

Dr. Mohammad Abu Rumman Hassan Abu Hanieh

The “Islamic Solution”

in Jordan

Islamists, the State,
and the Ventures of
Democracy and Security

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Foreword

Anja Wehler-Schoeck, Resident Director, FES Jordan & Iraq

In the course of the “Arab Spring” several undemocratic regimes were toppled throughout the region. However, three years after the self-immolation of Mohammed Bouazizi in Tunis, which became the symbolic catalyst of the popular uprisings in the Arab world, the progress of democracy is debatable. Throughout the region, the protests and revolutions spurred heated controversies regarding democratic governance and the involvement of certain political actors, namely Islamist movements and parties, which, under several of the fallen regimes, had been thwarted in their political participation.

A main concern remained whether Islamist movements were seeing democracy as an aim in itself or merely as a vehicle to accede to power. Meanwhile, these debates were also taking place within the Islamist movements themselves, which, as in the case of most of the Salafi streams, were traditionally opposed to involvement in political affairs. With the removal of Mohammed Morsi from the Egyptian Presidency in July 2013, this discourse gained a new dynamic.

Both in the Arab world and in the West, the debates on these issues are often highly ideologized and prone to generalizations. However, just as their secular counterparts, Islamist movements and parties are far from being a homogenous entity. They are marked by significant differences in terms of their ideology and convictions, their agendas, strategies and discourses.

To shed light on the various streams and trends, and to promote an educated discourse on Islamist movements, FES Amman has created a line of work dedicated to Political Islam. In this context, a publication series was launched in 2007, under which the eighth volume is being published with the present book. These publications aim to provide sound and thorough analysis of Islamist movements to a broad audience. While their focus is mainly on Jordan, the insights may certainly prove useful to a readership far beyond, given the fact that many movements operate throughout the region and that political developments in the different countries are often interconnected.

Given the wide positive echo, which the publications received in Jordan and in the region, and in the light of the fact that the issues they address remain as relevant today as they were at the time of publication, FES Amman decided to republish five of the texts in the present compilation “The ‘Islamic Solution’ in Jordan”. With this book, we wish to better show the linkages between the different facets of this complex topic and to update the analysis based on the developments in the past years. All previously published texts were thoroughly edited and amended. Moreover, three new chapters were added to reflect the 2010 elections in Jordan, to assess the trend of Jihadi Salafism and to examine the organization *Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami*.

The team of FES Amman wishes to express their heartfelt gratitude to the authors Dr. Mohammad Abu Rumman and Hassan Abu Hanieh, both of whom are renowned experts on the issue of Political Islam and who have proven to be invaluable resources in this field.

Our thanks also goes to you, our readers, for your interest in the activities and publications of FES Amman. We wish you an interesting and insightful read of “The ‘Islamic Solution’ in Jordan”.

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Introduction: The Aim of This Compilation

Political Islam has come to occupy a pivotal place in the Arab political and intellectual debate, sparked by the rise of the revolutionary democratic “Spring” in the region. This debate has been further fueled by the emergence of Islamist movements as important political players in many Arab countries, and by the expectation that these movements will play a very active role in demarcating the course of the upcoming phase and the competing stakes around it during this volatile period. It is expected that Islamists will be influential in the immediate future, whether they represent active political forces and parties on a local level or whether they yield their influence from larger countries, or even neighboring ones, where their presence and power have significantly increased in recent years.

The proverbial iceberg has melted in many Arab countries; and, consequently, discussions about the power of the Islamists and their political and social presence can no longer be characterized by the typically speculative discourse, which has often been dominated by a logic imbued with exaggeration, scapegoating, disparagement or belittlement. Today, the realities emerging from Tunisia, Egypt and Libya indicate that these movements are and will remain a serious, complicating factor in local and regional political equations and formulations.

Indeed, in the first free elections to take place after the success of the Tunisian revolution, Islamist movements won over 40% of the seats in the country’s new parliament¹, with *Hizb al-Nahda* (the Ennahda party)² forming the first post-revolutionary Tunisian government under its leadership. A similar outcome would emerge after elections in Morocco with the Islamist Justice and Development party (PJD), winning 107 out of 395 seats in the Moroccan parliament³. In post-revolutionary Egypt, parliamentary elections would also yield the majority of seats in the People’s Assembly of Egypt to the Organization of the Muslim Brotherhood’s Freedom and Justice Party and the Salafist⁴ movement’s al-Nour Party, with these parties’ electoral lists capturing first and

¹ Refer to a related article by Erik Churchill, “Tunisia’s Electoral Lesson: The Importance of Campaign Strategy”, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, October 27, 2011, available at <http://carnegieendowment.org/2011/10/27/tunisia-s-electoral-lesson-importance-of-campaign-strategy/6b7g>

² For a profile of the Ennahda party in post-revolutionary Tunisia. see <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-15442859>

³ See the Justice and Development Party (PJD: Parti de la Justice et du Développement) website (in Arabic), available at the following link: <http://e2011.pjd.ma/details.htm?id=230#ar>; for more details on the Moroccan elections (in English), see the following articles: “Islamist PJD party wins Morocco poll”, available at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-15902703>; or “Morocco: Islamist Justice And Development Party Leads Government,” available at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/01/03/morocco-islamist-justice-and-development_n_1181086.html

⁴ Salafism (*Salafiyya*) as defined by a Salafist site is, “The Salafist *da’wa* is that of the Qur’an and the Sunnah. It is the Religion of Islam – pure and free from any additions, deletions or alterations. Salafism is the ideology of adhering to the Path of the Messenger (Prophet Muhammad Peace Be Upon Him) and of the True Believers or Righteous Predecessors (*al-Salaf al-Saleh*). *Al-Salaf* is a collective term referring to the Pious Pioneers in Islam and all those who follow in the footsteps of the *salaf al-saleh* in their belief, actions and morals. Hence, Salafists are those who adopt the *Salafi* ideology. [Reference: The Quran and Sunnah Society; www.qss.org]. A more detailed definition and discussion of Salafism and the various manifestation of its ideology is presented in chapters five and six of this study [Translator’s note].

second place in the legislative elections, respectively.⁵ Finally, the electoral victories by Islamists in Tunisia, Egypt and Morocco are notwithstanding the pivotal role played by revolutionaries with Islamist backgrounds in the successful overthrow of Muammar al-Qaddafi in Libya.

The new Arab political scene has undoubtedly exposed the power of the Islamists. Yet current realities have also clearly demonstrated that the region is not standing before one ideological block or a congruous harmonious movement. In fact, although these groups and movements all share the same “Islamist” label, they differ significantly in important and critical detail when it comes to their political visions, intellectual and ideological backgrounds, and in their abilities to adapt religious tenets to prevailing realities. Accordingly, examining these movements and their positions – both objectively and epistemologically – requires more detailed scrutiny and in depth analyses rather than sweeping generalizations that attempt to situate them in “one basket” and raise superficial red flags in their opposition or support.

Essentially, the questions that seem of utmost importance, today, concerning the future of the region include: Will these Islamist movements facilitate and push forward democracy in the Arab world? Will they abide by the conditions enforced by the “ballot box” and commit to the general rules and codes of conduct required by the new democratic game – particularly in the case where Islamists reach the seats of power? Or, will they impede the course of democracy and merely reproduce and reformulate the Arab dictatorships once again; but this time, with a religious façade? Finally, will these movements commit the kinds of errors that will provide the necessary fodder for the military establishment and other elite and opposing secular forces to recycle the political scene and reproduce new systems and regimes in the region, which will instigate yet another cycle of political and perhaps even bloody struggles with the Islamists?

Branching out from this line of inquiry is another series of interlinked and interdependent questions regarding the extent to which Islamist movements actually believe in democracy, or in the rights of minorities and women, or in human rights, in general, as well as to what extent do they accept political, ethnic and sectarian pluralism. Above all, it is as important to address the question of these movements’ visions and perceptions of the Islamic state and of systems of governance, and whether these visions translate or accommodate the model of a civil and democratic state, or a religious democracy – in the example of the Iranian case – or the hardliner militant state, without any democratic semblances – in the example of the Taliban model in Afghanistan?

Additionally, if all the Islamist movements cannot be lumped in one proverbial, congruous “basket,” then, a fortiori, the same premise stands when it comes to Arab societies and Arab countries. Certainly, despite general similarities and broad semblances in character shared between Arab countries and societies, there is a vast range of political, historical, cultural and social landscapes, differences, disparities, and attributes particular to these societies and countries as well as in the way Islamist movements are placed and perceived inside the intricate fabrics of these societies and countries.

⁵ See a related article posted on Al Jazeera’s (Arabic) news website, found at the following link: <http://www.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/88BBD172-CAF9-422E-991F-06AA372A352B.htm>; for articles related to the Egyptian 2011-2012 legislative elections in English, refer to the Al Jazeera English website, various links available at <http://www.aljazeera.com/Services/Search/?q=results%20of%20egyptian%20parliamentary%20elections>

With all these complexities in mind, this book particularly focuses on the Jordanian context, which perhaps has not been challenged or tested to the extent witnessed by the Tunisian and Egyptian, and to a lesser degree, the Libyan and Yemeni experiences during the Arab “democratic spring.” In Jordan, the case relates to a monarchical state that, in general, has never engaged in a fierce struggle with the Islamists. Instead, the Jordanian regime has been unique in the relationship it has cultivated with one of the most important of Islamist powers in the region, the organization of the Muslim Brotherhood, a relationship that has been generally characterized by a measured and significant degree of co-existence and tolerance and, in the worst case scenarios, non-violent conflict.

In fact, tensions between the Jordanian state and the Muslim Brotherhood have never escalated, at any time whatsoever, to the more extreme levels felt by other countries. Even relations between the Jordanian state and the more radical Islamist movements have been kept within control and within the confines of restraint, despite the severity of certain militant operations that took place on Jordanian soil during specific periods, such as the Amman Hotel Bombings of 2005. Indeed, the size of these movements, the extent of their presence and their threat, and the state’s reaction to them, never reached the levels of aggressive policy or violence experienced in other Arab countries such as Syria, Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Saudi Arabia and Iraq, amongst others.

Perhaps, the pages of this book will attest to the fact that we stand before an example worthy of study. A diverse range of Islamist movements and groups exists within the Jordanian socio-political map, all of which vary to a great degree in their intellectual and ideological discourse and capacities as movements and groups. At the same time, the state has followed policies that have – historically – circumvented the point of reaching the brink of violent conflict with any of these movements or groups. The Jordanian regime has not followed the example of or replicated the extreme measures and policy models adopted by other Arab countries towards Islamist movements.

In this book, we will try to provide a closer examination of the “Jordanian model” in terms of the relationships that may be built between state and Islamists, from numerous angles. This examination will be presented with the ultimate aim of offering a more in depth analytical view of Jordanian “political Islam” within the landscape and context of the Arab “democratic spring”. With this objective in mind, the first angle is linked to Jordan’s official religious policy towards these movements. The second is related to the nature and character of the various movements, their ideological, intellectual and organizational diversity and differences, as well as the strength of their social and political presence within Jordanian society. The third angle attempts to explore the stakes involved in the relationships between these movements and the state and society, in addition to the general direction and future prospects of Islamist movements within the general Jordanian socio-political landscape.

A parallel mission adopted by this book and its line of inquiry is to delve beyond the general and the direct when trying to answer and assess the stances held by these movements when it comes to democracy, pluralism, human rights and other public and individual freedoms, in addition to other controversial issues that continue to hover at the surface of the Arab political and intellectual debate today. Our aim is to penetrate beyond this surface and into the depths of this political and intellectual debate as well as into the controversial dialectic taking place inside the Islamist movements themselves, in order to examine and follow the internal dynamics of the ideological and organizational transformations taking place within them. As a research team, we felt this approach allows for a better understanding and a more profound knowledge of these movements and allow us

to conduct and present a genuine, in-depth study of these movements, the real stakes involved, and the prospects for their evolution in the future.

Such a task is not without its challenges and difficulties. For the most part, the inner dynamics of these movements are not readily unveiled to the general reader or outside observer. This kind of knowledge and access has required years of study and analyses pursued by both researchers involved in undertaking the task of writing this book. It is also the result of endless interviews and meetings with members of these movements, or with those close to them, as well as what could be gathered – or what was possible to gather – from state officials concerning these “portfolios”. The latter was in addition to ongoing and systemic analyses of these movements’ literature and political and intellectual discourse, as well as a continuous, in-depth reading of the developments that have taken place over the course of these movements’ history and their political evolution.

In the end, what this book seeks to add to the Arab library is a closer look inside these movements, in order to provide the reader with a more detailed and precise presentation of the criteria, rules, and fundamental tenets governing these movements’ ideological approaches, political conduct, and social interaction. It provides a comprehensive understanding of these movements using a holistic, integrated approach that does not suffice with an individual movement or specific movements, but rather attempts to situate a movement or movements within the general landscape of the Islamist map, in a comparative manner, which allows for distinguishing between the similarities, the differences, the convergences, and the disparities that exist between these movements.

To avoid duplicating what may have been presented in previously published literature or other studies conducted on Islamist movements – as a whole or as individual movements in Jordan – we go beyond the traditional research framework, which would typically begin with discussing the formation of these movements according to a historical narrative or approach. Instead, we have chosen to begin with developments that have unfolded in the most recent past and analyze the critical moments and events experienced by these movements, which have impacted their political options and ideological discourse. We then progressively make our way back to the beginning, by analyzing and explaining how these movements reached the point they are at today, and what possibilities exist and what prospects may be expected as an outcome of these developments.

Although the map of the Islamist movements in Jordan is vast in its topography, we opted to focus attention on the more important and prominent actors engaged in the local scene, and the movements marked by a certain measure of problematic dynamics and controversy when it comes to their ideological vision or their organizational direction. To this end, we find ourselves presenting three major political forces: The Organization of the Muslim Brotherhood, the Salafists (in both their tradition and radical forms) and *Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami* (the Islamic Party of Liberation).

In terms of structure, the book commences with a mapping of the vast majority of the Islamist movements and groups active in Jordan. This mapping exercise presents the reader with how these movements and groups are situated within the local political scene and its formulations and equations, the general and critical differences between these groups, and an assessment of their emergence and evolution in relation to the Jordanian political scene.

In the first chapter, we offer a presentation of Jordan’s official or “formal” religious policy. Questions and issues regarding the relationship between state and religion are dealt with in a

manner that is ultimately aimed at investigating the legislative and political environment in which the Islamists and their activities exist and interact. Examining this environment also provides a broader picture of the general character of religion and religiosity in Jordan, in general – which, in itself, represents a vital and essential part of the study of the relationship that exists between the Islamists, the state, and society.

In the second and third chapters, the internal and external developments and transformations affecting and experienced by the Muslim Brotherhood are discussed. Chapter two specifically focuses on the electoral defeat suffered by the Brotherhood in 2007. This electoral setback has come to represent a significant milestone in the escalation of the crisis within the organization, and between it and the state – a crisis which, in its wake carried important implications for the Brotherhood’s discourse and triggered a process of internal reassessment and questioning of its political role. The severity of the 2007 electoral results also led to new organizational elections within the movement and a change in the character of its leadership. It also later catalyzed the formulation of a new discourse that was subsequently manifested in the Muslim Brotherhood’s boycott of the following parliamentary elections, which is discussed in more detail in chapter three.

Chapter three explores the specific developments and factors that led to the Muslim Brotherhood’s boycott of the 2010 parliamentary elections, as well as the development of the organization’s political discourse and internal dynamics up until the moment in which the region would be swept by the wave of revolutions brought forth by the Arab democratic spring. The chapter also probes into the subsequent implications that the recent regional upheavals have had on the restructuring of prevailing socio-political norms and interactions, in general, and upon the relationship between the Muslim Brotherhood and the state, in particular.

In chapter four, the intricacies of the relationship between the Jordanian state and the Islamic Resistance Movement Hamas are examined, as this turbulent relationship would have direct relevance to relations between the Muslim Brotherhood and the state, and would impact the internal dynamics within the Brotherhood, itself, particularly in recent years. Furthermore, the dynamics affecting the relationship between the Jordanian state and Hamas and their impact on Jordan’s Muslim Brotherhood also directly relate to the interdependence of issues that exist within the sensitive Jordanian-Palestinian formulation and Jordanian-Palestinian relations.

In the next three chapters, the book proceeds with a study of the Salafist current, or movements, and specifically, Salafism as it has manifested itself in its two principal forms relative to the local Jordanian socio-political scene. In chapter five, we study the “Conservative” or “Traditional” Salafist movement, which emerged in the 1980s and became a major Islamist actor on a societal level in Jordan, as these Salafists have always maintained their strict doctrine of non-engagement in all matters political and have consistently refused to form a political arm or party affiliated to their movement. Paradoxically, this particular stance has brought the movement closer to the line towed by state policy, although the movement’s religious posturing appear to be contradictory to that of the state. It is this position of political non-engagement, itself, which has turned the Conservative Salafists into major political players, as they continue to offer an ideology and discourse that refutes, conflicts and clashes with the political positions of almost all the other Islamist movements. Meanwhile and alternatively, the Arab democratic spring has exposed the possibility that this movement could transform and turn into a major and direct political player, with a role and active

engagement in the political game – as is the case in Egypt today, where the Salafists have formed political parties, despite the fact that the majority of Salafists took an open stance against the popular revolutions, at first.

The sixth chapter follows in this examination of Salafism by studying the Jihadi-Salafist movement, particularly after the death of Abu Mus‘ab al-Zarqawi (d. 2006). Al-Zarqawi’s assassination would indeed represent an important and decisive milestone in this movement’s evolution and would specifically impact the ongoing dispute within the movement between the non-violent current – whose path is forged by Abu Mohammad al-Maqdisi, the Jihadi-Salafist leader who was critical of al-Zarqawi’s approach before the latter’s death – and hardliners in the movement, influenced by al-Zarqawi’s legacy in Iraq, and who still reject any means other than the use of arms and militant force in propagating political change.

Chapter seven then examines the “ideological circumvention” utilized by the leaders of the global al-Qaeda movement and of the Jihadi-Salafist movement in Jordan as their approach to dealing with the recent Arab democratic revolutions and to managing the new implications borne of these revolutions. This chapter also explores the changing variables imposed by the new socio-political reality and intellectual strategic options offered by the Arab revolutionary spring, which are different from, if not totally contradictory with what Jihadi-Salafist “ideology” offers in its strategic reading of the Arab reality and in demarcating the path towards changing this reality.

The book finally concludes with a chapter on *Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami* (the Islamic Party of Liberation) and its ideological and organizational evolution as specifically related to the Jordanian context. A significant part of this chapter focuses on *Hizb ut-Tahrir*’s vision of political change and the character of the Islamic state it envisages, as well as the stances it maintains when it comes to democracy, pluralism and the nation-state, in general.

The analyses presented in this book depended mainly on direct resources about these Islamist movements and their ideological discourses, referencing main sources available on the Internet to ascertain the narratives and visions of these movements, especially that they do not always have the opportunity to publish in daily newspapers, and their political narratives of events is often confiscated and restricted, which in and of itself constitutes a methodological difficulty especially amid the instability of news websites and the possibility of the loss and deletion of its archives. This, in fact, has been experienced throughout the endeavor of writing this book, the two researchers faced with the “disappearance” of online material and broken links used as references, necessitating more efforts in searching for alternate sources, a problem that exist with other referenced links as well.

The problem of depending on online resources was most evident in dealing with websites of the Jihadi-Salafist current, particularly the renowned website of al-Maqdisi, “*al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad*.” As Jihadi-Salafists face an electronic security war, their websites are often hacked and blocked, prompting them to change names and links until they are re-discovered again, resuming the ever-ending cycle of censorship. Such was the researchers’ experience in referencing material related to *al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad*, which was disabled along with all its contents.

Circumventing this problem, Jihadi-Salafists endeavor continuously in reposting deleted material on various other websites; hence, simply entering the title and author of a specific material in a search

engine may provide an alternate reference. Yet, the problem continues to pose a hurdle for researchers in the field of Islamist movements and groups, particularly in the context of the current regional and global conditions.

This scholarly effort has taken years of research, writing, discussion and investigation. And, it is a work in progress, which has no defined end, as developments continue to impact these movements and the spectrum of subject matter related to them, on an ongoing basis. This ever constant and changing reality has required that we consistently review and develop ideas and information related to this topic. Indeed, these reviewing processes continued into the last stages of preparing this book for publication. However, in light of all these challenges and despite them, the book is intended to facilitate and present an “extensive” introduction to Islamists and their movements, the issues surrounding them and instigated by their presence, and their “solutions” to political and social issues, as specifically related to the Jordanian context. In the end, our aim is to provide those interested in this subject, researchers, scholars and general readers, an enriching, more in-depth learning experience that extends well beyond the surface of all that these movements represent and all that is entailed by their relations with both state and society.

Preface:

A General Mapping of Islamist Groups and Movements

More often than not, Islamist groups and movements are varied, diverse and frequently contradictory in positions concerning their political visions and stances on internal and external affairs. With these considerations in mind, the more important question, here, is: How can Islamist powers be mapped and categorized politically?

Historically, Islamist activism in Jordan emerged with the country's independence in 1946, when the Organization of the Muslim Brotherhood was established under the auspices of King Abdullah I and in the presence of several prominent members of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood.⁶ A few years later, Sheikh Taqiuddin al-Nabhani (1909-1977)⁷, who was also closely affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine and Jordan, founded a new Islamist party, which he named "*Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami*" or the Islamic Party of Liberation. The founders of *Hizb ut-Tahrir* made several attempts to register the new party in Amman, the capital of Jordan, but to no avail. The party's ideological stance against the modern nation-state and the prevailing political systems was quite extreme and instead. In its platform, the party calls for the reinstatement of the Islamic Caliphate.

Both the Muslim Brotherhood and members of *Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami* participated in the Jordanian legislative elections held in 1956, gaining only a limited amount of seats in parliament in light of the predominance of leftist and Arab nationalist movements at that time. Soon after, *Hizb ut-Tahrir* reversed its (theoretical) political stance about participating in political life – in its existing form and in the context of the modern Arab world. Instead, it became engaged in underground political activism, where the party tried to export its ideology and political activities to the outside. In the interim, it failed at attempted military coups in both Syria and Iraq, which subsequently led to the trial and execution of several members of the party's leadership in both countries.⁸

Later, in the beginning of the 1980s, Salafist groups began to emerge in the form of a "social manifestation" on the local Jordanian scene, when Sheikh Nasseruddin al-Albani, one of the most renowned leaders of contemporary Salafism, decided to settle in Jordan. From the time of its establishment, the Salafist movement in Jordan declared and maintained a clear stand: They are not interested in politics or in the intricacies of political life. They reject the principle of "political partisanship" and political parties. And, they believe "obedience to the ruler" to be of their religious duties and obligations.

However, this declared stance of political non-engagement would not prevent a heated competition emerging between the Salafists and the Muslim Brotherhood. Indeed the two movements would

⁶ For more details on the establishment of the Organization of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan, see Dr. Bassam al-'Amoush, "*Mahatat fi Tarikh Jamaa'at al-Ikhwan al-Muslimeen fi al-Urdun*" (Lit. "Milestones in the History of the Organization of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan"); Academics for Publishing and Distribution, Amman, Jordan, 2007; pp. 9-20. Also see chapter two and three of this book.

⁷ For more on Sheikh Mohammad Taqiuddin al-Nabhani, see chapter eight of this book.

⁸ See later chapters in this book for more detail on the Muslim Brotherhood and *Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami* and their history and evolution in Jordan.

contend fiercely over the recruitment of followers and supporters and over control of Jordan's mosques, which once provided fertile recruiting grounds for the Brotherhood, as well as main focal points for building and maintaining the latter's popular base.⁹

What is particularly ironic and noteworthy is that the same state, which banned the leading sheikh of the Salafists, Nasseruddin al-Albani, from preaching and teaching in Jordan's mosques (apparently under pressure from Sufis, which have traditionally enjoyed the support of the state), began to institute support for Albani's followers and aspirants in the early 1990s, in an effort to break the Muslim Brotherhood's "political spine" and curb its influence, the Jordanian state would embark on a policy of providing the Salafists with the space and latitude to conduct and expand their work and activities.

On another end of the Islamist spectrum, and in the context of shifting sympathies and an overall change in the social mood towards Islamist movements in Jordan, the first signs of armed and militant Islamist activity began to surface in the 1980s. Overtures of this transformation were embodied in the "Islamization" efforts within Palestinian organizations, which were influenced and inspired by the successes of the 1979 Khomeini-led revolution in Iran and the assassination of Egyptian President Mohammad Anwar Sadat by radical militant Egyptian Islamists in 1981 – all of which stirred ideas and sentiments about an emerging "revolutionary" Islamism.

But it was not until the onset of the 1990s that the first Islamist groups to adopt the creed of armed action were formally established. The seeds of these groups were planted by fighters – also known as the "Arab Afghans" –, who, after returning from the war in Afghanistan (1979-1989), began to organize themselves into militant and armed groups with the aim of imposing their religious-political agendas at home, by carrying out militant operations such as bombing cinemas or conducting cross-border military operations from Jordanian to Occupied Palestinian territories.

At the same time, the 1990s experienced another major transformation on the internal policy front with the launch of peace negotiations between Jordan and Israel. This political policy shift was followed by the enactment of legislations that would curb public freedoms as well as restrict the ability of any opposition to lobby and rally public opinion against the peace treaty. It is important to note that these shifts were taking place in light of a mood in the local socio-political environment, which was already politically charged and mobilized against peace and normalization with Israel due to decades of accumulated anti-Israeli political discourse in this regard.¹⁰

During this same period in the 1990s, Jordanian society started to experience the impact of shifts in economic restructuring policies and the resumption of the so-called economic reform program,

⁹ For a more detailed overview of Conservative or Traditional Salafism, see chapter five as well as other articles and books written by other scholars on this subject, including, "*Rimah al-Saha'if: Al-Salafiya al-Albaniya wa Khousoumouha*" (Lit. "Albani-Salafism and its Opponents"), published by Markaz al-Misbar li al-Dirasat wa al-Bouhouth (Lit. The Misbar Studies and Research Center), Dubai, United Arab Emirates, 2nd Ed., February 2011; as well as Marwan Shehadeh's "*Min al-Siyasa Tark al-Siyasa*" (Lit. "Abstaining from Politics is Political"), published on al-Haqiqa al-Duwaliya (FactJo) news website, available at <http://www.factjo.com/newsletterFullNews.aspx?id=1152&INo=77>

¹⁰ For more detail on the overall political environment which prevailed during this period see Ali Mahafatha, "*Al-Democratiya al-Muqaiada Halat al-Urdun: 1989-1999*" (Lit. "The Jordanian Case of Limited Democracy: 1989-1999"), published by Markaz Dirasat al-Wihda al-'Arabiya (Lit. Arab Unity Studies Center), Beirut, Lebanon, 2001.

which included the launch of structural adjustment policies and privatization initiatives. This atmosphere was further complicated by a reduction in the “paternalistic” role of the state and the erosion of client-patron relations that had come to characterize the citizen-government relationship over the years. All these factors led to social and political fissures that allowed for an environment conducive to the rise of more fundamental, radical and militant Islamist movements and groups.¹¹

In fact, the face of this new, more radical political Islam would emerge in a clearer, organized and structured way, both intellectually and realistically, in 1994, when the Jordanian government announced the arrest of ‘Issam al-Barqawi, a.k.a. “Abu Mohammad al-Maqqisi.”¹² Al-Maqqisi’s followers had been secretly distributing books, which advocated the new “Salafism” – a Salafism different from that advocated by Albani’s followers. This new Salafism was based on the *takfir* (excommunication, or the practice of declaring a person or idea an unbeliever, or *Kafir*, pl. *kuffar*) of the Jordanian political regime as well as all other Arab regimes, including Saudi Arabia. It also demanded the holistic, unadulterated application of Islamic *Sharia* and governance by that which was brought forth by God alone. They advocated the rejection of any form of public engagement in politics. Finally, they professed an adamant faith and belief that change could not be forged or propagated except through arms and the use of force.¹³

This form of Jihadi-Salafism would flourish during this period. Cases before the State Security Court, Jordan’s military tribunal, began to multiply and vary based on accusations and charges that ranged from weapons charges, militancy, acts of terrorism to *takfir*. Hundreds of individuals influenced by this new current were incarcerated. With that, the cases continued to burgeon and al-Maqqisi’s books continued to be printed and distributed in secret, as were the writings of ‘Omar Mahmoud Abu ‘Omar, otherwise known as “Abu Qatada al-Filastini”¹⁴. A Jordanian (of Palestinian descent) residing in London, Abu Qatada has been continuously active in the publication of several periodicals affiliated to armed Islamist groups active in Algeria and Libya, such as “*al-Ansar*” (“The Supporters”) and “*al-Fajr*” (“The Dawn”), as well as the global Jihadi-Salafist “*al-Minhaj*” (“The Method”) journal. He has been and is still considered one of the most important theorists and leading ideologues for Salafist groups active in North Africa, particularly Algeria and Libya.¹⁵

In 1999, the course of Jihadi-Salafism experienced a transformation when the new Jordanian King, Abdullah II, declared a general amnesty for all those tried and convicted in political cases related to terrorism. Individuals from the Jihadi-Salafist movement were released, with Abu Mohammad al-Maqqisi and Abu Mus‘ab al-Zarqawi at the fore. Al-Zarqawi, along with a number of his companions, left immediately for Afghanistan and then to Iraq, where he would establish what would later be known by the name of “*Qa‘dat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidain*” (or, The Base [*al-Qaeda*] for Jihad in the Land of the Two Rivers), or al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI).

¹¹ For more details see Sufyan Alissa, “Rethinking Economic Reform in Jordan: Confronting Socioeconomic Realities”, Carnegie Endowment Carnegie Paper, August 2007, available at <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=19465&prog=zgp&proj=zme>

¹² For more on Abu Mohammad al-Maqqisi, the founder of the Jihadi Salafist movement in Jordan, see chapter six of this book on Jihadi-Salafism.

¹³ See “*Afkar wa Sirat wa Mawaqif al-Maqqisi*” (Lit., “The Ideas, Biography and Positions of al-Maqqisi”) found on Abu Mohammad al-Maqqisi’s personal website, “*Minbar al-Tawhed wa al-Jihad*” (Lit., “The Platform for Monotheism and Jihad”), available at <http://www.tawhed.ws/>

¹⁴ For more on Abu Qatada, see chapter six of this book.

¹⁵ For more detail, see the chapter six of this study on Jihadi-Salafism.

In the years prior to this general amnesty, the security “battle” rarely abated between the Jordanian authorities and the Jihadi-Salafists. Jordan was the target of militant operations that included bombings, assassination attempts and dozens of other cases that were being tried before the State Security Court. Before al-Zarqawi himself was killed in Iraq in 2006, the confrontation in Jordan escalated until it culminated in the Amman Hotel Bombings, which took place on November 9, 2005, and claimed the lives of dozens and wounded many more. However, today, especially with the rise of the Arab democratic spring, there are signs that have been emerging amongst Jihadi-Salafists, led by Abu Mohammad al- Maqdisi, which suggest a change in tack and more openness to the idea of adopting a more non-violent approach in their activities and their advocacy for change.¹⁶

On another front, in 2001, a splinter group from the Muslim Brotherhood and certain independent Islamists worked to establish a new party, which they would call *Hizb al-Wasat al-Islami* or the Islamic Centrist Party¹⁷ (also known as the Center Party), whose relations with the state would be good. However, despite rapport with the state, the Center Party chose not to officially run or submit an official ballot list in the 2003 legislative elections. It would also establish an intellectual global forum entitled “*Muntada al-Wasatiya li al-Fikr wa al-Thaqafa*” (The Centrist Forum for Thought and Culture). Later, the party chose to participate in the 2007 parliamentary elections, but only with a “secret” ballot list!

All in all, relations among the majority of the Islamist movements and groups active within the Jordanian socio-political scene have been marked by continuous intellectual disagreements, social struggles and fierce competition. They are all constantly vying for the support and loyalties of the “religious” popular base; and, this competition has been played out with each group trying to prove that it is the only movement amongst all the groups and movements, which has full rights and authority in representing the “true and pure understanding of Islam”. Indeed, the issues and areas of disagreement between the movements and groups range from religious and jurisprudential issues to political, social and ideological issues, and quite often, many of these conflicting opinions and disagreements lead to mutual hostility, open enmity and even reciprocated acts of *takfir*. This general atmosphere of animosity continues despite the fact that the majority of these movements and groups have common and shared long-term objectives, such as the Islamization of society and establishing the “Islamic state” governed by Islamic *Sharia*.

At one end of the Political Islam spectrum, amongst all these Islamist movements and groups, the Muslim Brotherhood and the Islamic Action Front (IAF) are the only Islamist groups in Jordan that officially endorse public and full engagement in political life, as an open (not underground) opposition party, that acts according to and within the legal confines and bounds defined by the constitution and determined by Jordanian laws. Alternatively, although the Islamic Centrist Party sometimes does show its opposition to certain government and state policies, it is not considered a party in opposition, by any means or classification. Also, for the time being anyway, the Islamic

¹⁶ For more detail, see the part in the seventh chapter of this book that focuses and analyzes the Jihadi-Salafist approach to dealing with the Arab Democratic Revolutions.

¹⁷ For more detail, see Mohammad Suleiman, “*Hiwar ma’a d. Hayal ‘Abd al-Hafeeth, Na’eb Ra’ees al-Maktab al-Siyasi li Hizb al-Wasat al-Islami*” (Lit. “A Discussion with Dr. Hayal ‘Abd al-Hafeeth, the Vice-President of the Political Bureau of the Islamic Centrist Party”), “*Al-‘Asr al-Electroni*” (Lit., “The Electronic Age”) Magazine, March 7, 2003, available at <http://www.alasr.ws/index.cfm?method=home.con&contentID=4271>

Centrist Party does not enjoy nearly the kind of popularity it requires to compete, in any manner, with the Muslim Brotherhood electorally, politically or socially, at any level, such as in legislative or municipal elections, amongst professional unions, charitable societies or in civil society organizations.

At the other extreme, Jihadi-Salafism represents the other face of active political Islam, in a radical framework that is considered illegitimate both officially and legally. Jihadi-Salafism has followed a militant approach that has implicated the movement and its members in armed operations, bombings and other acts of violence. The fundamental cornerstone of its political ideology is grounded in the principle of “*al-Hakimiya al-Islamiya*” (“divine governance and sovereignty”), or linking the Islamic doctrine and creed with the application of Islamic *Sharia*, and governance by the *Sharia* and the right to declare the *takfir* of all those who do not govern by it. The latter fundamental belief has led Jihadi-Salafism to view and consider all current governments, laws, legislation, constitutions and armies as being inherently non-Muslim and has led to their complete rejection of any engagement or participation in political life. Similarly, the radical stances held by the Jihadi-Salafists have led the movement to also declare *takfir* and hereticize other Islamist movements that may disagree with its political, doctrinal and jurisprudential vision.¹⁸

The “Conservative” or “Traditional” Salafist groups do not interfere or engage directly in politics. In fact, the founder of this traditional current in Salafism, Nasserudin al-Albani, also coined the slogan “It is political to disengage from politics”. Contrary to other Islamist movements that pay special attention to politics and the political in their intellectual vision, general mission and overall activities, the Conservative or Traditional Salafist paradigm for propagating change is embodied by two major steps: First, “*al-Tasfiya*”, or purging all that contravenes the pure and unadulterated Islam (in the view of the movement) from religious books, conceptualizations, and literature; and, second, “*al-Tarbiya*”, or nurturing and raising new generations in the “purity” of this unadulterated doctrine and creed.

However, it is also important to note that conscientious abstinence from direct political engagement did not prevent the leaders of the conservative or traditional form of Salafism from fostering solid and good relations with the formal institutions of the state, particularly its security apparatus, especially to spite and denigrate the Muslim Brotherhood and radical Salafism. Meanwhile, the Conservative or Traditional Salafists have not adopted a democratic discourse; nor do they offer any level of progressive political vision concerning issues such as human rights, public and individual freedoms, women’s rights and religious tolerance. On the contrary, their political vision has been marked by an overwhelming tendency towards imbuing the concept of “heritage” in their ideas and visions, using archaic resources or new resources that emulate the archaic. The crux and founding principle underlining their political thinking and ideology is founded upon the belief in the obligation and duty of obedience and allegiance to the “guardian” (the governor or the ruler and all persons with positions of responsibility in governance) and consequently, that political opposition

¹⁸ For more detail, see the book by Abu Mohammad Al-Maqdisi, “*Millat Ibrahim wa Da’wat al-Anbiya’ wa al-Mursalin wa Asalib al-Tugh’a fi Tamyi’iha wa Sarf al-Du’a`Anha*” (Lit., “The Creed of Ibrahim: The Call of the Prophets and Messengers and the Manner of the Tyrants’ Diluting it”), published on his personal website; op. cit. [English translation is available at http://www.e-prism.org/images/Millat_Ibrahim_-_English.pdf. [English references provided by translator]. Also compare al-Maqdisi’s book with that written by Abu Qatada al-Filastini, “*al-Jihad wa al-Ijtihad Ta’amullat fi al-Manhaj*” (Lit., “The Jihad and Religious Scholarly Reasoning (*Ijtihad*) and Reflections on the Method”), published by Dar al-Bayariq, Amman, Jordan.

and partisanship are by religious standards, unlawful, and thus prohibited or sinful. Indeed, it is the kind of political thinking that, to a great degree, resembles the concepts that once prevailed in Medieval Europe, where allegiance and obedience to the ruler was considered obedience to God; and, any other manner of conduct or sinning against the ruler is no less than sinning against God.¹⁹

As for *Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami* (the Islamic Party of Liberation), the key framework for the party is the “*Khilafah al-Rashidah*” or the “Rashidun Caliphate”²⁰, which conceptually articulates its main, strategic goal. Accordingly, *Hizb ut-Tahrir* does not recognize any modern regimes currently in power, and considers them as non-Muslim. They reject democracy outright; and, they would never acknowledge or accept a non-Muslim political party in their “promised state”. Their approach to propagating change can be seen as being similar to the Traditional Salafists in that it is founded on spreading “public awareness”, based on their political vision, with a focus on stressing the importance of returning to the Islamic caliphate system. The next step in the party’s paradigm is building “public opinion” so that the masses demand and call for the return of a caliphate succession. However, one of the main differences between *Hizb ut-Tahrir’s* approach to propagating change and that of the other Islamist movements is that it involves acquiring the loyalty of the central ranks of leadership in the armed forces, based on the premise that the interests of this higher echelon in the armed forces are intertwined with that of the ruling elite. The latter step is what *Hizb ut-Tahrir* calls forging the “call towards victory”, where these military leaders are expected to carry out a military coup and turn power over to the leader of *Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami*, who would then declare the founding of the Caliphate state.²¹

What is interesting to note is that despite the fact that Jordan has been the main focal point of *Hizb ut-Tahrir’s* activities and all its leaders are Jordanians (of Palestinian descent), yet *Hizb ut-Tahrir* does not see Jordan as the appropriate place, geographically or strategically, for establishing its “promised state.” Thus, it suffices to conduct its intellectual and communications activities in Jordan and denies having any other “military” activities there – despite the fact that certain authorities have accused *Hizb ut-Tahrir* of participating in an assassination attempt against late King Hussein Bin Talal in 1993, allegedly carried out by several cadets at the Mu’tah Military Academy during their graduation ceremony.²²

¹⁹ See Mohammad Abu Rumman, “*al-Islah al-Siyasi fi al-Fikr al-Islami*” (Lit. “Political Reform in Islamic Thought”, al-Shabaka al-‘Arabiya li al-Abhath wa al-Nashir (Lit., The Arab Research and Publishing Network), Beirut, Lebanon, 1st Edition, 2010; pp. 245-255.

²⁰ *Rashidah* (singular adjective) or *rashidun* (plural masculine adjective) in Arabic signifies the “Rightly Guided” or “Perfect” and refers to the period of the first four caliphs of the Islamic community, known in Muslim history as the orthodox or patriarchal caliphs: Abu Bakr (reigned 632–634), ‘Umar (reigned 634–644), ‘Uthman (reigned 644–656) and ‘Ali (reigned 656–661). The 29-year rule of the *rashidun* was Islam’s first experience without the leadership of the Prophet Mohammad. His example, however, in both private and public life, came to be regarded as the norm (or *Sunnah*) for his successors. Reference: www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/491710/Rashidun [Translator’s note]

²¹ For more detail on the ideology of *Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami* regarding political change, see chapter eight of this book as well as Mohammad Abu Rumman, “*al-Islah al-Siyasi fi al-Fikr al-Islami*”, op. cit.; pp. 273-277.

²² For more detail, see statements by the current Emir of *Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami*, as well as one of its former leaders, ‘Ata Abu al-Rishta, denying that *Hizb ut-Tahrir* had anything to do with, or had any connection to this event, posted on *Hizb ut-Tahrir’s* electronic website, entitled “*al-‘Okab*” (Lit., “Retribution”), available at <http://www.alokab.com/forums/lofiversion/index.php/t50660.html>; also, for more general information and detail about the incidents at the Mu’tah Military Academy, see Ibrahim Gharaibeh, “*Maqtal al-Diblomasi al-Ameriki fi Amman wa Siyaq al-Unf fi al-Urdun*” (Lit., “American Diplomat Killed in Amman and the Context of Violence in Jordan”), on the Al Jazeera (Arabic) news website, available at <http://www.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/D373EC188-9EA9-4C21-AE60-CBCE940B414D.htm>

Regarding the Islamic Centrist Party, it shares the Muslim Brotherhood's stance on democracy and its position regarding direct engagement in public political life, in all its dimensions, according to the rule of law and the constitution. However, it has also tried to present its party as more flexible in its intellectual stances, and particularly in committing to a centrist line of politics and manner of thinking. In the end, the clear difference between the Islamic Centrist Party and the Muslim Brotherhood is determined by two major characteristics: First, the Muslim Brotherhood is closer in classification to an opposition party; and, it has taken a clear stand against the peace process and normalization of relations with Israel, as well as the greater part of government policies, both foreign and domestic. Meanwhile, the Islamic Centrist Party has declared its support for most government policies, including the Wadi Araba Treaty that formalized peace with Israel, because – according to most of the Center Party's leadership – it became law when it was enacted and endorsed by "*Majlis al-Ummah*" (Lit., "the people's assembly"; i.e. the Parliament). The second significant characteristic difference between the two organizations is that the majority of the leaders and members of the Islamic Centrist Party are Jordanians (or "East Bankers," i.e. of Jordanian descent), while the Muslim Brotherhood's popular, social, and organizational base is clearly marked by overwhelming support from Jordanians of Palestinian descent.

In summary, and through this mapping exercise of the Islamist powers and their political, ideological and intellectual stances, it seems clear that both the Muslim Brotherhood and the Islamic Centrist Party represent the only two Islamist organizations that practice and engage in legitimate political activity and participate openly in public political life. The difference between the latter organizations is the clear advantage the Muslim Brotherhood has over the Islamic Centrist Party in its popularity and in its broad multi-dimensional range of political activity, as well as the fact that the Brotherhood's representatives have always had an official and formal presence in parliament – when it chooses to participate in elections. And, it always presents an independent, unified ballot list during legislative and municipal elections, which the Islamic Centrist Party has been unable to achieve to date.

Additionally, and although on some levels it is difficult to compare the balances of power or the varying levels of influence or impact borne by all these different Islamist groups and movements, it is safe to say that many of these groups and movements are not officially recognized organizations, nor do they possess an institutional structure that may help determine the number of their members, highlight the volume of their activities, or reveal the level of their effectiveness. However, in terms of a direct political impact and role, it is also safe to claim that the Muslim Brotherhood represents the only Islamist party, which possesses a political level of activity that is legitimate, as well as a large political role within the forces of "legal" opposition, and that the "Jihadi Salafist" current plays a significant and marked role in the national security equation, in terms of cases brought before the Jordanian State Security Court, and in terms of militant operations and violent attempts at "propagating change" by using the force of arms.

At the peripheries of this particular map of Islamist groups, currents, and movements in Jordan, a group that goes by the name of "*Jamaa'at al-Da'wa wa al-Tabligh*" would form. This group's beginnings and founding concepts originated in the Indian Sub-continent, and its center today still remains in Pakistan. However, despite its expanding activities at a global and regional level, the group itself believes in the peaceful nature of the Islamic *da'wa*; and, thus, also advocates and practices the non-violent propagation of its *da'wa*. The group's fundamental tenets also include

non-interference and non-engagement in political affairs, at any level whatsoever. Instead, it depends on a more missionary-style platform of activities, which are conducted at the level of mosques using the instruments of “doctrinal discourse and preaching.” It does not offer any reform discourse or platform outside the framework of its religious “*da‘wa*”, which requires a commitment to the adherence of the provisions set forth by Islam.²³

²³ For further detail on this group or movement (in Arabic) see the following site at the following link: <http://www.rugb.8m.com/aldaavah%20%201.htm>; for further detail on *Jamaa‘at al-Da‘wa wa al-Tabligh* also refer to “Women and Politics: From the Perspective of Islamic Movements in Jordan, by Hassan Abu Hanieh published by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Amman Office, op. cit.; or, the following letter written by a religious scholar from the Boston College Department of Theology, January 7, 2005, written and submitted by Qmar-ul Huda, Prof. of Islamic Studies & Comparative Religion, available at http://law.shu.edu/publications/ResearchCenters/upload/kurnaz_religious_experts.pdf

Chapter One

Conservative Secularism: The Jordanian Approach to Managing the Relationship between the State and Religion

Introduction

Since the Emirate of East Jordan was established in the 1920's, Jordan has been able to maintain a consistent and stable equilibrium in the relationship that has evolved between the state and religion. Indeed, Jordan has managed to create a formula that has been successful in simultaneously circumventing either strict ties with religion or direct confrontations with it. Hence, Jordan has been able to protect this delicate "equation" from infiltrating and affecting certain matters of the state, and separating it altogether from others.

The Jordanian nation-state never built its legitimacy upon a purely religious "ideology", nor did it take Islamic law (*Sharia*) as the only source for legislation or for its legislative practices. Furthermore, it has subjected neither its domestic nor its foreign policy to any religious tenets or constraints, as is the case with states such as Saudi Arabia or Iran. On the other hand, it has also not founded its legitimacy upon a strict kind of secularism that internalizes an inherently confrontational spirit in its dealings with conservative or religious currents, as was the case with radical and ultra-nationalist Arab states such as former South Yemen and the Tunisian regime before the revolution. Indeed, secular regimes in the region have waged fierce, bloody battles and political wars against Islamist and Jihadi currents and movements, as is the case with current Baathist Syria, Iraq (formerly) and in the Nasserite period in Egypt.

Although similarities have been drawn between the Jordanian and Moroccan regimes, in terms of their hereditary, constitutional-parliamentary monarchies and their claims of hailing from the lineage of the Prophet Mohammad (Peace Be Upon Him), the Jordanian regime has been more careful to avoid any religious pretention. For example, where the Moroccan king carries the designation of "*Amir al-Mumineen*,"²⁴ successive Hashemite rulers have, from the outset, been careful to maintain a clearly modern, moderate, secular framework for the state according to an unambiguous character of a constitutional-parliamentary monarchy.

Despite the above, the Jordanian state has also never neglected religious considerations, particularly in its domestic policies and to a lesser extent in its foreign affairs. It has always remained committed to respecting the religious sentiments that prevail in Jordanian society, albeit ensuring that a large measure of personal freedom and religious tolerance between different religions and between different Islamic sects is maintained – a reality which is clearly reflected in the relationship between Muslims and Christians (who are a minority in Jordan) as well as between other Muslim ethnic groups (such as the Circassians, Chechens and Kurds, among others).

This balancing act has led to "positioning" Jordan within a category that is closer to what one would term "conservative secularism." The state's political framework, institutions, domestic and foreign policy are secular in character while, at the same time, not in confrontation with religion, the state takes religion into account when considering various legislations and in certain policies. Meanwhile, it does not adopt any specific religious ideology (such as Wahhabi Salafism in Saudi

²⁴ Meaning 'Commander of the Believers' or 'Commander of the Faithful'; this title was given to the Imam Ali specifically by Prophet Mohammad (PBUH), but was later attributed to anybody who became a caliph (not by the Prophet), so there is Amir al-Mumineen Abu Bakr, Amir al-Mumineen Omar, Othman, Muawiya, Yazid, etc. [Reference: <http://www.islamic-dictionary.com/index.php?word=amir%20al%20mumineen>] [Translator's note]

Arabia or Ja'afari (Shiite) Islam in Iran), and maintains a “neutral” stand when it comes to internal religious struggles and conflicts between the different religious and jurisprudential schools of thought.

These Jordanian “balancing points” have reflected upon the relationship that has evolved between the state and the various Islamist movements which exist in Jordan, particularly the Organization of the Muslim Brotherhood. Indeed, relative to other Arab states, Jordan offers an innovative approach in its relationship with the Islamists, allowing them to register their organizations and to conduct their activities with a degree of freedom, and has given these movements the space to expand and to have influence.

The experience of Islamists in Jordan, in general, has been diametrically opposed to that of many other Islamists and Islamist movements in other Arab countries, where they have been banned, repressed, and imprisoned and have engaged in bloody confrontations with their respective states. However, despite the balanced approach taken towards Islamist movements in Jordan, the state has been careful to maintain a clear distance from them, and will sometimes even engage in intellectual confrontations with Islamist movements that call for establishing “Islamic political systems”.

This “Jordanian model” deserves a more in depth reading and analysis, particularly in responding to the following major questions:

- What are the general features of the relationship that has evolved between religion and the state in Jordan? Is the Jordanian model closer to a conservative, liberal, or traditional Islamic approach?
- What are the major characteristics of the official policy towards Islamists active in the religious domain in Jordan?
- How have this “balance” and these considerations been reflected in the state’s management of “political religion”? And how has the state dealt with the impact of “political religion” on the legislative level, particularly when it comes to religious institutions and to the role religion plays in public life?
- Finally, is there an official “power house” or “decision-making establishment”²⁵ for religious policy or are there several policy “power houses”? Were there periods in which these policies evolved and developed differently?

This study seeks to discuss these questions in an attempt to reconstruct the general features of the state and its policy model, and in an attempt to define this model’s characteristics and nature relative to other models, both Arab and on a more global level.

²⁵ The authors use the term “*Matbakh al-Qarar*” (Lit., “Decision-making Kitchen”) to delineate the decision-making center, or centers – for that matter – in which authoritative decisions are made, discussed, lobbied, and influenced in the kingdom. [Translator’s note]

1. “Conservative Secularism”: The Context of the Relationship between the State and Religion

From its inception, Jordan has been characterized as a civil and not religious state. Religious, here, is meant in the Western Medieval European sense, means that this does not negate that the ruling regime has an overall conservative character that, to a great degree, reflects the royal family’s heritage and the continuation of a historical legacy. Indeed, it is this heritage and the longevity of this historical legacy carried by the royal family that has helped secure its sense of symbolic legitimacy.

The state was not established on a religious foundation and its legitimacy has not been built around any revolutionary or sectarian “religious ideology”. Nor does it allege to aim to establish an Islamic state in the style of the Islamist movements. From the outset, the country’s founder, Prince Abdullah I, was very keen to ensure that the state would have a civil political character. He was clear to reinforce this message on May 15, 1923, during a ceremony in which the country’s independence was declared, when he said, “On this special occasion, I declare that the fundamental law for this area will be created, and the electoral law amended in a manner appropriate to the spirit of the country, its place, its people and its environment.”²⁶

The Jordanian state has been able to maintain and preserve this “civil” and “secular conservative” character over the 90 years of its existence and throughout successive generations of kings: King Abdullah I, King Talal bin Abdullah, King Hussein bin Talal and today, King Abdullah II bin Hussein. The state has never deviated from this general path, at any stage in time. And, these attributes and considerations have remained a fundamental feature of Jordanian policy, with “secular conservatism” manifesting itself in numerous realms, constitutionally, politically, religiously and even culturally and socially.

The Jordanian Constitution: No Grey Areas

Article 2 of the Jordanian constitution expresses, without any ambiguity, the characteristics embedded in this prototype of “conservative secularism” in Jordan. It stipulates that, “Islam is the religion of the State and Arabic is its official language”.²⁷ Clearly, this article avoids specific terms or phrases which could be interpreted as instilling a religious character to the political system, as is

²⁶ Ibrahim Gharaibeh, “*Qira’at fi al-‘Alaqa bayn al-Din wa al-Dawlah fi al-Dustour wa al-Tashria’at al-Urduniya*” (Lit., “A Reading into the Relationship between Religion and the Jordanian State’s Constitution and Legislation”; in the book “*Al-Din wa al-Dawlah Al-Urdun Namouthajan*” (Lit., “Religion and State: The Jordanian State as a Model”), Jerusalem Center for Political Studies, 1st Edition, 2009, p. 3.

²⁷ Taken directly from the English translation of the constitution of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan as found in the library on the official website of the Office of King Hussein http://www.kinghussein.gov.jo/constitution_jo.html [Translator’s note]. The Arabic text of the Jordanian Constitution is available at the official website of the Jordanian Lower House of Parliament at <http://www.representatives.jo/pdf/constitutions.pdf>

the case with Iran which stipulates the Twelver Shi'a sect²⁸, or Saudi Arabia and Israel which do not have constitutions in any case, and instead rely on their holy books.²⁹

This balance appears in other articles of the constitution that further expand on what is stipulated in Article 2 of the Jordanian Constitution. For example, Article 6/1 states that, "Jordanians shall be equal before the law. There shall be no discrimination between them as regards to their rights and duties on grounds of race, language or religion."³⁰ This article stresses that citizenship is the major pillar upon which the dynamics of the country's relationship with its individual citizens and groups function. In addition, Article 14 states, "The State shall safeguard the free exercise of all forms of worship and religious rites in accordance with the customs observed in the Kingdom, unless such is inconsistent with public order or morality."³¹

The articles of the Jordanian constitution do not allow for any ambiguity or grey areas in which a religious character to the state could be construed at the expense of the civil political system. At the same time, there are no hostile postures taken towards Islam and Islamic law (*Sharia*) anywhere in the constitution. Instead, Article 105 accords Islamic *Sharia* courts exclusive jurisdiction over matters concerning the personal status of Muslims and over cases concerning *diya*,³² as well as any matters pertaining to an Islamic *waqf*³³. Article 106 further stipulates that these *Sharia* courts shall in the exercise of their jurisdiction apply the provisions of Islamic *Sharia* law.³⁴

On the other hand, and with regard to other religious communities, the constitution states in Article 108 that "the Tribunals of Religious Communities are those for the non-Moslem religious communities which have been or will be recognized by the Government as established in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan." Article 109 specifies: "(i) Tribunals of Religious Communities shall be established in conformity with the provisions of laws pertaining thereto. Such laws shall define the jurisdiction of such Tribunals in matters of personal status and *Awqaf* (endowments) constituted for the benefit of the community concerned. Matters of personal status of any such community shall be the same matters as are, in the case of Moslems, within the jurisdiction of the *Sharia* Courts. (ii) Such laws shall determine the procedure to be followed by the Tribunals of the

²⁸ The Twelver Shia, or *Ithna-'Ashariya*, are numerically the largest of the Shi'ite sect, and exhibit most of the doctrines, which became classical with the Shi'a. [<http://www.sacred-texts.com/isl/isl39.htm>] [Translator's note]. Article 12 of the Iranian Constitution stipulates that the official religion of Iran is Islam and the Twelver Ja'fari school is the official school of thought of the state. This principle is stipulated to remain eternally immutable. The constitution is available at <http://www.iranonline.com/iran/iran-info/government/constitution-1.html>

²⁹ Refer to Gharaibeh, Ibrahim: "*Qira' a fi al-'Alaqa bayn al-Din wa al-Dawla...*" op. cit. See particularly comments by Dr. Mousa Shteivi on Gharaibeh's research, p. 27.

³⁰ Refer to the Jordanian Ministry of Justice's website home page; <http://eng.moj.gov.jo/> [Translator's note].

³¹ The English translation of the Jordanian Constitution, op. cit., http://www.kinghussein.gov.jo/constitution_jo.html [Translator's note].

³² [...] Mentioned within the Qur'an as '*diya*', and advocated by Islam, '*diya*' is an obligatory, non-negotiable payment of blood money used in cases of accidental killings that presents a way to defuse the revenge-perpetuated cycle of continued conflict. [Refer to page 31 of: <http://www.fas.org/irp/agency/army/arabculture.pdf>] [Translator's note].

³³ *Waqf* (singular) *Awqaf* (plural) represents (religious) endowments as a canonical Islamic concept, which refers to a special kind of charity given for the purposes of benevolence. The word is used for charities and gifts that have permanence and continuity, so that people can benefit from them for years, generations or even centuries. This means that *Waqf* endowment is made of entities from whose usefulness, yield and fruit people can benefit, while the capital asset of the entity lasts and stays for a short or long period of time, such as a lot, a construction, a well and a tree. [Refer to: <http://www.isesco.org.ma/english/publications/WAQF/Chap3.php>] [Translator's note].

³⁴ The English translation of the Jordanian Constitution, op. cit., http://www.kinghussein.gov.jo/constitution_jo.html [Translator's note].

Religious Communities.” Article 110 states: “Special Courts shall exercise their jurisdiction in accordance with the provisions of the laws constituting them.”³⁵ The text of the constitution clearly stipulates that personal status matters of religious communities other than Muslims are referred to the Tribunals of these religious communities.

In summary, the provisions of the Jordanian constitution are clear in their emphasis on the civil nature of the political system, which is founded upon the principle of citizenship in terms of rights and obligations. It also makes a clear distinction between religious, civil, and political matters, and is clear in its respect for different religions – whether that be manifested in freedom of worship, or in matters related to different faiths or forms of worship, or otherwise.

The Political System: “Conservatism” as a Strategic Choice

Politically, it is obvious that Prince Abdullah I was cautious to ensure that a clear distinction and separation be made between politics and religion in Jordan. In 1923, he made a decision to form a council, called the “*Majlis al-Shura*” (Consultative Council), which was headed by the Chief Islamic Justice at that time, Sa’id al-Karmi. Of this council’s major tasks was to formulate and interpret laws, regulations and procedures. However, this council was dissolved in 1927 and a national conference was formed, to be followed later by other parliamentary councils, which reinforced the secular nature of the governing regime in principle and in substance.³⁶

This focus on a civil political nature did not prevent the emergence of a conservative character to the state, which was hostile neither to religion nor to Islam. On the contrary, there was an insistence by the prince to show his great appreciation and respect for Islamic practices and sentiments. Prince Abdullah I would recruit many religious and Islamic scholars into his council and court including the Sheikhs Kamel al-Qassab, Mohammad al-Khadr al-Shanqiti, Sa’id al-Karmi, Hussam al-Din al-Jarallah, Mohammad Hashim al-Saqqaf, Mohammad Ali al-Ja’abari, Abdullah Ghosheh, Abd al-Hamid al-Say’eh, Hamza al-‘Arabi, Fu’ad al-Khatib, ‘Aboud al-Najjar, Nadim al-Mallah, and Ibrahim al-Qattan, amongst others.³⁷

The Judiciary: A Separation between the Civil and the Religious Domains

In its nascent period, the state continued using Ottoman legislation, including Ottoman family law. However, over time, legislations influenced by Western laws began to replace the Ottoman laws in force in Jordan. The state’s legislations soon began to take on a civil character, whether those legislations were enacted by parliament or issued by governments in the absence of a parliament. Furthermore, and quite often, a significant share of these laws substantially contradicted and differed from recognized Islamic legislation in force.

However, there was (and remains) a clear intention to avoid provoking any direct “head-on collisions” between the policy of the state and Islamic law (*Sharia*). Efforts were (and are) made to

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Munib Madi and Sulaiman Mousa, “*Tarikh al-Urdun fi al-Qarn al-‘ishrin (1900-1959)*” (Lit., “The History of Jordan in the 20th Century: 1900-1959”), Amman: Maktabat al-Muhtasib, 2nd ed., vol. 1. p. 208.

³⁷ Ibid.

ensure, as much as possible, that such conflicts and contradictions would be limited so that they would not negatively influence or affect the equilibrium created between the civil character of the state and the state's respect for Islam.

On the other hand, there would be a complete separation between religious and civil affairs in the judiciary. The Jordanian judiciary would be marked by a division of the courts into two systems: Courts of Islamic law (*Sharia*) and procedural, civil courts – with personal status coming under the jurisdiction of the Islamic *Sharia* courts.

Article 50 of the Basic Law of Transjordan,³⁸ declared on April 16, 1928, that “the Sharia Courts have exclusive jurisdiction in all matters of personal status of Muslims under the provisions of the resolution and regulations of the Sharia Courts, dated 25/10/1333 AH, and it is an Ottoman law issued in 1914 AD. Unless amended by any law, regulations or temporary legislation, the Sharia Courts alone have jurisdiction over any provisions related to establishing any Muslim *waqf* or interest related to the Sharia Court in the internal administration and regulations of any *waqf*”. Furthermore, “In the application of the provisions of this Basic Law, the Personal Status Law relates to all cases concerning marriage, divorce, family remittance, alimony, guardianship, legitimate paternity, adoption of minors, the disposing of funds and monies related to wills, inheritance or gifts of those under legal guardianship, and in the administration of funds and monies of absentees. Article 51 further stipulates that the Sharia Courts will exercise its jurisdiction according to the provisions of Islamic Sharia.”³⁹

Indeed, the “conservative secular” character of the state is eloquently expressed in the following passage by researcher Ibrahim Gharaibeh, who writes:

“Although the Jordanian state was not religious in the same sense or manner as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which was founded in about that same time period, or in the sense or manner in which the Islamic Republic of Iran was established in 1979, or in the manner in which Pakistan was established on the basis of Islamic nationalism in 1947, Jordan was founded in 1921 upon the religious legitimacy of the Sharif of Mecca, Hussein bin Ali, who led the Great Arab Revolt against the Ottoman Empire during the First World War. And, although Islam was a principle point of reference in the governance, culture and traditions of the state and its founding king, Abdullah bin Hussein, the king chose, with full awareness, a sense of conscious, and advanced planning, to establish a hereditary monarchy and not an Islamic caliphate. He was clearly aware and attentive to the differences between a caliph, a king, and a sultan.

All the directives, statements and pragmatic approaches which accompanied the founding of the Emirate of East Jordan clearly demonstrate that the state philosophy adopted by King Abdullah was that of a modern monarchy, modeled upon European monarchies, inspired by Islam and history as a contextual point of reference and framework. In a letter he sent to the

³⁸ On 20 February 1928, the Jordanian–British Treaty was concluded, and Article 2 of the treaty set down a 'basic law' for the emirate of Transjordan, creating state institutions and defining their prerogatives. This law was published in the *Official Gazette* on 16 April 1928, giving Emir Abdullah and his descendants' executive power (article 16). [Reference: “Building Democracy in Jordan: Women's Political Participation, Political Party Life and Democratic Elections”, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) and the Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND), 2005; page, 109; http://www.idea.int/publications/dem_jordan/upload/Jordan_country_report_English.pdf] [Translator's note].

³⁹ Ali al-Mahaftha, “*Al-Fikr al-Siyasi fi al-Urdun*” (Lit., “Political Thought in Jordan”), documents and texts 1916-1946; Amman: Jordanian Book Center, 1992; 2nd ed., vol. 2.

guardian of the throne of Iraq, Emir Abd al-Ilah bin Ali, in 1943, the king expresses his conviction that it was the duty of Baghdad and Amman to encourage al-Nahhas Pasha, on behalf of the conference, to ask the government of Saudi Arabia to seek a constitutional administration and an accountable government in Hijaz, founded upon this basis.

However, religion would play a major and important role in the evolution of the Jordanian state. The state and successive kings had religious policies and stances, the evidence of which are seen in the personal conduct of and positions taken by kings, in the Jordanian constitution, in Jordanian law, in the state's regulations and procedures, in its legislation, its educational curricula, its official and semi-official media, in state policies, ministries and the army, in the official and public sector, and in specific religious institutions such as the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, the Office of the Chief Islamic Justice, and the Religious *Iftaa'* Section (charged with issuing *fatwas* or religious edicts) of the Jordanian Armed Forces.⁴⁰

Emir (later King) Abdullah I indeed paid heed to religious matters. However, the bulk of this attention was directed towards matters of religion related to public conduct, customs and traditions. For example, in a directive he sent to one of his prime ministers, he insisted that public authority figures commit to and perform their religious duties, such as daily, Friday and Eid prayers. In the directive, he also asked that no public figure neglect the obligation of fasting in Ramadan; and, that authorities in rural areas, mayors and heads of tribes should perform these duties, as well. He asked that senior officials pay attention to these instructions, and that they refrain from consuming alcohol and from gambling. With regard to the subject of alcohol, the directive also recommended that the government consider reducing the import of alcohol, after "its excessive consumption had spread and even penetrated the tents of Bedouins".⁴¹

In another directive sent to Prime Minister Tawfiq Abu al-Huda, Emir Abdullah focused on the proper attire of women in public life and of female students in schools. In another decree, he stressed the need for women to adhere to the appropriate cover, or "*mila'a* (a recognized sheet-like cover which is considered appropriate attire for a Muslim female when outside her home) and also cautioned that the headdress men wore in public should also be consistent with "the recognized and proper virtues the nation had inherited".⁴²

No penalties were included in any of these decrees and directives. Therefore, they remained merely advisory. Furthermore, no official laws were issued in the *Official Gazette* with regard to these issues. Indeed, the 1940s were a decade that witnessed a general departure from such traditions, and a mass "unveiling" made its way to Amman because the state actually relaxed its enforcement of such directives. Also, none of these directives were backed by Islamic rulings or edicts (*fatwa*), which also required women to wear the veil, or defined what the restrictions of veiling entailed, such rulings were not defined in school curricula either. And, the understanding that many women held, at that time, with regard to what was "proper attire" was more related to customs and tradition than what was perceived as "righteous or sinful". All this points to the fact that the religious concerns and beliefs held by King Abdullah I were of a more personal nature; and, citizens were not duty bound to adhere to his personal view and opinion on such matters.

⁴⁰ Ibrahim Gharaibeh, "*Qira'a fi al-'laqa bayn al-Din wa al-Dawlah...*" (Lit., "A Reading into the Relationship between Religion and State...") op. cit., pp. 14-15).

⁴¹ Tayseer Dhibyan, "*Al Malik Abdullah Kama 'Arafuhou*" (Lit., "King Abdullah as I knew Him"); Amman: Al-Maktabah al-Arabiyyah, 1967, p. 57.

⁴² Ibid, p. 66.

In many cases, state officials actually disregarded religious provisions if they were perceived as conflicting with state policies, or if the officials were subjected to some type of pressures, Sheikh Sa'īd al-Karmi is a case in point. He left his post of Chief Islamic Justice in 1925 over a disagreement on the legality of selling off certain religious endowments (the *waqf* associated with the shrine of Abu 'Ubaydah, a Companion of the Prophet (PBUH) in the Jordan Valley). Sheikh Karmi and Prime Minister Ali al-Rukabi both were of the position that the lands in the Jordan Valley endowed to the shrine of the companion Abu 'Ubaydah should not be released (from their *waqf* status) while British Mandate authorities insisted on the reverse and considered these lands as part of the emirate's national treasury. When Sheikh al-Karmi found no one amongst senior officials to heed his calls on this controversial matter, he resigned.

The “conservative secular” character of the state was further reinforced in the 47-year reign of King Hussein bin Talal (1953-1999). It was during the reign of this king that the principal milestones for building the state and its institutions and for securing the stability of the nation took place.

However, the requirements of nation-building, social development, and the needs for the rise of diverse intellectual, political and secular thinking inside society led to a situation where a kind of “co-habitation” took place. A parallel existence emerged between various manifestations of Westernization and of Islamization inside Jordanian society. But, in Jordan, there would be no sharp clashes between these manifestations like in other Arab countries and societies.

With that and from the outset of the late King Hussein's reign, on a political level the Jordanian state clearly sided with conservative currents against the more extreme secular movements. A kind of “political deal” was made with the Muslim Brotherhood⁴³ in an effort to fortify the state's legitimacy in the face of the more secular and leftist discourse that tried to undermine the regime and accused it of being subservient to the West.

The serious conflict between the state and the secular-leftist currents – from the early 1950s and throughout the 1960s and 1970s – drove the regime to open channels for a religious discourse that would help confront and oppose the spread of the leftist and Arab Nationalist (and Pan-Arabist) movements. This approach would reflect on the relationship that later developed between the state and the Islamist movements, and paved the way for these movements to spread their influence through society's social, religious and cultural pulpits. This Islamist influence would find its way to sovereign institutions as well. For example, an *Iftaa'* religious advisory department was established in the Jordanian Armed Forces, which focuses on religious issues, matters of religious jurisprudence

⁴³ For more in depth analyses on the relationship between the Jordanian state and the Muslim Brotherhood, see Mohammad Abu Rumman's “The Muslim Brotherhood in the Jordanian Parliamentary Elections 2007” and “Jordanian Policy and the Hamas Challenge: Exploring Gray Areas and Bridging the Gap in Mutual Interests”, and other volumes of the Political Islam series published by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Amman Office; 2007-2011. Also see chapters two and three of this study. [Translator's note].

and the spread of the *da'wa*⁴⁴ inside the army and the state's security apparatuses, and plays a significant role in providing religious guidance and education inside these institutions.

Despite this clear respect for religious practice and sentiment, the state policies in Jordan have taken an obvious margin of distance from the discourse of Islamist groups and their ideologies, and made sure that policy is not influenced or interfered with by religious considerations when it comes to defining the state's political interests as determined by the state's decision-making power house.

For example, despite the overwhelming opposition of religious currents, and particularly Islamist movements, to the Jordanian-Israeli peace accord and despite the objections these currents and movements waged against the regime in their protests, demonstrations and religious *fatwas* (which religiously prohibited such a peace treaty), the regime insisted on ratifying the peace treaty. Furthermore, the state did this without insisting on using *fatwas* by official religious institutions to confront the position held by Islamist groups and movements. In fact, it took an official position that it would not, by any means, engage or become involved in any of the religious debates or debates in religious jurisprudence over the legality of the peace process and its treaty.

On the other hand, all the state's ministries and public institutions issue directives and follow procedures that emphasize the need to respect religious sentiment, and that no offense or disregard for such religious considerations should come forth from these institutions. For example, in the holy month of Ramadan, nightclubs and bars are closed and the sale of alcohol and alcoholic beverages is prohibited during the day.

⁴⁴ *Da'wa* means "invitation" or "call to Islam." It is often translated to mean "Islamic mission" although, both in theory and in practice, *da'wa* is different in its aims and methods from, for example, the contemporary Christian comprehension of a religious mission. Many Islamic thinkers strongly emphasize this difference. (See notation in original text referenced here). Especially for those thinkers that adhere to the broad-based Salafist ideology typical of the Muslim Brotherhood and related revivalist groups, *da'wa* is not simply a method for spreading a spiritual teaching or performing charitable works; it is also an inherently political activity, whose principal aim is Islamic reform and revival leading to the eventual establishment of an Islamic state. *Da'wa* is prescribed in the Qur'an as an obligation for all Muslims. Some Qur'anic verses describe *da'wa* as a form of religious proselytization. For instance, *Surat an-Nahl*, verse 125 enjoins Muslims to, "Invite (all) to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them [non-Muslims] in ways that are best.." Other verses concerning the notion of *da'wa*, frequently cited by religious scholars, emphasize *da'wa*'s role in preserving and strengthening the socio-moral character of the Muslim community and its general adherence to *Sharia* law (Islamic law). *Surat al-Imran*, verses 104 and 110, speak of the Muslim communal duty (*fard kifayya*) to call the whole of mankind to Islam, and to enjoin right and forbid wrong. In addition to these verses, many Islamic thinkers also derive the obligation to engage in *da'wa* from *Surat al-Baqara*, verse 143: "Thus, We have made of you an Ummah justly balanced, that ye might be witnesses over the nations and the Messenger a witness over yourselves." According to a common interpretation, this Sura indicates that witnessing for and propagating Islam is the primary reason why the original Muslim *Ummah* (the community of all Muslims) was created. Insofar as this positive duty to spread and implement Islam through *da'wa* has also been understood by Muslims as an obligation to enlarge the *Ummah* – or what modern revivalists call the "Muslim Nation" – *da'wa* is also an inherently political activity for Salafists. This is because the latter define Islam as a comprehensive system, regulating not only the private sphere and the relations between a believer and God, but also the public sphere and politics. [Reference: "*Da'wa and the Islamist Revival in the West*", by Nina Wiedl, published on December 14, 2009 in the article: "*Current Trends in Islamist Ideology*"; Vol. 9; The Center on Islam, Democracy, and the Future of the Muslim World; available at http://www.currenttrends.org/printVersion/print_pub.asp?pubID=116] [Translators note].

Religious Neutrality and Political Utilitarianism

Institutions of the state take a position of “neutrality” when it comes to religion. They do not seek to impose any form of religious manifestations on society. And yet, they do not openly promote any manifestations of Westernization. Furthermore, political crises, internal or regional struggles throughout the previous decades have not reflected upon or influenced this firmly established state policy.

The state’s “religious neutrality” has also been reflected in its overall management of religious policy. The state does not seek to advocate or promote one particular religious faith or sect, and does not adopt any clear positions, either politically or culturally, with regard to any of the prevailing internal Islamic tendencies – which, sometimes, reached the point of a serious struggle and confrontations, particularly between the traditional Sufi current that once dominated society, and Salafist currents, whose presence have significantly increased since the 1980s.

However, this firm policy of neutrality exists only in the “religious domain”. Otherwise, the general rule governing the state’s policy in the political domain and with regard to security is quite clear. The state will employ, exploit or contain religious, Islamic and other such currents according to the needs of the political moment or according to immediate or prevailing security considerations and circumstances.

The relationship that has evolved between the state and Islamist groups and other religious orientations (Sufi, Salafist, Traditional, etc...) has always been characterized by neutrality and non-interference when it comes to theological or religious differences or conflicts of religious jurisprudence – as long as these conflicts and differences do not affect, influence or reflect upon political or security policy and considerations. In these matters, the state does not adopt any particular theological, jurisprudential, or religious position.

This general policy does not negate the fact that certain particulars and varied nuances do exist in this religious domain. For, despite the fact that the state does not adopt any specific “official” religious jurisprudence or orientation with regard to its religious policy, this does not prevent the emergence of certain currents within or on the margins of the state’s public institutions, which do advocate a certain religious leaning. Historically, the overwhelming “official” tendency within religious institutions in Jordan has leaned towards the Hanafiyya⁴⁵ *madhhab* (school of law in *fiqh* or

⁴⁵ The Hanafiyya (Hanafi) school is the first of the four Sunni schools of law or Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*). The Hanafi school of law was founded by Nu'man Abu Hanifah (d.767) in Kufa in Iraq. The privileged position which the school enjoyed under the 'Abbasid caliphate was lost with the decline of the 'Abbasid caliphate. However, the rise of the Ottoman Empire led to the revival of Hanafi fortunes. Under the Ottomans, judgment-seats were occupied by Hanafites sent from Istanbul, even in countries where the population followed another *madhhab*. Consequently, the Hanafi *madhhab* became the only authoritative code of law in the public life and official administration of justice in all the provinces of the Ottoman Empire. Even today, the Hanafi code prevails in the former Ottoman countries, such as Jordan. It is also dominant in Central Asia and India.

[Reference:<http://philtar.ucsm.ac.uk/encyclopedia/islam/sunni/hanb.html>] [Translators note]

Islamic jurisprudence within Sunni Islam), previously, and later towards the Shafi'iyya⁴⁶ *madhab*. Meanwhile, Ash'ariyya⁴⁷ theology and the Sufi inclination that emerges within this school of theology, has become embedded in the Religious Advisory Department of the Jordanian Armed Forces and even in the educational curricula of schools and universities.

However, Salafism, which emerged in Jordan in the 1980s, began to expand progressively in presence and influence, and increasingly attracted followers and supporters. The evolution of Salafism in Jordan was significantly influenced by Jordan's geographical proximity to Saudi Arabia, and by Saudi Arabia's consistent efforts to spread this discourse throughout the Arab world. And, many of those working and studying in the Gulf would be influenced by these efforts.

The rise and spread of Salafism in Jordan created a serious rift with the Traditional Sufi current; and, this struggle would manifest itself in the competition that emerged between these two currents inside the state's official religious institutions. The two currents also struggled over power and influence inside Jordanian mosques, where each worked to spread its particular views and ideas. Despite the fact that the Traditional Sufi current has been historically embraced by official institutions, it became clear that the state would not interfere in such religious contests. It maintained a strict, uncompromising policy of neutrality when it came to these religious differences and conflicts over religious jurisprudence, and subsequently kept to the sidelines rather than championing one side over the other.

At a later stage, in the mid-1990s and through the al-Khoei Foundation in London, Prince Hassan bin Talal of Jordan took an initiative to open up to the Shiite sect on an international level. Prior to that, the Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought was established within the context that Jordan should be presented as a model of centrism, dialogue and openness. And, the Aal al-Bayt University followed, also founded upon the principles of centrism, moderation, and tolerance and in an effort to create a Jordanian message of religiosity that was open to all religions and sects.

However, these initiatives would not last long and this spirit did not become entrenched domestically. There was a clear and official refusal to admit that Shiism had a presence in Jordan, despite the claim by certain Jordanian Shiites that thousands of Jordanian families had adopted

⁴⁶ Shafi'iyyah is the third school of Islamic jurisprudence. According to the Shafi'i school the paramount sources of legal authority are the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Of less authority are the *Ijma'* (consensus) of the community and thought and religious reasoning of scholars (*Ijtihad*) exercised through *qiyas* (analogy). The Shafi'iyyah school of Islamic law was named after Muhammad ibn Idris al-Shafi'i (767-819). He belonged originally to the school of Medina and was also a pupil of Malik ibn Anas (d.795), the founder of the Malikiyyah school of thought. However, he came to believe in the overriding authority of the traditions from the Prophet and identified them with the Sunnah. Baghdad and Cairo were the chief centers of the Shafi'iyyah, and from there, its teachings spread into various parts of the Islamic world. It was only under the Ottoman sultans at the beginning of the sixteenth century that the Shafi'i *madhab* were replaced by the Hanafi *madhab*. [Reference: <http://philtar.ucsm.ac.uk/encyclopedia/islam/sunni/shaf.html>] [Translator's note].

⁴⁷ Ash'ariyya theology represents a reaction against the extreme rationalism of the Mu'tazilah current. The founder of Ash'ariyya, Abu al-Hasan (873-935), was formerly a Mu'tazilite. He wrote a number of important books, which became the foundation of Ash'arite theology such as the *Kitab al-Ibanah* (The Book of Elucidations) and also an extensive work on the views of various Islamic schools and sects called *Maqalat al-Islamiyyin* (Doctrines of the Muslims). Another major figure in the development of Ash'arite theology was the Islamic theologian and jurist al-Ghazzali (1058-1111). Through al-Ghazzali and other prominent theologians - such as Al-Baqillani (d.1013), al-Baghdadi (d.1038), al-Djuwayni (d.1085) and al-Shahrastani (d.1153) - Ash'ariyya spread throughout the Sunni Islamic world. It is now dominant in Iraq, Syria, Egypt and Northwest Africa, and has a strong presence in Central Asia and Anatolia and to a lesser extent in India and Pakistan. [Reference: <http://philtar.ucsm.ac.uk/encyclopedia/islam/sunni/ash.html>] [Translator's note].

Shiism, from decades ago, particularly in cities in the north of the country.⁴⁸ The position against Jordanian Shiites would later extend to establishing a section in the General Intelligence Department to combat the spread of Shiism. This has become visible with the political and strategic differences that began to polarize between Jordan and other Arab countries friendly with the United States on the one hand, and Iran and the so-called “axis of opposition” on the other hand.

The official Jordanian sense of concern with regard to the spread of Shiism in the country took two principle tracks. The first was related to security concerns, particularly after the July War of 2006 in Lebanon, and the outcome of that war, embodied by Hezbollah’s “symbolic victory” (according to the term coined by the former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger). These security concerns intensified with the emergence of what official circles would call “political Shiism”, and the link made between this phenomena and claims that religious, political Iranian-Shiite activities were spreading throughout the Arab region. Exacerbating matters was the rising tensions in Jordanian relations with Iraqi Shiite powers loyal to Iran, particularly during the first years after the occupation of Iraq in 2003.⁴⁹

All these developments reflected on religious policy. Both moral and political support was offered to Islamist groups, as well as to sources in the media that were suspicious of the Shiites and Iran, and of their intentions in the Arab region. In the same vein, several of those Jordanians linked to Shiism were pursued and arrested, while numbers of Iraqi Shiites were deported by state security services on the suspicion that they were spreading Shiism among Jordanians.

The second track of official concern with regard to Shiism, as one senior official explained, was based on the rejection of the principle of religious proselytizing amongst the numerous religions and sects in Jordan, to begin with. Official concerns about proselytizing were linked to fears that such activities could jeopardize internal stability and domestic peace. Thus, and in accordance with this policy, the state also rejects any religious proselytizing by Muslims targeting Christians, and vice versa. Obviously, this policy also reflects the conservative character of the Jordanian model, even when it comes to dealing with different religions, sects, and denominations.⁵⁰

The Amman Bombings: Rethinking Religious Policies

The Hotel Bombings in Amman at the end of 2005, which were executed by several suicide bombers from al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) and killed and wounded dozens of Jordanian citizens, led to a reevaluation of the security strategy being used to confront al-Qaeda and other Islamist organizations that revolved around al-Qaeda’s ideology. The outcome of this reassessment would

⁴⁸ Interview with Oqail Baydoun, a Jordanian Shiite, conducted in Amman on 25 September 2006.

⁴⁹ Refer to the investigative report by Mohammad Abu Rumman “*Al-Tashiyi’ al-Siyasi Thahira Tughathiha Intisarar Hezbollah*” (Lit. “Political Shiism: A Phenomenon Nurtured by Hezbollah’s Victories”) in al-Ghad Jordanian daily newspaper; October 10, 2006.

⁵⁰ See the second part of the investigative report from the previous reference, entitled “*Al-Tashiyi’ al-Siyasi fi al-Urdun: Ab’aduhu al-Siyasiya wa al-Amniya*” (Lit. “Political Shiism in Jordan: Its Political and Security Dimensions”) in al-Ghad Jordanian daily newspaper; October 5, 2006.

be the adoption of the concept of the “preemptive strike” in which members of al-Qaeda would be pursued before they enter Jordan.⁵¹

However, the more important notion that began to circulate amongst official circles was the idea of a “preemptive” cultural strategy of prevention. This cultural strategy would contribute to building an “internal immunity” against the spread of extremism amongst Jordanian youth and would help confront al-Qaeda intellectually and legally, and not just through a purely security-oriented strategy.

In parallel, the state began to work on another front, dealing with extremists and militant Islamist currents active in Jordanian mosques and their religious *fatwas*. A number of laws were passed, such as the prevention of terrorism act, the law of preaching and religious guidance, and the law on public religious rulings and *iftaa'* (the act of issuing a *fatwa* or religious edicts). These laws would affect institutions and policies in a manner that will be discussed later in this study; but it has been presented here to provide a quick perspective on the state’s overall strategy. Indeed, this strategy merged an intellectual and political approach to strengthening the state’s religious (and security) institutions and worked to reduce the sources of strength feeding oppositional and radical Islamists in the mosques and other public pulpits and platforms from which they preached and issued their *fatwas*.

⁵¹ Cf. Rana al-Sabbagh’s “*Bin Laden Ith Uhadid al-Urdun min Jadid?*” (Lit. “Bin Laden Threatens Jordan Once Again?”); published in the al-Arab al-Yawm Jordanian daily newspaper; March 22, 2009.

2. Dealing with the Islamists: The Dominance of Security and Political Approaches

The relationship between the state on the one hand and Islamist groups and movements on the other hand represents one of the major components affecting Jordan's official religious policy. The vast majority of these movements are active in the "religious domain," despite their differing ideologies, schools of thought, and the strategies they advocate for bringing about change. Also, despite the wide range and diversity in religious and political discourses held by these movements, they all conduct the majority of their activities in mosques, and extend to schools, universities and the services sector.

In the matter under study here, responding to certain fundamental and dynamic questions will assist in the examination of the state's policy towards Islamists. These questions include: Has the state sought to build an enlightened Islamic current or have other considerations taken over and weighed into its relationship with the Islamists? Then, with regard to this relationship, does the state consider the religious discourses of these Islamist movements when it forms and draws up its policies, or is it indifferent to these? Also, did the issues of mutual and shared consensus or conflict between the state and these movements contribute to shaping and influencing the prevailing religious culture in society?

To begin with, the state's policy towards Islamist groups and movements is generally subject to purely political and security considerations. This policy is not prejudiced by these groups' religious character or content, or by their particular religious jurisprudence except for in how these may have repercussions on matters of security or lead to social tensions. In general, religious institutions (affiliated with the state) have been careful to avoid provoking any clash with the public popular mood, and are careful not to incite this "mood" by showing support for movements that have adopted controversial or contentious views and opinions.

One political source familiar with this subject says that, largely, the state's policy towards these movements takes into consideration its political interests and its ability to employ these movements in a manner that serves state policy, its vision, and its interests. At the same time, according to this source, there is also a "strategic caution" with regard to these movements, in general, even with those which, for the time being, work within the scope of official policy and with the interests of the state. Because, the source explains, even if these movements differ on a tactical level, all of them strategically agree upon the "dream of establishing an Islamic state". They also all concur on the need to change the very structure of the political system and its institutions and on the need to affect great social transformations. In the final analysis, these "dreams" featured in their continued efforts to "change the political system, the constitution and prevailing political conditions".⁵²

In other words, the "political equation" and security considerations are what govern state policy towards Islamists, whether that policy is expressed in a strategy of containment, utilization, marginalization, exclusion or outright prohibition. In dealing with Islamists, every one of these options has, at one time or another, been used by the state. With the Muslim Brotherhood, the

⁵² Interview with the political source in his office in Amman, September 14, 2010.

relationship with the state evolved in such a manner that the state moved from the strategy of employment and exploitation to the strategy of containment, marginalization and eventually exclusion from the political equation. With the Traditional Salafists, the state maintains a policy of employing or exploiting the movement in serving certain immediate interests of the state. Meanwhile, the official policy towards the Jihadi Salafists is confrontation through strict security measures and controls. In the cases of Jamaa'at al-Da'wa wa al-Tabligh and the Sufis, the state shows a great measure of tolerance and leniency, whereas Hizb ut-Tahrir has been prohibited and is banned by law. At the same time, the state has embraced certain (political) parties such as Hizb al-Wasat (the Islamic Centrist Party) and supports the party's platform, which represents through the "*Al-Muntada al-'Aalami li al-Wasatiya al-Islamiya*" (The Global Forum for Islamic Centrism). Meanwhile, the state's policy towards the Habashis (*al-Ahbash*) differs depending on the prevailing political circumstances, and on whether or not there is consensus about them inside the decision-making circles. And, despite the fact that the state grants Jamaa'at al-Da'wa wa al-Tabligh with plenty of space and freedom, it does so only as long as they maintain their position of non-interference in matters of politics and as long as they preach and maintain this religious-political line. With that, the latter remains under the watchful eye of state security because its large, unstructured, gelatinous organization is easily susceptible to being infiltrated by other Islamist groups.⁵³

With this context in mind, and in the next section, we shall proceed with clarifying the policies of the state towards certain Islamist groups that are active in the social and political domains, while other parties and groups will be excluded from any further examination, as the state's policy towards them is quite simple and clear. An example of the latter would be Hizb ut-Tahrir, which is legally banned, judicially condemned, and is actively pursued by the state's security services. Hence, the state's policy towards this movement does not require further detailing or clarification. The same is true for Jamaa'at al-Da'wa wa al-Tabligh and certain currents of the Traditional Sufi movements, and movements such as the social women's *al-Taba'iyat* movement,⁵⁴ with whom state policies do not directly clash, and with whom the state allows significant latitudes of freedom to conduct their activities, as long as they do not lean towards political activity and engagement, and as long as they or their members do not appear to behave in a manner that is worrisome in terms of security.

⁵³ For more on each of the parties or movements mentioned in this paragraph, see Mohammad Abu Rumman's "Jordanian Salafism: A Strategy for the 'Islamization of Society' and an Obscure Relationship with the State" (2010); "The Muslim Brotherhood in the Jordanian Parliamentary Elections 2007" (2008); and Mohammad Abu Rumman and Hassan Abu Hanieh's "The Jihadi Salafist Movement in Jordan after Zaraqawi: Identity, Leadership Crisis and Obscured Vision"; and Hassan Abu Hanieh's "Women and Politics From the Perspective of Islamic Movements in Jordan" (2008); all studies published by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Amman Office.

⁵⁴ There are variant perspectives by Islamists towards the *Taba'iyat*, who belong to an "Islamist women's group" in Jordan, that is closer to a Sufi group. Their name refers to the founder of this unofficial group, Fadia al-Tabba'. The group holds views similar to the *Qubaisiyat* women's movement in Syria, and they hold various educational activities and religious circles. They do not interfere in political affairs, and some observers view that this group represents a Muslim bourgeoisie women's movement, meaning that most of its members hail from upper-middle and upper economic classes of society. See the position towards *Taba'iyat*: Izzat Sultan, *Taba'iyat al-Urdun* (Jordan's *Taba'iyat*), in *Al-Sijil* journal 2/14/2008. Also see: Maher Abu Tayr "*Fadia al-Tabba' - Siraj Yuzhir*", in Addustour Jordanian daily newspaper, 7/25/2010. Also see on a debate within the Islamist current regarding the *Taba'iyat* on the *Nur al-Haq* network: forum <http://nouralhak.com/bb/viewtopic.php?f=48&t=1474&start=50>

The State and the Muslim Brotherhood: From Utilization to Marginalization

From the time of its establishment, which also coincided with the independence of the Jordanian state, the Organization of the Muslim Brotherhood enjoyed a special relationship with the regime, characterized by a sense of co-existence and mutual utilization. Indeed, from the 1950s to the 1970s, the two sides enjoyed a relationship where both mutually benefited from one another and employed one another, experiencing only certain momentary disturbances.⁵⁵

In the 1950s, the relationship between the state and the Muslim Brotherhood oscillated between cooperation and crisis, as was the case with all the other political parties that existed at that time. However, the relationship witnessed a greater degree of stability and co-existence after 1958, with the dissolution of other political parties and with the emergence of Baathist and Arab Nationalist parties in the Arab region that bore a negative opinion and stance against both the Jordanian regime and the Brotherhood.

These regional developments had an impact on the Jordanian domestic formulation. Leftist parties and forces were active to a large degree and enjoyed a large popular presence, domestically, and, had strong links with neighboring Arab regimes. Consequently, the Jordanian regime found a political, popular, and dynamic ally in the Muslim Brotherhood, which it could employ to discredit these parties and forces, and which it could use to turn public opinion against them, as they were considered “anti-Islamic” in the discourse of the Brotherhood. The state would also find it useful to employ the “Brotherhood” in the street to bolster its political stability against attempts to undermine it.

Meanwhile, the Muslim Brotherhood found safe haven in the Jordanian regime at a time when they were otherwise engaged in bloody, political, and existential battles in Syria and Iraq, and with the Nasserite regime in Egypt. Executions, arrests, and campaigns to liquidate the leading cadres of the Brotherhood organization in these countries were occurring at the same time that their intellectual and political project clashed with secular politics.

The relationship between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Jordanian state would further evolve with the outbreak of the clashes that took place in September 1970 between the Jordanian army and leftist Palestinian organizations. The Brotherhood in Jordan took a neutral stand during this military struggle, yet symbolically and politically supporting the regime.

As a political reward, the regime would grant the Brotherhood a wide margin of space to conduct their work and activities, and to expand, particularly within Jordanian communities (especially those of Palestinian origin) and “fill the gap” left by leftist organizations. Indeed, this is exactly what would take place later. The Muslim Brotherhood’s power grew, and, it would build its capacities of recruitment and mobilization from within an expansive network of social, charitable, economic and services institutions that all contributed to building the organization’s popular base, which, over time, would transform the Brotherhood into the largest political organization in Jordan.

⁵⁵ For the path of the relationship between the state and the Muslim Brotherhood, see chapter 2 of this book.

During that period (the 1960s, the 1970s and in the first half of the 1980s) the regime granted the Muslim Brotherhood a wide latitude of freedom in which to conduct its activities in mosques, through volunteer activities (the Red Crescent, for example), in schools, in community colleges and in religious and cultural charities and associations. The Brotherhood invested well in this “open” opportunity and worked hard to exploit this space to disseminate its religious and intellectual discourse to the Jordanian populace.

During that time, members of the Brotherhood were also not prevented from working in various domains in the public sector, particularly in education (schools, colleges and universities) and in the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs. All this opened doors before the Brotherhood to recruit, expand, and influence. They were able to leave their mark on school and university curricula, particularly with regard to textbooks and curricula related to Islamic education, which would become a vital source for building a certain religious culture in newer generations.

Signs of a shift in the state’s policy towards the Muslim Brotherhood began to appear on the political horizon in the middle of the 1980s; and it became increasingly clear in the 1990s, after the parliamentary elections in 1989. These elections revealed the immense political strength the Brotherhood had garnered amongst the Jordanian masses, and exposed the weakness and the regression of leftist, Arab Nationalist, and secular parties that had once represented a “common enemy” of both the state and the Muslim Brotherhood.

The official reversal in the relationship with the Brotherhood began in the 1990s. The state began to employ a policy that aimed to weaken and scale down the power and size of the Brotherhood. It worked to reduce the Brotherhood’s influence in parliament, in universities and in mosques, and to restructure the organization’s political power, as well as “pull the social rug out from under the feet” of the Muslim Brotherhood by striking at the organization’s social and charitable services infrastructure.

This policy of containment and marginalization transported the relationship between the two sides to the edge of a political abyss and crisis. But, the inheritance of a historical tradition of “co-existence” remained strong enough to be able to “release” some of the pressure points in the more serious crises the relationship faced, and helped preserve certain channels of contact and communication.

With the reign of King Abdullah II, the relationship took on the logic of a series of successive crises and whatever political channels remained between the two sides began to disappear. The portfolio of the Muslim Brotherhood was turned over completely to the state’s security services, moving the relationship into a much more tense and obstructed phase. The previous rules of political agreement and understanding, which once governed the political game between the two sides, began to wither away as the official view of the Brotherhood became increasingly wary about what it perceived to be the growing influence of the Hamas Movement within the Muslim Brotherhood.

In 2007, the growing tensions and the depth of the crisis of confidence between the two sides was reflected in the state’s blatant interference in the municipal and parliamentary elections against the Muslim Brotherhood. The outcome of the elections would strengthen the discourse of hard-liners within the Brotherhood. The organization’s *Shura* Council was disbanded, the presence of

moderates was significantly reduced, and the current within the organization, which was frustrated with trying to find a common ground with the state, began to grow. Indeed, it was this current that stood behind the decision to boycott elections in 2010.

Dealing with the Salafists: The Traditionalists and the Radicals

The Salafists began to emerge clearly within the Jordanian social and political scene in the 1980s after Sheikh Nasseruddin al-Albani, one of the most important and leading figures in the Salafist *da'wa*, decided to settle permanently in Jordan. A small circle of students influenced by Sheikh al-Albani began to coalesce; and, this circle began to increase in size and expand until it reached a point of significant influence on society.

In the 1990s, the still waters of Salafism began to stir and a new form of Salafism rose to the surface. This new form of Salafism was opposed to the followers of Sheikh Nasseruddin al-Albani and combined the doctrines and ideas of Salafism with Jihadi inclinations. These new Salafists began to compete with the Traditionalists over which current was actually the “legitimate representative of the Salafist *da'wa*”. The new movement took on an extreme character, galvanizing its members in a call of *takfir* (declaring as unbelieving and infidel) of the regime and calling for radical change. Two leaders would emerge from within this movement and, over time, they would become two of the most prominent names in the “Global Jihadi” movement that was close to al-Qaeda; they were Abu Mohammad al-Maqisi and Abu Mus‘ab al-Zarqawi.⁵⁶

The state’s policy towards the Traditional Salafists was marked by tacit support. The state allowed the Traditionalists wide margins of space within which they could use their power and influence in the country’s mosques and other advocacy platforms, where they were free to preach and conduct their *da'wa*. On the other hand, the state’s relationship with the Jihadi Salafists was confrontational, with the state adopting strict and stern security and legal measures to confront this current.

In contrast to the relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood, the state’s relationship with the Salafists has been quite consistent in either case: It supports and utilizes the Traditionalists on the one hand, and is actively confrontational with the Jihadis, on the other. This strategy takes security and political interests into account, without showing any real regard for the religious discourse of either movement. In fact, to a great extent, the discourses of both movements are grounded in the same doctrine and religious jurisprudence. They are similar in the manner in which they deal with issues of women, morality, the arts, and many other issues. The fundamental difference between these two Salafist trends appears to be in the stand each takes with regard to the government and in the methodology they advocate for affecting change.

Dealing with the Habashis: A Vague, Ambiguous Relationship

The clarity that marked the state’s relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafists, no matter how different the contexts were, would not be the same when it came to the state’s position

⁵⁶ Jihadi Salafism in Jordan is further discussed in Chapter 6 of this book.

with regard to *Jamaa'at al-Ahbash* (the Habashis). Indeed, the state's relationship with the Habashis would remain quite vague and ambiguous.

The term "Habashis" has been used to describe groups and clusters of individuals who have a presence in numerous Arab and Muslim states as well as Arab communities in the West. The Habashis follow a Sheikh (Abdullah al-Habashi), who hails from Ethiopia (or *Habasha* in Arabic). His followers believe he is one of the most important figures of the world's Islamic scholars. Sheikh Abdullah al-Habashi, who died recently in Beirut; and his followers are declared followers of the al-Ash'ari Shafi'iya school of jurisprudence and claim they are Sufis.

A great debate prevails about the views and the religious postures held by the Habashis. What is known about them is that they reject as blasphemous the opinions of renowned Sunni religious scholars, such as Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya and later Sayyid Qutb.⁵⁷ They also discredit numerous other well-known Islamic scholars and theologians. Thus, they obviously have a hostile relationship with the Salafists, and clashes between the Habashies and Salafists have even reached the point of exchanged assassinations in more than one Arab country.⁵⁸

The fatwas, which can be genuinely attributed to the Habashis in religious matters, are controversial and unclear. There are fatwas that the adversaries of the Habashis attribute to them that the Habashis themselves deny. However, what is even more ambiguous is the close, hidden relationship they have with certain governments in more than one Arab country, despite the differences in policies and postures held by these states.

In Lebanon, one of the leaders of the Habashis, officially known as the Association of Islamic Charitable Projects (AICP) or Jam'iyyat al-Mashari' al-Khayriya al-Islamiya was even accused of having been involved in the assassination of the late Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri. At the same time, the Habashis have been involved in armed clashes with members of the Shiite Hezbollah in Lebanon.⁵⁹

What is of concern here is the nature of the official policy in Jordan towards this particular group. A few years ago, there was official support for this group. They enjoyed the freedom to conduct their activities and to work in mosques, and were allowed to establish charitable organizations, schools and Islamic choirs. Finally, they penetrated and were active within (public) religious institutions with impunity. Indeed, the overall impression (and in actuality, this impression is more powerful than the reality) is that this group is "immune" from being criticized politically or by the media;

⁵⁷ For more on these scholars, see Mohammad Abu Rumman and Hassan Abu Hanieh's "Jordanian Salafism: A Strategy for the 'Islamization of Society' and an Obscure Relationship with the State" (2010); Mohammad Abu Rumman and Hassan Abu Hanieh's "The Jihadi Salafist Movement in Jordan after Zaraqawi: Identity, Leadership Crisis and Obscured Vision", published by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Amman Office.

⁵⁸ For more on the debate over the Habashis, see Al-Azhar's *fatwa* regarding the *Ahbash* which can be found in Arabic available at <http://www.ikhwan.net/forum/showthread.php?22917-%DD%CA%E6%EC-%C7%E1%C3%D2%E5%D1-%DD%ED-%CC%E3%C7%DA%C9-%C7%E1%C3%CD%C8%C7%D4>. Also see, *Al-Islam: Su'al wa Jawab* on <http://www.islamqa.com/ar/ref/8571>

⁵⁹ On the clashes with Hezbollah in Lebanon, see BBC's Arabic site at http://www.bbc.co.uk/arabic/middleeast/2010/08/100824_lebanon_clashes.shtml. On accusations of being involved in Hariri's assassination, see "*Mann Hum al-Ahbash*" (Lit., "Who are the Habashis?") at http://www.syria-news.com/readnews.php?sy_seq=13275

and, that they influence and enjoy the favor of powerful political figures in the state and in society.⁶⁰

But, in the last few years, the state's support for this group has waned and there has been a shift in the way they are now perceived by official circles. Much of this shift can be attributed to the close relationship that exists between Jordan and Saudi Arabia, which strictly follows a Wahhabi⁶¹ doctrine and which views the Habashis as representing the opposite side of the religious spectrum (from Wahhabism).

Observers go as far as claiming that the official policy towards the Habashis has fundamentally changed since the assassination of Rafiq al-Hariri, in 2005 – and with the accusations that the Habashis were conspiring with the Syrians against the late Lebanese prime minister. These accusations have increased official concerns about this group and suspicions about their ambiguous political course, especially when it comes to their alleged relationship with the Syrians.

It seems clear that the “pampering” the Habashis enjoyed earlier was based on political considerations and security concerns. The policy towards the Habashis, at that time, was part of the overall strategy the state used to undermine and scale down the size and influence of the Muslim Brotherhood. The Habashis were part of this policy that supported other “Islamist options” in society, and granted these groups open platforms and opportunities to influence and to preach, and to increase their social impact after excluding the Brotherhood from such domains. Indeed, the Habashis did not hesitate to oblige and to provide such services. Both their political and intellectual discourses were adverse to the Brotherhood, in any case; and, they worked to discredit the Brotherhood in mosques and schools, and through their charitable and da'wa activities.

The Islamic Centrist Party: General Agreement, and Disagreement over Details

In the same context of supporting Islamist groups and movements, which benefit the state's agenda, and which help weaken the Islamist opposition, the relationship between the state and Hizb al-Wasat al-Islami was one marked by official political and moral support.

Hizb al-Wasat al-Islami is a political party comprised of a group of young Islamists who, in the most part, came from the womb of the Muslim Brotherhood, and who were affiliated with the so-

⁶⁰ Refer to Mohammad Sulaiman, “*Al-Ahbash fil Urdun: Al-Sira al-Siyasiyya wal Dalalat*”, (Lit. “The Habashis in Jordan: Their Political Course and Implications”), al-'Asr online magazine, 2/26/2002, which is available at <http://www.alasr.ws/index.cfm?method=home.con&contentID=2563>

⁶¹ Wahhabism has the goal of calling (*da'wa*) people to restore the “real” meaning of *tawhid* (oneness of God or monotheism) and to disregard and deconstruct ‘traditional’ disciplines and practices that evolved in Islamic history such as theology and jurisprudence and the traditions of visiting tombs and shrines of venerated individuals. Such disciplines and practices are classified as *shirk* (polytheism), *kufir* (unbelief in God), *rida* (apostasy), and *bida'a* (innovations). Its founder Mohammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703-1792) urged his followers to adhere to a very strict and literal interpretation of “*Tawhid*” (monotheism) and to fight *shirk*. His followers, who called themselves *al-Muwahhidin* (the monotheists), are labeled by others as Wahhabis. While *Tawhid* is the core concept of Islam, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab argues that the recognition of a unique creator without a partner is insufficient for correct belief and must be joined with ‘pure’ Islamic behavior. Following in the footsteps of Ibn Taymiyya [...] Refer to Mohammad Abu Rumman’s “Jordanian Salafism: A Strategy for the ‘Islamization of Society’ and an Obscure Relationship with the State” (2010), “The Muslim Brotherhood in the Jordanian Parliamentary Elections 2007” (2008); and Mohammad Abu Rumman and Hassan Abu Hanieh’s “The Jihadi Salafist Movement in Jordan after Zarqawi: Identity, Leadership Crisis and Obscured Vision.” All these studies are published by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Amman Office. [Translator’s note].

called “doves” inside the Brotherhood. In 2001, this group joined with other independent Islamists to set up a new political Islamist party, which differed from the Brotherhood in its close relationship with the state. In contrast to the decision made by the Brotherhood to boycott the parliamentary elections of 1997, this new party believed in total political participation.⁶²

The state’s policy towards Hizb al-Wasat has been characterized by complete support. Indeed, it tried to help the party stand on its own two feet in the local political scene. But, despite this official support and assistance, the party has not been able to garner enough popular support or attract a parallel popular base wide enough to compete with the Muslim Brotherhood.

With that, Hizb al-Wasat has been able to offer an Islamist discourse that is more pragmatic on a political level than the Brotherhood. And although it has adopted a more conciliatory tone with regard to official policies, the party has tried to maintain a margin of independence in its thinking, which is apparent in certain statements and declarations made by the party that opposed specific official policies.

A Lack of Official Concern about Islamists’ Religious Discourse

The previous examination of the broad lines, which characterize state approach towards Islamists, highlights one major observation: The state deals with these movements through a security lens and Islamists are seen as inherently being part of a security “portfolio”; and, thus, the state leaves a significant part of the management of this portfolio to the discretion of the state’s security services.

Of course, the fundamental criterion of measure in this security perspective is the extent to which these movements or groups are consistent with or correspond to the interests of the state, and the extent to which they may contribute to its political and social stability. Subsequently, this strategy is not all that concerned with and does not take heed of the content inherent in the religious discourse of these movements, as long as their discourse does not give the state a “security headache,” and as long as their discourse does not entangle the state in any major intellectual, religious, and jurisprudential controversies with matters that relate to public opinion.

This approach is evident in the way the state “left things to chance” in the past when it came to the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordanian mosques, schools, and universities and in their charitable and da’wa work. This approach was maintained only as long as the Brotherhood represented an effective alternative to leftist and Palestinian organizations, which clashed with the state during that period.

That specific period allowed the Muslim Brotherhood to infiltrate wide segments of the population. Through the dissemination of their religious discourse and their intellectual outlook, they were able to gain influence and power over a significant proportion of public opinion. This influence was particularly significant when it came to ideas that were linked with a “comprehensive” Islamic solution and political change; and in their advocacy of a religious dimension in the confrontation

⁶² See Mohammad Sulaiman, a dialogue with Dr. Hayel Abd al-Hafeeth, vice-president of the *Hizb al-Wasat al-Islami*’s politburo, in al-‘Asr online magazine, op. cit.

with Israel, and in the battle they waged against Westernization on the social and cultural front, and in their da'wa and call for the establishment of an Islamic state.

The transformations that took place in the relationship between the state and the Brotherhood led the state to obstruct and bar the platforms, places of influence, and social communication between the Brotherhood and the Jordanian populace. It would instead grant access to these channels to those affiliated with the Traditional Salafist line. And, consequently, Traditional Salafism began to compete effectively with the Brotherhood in their ability to preach and spread their religious discourse in the mosques, through their religious instruction, and through all the other social activities that follow this type of da'wa or line of religious advocacy and work.

The clash between the Brotherhood and the Salafists clearly emerged in the 1980s in Jordanian mosques, but would reach its climax in the 1990s. This conflict basically revolved around the religious and intellectual discourse advocated by the Muslim Brotherhood, which advocated that change must come about through "political struggle", and the discourse advocated by the Traditional Salafists, which opposed "politicizing" religion and advocated obedience to the governing authorities and, instead, focused on matters of religion, religious jurisprudence, and Islamic law in relation to the faith, beliefs, practice, religious opinions and rulings of Islam.

The favoritism the state displays towards the Traditional Salafists and their discourse, these last few years, can be attributed to political and security considerations, even if this particular discourse is more extreme in terms of its content, its fatwas, and its doctrine. Whereas, the discourse of the Muslim Brotherhood is less extreme on matters related to women, to the arts, and to literature, in their social fatwas, in their relationship with the culturally different "other", as well as in their position on plurality, democracy, and other notions that relate to the workings of a modern, civil state.

This examination appears to substantiate that the state's political interests and security issues represent the more important considerations and determinants of official policy when it comes to such matters. And, it is clear that, in previous years, the state has not advocated a policy that pushes for building an enlightened Islamist current, which could re-articulate a popular religious vision that would allow for a socio-religious evolution and development that could be more in harmony with the spirit of the times.

These policies have reflected clearly on the general social mood in the country that, today, is more conservative, religious and closer to Salafism, which has spread and proliferated for both domestic and external reasons – the most important of these being the proximity of Saudi Arabia and the success experience in the spread of the Salafist da'wa, which enjoys much support and access to various channels and tools. Today, this form of religious jurisprudence and this religious vision has come to dominate Jordan's mass, popular social culture.

Furthermore, the existence and presence of opposing and, at times, even conflicting groups, movements and lines of da'wa (Salafist, Brotherhood, Sufis...) reflect the unyielding state policy of maintaining "religious neutrality" and the state's conscious efforts to keep a clear distance from any specific religious ideology or orientation. Certainly, this strategy is what has allowed for the plurality of religious discourse to exist domestically, and has allowed for differences between

various religious schools of thought and jurisprudence to exist. However, this does not negate the fact that the state does practice a political bias towards one side and against another, depending on what the prevailing political and security circumstances are and depending on what serves the interests of official policy and security considerations.

3. A General Mapping of Religious Institutions and Policies

There are several formal religious institutions responsible for implementing the Jordanian state's "religious policy" and for overseeing general religious affairs. Firstly, these institutions reflect the general extent to which public religious affairs are linked to or separated from other state policies. Secondly, from within these institutions, the state's efforts to balance between conservative secularism and other religious considerations are also evident. The influence of security considerations is also quite clear in the administration, procedures, and regulations that govern these institutions. Indeed, it is safe to say that security considerations have come to form a principle criterion in the standards applied in the state's administration of these institutions.

The state's formal religious institutions branch out into various domains. They cover judicial, administrative, and charitable affairs as well as matters related to preaching and religious guidance. This institutional network is connected to various independent charitable associations and organizations, which extend across the public domain and take on tasks related to religious affairs.

In this study, we will focus on the three most prominent "official" religious institutions. These are the Department of the Chief Islamic Justice, the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, and other official religious advisory (*iftaa'*) departments, with references made to other institutions such as the Awqaf Development Fund for the Care of Orphans and the *Zakat* (almsgiving) Fund.

The Chief Islamic Justice Department and the *Sharia* Courts

The *Sharia* judicial system is one of the most important religious institutions of a legal nature in the country. This system of courts falls under the jurisdiction and authority of the Department of the Chief Islamic Justice (CIJD), which oversees the *Sharia* courts and the application of the Personal Status laws and regulations by these courts.

According to Article 105 of the Jordanian constitution, "The *Sharia* Courts shall in accordance with their own laws have exclusive jurisdiction in respect of the following matters: (i) Matters of personal status of Moslems. (ii) Cases concerning blood money (*diyya*) where the two parties are Moslems or where one of the parties is not a Moslem and the two parties consent to the jurisdiction of the *Sharia* Courts. (iii) Matters pertaining to Islamic Awqaf", while Article 106 states, "The *Sharia* Courts shall in the exercise of their jurisdiction apply the provisions of the *Sharia* law".⁶³

These matters are clearly detailed in Article 2 of the Legal Code, Procedures and Regulations followed by the *Sharia* Courts. Article 2 stipulates that the *Sharia* Courts will consider and rule on matters that relate to the administration and the beneficiaries of *awqaf*, legal suits related to *awqaf* and *waqf* disputes, the legality of *awqaf*, debts and investment of funds for orphans, restraints on *awqaf* for legal reasons, guardianship, inheritance, confiscation and release, proof of maturity, appointing or removing a legal guardian or trustee, absentee provisions, marriage and divorce, dowries, family allowances, determining lines of descent and parenthood, custody, determining the

⁶³ From the English translation of the Jordanian Constitution, op. cit., http://www.kinghussein.gov.jo/constitution_jo.html [Translator's note].

shares of inheritance for both legal and transitional heirs, *diyya* (blood money) demands (if both parties are Muslims), the division of estates, and grants and endowments, amongst others.⁶⁴

The country's Chief Islamic Justice administers the Department of the Chief Islamic Justice and has the authority and rank of a minister. The Chief Islamic Justice reports to the Prime Minister and has jurisdiction and authority over all the Sharia courts and its judges. As of 2010, there are nearly 63 Sharia courts in Jordan, with over 185 Sharia justices presiding over these courts. All the cases and issues that fall under the jurisdiction of the Sharia courts are structured under the framework of the Jordanian Personal Status Law, which is drawn up by the Department of the Chief Justice in coordination with *Sharia* scholars and those specialized in Sharia law.⁶⁵

The Chief Islamic Justice Department underwent several stages in its development. During the era of the Emirate of Transjordan, the Islamic judge considered and ruled over all civil and criminal cases and suits. The civil judiciary was then separated from the Sharia judiciary, with the civil judiciary system having its own courts, which fall under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Justice. The Sharia judiciary system was thus confined to considering, deliberating, and ruling on matters of personal status and was assigned its own courts, which fell under the jurisdiction of the Chief Islamic Justice Department (CIJD). The CIJD was also authorized with overseeing the administration of *Awqaf* in the kingdom until the beginning of 1968, when all matters of religious endowments were separated from the jurisdiction of the CIJD and placed under its own Ministry "of Awqaf" (and Islamic Affairs).⁶⁶

The Emirate of East Jordan inherited seven Sharia courts from the Ottoman state, which were located in the Jordanian cities of Amman, Ma'an, Irbid, Karak, al-Salt, Jarash and al-Tafileh. The first *Shura* Council, established during the Emirate period in 1921, included the post of Chief Islamic Justice, with Sheikh Mohammad al-Khadr al-Shanqiti filling this post for the first time. Over the years and until today, fifteen different Chief Islamic Justices have successively filled this post, and the numbers of Sharia courts and Sharia judges have progressively expanded to keep pace with the increase in the Jordanian population.⁶⁷

The Personal Status Law in Jordan is a major bone of contention between Islamist and secular movements and groups. This dispute clearly emerged in the debate that took place in the country and in Jordanian media around the new draft law on personal status, which was prepared by the Chief Islamic Justice Department in 2010 and sent to the government for approval.

Despite the fact that there is a general agreement that this new draft law significantly improved upon the previous Personal Status Law, women's movements and other civil society organizations of a more secular nature pushed for amending certain articles that contradict specific international conventions and resolutions passed at international conferences on women's rights. Perhaps the issue that stirred the greatest controversy and commotion between the Islamists and the secularists

⁶⁴ See the text (in Arabic) of the Legal Code, Procedures, and Regulations followed by *Sharia* courts, available at the official website of Jordanian Legislations available at http://www.lob.gov.jo/ui/laws/search_no.jsp?no=31&year=1959

⁶⁵ See the official website of the Chief Islamic Justice Department available at <http://sjd.gov.jo>

⁶⁶ *ibid.*

⁶⁷ Taken from the draft study on "*Dirasat al-Hala al-Diniya fi al-Urdun*" (Lit., "The Religious Situation in Jordan", currently being conducted by the *al-Wasatiyya* Forum for Islamic Thought and Culture in Amman.

was the marriageable age of women. Although the draft law determines the legal marriageable age of women as no younger than 18 years of age, it allows judges to lower this age limit to 15 years in “exceptional” circumstances.

These “exceptional” circumstances or cases caused a great stir amongst women’s organizations, which demanded that such “exceptions” be defined more clearly, especially as the phenomena of early marriage (for females) has significantly increased in recent years, and especially as the authority of Sharia judges to rule over such cases is loose and extensive, and lacks measures of accountability.

Consequently, Jordanian women’s organizations convened a number of seminars, meetings, and media debates in which they managed to lobby the Chief Islamic Justice to apply further restrictions and stricter conditions for early marriage, in an attempt to curb the rise of this phenomenon in society. In the meantime, and in many other issues, the new draft law contains stipulations that are more favorable to women, such as the woman’s right to divorce in cases of hardship and irreconcilable differences. The new laws also have stipulated significant improvements in matters of custody over children, and have called for the establishment of domestic reform centers, as well as establishing allowance and alimony funds for divorced women, in addition to other provisions that even women’s organizations consider as improving upon the previous personal status laws.⁶⁸

The Personal Status of Christian Citizens

With regard to the provisions, regulations, and procedures related to the personal status of citizens who are not Muslim, according to Article 104 of the Jordanian constitution, the personal status of non-Muslims shall be derived of the practice and laws pertaining to that citizen’s specific religion or sect.⁶⁹

Numerous personal status laws governing Christian citizens of different Christian sects do exist, but they are not published in the *Official Gazette* and are outside the framework of the state’s supervision. In any case, the law on non-Muslim religious communities (number 21 of the year 1938) is one of the oldest laws in force, today; and, this law has not been subject to any substantial changes, other than a nominal amendment passed in 1976. This law defines which churches are officially recognized in Jordan.⁷⁰ Another law, entitled the “Legal Rights Journal,” governs affairs of the Catholic Church.⁷¹

Different non-Muslim religious councils have jurisdiction over the cases of personal status of individuals from their respective sects or religions. This jurisdiction falls outside the framework of the civil courts. These “religious councils” are authorized to deliberate and rule on cases of personal

⁶⁸ See the text of this draft law on the department’s website: http://www.sjd.gov.jo/Personal_status_law.pdf

⁶⁹ See constitutional articles stipulating Legal Code and Procedures for Personal Status of non-Muslims in Jordanian Constitution, English translation available at http://www.kinghussein.gov.jo/constitution_jo.html

⁷⁰ See the text (in Arabic) of Law No. 2 for year 1938 related to Non-Muslim Religious Denominations' Councils, available at the official website of Jordanian Legislations available at <http://www.lob.gov.jo/ui/laws/print.jsp?no=2&year=1938&RequestLevel=1>

⁷¹ See summary of a lecture by Yacoub al-Far, a lawyer, on the need for reconsidering Personal Status of Non-Muslims, in report by Samar Haddadin in al-Rai Jordanian daily newspaper, 7/22/2008. Available at <http://ourhim.files.wordpress.com/2008/07/al-rai-22-7-2008.pdf>

status of persons from their respective sects in the kingdom and include: The Ecclesiastical Court of the Greek Orthodox Church, the Ecclesiastical Court of the Greek Catholic Church, the Ecclesiastical Court of the Latin Patriarchate (Roman Catholic Church), the Ecclesiastical Church of the Armenian Church, the Ecclesiastical Court of the Arab Evangelical Episcopal Church, and the Ecclesiastical Court of the Coptic Orthodox Church. Finally, the Ecclesiastical Court of the Arab Evangelical Episcopal Church has jurisdiction over cases dealing with the personal status of individuals who are of sects that are not included in the 1938 Law of Religious Communities.

In the matter of these provisions, for example, in the case of divorce, the Catholic Church (which includes the “Latin Catholics”) adheres to the spirit of the bible in the matter of marriage, based on the biblical verse that states, “What God joined together, let no man separate” [Book of Mark 10:7-12]⁷²; but, will allow for the annulment of a marriage if it was convened in an incorrect or inappropriate manner. Meanwhile, Orthodox laws allow for divorce, even if a marriage was convened in a correct or proper manner. Meanwhile, the laws of the Arab Evangelical Episcopal Church do not allow for divorce.

In the case of a marriage or divorce between two different sects, jurisdiction automatically goes to the sect under which the marriage contract was convened. Meanwhile, jurisdiction over cases related to an interfaith marriage or divorce falls automatically under the jurisdiction of the civil courts, which will deliberate and rule according to the respective individual’s canonical law.

In other examples, cases dealing with remittances, allowances, and alimony suits are all derived of one general rule, governed by two major principles: The first being an assessment of the man’s ability to provide a remittance, allowance, or alimony, and the other being the cost of living. In the matter of custody over children, the judge has the right to decide with which parent a child will live, based on that child’s interests after the child completes the legal custody age. Meanwhile, litigation fees in such matters in ecclesiastical courts can be quite high and often call for the intervention of certain adjustments to put a ceiling on litigation costs so that they do not impose a burden on the litigants.⁷³

Individuals from Protestant sects, registered as “charitable organizations, societies, or associations”, are obliged to use the ecclesiastical courts of one of the recognized Protestant churches. These individuals are obliged to request one of these recognized courts to deliberate in cases related to their personal status.

In 2007, the National Council for Family Affairs presented a proposal to draft a religious guide for marriages related to Christian sects with registered courts in Jordan. This guide would be the first of its kind after a marriage guide was drafted on the marriage of Muslims that the council issued with the help of the Chief Islamic Justice Department.⁷⁴

⁷² Referenced from “A list of Catholic Scripture verses that defend Catholic doctrines” available at http://www.askacatholic.com/holyquotes/documents/_all_catholic_verses.htm#Marriage

⁷³ See the text (in Arabic) of Law No. 2 for year 1938 related to Non-Muslim Religious Denominations' Councils, available at the official website of Jordanian Legislations available at <http://www.lob.gov.jo/ui/laws/print.jsp?no=2&year=1938&RequestLevel=1>

⁷⁴ See 2007 annual report by the National Council for Family Affairs, available at http://www.ncfa.org.jo/Portals/0/NCFA%20annual%20report_aug27.pdf

And, on January 21, 2009, the Cabinet adopted a resolution that recognized the Council of Church Leaders in Jordan as the sole reference for Christian affairs, and called for regulating the relations between this Council and all other relevant state institutions. The Council of Heads of Churches was established in July of 1999 and includes Greek Orthodox Bishop Benedictus, Greek Catholic Bishop Yasser Ayyash, Roman (Latin) Catholic Bishop Salim al-Sayyegh, and Armenian Orthodox Bishop Vahan Tubulian. Bishop Hanna Nour was appointed as the Secretary General of the Council. Of the most important churches that are not included in this council are the Baptist Church, the Assemblies of God, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), the Coptic Church, and the Maronite Church.⁷⁵

A general directive was issued by the prime minister that stated, “The Council of Church Leaders is the sole reference for all matters related to the religious affairs of Christians in Jordan”. The directive called for all relations between the Council and relevant state institutions to be regulated. The justifications presented for issuing this particular directive was “to reduce any excesses or abuses that may arise due to an absence of a recognized reference for all parties concerned”.

The directive asked that all ministries, official departments, and public institutions to consider the Council of Church Leaders as the only reference with regard to the affairs of Christians in Jordan, and that all procedures should be coordinated with the Secretary General of this Council. The directive also stated that the Council was not responsible for any other Christian institutions in Jordan that are not under the jurisdiction of the council.⁷⁶ Finally, the main purpose of the directive was to create a single reference responsible for organizing matters for the different churches (registered in the council), with whom these churches could coordinate, in the aim of curbing any potential abuses that may arise.

This decision was the result of a request made by different churches that there be one, official umbrella for all the churches in the kingdom, and where relations between these churches and all the different official state institutions could be better organized and coordinated. The request was also made with the aim of reducing the issuance of certain decisions by different parties, not authorized to do so, and which did not represent all Jordanian Christians.⁷⁷

The Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs

According to the act that established the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs in 1970,⁷⁸ the Ministry has jurisdiction over all Islamic *awqaf*, mosques, orphanages, religious schools, religious institutes, and religious colleges in the kingdom funded by the Ministry’s budget, as well as Muslim cemeteries, as well as *awqaf* lands reserved for future burial needs, and *awqaf* lands where burials

⁷⁵ Information on Cabinet endorsement of Council of Church Leaders in Jordan is available at http://www.refworld.org/topic_50ffbce57a2_50ffbce61b_4ae86131c_0..ANNUALREPORT_JOR.html

⁷⁶ See Muhannad Saleh’s report on Council of Church Leaders as unified reference for Christians, available (in Arabic) on Ammon News Jordanian news site, available at <http://www.ammonnews.net/article.aspx?articleNO=33532>

⁷⁷ Refer to: “*Hawl al-Tawa’if al Masihiya*” (Lit., “Regarding Christian Sects”) in the draft study on “The Religious Situation in Jordan,” op. cit.

⁷⁸ See the text of the law on the official website of Jordanian legislations, available (in Arabic) at http://www.lob.gov.jo/ui/laws/all_modified_law.jsp?no=32&year=1970&law_no=26&law_year=1966

are prohibited, and matters related to the Hajj (pilgrimage), and *fatwa* religious-edicicts issuing departments, as well as the mosques that are not funded through the Ministry's budget.

Prior to this act, all matters related to Islamic *awqaf* in Jordan and in Palestine were organized and dealt with according to the *waqf* administration system inherited from the Ottoman state. The Ottoman system stayed in force until it was repealed under Article 10 of the Islamic Waqf Act, after the Kingdom was established. The Islamic Waqf Act (number 25) was drafted in 1946 and presented to the legislative assembly, which passed the law after introducing some amendments, additions and modifications. After establishing the ministry on October 7, 1967, the cabinet decided that the department dealing with *awqaf* and Islamic Affairs would be merged under the new ministry as of October 8, 1967; and, the name of the department would be officially changed into the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs in 1968.

Jordanian laws related to the administration of Islamic *awqaf* would stay in force in both the East and West banks of the Kingdom until after the Israeli occupation of the West Bank. The Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs remained directly responsible for managing and administering matters pertaining to Islamic *awqaf* in the West Bank until the decision to break administrative and legal ties and officially disengage with the West Bank was taken in July 1988.

When the Palestinian Authority came into power and asked that it be the final authority in matters pertaining to Islamic *awqaf* and the Sharia courts (in the West Bank), the Jordanian government proceeded to cut its administrative and legal ties related to such matters in the West Bank. Since that time, Islamic *awqaf* and the Sharia courts in the West Bank are subject to the supervision of the Palestinian Authority, according to laws and regulations that were in force prior to this decision.

There would be one exception to the above. The Jordanian government excluded the *Sharia* courts and Islamic *awqaf* in the city of Jerusalem from the decision to disengage legally and administratively from the West Bank. The justification presented for this exception was that the status of the holy city was to be postponed and determined in final status negotiations. As a result, Jordanian laws pertaining to Islamic *awqaf* remain in force today in the holy city of Jerusalem.⁷⁹

Supervision of Mosques

The Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs is authorized to supervise all the mosques located across the kingdom. In addition, it pays the salaries of imams, muezzins (callers to prayer), and preachers. The ministry also covers the overhead costs of all these mosques, which in 2010, numbered 5,008 with 1,770 still under construction. The capital Amman is home to the largest number of mosques, or 1,337 mosques, followed by Irbid, which has 513 mosques, and al-Zarqa which has 405 mosques.⁸⁰

Indeed, the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs has taken charge and has secured tightened controls over all the mosques in the kingdom, according to the procedures delineated in the

⁷⁹ See the website of the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs to see more on the establishment of the ministry and the history of its development, on the following link (available in Arabic at): <http://awqaf.gov.jo/?id=36>

⁸⁰ See the draft study on "The Religious Situation in Jordan," op. cit.

provisions and regulatory controls over mosques that were last amended in 2001. These regulatory controls stipulate that the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs will supervise the entire process involved in constructing mosques, and in all custodial matters related to mosques, and in forming social committees responsible for raising the funds needed for to cover these mosques' costs.⁸¹

It is obvious that security considerations have a clear presence in these directives and provisions, particularly with regard to the formation of committees and in the stipulations that official approval is required prior to the appointment of any member to these committees, in addition to the provision that funds raised and expenditures made by these committees must be officially audited and monitored. Furthermore, it is well known that approvals for appointed members must pass the state's security services approval, and that the political orientations of committee members are monitored. And, herein lies part of the state's strategy to contain, marginalize, and reduce the influence and activities of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordanian mosques.

With the knowledge that the ministry does not have the capacity to provide all the funding required to construct and care for mosques, it leaves the door open for charitable and fund-raising activities and financial donations for these purposes. However, the ministry will monitor and supervise the entire process and all the procedures entailed in constructing and maintaining mosques, including all their technical and security requirements (which covers how mosques are built or are taken care of, and how preachers and imams employed in mosques are appointed, and their conduct – all of which is subject to the ministry's provisions, directives, regulations and procedures).

Qur'anic Schools and Summer Programs

The Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs also supervises Qur'anic schools that provide instruction in the Qur'an, its teachings and its tenets. There are approximately twelve "model" schools based on the Qur'anic school prototype for both males and for females, as of 2010. Many other Qur'anic schools exist inside mosques, with almost 1,410 of these schools designated for males and 450 designated for females. The number of graduates from these schools since they were first established totals 20,347. Students in Qur'anic schools take classes in memorizing the Qur'an and study its provisions and tenets; and, the majority of these students do not maintain a permanent or specific tie with these Qur'anic schools, which are closer to summer programs or transitory classes that are purely instructional.⁸²

The Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs began to compete with the Association for the Preservation of the Holy Qur'an, closely affiliated to the Muslim Brotherhood. This association was established in 1991 and headed by the late Dr. Ibrahim Zayd al-Kilani, who was a former Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs (as one of the Brotherhood's ministers in the cabinet and government of Prime Minister Mudar Badran in 1991), and who is considered one of the most prominent religious scholars in the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood.

⁸¹ See the text of these directives as listed on the Ministry's website available at http://www.awqaf.gov.jo/pages.php?menu_id=151

⁸² See the draft study on "The Religious Situation in Jordan," op. cit.

The Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs repeatedly demanded that this association obtain a license from it; and, the association interpreted this demand as a tactic being used by the ministry to obstruct their work and keep them in check. The association responded with the fact that it is already licensed with the Ministry of Culture. But, the state is constantly intimating to the Muslim Brotherhood the possibility of taking over the association.

In any case, the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs now requires any organization or group that wants to establish a center for the Holy Qur'an to obtain a permit from the ministry. This directive is based on Article 3 of the law published in the *Official Gazette* on September 1, 2004, which stipulates that, "The Ministry will supervise all mosques and the administration of their affairs, including appointing their speakers, teachers, imams, muezzins and staff and will oversee their administration of religious rites and rituals and any other activity conducted in them." And, Article 33 (a) stipulates that, "No party may establish a School of the Holy Qur'an except through obtaining a permit from the Minister" and (b) "Schools of the Holy Qur'an, which were established prior to the enforcement of these new regulations and procedures, must rectify their status according to these provisions within a period defined by the Minister for these purposes, which includes obtaining a permit to operate."⁸³

To this day, this legal procedure hangs like a sword over the Association for the Preservation of the Holy Qur'an. It seems the future of this association will remain tied to the fate of the relationship between the state and the Muslim Brotherhood; and, whether or not the state will be comfortable with the presence of such an influential organization with branches and centers spread across the kingdom.

The Law on Preaching and Religious Guidance

In September 2006, the debate about amending the new law on preaching and religious guidance was sparked once again. This law was the outcome of the same process and concerns that led to the laws discussed previously. The law related to preaching and religious guidance is represented in Article 7, which stipulates that, "No individual is permitted to conduct a sermon, or instruct, or preach, or provide guidance in a mosque unless that person is qualified to do so, and has obtained written permission from the Minister or from individuals delegated by the Minister to do so. If a preacher violates these provisions, it is for the Minister, per recommendation from the Ministry's Secretary General and the Director of Preaching and Guidance, to prohibit him from conducting sermons, instructing, preaching, or providing guidance in mosques, provided he has been notified in writing of the decision enforcing this prohibition."⁸⁴

The text of the law on the penalties associated with violating this law's provisions states that, "The Minister may lift a ban on a person prohibited from conducting sermons, instructing, preaching or providing religious guidance in a mosque under paragraph (b) of this article if the causes for the ban and prohibition appear to no longer exist. Subject to the provisions of the current legislation in force, anyone who violates the provisions stated in paragraphs (a) and (b) of this article shall be

⁸³ See the text of the legislation at the official website of Jordanian Legislations, available (in Arabic) at http://www.lob.gov.jo/ui/bylaws/search_no.jsp?no=95&year=2004

⁸⁴ Text of the law is available (in Arabic) at the official website of the Ministry of Awqaf at <http://www.awqaf.gov.jo/?id=239>

punished by a jail term ranging from one week to one month, or subject to a fine of a minimum of 20 to a maximum of 100 Jordanian Dinars”.⁸⁵

In reality, this law was designed to target those who conduct sermons or preach, particularly those who are members of the Islamic Action Front, which is closely affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood. Indeed, the government was of the view that the Brotherhood exploited the pulpits of mosques and other public platforms for their political agenda. And, despite the fact that parliament approved, by an absolute majority, the prohibition on speakers in mosques who were not appointed or approved by the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, it rejected the proposition that the ministry have control over (religious) instruction, preaching and guidance. Instead, Jordanian members of parliament left the matter of the “*da’wa*” in mosques open to those capable and qualified to do so. Furthermore, they reduced the penalties on those found speaking from the pulpits of mosques without prior official permission from a jail term of from four months to one year (which the government wanted) to jail terms of from one week to one month.⁸⁶

Furthermore, Jordan’s Lower House of Parliament agreed to the proposed law on the condition that the text of the law separate between conducting Friday sermons and between (religious) instruction and guidance. The members of parliament agreed that those who conducted a Friday sermon without prior permission would be punished by law, while such penalties would not be applied to those who preached or provided religious guidance and instruction (without prior authorization). However, the Jordanian Senate, the Upper House of Parliament, would override the decision made by members of the Lower House on certain parts of this law, and once again merged Friday sermons with instruction, preaching, and religious guidance so that they would all be included in the text of the law.

In terms of building capacities and training imams and preachers in preaching and in religious guidance, directives and instructions related to such matters were amended and put into force. Also, The King Abdullah Institute for the Training and Rehabilitation of Preachers and Imams was established to oversee the training of preachers and imams.⁸⁷

Although the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs does not predetermine the subjects or content of the Friday sermons given by imams and speakers of mosques, yet there are occasions in which the ministry will provide clear instructions on the need to “guide” and “direct” public opinion on certain matters or issues. In the meantime, regular sermons given by imams and speakers of mosques are systematically monitored by the state’s security services. Sometimes the level of a speaker’s commitment does not necessarily reflect a full acquiescence to the ministry’s directives, and, on occasion, speakers will resort to slight deceptions, allegories, and puns in the “required” speeches or sermons and will try to break through the ceiling on certain prohibitions.

In the most part, speeches would be “guided” by the ministry with regard to political issues or matters of security. However, it rarely does so in matters of religion or culture. It is also not very

⁸⁵ Ibid. Also see report regarding the law in Al Ghad Jordanian daily newspaper on July, 25, 2011 available at <http://www.alghad.com/index.php/article/101970.html>

⁸⁶ See report by Mohammad al-Najjar, Aljazeera.net correspondent in Amman; September 4, 2006.

⁸⁷ See information on the King Abdullah Institute for the Training of Preachers and Imams on the official website of the Ministry of Awqaf, available at <http://www.awqaf.gov.jo/?id=133>

concerned about the kinds of *fatwas* and the jurisprudence advocated from the pulpits of mosques, as long as they do not provoke public sentiments, social altercations, and contentious issues or have any other significant negative echo on public opinion.

The subject of sermons and the preaching that takes place in Jordanian mosques is indeed a common issue of contention in the debate and discussions that takes place between the Muslim Brotherhood and the state. The Brotherhood often accuses the state of excluding its preachers and speakers from the pulpits of mosques and of replacing them with speakers that have a stronger predisposition to agree with official positions, or those that have more Salafist inclinations.

Briefly before 2009, the channels of communications opened by the former Director of Jordanian General Intelligence Department (GID), Lieutenant General Mohammad al-Dahabi, with the Muslim Brotherhood led to 20 of the Brotherhood's leading cadres being allowed to return to speaking in Jordanian mosques. However, the security services were quick to instruct the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs to renew the ban on these speakers, after al-Dahabi was dismissed and there was an official reversal of the policy of "opening up" to the Brotherhood.⁸⁸

One official source argues that the Brotherhood's claims that they have been "excluded" from the public and religious domain are incorrect. The source claims that, today, there are close to 130 speakers of mosques who are affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood. The source also says that the state is "alert" to and aware of these speakers, but has not prohibited them from speaking as long as they adhere to the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs' directives and instructions.

Traditionally, the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs has complained about the modest budget allocated to it, and budgetary limitations which have led to thousands of mosques being left without an official imam specifically appointed to them. Consequently, the ministry has had to resort to alternative measures to fill these gaps, such as appointing teachers, who teach Islamic studies in schools (in return for providing them residence in the mosques), to lead certain prayers and take care of small matters related to preaching and religious guidance in certain areas of *iftaa'*.

Some appointments are made in return for a small amount of monetary compensation, instead of a formal, administrative appointment. Those appointed in this manner are not treated as official employees of the ministry. In any case and in general, the salaries of employees at the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs are substantially lower than that of other public institutions and ministries, although the majority of imams are given a place of residence free of charge; adjacent to the mosques they work in.

Sharia Schools

Of the tasks relegated to the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs is to supervise schools that teach the Islamic *Sharia*, in coordination with the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs has a special department to deal with this specific task.

⁸⁸ See Rana al-Sabbagh, "*Al-Urdun: 'Awdah illa Murba' al-Azma ma' al-Islamiyyin*" (Lit., "Jordan: A Return to Square One with the Islamists"); the *al-Hayat* daily newspaper, London, February 3, 2009.

What distinguishes these schools from other public schools is that they provide religious courses and material in addition to the regular curriculum, and in addition to the core subjects taken by students in the public school system. They also provide a specialized education in the *Sharia* during high school, which prepares students to enter into *Sharia* (Islamic Law) faculties at Jordanian universities. These special studies also prepare students to enter into other disciplines in programs set by the Ministry of Education.⁸⁹

The first *Sharia* high school was established in 1961 from which the first group of preachers and scholars qualified in religious instruction graduated. Later, a group of *Sharia* schools would be established by royal decree in 1990 for the purposes of providing an education in teaching Islamic religion and studies. These schools include Abu Bakr al-Siddiq School in the capital, Amman; the ‘Omar ibn al-Khattab School in Irbid; the Othman ibn Affan School in Karak; the ‘Ali ibn Abi Taleb School in al-Balqaa; The Aqsa *Sharia* High School for males in Jerusalem; and, the High School for Girls in Jerusalem.⁹⁰ Since their establishment, the number of students who have studied in *Sharia* schools affiliated to the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Studies as of year 2010 totaled 3,064.⁹¹

These schools teach studies in the Holy Qur’an, the Prophetic Hadith, Islamic jurisprudence (*Fiqh*), and the Prophet’s *Sira* (biography), in addition to the regular curriculum of core studies that are given by the Ministry of Education at regular public schools. These curricula parallel the most important years of education, or from the seventh until the tenth grades, as well as high school through a special curriculum that has been adopted and used by the Ministry of Education.

In 2006, another royal decree was issued to build a model *Sharia* School in the city of al-Salt. The construction of this school was completed in 2009 and its operation commenced in the 2009/2010 school year. This particular school has been equipped with educational facilities and teaching aids and all the school’s facilities have been linked to the Internet. It has been equipped with all the teaching aids and supporting material necessary to provide a better education and to elevate the study of Islamic law to a level par with modern standards, and keeping pace with advances in modern technology.

The Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs and the Ministry of Education cooperate and coordinate in the technical supervision of these *Sharia* schools. Both ministries provide teachers specialized in the various subjects given at these schools, according to a system established between institutions and ministries where teachers mandated by the Ministry of Education teach side by side with their colleagues from the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs. These teachers cooperate in carrying out the educational duties entrusted to them, with a number of these teachers participating in special Jordanian Hajj missions.⁹²

⁸⁹ See further information on *Sharia* Education Department at the official website of the Ministry of Awqaf, <http://www.awqaf.gov.jo/?id=121>

⁹⁰ See the draft study on “The Religious Situation in Jordan,” op. cit.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

Official Religious Institutions and *Iftaa'* Departments

Iftaa' is a term used to represent the act of issuing a *fatwa* or an Islamic legal opinion usually issued on matters related to everyday life, or Islamic religious rulings, or scholarly opinions on a matter of Islamic law that are issued by an authoritative consultant in matters of Islamic law. Initially a private vocation, this act of issuing official *fatwas* came to be the role of the public office of the “*mufti*” (the religious scholar with authority to issue *fatwas*) in the eleventh century. The Ottoman Empire was the first state to integrate muftis into its official bureaucracy.⁹³

The Department of *Iftaa'* was established in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in 1921. From the time of its establishment, the Department of *Iftaa'* issued *fatwas* that are grounded in the Hanafi *madhab* (or Islamic school of jurisprudence), which was also the main school of Islamic jurisprudence in force during the days of the Ottoman Empire.

In Jordan's system of *iftaa'*, a mufti responded to people's queries on matters of faith, practice, interactions and transactions, or on personal matters. A mufti was appointed to stand next to every judge in all of the larger and smaller cities so that judges could consult with muftis when resolving social disputes. At the same time, a mufti would turn over matters to a judge which required special evidence and witnesses, and which were not matters that fell under the mufti's jurisdiction and specialization.

The system of *iftaa'* in Jordan remained this way until Sheikh Hamza al-'Arabi was appointed by royal decree as the Grand Mufti of the Hashemite Kingdom in 1944. In that same year, Sheikh Abdullah al-'Azab was appointed as the Mufti of the Jordanian Armed Forces.

In 1966, a system of Islamic *awqaf* was put into place, and the ninth section of this system's procedural code regulated all matters related to *iftaa'*. In that system, the kingdom's mufti reported to the Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs. This codified law also stipulated that the Grand Mufti would, in cooperation with the Head of the Preaching and Guidance Department, convene regular meetings with all the kingdom's muftis in order to organize their work and guide them; because muftis, at that time, were also responsible for preaching and religious guidance in society.

Later, a resolution was made to form a Council of *Iftaa'* that would be headed by the Chief Islamic Justice. This council would meet regularly to discuss new issues and to discuss matters relevant to society. It also discussed issues referred to muftis that were of the public interest, such as cases pertaining to ministries, companies and so on. Other issues were dealt with directly by the Grand Mufti or by the specific muftis appointed to cities or provinces.

The regulatory and procedural code for the administration of the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs continued to evolve, and with it, the system of *iftaa'*. In 1986, the Department of *Iftaa'* underwent a major upgrade, however, the mufti remained under the jurisdiction of the Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, and the Chief Islamic Justice remained the head of the Council of *Iftaa'*.

⁹³ Taken from the Oxford Islamic Studies Online website, see the following link: <http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t125/e978> [Translator's note].

The post of Grand Mufti in Jordan was filled by several scholars as follows, chronologically: Sheikh Hamza al-'Arabi, followed by Sheikh Abdullah al-Qalqili, Sheikh Mohammad 'Adel al-Sharif, Sheikh Mohammad Hashim, Sheikh Izzud-dine al-Khatib al-Tamimi, Sheikh Sa'id al-Hijjawi, Sheikh Dr. Nuh 'Ali Sulaiman al-Qudah, who was then followed by Sheikh 'Abd al-Karim Salim al-Khasawaneh as Grand Mufti of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.⁹⁴

The Department of Iftaa' Gains Independence from the Ministry of Awqaf

In 2006, legislation was passed that gave the Department of General Iftaa' its independence, from that point forth, from the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, as well as from other official institutions. And, the rank of the Grand Mufti would become equal to that of a minister in the government. With that, the Department of Iftaa' became independent from other state institutions and apparatuses.

However, work is still underway to systemize and organize the affairs of this department and the manner in which it issues its *fatwas*. Today, the support of religious scholars and Islamic legal jurists has been garnered to assist the department so that certain tasks and duties are divided amongst them, and so that different sections in the department can take on the responsibility to care and deal with one particular aspect of *iftaa'* related to the different needs of society.

The law delineated the tasks and obligations of the Department of *Iftaa'*, as follows:⁹⁵

- Supervision over and the organization of all matters concerning *fatwas* in the Kingdom
- Issuing *fatwas* in matters of public and private affairs in accordance with the provisions of this law
- To prepare and conduct research and studies on Islam and Islamic affairs on matters of importance and on current and emerging issues
- To produce a scholarly periodical journal specialized in publishing scholarly research and studies that focus on Islamic *Sharia*, legal studies and jurisprudence
- To cooperate with scholars in Islamic *Sharia* inside and outside the Kingdom on matters related to the issuance of *fatwas (iftaa')*.
- To present opinions and advice in matters presented to the department by agencies, services and institutions of the state

The Grand Mufti is responsible for the department's affairs, for the proper and efficient functioning of the department, as well as for implementing the public policy and guidelines related to the public issuance of *fatwas (iftaa')*. The Grand Mufti is appointed by royal decree, at the rank of minister, with all the authority and dispensations that this rank entails; and, his end of service is terminated in the same manner.

⁹⁴ On the establishment of the Department of Iftaa' and the development of its regulations and tasks, see the official website of the department at <http://aliftaa.jo/index.php/ar/pages/view/id/7>

⁹⁵ Ibid.

All *fatwas* issued (by muftis) from the Department of Iftaa' are free of any charges. Fees are not charged for requesting a *fatwa* in order to facilitate the manner in which people can learn and know more about the provisions and rulings of Islam.

In terms of the issues, questions, and queries presented to the Department of Iftaa', some are simple and can be answered by a mufti, if he knows the response, while other issues are more complex. In the case of the latter, a small *fatwa* advisory committee is designated to convene over the matter at the Department of Iftaa'. If a certain issue cannot be dealt with at the level of the smaller advisory committees, then the jurisdiction over it is turned over to the Department of Iftaa', which becomes responsible for dealing with that particular matter.

The department receives requests for *fatwas* through its website. These *fatwa* requests come not only from Jordan, but from all over the world as well. Requests for *fatwas* and queries about *fatwas* are delegated to expert committees of muftis, who give each question or request the special attention and scholarly response each request deserves. A committee's final *fatwa* is presented directly to the Grand Mufti, who either approves or amends the *fatwa*, which is then published on the Department's website.⁹⁶

In principle, the Department of Iftaa' uses the Shafi'iyya *madhab* in its *fatwas* because it is the most widespread and accepted Islamic school of jurisprudence in the Levant area, including Jordan. It will also use and consult the rulings and input of other Islamic jurists and scholars, especially in the cases where the Shafi'iyya *madhab* is difficult to apply, or where its application of a *fatwa* may be stringent, after the matter has been duly deliberated and debated by the muftis employed at the department. In such cases, where other Islamic jurists, scholars and other schools of jurisprudence are consulted, there are legal restrictions, rules and regulations that are followed, based on preset scholarly criteria.⁹⁷

In matters dealing with personal status, the Department of Iftaa' bases its *fatwas* on Jordanian Personal Status Laws and does not exceed the legal parameters set by these laws. This policy is maintained so that there are no contradictions between a *fatwa* issued by the Department and the provisions set by the Sharia courts in the Kingdom. And, it is important to note that, in general and in principle, the laws and provisions followed by the Sharia courts are based on the Hanafiyya *madhab*.

After the last restructuring took place at the Department of Iftaa', muftis were appointed to all the provinces where there are now (in 2010) thirty muftis in Jordan. And, today, the department answers close to 500 queries, questions, and request a day through various communication channels.

Statistics presented by the Department of Iftaa' in Jordan show that the department issued 159,318 *fatwas* in 2009, at an average of approximately 639 *fatwas* every working day, with a large

⁹⁶ See the Department of Iftaa's website available at <http://www.aliftaa.jo/index.php/ar/pages/view/id/7>

⁹⁷ Ibid.

proportion of these being related to matters of divorce.⁹⁸ The requests and queries to the department came in the form of questions over the phone, through written questions, short letters, electronic mail, and through personal interviews.

According to the data presented by the Department of Iftaa', questions and advice concerning matters related to divorce amounted to 15.3% of the queries received by the department. And, the number of *fatwas* issued by the department concerning matters of divorce amounted to 24,422 in total, with 12,764 of these *fatwas* being related to divorces that had already taken place and 11,658 *fatwas* being related to the matter of divorce that still had not taken place. As a matter of fact, reports indicate that the rate of divorce in Jordan is on the rise, with no less than 65,000 divorces registered in the country in the last five years, the majority of which took place in the larger cities, and particularly the capital, Amman.⁹⁹

The act establishing the Department of Iftaa', which gave it independence from the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, triggered a great deal of debate, especially as two major objectives were merged behind this legislation. The first objective was to create an official religious institution to put limits on the chaos and lack of control over who was issuing *fatwas* and what kind of *fatwas* were being issued, especially with regard to *fatwas* marked by extremist points of view. The second objective was to take a firm stand against and delegitimize extremist *fatwas* issued by militant Islamists that have been used to justify suicide operations, the killing of civilians, and violence.

At the same time, Sheikh Nuh 'Ali Sulaiman al-Qudah was appointed as the Kingdom's Grand Mufti. King Abdullah II made a personal visit to the new Grand Mufti at the Department of Iftaa', where he gave a clear message of formal and official support to the new department. Sheikh Al-Qudah had formerly been appointed as the Mufti of the Jordanian Armed Forces as well as the Jordanian Ambassador to Iran. He enjoyed a very good reputation as a religious jurist and was renowned for his scholarly abilities, his transparency and his conservative Sufi orientation.

After four years, in 2010, Al-Qudah was replaced after a series of *fatwas*, of a quite conservative nature, were issued and provoked a contentious debate. These *fatwas* raised serious questions on the extent to which the department's vision was consistent with the essence of official state policy. And, after complaints that the department's jurists had expanded the scope of their *iftaa'*, and had begun to engage and interfere in public affairs in issues related to tourism and elections, for example, as well as in matters related to "modernity" (such as interacting through Facebook and the use of electronic credit cards)¹⁰⁰, Sheikh Abd al-Karim Salim al-Khasawaneh, also one of the former Muftis of the Jordanian Armed Forces, was appointed as Grand Mufti of the Kingdom.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ See report on *al-Iftaa' al-'Aam Tujib 'ala 159318 Su'al al-'Am al-Madi, 15% minha hawla al-Talaq* (Lit. "General Iftaa' Department Answers 159,318 Questions Last Year, 15% of Which are Related to Divorce"), Addustour Jordanian daily newspaper, January 14, 2010, available at

<http://www.addustour.com/15634/«العام20الافتاء»%20تجيب%20على%20159318سؤالالعام20سوالالماضي%20العام2015%20حول%20الطلاق.html>

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ See the official website of the Department of Iftaa' available at <http://www.aliftaa.jo/index.php/ar/fatwa/show/id/919>

¹⁰¹ See the appointment of the Grand Muftis, found on the Department of Iftaa's website available at <http://www.aliftaa.jo/index.php/ar/pages/view/id/7>

The Directorate of Iftaa' in the Jordanian Armed Forces

The Directorate of Iftaa' (Religious Advisory Section) in the Jordanian Armed Forces is considered the major reference for *fatwas* in the country's armed forces. The department was established during the reign of King Abdullah bin Hussein when he appointed Sheikh Abdullah al-'Azab as the Mufti of the Jordanian Armed Forces.

This institution would progressively expand and evolve until every unit in the Jordanian armed forces had its own imam. A unit's imam took on the task of issuing *fatwas*, providing religious guidance, conducting religious lectures and classes, as well as leading the five prayers and Friday prayers for every unit, amongst other tasks.

In 1965, the Directorate of Iftaa' in the Jordanian Armed Forces began to recruit people with university degrees at the rank of officer as imams assigned to the armed forces. In 1966, the Directorate began to provide courses and workshops in *Sharia* studies for those working as imams in the armed forces and began to include imams in military training so that they would have the same military experience as other officers in the armed forces.

In 1975, this Directorate of Iftaa' began to send its university-educated imams to continue their scholarly studies and to enter into graduate programs with the aim of attaining higher degrees in their specialties, and with the aim of building the capacities of the imams working in the directorate. In 1977, a special wing was established for *Sharia* studies at the directorate, where its imams could attend workshops and seminars and received further training in the *Sharia*. In 1987, this wing was converted into an intermediate college in which an imam in the armed forces could receive a diploma in *Sharia* Studies from the Ministry of Higher Education through the Prince Hassan Military College for Islamic Science.

The Shafi'iyya school of jurisprudence is primarily used by the Directorate of Iftaa' in the Jordanian Armed Forces in its religious jurisprudence and its *fatwas*. The imams assigned to units of the armed forces conduct lectures, instruct on religion and respond to questions by persons of other ranks in their units. Army imams lead the five daily prayers, the Friday prayer and the two Eid prayers in their units' designated mosques. Unit imams participate in and coordinate all religious events, occasions, and activities for their units such as the Hajj, the *Isra' wa al-Mi'raj* (the Prophet's night journey and ascension to heaven) and the Eid of *al-Mawlid al-Nabawi* (the birth of the Prophet). They also actively engage in all their units' tasks and activities and are responsible for maintaining their units' spiritual morale.¹⁰²

The Iftaa' and Religious Guidance Section at the Public Security Department

The Iftaa' and Religious Guidance Section in the Jordanian Directorate of Public Security was established on June 1st, 1990. Prior to this date, Public Security depended on imams from the Jordanian Armed Forces for its religious guidance. After the section was established, Public Security began to recruit imams who carried university degrees or had diplomas in Islamic Law and *Sharia* Studies to help instruct and train the imams working for Public Security. The directorate

¹⁰² See the draft study on "The Religious Situation in Jordan," op. cit.

would also send many of its personnel with secondary school diplomas to the Prince Hassan College for Islamic Science so that they may study and receive a diploma in the Islamic *Sharia*. Several female preachers were also recruited by Public Security to work in different departments such as the Department of Female Police Officers and the directorate's Center for the Reform and Rehabilitation of Women.

In 2001, the Hajj and *Umra* (optional, lesser pilgrimage) Administration Branch at the Public Security Directorate was established in order to more efficiently process matters and procedures related to the Hajj and Umra of Public Security Directorate personnel. The branch also publishes a monthly newsletter "*Al-Aman*" that is distributed to all Public Security departments and units with the aim of developing the religious commitment of those employed by Public Security. This newsletter is also distributed to other state departments and public institutions.¹⁰³

The Iftaa' and Religious Guidance Section in the Jordanian Public Security Directorate is responsible for leading prayers and other religious rites in mosques designated for units operated by Public Security. It also conducts lectures and lessons on religion and coordinates Friday sermons. It sets timetables and programs for these lectures and seminars in a manner that suits the times and needs of this extensive security apparatus, and ensures that mosques designated for Public Security units and employees are well maintained, clean and furnished properly. They also work closely with leading cadres at Public Security in order to identify manifestations and conduct that may require religious guidance, and conduct studies with regard to such matters that offer *Sharia*-based solutions and recommendations for rectifying such negative manifestations or conduct.

The section responds to questions and queries about religious matters, rulings, and jurisprudence. It also produces a religious newsletter that deals with matters of faith, religious practice, and different religious occasions. It prepares the religious curricula for all the training conducted at the Directorate, organizes and coordinates religious festivities, and facilitates the Hajj and Umra procedures for members of the directorate.

In coordination with formal Jordanian universities, the section also takes on the task of providing religious guidance at reform and rehabilitation centers. It employs a select group of religious scholars, imams, and counselors to work in these reform and rehabilitation centers, where numerous lectures, seminars and debates are organized and convened for those who have embraced an extremist Islamist ideology.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

Conclusion:

“Religious Policy” Power Houses

Since early 2006, official attention and internal reflection with regard to the state’s religious policy has experienced a surge in comparison to previous years. Indeed, the Hotel Bombings in Amman in November 2005 marked a major turning point in official political thinking and the security considerations related to confronting al-Qaeda and other extremist, militant Islamist groups. Consequently, the state took a series of initiatives and enacted new laws that have “intensified” the attention and the focus on the religious domain and religious matters.

Previously, the state confronted extremist groups as well as the Muslim Brotherhood through security channels and measures that included closely monitoring these groups and their members, surveillance, legal prosecutions as well as infiltrating these organizations. Other measures included placing mosques, charitable organizations (related to these groups and organizations), and Islamist activism and volunteer activities, in general, under constant security surveillance.

The Amman Hotel Bombings led to a serious review of this strategy, which was based solely on a “security perspective”. Opinions from within and from without official circles began to focus on the importance of paying greater heed to the preventive and cultural dimension in the battle against “Islamist extremism”, particularly al-Qaeda, which was very active in Iraq under the command of the Jordanian, Abu Mus’ab al-Zarqawi (who was killed in the middle of 2006 by an American airstrike) – and, which posed the most serious security threat to Jordan’s national security at that time.

During the same period, Hamas Movement was becoming a rising star in the Occupied Palestinian Territories after its landslide victory in Palestinian legislative elections in 2006. In parallel, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood had also made great gains in parliamentary elections that took place in Egypt in 2005. All these circumstances reinforced growing fears and suspicions within official circles about “Islamist intentions” and the “growing Islamist appetite for authority” in Jordan.

These new fears and suspicions were further reinforced by transformations taking place within the regional environment, where Islamist movements were emerging as formidable new players, and in which official Arab fears propagated and endorsed the threat of the “Iranian-Shiite revival”. This general environment would exert great pressure on the “security approach”.

New Laws to Tighten the Security Grip

This vast, growing momentum was revealed in new laws and legislation that granted the Jordanian state and its governments more leeway to face Islamist movements and to cope more effectively with them. These new laws and legislation allowed the government to tighten its grip over mosques, over the *fatwas* being issued in the country, and over the activities of charitable and volunteer organizations (affiliated with Islamist movements and groups).

The government enacted new laws on preaching and religious guidance, and enacted laws prohibiting terrorism. It gave the Department of Iftaa' independence and established branches for the department in all the kingdom's provinces. The government confiscated the Muslim Brotherhood's Islamic Center Charity Society and restructured the terms and criteria that governed volunteer activities, social work, and charitable societies in order to limit and curb the influence of Islamist groups that were opposed to the state.

The new set of laws did not represent a real shift in state policy over the past few years. However, it did accelerate the steps and stages needed to tighten the state's security grip over mosques, over the sources issuing *fatwas* in the kingdom, and over social, charitable and volunteer work and organizations. This was all done within a strategic framework that can be viewed as being similar to the "nationalization" of these kinds of institutions, so that they would be under official supervision, monitoring, administration, or control.

In examining the shifts and transformations which took place with regard to the security approach used against the Islamists and their social and charitable work, it becomes obvious that the state's outlook and perceptions on the sources of threats to national security and the factors affecting political stability over the past decades have varied and changed. From the 1950s until the 1980s, the major challenge facing the governing regime and threatening its stability was embodied by leftist and communist movements, followed by the Palestinian secular movements. Yet, all these movements operated under a discourse that was critical of Islam and of Islamists.

In contrast, the prevailing circumstances, at that time, pushed the state to develop alliances and a unique form of coexistence with Islamists. Consequently, it opened the doors for Islamists to become active in the country's mosques. It allowed them to establish charitable societies and educational centers, and paved the way for their activities on the level of volunteer, social, and charitable work. All this was with the aim of curbing the popular influence of the leftists, as these movements were considered the adversaries of Islam; at least, this was how they were represented in the discourse of the Islamists.

In the mid-1980s, and what become much clearer in the 1990s, was the fundamental change in the state's outlook and perception about the sources of threat to its security and stability. These sources had now become the Islamist movements in both its moderate form (the Muslim Brotherhood) and in its radical manifestations (the Jihadi Salafists and Hizb ut-Tahrir). Islamist groups and movements had become the primary source of "headache" and concern for the state. The relationship between the state and these groups and movements became characterized by antagonism, hostility, rigidity, and confrontation – all of which produced a political and security environment that would be completely different from previous decades.

These shifts and transformations found their way into the heart of the religious policies of the state. Instead of opening doors and prospects before Islamist groups, their work and their activities, the reverse would take place. The state began to tighten its grip, and began to limit and curb Islamists and Islamist activities that were perceived as opposing or working against the state and its interests. This shift would be reflected in the way the state would deal with religious endowments, preaching, and guidance; and in the manner in which it appointed teachers of Islamic *Sharia* in Jordanian universities (who are screened by security to ensure that the political orientation of those who instruct in the Islamic *Sharia* does not pose a threat); and in the way the state's grip over charitable,

social and volunteer work and activity would also be tightened – all of which culminated in the enactment of a new series of laws and in the new measures taken after 2006.

The Cultural Approach: Timid Steps

At the same time that the above-mentioned laws and legislation were enacted, and the state's security grip over Islamist movements (which opposed the state) was tightened, reassessments in strategy led to further consideration and attention to a more proactive "cultural approach". This new direction was made clear in the interfaith Amman Message¹⁰⁴ (2004), which internalized Islamic ideas that urged moderation, centrism, and religious tolerance and rejected extremism, *takfir*, misguidance, and misinformation. The Amman Message pushed for building relations based on dialogue with the "other", religiously and culturally, rather than on conflict and confrontation.

After the Amman Hotel Bombings in 2005, the level of official attention towards the Amman Message was heightened, and, it would be promoted as representing the official line taken by the state with regard to religion, both domestically and externally. A series of seminars and conferences were held inside Jordan to introduce this "message" to civil society, and especially to Jordanian youth, who represent the segment of society most vulnerable to the influence of radical Islamist thinking and ideologies. The "message" would be integrated into university curricula, and was translated and published in several languages so that the state could actively market and promote it outside Jordan.¹⁰⁵

In the same vein, the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs worked to establish and develop a training center for preachers and imams. The objective of this center would be to build capacities and abilities of imams and preachers to speak more effectively to the public after much criticism was leveraged against the ministry with regard to the weakness and ineffective levels of religious preaching, guidance, and speaking that was taking place in Jordanian mosques.

In parallel, the state has provided its support and has sponsored activities and events, such as the *Al-Wasatiyya* Forum for Islamic Thought and Culture and the Global Forum for Islamic Centrism, both of which adopt and promote a moderate Islamic line and a centrist approach to Islamic thought, considered close to the official policy line with regard to Islam.

With that, and despite the great attention and repeated talk about the "cultural approach," about the Amman Message, and about building a "social immunity" to extremist and radical thinking, much of this has not been clearly reflected in the state's communication and press policies, nor in tangible steps taken to influence the prevailing "social and popular culture" in Jordan. Indeed, these efforts have not been able to go beyond a limited audience and a transient influence, which is in direct contrast with the thoughts advocated by political Islam (the line taken by the Muslim Brotherhood) and by the more radical thinking (such as that of the Jihadi Salafists), which have won over large segments of the Jordanian popular base. Indeed, the Amman Message and calls for moderate

¹⁰⁴ See the official website of the Amman Message (2004) available at http://ammanmessage.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=16&Itemid=30 [Translator's note]

¹⁰⁵ Ibid

thinking have not been transformed into any real social trends or currents, as is the case with the other modes of Islamist thinking.

Two Power Houses ... Security and Political

There is not one specific management representing a “Power House,” or a decision-making establishment for official religious policies, or that plans for the state’s religious institutions, and manages policies related to the religious domain. There was an attempt to set one up in 2007, when the king’s religious advisor, Prince Ghazi bin Mohammad, met with the heads of religious institutions more than once to talk about the religious policies and direction of the country. However, this initiative did not last long and never went beyond a few meetings.¹⁰⁶

On the other hand, the religious “portfolio” has traditionally and principally been managed by General Intelligence Department, which focuses mainly on the security aspect of religious considerations, organizations, institutions, and affairs, such as religious endowments (*awqaf*), Sharia colleges and the volunteer and charitable work of Islamists. And, the country’s “Security Power House” focuses its main concerns on social and political stability and on national security, and on ensuring that the management of religious institutions and organizations do not deviate from official policy lines. For example, there is constant communications between the General Intelligence Department and the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs with regard to Friday sermons, preaching and instruction in the mosques and in the Qur’anic schools, as well as in the appointments of instructors and professors to *Sharia* colleges (as is the case with other colleges).

In the meanwhile, another “Power House” emerged in the 1990s as a policy-making establishment that would be linked to the Royal Court through the king’s “Religious Advisor,” or the person in charge of managing religious affairs. Previously, this post was held by Prince Hassan bin Talal, who contributed to founding and overseeing the Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought (established in 1980) as well as the Royal Institute for Interfaith Studies (established in 1994). Prince Hassan also played a significant role in establishing the Aal al-Bayt University in 1994.¹⁰⁷

It was clear from the seminars, lectures, interviews, and meetings that Prince Hassan sponsored or participated in that his perspective and orientation on religion contributed to building the state’s religious message with regard to Islamic-Islamic and intercultural dialogue. He also contributed to developing open relations with the Western world and to advocating humanitarianism and matters of justice and law.

Aal al-Bayt University distinguished itself from other Jordanian universities in that it offered studies on all the Islamic sects including the four Sunni *madhahib* (schools of Islamic Jurisprudence), the Twelver Shiite Sect, the al-Zaidiyya sect, and the Ibadhiyya sect. It also opened its doors to students from all over the Arab, Islamic, and Western worlds. It established several multidisciplinary study institutes to help bolster and reinforce intercultural dialogue, and cultural

¹⁰⁶ From an interview with a prominent religious official figure, in his office in Amman on July 3rd, 2010.

¹⁰⁷ On the development of Aal al-Bayt Institute and the previous supervision of Prince Hassan, followed by Prince Ghazi, see the official website of the institution available at <http://www.aalalbayt.org/en/pastandpresent.html>

and religious coexistence and tolerance. This was all notwithstanding the fact that the university combined its faculty of law with that of the Islamic *Sharia*.

However, the university failed to maintain this track for too long. The university's administration was changed and Dr. Mohammad 'Adnan al-Bakhit, the university's president, who had been close to the late King Hussein bin Talal and Prince Hassan bin Talal, was dismissed from his post in 2001, on the pretext that he had written a critical article published in a magazine (of limited circulation!). This change in the university's administration would lead to a decline in the university's ability to perform and to meet the objectives of the message upon which and for which it had been founded.

Sources from amongst the Shiite Jordanians recall that Prince Hassan in the mid-1990s also worked towards building bridges and channels of communications with global Shiite institutions (the Al-Khoei Foundation in London) and that preparations were being made to establish an organization for Jordanian Sunni-Shiite dialogue, under the name The Abu Dharr al-Ghafari Institute. However, the state's security services did not welcome the idea, which never did materialize.¹⁰⁸

During the reign of King Abdullah II, Prince Ghazi ibn Mohammad took on the task of managing religious affairs at the Royal Court. He was delegated with the responsibility for the Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute (as of 2001, with the institution's internal by-laws instituted in 2007). Prince Ghazi also held the post of chairman of the board of trustees at the al-Balqaa Applied University, which included the Faculty of the *Da'wa* and *Usul al-Din* (the Fundamentals of Religion). Later, he would also sit as chairman of the board of trustees of the World Islamic Sciences University (established in 2008), where various scholarly disciplines are taught in addition to Islamic *Sharia*. The World Islamic Sciences University is attended by a large number of international students and its administration and internal management are of an Islamic nature, with the president also being a professor in Islamic *Sharia*.¹⁰⁹

As was the case with Prince Hassan, Prince Ghazi's attention has been on the more intellectual and academic aspects of interfaith dialogue and co-existence. Prince Ghazi, however, holds a predominantly Sufi religious leaning and has written several essays on the subject, the most important of which is entitled "*Al-Hubb fi al-Qur'an*" (Love in the Qur'an) and "*Ijma' al-Muslimeen 'ala Ihtiram Madhahib al-Din*" (Consensus Amongst Muslims on Respecting Religious Schools of Thought).

In the last few years, the role of Prince Ghazi has expanded and his consultations are sought on all policy matters related to religion and religious institutions. He personally oversees the appointment of the heads and directors of important religious institutions, such as the minister of the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, the Grand Mufti of the kingdom, and the deans of Islamic colleges, faculties and institutes.

However, differences, and sometimes conflicts would emerge between the perspectives and opinions held by General Intelligence Department and Prince Ghazi. The Intelligence Power

¹⁰⁸ See Mohammad Abu Rumman *Al-Tashihi' al-Siyasi fi al-Urdun...* (Lit. "Political Shiism in Jordan..."), op. cit.

¹⁰⁹ On such developments, see the official website of Aal al-Bayt Institute at <http://www.aalalbayt.org/en/pastandpresent.html>

House's security considerations will often win over the approach that advocates intellectual openness and cultural tolerance. And, if the two approaches conflict, the priority is given to the security approach and security considerations, as was the case when it came to dealing with Shiites. In such an example, the Intelligence Department did not allow one of the more important religious figures close to Prince Ghazi to take on an important post at the al-Balqaa Applied University, because he had Shiite leanings. Indeed, Intelligence would exert efforts to weaken the influence of this figure, despite the support he has from Prince Ghazi bin Mohammad.

These differences are also clearly reflected in the process of choosing heads of religious institutions. The Intelligence Department gives preference to persons that have good relations and open channels with the state's intelligence services, and who are of the same mindset and opinion as the intelligence services' political and security line. On the other hand, persons recommended by Prince Ghazi are more compatible with the prince's intellectual line and religious leanings.

The other face of this particular conflict is embodied by the prince's ideological, religious, and intellectual orientation, which is closer to Sufism and al-Ash'ariyya theology. Indeed, his position is incompatible with the Salafist line, even the kinds of Salafism that are considered "close" to the state. Meanwhile, the state is keen to support such Salafists for specific, major reasons, the most important of which are security considerations, as the role played by the Salafists in confronting other Islamist movements and currents in Jordan, and the strong relationship enjoyed with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which adopts the same Salafist line.

At the same time, there does not appear to be a significant role for other "Power Houses" in the state's official religious institutions, except for within the parameters of due diligence in administration and implementation, as long as there are no deviations from official policy lines drawn for these institutions by the state.

To date, no formal council exists with a clear authority and mandate to define the guidelines of the state's religious policy and to plan the evolution and development of the state's institutions active in this domain. This absence has weakened initiatives taken towards building a clear religious message for the state, as was the case with the Amman Message, which, despite all the conferences and efforts made, failed to produce a cultural and political current that could be adopted clearly and seriously. The result of this approach and method in managing these institutions and in defining religious policies has led to prioritizing pragmatic, security considerations over the need for religious reform and enlightenment within society and in terms of public opinion – the kind of reform carried out by Imam Mohammad Abdu in Egypt over a century ago.

The above has also led to an absence of any formal, religious authority figures, who can be seen, known, and recognized as established leaders, with a strong, authoritative presence in domestic and external forums, such as is the case with the Grand Mufti of Egypt or Sheikh al-Azhar. To date, Jordan still lacks the kind of religious leadership that is consistent with the state's official line, that can play an effective role, domestically and externally, and that can carry and effectively promote a defined religiously intellectual and doctrinal message characteristic of Jordan.

Chapter Two

A Deepening Crisis: The 2007 Parliamentary Elections

Introduction

The modest electoral results achieved by the Muslim Brotherhood in the Jordanian parliamentary elections of November 20, 2007 shocked observers and analysts alike. Even to those who had predicted that the popularity of the Brotherhood was on decline, the poor showing of the Muslim Brotherhood (six seats out of 110) could not have been more surprising.¹¹⁰

Directly after the announcement of the results, the supposition of the “dwindling strength of the Brotherhood” became a major theme of media debate and political analyses among researchers, journalists, pundits, and politicians. The debate not only took place on the level of the election’s local implications, but also on the level of its implications on political Islamist movements in general, especially that the Jordanian elections took place only a few weeks after the Islamic Justice and Development Party also failed to achieve the expected majority seats in the Moroccan legislative elections, falling into a second place in terms of parliamentary bloc membership after the Traditional Independence Party.¹¹¹

The assumption that the popularity of the Muslim Brotherhood was “dwindling” did not last long in the political and media circles, especially as talk of “large-scale rigging” of the results of the elections became a declared fact after officials delegated with administering the elections – later – came to exchange blame and throw the responsibility of the decision to “rig” the elections on each other. It became evident that large-scale manipulation of results took place not only against candidates from the Muslim Brotherhood, but was systematic across the whole electoral process in general.

The 2007 parliamentary elections became a pivotal and decisive turning point on several levels. First, it embodied the escalation of the crisis between the State and the Brotherhood to a new, advanced level, and later led to the emergence of a new, more fierce, political discourse characterized by a “higher ceiling” of antagonism exhibited by the leaderships of the Muslim Brotherhood, particularly those who were previously considered amongst the “Doves” trend within the movement.¹¹² Second, the elections also exposed a growing organizational crisis and a state of polarization within the movement, which later culminated in holding early organizational elections and an unprecedented escalation of internal debates and disputes. Finally, the elections brought forth an increasing discussion of the influence played by Hamas, and the latter’s relationship with various trends and wings within the movement. This discussion also touched upon the link between the organizational disengagement between Hamas and the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood and the implications of this internal crisis,¹¹³ which later ended with the ouster of the General Supervisor of the movement, Salim al-Falahat, and the decision to hold early organizational elections to elect a

¹¹⁰ For more information, see Oraib al-Rantawi in *al-Siyāq al-‘Aam li al-Intikhabat al-Urduniya/ al-Qanun wa Mujrayat al-‘Amaliya wa mukhrajatiha* (Lit. “The General Context of the Jordanian Elections; The Law, Proceedings, and Results of the Process”), by a group of researchers, in *Al-Intikhabat wa al-Tahawulat al-Dimuqratiya fi al-‘Alam al-‘Arabi: Khutwa li al-Amam am Khutwa li al-Wara’* (Lit. “Elections and Democratic Transformations in the Arab World: A Step Forward or A Step Backward?”), Al-Quds Center for Studies, Amman, 1st ed., 2008, pp. 81-89.

¹¹¹ It is noted that Morocco’s Justice and Development party issued a memo regarding fraud and rigging that allegedly took place during the elections, as reported in the party’s documents series.

¹¹² See chapter three of this book.

¹¹³ For more details on the dynamics of the relationship between Hamas and the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood, see chapter four of this book.

new *Shura* Council and a new leadership for the movement. All these factors ended up throwing the Muslim brotherhood in the following months into the midst of a severe internal organizational crisis that lasted for many months afterwards.¹¹⁴

An examination of all the dimensions of the Brotherhood's dismal results in the 2007 parliamentary elections and the variables impacting the political role of the movement necessitates an in-depth reading rather than merely focusing on the results themselves. Indeed, what is required here is an analysis of the fundamental changes and variables that may explain the transformations witnessed by the Muslim Brotherhood. The first variable worthy of analysis is related to the relationship between the Brotherhood and the State in the past decades (since the formation of the movement, i.e. 1946-2007). The second variable is related to the relationship of the movement with Jordanian society, its social roles, and its means and mechanisms of social and popular engagement and interaction. The third variable concerns the developments and changes witnessed in the Brotherhood on the level of discourse, practice, and the influential currents within the movement.

In order to discuss the above, the study will deal with the results of the 2007 parliamentary elections within a general context by analyzing the following points:

- The evolution of the relationship between the state and the Brotherhood: from alliance to crisis
- The dynamics of the crisis between the state and the Brotherhood, each side's interpretation of these dynamics, and the factors governing the relationship between the two
- A reading and an analysis of the political and intellectual debates which have influenced and reflected polarizations within the Brotherhood's organization
- A review of the features of the Brotherhood's political discourse, its perspective on democracy, and the extent of its political realism. To which extent has the Brotherhood's discourse served and assisted its integration into the political system? What are the limits of the conflict between the Brotherhood's discourse, its political stands, and state policy?
- The factors that led to the acute internal crisis in the Brotherhood on the eve of the parliamentary elections. What is the extent of this crisis, and its implications?
- The Brotherhood's electoral platform. To what extent did this platform include a new and realistic vision?
- The causes and factors explaining the Brotherhood's defeat in the 2007 parliamentary elections
- After the 2007 elections: the crisis with the state

¹¹⁴ On the election of Hammam Sa'id as General Supervisor of the Muslim Brotherhood in place of Salim al-Falahat, and the results of the organizational elections, see the report on Al-Jazeera.net: <http://www.aljazeera.net/news/pages/9b95eec9-7f56-4e38-9f55-6b4fdac1788e>. Cf. Mohammad Abu Rumman, "Salim al-Falahat Faris lan Yatarajal" (Lit., "Salim al-Falahat: A Knight who will not Dismount"), on "Al-Asr" electronic journal, May 4, 2008: <http://alasar.ws/articles/view/10024>

1. The Brotherhood and the Regime: From Alliance to Crisis

The relationship of the Brotherhood with the Jordanian regime has passed through several stages and has been characterized by meandering ups and downs. It started with peaceful coexistence, and then reached the point of convergence and alliance against common sources of threat. The relationship reached an advanced level when the regime sought the help of the Brotherhood in order for the movement to replace Palestinian organizations and powers after the 1970 crisis. In the early 1980s, Jordan received members of the Brotherhood who had fled from Syria, along with their families. However, the relationship began to dwindle in a spiraling decline in the mid 1980s, until it reached the point of divergence in the 1990s, before it escalated into a full-blown crisis with the ascension of King Abdullah II to the throne in 1999.

The Formation of the Brotherhood and the Path of its Relationship with the State

The Organization of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan first emerged as a natural reaction to the ideology of the mother organization in Egypt. The latter described itself as a universal proliferationist movement that works to spread Islam within a holistic and integrative framework. The Palestinian cause, in particular, constituted an entry point for the movement outreach and expansion in the Arab world, and especially in Jordan, where the mother organization sent a number of its leaders to the region, including 'Abd al-Hakim 'Abidin, Sa'id Ramadan, and 'Abd al-Mu'iz 'Abd al-Sattar, with the aim of establishing branches of the movement in various Arab countries.

The credit for forming the Jordanian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan may be attributed to the efforts of 'Abd al-Latif Abu Qura,¹¹⁵ who was on good terms with the movement's founder in Egypt, Sheikh Hassan al-Banna. Abu Qura was then a member of the Constituent Assembly in Egypt's Brotherhood, which also included a number of members from various Arab countries, such as Sheikh Mohammad Mahmoud al-Sawwaf (Head of the Muslim Brotherhood in Iraq) and Sheikh Mustafa al-Sibaa'i (Head of the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria).¹¹⁶

The roots of the Muslim Brotherhood movement in Jordan may be traced to the fusion and merging of two distinct groups that represent the elements of Jordan society: the 'East Bank Jordanians,' and the Palestinians of the West Bank. The Brotherhood emerged almost simultaneously in both

¹¹⁵ 'Abd al-Latif Abu Qura is the founder of the Organization of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan in 1945. Born in the city of al-Salt in 1909, his grandfathers reportedly came to al-Salt in the early 18th century from Damascus. Abu Qura studied at Al-Kata'ib schools, which focus on the memorization of the Holy Qur'an. He joined the Palestinian revolution of 1936, and later became a leader of the Muslim Brotherhood volunteers in the war of 1948. Abu Qura reportedly sold some of his properties in the Jabal Amman district to finance the Mujahidin. He was known for resisting the British mandate, and for his charitable and religious activities. He is considered one of the founders of Dar al-Thaqafa al-Islamiya (The Islamic Culture Society), through which the Islamic Scientific College and the College of Islamic Law (*Sharia*) were founded. Abu Qura was a businessman by trade, before he dedicated himself solely to work in the field of Islamic *da'wa*. He nonetheless resigned as a member of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan in 1953. [Reference: 'Awni Jadou' al-'Obaidi, "*Jamaa'at al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin fi al-Urdun wa Filastin 1945-1970*" (Lit., "The Organization of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan and Palestine: 1945-1970"), Amman, 1991, pp. 34-37.

¹¹⁶ On the formation of the Muslim Brotherhood, see Ibrahim Gharaibeh "*Jamaa'at al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin fi al-Urdun: 1945-1996*" (Lit., "The Organization of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan: 1946-1996"), Markaz al-Urdun al-Jadid li al-Dirasat, Dar al-Sindibad, Amman, 1997, pp. 47-52.

Palestine and the then emirate of Transjordan. The two movements merged completely after the union between the West Bank and Transjordan on both banks of the River Jordan in 1950.¹¹⁷

Dr. 'Izzat al-'Azizi, a prominent Islamist figure in Jordan, describes the nascent stages of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan (1945-1953) as a period that witnessed a strong presence and influence of the person of 'Abd al-Latif Abu Qura, who was leading the movement in a rather spontaneous manner in accordance with what he viewed as instrumental to its growth and sustenance. Al-'Azizi notes that the movement itself came to be identified with Abu Qura, who headed all its meetings and spoke on its behalf. He would meet with youth, state officials, and would host the movement's guests. Abu Qura would spend on the movement from his own personal funds, and would raise funds through his friends and supporters within the movement, albeit without formulating any particular organizational structure for it. He would delegate responsibilities to members in accordance with available means. Al-'Azizi adds that the formation of the movement's administration, under the name of "*Al-Maktab al-'Aam*" (The General Office), came as a response to the growth of the movement and the increasing number of members.¹¹⁸

Of the factors contributing to the emergence of a "balanced" relationship between the Muslim Brotherhood and the state at the time was the personality and character of King Abdullah ibn al-Hussein I, who worked to create a suitable environment for the movement's work and facilitated its activities in Jordan, culminating in the King's inauguration of the headquarters of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan. The King's embracing attitude towards the Brotherhood was evident when he met with Mahmoud 'Abd al-Halim, during which he said: "Jordan is in need of the Muslim Brotherhood's efforts, and let the first steps amongst these efforts be the appointment of 'Abd al-Hakim 'Abidin as a minister in Jordan's cabinet." The king honored 'Abidin, and the founder of the mother organization, Hassan al-Banna, with the title and rank of "Pasha." Al-Banna responded to the king's step with a letter of commendation and encouragement to work towards the Islamic cause, and lauded the king's lineage from the noble Hashemite descent and commended his "good faith" in the Brotherhood. Al-Banna nonetheless turned down the offer, stressing that "non-official" civil activism is of more need of Islamic efforts, albeit expressing hope that "official" and "non-official" efforts would intersect in the service of the Islamic *da'wa*.¹¹⁹

Of the strong indicators of the balanced relationship that emerged between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Jordanian state is the participation of a delegation from the Organization of the Muslim Brotherhood branches of Egypt and Palestine in the ceremony and celebrations of the crowning of Prince Abdullah ibn al-Hussein I as King on May 25, 1946. The Brotherhood's representative, 'Abd al-Mu'iz 'Abd al-Sattar presented the king with the Brotherhood's emblem after the former gave a speech on the occasion.

Also, of the indicators of "co-existence" between the Brotherhood and the state is the fact that the movement came out to welcome King Abdullah during his visit to Egypt in 1948. Furthermore, the movement invited state officials to partake in numerous festivities and events organized by the

¹¹⁷ Ibid, pp. 47-58.

¹¹⁸ 'Izzat al-'Azizi, "*Safahat la Tansa min Tarikh al-Haraka al-Islamiya fi al-Urdun*" (Lit., "Unforgettable Pages from the History of the Islamist Movement in Jordan"), in Al-Ra'i Jordanian daily newspaper, September 25, 1996.

¹¹⁹ 'Awni Jadou' al-'Obaidi, "*Jamaa'at al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin...*" (Lit., "The Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan and Palestine: 1945-1970"), op. cit., p. 37.

Muslim Brotherhood, such as the commemoration of the Prophetic Hijra (migration), *al-Isra wa al-Mi'raj* (Prophet's ascension to heaven), and the commemoration of the birth of the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him). Indeed, these events and celebrations would always commence and conclude with the Royal national anthem.

It is also during this time that the Brotherhood's magazine; "*Al-Kifah al-Islami*" (The Islamic Struggle) began to be issued. The movement was allowed to spread its *da'wa* in mosques and public places, and in the Brotherhood's branches and circles, without the interference of the state authorities. King Abdullah I was keen to meet with and host the movement's guests of scholars and prominent activists.¹²⁰

The war of 1948 with Israel became a major turning point in the course of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan. The war in fact contributed immensely to the movement's engagement in political life and political affairs in the country. Large numbers of the Brotherhood joined as volunteers in the battles against Jewish forces, and formed a brigade headquartered in 'Ain Karim in southern Jerusalem, which was headed by 'Abd al-Latif Abu Qura.¹²¹

Cautious Co-Existence and Common Threats

The Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan entered into a new phase in 1953, in light of a period distinguished by a tangible rise and proliferation of Arab nationalist and leftist movements in the Arab world, especially with the July 1952 revolution in Egypt.

The Brotherhood appointed Mohammad 'Abd al-Rahman Khalifa¹²² in 1953 to head the movement. This sudden change in the Brotherhood's leadership led to a withdrawal of a number of prominent leaders from engagement in its activities. A group of young Brotherhood members who had studied in Egypt controlled the reins of the Jordan Brotherhood. With the election of 'Abd al-Rahman Khalifa as the new leader, the processes of restructuring the organizational and leadership aspects of the movement took place, similar to what took place within the mother organization in Egypt.

Khalifa worked to formulate the movement's internal system of by-laws and institutional framework by which he would transform the movement away from the framework of a charitable organization, registered through the Law of Associations and Organizations, and into a comprehensive public Islamic entity, the mission of which is to be concerned with all aspects of public life, politically, economically, socially, and culturally. The Muslim Brotherhood would then solidify its move by officially requesting transforming the organization from a charity society to a public and comprehensive Islamic entity, a decision that was met with approval by the government.

¹²⁰ See Mikhliid 'Obaid al-Mubaydin, "*Al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin wa al-Nitham al-Siyasi fi al-Urdun*" (Lit., "The Muslim Brotherhood and the Political System in Jordan"), in 'Majalat al-'Ulum al-Ijtima'iya' (The Social Sciences Journal), Kuwait, vol. 2, issue no. 4, winter, 1999, pp. 15-16.

¹²¹ Ibrahim Gharaibeh, "The Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan," op. cit., pp. 54-55.

¹²² 'Abd al-Rahman Khalifa was born in 1919 in the city of al-Salt. He earned a degree in agriculture from Tul Karem and a license in law from the Law Institute in Jerusalem. He worked as a public prosecutor and a judge. Khalifa took on the position of the General Supervisor of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan from 1953 until 1994.

It became evident with the new internal by-laws that the movement is to become more politicalized than before. However, the Muslim Brotherhood would remain close to the regime, particularly amid the rise and spread of pan-nationalist, leftist, and communist forces in the 1950s, which came to constitute a threat to the very existence of both the regime and the Brotherhood at once. The bitter confrontations between the mother Brotherhood organization with the regime of Abd al-Nasser in Egypt further contributed to strengthening the ties of cooperation and coordination between the Jordanian regime and the Brotherhood, reaching its peak in the events of April 1957 in confrontations with the government of Prime Minister Sulaiman Al-Nabulsi and the coalition of political parties influential in it.

The Muslim Brotherhood took part in the 1956 parliamentary elections in Jordan, for the first time as a movement, after it had sufficed to supporting some of its members and supporters in running in previous elections of 1951 and 1954. In 1956, and out of a total of six Brotherhood candidates, the movement won four seats in parliament, constituting 10 percent of the overall Jordanian Lower House of Parliament (Council of Deputies). Despite the Brotherhood deputies granting a vote of confidence in the government of Al-Nabulsi, which exhibited leftist and pan-nationalist orientations, they nonetheless switched over to the side of the regime and escalated in their oppositional stances against the communist and leftist forces, a stance that recalls their earlier position in supporting the endorsement of the Anti-Communism Law of 1953.¹²³

As of March 1957, the public confrontations between the Muslim Brotherhood and leftist and nationalist political parties began to manifest clearly, particularly through competing and counter protests and demonstrations. Towards the end of April, and with the resignation of al-Nabulsi's cabinet, the Brotherhood organized a number of populist activities against these forces, and worked to mobilize their bases and incite public opinion against them through mosque sermons and other public venues. The confrontations would climax with the Brotherhood using armed force in support of the regime in confronting what came to be described as an attempted coup by the "Free Officers" to overthrow the king.¹²⁴

King Abdullah I was quick to show his gratitude for the Brotherhood's support of the state and the monarchy. The Brotherhood's General Supervisor at the time, 'Abd al-Rahman Khalifa recalls that the king offered him, through his Royal Court Chief, to form a new government. Khalifa turned down the offer "because the organization is still young and development, and does not have the capacity to form a ministerial cabinet, especially that most of the Brotherhood's members were young men with little experience."¹²⁵

Despite the warm and friendly relationship between the regime and the Muslim Brotherhood at the time, the latter, nonetheless, were simultaneously a source of nuisance for the regime because of their anti-Western ideas, on the one hand, and their ideology that Islamic *Sharia* law is the only legitimate basis of the state, on the other. Indeed, the Brotherhood would often criticize some of the

¹²³ See Hani al-Hourani, "*Tarikh al-Hayat al-Niyabiya fi al-Urdun*" (Lit., "The History of Parliamentary Life in Jordan"), Sharq Press, Cyprus, 1989, pp. 77-92.

¹²⁴ Hani al-Hourani, "*Mustaqbal al-Haraka al-Islamiya fi al-Urdun*" (Lit., "The Future of the Islamist Movement in Jordan"), in *Al-Harakat wa al-Tamithimat al-Islamiya fi al-Urdun* (The Islamist Movements and Organizations in Jordan), Markaz Dirasat al-Urdun al-Jadid and Dar al-Sindibad, Amman, 1997, p. 276.

¹²⁵ See Ibrahim Gharaibeh, "The Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan...." op cit., p. 68.

government's actions, especially those which the former considered as a deviation from Islamic moral values. They also denounced the strong relationship between successive Jordanian governments with Great Britain, and held a major demonstration in 1954 in protest of the presence of British officers in the Jordanian army, and called for their ouster. The demonstration led to the arrest of a number of Brotherhood members, including the General Supervisor, Khalifa.

The Muslim Brotherhood also denounced the Baghdad Pact of 1955, and Jordan's attempt to join it. They rejected the Eisenhower Doctrine (1957), which aimed to fill the void in the region with the United States substituting Great Britain in influence in the region. These events nonetheless did not prevent the movement from maintaining praise and commendation of the king. The relationship with the regime would return strong following the tripartite aggression against Egypt in 1956, with Jordan standing in support of Egypt.¹²⁶

The vacillating relationship between the state and the Muslim Brotherhood would turn tense on several occasions in the late 1950s and 1960s. In 1959, the Brotherhood's newspapers and pamphlets were confiscated and banned, and a number of Brotherhood members, along with the General Supervisor, were arrested. In 1960, the movement directed its fierce criticism against the government for what it considered "leniency" in moral issues, as when the government permitted a foreign company to present ice-skating shows in Jordan. The wave of arrests renewed in 1963, and the Brotherhood responded by giving a vote of no-confidence in the government of Wasfi al-Tal, accusing it of failing to apply Islamic *Sharia* and failing to respect moral and ethical values, in addition to criticizing it for distancing Jordan from the influence of the Arab region and failing to take any action towards jihad activities against Israel.¹²⁷

Despite the meandering nature of the relationship between the state and the Brotherhood, and the occasional clash of perspectives, yet the interests of both sides and the heritage of co-existence remained strong. The strong bonds date back to the Brotherhood's stance in support of the regime in the 1950s and early 1960s, and in response, the regime constituted a safe haven for the Muslim Brotherhood, which at the time was facing stern clampdown by a number of Arab regimes, with Egypt at the fore.

The Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan witnessed a profound turning point with the defeat of the 1967 war. Indeed, the movement experienced a quantum leap in terms of its organizational structure and mobilization and recruitment of young generations, particularly with the setbacks and retreat of the proliferation and influence of nationalist and leftist powers. A strong current evolved within the movement that was opposed to the "reformist" orientation of the Brotherhood, and called for opening the door wide for jihad. The Brotherhood would then establish a number of jihadi bases, known as "*Mu'askarat al-Shuyoukh*" (The Sheikhs Encampments), through which a series of successful military operations were launched from inside Jordanian borders against Israeli military targets.

¹²⁶ See Mohammad 'Abd al-Qadir Abu Faris, "*Safahat min al-Tarikh al-Siyasi li al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin fi al-Urdun*" (Lit., "Pages from the History of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan"), 1st edition, Dar al-Furqan, Amman, 2000, pp. 13-41.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

Yet the Brotherhood's engagement in armed operations came to a halt with the ouster of Palestinian resistance factions from Jordan in 1970 after the bloody Black September events.¹²⁸ During these events, the Muslim Brotherhood took a neutral stance, and called on all parties to stop the bloodshed and preserve national unity.

In analyzing the evolution and course of the relationship between the Brotherhood and the regime, it is evident that earlier periods were characterized by a rather cautious and anxious coexistence. Despite the legal and public nature of the Brotherhood's activities, and its support to the King against the leftists and the pan-nationalists in 1957,¹²⁹ some of the Brotherhood's political positions led to a limited crisis in the movement's relationship with the governing regime. This was similar to what took place in 1957 when the Brotherhood opposed the Baghdad Pact and the subsequent arrest of its General Supervisor in 1958.¹³⁰

At that time, the Brotherhood did not constitute an influential political force in Jordanian society. The leftists and the nationalists supported by neighboring countries, Syria, Iraq, and Jamal Abdel Nasser's Egypt, constituted the real political threat and the ferocious adversary to the Jordanian regime. In spite of some disagreements between the governing regime and the Brotherhood at that time, the common sources of danger and the desire for "survival" drove the two parties to converge. This was especially the case because the Muslim Brotherhood movements in other countries were witnessing turbulent times in the 1950s in their relationship with 'Abd al-Nasser's regime in Egypt and the nationalist regime in Iraq, and then in Syria.

Ishaq al-Farhan, one of the most prominent leaders of the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood, affirms¹³¹ that that period was indeed severe for the movement. Its members were surrounded by leftists and nationalist powers which, at that time, did not show any friendliness or cordiality towards them. Jordanian Brotherhood members were watching the state of their brothers in neighboring Arab countries, which came to be ruled by nationalist and leftist regimes. On the other hand, the masses were not inclined towards the Brotherhood but rather towards the other two powers. Perhaps what al-Farhan was delineating is that historical conditions of that stage drove the Brotherhood to have a peaceful and positive relationship with the governing regime in Jordan.

From the beginning, the Brotherhood paid attention to the importance of direct social and educational work. Some of their leaders contributed to the establishment of the Islamic Scientific College in 1947, which remains one of the best and most renowned private secondary schools in the country. The Brotherhood also established the Islamic Center Charity Society in 1963, which later

¹²⁸ Black September of 1970 events started with an attempt by the democratic Populist Front to assassinate King Hussein on September 1st, the hijacking of three airplanes, and attempted overthrow of the monarchical regime in Jordan, which culminated in a bloody armed confrontation between the *Fida'iyyeen* factions and the Jordanian army. The events led to the ouster of the *Fida'iyyeen* Palestinian resistance factions from Jordan in September of 1970. For more details, refer to Asher Susser, "*Al-Khat al-Akhdar bayn al-Urdun wa Filastin: Sirat Wasfi al-Tal al-Siyasiya*" (Lit., "The Green Line Between Jordan and Palestine: The Political Biography of Wasfi al-Tal"), translated from Hebrew by Jawdat al-Sa'ad, 1st edition, Dar al-Azmina, Amman, 1994.

¹²⁹ Bassam Al-'Amoush, "*Mahatat fi Tarikh Jamaa'at al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin fi al-Urdun*" (Lit., "Stations in the History of the Muslim Brotherhood Party in Jordan"), op. cit., p. 26-50.

¹³⁰ Ibrahim Gharaibeh, "*Jamaa'at al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin...*" (Lit., "The Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan 1946-1996"), op. cit., p. 59-74.

¹³¹ Interview with Ishaq al-Farhan in the office of the Islamic Studies Society in Amman, conducted a few days before the parliamentary elections, on November 20, 2007.

became one of the prominent institutions for economic and charity work for the Brotherhood. This association included the Islamic Hospital and other medical centers, schools, and colleges.¹³²

During the previous decades, the Brotherhood movement was able to build a wide network of general social work organizations and to participate extensively in volunteer activities. The movement was also able to utilize mosques, schools, and charity work to disseminate and introduce their *da'wa*. In addition, the Brotherhood's centers and "branches" were open to many social groups and individuals to meet and organize sports and scouts competitions and activities. The state did not prevent these activities directly, and even in certain stages, used to encourage them to strengthen the Brotherhood's presence in confronting the strong nationalist-leftist adversary, in the 1950s and 1960s, and the "Palestinian factions" in the 1970s.¹³³

Therefore, it may be said that the 1950s and 1960s represented a period of introducing, establishing, and gradually – albeit quietly – raising the presence and influence of the Brotherhood in Jordanian society.

The Brotherhood and the State: The Golden Era

The 1970s and 1980s were important because they witnessed the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood on both the social and political levels. It is a known fact that the Brotherhood had participated in what was known at the beginning of the 1970s as "*Mu'askarat al-Shuyoukh*" (or the Sheikhs Camps), which were military clusters affiliated with the Palestinian *Feda'iyeen* factions. Despite such participation, the Brotherhood had taken a stance of "neutrality" during the violent military confrontations between the Jordanian army and these Palestinian factions in the early 1970s. Their "neutral" stance was indeed viewed as a "political" leaning in favor of the Jordanian regime during the confrontations.¹³⁴

The Brotherhood's stance in the 1970s crisis reflected positively on their relationship with the regime. The latter opened the door for the Muslim Brotherhood to work more freely especially inside Palestinian refugee camps to fill the vacuum caused by the ouster of the armed Palestinian factions, and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) to Lebanon and then to Tunisia. The Brotherhood took advantage of that period very well, a period that contributed to their gaining a considerable social base and support.

The new strategic rise of the Brotherhood in Jordanian society since the early 1970s corresponded with the rising Islamic awakening in the region as a whole, especially after the major setback (*Naksa*) and defeat of 1967. Indeed, the 1967 *Naksa* is considered by Arab researchers and intellectuals as the harbinger of the great retreat of the nationalist and leftist project in the Arab street.

¹³² Walid Hammad, "*Al-Islamiyyun wa al-'Amal al-Khairi fi al-Urdun: al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn Namūthajan*" (Lit., "Islamists and Charity Work in Jordan - the Muslim Brotherhood as an Example"), in: Hussein Abu Rumman (Ed.) "*Al-Harakat wa al-Tanhimat al-Islamiya fi al-Urdun*" (Lit., "Islamist Movements and Organizations in Jordan"), Dar al-Sindibad: Markaz al-Urdun al-Jadid li al-Dirasat, Amman, 1996, p. 169-188.

¹³³ Interview with Ishaq al-Farhan, op. cit.

¹³⁴ Bassam Al-'Amoush, "*Mahatat...*" (Lit. "Stations..."), op. cit., p. 66-72.

During that period, the Brotherhood developed their social tools and expanded in their public work. They began to participate strongly in student unions in universities and in professional trade unions and syndicates. They indeed made good use of the funds flowing from the Arab Gulf and put it to use in Islamic and charitable activities, particularly with the leap in international oil prices. All of the above contributed in enhancing and firmly rooting the Islamist trend among the Arab masses in general, and the Jordanian society in particular.

The 1970s and 1980s witnessed prosperity in the Arab Gulf work market and the migration of thousands from the Jordanian labor force to the Gulf. This factor provided for a steady social trend towards “religiosity,” which the Brotherhood would later invest in particularly in its political and social grassroots activism.

In the early 1980s, large numbers of Syrian Brotherhood members fled to Jordan, escaping the bloody massacres that took place there after the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood entered into armed confrontations with the Syrian regime. Although the Syrian Brotherhood members did not practice any direct political activity inside Jordan, they nonetheless contributed to the spread of the propagation phenomenon that used cassette tapes of lectures and Islamic books, all of which were factors that motivated and supported the “Islamist” presence in Jordanian society.

Samih al-Ma’ayta,¹³⁵ a political analyst who is close to the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan, notes that the 1980s was a “fertile” period for the Muslim Brotherhood. That period witnessed the building and growth of its social and economic institutions, and provided it with an effective social network. Indeed, according to al-Ma’ayta, this period constituted the “social cache” of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan.

The Beginnings of Rifts and Fissures

In a letter sent by the late King Hussein in 1985 to the then Prime Minister, Zayd al-Rifa’i, indicators of the rifts and fissures in the relationship between the regime and the Brotherhood were highlighted. The king hinted that he had been deceived by the Muslim Brotherhood and by their intentions. The king said, “Suddenly, the truth is unveiled. What was unknown to us has become evident. It appears that some of those who were tied to the bloody events in Syria are now amongst us.”¹³⁶

In fact, after the Syrian regime succeeded in cracking down on, and eliminating, the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria, Jordan began to work on improving its relations with its northern neighbor, for which, the government of Prime Minister Zayd al-Rifa’i was formed in 1985. Jordan presented an official “apology” to Syria over the actions that the Muslim Brotherhood had committed against the Syrian regime. Thus, the relationship between Jordan and Syria improved at the expense of the Muslim Brotherhood inside Jordan.¹³⁷

The previous “royal comment” was confirmed by a senior official in the state, who pointed out that the beginnings of the crisis with the Brotherhood was not “new,” but rather dates back to the mid-

¹³⁵ Interview with Samih al-Ma’ayta, conducted on December 12, 2007.

¹³⁶ Ibrahim Gharaibeh, “*Al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun...*” (Lit. “The Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan 1946-1996”), op. cit., p. 85-86.

¹³⁷ See Leonard Robinson, op. cit., p. 85.

1980s. He linked the crisis to an early realization by the decision-making establishment in the Kingdom that the Brotherhood had become a strong influential organization, which had pulled the carpet from underneath of feet of the leftist and nationalist forces. We shall return to this “comment” later in the chapter in the context of discussing the dynamism of the current crisis between the Brotherhood and the regime.¹³⁸

Soon after, a violent crackdown on university students at the Jordanian al-Yarmouk University took place in 1985-1986. Security forces intervened to suppress students who demonstrated in protest of a rise in university fees. A substantial participation of Muslim Brotherhood students was clear in these events, which became yet another turning point in the transformation of the relationship between the regime and the Brotherhood during that phase.

Samih al-Ma’ayta, who was an active member of the Muslim Brotherhood students who took part in the al-Yarmouk University protests, views that the decision to “escalate” was not a “political” decision taken by the Brotherhood’s leadership, but rather it was a decision guided by the “field leaderships” inside university campuses. At that time, the rather right-wing Brotherhood leader, Dr. Mohammad Abu Faris, was in charge of this department.

Al-Ma’ayta points out that the Brotherhood during that period were active in student unions and organizations and had a strong presence in university campuses, a matter that contributed to shifting the “spirit” of popular political transformation away from leftist and nationalist forces, and more towards the rising Islamist forces. Parallel to the rising Islamist influence on university campuses in the 1980s were the early signs of an emergent Islamist influence upon professional trade unions and syndicates.¹³⁹

In 1989, parliamentary life was resumed in the country after a long hiatus. The 1989 parliamentary elections confirmed beyond any doubt the sweeping popularity of Islamists, in general, and of the Muslim Brotherhood, in particular. The Brotherhood stood for elections under a unified ticket of candidates, and under the motto of “Islam is the Solution.” The movement won 22 seats out of a total of 80, in addition to a number of independent Islamist candidates who won four other seats. These results were considered a pronounced success for Islamists, in comparison with the humble percentage of votes, and seats, gained by the leftists and the nationalists.¹⁴⁰

Among the factors attributed to necessitating the return of parliamentary life in 1989 was the popular uprising that took place in the southern part of the kingdom in the previous year. Indeed, southern governorates took to the streets in protest of the sudden and overwhelming hike in prices of commodities, coupled with public reaction to a number of corruption cases that were stirred up. The uprising led to a political and security crisis between the regime and the (eastern) Jordanian tribes, which were viewed as the backbone of the stability of that very regime. The events also hindered the economic reform program that the regime had just initiated. Observers and researchers attribute to those events the resumption of parliamentary life, after the decision-making

¹³⁸ Interview with a state official who has a direct relationship with the state file of the Muslim Brotherhood. The interview was conducted at his office on June 11, 2008.

¹³⁹ Interview with Samih al-Ma’ayta, op. cit.

¹⁴⁰ Ibrahim Gharaibeh, “*Jamaa’at al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin...*” (Lit., “The Muslim brotherhood in Jordan...”), op. cit., pp. 119-138.

establishment in the kingdom felt the need to alleviate the social and political congestion and frustration that prevailed during that period.

On the other hand, one cannot overlook two other main factors that contributed to the return of parliamentary life in 1989. The first is the external factor, where the collapse of the Soviet Union and the disintegration of the Communist camp at the time brought about a new wave of democratic transformations. The late King Hussein wanted to take the initiative and jump on the bandwagon of emergent global transformations. The other factor was the decision of administrative and legal disengagement between the East Bank and the West Bank, which the King had announced in July 1988. The disengagement decision relieved Jordan from the predicament and dilemma of holding parliamentary elections in one part of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan without the other, considering that the West Bank at the time was still administratively part of Jordan.

The Gap between the Regime and the Brotherhood

Representatives of the Muslim Brotherhood in the parliament had participated in the government of Prime Minister Mudar Badran in 1991, holding five “non-sovereign” ministerial portfolios (Education, Health, Justice, Social development, and Awqaf (Endowments) and Islamic Affairs). This active participation did not manifest any indications of predictions of the “tragic” transformation that will afflict the relationship between the regime and the Muslim Brotherhood in the near future. Perhaps this participation represented a symbolic turning point from the height of good relations to the downward spiraling in relations that will take place henceforth.¹⁴¹

The Jordanian regime found itself in the context of regional isolation in the wake of the outbreak of the Gulf War in 1991, which culminated in the withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait. The Madrid Peace Negotiations Conference was key for Jordan to exit this isolation. This sweeping transformation in Jordanian foreign policy came in parallel with a more objective shift in domestic policy, and particularly between the regime and the Muslim Brotherhood, which had since monopolized popular power and support as the sole political force left in the domestic political arena. The Brotherhood capitalized on this political climate by establishing their political party, *Jabhat al-‘Amal al-Islami*, or the “Islamic Action Front (IAF),” in 1992.¹⁴²

Severe differences exploded between the regime and the Muslim Brotherhood as Jordan entered into peace negotiations with Israel in 1991. The gap between the two widened further with the endorsement of a new electoral law, which was based on the principle of a Single Non-Transferrable Vote (unpopularly came to be known as the “one-man one-vote law”). The Muslim Brotherhood were of the view that this law had the main objective of curtailing their parliamentary representation and preventing the movement from obstructing the endorsement of the imminent peace treaty. And, indeed, the Wadi ‘Araba peace treaty between Jordan and Israel was signed and ratified in 1994, after it was endorsed by the 12th Lower House of Parliament that was formed in 1993, in accordance with the then new electoral law. The Muslim Brotherhood had participated in the elections, this time only winning 17 seats, a retreat from their share in the previous parliament.

¹⁴¹ Cf. Bassam al-‘Amoush, “*Mahatat...*” (Lit. “Stations...”), op. cit., pp. 130-135.

¹⁴² Ibrahim Gharaibeh, “*Jamaa’at al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin...*” (Lit., “The Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan...”), op. cit., pp. 139-142.

The new official policies towards the Muslim Brotherhood were not confined to the election law; they in fact extended to other arenas, including university campuses and curtailment of Brotherhood employment in official state institutions. In addition, a number of new legislations were passed, which were viewed as an embodiment of the level of retreat and deviation from the democratic course of the country and a move towards restricting and tightening the grip on public freedoms. Consequently, the Muslim Brotherhood boycotted the next parliamentary elections held in 1997, issuing in reaction a political declaration entitled "*Limatha Qata'na?*" (Why We Boycotted?). The declaration expressed objection and protest to what the movement considered as a regression and a retreat from the country's democratic path, and a particular targeting of its political role and influence.¹⁴³

Nonetheless, the 1997 parliamentary elections took place without the participation of the Muslim Brotherhood, and also witnessed the boycott of several other opposition political parties as well. The gap and the conflicts between the regime and the Muslim Brotherhood continued to widen until the death of King Hussein in 1999. With the ascension of his eldest son, Abdullah, to the throne, a new page was opened in the relationship between the incoming regime and the Muslim Brotherhood.

It is worth mentioning, however, that despite the serious disagreements and conflicts between the governing institution in the state and the Muslim Brotherhood, indicators point to the fact that channels of political dialogue remained open and continued. Indeed, the relationship never reached a critical stage. The Brotherhood strategically abstained from partaking in the many events that directly touched on the "security" aspect of the state, such as in 1996, when the policies of structural adaptation led to a hike in basic commodities and consequently, the eruption of turmoil in southern cities and in some university campuses. The Muslim Brotherhood's role in these events was confined to the "minimum degree of protest," contrary to the leftist and nationalist powers which participated heavily in these events, culminating in the arrest of a number of its leaderships and members.

In this context, Samih al-Ma'ayta points out that, despite the Muslim Brotherhood's strong opposition to the peace treaty with Israel, they nevertheless did not seek to "abrogate it, inasmuch that they aimed to "register a historic stance." Al-Ma'ayta supports this claim with the observation that, at the time of voting on the decision to endorse the peace treaty in parliament, one of the options offered was for the Muslim Brotherhood representatives in parliament to submit their resignation in protest of the treaty, which would have represented a fierce escalation against the regime. However, the movement decided to remain in parliament, and merely voted against endorsing the treaty.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ Ali Mahaftha, "*Al-Dimuqratiya al-Muqayada...*" (Lit., "The Limited Democracy..."), op. cit.; Cf. Bassam al-'Amoush "*Mahatat...*" (Lit., "Stations...") op. cit., pp. 205-209.

¹⁴⁴ Interview with Samih al-Ma'ayta, op. cit.

Structural Transformations and an Open Crisis

Several factors had played a fundamental role in drawing the arrangement of the relationship between the new king, Abdullah II, and the Muslim Brotherhood. The period of regime transition, and the non-political background of the new, young king, played a major role in granting the “security apparatus” (more specifically the General Intelligence Department, or “GID”) the main role in administering the details of domestic governance. Thus, the “Brotherhood file” was transferred from being a “political file” handled personally by the king, to a “security file” in the hands of responsible officials. Consequently, the relationship between the two parties became tense, resulting in a significant closure of channels of communication, meetings, and understandings, in complete contradiction to the approach of the previous reign.

This strategic change was clearly manifested with the ouster of the Hamas leadership in 1999, which represented a clear indication that the new king does not intend to play a strategic role in the West Bank. In the previous phase, the relationship between Hamas and the late King Hussein was indeed strong, and the movement’s political bureau enjoyed a legitimate presence in Jordan, despite the armed operations it was carrying out inside the Palestinian Occupied Territories. And, despite Jordan’s signing of the Wadi ‘Araba peace treaty with Israel, Hamas’ political bureau nonetheless did not issue any statements hostile to the Jordanian regime.

The late king himself accompanied one of the Hamas leaders, Mousa abu Maqzouq, from an American prison to Amman. Indeed, he took a stern position towards the attempted Mossad assassination of Khalid Mish‘al in Amman in September of 1997, when the late king insisted on Israel to send the antidote for the poison administered to Mish‘al. King Hussein’s stances towards Hamas were also evident with his insistence upon the release of Hamas’ spiritual leader, Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, from Israeli prisons. The king had indeed considered this to be the price that must be paid for Jordan to overcome what it considered an Israeli aggression against its security and its sovereignty.¹⁴⁵

Therefore, the ouster of the Hamas leadership from Jordan constituted a clear message from the new king that he was giving priority to the domestic front, and to building a new relationship with the Palestinian Authority; at its core is the notion that Jordan considers the establishment of an independent Palestinian state a vital interest to the Kingdom.

This change in strategic priorities reflected heavily on the relationship between the Royal Palace and the Muslim Brotherhood; for, the late king had always looked at the Brotherhood and at Hamas as a “trump card” in confronting the Palestinian Liberation Organization (the PLO), Fatah, and the late Palestinian President Yasser Arafat. This is especially the case when one considers that King Hussein had taken the decision of political and administrative disengagement with the West Bank reluctantly; a decision that had been – at the time – rejected by the Muslim Brotherhood (based on its perpetual affirmation on unity). The Brotherhood’s rejection to the disengagement decision was met with ease – albeit unofficially – from the late king, according to al-Ma‘ayta.

¹⁴⁵ For more details on these incidents and the relationship between Hamas and the Jordanian regime, see chapter four of this book.

In the new reign of King Abdullah II, parliamentary life was suspended for over two years (2001-2003), with the parliamentary elections postponed after the end of the term of the 13th Lower House of Parliament. A great wave of crises emerged between the new regime and the Muslim Brotherhood, instigated by several incidents. Amongst the important incidents is what came to be known as the “Professional Syndicates Crisis” in 2004, where ex- Minister of Interior Samir al-Habashneh spearheaded confrontations with the Muslim Brotherhood. Al-Habashneh was known to represent the rightist wing in the state vis-à-vis the Brotherhood, and indications were surfacing of a deep political crisis emerging. Al-Habashneh however would be relieved from his post before finishing his battle, in what appeared to be an indication of the regime’s retreat from its intent to yank the professional associations from the Muslim Brotherhood, after the state had already curtailed the Brotherhood of influence in university campuses, mosques, and elsewhere of political, civil, and religious institutions.

With the occupation of Iraq in 2003, the symptoms of a new regional and an internal phase began to surface, particularly in the context of the shifts in American influence in the region pushing towards enhancing the political and economic reform processes, with the idea that terrorism (which brought about the events of September 11, 2001), is the illegitimate offspring of the absence of reform, development, and democracy in the Arab world. This view would also consider that the most successful weapon on confronting extremist movements is that of encouraging comprehensive reforms. It is against this backdrop that the American-Middle Eastern partnership was announced by former Secretary of State Colin Powell, and the Greater Middle East initiative was sought by the G-8.

This new climate imposed itself on the relationship between the new regime and the Muslim Brotherhood. The Brotherhood resumed participation in parliamentary life in the 2003 elections, winning 17 seats. Unfounded political suppositions would reverberate at the time of an “implicit deal” between the two sides, delineating the Royal Palace’s desire for the Brotherhood to bring in parliamentarians from the “Palestinian youth.” This delineation would hint to the presence of a “current” inside the Kingdom’s “power house” that is pushing towards more political integration of Jordanians of Palestinian origin.

The general features of the relationship between the official state establishment and the Muslim Brotherhood would lean towards a sort of “pacification” and “calming” of the crisis, meaning to halt the continuous depletion in the relationship between the two sides. This would come about despite the widening gap between the political stances of each side on both the domestic and regional affairs.

However, the sweeping victory of Hamas in the Palestinian legislative elections at the beginning of the 2006 fiercely ignited the question of the mutual relationship and intentions of both the Brotherhood and Hamas. This was exacerbated with the arrest of four members of Parliament who attended the wake following the funeral of the leader of Al-Qaeda in Iraq, Abu Mus‘ab al-Zarqawi, and the subsequent sentencing of two of them to a year and a half in prison (before a Special Royal Pardon would be issued to release them). This development would further aggravate the

relationship, and would push the suspicions and questions of intentions to unprecedented limits and scenarios that would reach the stage of the “option of divorce.”¹⁴⁶

One of the main touchstones of the relationship between the political establishment and the Muslim Brotherhood was the election of Zaki Bani Ersheid as the Secretary General of the Islamic Action Front, in March 2006. His election was met with a fierce government rejection, and with strongly worded warning messages, on the pretext of his close relations with Hamas, a matter that Bani Ersheid necessarily denies.

After that, the crisis in the relationship would further deepened with the government’s announcement of expropriating the Muslim Brotherhood’s “Islamic Center Charity Society” on the ostensible pretext of “financial and administrative” corruption in this association. Nonetheless, the political dimensions of the move were too evident to be overlooked. Indeed, the political dimensions of the move are directly linked to the conviction held by the state’s “power house” that the Islamic Center Society constituted a main source of financial strength to the movement, and a vital source of mobilization of activism and gaining a wider popular base. Indeed, a prominent politician, who is rather antagonistic towards the Muslim Brotherhood, noted that the Islamic Center Society represents 30 percent of the Brotherhood’s sources of power, and is an essential source of revenue with which the movement finances its parliamentary elections campaigns.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ For more details on the four parliamentarians’ visit to the funeral wake of Abu Mus’ab al-Zarqawi, see the report on BBC (in Arabic) available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/arabic/middle_east_news/newsid_5075000/5075284.stm

¹⁴⁷ Interview with a prominent politician who preferred to remain anonymous, conducted on September 10, 2006.

2. Explaining the Crisis and Its Dimensions

The municipal elections of September 2007 represented a turning point in the relationship between the regime and the Muslim Brotherhood. The Brotherhood took the decision to withdraw their candidates hours after the ballot booths opened their doors in protest of what they considered “rigging beyond limits”, which reached its peak when members of the military forces were brought by special buses and voted openly. On its part, the government accused the Brotherhood of “contriving” and premeditating the withdrawal decision, and that upon seeing that the results in their favor would be weak, they used all kinds of pretexts to undermine the elections.

The crisis would not be limited to the Brotherhood’s withdrawal from the elections. Indeed, the Brotherhood would escalate their political discourse using an unprecedented language in criticism and protest against the state. This was manifested through an article published on the day of elections (July 31, 2007) on the official website of the Brotherhood, signed by the “Political Editor”. The article, entitled “*Limatha Qata’na al-‘Urs al-Dimoghwa’i*” (Why We Boycotted the Demagogic Wedding?), launches a fierce attack on the General Intelligence Department, a department that always dives underneath the crisis between the Islamists and governments and remains outside the circle of criticism and controversy. It was clear that the article intended to deliver a message that the Brotherhood could overstep the “red lines” since the government has overstepped them as well.¹⁴⁸

The government’s response was given a few days later during an interview conducted by the official state news agency with the Prime Minister then, Ma’rouf al-Bakhit, who went beyond the limits of common official language and launched “unprecedented” accusations and attacks against the Brotherhood. He warned that “accidental leaderships are trying to drag Jordan into circumstances similar to what is happening in Nahr al-Bared in Lebanon.” He considered that “unwarranted and overstepping talk about the military and security institutions is a rot in the bone and insolence against the fundamentals.”¹⁴⁹

There was an overriding feeling within political and media circles that the government’s threatening message would not be confined to words, and that perhaps there would be “some kind” of action taken against the Brotherhood. However, an interview conducted by the Jordanian official state television with King Abdullah II at this point helped mitigate the state of uneasiness and apprehension. In this interview, the king did not refer in any way to the municipal elections, despite the fact that the interview came only a few days after, however, the king was keen on delivering a message by his affirmation on holding “fair and impartial parliamentary elections,” a message

¹⁴⁸ Statement published on the Muslim Brotherhood’s site: “*Limatha Qata’na al-‘Urs al-Dimoghwa’i*” (Lit. “Why We Boycotted the Demagogic Wedding?”), <http://www.ikhwan-jor.com/>; cf. Mohammad Abu Rumman, “*Dinamikiyat al-Azma bayn al-Hukm wa al-Ikhwān fi al-Urdun*” (Lit. “The Dynamism of the Crisis between the Regime and the Brotherhood in Jordan”), on Jazeera.net available at <http://www.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/32E438CC-1D1F-436E-B74F-0F955A9C078B.html>

¹⁴⁹ Al-Hayat Newspaper, London, August 6, 2007 available at http://www.daralhayat.com/arab_news/levant_news/08-2007/Item-20070805-3790e247-c0a8-10ed-0169-5e99a0f7123f/story.html

understood by the Muslim Brotherhood as an indication of a “royal guarantee” towards the upcoming parliamentary elections.¹⁵⁰

A subsequent meeting between the Prime Minister and a delegation from the Muslim Brotherhood’s leadership, considered from the moderate trend, led to a containment of the crisis and a retreat from the “edge of the chasm”. Some leaks in the press, however, indicated that the security apparatus was not happy about the meeting that took place between the Prime Minister and the Brotherhood delegation.¹⁵¹

The containment of this particular crisis between the governing institution and the Muslim Brotherhood is reminiscent of what took place in 2004 with the crisis of the Professional Syndicates and Associations, when the developments almost reached a point of explosion before the state decided not to overstep the line of the crisis to an “unprecedented” stage of confrontation and tragic scenarios.

Behind the Crisis

There are various theories and suppositions that attempt to explain the causes behind this wide escalation in the crisis that pushed it towards the edge of chasm between the two sides. On its part, the regime says that the Muslim Brotherhood has “changed” and is no longer satisfied by the limited political role that characterized its activism in the past. The Brotherhood, according to the regime, is now demanding to be a “partner” in the decision-making process, a matter that aggravates the regime and stirs its fears of the movement’s political ambitions. On the other hand, the Brotherhood would be of the view that the regime itself has changed its own view of the movement, and no longer feels the need for it.

Who has changed; the Brotherhood or the regime? This question came to preoccupy the political and media debate between the two sides. But, in reality, what has actually changed are the political and historical conditions that have governed the relationship between the two for decades; conditions that have led to creating a climate of co-existence – in the past, especially during the times of historical alliance in confronting the common internal and external adversaries.

The historical and political circumstances changed during the 1990s in many respects:

Firstly, the “political adversaries,” such as the Arab nationalists, leftists, and the Palestinian organizations, had weakened and became limited secondary powers in their influence on society. Therefore, there were no shared sources of threat or common interests at stake as was the case in previous periods.

Secondly, the gap of differences and divergences between the regime and the Muslim Brotherhood has become greater than the common denominators between them. The Brotherhood had strongly

¹⁵⁰ See Nahed Hattar, “*Al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun wa Hamas wa Amman*,” (Lit., “The Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas, and Amman”), in *Al-Ra’i al-Akhar* electronic journal, issue no. 27 (2008), available at http://www.ra-akhar.com/ar/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=705&Itemid=19

¹⁵¹ See Rana al-Sabbagh, “*Muhawalat al-Ibqaa’ ‘ala Sha’rat Mu’awiya bayn al-Sulta wa al-Islamiyin*” (Lit., “An Attempt to Maintain the Last Bridge Between the Authority and the Islamists”), in *al-Arab al-Yawm* Jordanian daily newspaper, September 30, 2007 available at http://alarabalyawm.batelco.jo/print.php?articles_id=2570

opposed the peace treaty with Israel, and had maintained a negative stance towards reform and restructuring policies (particularly the program dictated by the International Monetary Fund). Furthermore, the regime was of the view that its entry into peace negotiations with Israel and its implementation of international economic programs were the only means to exit the “bottleneck” after its state of political isolation following the Gulf War in 1991. At the time, the financial assistance provided by the Arab Gulf states had been suspended as a result of Jordan’s position towards the war, and the regime’s relations with the Western powers, and with its Arab neighboring, deteriorated. The economic crisis was further exacerbated with the fleeing and ouster of hundreds of thousands of Jordanian expatriates from Kuwait and other Gulf countries, which led to increased pressures on domestic infrastructure and the public budget.

And, thirdly, the Brotherhood, indeed, had become the main populist power remaining that could influence public opinion, a matter that pushed the “security-oriented trend” within the state’s “power house” to take heed of the threat of the Brotherhood’s tangible rising power.

The Crisis in the Perspective of the the Regime

A prominent state official,¹⁵² who has been responsible for the Brotherhood’s file, explains that the crisis with the Muslim Brotherhood in fact started in the mid-1980s. The “grey areas” in the Brotherhood’s positions and its role are not borne of the past few years, but rather date back to over 20 years ago, to the mid-1980s, when the Muslim Brotherhood witnessed significant and grave transformations. These transformations were manifested as the “politically-extremist trend came to dominate the movement’s approaches and behavior.” As for the periods that represented a level of “closeness” with the official institution, i.e. the regime, such as the case of the Gulf War in 1991 in which the state paid a high price for its position, the Brotherhood’s attitude towards the state was one of “harassment” and instigating the public against it.

This senior state official regards the political work of the Brotherhood as being characterized during the last periods by clear divergence from the position of the official institution, and being distant from understanding the circumstances that govern the decision-making process. There is always a state of “seeking strength through outside support” and taking supportive stances towards external powers, even if the latter maintained bad relations with Jordan. One example given by this state official on this is the Arab Political Parties’ Conference held in Damascus in 2006, and, in which Dr. Ishaq al-Farhan, a prominent Islamist leader, participated and “was applauding the Syrian President, Bashar al-Assad, as the latter launched accusations against Jordan! This came at a time in which his movement, the Muslim Brotherhood, remained banned in Syria.”

The official institution views the positions of the Brotherhood as “ingratitude” and heedlessness of the privileges they enjoy in Jordan. The Brotherhood, from the perspective of the regime, is allowed to work legitimately and openly, and welcomed to participate in the political process, and is able to build a wide social network and base. Instead of affirming the loyalty of the Brotherhood to the state and its concern for the country’s interests, the Brotherhood instead stands on the opposite side of the positions of the state, in most cases, according to this reading.

¹⁵² The following part of the analysis is based on accounts from an interview with a high-ranking official who is in direct relationship with the Brotherhood’s file. Interview was conducted on August 14, 2006.

This official believes that “the Brotherhood has become a real danger to political stability and constitutes a condition closer to the ‘Khomeini phenomenon’. They pull the carpet from underneath the state through several projects that are parallel to the state’s projects socially, economically, politically, and culturally. In every field, they have institutions and bodies that carry out wide activities to the extent that they actually represent a “state within a state”. A previous head of the General Intelligence Department even describes the great influence of the Brotherhood as a “white coup against state institutions.”

This official adds, “The problem is that the influence of the Brotherhood, its activities, and its institutions are used against the state. The ‘branches’ of the Brotherhood and its ‘circles’ have transformed into political podiums, far from the social and educational functions for which the Muslim Brotherhood was established. In these brethren meetings, the official institution is whipped and accused of being an agent for and an ally of the United States.”

The official reaches the conclusion that “there are two faces to the Brotherhood: Through the first face, they talk with the regime in a peaceful, truce-oriented manner. Yet, through the second face, they talk with the internal Brotherhood in a language that affirms the priority of loyalty to the movement above that to the state and its interest, and focus on opposing the policies of the official institution as if the latter is an opponent of the movement.”

The official adds that the danger of this equation today between the Brotherhood and the Regime lies in the fact that “the Brotherhood aligns itself with the Iranian-Syrian axis, and with Hezbollah and Hamas, all of which are countries and organizations that harbor animosity towards Jordan and its regime, and adopt political choices that are quite distant, and often contrary, to the choices of the Jordanian state. If we envision the explosion of the security conditions in the region in the case of the deterioration of the situations in Lebanon and Palestine, alongside the ongoing civil war in Iraq and Iran’s activities in the context of its nuclear program, then it is also evident that the Brotherhood remains an candidate player in the context of political stability, mobilization and instigation of public opinion against the policies of the state.”

This prominent official goes even one step further when he compares “moderate Islam” (the Brotherhood), and “extremist Islam,” (Al-Qaeda). Despite acknowledging the presence of a “*Takfiri* trend” within certain circles of Jordanian society, yet he maintains that the state has a clear strategy in dealing with this challenge. However, he considers that the problem with the Muslim Brotherhood is that they are ambiguous in their positions and discourse towards the state and its institutions, and maintain “more than one face.” The official notes that one of the pending issues today remains the basic principle in accordance with which the movement operates, and that is “public in its *da’wa*, and secretive in organization.” The secretive and covert nature of the organization is a matter no longer acceptable to the official institution of the state, especially considering that the Muslim Brotherhood is an officially-registered organization in accordance with Jordanian laws, and hence, its documents, activities, and actions should all be clear and unveiled to the state’s monitoring.

The above rationale represents a summary and an affirmation of the perspective of the official state institution towards its relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood. A number of main observations may be deduced as constituting the perspective of the state:

- The Muslim Brotherhood has become an organized movement that constitutes a source of threat to the regime in light of the change in the Brotherhood's political orientation. This orientation has become more radical and opposing to the policies of the state, without recognizing or appreciating the pressures that the state faces.¹⁵³
- The Muslim Brotherhood supports regional "unfriendly" powers. This is perhaps reminiscent of the relationship in previous periods, albeit in a completely reversed manner, where the Brotherhood stood alongside the regime against "unfriendly" Arab nations and domestic powers.
- The governing institution, i.e. the regime, views the Muslim Brotherhood institutions with an eye of suspicion and apprehension, and considers these latter institutions as "parallel" to, if not competitive with, state institutions.

The Brotherhood, Hamas, and the Regime

The previous official reading shed a heavy shadow on the relationship of the Muslim Brotherhood with the regime. The severity of the crisis was exacerbated when state officials affirmed that there had been an infiltration of the Muslim Brotherhood movement in Jordan by Hamas. This infiltration, according to the state officials, would manifest itself with Hamas' insistence upon the appointment of Zaki Bani Ersheid (which the regime views as having strong relations with Hamas' politburo) as Secretary General of the Islamic Action Front. This took place amid the spiraling deterioration in the relationship between Hamas and the Jordanian regime, particularly after Hamas came to power in Gaza.

It is difficult to separate the tension in the Jordanian government's relationship with Hamas from the government's relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood. On the one hand, Hamas represents the Muslim Brotherhood organization in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. And, there is also an emotional ideological relationship, at a lesser level, between the two, Hamas and the Jordanian Brotherhood, considering that Hamas was, officially, part of the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood before they disengaged. On the other hand, a great number of the Brotherhood's leaders, members, and supporters, are "Jordanians of Palestinian origin." Hence, they react directly, and with sensitivity, to the crises and conflicts that erupt between the Jordanian government and Hamas.

One of the evident manifestations of the crisis between the government and Hamas emerged with the Jordanian government's announcement (and only a few weeks after Hamas won the Palestinian legislative elections in 2006), of discovering a "cell" affiliated with "elements within Hamas" that had planned to carry out armed operations inside Jordan. The Muslim Brotherhood was quick to cast doubt on this claim, a grave claim that stirred dynamic political and media debates, and further aggravated the "tensions" already mounting between the government and the Muslim Brotherhood.

¹⁵³ Cf. Shmuel Bar, "*Al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun fi al-Urdun*" (Found in English as "The Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan, Data and Analysis," The Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, June 1998.

The Jordanian government, on its part, considered that the Brotherhood's stance was "unequivocally" biased toward Hamas, without the former taking initiative to confirm the Jordanian official narrative first.¹⁵⁴

Away from the "official narrative" and the question of its credibility and accuracy, it remains that the political significance and implications of the announcement indicate that there is a spiraling deterioration in the relationship between the Jordanian government and Hamas, a matter that puts the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood in a predicament, and stirs ramifications and debates within the movement itself, which will be discussed henceforth.

¹⁵⁴ Al-Sharq Al-Awsat Newspaper, London, April 20, 2006 available at <http://www.asharqalawsat.com/details.asp?section=1&article=359229&issue=10005>

3. The Brotherhood's Political Debates

Officials in the governing institution and those who are close to the regime claim that the Organization of the Muslim Brotherhood has come to take a more extremist and radical orientation in its political discourse and activities over the past few years. On the other hand, other opinions indicate that the Brotherhood is leaning towards further acceptance and more serious commitment to democracy and its conditions, and furthermore, that they are “paying the price of their moderation” – contrary to the political propaganda presented by Arab regimes.

Will the Brotherhood move further towards moderation and political participation, or in the opposite direction towards extremism and ideological and political rigidity?

The answer to this question necessitates a review and assessment of the development of the ideological and political debate within the Muslim Brotherhood. Indeed, the period from the 1970s until the mid-1980s witnessed the prevalence of a fundamental debate regarding the definition of Arab ruling regimes, the movement's relationship with these regimes, and the movement's position on democracy, its contents, conditions, and the level and dimensions of political participation within this framework.

The Brotherhood's debate developed later on to deliberate on the priorities of concern and the determinants of political stances, in terms of whether they are subject to the parameters and conditions of the Jordanian “political game,” or whether they take a more regional dimension, and continue to focus on the Palestinian cause. In this context, the framework of the relationship with Hamas came to occupy a central focus within the Brotherhood debate, particularly after Jordan's ouster of the Hamas leadership in 1999. This new debate has contributed to reproducing the state of internal organizational polarization, which bore yet another debate concerning the limits of the movement's political ambitions.

Between Ideology and Pragmatism

In its nascent stages during the 1950s and 1960s, the Muslim Brotherhood's political discourse focused on specific political issues, at the fore of which were: supporting the Palestinian cause (the Brotherhood took part in the 1948 war), denouncing the Soviet Union and the Communist camp then, and confronting the spread of communist, leftist, and pan-Arab nationalist ideologies. The latter ideologies had taken a negative stance towards the Brotherhood and towards the question of the role of religion in society, and had in fact accused Islamist movements of maintaining relations with the West and of being “backwards” and “regressive.”¹⁵⁵

Towards the second half of the 1960s, the harbingers of a new intellectual and ideological school of thought began to emerge, particularly with the spread of the thought of Sayyid Qutb, the Brotherhood Islamic thinker. The Thought and ideas of Sayyid Qutb represented a reflection of the “plight” of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and their bloody confrontations with Jamal Abd al-

¹⁵⁵ Interview with Ishaq Al-Farhan, op. cit.; cf. Ibrahim Gharaibeh, “*Al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn*” (Lit. “The Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan 1946-1996”), op. cit., p. 45-73.

Nasser's Egyptian regime. In light of this context, a debate emerged inside the Brotherhood movement that wavered between two directions. The first called for a serious consideration of underground covert work, amidst the bitter confrontations between the Muslim Brotherhood and a number of Arab regimes. This direction argued that the movement's relationship with the Jordanian regime had no future guarantees. On the opposite end of the spectrum was the current that insisted on public, overt, and legitimate work, in an effort to avoid falling into the mistakes of the movement in Egypt when the latter went underground.¹⁵⁶

However, criticism and opposition to the thought of Sayyid Qutb emerged within the movement in the early 1970s, solidified with the publishing of the book "*Du'waa la Qudaa*" (Callers to Faith, not Judges), by the legal scholar and former General Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt Hassan al-Hudaibi. Subsequent writings that reinforced the current critical of Sayyid Qutb's thought would include Salim al-Bihinsawi's "*Adwaa' 'ala Ma'alim fi al-Tareeq*" (Shedding Light on Qutb's 'Milestones'), "*Sayyid Qutb bayn al-'Atifa wa al-Mawdu'iyah*" (Sayyid Qutb: Between Emotions and Objectivity), and "*Fikr Sayyid Qutb fi Mizan al-Shar'a*" (The Thought of Sayyid Qutb in the Scale of Islamic Law [Sharia]).

Retractions of Muslim Brotherhood leaders from the thought of Sayyid Qutb were manifested in Jordan, where two schools of thought competed in formulating the political discourse of the Jordanian movement. The first school was closer to the very notion of ideology, and was influenced by the literature of Egyptian Sayyid Qutb. The other school was closer to the nature of pragmatism and realism. The two schools of thought would come to reflect the organizational polarization inside the movement, where the "Doves" came to represent the pragmatic current and the "Hawks" would represent the ideological one.

The ideological school, represented by the "Hawks," was of the perspective that Arab governments are *Jahili* ones (representing the pre-Islamic era of ignorance), and do not represent Islam. This school rejected democracy in all its contents and formulations; a reservation it held with the pretext that democracy is a Western system that grants authority of governance and legislation to the people rather than to God alone. Hence, this current would endeavor to dismantle the concept of democracy into philosophy and mechanisms. It argued that, "we accept the mechanisms of democracy, but reject its philosophy." Upon this foundation, the current would come to differentiate between, and give preference to democracy at the expense of dictatorship. But if this comparison and preferential choice would be between democracy and Islam, then undoubtedly they would choose Islam. This rationale meant that this current differentiates between democracy as a provisional and interim political objective, and Islam as the ultimate political system they seek to establish.

On the other hand, the pragmatic current was influenced by the writings of Rachid al-Ghanoushi and Dr. Hassan al-Turabi (in previous periods). The Egyptian Sheikh Yousuf Al-Qardawi would come to play an influential role (particularly in the 1990s) in formulating the concepts and principles of this current, which would be built on an implicit critique of the thought of Sayyid Qutb and reinforcing the acceptance of the values of democracy and the political process, and avoided

¹⁵⁶ Interview with Ziyad Abu Ghaneim, an Islamic writer and a former leader in the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood, conducted at his office on October 25, 2007.

labeling prevailing Arab regimes as “*Jahili*.” This current embraced a jurisprudential school of thought that is more tolerant towards social and political issues.¹⁵⁷

The pragmatic current upheld the banner of “political participation” in an evident manner. It also tried to influence the overall movement to declare an intellectual and political stance that accepts the democratic system, with the argument that the differences between the democratic and Islamic systems are “limited” and may be rectified and addressed. For this cause, the current waged a battle inside the Muslim Brotherhood with the ‘Hawks’ current and the more rigid and hardline school of thought throughout various stages of the history of the Brotherhood in Jordan. This would prove to be the case in the 1970s, when one of the spearheads of the current, Dr. Ishaq al-Farhan, accepted a ministerial post in the government, a matter that led to suspending his membership for a number of years. This move, nonetheless, would encourage the Muslim Brotherhood to participate in the parliamentary elections of 1989, and furthermore, partake in the government of Prime Minister Mudar Badran in 1991.

In the context of these polarizations, Ibrahim Gharaibeh, a researcher on Islamist movements and thought, highlights the ‘Hawks’ current’s domination and control of the articular leadership positions in the Muslim Brotherhood during the mid-1980s. He notes that during this period, the ‘moderates’ were marginalized, and the ‘hardliners’ prevailed. He says: “This current [the Hawks] would prevail over the executive office, the departments, committees, and the administrations of the Islamic Center Charity Society and all the positions of responsibilities, even the guidance and edification departments...” However, with the return of parliamentary life in 1989, and the large-scale political and social transformations witnessed during that phase, the ‘pragmatic’ current would come to re-impose itself within the leadership of the movement and its various institutions. In the 1990 internal organizational elections of the Muslim Brotherhood (nearly six months after the historic 1989 parliamentary elections), a new executive office would be formed with a majority of its members hailing from the ‘moderate’ current.

Yet in 1992, organizational conflicts would lead to the resignation of the Brotherhood executive office, two years short of its full term. A new executive office, more in tune with the ‘pragmatic’ current, would be formed.¹⁵⁸

The Dispute Concerning Participation in Governments

In 1991, the Muslim Brotherhood joined the cabinet of Prime Minister Mudar Badran, albeit with the several conditions. The conditions of participation in the government included, at the fore, a direction towards Islamization of public life and the re-employment of all members of the Brotherhood who have been terminated from their [public sector] jobs. A heated debate within the movement erupted prior to the decision to participate in the government, more precisely between the ‘Hawks,’ who opposed participation, and the more ‘pragmatic’ current. The differences were strongly manifested with the publishing of a book dedicated to the refutation of the pretexts and

¹⁵⁷ Interview with Dr. Fathi Malkawi, the Regional Director of the International Institute of Islamic Thought, conducted at his office in al-Lweibdeh in Amman on July 12, 2007.

¹⁵⁸ Ibrahim Gharaibeh, “*Al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn...*” (Lit. “The Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan 1946-1996”), op. cit., p. 79-92.

justifications for participation in governments. The book, entitled “*Al-Musharaka fi al-Wizara fi al-Anthima al-Jahiliya*” (Participation in Governments of Jahili [Pre-Islamic Ignorance] Regimes), was written by Mohammad Abu Faris, one of the most prominent leaders of the ‘Hawks’ current.¹⁵⁹

Meanwhile, the Muslim Brotherhood would request from one of its members, ‘Omar al-Ashqar, who is a renowned jurist, to write a treatise in response to Abu Faris’ book. Al-Ashqar’s book, entitled “*Hukm al-Musharaka fi al-Wizara wa al-Majalis al-Niyabiya*” (The Ruling on Participation in the Government and Parliamentary Assemblies), manifested marked differences with Abu Faris. Al-Ashqar rejected the *fatwa* of Abu Faris, and permitted participation in governments under the consideration that the fundamental principle is to “prohibit,” and that “permission” here is the exception on the basis of evaluating interests. It is worthy of noting here, that the *fatwa* was founded on the description of prevailing Arab regimes as *Jahili*, and it is widely known that this term is one of the governing concepts of Sayyid Qutb’s political thought.¹⁶⁰

Later, Dr. ‘Ali al-Sawwa, another Brotherhood jurist, presented yet another response to both Abu Faris and Al-Ashqar, rejecting outright that the fundamental principle stands upon “prohibiting political participation.”¹⁶¹

In the early 1990s, the Muslim Brotherhood took an active and direct role in participating in the drafting of the National Charter, which was tantamount to a political document that would found a new era of public political work. An elite body, representing various Jordanian political forces, was delegated with preparing and drafting this charter, which included in its content a number of new political principles that would in turn guarantee the Muslim Brotherhood’s overall acceptance of political and intellectual pluralism, and other main issues such as human rights, public freedoms, and the conditions of the “political game.”¹⁶²

During that period, and indeed until today, some of the most prominent Brotherhood members representing the ‘Hawks’ current, include: Dr. Mohammad Abu Faris, Dr. Hammam Sa’id, the late Dr. ‘Abdullah ‘Azzam (during the 1970s, he was killed under mysterious circumstances in Peshawar, Pakistan in 1989), Dr. Ahmad al-Kofahi, Dr. ‘Ali al-‘Utoom, Ibrahim Khreisat, and ‘Abd al-Mun’im abu Zant (formerly).

As for the prominent figures representing the ‘Doves’ current, they include: Dr. Ishaq al-Farhan, Dr. ‘Abd al-Latif ‘Arabiyat, Dr. ‘Abdullah al-Akayleh (formerly), Dr. Bassam al-‘Amoush (formerly), Ahmad Qutaish al-Azaydeh (died in 1992), ‘Abd al-Hamid Thunaibat, and ‘Abd al-Rahim al-‘Okoor (formerly).

A basic reading of the general characteristics of the personalities representing each current, we find that the majority of the ‘Hawks’ have studied and are specialist in Islamic *Sharia* sciences. The

¹⁵⁹ Mohammad Abu Faris, “*Al-Musharaka fi al-Wizara fi al-Anthima al-Jahiliya*” (Lit. “Participation in the Cabinet [Government] of the Jahili Systems”), Amman, 1991.

¹⁶⁰ ‘Omar Sulaiman al-Ashqar, “*Hukm al-Musharaka fi al-Wizara wa al-Majalis al-Niyabiya*” (Lit. “The Ruling on Participation in the Cabinet [Government] and Municipal Councils”), Dar Al-Nafa’is, Amman, 1992.

¹⁶¹ Ibrahim Gharaibeh, “*Al-Ikhwān al-Muslimun...*” (Lit. “The Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan 1946-1996”), op. cit., p. 109-112.

¹⁶² On the participation of the Muslim Brotherhood in the drafting of the National Charter, see the unpublished lecture delivered by Dr. Ishaq al-Farhan at the Shoman Institute in 1998.

'Doves,' on the other hand, have studied social sciences and humanities, and many of them studied in the West. In terms of social backgrounds, the leaderships of the 'Hawks' is closer to a mix of [East Bank] Jordanians and Jordanians of Palestinian descent. The 'Doves,' on the other hand, tend to be mostly [East bank] Jordanians.

Between the Brotherhood and the Party

In 1992, the Islamic Action Front (IAF) political party was established, reflecting the Muslim Brotherhood's response to, and adaptation with, the new political climate, particularly after the endorsement of the Political Parties' Law. A number of fundamental questions would preoccupy the internal Brotherhood debate in this regard, including: the 'legal frame of reference' for the Muslim Brotherhood's activism after the endorsement of the law, especially that the Brotherhood is registered with the Ministry of Social Development as a charitable association. If the movement wanted to transform into a political party, then it would lose the right to work inside mosques, professional associations, unions, and charitable and *da'wa* work. On the other hand, if it wanted to remain an association, it would not have the right to practice political party work.

In response to this predicament, four scenarios were put forth to dealing with the new Political Parties Law. The first scenario was based on maintaining the previous formula; that is the movement's continuation to work in various political and non-political activities, and overlook the idea of forming a political party. The second scenario would transform the movement into a registered political party. The third would favor abstaining from political party work. And, finally, the fourth scenario would be based on a combination between forming a political party while maintaining the actual organization, in accordance with a "formula that would govern the relationship between the two entities."¹⁶³

The main aim of forming the Islamic Action Front was to bring together the Brotherhood with other national figures, who adopt an Islamic frame of reference and agree with the Muslim Brotherhood in their main political objectives. Indeed, many independent political figures took part in establishing the IAF, but the majority of them would soon withdraw with the holding of the first internal organizational elections of the party, with the justification that the Brotherhood monopolized the leadership positions.¹⁶⁴

The Islamic Action Front would not find its independence from the Muslim Brotherhood organization, but rather, during the last few years, would transform into a rather "political department" of the movement. Despite the presence of a number of independent figures within the party, yet the leadership of the Muslim Brotherhood remained the principal frame of reference of IAF. A tradition would soon become the norm in deep rooting the Brotherhood's dominance over the party; that is, the Secretary General of the political party would always be selected by the *Shura* Council of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Samih al-Ma'ayta points out that the party failed, in reality, to maintain a dividing distance from the Brotherhood that would preserve its independence. Thus, the IAF remained weak in the eyes of the

¹⁶³ Interview with Ishaq al-Farhan, op. cit.

¹⁶⁴ Bassam al-'Amoush, "*Mahatat...*" (Lit. "Stations..."), op. cit., pp. 165-166.

Brotherhood. This was evident in the weak organizational structure of the party itself, according to al-Ma'ayta, where its members (mostly Brotherhood members as well) do not receive any proper political nurturing and do not study political literature that is outside of the Brotherhood's framework. This, he says, has deprived the IAF from developing an independent political partisan culture and ideology. Furthermore, and contrary to the conditions of the Brotherhood, the party continued to suffer from meager financial resources and noticeably poor participation and engagement in its activities.¹⁶⁵

The Emergence of the Centrist Current and the Competition over “Decision-Making”

The first half of the 1990s witnessed profound changes and transformations in Jordan's domestic and foreign policies. The peace negotiations with Israel were at the fore of negative factors that soured the relationship between the Jordanian regime and the Muslim Brotherhood. Such changes and transformations casted their weight heavily on the internal debates within the movement, and reinforced the rise of yet a third current, that later came to be labeled as the “Centrist” or “Middle” Current. This current would adopt a central position between the ‘Hawks’ and the ‘Doves’ in regards to political participation and power. The majority of its members would come from the younger third and fourth generations of the Muslim Brotherhood, whereas the members of both the ‘Hawks’ and the ‘Doves’ tend to be first and second generation Brothers.

Samih al-Ma'ayta points out that the emergence of the Centrist current was historically linked to the change in leadership, when ‘Abd al-Majid Thunaibat was chosen to take over the overall leadership in place of the longstanding General Supervisor ‘Abd al-Rahman Khalifa. According to al-Ma'ayta, Khalifa was a dominating personality, who possessed the full ability to control and tune the rhythm of the movement in all aspects. He was practically the “orchestrator of the Doves’ discourse” and interacted directly with the head of the state. With his absence, a void ensued, allowing the ‘Centrist’ current to attempt to fill it. Since then, al-Ma'ayta argues, the domineering role of the position of the General Supervisor has waned.¹⁶⁶

The main project championed by the Centrist Current is based on the following basic pillars. The Centrist current agrees with the Doves’ political discourse in accepting democracy, believing in political participation (contrary to the Hawks current), and in abstaining from the *takfir* of current governments. However, members of the current refuse to maintain full congruency with the regime (as is the case with the Doves, according to the Centrists), and they view that the Doves, who benefited tremendously from the Brotherhood's political participation, have ‘doctored’ this participation to favor their own figures, which have become renowned in the political and media arenas without really enjoying true organizational weight. Centrists are of the view that the ‘pragmatism’ of the Doves is exaggerated, and has led to exporting the Brotherhood's decision-making authority outside the movement (i.e. to the regime).

The Centrist current calls for a focus on Jordanian domestic and national affairs, and prioritizing these affairs ahead of Arab and Islamic issues, even including the Palestinian cause. A founding

¹⁶⁵ Interview with Samih al-Ma'ayta, op. cit.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

member of this current, Dr. Hayel 'Abd al-Hafeeth, recalls that their slogan during this period was "A strong Jordan is better for others than a weak Jordan." Soon after, the propaganda machine counter to the Centrist current began to operate within the movement's leadership and bases, and marketed the idea that the Centrist current is seeking to "Jordanize Islamic work."

The approach of the Centrist current was met with opposition from the Hawks current, which viewed that the popularity of the overall movement in Jordan was gained through its focus and concern about the Palestinian cause, notwithstanding the fact that "Jordanians of Palestinian descent" constitute a large percentage of the Jordanian population, and constitute the largest percentage of the membership of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Nonetheless, the Centrist current began to rise within the Brotherhood's leadership, at the expense of both the Doves and the Hawks, particularly during the 1990s. This ascendance and influence became evident during the organizational elections in 1994, when 'Emad Abu Diyeh, Salim al-Falahat (former General Supervisor), and Jamil Abu Bakr were elected into the executive office. Since then, the Centrist current has enjoyed ever growing influence over the Brotherhood's "decision-making."¹⁶⁷

The critical moment in the Centrist current's hegemony over the leadership of the movement came with the Brotherhood's decision to boycott the 1997 parliamentary elections. A fierce debate ensued prior to the elections. As 'Abd al-Hafeeth notes, the dispute initially erupted between the Hawks and the Doves over participation in the 1997 upcoming elections. The Hawks called for boycotting the elections in protest of state policies that 'targeted' the movement and in protest the regression of public freedoms. A boycott aimed at stripping legitimacy from the prevailing political status quo, the argument runs, would be in the best interest of the movement. On the other hand, the Doves were in favor of participating in the elections out of fear that the movement would lose its position and influence in the public sphere, a move that might lead to its political isolation.

'Abd al-Hafeeth recounts that the position of the Centrist current was in favor of "symbolic" participation through a limited number of candidates. But it soon retracted and leaned in favor of the Hawks' position to boycott, and endeavored to propagate this perspective, which culminated eventually in endorsing the boycott decision. 'Abd al-Hafeeth interprets the Centrist current's swift adoption of the boycott decision on the basis of organizational calculations within the Muslim Brotherhood, where Centrist leaders sought to prove the point that the decision of the movement "was internally made, inside, independently from the governing institution of the state," and aimed to weaken the influence and "stardom" of the Doves, who have been benefiting from parliamentary and political participation.¹⁶⁸

Therefore, members in the Centrist current retracted from the position towards "symbolic" participation when they felt that the ultimate beneficiary from such participation would be the Doves. 'Abd al-Hafeeth says in this regard: "The idea adopted by the Centrist current at the time was one that considered the phase of parliamentary life boycott as a phase of "self-latency" in an

¹⁶⁷ Interview with Dr. Hayel 'Abd al-Hafeeth, a member of the political office of the Islamic Centrist Party, an independent party that split from the Brotherhood. During the time under discussion, 'Abd al-Hafeeth was one of the founding members of the Centrist Current within the Muslim Brotherhood.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

effort to weaken the Doves, with the objective of re-emerging once again with new leaderships, which was what took place in the Brotherhood candidacy to the 2007 parliamentary elections, where there were a number of Centrist leaders and prominent figures.”

Indeed, the Brotherhood’s Executive Office was reshuffled in 1997, with a near absolute dominance of the Centrist current, with the exception of the position of the General Supervisor, which was occupied by ‘Abd al-Majid Thunaibat. The majority of the Executive Office members were chosen from the Centrist current, with ‘Emad Abu Diyeh, a prominent Centrist leader, elected as the Deputy General Supervisor.

The boycott decision proved to be very critical to the movement, and led to an internal storm that culminated in the expulsion of a number of Doves’ leaders who refused to abide by the boycott, including ‘Abd al-Rahim al-‘Okoor and Dr. ‘Abdullah al-‘Akaylah. Dr. Bassam al-‘Amoush wrote an article in the Al-Ra’i government-affiliated daily newspaper in response to the Brotherhood’s statement concerning the boycott, a letter that culminated in his ouster from the movement as well.¹⁶⁹ Meanwhile, a number of other Brotherhood figures also left the movement, whether by choice or ouster, following the boycott decision. A number of them were at some point close to the Centrist current, and moved later on to establish the Islamic Centrist Party, in 2001, which is wholly independent of the Muslim Brotherhood.

The Restructuring of Organizational Polarization

The harbingers of disintegration of the Centrist current, and the rise of a fourth current within the movement began to emerge in 1999, on the heels of the Brotherhood’s relationship with Hamas. The issue of the “duality of the organization” (and the affiliation of a number of Brotherhood members directly with Hamas) became a central point of contention, and led to posing the question regarding the organizational relationship between the two entities considering the presence of the Hamas Political Bureau office inside the Headquarters of the Muslim Brotherhood and the office of the Islamic Action Front. Furthermore, the presence of a number of Hamas political leadership in the Jordanian arena also became a point of controversy, especially that a great number of Brotherhood members are “Jordanian of Palestinian descent” who maintain for the Palestinian issue a prominent position in the concerns and priorities.¹⁷⁰

The decision made by King Abdullah II in 1999 to oust Hamas’ leadership from Jordan further fueled the simmering crisis within the Muslim Brotherhood, especially after the leadership of Hamas accused the Brotherhood’s Executive Office of complicity with the government against them and blasted them for failing to take a decisive decision on the incident. Conflicts, accusations, and laying blame all reverberated within the Muslim Brotherhood, with the Brotherhood leaderships and bases closer to Hamas casting accusations on a number of Executive Office members, and

¹⁶⁹ See the report entitled “*Bassam al-‘Amoush: Al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun bi Haja ila Brostreika*” (Lit. “The Muslim Brotherhood in Need of the Perestroika”), in an interview with Mohammad Abu Rumman in Al Ghad Jordanian daily newspaper, July 9, 2007: <http://www.alghad.jo/?news=186069>. Cf. Bassam al-‘Amoush, “*Mahatat...*” (Lit. “Stations ...”), op. cit., pp. 205-209.

¹⁷⁰ On the problematic relationship between the Centrist current and the Hamas Politburo, see chapter four of this study.

particularly the Deputy General Supervisor 'Emad Abu Diyeh, of having "relations with the security apparatus" and of conspiring against Hamas.¹⁷¹

The storm of Hamas' ouster culminated in a serious structural crisis in the Centrist current, which led to the formation of a new current that included figures that were close to Hamas' politburo. The crisis was further exacerbated by the dispute over prioritization of the "Jordanian concern" or the "Palestinian concern." Furthermore, and for the first time in the movement's history, the dispute over the nature of the relationship with Hamas would surface, despite the Brotherhood's keenness to repeatedly refute this state of polarization in its political discourse and its rhetoric in the media.

Since that historic moment, the question of the relationship with Hamas would only grow more persistent in the context of the state of organizational polarization within the Muslim Brotherhood. Hamas' ouster also instigated the question of how to define and draw the parameters of the relationship with the Jordanian "power house" (the regime). Soon after, the eruption of the Second Palestinian Intifada in 2000, following the failure of the Camp David II talks, and the explosion of the crisis between Hamas and Israel, followed by the Jenin Camp incident in 2002, all led to tipping the internal balance of power within the movement in favor of the current closely affiliated with Hamas. Indeed, during the Brotherhood's organizational elections, this current would be met with favoritism, especially that this time period witnessed a clear and rising popularity of Hamas in the Arab street, in general, and the Jordanian street, in particular.

In the subsequent organizational elections of 2002, the current close to Hamas, in alliance with the Hawks, was able to dominate the Brotherhood's Executive Office, with Hammam Sa'id taking over 'Emad abu Diyeh's post as Deputy General Supervisor. That time period also witnessed the Brotherhood's return to participation in parliamentary life, with 17 Brotherhood members (most of them close to Hamas) winning seats in the Lower House of Parliament.

The fourth current, with close ties to Hamas, would take strong positions in parliament, one of which was their demand to allow Hamas' leadership back in Jordan. Indeed, this demand was noticeably one of the most prominent demands upheld by the Brotherhood's parliamentary bloc, and became the repeated slogan chanted by the Muslim Brotherhood in their protests and demonstrations. The fourth current would indeed raise the political ceiling of the movement's discourse in regards to the relationship with the regime and the governing institution.

After the great success that Hamas achieved in the Palestinian legislative elections of 2006, new organizational elections took place within the Muslim Brotherhood. This time, the Centrist current was able to regain its position in leadership and earn a rather substantial presence in the *Shura* Councils of both the Muslim Brotherhood and the Islamic Action Front party, in addition to winning the majority of membership seats in the Executive offices of both entities. This time, the Centrists' domination over the movement's leadership was even more profoundly manifest than in 1997, with Salim al-Falahat elected as General Supervisor, and Dr. Rohile Ghariabeh as First Deputy to the Secretary General of the Islamic Action Front. Yet the surprise that disrupted the climate of this new hegemony was the recommendation put forth by the former Brotherhood *Shura* Council (more closely affiliated with fourth Hamas current) during its last session to nominate Zaki

¹⁷¹ Cf. Bassam al-'Amoush, "*Mahatat...*" (Lit. "Stations ..."), op. cit., pp. 213-220.

Bani Ersheid, who is viewed as very close to Hamas, to the position of Secretary General of IAF (as the tradition within the movement had been for the Brotherhood's *Shura* Council to nominate a candidate for this position during its last session before the end of its term).

The recommendation concerning Bani Ersheid equally incited the fire of both the regime and the Centrist current within the brotherhood, and indeed led to exploding the crisis in both the internal front within the movement, and the front in the crisis with the regime. This in fact put the Centrist current in the midst of the storm of successive crises since it came back to dominate over the movement. Later years would also witness a series of successive developments in the relationship between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Jordanian regime, leading up to the phase of preparing for the parliamentary elections, when the internal crisis reached its peak.

The Parameters of the Brotherhood's Political Role

One of the main issues that stir substantial discussion regarding the agenda of the Muslim Brotherhood is the question of the movement's "political ambitions." This question would emerge strongly particularly after Hamas' landslide victory in the Palestinian legislative elections in January 2006, and the emergence of a political Jordanian current that is apprehensive of the implications of Hamas' victory on "heightening the Brotherhood's appetite for power." This dialectical issue came in coincidence with a controversial statement made by 'Azzam al-Huneidi, head of the Muslim Brotherhood parliamentary bloc, who said that the "Muslim Brotherhood is prepared to take on the role of the executive power in Jordan." This statement was aptly and effectively used by the opponents of the Muslim Brotherhood within the state's "power house" and governing institution.¹⁷²

On the discussion on the limits and parameters of the Brotherhood's political role in Jordan, and in going back to previous periods, it is worthy to recount here the paper written by Dr. 'Abdullah al-'Akayleh in 1994, in part of a book entitled "*Musharakat al-Islamiyeen fi al-Sulta*" (Islamist Participation in Power). In this paper, al-'Akayleh presents the Muslim Brotherhood's limitations to the role it can play in Jordan, on the basis of main parameters set by the movement's recognition of the position of the state, the weakness of its capabilities, and its reliance on external economic support. Hence, the movement avoided "embarrassing" the state in what the latter has no power, in addition to the movement's recognition that Jordan does not possess the elements of an Islamic state. The latter argument, al-'Akayleh notes, reassured the regime that the strategy of the Muslim Brotherhood does not seek to replace it with an Islamic state. Indeed, and for years, the regime had been of the view that the Muslim Brotherhood is a safety valve for the regime itself against any attempt to overthrow it. Meanwhile, the Muslim Brotherhood had maintained the view that the current regime in Jordan is better for the country than all the other leftist and nationalist powers that have prevailed in the region. Hence, and to the good fortune of the regime, the Muslim Brotherhood rejects violence and terrorism, believes in gradual peaceful change, and in flexibility in crises,

¹⁷² Muhammad Abu Rumman, "*Denamikiyat al-Azma...*" (Lit., "The Dynamism of the Crisis between the Regime and the Brotherhood in Jordan"), on Jazeera.net, available at <http://www.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/32E438CC-1D1F-436E-B74F-0F955A9C078B.html>

furthermore, the demands of the Brotherhood are reformative in nature; these are demands that do not amount to a threat to the regime and do not constitute an alternative to it.¹⁷³

There are no indicators or documents that prove the presence of a radical change in the previous convictions of the Brotherhood or their adoption of what is called “the strategy of defying the state,” according to the official propaganda presented by some forces within the regime. Also, Al-Hunaidi’s previous declaration is not to be taken as a “coup or revolutionary change,” but rather it is to be understood as the movement’s ambition in widening the field and reinforcing the parameters of its political role in the country. This declaration, and the subsequent reactions to it, is also indicative of the presence of a strong current within the regime that is against such Brotherhood ambitions.¹⁷⁴

On his part, Zaki Bani Ersheid is of the view that one of the hallmarks of the crisis between the various currents within the movement is indeed the question of the limitations and parameters of the Brotherhood’s political role. The current headed by Bani Ersheid sought to break the traditional equation and the minimalist parameters of the Brotherhood’s political role, in an effort to reach what he and his current consider as a “true partnership in the decision making process.” This true partnership is to be proportional to the size and influence of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordanian society. Meanwhile, Bani Ersheid views that the other current seeks to maintain the status quo in the current phase, in an effort to preserve the role of the movement and its political accomplishments, rather than gambling on, and venturing behind this new ambition.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³ ‘Abdullah al-‘Akayleh, “*Tajribat al-Haraka al-Islamiya fi al-Urdun*” (Lit., “The Experience of the Islamist Movement in Jordan”), in: ‘Azzam Al-Tamimi’s “*Musharakat al-Islamiyeen fi al-Sulta*” (Lit., “Islamists Participation in Power”), Liberty Organization, London, 1994.

¹⁷⁴ Of course, the situation would later change, profoundly The Muslim Brotherhood’s discourse with the wave of the Arab Democratic Spring would begin to clearly lean towards bringing about essential changes in the rules of the political game, a topic of discussion handled in the next chapter.

¹⁷⁵ Cf. “*Bani Ershied: Tayyar fi al-Haraka al-Islamiya Yu’arid al-Musharaka fi al-Intikhabat al-Niyabiya*” (Lit., “Bani Ersheid: A Current in the Islamist Movement Opposes Participation in the Parliamentary Elections”), a dialogue with Mohammad Abu Rumman, in Al Ghad Jordanian daily newspaper, July 9, 2007, available at <http://www.alghad.jo/index.php?news=169011&searchFor>

4. Characteristics of the Brotherhood's Political Discourse

Prior to discussing the 2007 parliamentary elections and how the internal “Brotherhood Crisis” casted a heavy shadow on its significance, it is essential to refer to the recent developments in the political discourse of the Muslim Brotherhood and the Islamic Action Front, as well as to the general features upon which the Brotherhood's political vision rested, after a long cultivation of internal ideological and political debates and disputes.

The features of the Brotherhood's ideological and intellectual development is apparent in its vision for reform, as it was presented in 2005 and published in a booklet entitled “*Ru'yat al-Haraka al-Islamiya li al-Islah fi al-Urdun*” (The Islamist Movement's Vision for Reform in Jordan). This vision was presented concurrent with the declaration of the Muslim Brotherhood in both Egypt and Syria (2004) of their own visions for reform in their respective countries as well. The concurrence of the Muslim Brotherhood initiatives here poses two main questions: the first relates to the historical condition and the intended political messages, and the second relates to the content of the new development in the Muslim Brotherhood's discourse.

As for the historical element, the “timely concurrence” of the Muslim Brotherhood's initiatives in the three countries is indicative of a “supra-national” Brotherhood coordination and collaboration that has been able to put the brakes on the state of intellectual and ideological reluctance that the Brotherhood has been afflicted with, and a move towards announcing the acceptance in the values of democracy and the concept of civil state, and so forth.

This historic “collusion” is tantamount to a message to the West – in particular – in response to a question that reverberated heavily during that time period on whether Islamist movements would accept democracy, and in light of the abundance of claims made by Western researchers and Arab governing regimes that argued that Islamist movements do not believe in the values of democracy as ultimate and final values with which to govern political life, in as much as it (Islamist movements) wants to exploit democracy to achieve its own political objectives of establishing an “fundamentalist state,” after which it will rid with democracy and elections, (i.e., the principle of entering elections only once in an effort to reach power).

In returning to the timeframe in which the Brotherhood initiatives were launched (2004 and 2005), we find that this phase witnessed also a rather positive and optimistic climate with the supposed emergence of new prospects for change. Many Western articles alluded to the heralds of an upcoming Arab democratic spring, especially as most elections and political transformations indicated that Islamist movements are the rising alternatives to the “status quo,” whether that rise is a consequence of the disintegration of states or the weakness of political regimes (as was the case in Iraq and Palestine), or manifested through parliamentary or municipal elections (such as in Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Kuwait...). To this, the Muslim Brotherhood sought to invest in this climate and present guarantees regarding the values that govern their political vision and practices.

The content of the Brotherhood reform initiatives and their declarations of accepting the values of democracy, pluralism, alternation of power, and so forth, undoubtedly represented a new

ideological-intellectual phase in the discourse of these movements, movements that have been reluctant in the previous decades to declare or indicate its willingness to embrace democracy, and insisted on refusing to compare it with the Islamic system of *Shura*.

This ideological shift, however, does not constitute an end to the discussion. Indeed, believe in, and acceptance of democracy and its values is not a “political” decision as much as it is an advanced historical process that is borne out of the crystallization of a steady and constant culture in the aftermath of crises, conflicts, or ideological and cultural throes of labor. The question here remains: Has the Muslim Brotherhood in fact gone through such intellectual and historical trials and tribulations and come to reach this conviction, or did the announcement of accepting democracy reflect a mere pragmatic attempt to invest in, and utilize the historic moment?

In this context, the question of “credibility” is central; to what extent is the practical implementation congruent with the theoretical discourse presented by the Muslim Brotherhood? This is not the place to judge the “intentions” of the Muslim Brotherhood; however, an answer to this question is in need of “tangible indicators” that makes it worthy to discuss this Brotherhood declaration of its vision for reform. Perhaps the many contemporary Islamist experiences in governance do not cast “reassuring messages” regarding the Islamists’ announcement of embracing democracy. Furthermore, and if we cast aside the previous cases of modern models of Islamist governance, the new developments and transformations nonetheless do not serve this Islamist call. Perhaps the main witness to that is what is occurring in Iraq today at the hands of Islamist movements that have declared, not in the distant past, their commitment to democracy and the concept of civil state, and which are now invoking their rudimentary criteria in governance and have retracted from their commitment to respecting religious, sectarian, and political pluralism, and are indeed presenting their opponents with tangible evidence to use against the phenomenon of Islamist movements. The same may be said of Hamas, which, despite the pressures and sanctions it faced, it nonetheless contributed to ingraining skepticism and questions regarding its belief in democracy after its takeover of Gaza and in light of its attitude towards its political opponents. Indeed, Human Rights Watch substantiates in its reports Hamas’ excessive use of force on several occasions.

On the other hand, Islamists insist on the genuineness of their acceptance of democracy and the electoral process, substantiating it with the evidence of the internal elections held by Islamist movements in general, and in Jordan in particular. By all means, the tradition of holding internal elections distinguishes the Muslim Brotherhood from the various secular forces and political parties. This evidence is perhaps partially true; indeed there is an acceptance of the mechanism of elections and alternation of power within these Islamist movements, however, it is an acceptance that is limited to the common ideological, political, and cultural denominator, and does not – necessarily – reflect on their relation with the political and ideological “other,” of which the Muslim Brotherhood’s acceptance remains ambiguous and wavering within a “grey area.” Hence, the question arises on whether Islamists, if and once they reach power, would permit the activities of communist and liberal movements, for example? And, will they allow for a level of public and private freedoms that are in contradiction with their interpretations of “religion,” or will they work to implement the “provisions” of Islamic *Sharia* even if there remained contradiction between these provisions and the question of freedoms?

Some observers view that the alliance of Islamists with “secular” opposition movements is an indication of their acceptance of the ideological “other.” In Jordan, the Islamic Action Front formed an alliance with a number of opposition political parties for years. Prior to that, an alliance between Hamas and other Palestinian political forces took place in opposition of the Oslo Accords. However, these alliances, even if they do indeed reflect a sort of development in the political practices of Islamist movements, they are nonetheless tied to “political and tactical” objectives, in the most part. There are no tangible indicators to reach a conviction that such alliances are built upon perpetual common intellectual and political denominators that would constitute a future guarantee of national “political consensus” between the Islamists and the “other” when it comes to the foundations and conditions of the political system. Indeed, it was not long after that the relationship between Hamas and the other oppositional forces regressed and worsened after Hamas’ takeover of the Gaza Strip.

Yet again, this assessment in no way means a prior negative judgment upon the Muslim Brotherhood’s “democratic claims,” but it is, consequently, a call for a much deeper and more precise reading of this initiative.

The Brotherhood’s Reform Vision

In light of the assessment above, the Muslim Brotherhood’s “Reform vision,” which was presented in 2005, merits discussion. The “vision” consists of 17 themes, addressing various topics that mostly address internal policy in regards to political and structural reform, education, the economic, social, and administrative fields, and the issue of national unity. The final three themes of the “vision” tackle Jordan’s regional and foreign policy, particularly pertaining to the Palestinian cause, Iraq, and Arab and Muslim unity.

The significance of the document, as a “reform vision,” is that it reiterates the call for political and structural reforms that would uphold the principles and practices of rotation/alternation of power, establishment of a constitutional court, separation of powers, and the enforcement of the constitutional provision stipulating that the system of governance in Jordan is that of a hereditary, monarchical, parliamentary system, which is tantamount to a call for a “constitutional monarchy.”

In the context of the higher national interests, the Brotherhood’s reform vision calls for “adopting the principles of democracy and *Shura*, along with their tools, governing on the basis of the ballot boxes in accordance with a just electoral law and sound electoral measures, and allowing for peaceful transfer of executive power as a fixed fundamental method in political life.”

As for public freedoms and human rights, “the vision” stresses on the protection and preservation of public freedoms, including the freedom of assembly, freedom of expression, freedom of peaceful demonstration, etc.). The document also reiterates the necessity of safeguarding freedom of belief and the freedom of religious practice for all citizens. Furthermore, it denotes the protection of citizens’ personal freedoms (right to privacy, right against spying and monitoring of personal communications, and right to personal confidentiality).

On women’s rights, the document pronounces the movement’s support for women’s political right to vote, to run for elections, to assume political office, and to join political parties.

In the area of foreign policy, the Brotherhood's "reform vision" reiterates the movement's position that "Palestine, from sea to the river, is a historical, political, and legal right of its people...and that this land is the property and endowment belonging to this *umma*." Furthermore, it stresses that, "any political or military measures derogating from this right is void and illegitimate." Hence, the document delineates the movement's rejection of the Oslo Accords, the Wadi 'Araba peace treaty, and its refusal to recognize the existence of the state of Israel (even its existence on the territories it seized in 1948).

On the situation in Iraq, the document asserts the movement's denunciation of US occupation, and support for the Iraqi resistance, albeit distinguishing between "arbitrary and chaotic acts" against segments of Iraqi population, and "legitimate resistance."

Although this document is considered a step forward towards conformity with democracy, at least in terms of stated public positions, it nonetheless does not answer or explicitly touches upon a number of major issues that remained ambiguous and hovering in "grey areas." It is in fact these dialectic and controversial issues regarding the Muslim Brotherhood's political discourse that are of paramount importance that merit clarification.¹⁷⁶ Among those grey areas not explicitly dealt with are; the political rights of minorities, as the document does not clarify whether this pronounced religious freedom guarantees the right of any citizen, regardless of his or her religious or sect, to assume high positions in political decision-making in the state. Also, on the issue of women's right, the document pays no heed to the issue of a woman's right to assume the position of Prime Minister, for example, albeit, this issue in Jordan is specifically less sensitive than it is in other countries, mainly because the system of government is monarchical and the head of the political authority does not change. Hence, the topic of discussion here is limited to the utmost position of prime minister. Whereas in Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood's draft reform platform there explicitly announced the rejection of women and religious minorities (particularly Coptic Christians) from assuming the position of presidency. This pronouncement instigated large-scale political and ideological and political debates both within the organization of the Muslim Brotherhood and also amongst the various political and intellectual circles.¹⁷⁷

These issues, in addition to the proposal of establishing a committee of *Sharia* scholars to assess the "compatibility of legislations with Islamic *Sharia* provisions," a proposal that also ignited discussions and disagreements within the Brotherhood on the international level, between those who supported the proposal and those who opposed it. In this context, the former General Supervisor of the Muslim Brotherhood, 'Abd al-Majid Thunaibat, wrote an article in the Jordanian Al-Ghad newspaper voicing his acceptance of the idea of women and non-Muslims assuming the office of state presidency. He also argues that establishing a *Sharia* scholar's committee is "not required" since the subject matter is the contemporary civil state rather than the "State of Caliphate"¹⁷⁸.

¹⁷⁶ On the "grey areas" in the discourse of Islamists, see: Nathan Brown, Amr Hamzawy, and Marina S. Ottaway: "Islamist Movements and the Democratic Process in the Arab world: Exploring Grey Areas" Carnegie Papers, no. 67, March 2006.

¹⁷⁷ For previous versions of reform initiatives, see the documents on Islamonline, available at http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=ArticleA_C&cid=1184649775542&pagename=Zone-Arabic-Daawa%2FDWALayout

¹⁷⁸ 'Abd al-Majid Thunaibat "Hawla Barjamaj al-Ikhwān fi Misr" (Lit. "Regarding the Brotherhood's Program in Egypt"), in Al-Ghad Jordanian daily newspaper, November 9, 2007: <http://www.alghad.jo/?article=7516>

The Priorities and Interests of the Islamic Action Front

In the context of political positions, a number of major issues preoccupy both the Muslim Brotherhood and the Islamic Action Front party. In the following quantitative analysis of the IAF's statements (published on its website) in the past three years (up until November 10th),¹⁷⁹ we find that IAF published 38 declarations in 2007, eight of which concern the Palestinian issue, two concern Arab affairs, three on the issue of normalization, six on political reform, two on internal organizational affairs within IAF, one declaration concerns the economic aspect, three on social issues, and 13 declarations were issued concerning issues related to the relationship between the Islamist movement and the regime.

It is worth noting that the percentage of statements and declarations related to the relationship with the government has systematically risen. This is explained by the series of crises that have taken place between the two sides during the last few months. The Palestinian cause came second in terms of the IAF concerns, followed by political reform. On the other hand, we can notice a retreat in interest in the issue of normalization compared with previous years. Social and economic issues come at the bottom of the movement's interests.

In 2006, there were 62 statements issued by the movement, 13 of which concerned the Palestinian issue, 18 related to Arab affairs, in particular the Iraqi and Lebanese situations, ten about normalization, eight about the relationship with the government, ten about political reform, two concerning the economic situation, and one concerning the social situation.

In 2005, there was a total of 108 statements issued, 40 of which concerned Arab Affairs, ten on the Palestinian issue, 16 on normalization, five concerning relations with the government, six on the economic situation, three on the social situation, and 28 concerned issues related to political reform.

The total number of statements and declarations during this time period was 208, 60 of which concerned Arab regional affairs, 31 on the Palestinian issue, 29 concerning normalization, 26 on relations with the government, nine concerning the economic situation, seven on the social

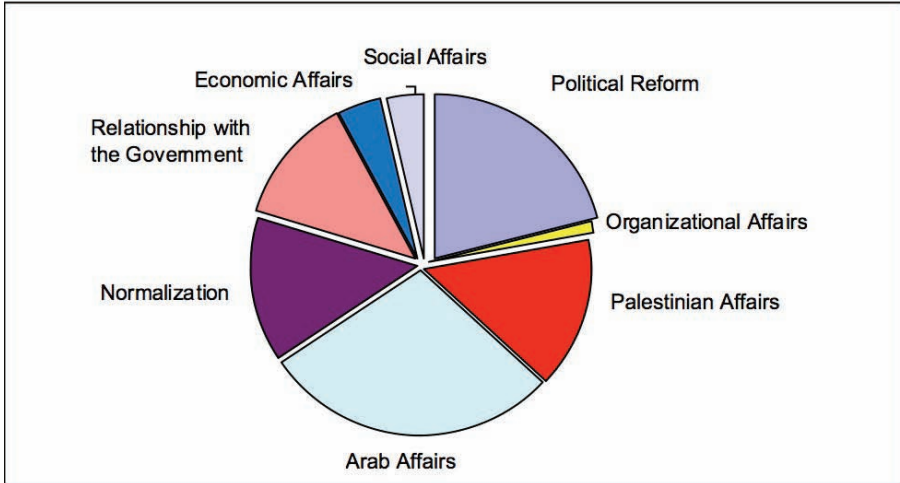
¹⁷⁹ This quantitative analysis is based on analyzing official data available on the website of the Islamic Action Front, in the data window, whether it belongs to the IAF directly or to the Brotherhood, *Shura* councils, or the committees related to them or linked with them. The criterion for classifying subjects and issues mentioned is according to the following points:

1. Separating foreign affairs between the Palestinian situation and the Arab and international situations, mainly because of the special importance of the Palestinian situation in the Jordanian context. As for the Arab and international developments and transformations, they include the situation in Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon and the relationship with the United States and the West and other regional issues.
2. Regarding the relationship with the government, statements related to the crisis between the Brotherhood and successive governments have been included, in addition to what the movement regards as government restrictions on it and on its various activities including banning events, arrests, and the negative media campaigns against the movement.
3. As for the subject of political reform, issues related to the vision of the movement towards reforms, public freedoms, and human rights are included, amongst others.
4. The subject of normalization is a vital bone of contention that has stirred wide controversy between successive governments and the movement. The IAF website offers the various statements issued by the National Anti-Normalization Committee. Denmark was later added to the list of anti-normalization efforts because of the incident with the offensive cartoons published in a Danish newspaper that were deemed insulting to the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him).

situation, and two on internal organizational issues. Meanwhile, a total of 44 statements issued in the past three years concerned the aspect of domestic political reform.

The following is a graph representing the different issues in the statements of the Islamic Action Front during the above-mentioned period:

Topics in the Brotherhood’s Online Declarations, 2005-2007



From the previous figures, the following observations can be made:

- Significantly, little attention is given to the economic situation; the percentage of statements concerning the economic situation is 4.3%. Yet, all recent opinion polls in Jordan reveal that the economic situation is a priority and a major concern for citizens. It is also considered among the most important priorities and concerns of the governing institution, as is evident in the Royal letters of delegation to successive governments. This aspect highlights how distant the party’s discourse and priorities are from both the state and society. It also highlights the “reality gap” in both the Islamist movement’s discourse and practice.
- Even less attention is given to social issues in the party’s discourse; only 3.36% of the total statements addressed domestic social aspects. This very low percentage reflects the predominance of political affairs over the concerns and activities of the party. It also implies that “the social issue” is almost “vague” in the party’s formal discourse, and reflects that the fatwas and the jurisprudential opinions of the movement tend to be more socially conservative.
- External regional affairs (whether the Palestinian issue, the Iraqi, or the Lebanese and Syrian issues) assume the lion’s share of the IAF’s interests and topics of statements. Statements concerning regional issues amount to 28.84% of the total statements; those related to the Palestinian issue constitute 14.9 percent of the declarations (i.e. nearly a total of 44 % of the total statements issued in the past three years). This substantiates the fact that external affairs are among the major priorities of the Party. The topic of normalization may also be included

into the equation, for although it relates to the domestic affairs, it nonetheless is an issue that intersects with foreign policy (the relationship with Israel) and the Palestinian issue, with a percentage focused on normalization reaching nearly 14 percent of the total number of declarations issued during that time period.

- Interest in normalization and the percentage of statements on this issue affirm that this subject, which is associated with the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty, is indeed one of the measures and decisive factors of disagreement between the Muslim Brotherhood and the regime, especially as the Anti-Normalization Committee affiliated with the Professional Associations insists on publishing blacklists (names of normalizers), which ignited the Professional Associations crisis in 2004.
- The issue of political reform comes second to regional affairs, excluding the Palestinian issue. The IAF's interest in the various issues of political reform reaches 21.18 % of the total number of statements. Nonetheless, the multiplicity of the political reform issues, public freedoms, human rights, civil society and democracy probably creates a higher rate of interest compared to the party's interest in external affairs.
- Internal organizational affairs have not been of high interest to the Party. Between 2005 and 2006, no statements were made about organizational issues. While in 2007, two statements were issued denying the existence of internal conflicts and were directly associated with what was reverberating in the media regarding a conflict about the list of the IAF candidates for the parliamentary elections. On the other hand, the scarcity of statements concerning the internal affairs of the party and the Islamist movement reflects a major sensitivity in dealing with the internal organizational issue. The movement constantly denies any internal conflicts or polarizations, yet most leadership figures discuss these conflicts and polarizations behind closed doors. This dilemma might be due to internal prevalence of principles such as obedience, homage to the group, and allegiance to the leadership. In addition, revealing dissidences and exposing secrets is considered an infringement of the very basic principle of the party, which is "secretive in its organization, public in its *da'wa* mission."

The Front's Political Positions

Moving on from the quantitative analysis to the substance of the Islamic Action Front's political positions, a number of clear positions and stances towards developments and current political issues may be observed in analyzing the party's official statements; these include:

- As far as internal political reform is concerned, the party's position is mostly related to protecting public freedoms and human rights, condemning arrests, and objecting to the ban of demonstrations and protests.
- Regarding the Palestinian cause, it is evident that the party is completely biased towards Hamas, whether in armed action or political action. Yet, Hamas take-over in Gaza caused "some confusion" in the Party's discourse between the pro-Hamas current, whose positions justify Hamas' actions, and the discourse of the Moderate current, who avoid delving into details, and suffice to calling for Palestinian unity. Furthermore, the Gaza events casted heavy implications on the relationship between the Muslim Brotherhood and other Jordanian opposition forces and

parties, especially with the latter issuing a statement denouncing and condemning Hamas' actions in Gaza, followed by the IAF's objection to this statement.¹⁸⁰

- On the Iraqi affairs, it is evident that there is a clear difference between Jordan's Brotherhood and the Brotherhood in Iraq (represented by the Islamist Party, which partakes in the political process). This difference soon transformed into a crisis between the two, evident in exchanged criticisms and accusations. The Jordanian Brotherhood expressed rejection of "the US occupation and its entailments," and have reservations on the participation of the Islamist Party in the political process there, in addition to supporting the "Commission of Muslim Scholars" headed by Hareth al-Dhari, opposing the political process, and supporting the armed resistance, even though it was keen to publicly declaring that it only supports peaceful civil resistance. Furthermore, despite the Brotherhood's criticism of the acts of violence that led to the killing of innocent civilians and the destruction of churches, etc., it nonetheless did not issue any clear and explicit condemnation of al-Qaeda in Iraq. Instead, a number of Islamist deputies in parliament offered their condolences in a visit to the funeral wake of al-Qaeda in Iraq's leader, Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi in the city of al-Zarqa in Jordan, a matter that played a major factor in igniting the crisis with the Jordanian government at the time.¹⁸¹
- With regards to the party's position towards Iran, the Secretary General of the Islamic Action Front issued an announcement to party members clarifying the party's position towards Iran. He stated that the party opposes the Iranian policy in Iraq and Afghanistan, while it embraces Iran's policy in Lebanon and Palestine (the Iranian policy supporting anti-Israeli Islamist forces. The major idea implied in this announcement is that the party's position towards Iran depends on the latter's political positions and how compatible they are with the party's positions and principles. On the other hand, the statement clarifies that the IAF views the Iranian foreign policy on a case-by-case basis, disregarding the factors from which such policies stem; national Iranian interests. These interests, according to IAF, once intersected with those of the Americans in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and these Iranian interests may also lead to a deal with the Americans in each of the cases of Lebanon and Palestine. The statement stresses that the party supports Iran and rejects any aggression against it. Nonetheless, and ultimately, the Iranian role in Iraq (and the accusations against it of inciting strife causing instability and supporting armed Shiite militias), is secondary – in the IAF's perspective – to the Iranian "presumed" role in supporting Hamas and Hezbollah. This latter fact affirms that the Palestinian cause continues to represent one of the most important considerations that determine the party's political positions.¹⁸²
- Regarding the IAF's position towards Syria, the party expressed through numerous statements and declarations its support for Syria in confronting "external pressures" and the "American campaign. This position is in contradiction with the position taken by the banned Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, which entered into a bloody armed conflict with the Syrian regime since the early 1980s, and which allies with the dissident and defecting former Syrian Vice President 'Abd al-

¹⁸⁰ Cf. report on Al-Majd weekly newspaper, published on November 12, 2007, available at <http://www.almajd.net/article/details.details.asp?2150> ; also Cf. Statement of the General Supervisor of the Muslim Brotherhood on the Brotherhood's website: <http://www.ikhwan-jor.com/modules.php?name=News&file=print&sid=714>

¹⁸¹ Nathan Brown, "Al-Urdun wa al-Haraka al-Islamiya: Hudud al-Musharaka" (Lit., "Jordan and the Islamic Movement: Limits of Participation?") Available in Arabic and English. Carnegie Papers, no. 74, November 2006.

¹⁸² Cf. Mohammad Abu Rumman, "Al-Ikhwan wa Iran: Ma Waraa' al-Nass" (Lit., "The Brotherhood and Iran: What's Behind the Text"), in Al-Ghad Jordanian daily newspaper, Amman February 4, 2007: <http://www.alghad.jo/index.php?article=5625&searchFor=الاخوان%20وايران>

Halim Khaddam in the Salvation Front (Jabhat al-Khalas), before it withdrew from the coalition. This clear and great disparity between the positions of the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood and the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood created yet another “crisis” between the two sides on the one hand, and, on the other, between the Syrian Brotherhood and Hamas (which had until recently headquartered its politburo office in Damascus and which allies with Syria).¹⁸³

- The position towards the Lebanese conflict: IAF expressed its support for Hezbollah during its war against Israel in 2006 through various populist activities. However, the party’s position towards the internal Lebanese conflict, between the March 14 forces and Hezbollah with its allies, is more ambiguous and vague. The Lebanese Muslim Brotherhood is closer to the March 14 forces, despite the fact that one of its historical leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood in Lebanon, and a global Brotherhood theorist, the late Fathi Yakan, had previously defected from the Brotherhood and established the Islamic Action Party, and had been supportive of Hezbollah in confronting the March 14 forces.

From these political positions, it is evident that there is a major gap between the “foreign policy” of the Islamic Action Front and the Muslim Brotherhood on the one hand, and the official Jordanian foreign policy, on the other. Viewing this at the macro level, it is clear that the wagers of the Muslim Brotherhood are in line with those of Hamas and the “Rejectionist Camp” (Iran, Syria, Hezbollah) in confronting what the Brotherhood considers an “American project.” These wagers, viewed from another angle, are in complete contradiction with the policies of the so-called “Arab Moderate States” and their positions towards Iran and the United States.

This gap between the wagers of the Islamic Action Front and that of the Jordanian foreign policy seems larger than merely confining it within the context of “difference” in implementing “vital political interests.” Instead, and above all, this gap evidently falls within the context of the problematic nature of “defining” these interests, whether in regards to the problematic relationship with the United States or over the sources of threat. This gap in defining the interests between the two sides explains the noticeable sense of “apprehension” held by both the Islamists and the state, which contributed to deepening and exacerbating the crisis between them.¹⁸⁴

Between America and Europe

While the IAF’s explicit position that the American plan in the region is a source of threat and a major supporter of Israel, its position towards the Europeans is not as clear or defined. It is rather defined on a case-by-case basis. For example, the party issued a statement during the visit of Javier Solana, the then European Union’s chief foreign policy official, to Jordan in February 2006, in which the Muslim Brotherhood criticized the European position of threatening Arab governments if punitive measures were to be taken on account of the “Danish Cartoons” incident. The Islamists

¹⁸³ Cf. Bassam al-‘Amoush, “*Mahatat...*” (Lit. “Stations ...”), op. cit., p. 92.

¹⁸⁴ Cf. Shaker al-Jawhari, “*Hamas Taqoud Ikhwana al-Urdun wa Hasaat Amraha Iraniyan*” (Lit., “Hamas Leads the Jordanian Brotherhood and Has Resolved its Position in regards to Iran”), in *Al-Waqt* Bahrain-based newspaper, June 20, 2007.

also criticized the position of the Europeans concerning the issue of recognizing the results of the Palestinian legislative elections, in which Hamas achieved a great victory¹⁸⁵.

In this context, the former Secretary of The Jordanian Brotherhood, Khalid Hasanein,¹⁸⁶ confirms that a document had been issued by the Egyptian Brotherhood and received by Jordanian Brotherhood, which calls for distinguishing between the American and European positions, in the general sense. Hasanein points out that The Brotherhood does not object to communicating and conversing with European officials, and that they have already participated in dialogues with the Europeans and the relationship has been good with them, this is as opposed to the relationship with the Americans. This also applied to the relationship between the Europeans and Hamas, prior to the 2006 legislative elections, which subsequently contributed to negatively impacting the relationship.

Hasanein views that the Brotherhood differentiates and recognizes the differences between the American and the European foreign policies, in general. Albeit, according to Hasanein, the Brotherhood remained apprehensive of actions taken by the then-current French president Nicolas Sarkozy, which they viewed as inevitably leading towards bridging the gap between the American and European policies against the interests of the peoples of the region.

Hasanein explains the Danish cartoons crisis and other emergent problems between Muslims and European countries in light of the rise of the conservative right trends and islamo-phobia in these countries. He recounts that some Islamist movements sent a delegation to Denmark to contain the crisis and delineate the implications that arise from the cartoons. The delegation, however, reportedly returned disappointed with the sharp unyielding positions it faced there. Hasanein here notes the vast difference in perspective towards the Danish cartoons between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Europeans, yet he recognizes the sensitive European dimensions, in general, and the Danish in particular, to considering these cartoons as an expression of democracy and freedom of opinion held so sacred in the West. On the other hand, he highlights that Arab Muslim peoples consider the cartoons as an insult and affront to their own sacred and holy figures and a large infringement on the dignity of its religion.

In the context of the relationship with the West, in general, Dr. Rohile Gharaibeh, one of the leading Islamist figures in IAF and former head of the Political Department of the Muslim Brotherhood, presents an intellectual and jurisprudential theorization that transcends the classical view adopted by many Islamists on the basis of dividing the world into a “*Dar al-Harb*” (Abode of War), “*Dar al-‘Ahd*” (Abode of Truce), and “*Dar al-Aman*” (Abode of Refuge). Gharaibeh rather argues that international relations are governed by interests; and hence, it is interests that become the criterion for defining the positions towards states and foreign players. It is from this outlook, Gharaibeh says, that the positions and political stances of the Muslim Brotherhood are governed purely by “political considerations,” rather than the doctrinal perspective adopted by other Islamist parties and movements.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁵ See the Islamic Action Front’s statement: “*Tasreeh Sader ‘an al-Hizb bi Munasabat Zyarat Khafaier Solana li al-Mintaqa*” (Lit., “A Statement Issued by the Party on the Occasion of Javier Solana’s Visit to the Region”), February 12, 2007.

¹⁸⁶ Interview with Khalid Hasanein, former Secretary of the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood, conducted at his office at al-Ummah Studies Center in Amman, March 4, 2008.

¹⁸⁷ Interview with Rohile Gharaibeh, op cit., January 14, 2008.

5. A Stormy Internal Crisis

The Brotherhood entered a stage of preparing for the parliamentary elections just after the crisis of the municipality elections and the subsequent deterioration of its relationship with the government. These developments led to the rise of an internal trend, mainly from within the Hawks in the movement, that called for boycotting the elections in protest of: 1) The “violations” and “rigging” committed during the municipal elections; 2) the continued implementation of the unpopular “one-man, one-vote” electoral law; and 3) the continuation of the government of Prime Minister Ma‘rouf al-Bakhit in office, the same government that oversaw and administered the controversial municipal elections. These three reasons, according to this rising trend within the movement, raised questions regarding the credibility and impartiality of the upcoming parliamentary elections, and constituted an indicator to the futility of participating in the elections in light of the inability to influence the decision-making process in general.¹⁸⁸

On the other hand, those who supported participation argued that the boycott would serve neither the movement nor the course of political life, in general. They argued that the experience of the boycott in 1997 had failed, and led to the political isolation of the Muslim Brotherhood and to the loss of important platforms in influencing political life and the media. While those believing in participating were convinced that they would not be able to influence the decision making process, they still thought that the presence of the Brotherhood in the parliament would provide them with a platform and a podium for political and media influence, where their voices and positions would remain publicly known, and would mitigate the official measures that seek to curtail the power and influence of the Brotherhood, along with the latter’s tools in activism and influence in various fields.¹⁸⁹

In the context of the escalating crisis with the government, the pro-participation current saw that the Brotherhood was before two choices: First, the movement boycotts the elections and pushes the crisis with the government to rejecting “lowering the ceiling” of the Brotherhood’s political discourse, which would forewarn of unprecedented scenarios. The Second choice, however, is to be as pragmatic and politically realistic as possible and participate with a limited moderate list in order to refute the argument made by officials claiming that the Brotherhood adopts a strategy of “intractability with the state” and that they aim at a complete takeover of power. Participation in the elections, on the other hand, would attest to local and international public opinion that the Muslim Brotherhood is a peaceful civil movement that believes in political participation and rejects violence, regardless of the internal political conditions.¹⁹⁰

In light of this variance in perspectives and disagreements on decisions, the Muslim Brotherhood’s *Shura* Council decided to refer the decision to participate in the elections to the Executive Office,

¹⁸⁸ Cf. “Bani Ersheid: a Current in the Islamist movement Opposes...” op. cit.,: <http://www.alghad.jo/index.php?news=169011&searchFor>

¹⁸⁹ Cf. ‘Abd al-Majid Thunaibat, “*Al-Muqata‘a al-Khayar al-Sa‘b*” (Lit., “Boycott: the Difficult Option”), in *Al-Ġhad* Jordanian daily newspaper, September 2, 2007:

<http://www.alghad.jo/index.php?article=7078&searchForالمشاركة%20خير>

¹⁹⁰ Cf. Rana al-Sabbagh, “*Muhawalat al-Ilbqa‘ ‘ala Sha‘rat Mu‘awiya bayn al-Sulta wa al-Islamiyeen*” (Lit., “The Attempt to the Last Bridge (Mu‘awiya’s Hair) between the Authority and the Islamists”), in *Al-Arab al-Yawm* Jordanian daily newspaper, September 30, 2007: http://www.alarabalyawm.net/print.php?articles_id=2570

which, on its part, voted in favor of participating. The Executive office would then issue a statement in which it linked its decision with “national interest” albeit highlighting surrounding factors.¹⁹¹

A Contentious Candidate List

The IAF presented a list of its candidates to the parliamentary elections after postponing declaring it more than once. The list included 22 candidates, a number and a share of participation much smaller in comparison to the Brotherhood’s participation in the elections since the return of parliamentary life in 1989. Compared to this election round, the Islamist movement had participated with 30 candidates in 2003, 36 candidates in 1993, and 29 candidates in 1989.

Observers of the course of the movement are of the view that the alliance between the moderate current and the ‘Doves’ helped impose this trend’s agenda on the orientation of candidates, and helped in excluding controversial figures from the ‘Hawks’ current from running for elections, as was the case with Dr. Hammam Sa’id (in Sweileh District, Amman) and Dr. ‘Ali al-‘Utoum (in Irbid).

The following table shows the Brotherhood’s candidates who have won in comparison to the total number of the Parliamentary Councils during the last 5 parliamentary elections, from 1989 until the last elections.

Results of Brotherhood’s Candidates in the Last Five Parliamentary Elections

Year	Number of candidates	Number of parliament members	Number of parliament seats
1989	29	22	80
1993	36	16	80
1997	Boycotted		80
2003	30	17	110
2007	22	6	110

The list of candidates, whether in terms of the numbers of candidates or their orientations, was seen by political analysts and the media as a message of “guarantees and reassurances” aimed to mitigate the tensions with the regime. However, the paradox lies in the fact that this list was met with a fierce media attack by the Brotherhood trend that is close to Hamas, which had been excluded from the candidacy list. The ‘Centrist’ trend was accused of overstepping the candidate choices of the membership bases of both the Brotherhood and IAF, and of taking unilateral decisions, and their leadership was blasted for running for elections by “exploiting the authorization they received from the Brotherhood’s *Shura* Council in determining the names of candidates after being informed of the choices made by the membership bases.”¹⁹²

¹⁹¹ The Brotherhood’s statement concerning the decision to participate in the elections on the Brotherhood’s official website:

<http://www.ikhwan-jor.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=959>

¹⁹² Cf. Al-Hayat newspaper, London November 18, 2007 available at

http://www.daralhayat.com/arab_news/levant_news/11-2007/Item-20071117-4f456643-c0a8-10ed-00a4-2c31000c6d3e/story.html

The internal Brotherhood's accusations, which were leaked through the media, went further to accuse the 'Centrist' current of manipulating the candidates' list, and even further, accused it of colluding with the government and striking a deal with it against the other currents within the movement. The Brotherhood crisis manifested clearly with the sulking practiced by IAF's pro-Hamas Secretary General, Zaki Bani Ersheid, who refused to attend the meetings held to prepare for the parliamentary elections in protest of the Centrists' domination of the process. He was even absent from the press conference in which the candidates' list was announced unexpectedly.¹⁹³

Sources within the Brotherhood's 'Centrist' current view that the cause of the internal crisis refers back directly to Hamas' decision of official and organizational disengagement from the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood, a decision that was met with opposition from the Jordanian Brotherhood's *Shura* Council, despite the approval and endorsement of the Global Guidance Office of the overall movement. The disengagement decision necessarily makes the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood a separate and independent entity, with its own General Supervisor. This was a profound break from the past history of the Brotherhood, where the Palestinian Brothers were tied, though only formally, with the Jordanian movement.

According to this development, the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine shall now include the Muslim Brotherhood members of the Palestinian refugees in the Syrian and Lebanese camps, and the expatriates in the Arab Gulf countries, Europe, the West, and other Arab countries where Palestinian communities are concentrated. Whereas now, the Brotherhood in Jordan would be an independent entity, the membership of which consists of Jordanians of both Palestinian and Jordanian descent. This new order of things poses the question of who leads the Brotherhood in Jordan, the 'Centrist' current or the current with close ties to Hamas? The latter would make the movement in Jordan (which is active in Palestinian refugee camps), orbit within Hamas' sphere of influence, its agenda, and calculations. According to a Brotherhood source, this prevailing internal crisis between the two currents is, in fact, related first and foremost to the question of leadership, political course and orientation, and the movement's priorities and concerns.¹⁹⁴

Mechanisms of Selection and Nominations for Candidacy

In response to the previous claims Dr. Rohile Gharaibeh, the Deputy Secretary General of the Islamic Action Front, clarifies the criteria according to which candidates were selected by the Front¹⁹⁵:

- Balloting and voting operations were carried out in the branches and offices of the Islamic Action Front party and of the Muslim Brotherhood. Names of candidate choices with the highest numbers of votes were sent to the Executive Offices of both the Brotherhood and the IAF.
- The Brotherhood's *Shura* Council delegated 16 members of both Executive Offices of the Brotherhood and IAF to study the selected names and finalize the candidates' list.
- The committee adopted a set of criteria to select the candidates, as follows:

¹⁹³ See report on Al-Ġhad Jordanian daily newspaper, Amman, October 2, 2007.

¹⁹⁴ Cf. Shaker al-Jawhari, "*Al-Qissa al-Kamila li Tanthim al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin fi Bilad al-Sham*" (Lit. "The Complete Story of the Muslim Brotherhood Organization in the Levant"), Dunia Al-Watan, Gaza City, March 14, 2007.

¹⁹⁵ Conversation with Rohile Gharaibeh, op. cit.

- Consideration of the candidates' names presented by the branches and offices, because the "membership bases" are the most suited in realizing the implications of selections within the various electoral departments and areas. Then they usually approve these names, as long as they do not conflict with other considerations. Gharaibeh stresses that 75-80% of the "membership bases" candidates were accepted.
- Consideration of candidates in accordance with electoral districts where the committee sees greater chances for winning, and supporting certain figures who may be close to the Brotherhood's discourse in other districts where there are also good chances of winning. The committee recommended not entering into districts where "tribal" sensitivities may occur. On this basis, Gharaibeh predicted a win for most, if not all, candidates of the movement, because their chances were "very promising." This was the factor that determined the number of candidates, according to Gharaibeh, in an attempt to reduce the number of losing candidates from within the movement's list.
- As for "qualifications," Gharaibeh stressed that there had been a verification process for the candidates' capacities to perform the required roles and tasks and their compatibility with the Movement's discourse and reform view. Hence, the exclusion of a number of candidates who do not reflect the Brotherhood's discourse in parliament though they were nominated by the "grassroots membership bases". This has stirred an extensive internal debate. Gharaibeh is of the view that the movement's list of candidates for this election is one of the "best candidacy lists in the history of the movement in terms of presence, symbolism, competency, insight and thorough knowledge of the Brotherhood's political agenda". This seems to be a relatively new standard of selection compared to previous elections where the presence of Hawks and Doves was most significant, and the variation between the Brotherhood deputies' competence and qualifications was apparent.
- Reversing the decision under which the members of Executive Office of the Islamic Action Front were excluded from the right to run for elections, while maintaining the ban on the "Brotherhood's Executive Office". This was unlike the 2003 parliamentary elections when members of both Executive Offices were banned from standing for elections. The Brotherhood then provided a number of ambitious young men for candidacy.

A set of intersecting criteria determining the selection of candidates can be deduced from Gharaibeh's argument, they include: the criterion of voting (balloting within membership bases), the realistic criterion (odds of success), the criterion of competence (the candidate's capacity and qualification), and the criterion of concordance with the movement's discourse.

As for the educational qualifications of the IAF candidates, there are five with a PhD degree, six with a master's degree, one with a higher diploma, eight with a bachelor's degree, one with a diploma, and one with a secondary degree.

As for fields of specialization, seven specialized in Islamic *Sharia* sciences, five in engineering, four in pharmaceutical sciences, three in education, one in human sciences, two with scientific specializations, two in economics, and one in law.

The age of the candidates ranged from 35 to 68 years with the average age being 53 years. Regarding the candidates' Palestinian and Jordanian origins, it was exactly a fifty-fifty distribution.

The professional and practical experience of the candidates varied from experience in municipal administrative councils to volunteer, government work, and private commerce. There were nine former lawmakers who had served in previous parliaments from within the movement, seven of them served in the previous Lower House term (2003-2007), out of a total of 17 candidates.

6. The Electoral Campaign

The electoral platform of the IAF was similar, if not identical, to the Brotherhood's "Reform Vision" of 2005, especially regarding structural political reform, public freedoms, human rights, social affairs, economic reform, education, culture, and foreign policy. Nevertheless, the program had significant weaknesses in some vital and essential aspects:

- *"The Realism Gap"*: It has been noticed that there is a serious crisis in the platform's realism and applicability as the program uses a language closer to that of demands, principles and values governing the Brotherhood, without having a practical reading of the problems seriously and directly challenging the state and the files with which the coming parliament will be dealing. The area of external policy remained the most unrealistic. The platform addresses refusing the occupation of Iraq and considering the presence of American forces a "military occupation." It thus requires "mobilizing the nation with all its forces to resist this occupation politically, culturally, and through *Jihad*, and to confront American hegemony in most of Arab and Muslim countries!"; Furthermore, it called for "providing all possible support to the Iraqi resistance to liberate Iraq", and "supporting official and popular efforts to reject the occupation and resist the American dominance in the region." As for the Arab Muslim unity, the platform speaks of attempting to alleviate the various kinds of sanctions imposed on some Arab and Muslim countries, such as Sudan and Libya, although the embargo on Libya had been significantly loosened; also "resisting the ethnic, regional, sectarian calls that aim at dividing the *Ummah* and instilling hatred". It is apparent that the previous articles within the platform, among many others, are unrealistic and are not in tune with the function of the parliament, its jurisdiction, prerogatives, authority, or even with the geostrategic conditions upon which Jordan bases its economic policy in terms of its need for foreign assistance and the remittances of Jordanian expatriates working abroad. These articles are more of general constants or the "political ideals" of the movement rather than "realistic political options."
- *"The Black Hole"*: The economic concern is still more like a black hole in the Jordanian Brotherhood's program. The Muslim Brotherhood has not taken any progressive steps towards formulating an economic vision that is based on alternatives or practical observations. Instead, the Brotherhood's economic platform adopts "monitoring foreign investment and limiting its control over the national economy", controlling the foreign debt, addressing poverty issues, developing a national plan to address unemployment, controlling the deficit in the trade balance, reducing the budget deficit, supporting those of limited income, and freeing the Jordanian policy from the control of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and looking for alternatives for oil, etc. However, the program does not provide a clear economic policy on how to best achieve these objectives and does not even provide a practical reading of the problems afflicting the Jordanian economy. In comparing the economic aspect of this platform with that of the Justice and Development Party in Morocco, which raises the slogan "Building Morocco of Justice Together", the same slogan the party used in the latest legislative elections, one finds that it provides a clear, practical, and critical vision of the economic crisis and formulates the options it adopts in a clear and pragmatic manner. The Jordanian Brotherhood platform approach seems further poorer and shallower when compared to the electoral platform of the Turkish Justice and Development Party, which stood for legislative elections in 2003. The Turkish Justice and Development Party provided a complete economic platform and vision for

the problems, solutions, and measures to be taken in order to tackle the crisis within a given time frame.

- *IAF's insistence on the slogan "Yes, Islam is the Solution"*: It is this same slogan that instigated a wide controversy regarding the platform of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, and then regarding the platform of IAF in Jordan. The slogan implies, firstly, that Islam is the solution as if Islam is completely absent from the prevailing political reality, which is what other Jordanian parties and forces reject, and secondly, it implies as if there are quick and direct solutions to complex and compounded problems, ignoring the relativity of recognizing and understanding the provisions of Islamic law and applying them. Interestingly, the Brotherhood's website published two articles about the topic, the first entitled "Why the Slogan Islam the solution?" and the second, "Islam is the Solution, Freedom and Happiness". Both articles speak of Islam's liberating of human beings from despotic authorities and the philosophy of Islam in life that bestows happiness upon humanity. The implementation of these issues, however, is not realistically related to the functions of the parliament or to the reality of the political situation. Indeed, the content of the articles is even more ambiguous than the slogan itself.¹⁹⁶
- *Stressing the rejection of the peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in its current form*: The platform declares, "No entity whatsoever is entitled to waive any part of Palestine", and "Our struggle with the occupier is a conflict of doctrine and civilization that cannot be terminated by a peace treaty. It is a conflict over existence rather than over borders." Furthermore, the platform declares: "All the agreements derogating the nation's right to sovereignty are null and void, and do not obligate the nation to anything."

Perhaps the question to be raised in this context is whether it was "the Centrist Current" (the moderate group) who was in charge of developing the electoral campaign and its components. If so, how would one explain the extreme inflexibility of the foreign policy platform and the shallowness of the internal (domestic) part despite the declaration made by the leaders of the Centrist current that the platform will give most of its attention to the domestic situation? The answer to this is that the crisis between the 'Moderate' and the 'Hardliner' Brotherhood trends, or between the Centrist current (focusing on the Jordanian concern) and the Hamas current (focusing on the regional front) impedes any real progress in the political discourse and burdens the movement with settling the tug of war between the two trends. Furthermore, the campaign launched against the Centrist current by the other pro-Hamas current pushed the former to further rigidity in its political stances in an attempt to deflect and refute the accusations made against it by the latter.

There is a difference between the Centrist current's orientation towards a certain direction and the maturity of its capacity and discourse to pursue this direction. Finally, time was of the essence, yet it did not help develop a ripe and mature electoral program that meets the minimum level of political realism within the context of the rough internal crisis that had preoccupied the leadership of the Centrist current and the previous successive crises with the governing institution.

¹⁹⁶ See op. cit. articles on the official website of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan. Cf. Amro al-Shobaki, "*Al-Islam Huwa al-Hal: Limatha al-Israr 'Alaihi?*" (Lit. "Islam is the Solution. Why Insist on It?") On the same problematic issue with the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, available at http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=ArticleA_C&cid=1176802133354&pagename=Zone-Arabic-Daawa%2FDWALayout [The author returned to the link in the process of editing, but the original link had been disabled]

7. The Election's Earthquake: The Brotherhood Setback

The Brotherhood won only six seats out of 110 seats in the Lower House of Parliament. They won only two seats in Amman, one seat in al-Balqaa governorate (al-Baq'a Refugee Camp), and three seats in Ajloun, Jarash, and Aqaba. All Brotherhood candidates got a total of 96,152 votes out of 1,935,411 total votes throughout the kingdom. The mean of the number of votes that the Brotherhood candidates received was 4,370.5 votes.¹⁹⁷

Not only was this result a shock to the leadership and members of the Muslim Brotherhood and their supporters, but also to most observers and analysts. Even high-ranking officials in the state were expecting the Brotherhood to get, in the lowest estimates, between ten to twelve seats. In an initial approach to the current results of the Brotherhood, they seem to be the worst results the movement has ever received since it began engaging in the parliamentary process in 1956. In 1956 and the succeeding elections, the Muslim Brotherhood won four seats out of a total of 40, despite these elections occurring during the pinnacle of leftist and Arab nationalist influence. Hence, the results of the Muslim Brotherhood in the 2007 elections may indeed be considered a “political defeat.”

Necessarily, however, it is difficult to claim that the 2007 parliamentary elections were indicative of the retreat of the movement's popularity, especially after high-ranking officials in the state (such as the Prime Minister and Director of the General Intelligence Department, who were responsible for administering the elections), came out to try to justify the reasons behind the semi-complete “rigging” of the elections. Following such admission of manipulation and rigging of the elections, the claims of the invalidity of the elections became factual and in no need of further evidence.

Yet, despite all this, there are various implications that emerged from the elections that pertain particularly to the internal crisis within the Muslim Brotherhood, coupled with electoral miscalculations in the movement's own judgment of the elections. Some members within the movement conclude that the dismal results in the parliamentary elections were the by-product of a combination of rigging by the state and the mistakes and the internal crisis that afflicted the movement's electoral campaign. The crisis would not end there, but would indeed further escalate in later stages.

The Brotherhood's Account of the Great Retreat

The Brotherhood's story of the great retreat was given in the press conference held by the Deputy General Supervisor of the Muslim Brotherhood, Jamil Abu Baker, on the day following the elections. He attributed the dismal results to the “government's role” and lack of impartiality of the elections, evident in the mass transfer of votes (by the hundreds and thousands) in favor of certain candidates, a process that came to be linked with yet another electoral fraud phenomenon known as “vote-buying.”

¹⁹⁷ For results of the candidates, see Al-Ghad Jordanian daily newspaper, Amman November 24, 2007.

The Brotherhood accuses the government of overlooking these grave violations although they were open and public in many areas. It also accused the government of allowing a great number of those who do not have the right to vote (holding identity cards that do not have a specified electoral district), or the efforts made to prevent thousands of eligible voters from casting their ballots, using various pretexts and unconvincing excuses.

The Brotherhood adds another methodological fault that hit the electronic linkage operation. Computers were out of order in some areas for hours, thus allowing manipulation to take place. In addition there were violations in the final count of votes and in the numbers of the ballot boxes.

Dr. Rohile Gharaibeh, Deputy General Secretary of the Islamic Action Front Party, points out that the elections were a government “trap and ambush” set for the Muslim Brotherhood. This same “ambush” was set for them during the municipal elections as well, but the Brotherhood managed to circumvent it, only to fall prey to it during the parliamentary elections. Gharaibeh adds that the Brotherhood movement was deceived by the government’s promises to hold elections that achieve the minimum level of impartiality and transparency. He refuses to attribute the crushing defeat to the “internal crisis”. He rather believes that “the crisis may be responsible for the loss of a limited number of candidates but not for the final result.”¹⁹⁸

Both Jamil Abu Baker and Gharaibeh confirm that the Brotherhood received reports and information reportedly attesting to the government having a strategic plan to weaken the Brotherhood inside large cities in particular, which were considered strongholds for the movement, in both the municipal and parliamentary elections¹⁹⁹.

On the other hand, the government refuted the Brotherhood’s account of the elections. Meanwhile, pro-government columnists, commentators, and political analysts attributed the reasons for the dismal results the movement achieved in the elections to the Brotherhood’s own internal conflicts, and to the sharply waning popularity of the movement in Jordanian society, in addition to the ramifications of the crisis between Hamas and Fatah on the Brotherhood’s popularity in Jordan.

The Controversy of the Retreat and Popularity

Beside the previous stories, there are various suppositions that may converge or diverge in explaining the tangible setback experienced by the Brotherhood in the 2007 parliamentary elections. The most prominent of which, include:

- The decline of the Brotherhood was the direct result of the government’s role in supporting certain candidates, on the one hand, and the spread of the “vote selling and transferring” phenomena, which emerged clearly in the 2007 elections, on the other hand.
- The retreat of the Brotherhood is a reflection of the severe internal crisis and of the struggle between the moderates and the hardliners and a direct result of the negligence or collusion of the hardliners against the moderates.

¹⁹⁸ Interview with Rohile Gharaibeh, op. cit.

¹⁹⁹ See the Islamic Action Front’s statement after the elections on November 21, 2007; also Interview with Dr. Rohile Gharaibeh, op. cit., ; Cf. to the article: “*Al-Tazwir Yahsim al-Intikhabat al-Niyabiya fi al-Urdun*” (Lit. “Rigging Decides the Parliamentary Elections in Jordan”), on the Muslim Brotherhood’s website, November 21, 2007.

- The retreat of the Brotherhood is linked to the waning of the movement’s political popularity, as a result of either the government’s curtailment of their social and political influence during the last few years, or due to regional circumstances related to Hamas and the crisis of political Islamism in the region, or even perhaps to the Brotherhood’s lack of recognition and appreciation of the fast-developing social and economic transformations.
- The retreat of the Brotherhood is linked to mistakes committed by the Brotherhood in estimating the election formulas and its erroneous choices in several districts.

Initially, there is a dominating trend in political and media analyses for the Brotherhood’s retreat, which pushes towards adopting and recognizing the role of all the previous suppositions. This trend views that the retreat is a result of a compounding problems caused by various factors. Yet the question remains regarding the importance of each supposition and the extent to which each truly reflects a proper interpretation of the causes of the retreat. This, in fact, is difficult to achieve, especially that the numbers and information related to the voting process do not provide us with categorical answers, even if they do help us in discussing each supposition in a more in-depth and objective manner.

The Government between Direct Interference and “Negative Neutrality”

A long-standing politician, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, points out that the 2007 elections were in part of its course and outcomes closer to “appointments” rather than a winning by elections. The government facilitated and contributed towards helping some persons to reach the parliament. Before the issuance of the National Center for Human Rights report about the elections and their details, the refusal of the government to allow civil society organizations to monitor the election process, especially the final count of votes, validates this argument. Some candidates got “astronomical numbers of votes” in some polling districts, numbers that represent a much higher percentage than the usual percentage they get every elections. This is what happened in the third and fifth (Sweileh center) polling districts in Amman or even in some districts in the governorates.

In other districts, despite the direct non-interference of the government, the policy of “negative neutrality” concerning the phenomenon of vote buying and transferring in a collective large-scale manner, confirmed by official and unofficial media reports, was a negative factor with a direct influence on the Brotherhood’s electoral results, especially in Amman districts. This was linked to the phenomenon of the “new capitalist parliamentarians”, who succeeded in districts in which they do not have any tribal backing or any previous political popularity that would provide them with that extent of populist support.

Several reports indicated a decrease in the number of voters in many districts, whereas these numbers were supposed to have risen due to the increase in population. In the al-Baq’a camp, for example, the outcome of the elections confirmed categorically the operation of “collective transfer” of votes. Mohammad Aqel, the Brotherhood’s candidate, won the last parliamentary elections in 2003 and got 10,224 votes. Meanwhile, he won the 2007 elections with 4,657 votes with no strong competition as in previous elections. This means that the votes he lost, despite his success, were over 5000 votes, which means that voters either did not vote or the votes went to other centers, which is the most probable explanation. It was noticed that one candidate, for example, in the third

electoral district in Amman, won the elections with 10,666 votes and another with 11,604 votes, although Amman's third district does not have this large number of registered voters. The above-mentioned phenomenon applies to several districts in Amman and al-Zarqa as well.

Mass practices of vote buying and transferring benefited several candidates in the different districts of Amman and harmed the chances of the Brotherhood's candidates. This fact explains, partially but logically, the increase in the number of votes received by candidates who were competitors with the Brotherhood in Amman's districts, especially the first, second, third, fourth, and fifth districts, in comparison with the votes received by the Brotherhood's candidates, who did not rely on the fraudulent practice of vote buying and transferring.

The Dynamics of the Struggle and the Electoral Campaign

There are several indicators that highlight how the internal crisis within the Muslim Brotherhood has affected the enthusiasm of the movement's grassroot bases and the overall popularity of the movement, especially as the internal crisis exploded publicly in the media a few days before the elections. The crisis went beyond political differences, going further to witness grave accusations by hardliners against the moderates that the latter was colluding with the government within the context of cutting a deal with the regime. Many members from the movement in various parts of Jordan confirm this observation, especially members who hail from branches where hardliners dominate or where the leadership contradicted the choice of the bases and nominated other candidates to the movement's list.

Speaking in numbers, in Amman's fifth district, Sweileh area, which has historically constituted a stronghold of the Hawks, the Brotherhood's candidate, Nimir al-Assaf, lost the election with 5,451 votes in comparison with the 11,666 votes received by Dr. Mohammad Abu Faris, the Brotherhood's candidate in the 2003 elections. It should be mentioned that the latter, a hardliner 'Hawk' did not attend any of al-Assaf's election campaigns or show any endorsement, which is a clear political message to the Brotherhood's supporters and bases.

In the first district in Irbid governorate, the Brotherhood's candidate, Nabil al-Kofahi, received 4,996 votes and lost, he also lost during the 2003 elections with 4,200 votes. The other candidate who also lost was Mohammad al-Buzoor, who got 2,588 votes, less than what he got in the previous elections which he won with 6,509 votes. It is worth noting that the leadership of the Brotherhood did not approve the candidacy of Dr. 'Ali al-'Utoom, the Brotherhood's former member of parliament, who won in the 2003 elections with 8,461 votes, although the membership bases of the Brotherhood nominated him. The justification given by the leadership was that al-'Utoom's performance in the previous parliament was not convincing and that he did not adapt to the new political discourse of the Brotherhood. Although it was expected that al-'Utoom's votes would go to the other two candidates, Nabil al-Kofahi or al-Buzoor, Nabil al-Kofahi had a slight increase over his previous votes while al-Buzoor lost about four thousand votes. This means that the Brotherhood lost a total of 12,000 votes in Irbid's first district from previous elections.

The above numbers reflect a possible dimension of the role of the internal crisis and its effect on the results especially in the districts and centers in which the leadership did not follow the nominations

of the membership bases. The leadership presented a group of candidates from the Centrist current to run in the strongholds of the Hawks and the fourth current.

The Brotherhood, Hamas, and Public Opinion

Some observers and analysts perceive that the Brotherhood's popularity has been affected negatively, especially among Jordanians of Palestinian origin, with the retreat of Hamas' popularity among Jordanians. This was especially true in light of the bloody struggle between Fatah and Hamas, as well as Hamas' "behavior" following its military takeover in the Gaza Strip. This argument seems reasonably plausible, at least from a theoretical point of view. During the last few years, Hamas had become a symbol for the resistance movement against the occupation. Its followers made great efforts in this regard and gained the sympathy of the Arab and Muslim peoples. The Muslim Brotherhood stood for elections in 1989, 1993, in light of the influence of the military operations of the Al- Qassam Brigades. Many of the election festivals and activities witnessed cheers and songs in support of Hamas and its struggle against the "Israeli occupation".

As for the 2007 elections, Hamas was, in the eyes of its friends and opponents, involved knee-deep in the administration of the Gaza Strip and in other events that posed questions regarding the future of its political project. At the same time, there is a noticeable latency in the "military activities" of the movement. These circumstances did not negatively affect the popularity of the pro-Hamas Brotherhood current although the Brotherhood's supporters are linked to Hamas politically, ideologically, and emotionally. Nevertheless, the influence of Hamas as a supportive factor to the Brotherhood in the elections dissipated to a large extent in the 2007 elections compared to earlier ones.

Two more main factors may also be added to further analyze the retreat. First, the brotherhood were standing for elections while the Islamic Center Charity Society, which represented one of their most valuable tools of activism and fundraising, was just expropriated by the government. Prior to that, the activities of the Brotherhood waned noticeably on university campuses and its members were banned from working in mosques. All of these activities constituted a wide social network that has enabled the Brotherhood to communicate and engage effectively with Jordanian society. These activities have also given the Brotherhood tangible presence in society especially that its "volunteering-charitable societies" worked as parallel organizations to that of the state's, working to fill the void in providing necessary aid and support to the needy segments of society. In the 2007 elections, the direct impact of the retreat of the Brotherhood's social work started to be felt. This has led to a "missing link" in their communication with the masses.

The second factor is that although there has been a tangible change in the social temperament towards religiosity and conservativeness, there are several religious groups which started to compete with the Brotherhood in "representing religious legitimacy" among the masses. The state has given some of these groups wide leeway for movement and expression to fill the void left by the retreat of the Brotherhood due to curtailment laws and policies imposed by the state. Some of these most important groups are the Salafist movements, whether in their traditional current (which is pro-government), or the radical (anti-government) current. All of these groups are adversaries and

competitors to the Brotherhood and have recently enjoyed a tangible rise in presence among the masses.

In the margin of these groups we can see new orientations towards religiosity, which prefer to separate the political realm from the social and private realms. Perhaps the influence of what came to be known as “*al-Du‘aa al-Judud*” (the new *da‘wa* preachers) on young generations has become a tangible phenomenon in several Arab societies, especially since these preachers have wide and proliferating media platforms. Their preaching and guidance discourse remains distant from political affairs and the high cost of associating with politics. This “competition” in the Islamist market has left some recognizable affects on the popularity of the Brotherhood and their attempt to link “voting for them in the elections” and “accepting Islam” among the masses.

In the context of this political, social, and cultural reading, we may refer back to the 2007 elections results to observe that the Muslim Brotherhood have lost seats in some of their main strongholds in Amman, Irbid, and al-Zarqa, which are areas that have a large Palestinian presence. In the first district in Amman, ‘Azzam al-Hunaidi, the Brotherhood’s candidate, received 15,833 votes in the 2003 elections and won. However, in the 2007 elections he received 4,779 votes. Mousa Hantash got 4,744 votes. This means that what al-Hunaidi got in the 2003 elections was 5000 votes more than what he and Hantash (who lost in the last elections) received in 2007.

In the second district in Amman, the two IAF candidates, Musa al-Wahsh and Tayseer al-Fityani, got 19,571 votes in the 2003 elections and won. Whereas in the 2007 elections, both Musa al-Wahsh (lost) and Hamza Mansour (won) together received 15,340 votes with a loss of almost 4,000 votes. In the fourth district in Amman, the Brotherhood’s candidate, ‘Adnan Hassoneh, received 11,484 votes in the 2003 elections, while Sa‘ada Al-Sa‘adat got 6,676 votes in 2007, with a loss of almost 5,000 votes. These are some examples, but there are many other similar cases in other districts. The (East) Jordanian Brotherhood’s candidates, Sulaiman al-Sa‘ed, Mohammad Tomeh al-Qudah, and Abd al-Hamid Thunaibat, all won in their own districts, albeit by the help of their social weight, tribal backing, or individual efforts.

Mistakes in Reading Election Equations

It seems that the Muslim Brotherhood has formulated its election calculations and the 22 candidates on a reading of their results in previous elections and the number of votes they used to get. According to this previous data, the indicators in their hands pointed out that all or most of the candidates would be able to win the elections. The main dilemma in the “Brotherhood’s reading” was that the party assumed that the votes and results its members used to get due to their popularity and supporters were not linked to social activities and weight or to communication between candidates and supporters and bases. The Brotherhood’s reading also overlooked the problem of demographic divisions, which probably was a factor that made Jordanians from Palestinian origin vote for the Brotherhood’s candidates because they represented these voters’ interests in the political system.

Based on this theory and supposition, one of the factors that negatively impacted the Brotherhood’s results was the mistake in nomination and selection of candidates. Nimir al-Assaf, for example,

stood for elections in the fifth district (Sweileh) in Amman, which is a district predominated by the Hawks from Palestinian origin, while he is associated with the Centrist current (and is of East Jordanian origin). The difference in the number of votes between him and the previous Brotherhood's candidates was indeed vast. The same thing applied to Mahmoud al-Muhaysen (Jordanian) in the first district in al-Zarqa, which historically represented a district for the Brotherhood (from Palestinian origin). Dr. Rohile Gharaibeh (Jordanian from the Centrist current) stood for elections in the third district in Amman, in which he did not have any social weight (as apposed to the case of the previous candidate Zuhair Abu al-Raghib, who is from Syrian origin, but had enjoyed the support of a wide social base). It was clear that Gharaibeh depended to a large extent on votes from the "Palestinian Brothers" in al-Hussein refugee Camp and adjacent areas.

In the al-Rusayfa area, for example, one of the districts of al-Zarqa governorate, Ja'afar al-Hourani lost while another IAF candidate, Mohammad Al-Hajj, who left the movement and stood for elections independently away from the interference of the government, won.

One of the main mistakes committed by the Muslim Brotherhood in the 2007 electoral experience was not taking into consideration the time factor and short time period that separated the municipal elections from the parliamentary elections. The Brotherhood extensively and for months worked on denouncing the municipal elections in its political and media discourse and blasting the lack of transparency and impartiality in the elections. This created a climate of frustration and apathy amongst members and supporters of the movement. Thus, according to one of the Brotherhood's leaders, it became difficult to convince and motivate the Brotherhood bases, suddenly, of the feasibility and necessity of participating in the parliamentary elections.

The Weak Performance of the Brotherhood's Previous Parliamentary Bloc

The previous supposition represents a helpful factor and can be explained by means of the numbers that the Brotherhood's candidates, who were previously members of parliament, got. 'Azzam al-Hunaidi, for example, received 15,833 votes in 2003 but only 4,779 votes in 2007. Musa al-Wahsh got 10,672 votes in 2003 in comparison with 6,030 in 2007. Mohammad al-Buzoor got 6,509 votes in 2003 in comparison to 2588 votes in 2007. Ibrahim al-Mashwakhi got 8,095 votes in 2003 in comparison to 2,018 in 2007. Hayat al-Msaimi got 7,133 votes in 2003 in comparison to 3,756 votes in 2007. Ja'afar al-Hourani got 9,095 votes in comparison to 3,747 votes in 2007. Mohammad 'Aqel got 10,224 votes in 2003 in comparison to 4,657 votes in the last elections.

Although the Brotherhood and the IAF did not issue any official evaluation on the performance of the previous parliamentary bloc, a state of dissatisfaction, nonetheless, was noticeable in some of the declarations and delineations by Islamist leaders. This state of dissatisfaction reflected, undoubtedly, in the retreat of the total votes of the IAF's parliamentarians who have stood again for the elections in 2007.

Based on the numbers, we can draw up a main observation. Although it is reasonable and logical to say that obvious violations have negatively affected the Brotherhood's candidates and benefited their competitors directly, this fact does not negate the following facts: that there is "some" decline in the support of the Brotherhood among the masses; there were mistakes committed by the

Brotherhood's calculations of their electoral campaigns; and there were questions about the ability of the Brotherhood to adapt their discourse and practices to political, economic, and social changes.

If voters or citizens had felt that the Brotherhood was able to represent their interests and demands in the parliament in a better way, then the results of the elections would have been better regardless of the government's practices and the behavior of the other candidates.

Conclusion:

After the 2007 Elections: The Crisis with the Regime

Those who adopted and implemented the 2007 elections scenario from within the governing institutions of the state come from a right-wing and security-oriented trend. This trend views the Muslim Brotherhood through a complex and compounded paranoid perspective (the Islamist alternative phobia, the relationship with Hamas, and that the Brotherhood represents Jordanians from Palestinian origin). This trend also believes that the regime does not wish to stay under the mercy of the “moderate line” (or the Centrist current), especially amid the absence of any safeguards for the strategic course and political path of the Brotherhood that would guarantee the continuation of its moderate and peaceful positions. Furthermore, this trend believes that the most secure strategic bet is to weaken the Brotherhood and grant it its “normal size” instead of the enlarged size and influence it had gained during exceptional circumstances in previous periods.

Despite the fact that this trend is rather influential and has a substantial presence within the security institution in Jordan, it nonetheless was unable to provide answers to the country’s “power house” (i.e. the regime) following the 2007 elections, on why the movement still maintains its influence within Jordanian society, particularly amongst Jordanians of Palestinian origin, and its political wing, the Islamic Action Front, remains the biggest and strongest political party in the Jordanian political arena. This means that the Islamist movement’s decision to boycott any elections, or the state’s confrontation with it, would amount to a real political crisis. For all intents and purposes, the Muslim Brotherhood and IAF are the opposition political force that constitutes the most important “political player” in the political equation, which in turn gives this movement the legitimacy and strength it is due.

The scenario of striking the Muslim Brotherhood or attempting to curtail it faces the difficulty of drawing the features of an alternative political scenario that would be void of crises. Indeed, in a scenario where the Muslim Brotherhood is absent, and in light of the weakness of other political parties, there remains a need to reinforce the legitimacy of the “political game” by containing the opposition rather than excluding and ousting it.

The predicament of the option of confrontation with the Muslim Brotherhood is what gives a chance for an alternative discourse and a variant vision in the state’s “power house,” which sees the feasibility of reconsidering this strategy and the possibility of “opening up” to the movement and engage it in common and shared visions regarding the rules and conditions of the political game. However, this trend remains, until now, distant from truly influencing the course of the relationship with the Brotherhood, although it tends to emerge visibly in phases where the regime “opens up” to the movement.

Nonetheless, in light of the previous discussion and analysis of the course of the relationship, we find that, at least theoretically, the scenarios posed for dealing with the Muslim Brotherhood range between the following:

- *The scenario of eradication and curtailment (the non head-on confrontation):*

The supporters of this scenario consider that the 2007 parliamentary elections proved the success and strength of this strategy. This would lead to the waning of the Brotherhood's strength and its public presence. However, opponents of this scenario point out that the Brotherhood in Egypt suffered from banning, marginalization, and exclusion for many years, yet it continued to increase in power, presence, and taking root among the masses. Indeed, Egypt's Brotherhood was able to utilize the suffering, injustice, and persecution it faced to build the image of being the "victim" among the masses, who in turn sympathized with the Brotherhood. Thus, the Egyptian Brotherhood was able to achieve great results in the legislative elections in 2005 despite the large-scale violations, rigging, and the impartiality of the elections. Furthermore, opponents of this scenario respond by presenting the Iraqi example, where the arbitrary security solution used with the Brotherhood during the last decades did not prevent the Brotherhood from emerging and gaining great popularity when the political and security institutions of the previous regime collapsed. Policies of control and marginalization may seem comfortable and easy in the short term, but they are not guaranteed in the long term and may bring adverse results.

- *The scenario of prohibition and head-on confrontation:*
This is considered, by far, the worst scenario. It is based on the assumption that the Muslim Brotherhood will lose control over its "reactions" or the reactions of its members and followers. Successive frictions, in case regional or internal developments related to the political or economic conditions take place, may lead to increased tension and tragic scenarios. This, in turn, would lead to large-scale arrests or to adopting highly sensitive measures such as banning the Brotherhood or its political party, or both.
- *The scenario of containment and engagement:*
This scenario is based on several suppositions. First, the emergence of an elite group within the state's "power house" that would reconsider the strategy of marginalization and curtailment, or new transformations and developments would necessitate a return to the strategy of containment and co-existence. The strategic solution most guaranteed for dealing with the Muslim Brotherhood or movements working within the framework of political Islamism (which adopt and participate in the political process) is that of containment and engagement in everyday political aspects, which would transform these movements from the role of "political slogans" to that of "realistic and pragmatic politics." The movements, hence, would find themselves before two options: Either adopt a more rational and realistic political approach, or prove their failure in presenting alternative policies and political programs. Both options would indeed deprive these movements from the role they previously played, that is the role of the bystander observant, waiting, criticizing, and presenting an inciting discourse for which they are often not held accountable. The Moroccan example is a proof of the success of this scenario and its effectiveness. The Justice and Development Party there retreated to second place, but it may advance or regress further in the next elections. However, the strategy of containing and engaging it has put it in a position where it must deal with the political reality. Its situation will become similar to political parties in the Western countries, advancing sometimes and regressing in other times, albeit with the guaranteed participation and populist representation in constitutional and political institutions in a manner that prevents the eruption of social fissures, angry pockets, and public incite.

The containment and engagement scenario is facing great opposition from the influential elite within the state's governing institution for many reasons, including:

- The exceptional political circumstances through which the region is passing and which forces Jordan to balance “politics under the care of security”. However, this pretext has been practically voided by the emergence of the Arab democratic revolutions.
- There is no trust in the credibility of these Islamist movements and their intentions. This is similar to what happened after the Palestinian legislative elections, in the aftermath of Hamas’ success, and the Gaza events. However, the security trend here overlooks the fact that the regional and international blockade played a significant role in pushing Hamas into more radical options.
- The demographic formula in Jordan does not allow for taking wide steps in political reforms, nor does it allow for containing the Muslim Brotherhood, which represents the “Palestinian majority.” What is needed in the upcoming phase is to “buy time” until other options mature, and until local political currents emerge strong enough to compete with the Brotherhood, and until a clearer scenario of a peace settlement emerges on the Palestinian track.

The answer to the opponents of the containment scenario is given in the context of the following main issues:

- The real safeguard for security is not to neutralize politics but to activate it. The strategic formula which has the most guarantee is “security under the care of politics” and not the opposite. The security solution is required, but it must be implemented within the context of a political strategic vision that positions it within effective molds and limits. Alternatively, relying on the security approach may either lead to delaying crises, further deepening them, or transforming the country into a “police state.”
- Jordan has strong political, military, and security institutions, and the Muslim Brotherhood is a peaceful organization that adopts peaceful political and civil work, and publicly declares its commitment to the rules of democracy. These factors, in and of themselves, constitute limits, restraints, and guarantees against the Islamists violations of the rules of the political game. Indeed, proponents of this approach refer to the Turkish model of “military democracy,” where clear political conditions are imposed on the political activism of Islamists in a manner that guarantees their containment and simultaneously safeguards the regime and the political system.
- Considering the Muslim Brotherhood as a “political front” for Jordanians of Palestinian origin is a supposition that helps to integrate this large segment of today’s Jordanian society and guarantees them fair political representation, within the parameters of the controlled domestic political conditions. Proponents of this approach see no contradiction between this approach and the issue of final solution to the Palestinian cause. Indeed, it is possible to maintain a proportional political representation of the Muslim Brotherhood in the political system without “violating” the identity of the parliament (in reflecting the makeup of Jordanian society) or disrupting the political and demographic equation in the country. This may be done through an electoral law that would balance between the considerations of geographic representation, demographic make-up of the population, and the socio-political formation of Jordanian society.

- The above argument does not negate the fact that the Muslim Brotherhood enjoys substantial presence among East Bankers, even on the leadership level. The results of the parliamentary and municipal elections, and indeed the internal organizational elections within the movement, all indicate that the (East) Jordanian elite maintains a strong and influential presence in the movement, despite the regime's policies to undermine it.
- There is fear that the pretexts presented by those who oppose the scenario of engagement and containment are only aimed at impeding the political reform process, using the Islamists as a "scarecrow," while in fact there is no real intent to move forward with the required political reform measures.
- The most substantial justification for this scenario is to maintain the status quo. The country must indeed move forward, and swiftly, in the path of political reform. In this context, the Muslim Brotherhood constitute a practical, realistic, and pragmatic partner that would facilitate and help ease this peaceful flow forward, without having to recall or replicate the harsh models of Tunisia or Egypt, or even Libya, Yemen, and Syria.

The internal organizational crisis within the Muslim Brotherhood grew in parallel to the crisis with the regime in the past few years, and this crisis emerged more serious and detrimental in the post-2007 elections phase. This crisis has become one of the main headlines in the local and international media pertaining to the Muslim Brotherhood, and indeed, nearly stormed the whole movement and undermined its organizational cohesiveness.

The ramifications and implications of the crisis escalated during a meeting held by the Brotherhood's *Shura* Council in which it took a decision to dissolve itself following the 2007 parliamentary elections. The Executive Office was held responsible for the movement's falling into the "trap" of the government.²⁰⁰ This culminated in early organizational elections in which the 'Hawks' and the Fourth current won the majority of the seats, and the Executive Office was restructured in accordance with a new formula, this time, the posts were divided equally between the Doves and the Hawks.²⁰¹

Despite this move, the Muslim Brotherhood did not escape successive crises, where disputes between members of the Executive Office erupted every now and then, culminating in the selection of a transitional Secretary General of the IAF, Dr. Ishaq al-Fahran,²⁰² to replace Zaki Bani Ersheid, who quit his post in the IAF Executive Office in protest, before Hamza Mansour would be re-elected in the latest organizational elections of the party.

The main debate, and in fact the core bone of contention in the past years has been focused on defining the identity and the priorities of the movement. This crisis is indeed inseparable from the crisis facing the Jordanian national identity and the nature of the dual demographic make-up of the

²⁰⁰ For background information on this decision, see the report on BBC Arabic entitled: "*Majlis Shura al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin fi al-Urdun Yahul Najfuh*" (Lit., "The Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood Shura Council Dissolves Itself") available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/arabic/news/newsid_7119000/7119723.stm

²⁰¹ See the report on Al-Jazeera available at <http://www.aljazeera.net/news/pages/9b95eec9-7f56-4e38-9f55-6b4fdac1788e>

²⁰² On the crisis in the Islamic Action Front and the resignation of Zaki Bani Ersheid and the election of Ishaq al-Fahran, see the following report on Al-Jazeera available at <http://arabic.aljazeeraportal.net/news/pages/a51efc7-8f5b-452a-b2b2-dd81c8c1678a>

population (between East Bank Jordanians and Jordanians of Palestinian descent).²⁰³ However, and although indicators were pointing towards further deepening and escalation of the internal crisis, nonetheless, the decision to boycott the 2010 elections, later on, culminated in a sort of an “internal truce” and an attempt to recuperate and regroup the movement, as will be discussed in the following chapter.

²⁰³ For more discussion on the demographic duality of the Jordanian population and its relation to Hamas, see chapter four of this book.

Chapter Three

A New Political Role: The Muslim Brotherhood after the 2010 Elections

Introduction

Shortly after the Organization of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan endorsed a decision to boycott the parliamentary elections of 2010, the movement's broader leadership (the leaderships of the different groups and affiliations within the organization) convened an internal conference to discuss different working papers that dealt with contentious internal portfolios, which, in recent years, have culminated into a serious crisis within the ranks and files of the movement. The conference also debated how the Brotherhood would conduct its future relations with the government and the state.

This particular conference was not necessarily designed to arrive at concrete decisions, nor did it conclude with specific and defined recommendations. Rather, it was a forum for a broader internal debate over questions whose answers would help define and determine the Muslim Brotherhood's approach and strategy in the coming period, particularly in the "post-boycott" period. In fact, many of the questions and issues under discussion were of no less importance than the very decision to boycott the elections. The debate extended beyond this issue to that of redefining the movement, itself, and determining the Brotherhood's stakes in the internal political balance in the wake of all the larger, internal and organizational transformations the movement had undergone and experienced over the past few decades. During this conference, the Muslim Brotherhood revisited the alternatives and options available to the movement in order to better define their position on decisive and critical issues of national importance, particularly those related to national identity and Jordanian-Palestinian relations, as well as the spectrum of the movement's strategic options as related to their political engagement in public life.

In pragmatic terms, the importance of this conference was that it went beyond the framework of issuing decisions to the broader scope of generating an internal debate on these strategic portfolios, according to recommendations presented by the Brotherhood's political bureau, which, recently, had transformed into a kind of policy "power house" for the movement. In previous months, this internal policy "power house" had been formulating recommendations and working papers that extended beyond the organization's traditional lines to presenting what internal sources in the movement describe as a "national reform project". This "project", in itself, would include a vision determined at various levels and for a series of critical thematic issues, including: the state and society, political reform, foreign policy, the question of Jordanian-Palestinian relations, as well as a blueprint for a draft electoral law, presented by the movement as a first step to dealing with the challenges and the various requirements of political reform.²⁰⁴

Of further importance was the fact that this conference, convened to discuss the Muslim Brotherhood's options during its boycott of parliamentary elections, would also coincide with the harbingers of the Arab democratic spring, which gave birth to a transformative moment of historical proportions in the region, represented in the popular overthrow of the Tunisian, Egyptian, and Libyan leaders as well as revolutions-in-the-making unfolding in the streets of both Yemen and Syria. The Arab democratic spring, indeed, ushered in a new, popular political mood in the region that took on a fervent revolutionary character, demanding democracy, change, and reform.

²⁰⁴ From an interview with a leading figure and reliable source from the Muslim Brotherhood, conducted at his office on January 16, 2011; this source wishes to remain anonymous.

These dynamic regional variables coupled with a new, Arab populist spirit weighed in heavily on the Jordanian political landscape, igniting unprecedented popular political activism in which the Muslim Brotherhood has become an essential part. Unlike the revolutions and mass protests unfolding elsewhere, the popular mobilizations in Jordan set the ceiling of their demands at the level of “reforming the regime”. However, this time, the bar for reform has been raised to include resolute demands for constitutional reform, curtailing the powers vested in the king, combating corruption, and reforming the tenets for a parliamentary government, amongst others.

The new emerging political environment would fully converge with the Muslim Brotherhood’s boycott initiative and the political thinking of certain policy circles within the movement, which lobbied for alternatives that would range from betting on the utility of a strategic dialogue process with the regime to partnering with other oppositional forces in demarcating the milestones of a new political era, founded upon structural reform. A great part of these political machinations also wagered on the regime’s non-responsiveness which, for the first time in its history, pushed the Muslim Brotherhood to resort to a more confrontational form of hard opposition, taking to the streets, and openly challenging the traditional “red lines”, which had once been so firmly set in stone and honored by the Jordanian socio-political status quo.

Within the context of this provocative and dynamic climate, the issue of the internal crisis that remained mired within the ranks of the Muslim Brotherhood became an even more important question and challenge, requiring some manner of resolution by the movement. Indeed, the decision to boycott elections translated into certain implications and would have rebounding ramifications for the many different and opposing wings in the movement. Would the boycott reinforce these differences and polarizations, or would it provide an opportunity for reformulating alliances, or would it reunite the Muslim Brotherhood over a specific stance and return internal coherence and cohesiveness to the movement?

Finally, there remains the question of the formal stance adopted by the state towards the Muslim Brotherhood. Would the state endeavor to forge alternative paths or set new trends in motion in response to recent transformations, such as the emergence of a solid, open, and confrontational opposition? Or, would the overall position taken by the government ahead of the 2010 parliamentary elections on continuing the dialogue process with the Muslim Brotherhood reflect a shift in the center of policy circles? Or, does this position actually reflect differences in opinion and incongruent visions within the official Jordanian policy “power houses” (decision-making centers of power) over how the state should conduct its relations with the Muslim Brotherhood, for the first time in almost fifteen years?

By addressing these issues, debates, questions and challenges, this chapter will try to construct an overall picture of the internal organizational balance currently prevailing in the Muslim Brotherhood organization, the movement’s power and presence in the Jordanian street, the changes taking place in its political discourse, as well as some of the alternatives available to the Muslim Brotherhood in the future and, in the end, what directions the relationship between the movement and the state may take after the Brotherhood’s boycott of the 2010 parliamentary elections.

1. The Decision to Boycott the 2010 Parliamentary Elections: Key Factors and Rationale

In late July of 2010, both the *Shura* (Consultative) Councils of the Muslim Brotherhood and the Islamic Action Front (IAF)²⁰⁵ respectively endorsed a decision to boycott the upcoming parliamentary elections. This decision was taken after soliciting the views of the movement's general membership and party base, which showed that almost 70% of the movement and the party's members and leaders supported the boycott decision.

The Brotherhood's *Shura* Council passed the decision to boycott after a vote where 70% of the Council favored the decision, 10% abstained and only 20% voted against the boycott and in favor of participating in the elections. Meanwhile, in the Islamic Action Front, the outcome of the party's *Shura* Council vote showed 61% in favor of the boycott while 39% voted for participating in the elections. Amongst the ranks of the greater membership base, however, support for the boycott reached over 90% in some of the organization's large and important branches.²⁰⁶

The Muslim Brotherhood's decision to boycott the 2010 elections was met by variant official reactions from the government, which ranged from indifference or disregard to the boycott decision altogether, to those who held the view that the Brotherhood's participation would lend support to general claims that the government would conduct more transparent elections and expand the political electoral base in an effort to rectify the skewed results of the 2007 elections, which were met with widespread criticism. Even on a (semi-) official level, there had been partial admission that there was widespread manipulation of the 2007 electoral results, which eventually led to the dissolution of the Jordanian Lower House of Parliament (the Council of Deputies) two years later.

After the boycott decision was formally endorsed, messages were exchanged between the Brotherhood and the government, which eventually led to a meeting between an official delegation from the Muslim Brotherhood and the government on September 18, 2010.²⁰⁷ However, and despite the fact that this meeting was preceded by side negotiations and mediation, the meeting concluded without a reversal of the movement's boycott decision and with both the government and the Muslim Brotherhood clinging to their positions vis-à-vis the electoral law – the amendment of which had been the main condition set by the movement for reversing its boycott decision and for agreeing to participate in the next elections.

Meanwhile, in other “back corridors”, certain parties from the Muslim Brotherhood would take the initiative to present the prime minister with four conditions that, if met, would resolve the “boycott crisis”. The first of these conditions was to petition the king to instruct the government to present a new draft electoral law to parliament, as a matter of urgency. This suggested draft electoral law was

²⁰⁵ The Islamic Action Front (or, “*Jabhat al-‘Amal al-Islami*” in Arabic) is a registered political party in Jordan that represents the political wing of the Organization of the Muslim Brotherhood. It was founded in 1992 with 350 initial members. Reference: <http://www.jordanpolitics.org/en/index.php/parties/current-parties/819-the-islamic-action-front-party>. The party's official website is <http://www.jabha.net> [Translator's note]

²⁰⁶ For more information on this matter refer to the following link (in Arabic): <http://www.elaph.com/Web/news/2010/7/584445.html>

²⁰⁷ For more information about this meeting refer to the Bahrain-based *Al-Wasat* newspaper, No. 2935, Sunday, September 19, 2010, 10 Shawwal 1431 AH.

to be based on consensus and as a result of dialogue with other political parties. This first condition was presented with the rationale that merely amending the standing law would not suffice, as it (the electoral law) was “not fit for negotiation or discussion,” in any case. The second condition was that a special oversight committee be formed and tasked with supervising the elections instead of the Ministry of Interior. The third condition also stipulated permitting full and unrestricted civil oversight of the elections. Finally, the fourth would represent a request that the upcoming elections be postponed until the Muslim Brotherhood and the Islamic Action Front had enough time to actually reverse their decision, given the limited time frame that remained before the date set for the next elections.²⁰⁸

According to internal sources in the Muslim Brotherhood, the prime minister agreed to the first three conditions but not the last, after the government announced the impossibility of postponing the date set for elections and after the king, himself, had confirmed the date more than once. And, thus, this attempt to defuse the crisis failed.²⁰⁹

Meanwhile, in the period preceding the 2010 parliamentary elections, the Muslim Brotherhood had issued a statement in which it explained the reasons and rationale for its decision to boycott elections. The government, on the other hand, instead attributed the entire boycott decision to differences and conflicts within the movement itself. The Brotherhood’s decision indeed posed fundamental questions about the intellectual, organizational, and political background behind the boycott, as well as the organizational dynamics leading to the decision, and the internal discussions and debates surrounding it.

The Path to the Boycott

The positions held by the different groups within the Islamist movement were practically split between two currents when it came to the question of boycotting or participating in the 2010 parliamentary elections. The current that would advocate against the boycott and for participating in the elections argued that political participation represented the original pillars of Islamist activism, as it also represented the unique path that the Islamist movement had originally adopted in order to propagate and bring about political reform – a path which categorically rejects armed action and which firmly stands by democracy and democratic processes. These advocates for participation were also of the conviction that even if the current circumstances were dubious and frustrating, participating in the elections would provide the Islamist movement with a more open environment – outside the framework of other official constraints – to advocate their positions through the electoral campaigning process and engaging with the street. In their view, participating in the elections would also provide the movement with access to the political platforms required to defend its thought and program.

Whereas, according to the current advocating participation, the Muslim Brotherhood’s boycott of the 1997 elections had not been to the advantage of the organization and did not yield any positive results. Instead, the 1997 boycott would cost the movement dearly and, in their view, Jordanian political life, in general, would suffer as a consequence. Arguments supporting this view included

²⁰⁸ From an interview with a leading figure in the Muslim Brotherhood, op. cit., January 16, 2011.

²⁰⁹ From an interview with a reliable source from within the Muslim Brotherhood.

the fact that it was after this boycott, or in 1999, that the leadership of the Hamas movement would be expelled from Jordan, in addition to the fact that parliament would be dissolved in 2001 and would remain dissolved and absent for another two years, allowing Prime Minister Ali Abu al-Ragheb's government unrestrained, unilateral, and full reign to act at will in the political arena. This government, indeed, enacted hundreds of temporary laws without any form of opposition.

One advocate for participating in the 2010 elections also added that the arguments presented by those defending the boycott did not herald anything new or important enough for the movement to change its position, particularly as the prevailing state of "political crisis" was not transient or incidental, but rather had been the norm for many years. In fact, according to this advocate, the same conditions continued to exist when the Islamist movement decided to participate in the 2007 elections. Thus, there was nothing definitively or critically new, this time, which could justify the movement's decision to boycott the 2010 elections.²¹⁰

On the other side of the movement's spectrum, those advocating the boycott were of the conviction that the political and economic circumstances in the country were heading from bad to worse. Thus, formal participation in the political process, in this prevailing reality, would not produce any genuine outcomes. Advocates of the boycott believed that the organization would not be able to produce any real impact in changing the status quo through its participation, nor do justice to the Islamist movement's responsibilities, influence and efforts, as was clearly proven in the case when the movement did participate in elections and actively engaged in the parliaments of 2003 and 2007 – and, in their opinion, to no avail.

Some advocates of the boycott also added that changes and achievements expected at the regional level in the near future would place "external pressure on Jordan to accept certain hard realities and solutions"; and perhaps, it were these prospects that pushed the government's efforts in trying to encourage the movement to reverse its boycott of electoral processes, in a manner that even surprised the organization's leadership, itself. Indeed, the Muslim Brotherhood's leaders were cautious and wary of being "lured" into being a part of a parliament that may endorse policy lines that go against the movement's principles – such as, in 1993, when the Muslim Brotherhood became an unwilling part of a parliament that passed the law that endorsed and instated the Wadi 'Araba peace settlement between Jordan and Israel.²¹¹

In a statement the movement would release to explain and justify its boycott decision, the Muslim Brotherhood attributed its boycott to seven fundamental points: Measures to ensure the transparency and integrity of elections; changing the 2007 electorate voter lists; amending the electoral law; and changing the official bodies responsible for monitoring elections; the need to restore the stature, authority, and powers vested in the Lower House of Parliament; prohibiting civilians actively engaged in the armed forces and security services from voting; lifting restrictions on public freedoms and resolving certain issues (related to questioning teachers and day laborers, and the government's expropriation of the Brotherhood's Islamic Center Charitable Society); and, finally, emphasizing the futility of participating in public or political life under these circumstances.

²¹⁰ From an interview with 'Atef al-Jolani, conducted at his office at the *Al-Sabeel* newspaper on January 16, 2011.

²¹¹ From an interview with Zaki Bani Ershid, the head of the political committee of the Islamic Action Front (IAF), conducted at the party's offices on December 22, 2010.

Setting a specific political context for the boycott, the statement issued by the Muslim Brotherhood addressed the main parts of the organization's 13-point platform, the most important of which included: Conducting constitutional reforms in a manner that would restore the balance between the three branches of government; enacting legislation protecting and guaranteeing the Article II of the Constitution (related to the state's official religion, Islam); "enabling the right of citizens to elect their prime minister and his ministerial cabinet" in a manner which fairly reflects the ballot box and electoral results; repealing legislations and laws restricting public freedoms (such as the public assembly law, the preaching and religious guidance law, and the law on electronic crimes); formulating and enacting a new electoral law that allows for free and fair partisan competition between lists; and ensuring the peaceful alternation of power (*tadawul al-sulta*) based on electoral processes, amongst other demands.

Perhaps the most important aspect of the Muslim Brotherhood's new platform was the manner in which "political reform" would be presented, as a fundamental demand and priority of the movement; and, that this insistence on reform would extend beyond traditional demands to demands of constitutional reform, direct election of the prime minister, ensuring the peaceful rotation of power, and free and fair partisan competition. Indeed, this significantly raised ceiling of demands reflected an (at least) implicit shift in the Islamist movement's vision and focus towards the internal front and towards domestic affairs.

Another important point worthy of note, and which could be discerned from observing the dynamics inside the movement, was that the internal debate between the different groups and members of the Islamist movement was taking on an almost entirely political nature. Indeed, no one group was debating the ideological basis of the boycott or discussing the movement's overall position towards democracy, but rather the decision to boycott the elections was grounded within the context of a wholly different level of political discourse, based on different readings of the political circumstances and the different equations affecting the domestic political landscape.

Meanwhile, official circles recognized that, at least for the immediate future, political reform would become the new standard touted by the Muslim Brotherhood. But the official interpretation of this stance was that it was not solely a reaction to transformations and developments currently unfolding in the country and in the region, but also as a mere pretext to justify the Muslim Brotherhood's boycott of the 2010 elections to the regime and to the general public. This "official" opinion was further justified by the view that the Muslim Brotherhood's political reform project was, in fact, nothing new. According to official readings, this same, general platform had been approved and endorsed by the movement as part of certain initiatives it had presented as far back as 2005. Furthermore, this "reform" project was one which was never put into motion in a holistic manner; rather, it was discussed and presented by its architect, Dr. Rohile Gharaibeh, from time to time. Officials were of the conviction that the Brotherhood's leadership was careful to remain distant from this "project" in order to avoid triggering any negative official responses or accountability measures against the movement.

Organizational Dynamics: Changing Internal Alignments

Zaki Bani Ersheid, the former secretary general of the Islamic Action Front and one of the leaders of the “fourth” current in the Muslim Brotherhood, says, “It is my personal conviction that the 2007 elections were the decisive factor in the verdict to boycott in 2010”.²¹²

He explains that the group that had lobbied within the Muslim Brotherhood’s for participation in the elections of 2007 was the same group that lobbied against participation in 2010. In his view, in 2010, this group sought to send a “dual message” to both the organization and to the state and its security apparatus. The first message was directed internally to disprove claims held inside the organization that they were always on the side of the government and in favor of participating in the elections. The second was directed to the state in order to emphasize and underline the extent of the severity in the error of the state’s interference and manipulation of the 2007 elections. Bani Ersheid also adds: “In my estimation, these messages were clearly delivered and heard”.²¹³

Another one of the leading figures in the movement explains the main positions held within the Muslim Brotherhood on the boycott decision as follows: There is a current which traditionally favors boycotting participation (the “hawks”) and another current which traditionally favors participation (the “doves”). There are two other dynamic currents within the movement, which represent the newer generations and who, today, dominate the organization. The first of these latter groups calls itself the “reform current”; and, it is this current, which took the most active part in leading the Brotherhood during previous elections and in advocating participation, whereas, it played a leading role in the decision to boycott the 2010 elections. Meanwhile, the last group, or the “fourth” current in the organization is split between those who support the boycott and those who support participation.²¹⁴

According to this interpretation, the major transformation in the movement’s internal alignments would actually take place within the “reform current,” which had led the Brotherhood’s participation in 2007 and which, in 2010, would lead the movement in its boycott. Finally, according to this same source, a limited group of members from within the “doves” current still favors participation, whereas the other three currents in the organization supported the boycott (with the exception of a small group in the “fourth” current). In the end, these alignments tipped the balance in favor of the boycott and against participation.²¹⁵

Taking a closer look at the organization’s internal dynamics, one would find that this leading figure’s interpretation of matters is quite accurate. And, this assessment is further supported by the fact that Khalid Mish’al, the leader of the Hamas Movement, sent a message to the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan, recommending that the organization agree to participate, in addition to a “recommendation” from the Global Muslim Brotherhood’s Guidance Office, which urged the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan to participate in elections (a recommendation dealt with by the *Shura* Council as non-binding); both messages of which were left unheeded. However, these recommendations would still influence the opinion of certain figures affiliated with the “fourth”

²¹² From an interview with Zaki Bani Ersheid; op. cit.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ From an interview with a leading figure in the Muslim Brotherhood, op. cit., January 16, 2011.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

current, who would subsequently agree to the necessity of participating in the upcoming elections.²¹⁶

The most prominent advocates of the 2010 boycott amongst the Muslim Brotherhood's leading figures, from the reform current and the doves current, would include: Dr. 'Abd al-Latif 'Arabiyat, Dr. Rohile Gharaibeh, Nabil al-Kufahi, Salem al-Falahat, and Nimr al-'Assaf. From the hawks, the leading advocates of the boycott included: the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood's General Supervisor, Hammam Sa'id, Dr. Mohammad Abu Faris, Murad al-'Adayleh, Ahmad al-Zarqan, and 'Ali al-'Atoum. Finally, Zaki Bani Ersheid would be the most important leading figure from the "fourth" current to advocate for the decision to boycott the 2010 elections.

Alternatively, the most important of the movement's leading figures to advocate participation and against the 2010 boycott from the doves current, would include: the Deputy General Supervisor, 'Abd al-Hamid al-Qudah, 'Abd al-Majid Thunaibat, Hamza Mansour, and 'Azzam al-Huneidi. And, from the "fourth" current, advocates for participation would include: 'Ali Abu al-Sukkar, 'Atef al-Jolani, Faraj Shalhoub, Kathem 'Ayyesh, and Jawad al-Hamad.

Dr. Rohile Gharaibeh agrees that the reform current, which advocated and led the campaign for the Islamist movement's participation in the 2007 elections, was the same group to lead the internal campaign supporting the 2010 boycott decision. This change in position would be justified by a conviction, established over time amongst the members of this group, that there were fundamental conditions required (and which were missing) to ensure transparent, free and fair elections; and demanding that these conditions be met represented a critical turning point in the political scene. Furthermore, this group would come to the realization that the decision to derail the movement in the 2007 elections was not a decision built upon a unified national vision, but rather upon a narrow reading of matters, which was focused on settling accounts with the Muslim Brotherhood and was the outcome of a power-struggle between different power circles at that time. A series of conclusions were borne of these convictions, which were reinforced amongst the members of this group, including the presence of tribulations and unilateralism in the state's decision-making processes and the weakness of the prime minister's position in the political equation.

The reform group in the Muslim Brotherhood also arrived at the conclusion that the state's neglect or indifference to the messages the movement tried to relay in 2007, and the fact that it continued to try to weaken any national group or movement that lobbied for political reform through a rational discourse, reflected a true crisis in the state's policy "power house" and in its decision-making process; and, that this state of affairs was dangerous for the country's future and threatening its socio-political stability. The latter conditions were in addition to fears that several indicators were pointing to a deteriorating economic situation as well as a solution to the Palestinian crisis and naturalization (of Palestinians), which would likely be resolved at Jordan's expense.²¹⁷

²¹⁶ From an interview with Dr. 'Abd al-Latif 'Arabiyat, conducted at his home in Dahiyat al-Rashid in Amman on December 20, 2010; and, also from a discussion held with Zaki Bani Ersheid (op. cit.). Furthermore, the position held by Hamas was confirmed in person by Khalid Mish'al in a telephone conversation he held with the researcher and author of this part of the study.

²¹⁷ From an interview with Dr. Rohile Gharaibeh, conducted at his office in the Ummah Studies Center in Jabal al-Lweibdeh in Amman on November 10, 2010.

All of these factors pushed the reform group towards forming new convictions that it was of vital importance to introduce a qualitative change in the manner of thinking about their political reform project, strategically. They would also become increasingly convinced that it was time to transition beyond demanding partial, progressive, and cumulative reform – which clearly was not going to happen given the current political circumstances – to demanding profound change in the very structure of the political equation, which would allow for changing the “rules of the game”, and to finally achieve genuine, fair and representative political participation.

These new convictions would reinforce the motives behind the reform group’s decision to declare and adopt an initiative calling for a constitutional monarchy (which, in any case, had been under extensive consideration), in coordination with other leading Jordanian political figures. However, it is also important to note that the Muslim Brotherhood’s *Shura* Council rejected this “constitutional monarchy” proposal.²¹⁸

This (unofficial) initiative constituted an unprecedented milestone in the movement’s history and in its political discourse. The proposal put forth a historical demand for constitutional amendments that, while preserving the monarchy, called for a profound structural change in governance, which would guarantee the prime minister would always represent the majority elected to parliament. It also put forth demands that the real powers and jurisdictions vested in the constitutional institutions of the state be truly restored and activated.²¹⁹

The “constitutional monarchy” proposal also included a vision for how domestic Jordanian-Palestinian relations should be conducted. Apparently, it was this part of the proposal that would turn the initiative into a major cause for concern and unease for other groups in the Muslim Brotherhood²²⁰; as, according to the pioneers of the initiative, many were under the illusion that this part of the initiative could lead to diminishing the political rights of Palestinians in Jordan.

Following the constitutional monarchy initiative, and in protest of the standing electoral law, the reform group in the Muslim Brotherhood began preparing for the boycott of the 2010 elections, while simultaneously demanding that certain conditions and requirements be met by the state in order to safeguard free and fair elections, in addition to demanding holding officials responsible for rigging the 2007 parliamentary elections responsible. The group would also contribute to

²¹⁸ A conflict inside the Muslim Brotherhood would be sparked by the constitutional monarchy initiative, where the reform group insisted that it had been mandated by both the executive offices of the Muslim Brotherhood and the Islamic Action Front to develop this proposal. The reform group insists that this plan had received approval of the initiative from both these offices. However, sources from inside the Brotherhood’s leadership circles denied that both of the executive offices officially endorsed the proposal, before the Brotherhood’s *Shura* Council rejected it. One of the leading figures inside the Muslim Brotherhood, who opposed the initiative, recounts that he was very surprised – during the Brotherhood’s *Shura* Council meeting – when Dr. Rohile Gharaibeh claimed that both of the executive offices (of the Muslim Brotherhood and the Islamic Action Front) had accepted and endorsed the initiative and, when challenged to deny this fact, the members of these offices responded with silence – which, according to the source cited in this reference, showed that these offices likely did approve the initiative, in principle, and only later reversed their position. Cf. Mohammad al-Najjar’s article, “*Ikhwan al-Urdun Yunaqishoun al-Malikiya al-Dustouriya*” (Lit., “The Jordanian Brotherhood Debates the Constitutional Monarchy”), published on the Al-Jazeera.net news website, found at the following link: <http://www.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/2D7787AA-7218-4D6D-A6D4-009E93D4D459.htm>

²¹⁹ From an interview with Dr. Rohile Gharaibeh (op. cit.); also, recently, a website created to introduce and explain this initiative was disrupted and forced offline, with the founders of the website accusing certain elements in the state’s security apparatus for this obstruction.

²²⁰ From a private interview conducted with one of the leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood, op. cit.

formulating a new vision for the Muslim Brotherhood by identifying the reasons for the boycott and defining its justifications, as well as presenting, arguing and explaining the Brotherhood's position, as well as the rationale behind the boycott to parties close to the government and to the general public.²²¹

The sum of the above reflected the fact that prevailing "domestic balances" did, in fact, play an important and vital role in driving the Muslim Brotherhood's decision to boycott the 2010 elections. Indeed, the boycott decision was not determined by a framework, which "externalized the crisis", but rather (and to be more precise): that prevailing political conditions, the domestic political environment, and official policy drove the reform current, which had once favored participation, towards the decision to boycott. In the end, the overall situation strengthened the hand of other currents inside the organization that already favored boycotting participation and finally, led to passing and endorsing the decision by a majority in the movement.

The role that the reform group played in the 2010 boycott can be compared to that of the Muslim Brotherhood's centrist current in 1997, which led the internal lobbying for a boycott of elections that took place in that same year. In fact, later, the reform group would be borne of this "centrist" current that, at that time, held the reigns and also included the fourth current – which, today, is also considered the group that best represents the new blood and next generation of leaders in the Organization of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Others, including many inside the Islamist movement itself, have added that there were also fears that the movement would become split – anew - over electoral ballot lists and nominees, if they had decided to partake in the elections. Thus, these anticipated disputes also played a role in pushing the boycott decision forward. Indeed, had the Muslim Brotherhood and the Islamic Action Front agreed to enter into the 2010 elections, clashes over ballot lists and nominees would have further fueled the internal crisis in the movement and would have escalated the media war that had recently flared up between different bickering factions inside the ranks of the organization's leadership. Evidently, the decision to boycott the 2010 parliamentary elections actually contributed to restoring the organization's internal cohesion and containing certain conflicts. At the very least, this decision would prevent some of these conflicts from escalating to a higher level and from spilling over into the next period.

In this context, Dr. 'Abd al-Latif 'Arabiyat, an active proponent of the 2010 boycott and also the head of the Muslim Brotherhood's *Shura* Council at the time (who is traditionally associated with the moderate current, or the "doves" in the movement), provides an explanation for all the different factors that drove the movement towards the boycott. He first points to the fact that the question of boycotting versus participating in elections had been part of the movement's dynamics since before the parliamentary elections of 1993 – or, since the Single Non-Transferable Vote (SNTV, unpopularity known as the "one-man one-vote") electoral law was passed. But, at that time, in light of

²²¹ See an article written by Dr. Rohile Gharaibeh, "*Muqata'at al-Intikhabat al-Niyabiya 2010: Bayn al-Haqiqah wal Wahm*" (Lit. "The 2010 Elections Boycott: Between Truths and Delusions"), published on the Al-Bosala website (a website that is closely affiliated to the Islamic Action Front), available at <http://www.albosala.com/Portals/Content/?info=YVdROU1UQXhNaIFYz15MWNtTmxQV4xWW5CaFoyVW1kSGx3WlQweEpnPT0rdQ=..jsp>

the appeals made by the late King Hussein Bin Talal to the Islamist movement, the Muslim Brotherhood agreed to partake in the 1993 elections.

Yet the deteriorating path of the democratic process in Jordan would drive the Muslim Brotherhood to reverse its position and boycott the parliamentary elections of 1997. However, the outcome and repercussions of this decision, in 1997, did not play in the movement's favor; and, the Muslim Brotherhood suffered from the fact that it did not have a clear platform and did not provide a defined vision during this period in which they boycotted participation in public life. Instead, after the dissolution of parliament, Prime Minister 'Ali abu al-Ragheb's government was left alone, unchallenged and with unrestrained authority, to unilaterally pass a series of regressive "temporary" laws and legislation.

Later, according to 'Arabiyat, the harbingers that emerged prior to the 2003 elections, including the formation of reform committees and signs of more openness and change, coupled with the negative repercussions suffered by the movement due to its 1997 boycott, all encouraged and pushed the Brotherhood to partake in the 14th parliamentary elections of 2003.

However, he continues that, in 2007, once again, all the signs favored a boycott, particularly after the municipal elections and all the negative incidents associated with these elections. However, interventions on the part of the government, successive meetings with policy-makers, and the promises made by the prime minister, at that time, pushed the Muslim Brotherhood to jump at the opportunity; and, thus, the movement would agree to participate in the 2007 parliamentary elections. But, unfortunately and in the final count, these elections would end up fraught by extensive fraud and manipulation.

Dr. 'Arabiyat concludes that it was this long convoluted journey led the Muslim Brotherhood to come to the final "conclusive conviction" that these regressive policies would not improve any time soon, and that trying to confront these kinds of policies using traditional lines of opposition had become futile. In his view, the time had come to take a stern and tough stance and declare a boycott. He also affirms that both the leadership and the membership base of the movement had come together and were united in these convictions, as evidenced by the very high proportion of members in favor of the boycott compared to those against the decision. Finally, according to 'Arabiyat, the major objective of this stance, whatever the outcome, was to "shock" and stir the stagnated political waters, and to push more seriously towards political reform. For him and the vast majority of the movement, it was time to break these recurring volatile patterns, which have prevented the progression and nurturing of political life, and instead have pushed the nation towards a very fragile and much more dangerous place.²²²

²²² From an interview with Dr. 'Abd al-Latif 'Arabiyat, op. cit..

2. An Absent Brotherhood: The Question of Political and Electoral Power

To date, there is no consensus around specific numbers or precise data that can be used to measure the presence and strength of the Muslim Brotherhood's electoral power. Instead, a great disparity between different assessments and readings exists, where some claim that the Brotherhood only represents 5% of the electorate, while others estimate the movement's strength at 25% or more.

The main problem in trying to define this electoral power actually begins with the assumption that the Muslim Brotherhood's electoral strength and power is a constant feature in Jordanian politics that never changes. This premise, in itself, is imprecise, as the strength of the Brotherhood's electoral power is subject to numerous considerations, determinants and variables that inform and condition the political environment. It is also greatly influenced, favorably or negatively, by the nature of the political environment prevailing during the different electoral periods.

Perhaps, the most important variable in predetermining the Muslim Brotherhood's electoral strength is related to the electoral law itself, and the manner in which electoral districts are distributed. General assessments indicate that if there was an electoral law, which is based on party lists, and assuming, for example, a voter turnout of approximately 50%, the chances that the Muslim Brotherhood would win a parliamentary majority would likely be closer to 50%. If the electoral law is based on both party lists and the "one-man one-vote" ballot system, the chance of winning a parliamentary majority decreases to 30% and becomes even less, or 20-25% with only the one-man one-vote ballot system. In the case of truly free and fair elections, this number would likely be closer to 40% and 25-30%, respectively.

Furthermore, the strength of the Muslim Brotherhood's electoral power varies according to geographic areas. Traditionally, the Muslim Brotherhood's strongest political presence and largest popular bases exist in Jordanian areas that have a high percentage of populations that are of Palestinian origin, such as in Amman, al-Zarqa and al-Baq'aa and to a lesser extent, Irbid. In other governorates and regions in Jordan, the Brotherhood's electoral power relies heavily on "social factors" in parallel with factors related to the political climate prevailing at the time of the elections.

By comparison, if one considers the Muslim Brotherhood's performance in previous elections, we would find that, in 2007, they received 93,339 votes (with the acknowledgement that these numbers and the proportional results of the 2007 elections were very controversial, and that these elections were the subject of serious allegations related to voter fraud and rigging of ballots). Indeed, in the 2007 elections, the Muslim Brotherhood presented 22 candidates, of which only six won after it was proven that the state intervened in favor of other candidates. Alternatively, in the 2003 elections, the Muslim Brotherhood won 167,847 votes spread over 30 candidates, of which 17 won seats in parliament. Meanwhile, the organization boycotted the 1997 elections, whereas in the 1993 elections, the Muslim Brotherhood would win close to 150,000 votes spread over 36 candidates. Clearly, the number of votes won is directly related to the manner in which electoral districts are distributed, the standing electoral laws, the rules of the prevailing electoral "game," and the number of "lost" votes during elections. However, in terms of the ratio of votes per candidate, and up until

2010, the popularity of the Muslim Brotherhood can be safely estimated at a median average of between 4,000-5,000 votes per candidate.

In the end, all these numbers reflect the fact that the electoral power and strength of the Muslim Brotherhood is not fixed or consistent, or based on one singular dimension, but rather on several interlinked and overlapping factors and considerations, including:

First, the Islamist and conservative vote: It is important to differentiate between religiosity that may influence voting and the fact that the Muslim Brotherhood is one of the Islamist parties. Also important to note is the fact that the vast majority of Islamist movements and groups in Jordan do not actively participate in electoral processes, and are much less engaged in political and public life than the Muslim Brotherhood.

Second, the Palestinian vote: The Muslim Brotherhood is still viewed as being the main political front for Jordanians of Palestinian origin since the country returned to parliamentary life in 1989. Proof of the latter is evidenced in the strength of the Brotherhood's presence and by the votes garnered by the movement in areas densely populated with these communities in Jordanian society.

Third, the "Protest" vote: Votes that are a reflection of general opposition to official policies are often called the "punitive vote"; and, these votes are sometimes given to the Muslim Brotherhood merely because it represents the largest and most effective opposition party in the country. Indeed, the Muslim Brotherhood is the only party that can actually compete with the government in terms of popularity and in its ability to attract and mobilize masses during parliamentary elections – a factor that often influences those who oppose official policies to vote for the movement.

Fourth, the social variable: Social work, volunteering and charitable activities often helped a party's popularity. And, recently, the Muslim Brotherhood's once active engagement in social work, volunteer and charitable services has been significantly reduced. Meanwhile, this kind of social engagement once represented a major contributing factor to the manner in which the Brotherhood engaged and connected with the Jordanian street and gained peoples' support, trust, and respect.

Finally, official circles believe that allegations of corruption against leading figures in the Muslim Brotherhood's Islamic Center Charitable Association have significantly affected the popularity and credibility of the movement in the eyes the public.

On another front, the government has maintained that voter turnout was not affected by the Muslim Brotherhood's boycott and absence in the 2010 elections, claiming that turnout was close to 53% - or, a percentage similar to the voter turnouts recorded in previous elections.²²³ However, the opposition questioned these figures and maintained that this voter turnout was much lower than claimed.²²⁴

²²³ For more detail, see http://www.electionsjo.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=305:2010-11-09-17-22-03&catid=1:2010-06-16-12-43-34&Itemid=2

²²⁴ See *Muqati'un min Ajl al-Taghyeer: Nisbat al-Iqtira' lam Tatajawaz 37%* (Lit. "Boycotters for Change: The Voter Turnout did not Exceed 37%"), available at <http://ar.ammannet.net/?p=81197>

On the whole, very few observers or officials can ignore the negative impact caused by the Muslim Brotherhood's absence in these elections, particularly in view of the following repercussions on the country's democratic process:

- The weakened representation of Jordanians of Palestinian origin in voting processes and in voter turnout, as well as in their representation in the Lower House of Parliament, as a result of the boycott; indeed, this segment of Jordanian society would only receive 12% representation in parliament as an outcome of the 2010 elections.
- The negative impact the boycott has had on the momentum of Jordanian electoral political processes; and, the loss of a great part of the political substance inherent to these processes.
- The fact that the seats of opposition in parliament have been left vacant, which weakens the power of parliament, as well as its ability to act as the genuine representative of all the different parts of Jordanian society.

3. The Internal Debate and the “Organizational Crisis”

One of the most important questions posed by the Muslim Brotherhood’s boycott of the 2010 elections is whether or not this decision, and all that was related to it in terms of discussions and debate inside the movement, represents a major turning point in the path of the Muslim Brotherhood’s internal crisis, which clearly had been escalating and had reached an advanced stage in the running up to these elections.

Preliminary indications point to the fact that the movement is experiencing a state of “cautious retreat”, at least in the media, in the “war of words” and in the retaliatory statements that had flared up between the various wings of the Brotherhood ahead of the 2010 elections. Certainly, after the boycott and throughout the election period, the movement would appear “unified” in its external stance, despite the presence of internal conflicts and disagreements surrounding the decision to boycott the elections. At the very least, the organization’s leadership has been in consensus in justifying and defending the boycott decision, whatever their positions actually are inside the movement.

Furthermore, in general, there was no evidence of any major breaches of the boycott decision, with the exception of five candidates from the Muslim Brotherhood, who defied the boycott and ran for parliament, in addition to two other members from the Brotherhood’s political arm, the Islamic Action Front. Of these seven candidates, only Ahmad al-Qudah won a seat in the ‘Ajloun governorate. Subsequently, all seven members were tried internally, with their memberships terminated.²²⁵ The boycott did not produce any great internal “commotions” – in contrast to the case when the Muslim Brotherhood boycotted the 1997 elections, a decision that sparked mass protests amongst the “doves” in the movement, and eventually led to certain members splitting from the movement to found their own party, which they called *Hizb al-Wasat al-Islami* or the Islamic Centrist Party, in 2001.

Yet another question posed by the internal environment accompanying the boycott decision was, how long would this moment of internal and organizational “mitigation” last?

Perhaps, the latter question can best be answered by further investigating the causes for the movement’s internal differences, which plagued the organization and led to a significant escalation in the internal crisis in the months leading up to the elections. By returning to the roots of these internal tensions, it becomes clear that the internal crisis recently resurfaced²²⁶ inside the Muslim Brotherhood with the election of Zaki Bani Ersheid as secretary general of the Islamic Action Front

²²⁵ For more detail on the decision to terminate the memberships of candidates who defied the boycott and ran for election, refer to al-*Bosala* electronic news agency, which is closely affiliated to the Islamic Action Front, available at [http://www.albosala.com/Portals/Content/?info=YVdROU1UTXdPREItYz15MWNi\(TmxQVvk4xWWxCaFoyVW1kSGx3WIQweEpnPT0rdQ==.plx](http://www.albosala.com/Portals/Content/?info=YVdROU1UTXdPREItYz15MWNi(TmxQVvk4xWWxCaFoyVW1kSGx3WIQweEpnPT0rdQ==.plx)

²²⁶ Obviously, these conflicts and differences inside the Muslim Brotherhood are rooted in much earlier stages in the movement’s long history, during which time different groups and currents would evolve inside the movement, converging or diverging over different issues, debates, positions and polemics. These varied positions formed around polarizations related to the movement’s stance towards the government or democracy, or over determining the parameters of their political role and extent of their political engagement in public, in addition to defining the priorities of the movement’s agenda, and so on. However, the internal crisis being referred to, here, in this specific part of the text, is related to significant differences and polarizations that would take on a different dimension, tack, and momentum since 2006.

in 2006. Indeed, Bani Ersheid was not a consensual candidate, as many in the Brotherhood's leadership believed that he was not sufficiently qualified to lead the party and that he was not in tune with other leading figures in the Muslim Brotherhood or the Islamic Action Front. He was also viewed as being too closely affiliated to certain currents inside the movement, which were close to the Hamas movement.

The presence of Bani Ersheid in the executive office of the Islamic Action Front, which was predominantly controlled by "doves" who are not in tune with Bani Ersheid, as well as the fact that Muslim Brotherhood's core leadership also came from the "doves" wing, would become a governing factor in fueling the internal debate and crisis that continued to escalate since 2006. Consequent to this difficult period, the Muslim Brotherhood would eventually lose the majority of its seats in parliament in the 2007 parliamentary elections, with only six seats remaining – although part of these losses should also be attributed to the stark interventions by the government to derail the movement's candidates.

Finally, organizational elections inside the Muslim Brotherhood and the Islamic Action Front would conclude with a major eruption of the ongoing crisis, with the movement's more "hawkish" wing accusing the moderate "doves" of failing to read the requirements of that period and the prevailing political environment accurately. Subsequent to these raucous elections, the movement's *Shura* Council moved to dissolve itself. In the end, the "moderates" and the "doves" lose their majority in the organization's assembly, and the elections resulted in a hawkish candidate, Dr. Hammam Sa'id, winning the post of general supervisor of the Organization of the Muslim Brotherhood instead of the incumbent, Salem al-Falahat, who was more closely affiliated with the moderates.

These specific internal elections marked a turning point in the Muslim Brotherhood's internal crisis. From that point forth, the prevailing polarizations in the organization would garner most of the movement's attention and became a significant and extensive point of contention in the organization's dynamics, as well as amongst the ranks of the movement's leadership. The crisis would advance to a stage where it came to dominate all related media coverage, with increasingly sensationalist headlines featuring and honing in on these internal conflicts that ranged from the movement's relationship with Hamas (after the latter became autonomous from the Jordanian movement), to the debate taking place over the Muslim Brotherhood's internal statutes, to restructuring the *Shura* Council and to the question of the representation of the Brotherhood's "administrative offices" in the Arab Gulf states. Later, these contentious issues even extended to questions of whether or not the party (the Islamic Action Front) should become independent and fully autonomous from the Organization of the Muslim Brotherhood.²²⁷

Indeed, the Muslim Brotherhood would find itself having to make a decision on the 2010 parliamentary elections at the height of this "internal crisis" and in the midst of the internal bickering raging in the media between the movement's opposing wings.

Returning to an examination of the transformations and developments that took place within the Muslim Brotherhood, over the past few years, it is clear that the real milestone in the movement's dynamics would be embodied by the emergence of the "reform" group's agenda. This group was

²²⁷ For more detail on these specific issues, see next chapter in this book.

better known for maintaining the priority and focus on the domestic affairs on the movement's agenda; however, it would become significantly transformed, as a group, when it raised the ceiling of its political rhetoric after the 2007 parliamentary elections. The political evolution taking place within the reform group eventually reached an advanced stage with the introduction of its "constitutional monarchy" initiative, taking the lead in advocating the Muslim Brotherhood's 2010 election's boycott, and, finally, calling for a transition from soft to hard and open opposition and "changing the rules of the political game", altogether.

The "new platform" presented by the reform group would not run its course unchallenged and would face opposition from within the movement, even within the "doves" current. For example, three leaders of the doves wing, 'Abd al-Majid Thunaibat, 'Abd al-Hamid al-Qudah and 'Abd al-Latif 'Arabiyat, vehemently opposed the constitutional monarchy initiative, and some even defended the cause of participating in the elections. However, the general mood prevailing within the reform group and amongst its leadership was one of consensus over the initiative and of those advocating it, including Dr. Rohile Gharaibeh, Dr. Nabil al-Kufahi, Salem al-Falahat and Nimr al-'Assaf.

On the other hand, the group that traditionally represents the "hawks" in the movement supported raising the ceiling on the movement's political discourse; a position that originates from a different ideological point of view – one that is closer to that of the Sayyid Qutb school of thought, which, in all cases, rejects the current Arab political regimes as illegitimate forms of governance. In fact, in contrast to the reform group, whose position evolved and changed considerably, the hawks were not really changing much in the way of neither their ideological discourse nor political stances. Furthermore, the hawks do not seem as willing to translate this "confrontational discourse" into a working policy.

In the end, all these discussions and rethinking of positions, which accompanied the debate over the boycott decision, marked a point of departure in the movement's internal crisis, and it paved the way for the Muslim Brotherhood's transition into a different stage. This unique historical phase was ushered in by a new, central current in the organization borne of the Brotherhood's core, inner "political circle," which included leading figures from both the reform and the "fourth" currents, the most prominent of which included Dr. Rohile Gharaibeh, Dr. Nabil al-Kofahi, 'Atef al-Jolani, Faraj Shalhoub, 'Abd al-Hadi al-Falahat, Kathem 'Ayesh, Hassan Thunaibat, 'Azzam al-Huneidi and 'Abd al-Hamid Thunaibat.

Conflicts and differences in opinions have continued between some of the leading figures from the reform group and the "fourth" current, a comparative analysis of their rhetoric does not reveal any significant or fundamental differences in vision when it comes to the conviction that the organization must cross over to a new level in its political work, based on an agreed need to transition from merely "effective participation" to genuine and full "political partnership." In fact, both currents would arrive at a consensus on the importance of pushing forward towards national political reform, on expanding the political participation of the organization's popular base, on fortifying the internal front, as well as on the need to expand the spectrum of diplomatic options available to the country in terms of its foreign policy.

This fundamental, underlying consensus helped contain some of the movement's internal problems and controversies during a two-day conference convened by the Muslim Brotherhood in December 2010. In terms of its expanded framework, the conference debated four major themes and several working papers that reflected different positions, attitudes, and scholarly opinions held by various groups within the movement, related to specific political and intellectual issues at hand, including: the Muslim Brotherhood's relations with the government, its relationship with the Palestinian cause, the issue of national identity, as well as a reassessment of the Muslim Brotherhood's future priorities, direction, and course.

According to several confirmed accounts relayed by members who participated in this conference, the general climate was not confrontational, despite differences of opinions over specific issues between the various groups and currents within the movement. Rather, for the first time in a long time, the conference represented a "forum" for dialogue and constructive debate that discussed the many alternative and differing points of view and visions that have emerged from amongst a spectrum of leading groups in the organization.

In parallel to this conference, and with the objective of trying to contain the internal crisis and reestablish control inside the movement, leading scholars from the IAF issued an internal *fatwa* meant to target the negative dynamics inside the movement. This *fatwa* went as far as prohibiting the formation of alliances and polarizations that may breed the splintering of groups and leaderships inside the movement, or foster divided loyalties within the Brotherhood and its party (the IAF) in any manner that may lead to weakening the movement's internal cohesion or that may produce ruptures in its internal relations.

Finally, according to leading cadres in the Muslim Brotherhood, the conference was not organized with the specific objective of issuing decisions as much as it was for internal "brain-storming." Nevertheless, recommendations were borne of this process, which were submitted by the various committees mandated with the task of recording minutes and their observations of meetings. Indeed, this forum and the recommendations submitted therein were viewed by the movement's leadership as being instrumental in framing the Muslim Brotherhood's future agenda and policy direction, marking an important milestone in determining the nature of the organization's internal dynamics and the manner in which it would deal with critical differences in the future.

Meanwhile, different leadership circles in the Muslim Brotherhood concede that it would be difficult to reach an immediate and comprehensive resolution to the movement's internal organizational crises and polarizations. At the same time, they agree that the 2010 elections (and the decision to boycott these elections) have represented an important turning point for the movement, which has contributed, at the very least, in reducing the levels of escalation and the degree and momentum of the internal conflict. Furthermore, they are in agreement that this critical point paved the way, once again, for internal dialogue that would help channel energies and produce alternatives to the internal conflict between the movement's main wings, either by ushering in a new phase that is less polarized than the past, or by restructuring alignments related to the movement's priorities and agenda in the immediate future.

There were signs looming over the horizon that point to a scenario where a new central current in the movement would emerge from within the organization's ranks, which would reestablish control

over the reigns in the Muslim Brotherhood and which would restore the political initiative and organizational dynamics of the organization – as was the case in the mid-1990s, when the centrist current emerged and won the majority of leadership seats in both the Muslim Brotherhood and the Islamic Action Party, at the expense of both the doves and the hawks. Of course, this was all before the current would, once again, become divided amongst itself over the crisis that ensued after the leadership of the Hamas movement was expelled from Jordan in 1999.

4. Contrasting Wagers on the Position of the State

In light of the dynamics that came in the aftermath of the Muslim Brotherhood's decision to boycott the 2010 elections, we find ourselves before various interpretations and different approaches adopted by the movement's organizational elite – all of which are somehow related to what possible scenarios the future may hold for the movement. These varied approaches include different kinds of bets being made on what position the state would take towards the Muslim Brotherhood, after the parliamentary elections, and consequent to all the structural transformations that are taking place within the socio-political scene in Jordan. Obviously, much of this political wagering would be construed before the dawn of the Arab democratic spring. With that, it is still important to analyze and assess these various positions and approaches, as they represent an important turning point in the evolution of the Muslim Brotherhood's political thinking.

At one point, the movement's "political circle" would arrive at a consensus over a general and central policy on reform, which would also represent the overall strategic vision that the Muslim Brotherhood would present to the state and society during the upcoming period. This project and vision would also include the Muslim Brotherhood's response to fundamental questions about the movement's identity, its political role and vision, as well as its vision on the many challenges and questions facing the nation, as a whole.

In the next section, we present the initial approaches that had been borne of the organization's painstaking internal throes, before and after the 2010 parliamentary elections. We shall then examine the key premises and the most important features conveyed by the Muslim Brotherhood's new reform project.

In the Throes Preceding the Formation of the Brotherhood's Core Reform Initiative

The proposals presented by the leading groups in the Muslim Brotherhood in the months preceding the last parliamentary elections would reveal significant transformations in the movement's rhetoric. The "doves" and "centrist" wings in the movement were clearly shifting away from trying to appease the state and from sending "reassuring messages"²²⁸ to the regime, and instead chose to raise the bar of their demands and to escalate matters, particularly with their decision to adopt the constitutional monarchy initiative. The latter was then closely followed by these two groups taking the lead in lobbying for the Muslim Brotherhood's boycott of the 2010 parliamentary elections.

²²⁸ These "reassuring messages", in the past, were part of an attempt to safeguard the option of participating in parliamentary elections (even after the government's interference in the 2007 municipal elections). The doves and centrists wanted to keep their options open, and tried to reassure the state by, for example, submitting candidate lists that offered moderate candidates known for their balanced discourse, and even signed a declaration that included a reaffirmation of the Muslim Brotherhood's faith and loyalty to the state (after four members attended the funeral wake of Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi and were arrested shortly thereafter). For further details on the latter, refer to Mohammad Abu Rumman, "*al-Siyasa al-Urduniya wa Tahadi Hamas: Istikshaf al-Manatiq al-Ramadiya wa Muqarabat Fajwat al-Masaleh al-Mushtraka*" (Lit. "Jordanian Policy and the Hamas Challenge: Exploring Gray Areas and Bridging the Gap in Mutual Interests"), published by Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Amman Office, 2009; pp. 73-76.

At first, the Muslim Brotherhood's "doves" current and reform group offered two approaches, based on two different readings of what the movement's "next steps" should be. The first approach attempted to safeguard the formulations inherent in the Muslim Brotherhood's traditional vision and approach. Consequent to this stance, the doves advocating this approach subsequently opposed the constitutional monarchy initiative, as well as rejected any immediate shifts towards a more open and hard opposition. This particular group in the doves' wing was represented, first and foremost, by the Muslim Brotherhood's former general supervisor, 'Abd al-Majid al-Thunaiбат, in addition to the then current deputy general supervisor, 'Abd al-Hamid al-Qudah. Meanwhile, the reform group, led by Dr. Rohile Gharaibeh, Dr. Nabil al-Kofahi, and Salem al-Falahat, presented a second approach that advocated a fundamental transformation in the Muslim Brotherhood's political rhetoric and discourse. Finally, Dr. 'Abd al-Latif 'Arabiyat, the head of the Muslim Brotherhood's *Shura* Council, took a middle ground position.

Alternatively, a split clearly emerged inside both the "hawks" and the "fourth" current, where members from each current voted for and against the boycott. To add to these schisms, these groups offered significantly different interpretations and assessments on what the Muslim Brotherhood should do next. One group adopted a stance that called for raising the bar of demands, escalating matters, changing the rules of the "political game" and increasing pressure on the regime to carry out structural reforms. Meanwhile, the other group insisted that the boycott decision should be a tactical option and not a strategy. Thus, it did not concede to any shifts that risked crossing established "red lines", nor agreed to confrontational initiatives such as the constitutional monarchy proposal. Instead, this group advocated taking steps to ensure a more constructive and strategic dialogue with the state and for a genuine contribution (and thus participation) by the Muslim Brotherhood in public, political life, where the movement could be actively and politically engaged in the formulation of national responses to challenges and problems facing the country.

What is most interesting, and perhaps even ironic, was the shift that took place with the fourth current's position. Indeed, it was this current, which led the campaign against the leaders of the "doves" three years earlier, in 2007, accusing them of succumbing and bowing down to pressure from the government, and of implicating the movement negatively with their inaccurate reading of the parliamentary elections that took place that year. However, in 2010, it was this same current, which advocated an approach that sought more openness and strategic dialogue with the state; and, it is this fourth current, which urged the movement to avoid being drawn into the rhetoric of escalation and into open, hard opposition before allowing the logic of dialogue to truly run its course.

Amid these throes, preliminary proposals were put forth (before these would crystallize into one central approach), which tried to respond to many important and fundamental questions facing the Muslim Brotherhood. The first challenge was to find intellectual options and strategic alternatives for dealing with the crisis with the state and with the state's systematic attempts at trying to contain and curb the movement's presence and political role. The second challenge was to identify how the movement could respond more effectively to certain overriding issues and questions facing the nation, as a whole, particularly in terms of political reform, Jordanian-Palestinian relations, and foreign policy.

One of the more important approaches proposed was represented by the discourse of groups in the Muslim Brotherhood that were pushing for an escalation of the stakes involved. This approach was advocated by the reform group, with its rhetoric to move towards more open, hard opposition, and a group from the fourth current (represented by the political committee in the IAF, headed by Zaki Bani Ersheid), which advocated changing the rules of the political game. However, the reform group later reached a consensus with another group in the fourth current to work on a more strategic approach, based on dialogue with the state that would be initiated through the Muslim Brotherhood's political Bureau.

Prior to examining the main premises and pillars of the new, central reform project, which has crystallized over time and adopted by the Muslim Brotherhood, in the final count, we shall provide a general overview of the main features that characterized the different approaches borne as a result of these internal labors and maneuvering in the movement. We will also discuss what these approaches proposed in terms of political thinking and ideas, which were new to the traditional line held by the Muslim Brotherhood over the course of its historical experience and evolution in Jordan and in its relationship with the state.

The First Approach: The Reform Group and the “Hard Opposition” Strategy

The reform group in the Muslim Brotherhood represents the one current in the movement that is most cautious and attentive to defining its ideas within a framework of specific political projects and platforms – which is clear in the group's “constitutional monarchy” initiative and in its advocacy for the decision to boycott the 2010 parliamentary elections. In this context, the reform group's reading and assessment of the prevailing political environment were constructed according to the following main premises and convictions held by this group:²²⁹

- That the official Jordanian regime was not serious about carrying out serious structural political reform; and, based on prevailing indicators, the vestiges of power in constitutional institutions had been rendered absent in terms of their role and value, particularly the parliament. In this group's opinion, the implications of this precarious situation meant that the executive branch had come to dominate the political balance of power, oversight mechanisms had been weakened, and systemic corruption had become endemically rooted – as evidenced in the spectrum of privatization initiatives and sales of national assets, all of which have been sorely lacking in transparency and in accountability.
- That the marriage or alliance between “corruption and tyranny”, an expression devised by the reform group, would prevent any further steps towards serious reform. At the same time, it would provide a political corridor for facilitating international agendas that, ultimately, may not be in the interest of the Jordanian people.
- That the “political power house” has, for all intents and purposes, espoused the idea of the political resettlement and naturalization (*tawteen*) of Palestinian refugees in Jordan, based on political and administrative quotas, which, at the end of the day, will resolve the Palestinian

²²⁹ These premises were collated from interviews conducted with Dr. Rohile Gharaibeh (op. cit.) and Dr. Nabil al-Kofahi (conducted at the Strategic Studies Center at the University of Jordan on November 22, 2010).

question at Jordan's expense, on the one hand, and at the expense of these refugees' right of return, on the other hand – all of which serves none other than the Zionist project and agenda.

- That significant structural transformations and shifts in the political reality and in the socio-economic formulations of not only the country, but of the entire region, would be affecting and changing the political status quo. Furthermore, the “East Bank Jordanian” popular base, which has traditionally formed the pillar of the country's political stability, today, has come to embody the pragmatic face of the hard and open opposition mounting against prevailing official policies. According to the reform group, this traditionally stable segment of Jordanian society has become increasingly discontent and apprehensive of the official policies. Adding salt to the wound, East Bank Jordanians have been suffering the brunt of increasing economic pressures and hardships, because of the privatization and sale of national resources and property. They were also suffering the most from increased poverty, unemployment, and developmental marginalization, particularly in the more remote governorates in the countryside.
- That, on the external policy front, Israeli strategy and vision and concurrent negotiations and pending settlements are all being channeled towards the “political resettlement” of Palestinian refugees in Jordan; and, that the Jordanian regime or decision-making establishment, is under pressure to facilitate and implement this agenda.

According to this assessment of the current state of affairs, the reform group formulated its objectives, based on the conviction that it was essential to propagate profound change in the rules of the current political game, and that it was necessary to transition from partial engagement to “full partnership” in political participation, by demanding the full activation of the “parliamentary” system of governance. Furthermore, these objectives are delineated along the following three tenets: that all the powers and roles vested in the constitutional institutions of the state must be restored, that the principle of the separation of powers must be reinforced and safeguarded, and that the principle that the power and authority are derived from the people must be reaffirmed.

The reform group also arrived at the conclusion that it would not be possible to achieve these objectives using the strategy of “soft opposition” that the Muslim Brotherhood has traditionally practiced; and, that this strategy, in itself, had become futile. The solution, according to this group, was to shift to “hard opposition” by raising the ceiling of the movement's political rhetoric, and to cross traditionally set “red lines” with the right to criticize previously impervious subjects, such as the corruption of the upper classes and demanding amending the constitution. Raising this ceiling of demands also meant that the movement should be ready to take to the streets and to demonstrate, and to revive mobilization mechanisms amongst the ranks and files of the opposition and refine their rhetoric of political criticism.

According to this vision, the Muslim Brotherhood should also be careful not to stand alone in the arena of political confrontation. Instead, the movement should be ready to lead the formation of a new (national) political body, in a manner that would not affect the Muslim Brotherhood's power, role and presence. This new conglomerate structure should also be ready to bear the burden of the reform project and expand the framework of the reform front in a manner that unites agendas, ideologies and different walks of intellectual and political life that nonetheless agree to the need and importance of political reform.

However, two major complications would stand before this particular assessment and reading of the political situation. The first would be related to the dual demographics in the country (Jordanian/Palestinian), and even inside the movement. The second was that the popular base of the Muslim Brotherhood was neither prepared nor equipped to shift to this new form of political opposition; nor was it ready to deal with the ramifications of the kinds of confrontations or struggles that may arise as an outcome of implementing this strategy.

However, the dawn of the Arab Democratic Spring provided the window of opportunity for the Muslim Brotherhood to overcome these obstacles, as the attention of a whole new generation of younger men and women suddenly turned towards political activism. Indeed, the stirring of this new blood was evidenced in the significant contribution and active participation of young Muslim Brotherhood members in the formation of the March 24 Youth Movement in 2011.

The Second Approach: The Strategy of “Changing the Rules of the Game”

For the most part, the approach based on a strategy of “changing the rules of the political game” was originally developed and proposed by Zaki Bani Ersheid, the head of the political committee in the Islamic Action Front and the former secretary general of the party. This particular approach did not differ greatly in substance from that which was proposed by the reform group; however, there were particular distinctions in its implied wagers and stakes and in certain fundamental details, particularly in the manner in which it dealt with the “redistribution of roles”.²³⁰

Bani Ersheid’s initiative was designed on the basis of recalling the experience of the regime’s willingness and openness to transition towards a more democratic path that took place in 1989, after popular and political pressures rose to levels that forced and instigated this turnaround towards reviving the democratic path. It was also based on the conviction that the movement’s main goal in the upcoming period should be to “break the base of political monopoly” exercised by the regime by changing the rules of the political game. It also called for shifting from the scaled down and limited political engagement of the Islamist movement to full and genuine partnership in public political life and in the nation’s decision-making processes, as the Organization of the Muslim Brotherhood was undoubtedly the largest political opposition party in the country.

However, unlike the former approach (presented by the reform group), the goal in Ersheid’s approach was not to adopt an immediate strategy of escalation, but rather to prioritize dialogue to achieve these aims, similar to the manner in which matters played out in 1989. At the same time, if a dialogue initiative does not precipitate an official response or if it does not achieve these aims, the alternative would then be to turn to a populist and mobilized approach in the streets, in order to alter the mechanisms governing public and political life.

In summary, the two approaches concurred on several main themes, which included the need for changing the rules of the political game, raising the ceiling of the movement’s political discourse, and shifting from the realm of the Muslim Brotherhood’s traditional participation to genuine

²³⁰ From an interview conducted with Zaki Bani Ersheid, op. cit.

partnership and engagement in and contribution to national and political decision-making processes. Both approaches were also in consensus over the notion of forming an expanded conglomerate national front that would be able to lead the political reform project. However, they also differed structurally in the following aspects:

First, the approach led by Zaki Bani Ersheid rejected the constitutional monarchy initiative proposed by the reform group, as this initiative was viewed by the former as being too confrontational as a preliminary or “first” step. Indeed, for the proponents of the second approach, the constitutional monarchy initiative represented the highest possible level for the movement’s potential demands; and, in their opinion, other alternatives still existed that could and should be tested, at this stage, before introducing these types of radical steps and uncharted waters.

Second, the two approaches disagreed over the manner in which roles should be distributed between East Bankers and Jordanians of Palestinian descent. Indeed and in principle, instituting these types of demarcations inside the Muslim Brotherhood was not considered acceptable, even at this point – and was not considered acceptable by the general, popular membership base of the movement either.

Third, the stakes presented by both approaches would implicitly differ when it came to predicting how the state may react towards the Muslim Brotherhood. The first approach held the conviction that the Jordanian policy regime would not offer any major or genuine concessions on political reform, except when faced by relentless opposition and intense bottom-up pressure to carry out such a paradigm shift. Alternatively, the second approach allowed for some leeway and flexibility on the side of the state and for its reaction towards the Muslim Brotherhood, which could vary anywhere between accepting the option of dialogue and allowing matters to escalate. Furthermore, the second approach was more ambiguous in the general manner in which it presented its reform project whereas the reform group proposed a project that was quite clear and comprehensive in vision and scope.

Finally, leading officials within the movement have also pointed to the fact that, practically, both approaches were proposed quite recently and within the current context; and, both were based on two different schools of thought. The first has pushed for raising the ceiling of the organization’s rhetoric and its practices, while the second has worked more towards “systemizing” the first approach, or creating a more rationalized, step-by-step formula that will allow a new reform initiative to mature. For example, the latter approach and school of thought was instrumental in the Muslim Brotherhood’s decision to withdraw from participating in “the day of anger” scheduled for Friday, January 15, 2011 (aimed at protesting rising prices), and instead, postponed the march to the following Sunday, in an attempt to mitigate the severity of its rhetoric and send various signals showing that it was ready for dialogue with the state, instead of confrontation. Meanwhile, the implications borne of the discrepancies between these two approaches are likely to lessen; and, the movement is expected to iron out its differences in the case where a more “central approach” – which better reflects the centrist current in the movement and its rhetoric – becomes the general policy line adopted by the Muslim Brotherhood.

Features of a New Central Approach: Fostering Strategic Dialogue with the Official State Policy “Power House”

The Muslim Brotherhood’s new central approach was devised, developed, and introduced by the movement’s “political establishment”, with the main features of this more centralized project being to adopt a strategic dialogue with the state in order to attain the movement’s reform objectives and the levels of political engagement and participation the movement has aspired to realize. Indeed, this centrist approach or “central” policy was constructed upon the following fundamental premise: That the two pillars of the country’s stability are the state and the Muslim Brotherhood and the subsequent cooperation between these two.

This premise is also grounded in the conviction that political reform can be based on safe, progressive, and gradual steps forward; and, that “progressive” reform would safeguard the country’s stability, and would allow for consensus and cooperation with the state, in a manner that will provide the space required for the state to re-conceptualize and redefine how it views the Islamist movement, as well as the way the movement defines itself. This new approach also aimed to provide the latitude for a redefinition of the bases for building the processes of cooperation and constructive engagement required to safeguard the country’s interests and the public welfare.

The central approach would also be borne of the fact that the Muslim Brotherhood found itself faced with two, basic options: Choosing the path of strategic dialogue with the state – as the state remains the principle party in the prevailing political equation – in order to determine the framework for the relations that will govern the next political period; or, choosing the path of escalation and increasing pressure in order to improve the requirements, mechanisms, and rules of the political game and pushing political reform forward in this manner.

One of the architects of this approach, ‘Atef al-Jolani does not shy away from admitting that the first option – or the choice of dialogue – was by far the better and more productive option before all parties. Indeed, al-Jolani views this approach as presenting the Islamist movement as a true partner in the political equation and as a true partner in facing and overcoming the challenges that are facing the country and its future. At the same time, he emphasizes the fact that the movement is still waiting for the regime to accept and welcome this partnership; and, that this step requires that official policy circles be ready and willing to reassess and to redefine their view of the Islamist movement in a manner that allows for the state to perceive the Muslim Brotherhood as “a strategic partner and not a political challenge.”²³¹

This approach was also based on the premise that both domestic and external political circumstances, pressures, and factors will push the Jordanian policy regime to reassess official policy lines that it has adopted, and wagers it has made in the past years, which have all resulted in failed policies and socio-political stalemates and crises – both domestically and externally. This is notwithstanding the fact that the domestic front has become increasingly vulnerable to dangerous manifestations, from the emergence of sub-identities and divisions spreading far and wide across the spectrum of the communities that make up Jordanian society, to the rise of social and political protest movements and outbreaks of social violence, as well as the deterioration of the public

²³¹ From an interview with ‘Atef al-Jolani, op. cit., January 16, 2011.

education system – making it even more critical that the state extend itself beyond superficialities to carry out the genuine and profound political reform that is required, and is ultimately inevitable. Indeed, according to al-Jolani, this was the major goal that the Islamist movement was striving for and wanted to try to assist the state in achieving.

The proponents of this approach would also assert that, in addition to these domestic transformations, regional developments and variables have led to many external challenges, including a total standstill in the peace process with Benjamin Netanyahu's government and the weakened stature and importance of the "moderate" Arab states vis-à-vis the regional equation. Certainly, the importance of all these factors in determining the regional political environment have further contributed to edifying the need to open new channels on different axes, including with the Hamas movement and other Islamist opposition movements that play a role in domestic internal affairs, in order to fortify the domestic front.

Al-Jolani also stresses that the bets made by the movement's "central" approach have already been vindicated, as the official Jordanian policy "power house" has finally opened serious channels with the Muslim Brotherhood in the final moments preceding the 2010 parliamentary elections, in an attempt to try and convince the movement to reverse its boycott decision. Indeed, al-Jolani believes that these policy circles eventually came to recognize that their reading of matters had led to the incorrect perception that the Muslim Brotherhood was a challenge rather than a real political partner.

Based on these premises and assumptions, the advocates of this approach have wagered that this new, solid opposition, which also hails from a predominantly East Banker composition and "face," will be able to push the regime towards more openness and dialogue with Islamists. The latter is also perceived as being the first step towards arriving at a new understanding over the nature of the future political period and its affairs; and, that this understanding will require no less than strategic dialogue between the policy "power houses" of both the movement and the state, which should take place within a calm environment, away from the limelight and political exaggerations, and far from inflated and charged environments. Only this kind of dialogue can help properly define and determine the needs of the future and prepare the general groundwork required to meet challenges more effectively and achieve society's higher interests.

According to al-Jolani, the most important issue at hand is not who will be first to initiate dialogue, but rather, transcending beyond this point to redefining the Islamist movement and its role. However, for the proponents of the central approach, the problem remains with the state and its officials, who hold the reigns over the decision and who possess the resolution to the crisis. Finally, the state is seen by the movement as the only party with whom the Muslim Brotherhood can conduct a national, strategic dialogue. Indeed, due to all these factors, in al-Jolani's view, the strategic dialogue approach was built as an attempt to actually supersede the position of the official policy "power house", and preempt matters in order to offer more rational and realistic options and visions for political reform, for general policy, and for foreign policy in the future.²³²

²³² From an interview with 'Atef al-Jolani; op. cit.

Eventually, a delegation from the Muslim Brotherhood met the king, where the movement was offered a partnering role twice: once with the government of Prime Minister Ma'rouf al-Bakhit, then again with the government of Prime Minister 'Aoun al-Khasawneh. However, the Muslim Brotherhood rejected both offers of participating in these governments, holding fast to their insistence that their major demands regarding political reform be met, first, as a condition for any further political engagement or participation in municipal and parliamentary elections.

The Core Points of the New Reform Project

The core points and main axes of the reform project, which was endorsed by the Muslim Brotherhood's *Shura* Council in March of 2011, reflect the evolution of the internal dialogue towards generating common visions, even with regard to controversial national issues. According to al-Jolani, this turning point allowed the movement to transition from the realm of being influenced by the socio-political crisis unfolding in Jordan to taking the lead in initiating a national vision, which offered a nationwide common ground.²³³

The most important aspect of the new "central" reform project was that it included a resolution to the manner in which the Islamist movement defines itself, providing clear and consistent answers to the question of their identity and role. The project would indeed clearly state the movement's political goals and clarify its position with regard to the state, as well as its vision on several vital and sensitive issues and portfolios.

In the matter of the Muslim Brotherhood's relationship with the Jordanian state and with Jordanian society, the new draft reform project declared that citizenship and the rule of law are the only means to effectively confront the escalation of the country's social crises and outbreaks of violence. The project also called for nondiscrimination between all citizens on the basis of race, religion, or color, and reaffirmed the importance of national unity. In addition, it presented the Islamist movement's position as being one component, amongst the many components that make up the state, which is committed to the constitutional and legal frameworks that glue the nation together. Besides, the project rejected violence and has placed all its faith in non-violent political work, while reaffirming the citizenship of all Christians and Jordan's national, Arab, and Islamic identity and character.

In the specific context of political reform, the project called for genuine and profound reform that extends beyond slogans and aspirations. At the same time, the project also recognized and stressed the importance of gradual reform, within an integrated and holistic plan, based on a framework of defined, consecutive and successive periods. It demanded true partnership in decision-making processes and called for the restoration of the powers vested in the Lower House of Parliament. It also called for restoring and safeguarding the autonomy of the three branches of government, and particularly the judiciary, by abolishing special courts and paving the way for the constitutional court to carry out its mandated role. It also recognized and reaffirmed the need for the state's security apparatus, in juxtaposition to the necessity of properly training and preparing these bodies to face the challenges they have been created to deal with, while ensuring these bodies do not

²³³ Ibid.

interfere in the political arena. Finally, it called for revamping and reforming the educational system and establishing a syndicate for teachers.

Regarding Jordanian-Palestinian relations, the draft reform project reaffirmed the close and interconnected, historic and demographic ties and relationship between the Jordanians and the Palestinians. Simultaneously, it rejected any notion of a “confederation in all its current formulas in light of the presence of the Zionist entity”, as current formulations only work to safeguard Israel and its interests, today. The Muslim Brotherhood’s project also rejected any notion of Jordan becoming an alternative homeland, as well as any initiative that would facilitate the political resettlement and naturalization of Palestinian refugees in the kingdom. Instead, it reaffirmed and supported strengthening the ability of Palestinians to remain steadfast in their struggle, as well as the Palestinian refugees’ right of return, albeit without affecting their citizenship (in Jordan) and rejecting any policy that may lead to repealing their (Jordanian) citizenship (until such time that they have attained their right of return).

In terms of the electoral law, the reform project proposed drafting and enacting a law that preserves the current electoral districts, but also grants a 50% ratio to proportional lists – and in general, proposes a new proportional and mixed system to the “one-man one-vote” law currently in place.²³⁴

As for foreign policy, the new approach suggested the expansion of the spectrum of diplomatic options available to Jordan as well as diversifying its relations. It also proposed that Jordan takes a constructive neutral stand in certain regional portfolios, based on a rationale that such policies would help extract Jordan from the current polarizations afflicting the region and from the current alignments that have formed around the confrontation with the Arab “rejectionist camp” (i.e. specifically Syria, Iran, the Hamas movement, and their allies in the region, which are considered to be in opposition to the “West” and against the interests of the alliance of “moderate” Arab states). The intention of such foreign policy readjustments being to open more constructive and positive channels with Iran, Hamas, and other political parties, in a manner that better serves Jordan and the Jordanian people’s interests.²³⁵

²³⁴ For more detail refer to “Jordan: Electoral System Design in the Arab World”, by Andrew Reynolds and Jørgen Elklit, available at <http://www.idea.int/esd/upload/jordan.pdf> [Translator’s note].

²³⁵ The details incorporated in the draft central reform project were provided during the authors’ interviews with ‘Atef al-Jolani, op. cit., and with Dr. Rohile Gharaibeh, op. cit., January 17, 2010; and another interview with Nabil al-Kofahi, op. cit., January 8, 2011.

5. Continuation of the Status Quo or a New Phase in the Political Equation?

The previous readings have all been reflected by the Muslim Brotherhood's current political compass and the priorities it has set for dealing with the upcoming period – whether that is on the level of developing the movement's internal dynamics, structural crisis, its internal and external political discourse, or the nature of its relationship with the state. However, if one tries to expand beyond this theoretical level of framing how the Muslim Brotherhood and the Islamic Action Front would be led, to yet another level – or to what is actually taking place on the ground – one would find that, on a practical or pragmatic level, the movement's political discourse and rhetoric has clearly changed on several fronts and from various angles:

First, recently, there has been a definite and clear shift in the focus towards local affairs and the amount of attention paid to the domestic arena by both the Muslim Brotherhood and the IAF. Indeed, if one were to compare with previous years, one would find that international and Arab affairs, as well as the Palestinian cause, occupied the first rank in both the movement's and the party's priorities and focus of attention.

Second, the substance of the Muslim Brotherhood's rhetoric and political discourse has changed, even in terms of domestic affairs, and has increasingly moved towards elaborating a more focused and clear political vision regarding political reform. This shift evidently appears in the manner in which the Muslim Brotherhood limited their discussions with the state to the subject of amending the electoral law, during the “dialogue” that took place between the two parties preceding the 2010 parliamentary elections. Certainly, this particular subject, or the electoral law, remains the core problematic point in the debate and controversy surrounding political reform in the country, until today.

Third, in parallel to the marked change in the substance of the Muslim Brotherhood's and Islamic Action Front's discourse, the ceiling of this discourse has also been raised. Indeed, the rhetorical bar has heightened in the *fatwas* (religious edicts and advisory opinions) issued by the committee of Islamic legal scholars in the IAF – such as the one that religiously prohibits any form of engagement with the NATO forces in their combat in Afghanistan (which was implicitly understood as criticizing the fact that Jordanian had boots on the ground in Afghanistan), and, the rhetoric found in the content of the political declarations issued by the Muslim Brotherhood and the IAF has also increased in severity, with a consistent and sharp language aimed at corruption and accountability of corrupt officials, living conditions and standards, and the need for genuine reform.

At the same time, certain voices from inside the Muslim Brotherhood have tried to describe much of the escalation of the stakes involved as merely reflecting the positions of certain currents within the movement; and, that the greatest escalation in rhetoric took place during the period that preceded the introduction of the movement's new central initiative. In fact, according to these opinions, these aggravated “individual” positions were not, in fact, the ideal position to be taken by the movement as a whole. Nonetheless, although it may seem true in terms of appearances, the prevailing view is that this proposed project and all that the “dialogue current” has offered and presented – in terms of pushing for structural political reform – have not been accepted or agreed to

by the regime, to date. Instead, the project has become a subject of tension, notwithstanding the fact that the very idea that the Muslim Brotherhood's rhetoric and discourse has shifted has become a subject of "official" concern.

Fourth, also on a pragmatic level, the Muslim Brotherhood has produced new mechanisms and generated new political alliances. One such alliance is with the Popular Unity Party – which also boycotted the 2010 elections – in the National Reform Committee, whose core mandate includes a political discourse that focuses on political reform.²³⁶ Another example of this new approach is the manner in which the Brotherhood has organized unofficial meetings with important opposition figures and parties, and has opened new channels of dialogue with different organizations, such as with the National Committee of Retired Servicemen.²³⁷ Furthermore, the Islamic Action Front Youth Committee also declared the founding of the "*Ahrar*" (lit., the "Free Peoples") union, similar to the "*Thabahtouna*" (lit., "You Killed Us") movement, which focused on the subject of restricted freedoms on Jordanian university campuses.²³⁸

In the end, however different and varied the approaches presented by the Muslim Brotherhood may seem, by necessity, there were specific conditions that led to these actual shifts in the Movement's political discourse and political conduct during the last period. At the heart of the causes for these shifts has been the fact that, in general, and in most of the Arab countries, the attention of the vast majority of the people and oppositional political forces, including Islamist movements, has been turned towards domestic affairs and concerns. This identification with the generally negative political mood of the masses has certainly been weighed in the Muslim Brotherhood's discourse and presence; and, it has significantly contributed to the increasingly serious and sharp language, instruments, and positions adopted by the movement – all of which reflect this general political escalation and higher ceiling of political opposition everywhere.

In juxtaposition to the changing local conditions, the recent official disengagement in the institutional and organizational links between Hamas and the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood would certainly reflect upon the priorities and internal agenda of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan. This "formal" break in ties with Hamas would inevitably grant the Muslim Brotherhood the space and latitude to focus more widely on attending to domestic affairs.²³⁹

In sum, the main outcome of this increased attentiveness and focus on domestic and local affairs in the Muslim Brotherhood's discourse, and the fact that the movement raised the bar on its political and economic rhetoric, by necessity, would also increase the likelihood of crossing the proverbial political "red lines" – as it would also increase the frequency and level of engagement and confrontation with the state in the future. Indeed, the signs of this increased tension and more

²³⁶ For more detail, refer to the feature published in the *Al-Arab Al-Yawm* Jordanian daily newspaper, available at http://alarabalyawm.batelco.jo/print.php?news_id=258063

²³⁷ For more on the meetings held between the Islamists and the National Committee of Retired Servicemen, see an article written by Mohammad al-Najjar, "*Hiwar Islamiyy al-Urdun wa Mutaqa'idin al-Jaysh*" (Lit., "Dialogue between Jordan's Islamists and Retirees from the Armed Forces"), published on Aljazeera.net, on May 1, 2011. Also, although this dialogue would be commended by the executive offices of both the Muslim Brotherhood and the Islamic Action Front, and a committee was actually formed to follow up on this initiative, the political department in the Muslim Brotherhood put the brakes on and halted this initiative.

²³⁸ For more detail, refer to the *Ahrar* website, available at <http://www.alahrar.org>.

²³⁹ From an interview with Dr. Rohile Gharaibeh, op. cit.

frequent friction was evidenced in the *fatwa* issued by the religious legal scholars of the IAF, regarding any cooperation with foreign armed forces engaged in Afghanistan; and, later, in the interventions made by Zaki Bani Ersheid to defend this *fatwa*, which led to harsh and sharp reactions from the Jordanian government, the parliament, and other state institutions – which were viewed as an official “message” to the Muslim Brotherhood that it should not cross what the state considered to be non-negotiable “red lines”.²⁴⁰

Tangible Shifts and New Interpretations

Tangible shifts in the substance of the Muslim Brotherhood’s discourse clearly emerged as a result of the movement’s increased engagement, attention to and concern with local affairs. Relative to the past, the ceiling of the movement’s discourse would also appear significantly raised, with an intensified focus on political reform and shift towards “political partnership” – whether this rhetoric was of a more positive nature, such as in the calls for political dialogue, or of a more escalatory nature, such as exceeding the “red lines” and taking to the streets in protest.

Two major factors led to this increased focus on domestic affairs. The first can be attributed to the fact that everyday citizens have become increasingly concerned with domestic political affairs, crises, economic and social pressures, and the internal tensions that have emerged from this complicated local environment. The second factor was clearly related to the recent formal disengagement with the Hamas movement, which necessarily reflected itself in a definitive restructuring of the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood’s political priorities and concerns towards domestic affairs.

On the other hand, many from Jordan’s official circles have held to the view that the lobbying and campaigns carried out by the Muslim Brotherhood, on both the political level and in the media and with public opinion, do not, in fact, reflect due concern with national and domestic interests. Instead, policy makers have interpreted the movement’s high bar of rhetoric as carrying an underlying, ulterior motive, which was to pressure and force the state to open channels of communication with Hamas leadership, as a prelude to allowing Hamas’ leadership to return to Jordan. Other official readings of the Muslim Brotherhood’s discourse and proposed initiatives evolved into a conviction that the pressure coming from the movement was no more than a disguised attempt and intention “to carry out a coup” against the state, influenced by the tide of the “Arab Democratic Spring”.

Meanwhile, inside the Muslim Brotherhood, an unambiguous rhetoric would also emerge from amongst the ranks of the younger and newer generation of members in the movement, who have reached the unequivocal conviction that the time for the movement’s traditional approach and formula for engaging in the political game had come to an end. This new blood in the organization

²⁴⁰ For more detail on the reactions of the state to the Islamic Action Front’s *fatwa*, see the following articles, “*Majlis al-Nuwab Yarud ‘ala Tasrihat Bani Ersheid*” (Lit., “The Lower House of Parliament Responds to Bani Ersheid’s Statements”), published in the *Al-Ghad* daily Jordanian newspaper on December 19, 2010, and “*Radan ‘ala Jabhat al-‘Amal al-Islami: al-Hukuma Tarfud wa Tudeen al-Isa’ at li Dawr al-Qiwat al-Musalaha*” (Lit., “Reacting to the Islamic Action Front: The Government Rejects and Condemns the Affront to the Role of the Armed Forces”), published on the *Ammon* Jordanian News website on December 13, 2010, available at <http://www.ammonnews.net/article.aspx?articleNO=75654>.

clearly wants to change the rules of the political game and seeks a shift towards true and total “political engagement and partnership,” in a manner that genuinely reflects the movement’s weight and presence in the Jordanian street – which, by necessity, would also require expanding and increasing the Muslim Brotherhood’s political role.

Additionally, and also on the Muslim Brotherhood’s internal front, the direction of the movement’s organizational crisis remains vague, where – despite the fact that the doves and hawks have sought to preserve the general appearances of cohesion – differences in vision over the movement’s future agenda and direction clearly plagued both wings. This state of internal affairs will likely lead to a new internal dynamic, which will be reflected in even more realignments of structures and positions inside the Muslim Brotherhood, which will impact current classifications and arrangements. Perhaps the discussions taking place inside the movement’s “political establishment” will help pave the way for the birth of a new central stream in the organization, which will help contain the severity of the differences and polarizations that currently exist within the movement, and will help create new parameters for the manner in which relations are conducted between the Muslim Brotherhood and the state, on the one hand, and between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Hamas movement, on the other hand.

The problem that remains is the manner in which the movement will deal with the “dual demographics” dilemma, which is an issue that highly complicates internal and political balances, despite attempts to gloss over this challenge. With that, the new reform project proposed by the movement may, indeed, carry in its folds a shared vision on the position of the Muslim Brotherhood regarding disengagement with Hamas, which may allow the movement to extricate itself from these circles of ambiguity and gray zones.

What is evidently clear is that the Muslim Brotherhood is currently passing through the throes of an intellectual and political rebirth, the core of which lies in the movement’s ability to redefine itself, its identity, role, mission, agenda, and priorities, as well as its position in relation to vital political issues and fundamental portfolios affecting the Jordanian state and society.

In the end, the Muslim Brotherhood’s insistence on constitutional change and its insistence on its position regarding political reform both represent a quantum leap in the organization’s political thinking. It has also crystallized into a lucid stance that shows the movement has embraced democracy and has accepted the democratic political game, proving the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan is more than ready to engage in a much larger and wider, pragmatic manner with social, economic and political problems and challenges. Indeed, this evolution has been clearly reflected in the shifts taking place within the Muslim Brotherhood, which continue to bring the movement increasingly closer to democracy, compared to the political reform project the movement proposed and publicly announced earlier in 2005.

Conclusion:

The Future of the Relationship between the State and the Muslim Brotherhood: Deal or Confrontation on the Horizon?

Many factors have been involved in defining the framework and context that govern the relationship between the state and the Muslim Brotherhood – whether these variables are exemplified in the prism through which the state views the Muslim Brotherhood or the latter views the former, or whether these are embodied by a historic moment and what that these moments may entail for political “relational patterns” inside the Jordanian domestic political scene.

Furthermore, despite the fact that, historically, the relationship between the Jordanian state and the Muslim Brotherhood has never been governed by any formal, established or written agreements, there are implicit understandings that have developed – either through experience or by norms and practices established between the two parties –, which have come to resemble what may be viewed as the “rules of the game.” Over many long decades, this paradigm has also contributed to consolidating an “exceptional model” for the relationship between the state and the Islamist movement, which is particularly Jordanian, and which is unique to the entire Arab political scene, where Islamist movements, in general (and the Muslim Brotherhood, in particular), have become entangled in fierce struggles with regimes, many of which have escalated to the point of bloody battles, executions, and massacres (in countries like Syria, Iraq, Egypt and Algeria).

Thus, if we were to step back slightly, and turn our focus to an examination of the experience and the relationship that has evolved between the Jordanian state and the Muslim Brotherhood; and, if we try to grasp the more important and more influential conditions and factors involved, we would find that many different variables affect the formulations and balances that have governed these relations, such as:

Historical Moments and Milestones

At the forefront of these determinants is what we shall term the “historical moment” or historic milestones that would change the course of relations between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Jordanian state. Indeed, whether these historical “moments” or milestones can be attributed to domestic or external variables, they have been ubiquitous. Besides, they served as a catalyst for either the escalation or the reduction of tensions in the relationship between the Jordanian state and the Muslim Brotherhood.

For instance, in the 1950s and the 1960s, and similar to most of the other regimes in neighboring countries, the Jordanian state found itself locked in a fierce struggle with Communists and Arab Nationalist parties. During this period, the Muslim Brotherhood stood by the Jordanian regime, as its only ally; and thus, was rewarded with a “safe haven” under the regime’s wing. However, in neighboring countries, the opposite would be true; and, the Muslim Brotherhood would suffer terribly.

Meanwhile, by the mid-1980s, the tables for the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan began to turn. During this particular period or “historical moment,” official policy circles in Jordan began to take notice of the movement’s growing presence and role. Indeed, the Muslim Brotherhood’s influence was seriously expanding in the country; more importantly, the movement’s interference in political affairs was also significantly increasing, in both degree and frequency. At the same time, the power of the Arab Nationalists and the Leftists, which was once a leading factor in cementing the alliance between the Muslim Brotherhood and the state, was receding and in serious decline – vacating the power balance from a shared or common “enemy”. Thus, the state found itself less bound and more free to turn its attention towards the Muslim Brotherhood, and towards its discourse and its conduct. And, in 1989 – or the year that ushered in the restoration of parliamentary life in Jordan – the Organization of the Muslim Brotherhood emerged as the only serious political force left in the Jordanian political arena. Moreover, it had also become a party that was significantly empowered by the Jordanian street, a reality that marked the official demise and dying star of the Arab Nationalist movements and the Leftists.

Official attention was turned towards the growing power and “rising stardom of the Muslim Brotherhood” with concern, and the political compass indicated a turn for the worse in their relationship. Finally, the First Gulf War and Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait, followed by the war on Iraq in the early 1990s, produced domestic pressures on the Jordanian regime, which led the state to “co-opt” the Muslim Brotherhood into the government of Prime Minister Mudar Badran, in an attempt to soothe rising tensions amongst the agitated masses and public opinion.

However, in the following period, the situation completely changed. The Jordanian regime entered into peace negotiations with Israel; and, it began to mend fences with the international community and other Arab states. This change in tack and in policy focus, by necessity, also required the state to seriously consider constraining and curbing the power of the Muslim Brotherhood by setting barriers on the path of the movement’s continued political and popular ascension. Thus, certain “privileges” enjoyed by the movement in their social, volunteer, and political work were revoked; and, the noose was tightened around the neck of the Muslim Brotherhood on a legal front. Employment of members of the Muslim Brotherhood in the public sector was significantly curbed, and the movement’s ability to engage in elections, or work on university campuses and in charitable associations was increasingly constricted.

Thereafter, during different historical moments and along varied political milestones, the relationship between the state and the Muslim Brotherhood continued to deteriorate. This continuing deterioration in relations became particularly evident after the events of September 11, 2001, and before that with the expulsion of the Hamas leadership from Jordan (1999), which was then followed by the invasion by Israeli Forces into the Jenin Palestinian refugee camp in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

However, after the occupation of Iraq (2003) and the emergence of a new American approach in the region that paid more heed to political reform and openness, pushed the relationship between the state and the Muslim Brotherhood into abatement once again, and the movement would agree to participate in parliamentary elections that took place at that year.

Alternatively, in 2006, another substantial dip in the relationship between the movement and the state was ushered in by the state when it interfered in municipal and parliamentary elections in an effort to derail the Muslim Brotherhood's candidates. Meanwhile, four members of the movement, who were also members of parliament, were arrested and tried for participating in the funeral wake of Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi. These events were coupled with the state's intervention in – and expropriation of – the Muslim Brotherhood's Islamic Center Charitable Association; and, finally, a group affiliated with the movement was brought before the State Security Court and tried on charges of being linked to the Hamas movement.

However, after this specific series of incidents and the significant escalation of tensions between the two parties, channels were opened and dialogue was initiated between state officials and leaders of both the Muslim Brotherhood and the Hamas movement – only to turn, once again, for the worse, when the Muslim Brotherhood passed a decision to boycott the parliamentary elections of 2010; thus, ending this brief moment of relief.

Dynamics between Leaders in the State and the Muslim Brotherhood: Mutual Scrutiny and Caution

Likewise, the suspicions, mutual mistrust, and cautious dynamics at play between state officials and leading figures from the Muslim Brotherhood played a pivotal role in influencing the manner in which relations between the state and the movement evolved, as well as the constant volatility in relations between the two parties.

In one such example, one of Jordan's more dynamic Prime Ministers, Mudar Badran, advocated opening channels of dialogue with the Muslim Brotherhood. He also played a critical role in defining the more positive dynamics between the state and the movement's political presence from the mid-1980s to the early 1990s, when the Muslim Brotherhood engaged in a unique experience in Jordan after it took part in Badran's government in the early 1990s.

These leading figures, at the level of the state and the level of the movement, have always represented important keys in the manner in which each party defined, viewed, and perceived the other. And this begs the following questions. Was the Muslim Brotherhood perceived as an acceptable ally, a threat, or a challenge in the eyes of the state? Could the state envisage a strategic alliance, which could be built between the two parties? Or, was the state ready to suffice with merely creating tactical openings in the course of this relationship, depending on the circumstances?

On the other hand, how did the Muslim Brotherhood view and perceive the state? Was it a state that the movement felt actually guarantees and safeguards people's rights? Would the Jordanian state continue to provide a safe haven for the Muslim Brotherhood, relative to the situation in other countries, which have always been on the attack against the movement – imprisoning and executing its leaderships? Was Jordan a state tied intrinsically to the Western camp, which has historically been hostile and against the Palestinian cause? And, was Jordan a Muslim state? Or, was it a "*kafir*" infidel regime?

These leading figures and the manner in which these leaders continue to view the “other” certainly have been a constant contributing and vital factor in delineating the context and framework of the relationship between the state and the Muslim Brotherhood over these many, long decades.

Who Changed?

Several critical premises underline the causes for the recent and significant escalation in the crisis between the state and the Muslim Brotherhood. Indeed, this crisis has reached the edge of the political abyss for both parties.

The state claims that the Muslim Brotherhood has changed, and that it is no longer satisfied with its previous, limited political role. According to the state, the movement is seeking to assume the role of a partner in the decision-making process, and this ambition has become a major concern for the regime, which is becoming increasingly apprehensive about the extent of the Muslim Brotherhood’s political ambitions. On the other hand, in the eyes of the Muslim Brotherhood, it is the regime and its governing institutions that have changed. The movement feels abandoned by the state, which does not seem to need the movement’s support anymore.

Who changed, the Organization of the Muslim Brotherhood or the Jordanian state? This question has been the focus of a long-standing political and media debate. But, in the final count, the proper answer is that the political and historical conditions and circumstances that govern the relationship between the two sides have changed. At one point, circumstances led to a certain level of co-existence between the state and the movement; and, different circumstances led to a historic alliance between the two parties against common enemies within and without the country.

In all cases, the essence of the “official claim” remains that the Muslim Brotherhood has changed; and, today, according to the state, the movement has different objectives from those that it held in its earlier days – or in the 1940s, when it was an active party that enjoyed the recognition and support of the state. The leadership of the Muslim Brotherhood, today, is not the same as that of the past; and, indeed, in the eyes of the state, their intentions are different.

Obviously, the Muslim Brotherhood, as a movement, must have definitively evolved and changed over the course of the past decades. However, this begs the question whether the change has been a function of a natural process that reflects the changes that have swept the Jordanian society over the decades. Conversely, one could also ask whether this change reflects the evolution of the movement itself that made the tacit understanding between the two sides dysfunctional. Some also ponder whether the movement is experiencing a break with the past and whether it may drift into becoming an underground organization. Or perhaps the evolution pushed the movement to redraw the rule of the games with the regime and to balance the political battlefield in such a way that corresponds to the actual political weight of the movement.

During a closed seminar that took place in the Center for Strategic Studies at the University of Jordan in October 2011, one of the leading figures from the Muslim Brotherhood conceded that the movement has “changed significantly”, in previous years; and, that it is still in a process of change,

with the organization shifting from being a “*da’wa* movement” into becoming an “experienced and able political party, with a serious and substantive political rhetoric and language”.²⁴¹

Perhaps, the above acknowledgement reflects, in fact, the true face of the real transformations that have taken place and continue to take place in the movement. By necessity, this kind of evolution represents a “change” that the state will find suspicious and discomfiting, as well as difficult to accept or support. Also, by necessity, these suspicions and this discomfort have clearly reflected on the manner in which the relationship has changed and on how tensions have escalated during the past two decades.

If we were to reflect upon the latest transformations in the Muslim Brotherhood’s rhetoric, we would find that the most important document endorsed by the organization’s *Shura* Council is the movement’s new strategic reform initiative, which is, in itself, inherently representative of the fundamental shifts that have come to characterize the movement’s discourse. Additionally, the most important aspect of this new project and strategic initiative is that it provides clear and consistent answers to the question of how the Islamist movement defines itself, from this day forth, in a clear and stable manner, and how it defines its political goals and its stance towards the state, as well as its vision and strategy for dealing with several vital and sensitive issues affecting the country, today.

For the state and its official “policy circles”, this rhetorical shift in the movement’s discourse has certainly been more disturbing. For the state, this shift means that the Muslim Brotherhood is preparing to “throw its full weight” and use its social and political presence in the domestic arena to push for demands for fundamental political reform. The latter is in direct contrast to precedents set in the past where the debate over priorities was kept within the bounds of the movement, and where discussions of whether these priorities were domestic, regional, or external were limited to the confines of the organization. It also goes against the norm previously practiced by the movement where advocates of domestic issues and those concerned with domestic political reform were commonly labeled as the “Jordanianizers” in the movement, whereas; today, the movement and all those in it seem to be speaking the same language.

During recent months of the writing of this book, developments and tensions between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Jordanian state have significantly escalated in concurrence with the dawn of the Arab democratic spring in other countries, particularly after the success in Egypt and Tunisia in toppling ironclad regimes, and particularly after this revolutionary fervor has come to threaten other regimes that, for long, had a firm grip over their peoples. Consequently today, the relationship between the two parties in Jordan remains highly, and clearly, volatile.

Indeed, the Muslim Brotherhood has recently boycotted participating in the National Dialogue Committee and has generally rejected its recommendations.²⁴² It has also played down the constitutional amendments introduced by the regime, and has instead entered into popularly-based political alliances, which also tote a high ceiling of demands. Additionally, the youth members of the Muslim Brotherhood joined other populist movements during the events of March 24 (2011) at

²⁴¹This seminar was held at the Center for Strategic Studies at the University of Jordan on October 4, 2011; the report and outcome of this seminar have not yet been published.

²⁴² For more on the Muslim Brotherhood’s rejection of the recommendations put forth by the National Dialogue Committee refer to the Amman Post Jordanian news website: <http://ammanpost.net/article.aspx?articleno=10400>.

the 'Abdel-Nasser Square in Amman, where the heavy-handed challenges to the regime reflected onto the darkening mood of official circles, which are increasingly wary and suspicious of the Muslim Brotherhood and its agenda.²⁴³ Raising the stakes further, the Muslim Brotherhood suspended its participation in municipal elections and submitted a set of demands as a condition for reversing this decision, including changing the government of Prime Minister Ma'rouf al-Bakhit and the implementation of specific constitutional amendments and other types of reforms.²⁴⁴

As a result of these dynamics and with the eruption of another crisis over the municipal elections, and the chaos surrounding the creation of new municipalities, in addition to the fact that almost 70 members of parliament signed a petition demanding the government's resignation (after which the government was changed), and the Royal Court's declaration that it would reopen channels of dialogue with the Muslim Brotherhood, these variables nonetheless constituted new factors that pushed the relationship further into another direction. Despite the fact that the Muslim Brotherhood refused an offer to join the new government formed under Prime Minister 'Aoun al-Khasawneh,²⁴⁵ the movement responded with significant flexibility and openness towards the new prime minister and continued to speak highly and positively about the new government.

Perhaps, the best manner to describe this new historical moment would be to call it a moment of "transition." Certainly attitudes, political postures, and possibilities have evolved; ranging from the option of alliance to becoming easily engaged in oppositional and confrontational alignments!

In the end, there has not been a singular, completely consistent path governing the course of the relationship between the state and the Muslim Brotherhood. Rather, this relationship has been characterized by certain volatility and a meandering which, in themselves, have led to a path of continuous decline. Certainly, the relationship between the two parties was much better in the 1950s than it was in the 1980s; and, it was much better in the then than it is now.

Furthermore, there is no single variable or set of variables, which carries a specific weight and which can be employed to try to predetermine or construct possible scenarios for the future. Certainly, specific variables have played a pivotal role during one period; but as suddenly, what were once secondary variables replace these to become fundamental determinants.

However and without any doubt, there are a series of important, dynamic variables that exist today, which will be pivotal in determining the future. The most important of these determinants, indeed, are inherent in the implications which will be derived from the Arab Democratic Spring and, specifically, the revolution unfolding in Syria – and whether or not the situation in Syria will end similar to that of Egypt and Tunisia, leading to the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood to power – or whether current dynamics will conclude in some other unforeseeable scenario. Certainly, the manner in which these events play out and conclude will be a critical factor in determining the

²⁴³ Refer to the controversial debate that surrounded the Muslim Brotherhood's participation in the March 24 Youth Movement, as stated in the declaration issued by the *Jayeen* Movement (Lit., "We Are Coming" Movement), which accused the March 24 Youth Movement of cooperating and coordinating with groups from the Muslim Brotherhood; refer to the Ammon Jordanian news website: <http://www.ammonnews.net/article.aspx?articleNO=83978>.

²⁴⁴ For further detail on the decision taken by the Muslim Brotherhood to suspend its participation in municipal elections, refer to the Al-Arabiya news website: <http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/10/02/169777.html>.

²⁴⁵ For more on the Muslim Brotherhood's decision not to join in the government of Prime Minister 'Aoun al-Khasawneh, refer to the following link on the Amman Net Jordanian news website: <http://ar.ammannet.net/?p=130472>.

nature and direction of the future and the manner in which the relationship between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Jordanian state will be governed.

Chapter Four

Jordanian Policy and the Hamas Challenge: Exploring Gray Areas and the Question of Mutual Interests

Introduction

The relationship between Jordan and the Palestinian resistance movement, Hamas, represents one of the most important strategic portfolios for both parties, as well as for the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan. Needless to say, the Muslim Brotherhood is the third party that is also actively engaged in this relationship. The importance of this relationship far exceeds the question of foreign policy for all these parties; indeed, it touches upon the very core of a sensitive nerve in the internal composition of Jordan's domestic political equation.

Despite the importance of this subject, little objective and scholarly research has been done to examine the multi-faceted dimensions and dynamics affecting this relationship, or the internal and external factors that shape it. There are barely any studies that chronicle the evolution and transformations in this relationship, or the events affecting it, and other influencing factors simmering behind the scenes that do not necessarily manifest themselves at the surface.

This part of the book is an attempt to go beyond the limited scope of the literature and the research currently available on the subject. It seeks to develop a framework that does justice to the subject by placing the interests, stakes and politics involved within an objective context. It also attempts to shed light on this ambiguous and vacillating relationship by exploring gray areas and defining past, current, and expected trends.

The scarcity and lack of resources on the subject – save for a few books that ‘document’ events according to the point of view of one of the parties – represented the greatest challenge faced by this part of the study.²⁴⁶ To overcome this challenge, the study uses a methodology that traces the history of this relationship, which may be divided into stages. The study also observes the transformations experienced at each stage. It also uses discussions and interviews with a number of relevant actors, active at different times during these various stages. Finally, documents, statements, and declarations available are analyzed and presented so that they may benefit future research and scholarship on the subject.

Also contributing to the difficulties faced by this research were individuals, who played an important role in certain periods, and had access to certain data and information, but refrained from providing this evidence in their testimonies – despite the fact that many of these individuals left the political scene years ago. At this point, this information is historical and not “state secrets.” But, perhaps, what has prompted this cautious attitude is the fact that much of the relationship between Jordan and Hamas was actually crafted behind the scenes, due to security concerns.

²⁴⁶Azzam Tamimi, “*Hamas: Unwritten Chapters*”, Hurst & Company, London, 2007. See also to Ibrahim Ghosheh, “*al-Mi'thana al-Hamraa*” (Lit. “The Red Minaret: A Biography”) 1st Edition, Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, Beirut, 2008. Dr. Bassam al-'Amoush also dedicates a portion of his book, “*Mahatat fi Tarikh Jama'at al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin fi al-Urdun*” (Lit. “Landmarks in the History of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan”). 1st Ed, Academicians Publishers, Amman, 2006), to the relationship between Jordan and Hamas based on his own experience with the Muslim Brotherhood. And, Ibrahim Gharaibeh depicts certain information and details, from his perspective, about the evolution of the relationship between the Brotherhood and Hamas in his novel, “*Al-Saraab*” (Lit. “Mirage”), 1st Ed, al-Thaqafa Publishing and Distribution, Beirut, 2009. Also see Paul McGeough, “*Iqtul Khalid: 'Amaliyat al-Mossad al-Fashila li Ightiyal Khalid Mish' al wa Su'oud Hamas*”, 1st Ed, Dar al-Arabiya Publishers, Beirut, 2009. The book was originally written in English, entitled: “*Kill Khalid: The Failed Mossad Assassination of Khalid Mishal and the Rise of Hamas*” The New Press, New York, 2009.

In order to meet its research objectives, this chapter examines the factors and variables, which influenced and governed the relationship between Jordan and Hamas, in an attempt to present a reading of what was at stake for both parties, as well as what defined their mutual and conflicting interests. To this end, the chapter begins with a historical review of the periods in which the relationship began to develop and undergo certain transformations, in order to construct a 'historical context' for both the researcher and reader. It also attempts to build a framework, which will help clarify the factors and variables that impacted the way the relationship evolved and how it is viewed, according to the respective points of view of both parties.

This chapter also examines the relationship between the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas, as this relationship represents a key determinant that has influenced relations between the state and Hamas. Finally, the chapter attempts to identify 'gray areas' for both sides (the state and Hamas) in their relationship, and attempts to understand the a gap that has developed between the two parties, which obstructs both sides from recognizing mutual interests.

What remains to be said is that this part of the study avoids recounting details about certain incidents and the differing opinions about these incidents. Nor does it engage in a comparative analysis between conflicting viewpoints, but rather refers to other sources as much as possible, as other books and studies have covered these subjects in great detail, and have offered a full range of opinions, such as "The Red Minaret" by Ibrahim Ghosheh and Paul McGeough's "Kill Khalid".

Thus, this chapter focuses on constructing a scholarly examination of the relationship between Hamas and the Jordanian state based on three key dimensions:

- Firstly: An informative and historical account, which surveys the two stages in the evolution of the political relationship between the state and Hamas.
- Secondly: The analytical dimension, which assesses the factors and dynamics that determined and influenced the relationship between the state and Hamas.
- Thirdly: The future outlook, which explores the various stakes, interests and choices available to both parties in charting the future course of this relationship.

News Clippings Epitomize the Political Situation

At the end of August 2009, the Jordanian Monarch, King Abdullah II, granted permission for the leader of the Hamas Movement, Khalid Mish'al, to enter Jordan for a few hours to attend his father's funeral and wake. The news of this visit broadcast by the Jordanian media included a statement by an official source that said, "The visit is based on purely humanitarian considerations and has no political implications whatsoever."²⁴⁷

Despite the few hours spent in Amman, Mish'al still managed to make a political speech, which carried an amicable message and reconciliatory tone. From the location of his father's wake, Mish'al addressed the public and the country's political leadership in this speech, where he

²⁴⁷ See <http://www.ammonnews.net/article.aspx?articleNO=44268>.

outlined Hamas' view on what could be an improved framework for relations between the Jordanian state and Hamas.

Alternately, Jordanian officials maintained their silence, offering nothing in the way of a political reply, save for Amman's mayor offering condolences to Mish'al on behalf of the king prior to Mish'al's return to the Syrian capital. For several years, Damascus and the Syrian regime had provided a safe haven for Mish'al and his colleagues from Hamas' political bureau.

Commenting on the event, the Jordanian media and certain Jordanian journalists scrutinized the "humanitarian" justification for Mish'al's visit. They questioned the political implications and dimensions of this visit, and whether or not this opened new channels in the deadlock marking the relationship between Jordan and Hamas over the past few years.

Writers recounted the assassination attempt against Mish'al, which was carried out in Amman in 1997, and where the late King Hussein saved Mish'al's life by insisting that Israel provide the antidote to the lethal drug injected to Mish'al. Jordanian journalists also recalled the years of "warmer" relations between Jordan and Hamas, when Amman had hosted the movement for almost eight years, and had allowed Hamas' political bureau to maintain a legal presence in Jordan. The latter is notwithstanding the fact that the movement's political inauguration took place in Amman, at the headquarters of the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood. All this was prior to the Jordanian government's official ban on the activities of Hamas' political bureau in the country, and the incarceration of its leaders, followed by their deportation to Qatar in 1999.²⁴⁸

Much "water has passed under this bridge." According to certain powers in Jordan's political leadership, since early 2006, Hamas began to change and to show visible signs of posing "a threat to Jordan's national security" in light of the regional polarization that had placed the movement in alliance with the *Mumana'a* "Rejectionist" or "Resistance" axis of Iran, Syria and Hezbollah. In the meantime, Jordan was allied with the opposing regional axis, known as the *I'tidaal* "Moderate Arab States" (and later as "The Arab Solidarity Alliance"), which included Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and the Palestinian National Authority.

During the funeral of Mish'al's father, the leadership of the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood made an obvious effort to cast the occasion in their political favor, with members of the Muslim Brotherhood taking care of organizing the funeral and wake. The occasion provided spokesmen for the Muslim Brotherhood a golden media opportunity in which they commended Hamas and its political stances, as well as implicitly criticized the official position of the Jordanian state. The result was an environment of serious resentment on the part of important state policy-makers. Had it not been for the intervention of Mish'al's speech, which praised the Jordanian monarch for his

²⁴⁸ See Fahad al-Khitan, "Ziyara Inسانيya Tuthakkir bi al-Masalih al-Siyasiya" (Lit. "A Humane Visit: A Reminder of Political Interests"), Al-Arab Al-Yawm Jordanian daily newspaper, Amman, August 29, 2009. See also to Taher al-'Adwan, "Fi 'Azaa Aal Mish'al: Matha law Hadara al-Ra'is" (Lit. "At the Mishal Family Funeral Wake: What If the President Showed up?"), Al-Arab Al-Yawm Jordanian daily newspaper, Amman, September 1, 2009; and, 'Oraib al-Rantawi's "Mish'al fi Amman.. Matha 'an al-Alaqa ma'a Hamas" (Lit. "Mishal in Amman: What of the Relationship with Hamas?"), Ad-Dustour Jordanian daily newspaper, Amman, August, 30, 2009; and, Maher Abu Tair, "Mish'al fi Amman" (Lit. "Mishal in Amman") on August 29, 2009.

“hospitality”, and for his position with regard to the Palestinian cause, the occasion had the potential of turning into a serious political crisis.²⁴⁹

At the same time, the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood (to which Mish‘al originally belonged, prior to Hamas’ official split from the movement, and prior to the establishment of Hamas as an independent “Palestinian” Muslim Brotherhood), was not of “one heart.” Sharp differences stormed within the organization; and, this crisis between the movement hawks, or those close to Hamas, and the centrists and doves, who have maintained a distance from Hamas, hung heavily over the organization’s internal dynamics. Leaks blamed on both sides would become part of a “media war” that, recently, turned into an open battle waged in the media and elsewhere, creating, with it, rich content for the press.

Mish‘al’s “humanitarian” visit and attendance at his father’s funeral carried with it broad political implications against a backdrop of nearly two decades of changes, altercations, and events in the path of the relationship between Hamas and the Jordanian state. Indeed, Hamas has not been a neutral party to the internal crisis in the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood; also, the Jordanian state has not been an idle by-stander. In fact, the relationship between the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas has significantly impacted relations between all three parties: The Jordanian state, the Muslim Brotherhood, and Hamas. For the Muslim Brotherhood, the relationship with Hamas and its influence inside the organization have been key determinants in the struggle to define the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood’s “political identity.” The relationship, in itself, also represents a very sensitive nerve in the internal divisions and disagreements that exist between the organization’s wings.

The relationship that developed between Hamas and the Jordanian state has been a ‘complexly constructed’ relationship, with the Muslim Brotherhood representing a complicating third pillar in this relationship. In fact, the Muslim Brotherhood represents an important and dynamic entry point for any research or political analysis that examines and explains the relationship between Hamas and Jordan, the political framework governing these relations, and finally, the future prospects for these relations.

The following pages examine these complex dynamics by answering the following questions: What is the current framework and context for Hamas-Jordanian relations? What are the different stages, milestones and transformations that have marked the evolution of these relations? What is the position of the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood’s regarding the state and Hamas? What determinants, considerations, and factors govern the vision of the three parties (the state, the Brotherhood and Hamas) in terms of their relationship with each other, and in terms of their diverging and converging interests? Finally, how can one forecast the future for these relations in light of local, regional, and international variables and changes?

²⁴⁹ See “*Mish‘al Yarfuld Muzayadat Qiyadat Islamiya: Ziyarati li al-Urdin laysat Nasran li Hamas*” (Lit. “Mishal Rejects Islamic Leaders’ Exaggerations: My Visit to Jordan is Not a Victory for Hamas), Al-Ghad Jordanian daily newspaper, Amman, August 8, 2009.

1. A Historical Prelude: The Meandering Path between Hamas and Jordan

Relations between successive Jordanian governments and Hamas have not followed one, clear upward or downward path, but rather periods of ebb and flow, and cordiality and animosity. Despite this meandering path, it is possible to examine major trends during certain historical periods that have affected the evolution of the relations between the two parties, until today.

What makes things more interesting is the fact that the greater part of Hamas' political birth and strategic policy development took place from within Jordan. Furthermore, leading figures in the movement's political bureau carry Jordanian passports, and a large portion of the movement's proponents and its grassroots supporters are Jordanian citizens (over half of which are of Palestinian origin).

Historically, the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood played a leading role in the birth of the new Jihadi activities of its branch in Palestine, which was named Hamas, coinciding with the First Intifada in 1987. In the wake of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 and the subsequent war, many of Hamas' political leaders, who had been active in the Arab Gulf states, returned to Jordan. There, they returned to their political and communications activities under the auspices of the Jordanian Organization of the Muslim Brotherhood.

In 1993, a "gentlemen's agreement" was reached between the Jordanian government and Hamas, which defined the framework within which the movement would operate in the domestic arena. However, this agreement did not endure under the constant strain on the relationship, which finally came to a head in 1999, when the Jordanian government banned the activities of the movement in Jordan, and Hamas' leaders were forced to leave to Qatar and then to Damascus.

Subsequently, the occupation of Iraq by American (and Coalition) forces in April 2003 created new regional conditions, the repercussions of which became more evident in 2006. Also, in 2006, Hamas stood for parliamentary elections and won a landslide. In parallel, the role and influence of Iran in the region significantly increased. Meanwhile, all the regimes in the region began to polarize into competing alliances and axes, which reinforced and further escalated the crisis between Jordan and Hamas to a more advanced stage.

In 2008, with Hamas taking over and maintaining its grip on the Gaza Strip, a new attitude towards the movement began to emerge on a regional and global level. Nevertheless, the Director of the Jordanian General Intelligence Department (GID), at that time, Lieutenant General Mohammad al-Dahabi, tried to engineer a new direction for the relationship between Jordan and Hamas, and once again, tried to enable political dialogue with the movement through secure channels. These efforts at dialogue did not succeed, especially with al-Dahabi's service coming to an end in late 2008.

Subsequently, the Jordanian government froze all communications with Hamas, and contacts with the movement's leadership were kept to the minimum. The relationship between the two parties was marked by great insecurity as it went back to "square one" in its cycle of alternating crises. There was no agreement on the definition of the strategic interests that governed the relationship between

them; nor was there a definition of the criteria to present an interpretative framework that could help produce a more logical response to the transformations that the relationship was experiencing.

The Muslim Brotherhood in the Levant: The Birth of Hamas from the Womb of the Palestine Branch

In 1986, the Global Organization of the Muslim Brotherhood decided to establish a branch for the movement in Palestine. This “Palestine Branch” was created to assist in transforming Islamist activities in Palestine to a more active level of charitable, educational, and *da’wa* work, or as deemed required by the Muslim Brotherhood’s new “Jihadi project.”²⁵⁰ By the end of the next year (1987), this initiative was born with the rise of the popular Palestinian Intifada, in a declaration made by the Muslim Brotherhood announcing the birth of a new Islamic resistance movement, Hamas, (or the Jihadi front of the Muslim Brotherhood).²⁵¹

The Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood was never far removed from events in Palestine. In fact, the movement in Jordan was considered the representative of the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine, as the general supervisor of the Jordanian organization was also the official leader of the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood (or Hamas). The two organizations, together, formed the “Organization of the Muslim Brotherhood in Greater Syria (the Levant),” which was established as far back as 1978, much prior to the establishment of the Hamas Resistance movement.

It was from the headquarters of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan that the political vision, communications strategies, and objectives of Hamas’ political bureau and its *Shura* Council were formed and presented. This synergy meant that Hamas did also play a fundamental role in the organization’s overall policy-making and political discourse, equal in importance to its new “Jihadi” mission in Palestine.

Despite this shared history, Hamas Political Bureau Chief, Khalid Mish’al, claims that the real cadre of the movement’s leadership was not borne of the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood, but rather from a group of expatriates – mostly from Kuwait –, who advocated turning the volunteer and charity work of the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine into Jihadi action, and who eventually led the launch of Hamas as a Palestinian Jihadi movement.²⁵²

During this period, it was almost impossible to differentiate between the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas. The Organization of the Muslim Brotherhood in the Levant existed as the primary or mother organization before the Hamas political bureau assumed more autonomy and distinguished itself from the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood.

The presence of Hamas in the Jordanian domestic scene witnessed a quantum leap with the onset of the Gulf War in 1991 (after the occupation of Kuwait by Saddam Hussein). The leadership of the movement’s political bureau returned to Jordan from Kuwait, and continued their work through the Muslim Brotherhood’s organization in Jordan. Khalid Mish’al’s new office was located inside the

²⁵⁰ Paul McGeough, “*Uqtul Khalid*” (Lit., “Kill Khalid”), op. cit., pp. 74-75.

²⁵¹ Ibrahim Ghosheh, “*Al-Mi’thana al-Hamraa*” (Lit. “The Red Minaret”) op. cit., pp.156-59.

²⁵² Interview with Khalid Mish’al at his office in Damascus, October 15, 2009.

Muslim Brotherhood's headquarters and Ibrahim Ghosheh's office was located inside the Islamic Action Front's (IAF) parliamentary member party office.²⁵³

The first major confrontation between the Jordanian government and Hamas took place in 1991. The government arrested several members of the Muslim Brotherhood on charges that they had been conspiring with Hamas, and that they had been stockpiling weapons and preparing to carry out military operations.

One of the leaders of Hamas, Ibrahim Ghosheh, links these events with the nature of the political atmosphere prevailing in Jordan at that time. The Americans and the West had begun preparations for the First Gulf War against the Iraqi regime under the leadership of Saddam Hussein; and, Jordan feared that this climate would have repercussions on its domestic front.

According to Ghosheh, there were very strong concerns inside Jordan about the possibility of Israeli retaliation. Consequently, political leaders opened discussions with the regime about establishing "national resistance committees," and tried to amass weapons to arm these "committees" as a defensive measure. Ghosheh maintains that a statement made by Jordanian Prime Minister Mudar Badran (at that time) in which Badran declared that, "The Jordanian people have the right to arm themselves in any way they may deem necessary," was perceived as "implicit permission" to stockpile weapons. Furthermore, prior to the dismantling of these "committees" and the arrest of its members, several members of the Islamist leadership, including Ibrahim Ghosheh, made a visit to Teheran – with the prior knowledge of Jordanian authorities – in an attempt to garner Iranian support for enabling this form of popular resistance.

There is no official Jordanian account that corresponds to or confirms Ghosheh's version of these incidents. The fact that individuals were arrested and tried before the courts implies the absence of any clear, formal understanding between the two parties. In fact, it appears that this was an attempt by some members of the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas to re-articulate the official Jordanian position and statements made by Jordanian officials, which were susceptible to interpretation.

Eleven individuals were arrested and the mediation process for negotiating their release was launched by members of the Muslim Brotherhood in parliament and other politicians. Ghosheh tells the story of a meeting between this delegation and the Director of General Intelligence, at that time, Mustafa al-Qaisi. In this meeting, a discussion ensued between the two parties about the purpose of Hamas' presence on Jordanian soil and its stockpiling of weapons. Ghosheh insisted that Hamas was not targeting Jordan's national security; and, that the weapons seized were meant for transfer to the Palestinian resistance. The Director of General Intelligence Department questioned this rationale; and, the debate turned to the nature of the relationship between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Jordanian authorities – and, who better served the interests of the other.

This particular crisis was short-lived. The men arrested were released by a pardon issued by the king, despite the fact that 160 Kalashnikovs were found in their possession, along with almost one million rounds of ammunition.²⁵⁴

²⁵³ Paul McGeough, "Kill Khalid", op. cit., pp. 95-96.

²⁵⁴ Ibrahim Ghosheh, "The Red Minaret", op. cit., pp.178-181.

At the end of 1991, Hamas' *Shura* Council convened to elect a new leader for Hamas. Ibrahim Ghosheh was appointed as the official spokesman and Dr. Mousa Abu Marzouq was appointed political bureau chief of the movement. Indeed, a more autonomous Hamas leadership began to take root; and, this new leadership (with members outside Palestine) began to have a greater role in the media and in politics, turning Amman into a vital hub for Hamas' political activities.²⁵⁵

The “Gentlemen’s Agreement”: Defining a Framework for Hamas’ Presence in Jordan

The relationship between the Jordanian government and the Hamas movement witnessed another marked transformation in 1993, when several members of the movement’s political bureau met with then Jordanian Prime Minister Zayd Bin Shaker. After this meeting, both Dr. Mousa Abu Marzouq and ‘Imad al-‘Alami were granted residency in Jordan; it was agreed that the Hamas political bureau would be allowed to establish its base in Amman.

This preliminary agreement with Prime Minister Bin Shaker was affirmed in a gentlemen’s agreement that followed between two of Hamas’ leaders, Ibrahim Ghosheh and Mohammad Nazzal, and then Director of the General Intelligence Department, Mustafa al-Qaisi. However, this agreement only included “broad” guidelines (according to Ghosheh), which covered the following:²⁵⁶

- Permission for Hamas to conduct its political and communications activities on Jordanian soil;
- that Hamas would not interfere in Jordanian affairs; and
- that Hamas would not carry out any military operations launched from Jordanian territory.

This agreement was never signed, with both sides satisfied with a verbal commitment to its terms. Shortly thereafter, the Hamas movement established and opened its own office in Amman, in the neighborhood of Khalda.

However, certain developments and events, and their subsequent ramifications, appeared to have been greater than the commitment to the terms of the gentlemen’s agreement. On February 25, 1994, the Ibrahim Mosque Massacre was carried out in Hebron in the West Bank, by a Jewish extremist, who opened fire on people while they were performing dawn prayers, killing 29 people and wounding over 200.

This incident incited public opinion all over the Arab and Muslim worlds; and, the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan mobilized thousands in a demonstration to condemn the massacre. Soon thereafter, the military wing of Hamas sought revenge, and retaliated with a series of unprecedented armed attacks against Israel.

²⁵⁵ Ibid, pp. 181-182.

²⁵⁶ Ibid, pp. 203-204; Ghosheh himself attended the meetings that produced the agreement. The researcher tried to meet with the Jordanian Director of General Intelligence Department at that time, Mustafa al-Qaisi to discuss this matter. However, al-Qaisi declined to comment or to give his account of what took place. Also refer to Paul McGough, “Kill Khalid”, op. cit., pp. 97-98.

These attacks put international pressure on Jordan, especially as these incidents took place after the signing of the Oslo Agreement between the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel. At the same time, Ghosheh recalls that then Jordanian Minister of the Interior, Salameh Hammad, called him, objecting to statements that he and several other members of the Hamas political bureau had made.

The climate of crisis between the two sides escalated when Ibrahim Ghosheh was summoned to the Jordanian Interior Ministry, and asked to surrender his passport. Ghosheh refused, and security forces were dispatched to arrest him. Member of Parliament (at the time), Bassam al-'Amoush, who had accompanied Ghosheh from the offices of the IAF, tried to intervene; but, both were intercepted by security forces in the street. A compromise was made and it was agreed that al-'Amoush would accompany Ghosheh to report to the Amman chief of police. An altercation between the two sides took place; but the crisis ended with a phone call intervention made by the prime minister, who was outside the country at the time.²⁵⁷

In the meantime, Hamas continued its armed attacks inside Palestinian and Israeli territories, and pressure on Jordan continued to mount, as a consequence of the movement's continued presence on its soil and its political and media activities. Thereafter, the Jordanian-Israeli peace agreement was signed on October, 26, 1994, representing a critical milestone and turning point in the relationship between Jordan and Hamas.

Despite assurances made by the Director of General Intelligence, Mustafa al-Qaisi, to Hamas' leadership, that the agreement with Israel and its security arrangements did not necessarily mean an end to the gentlemen's agreement with the movement, reality on the ground bore signs to the contrary. And, pressure from the Jordanians began to increase on the movement's political bureau to put a halt to statements in support of the resistance in Palestine.

In May of 1995, then Minister of Interior Salameh Hammad informed the Hamas political bureau that Jordan would no longer allow Mousa Abu Marzouq and Imad al-'Alami to reside in Amman, asking both to leave the country by the end of the month. Thereafter, several armed attacks carried out by Hamas in the Occupied Palestinian Territories led to even more pressure on Jordan to stop Hamas from continuing its political activities on Jordanian soil.

At the end of 1995, the Hamas *Shura* Council convened to replace Mousa Abu Marzouq, after he was asked to leave Jordan. Khalid Mish'al was elected to succeed Abu Marzouq as head of the movement's political bureau, and Ibrahim Ghosheh was elected as head of the *Shura* Council.

In that same year, several of the leaders of the Hamas movement were arrested in Jordan, the most prominent of which were 'Izzat al-Risheq and Sami Khater. According to Ghosheh's account of this event, hundreds of thousands of Jordanian Dinars and other equipment were seized during the

²⁵⁷ See Ghosheh's account of these events in "The Red Minaret", op. cit., pp. 216-219; and compare this version to the slightly different details given in Bassam al-'Amoush's version, particularly with reference to the attempted arrest of Ghosheh, In al-'Amoush's "*Mahatat fi Tarikh Jamaa'at...*" (Lit., "Landmarks in the History of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan", op. cit, pp. 197-198.

arrest. The editor-in-chief of the “Al-Sabeel” weekly newspaper, Hilmi al-Asmar, was also arrested. Later, all those arrested were released.²⁵⁸

The pressure on Hamas continued to mount as the pace of its armed attacks and military operations escalated. At the same time, the movement had become directly engaged in ongoing confrontations with the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The continued attacks led to the convening of an international summit in Sharm el-Sheikh, under the patronage of the United States, with over thirty countries participating. The “Summit of Peacemakers” and the resolutions against terrorism that emerged from this summit clearly reflected on Hamas’ activities in Jordan.²⁵⁹

All of the aforementioned was happening in coincidence with major changes in Jordan’s top posts in the Prime Ministry (Abd al-Karim al-Kabariti) and in the General Intelligence Department. There were numerous indicators, particularly later, that would point to a mounting transformation in the Jordanian attitude towards the Hamas movement and its presence on Jordanian territory, particularly by the new Director of General Intelligence, Samih al-Batikhi. Incidents further escalating tensions between the two sides increased, as did the number of arrests of members and supporters of the Hamas movement, until the number of Hamas detainees in Jordan reached sixty.

On the other hand, according to an account relayed by Bassam al-‘Amoush, who had become the mediator between the Royal Court and Musa Abu Marzouq, in May of 1997, Mousa Abu Marzouq was released from custody and allowed to return to Amman through a personal intervention by King Hussein. The latter returned to Jordan on a special military airplane and was received along with his family at the Royal Court by King Hussein.²⁶⁰

In his book, “Kill Khalid”, Paul McGeough documents the opinions of several authority figures from Jordan and from Hamas, who claimed that the “power house” (the decision-making establishment) in Amman allowed for Abu Marzouq’s return so that he could take over the leadership of Hamas movement, instead of Khalid Mish’al. Indeed, Mish’al’s “extreme” positions were not to the liking of Jordan’s policy-makers, nor were his schemes to use Hamas as a trump card in the peace process, and with Yasser Arafat.²⁶¹

These overtures would not change the deteriorating course between the state and Hamas. In May of the same year, Ghosheh issued a statement to the media urging support for the Qassam Brigades’ armed resistance in Palestine,²⁶² which was in direct violation of the Jordanian government’s ban on Hamas issuing statements in support of armed resistance from Amman. Consequent to issuing this

²⁵⁸ Ibrahim Ghosheh, “The Red Minaret”, op. cit., pp. 221-224.

²⁵⁹ See the terms of the statement issued at the summit (in Arabic), available at http://www.moqatel.com/openshare/Behoth/Siasia2/MazbahaKan/mol01.doc_cvt.htm, where the parties agreed to prevent support (of any kind) to “terrorist” groups that oppose the peace process. By definition, that included Hamas, which had political offices and media arms in Jordan.

²⁶⁰ See Bassam al-‘Amoush’s account of these events in which al-‘Amoush acted as mediator between the King and Abu Marzouq’s family; refer to Bassam al-‘Amoush, “*Mahatat...*” (Lit. “Landmarks in the History of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan”, op. cit., pp. 184-195.

²⁶¹ Paul McGeough, “Kill Khalid”, op. cit. pp. 305-309.

²⁶² Otherwise known as the ‘Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades: The military wing of the Hamas Movement in Palestine, named after the Syrian-Palestinian Islamist Imam, available at [Sheikh Izz ad-Din al-Qassam](http://www.mideastweb.org/Middle-East-Encyclopedia/izz_ad-din_al-qassam_brigades.htm); http://www.mideastweb.org/Middle-East-Encyclopedia/izz_ad-din_al-qassam_brigades.htm [Translator’s note].

statement, Ghosheh was arrested and held at the General Intelligence Department Prison for 15 days.²⁶³

On September 25, 1997, an assassination attempt on Khalid Mish'al by two Israeli Mossad agents took place on Jordanian soil. Mish'al's bodyguard and several other individuals, present at the scene, were able to catch the Israeli agents, who were then turned over to Jordanian security forces.²⁶⁴

Mish'al remained in the grasp of death until King Hussein personally intervened and sent warnings to the American administration about the dire repercussions of the situation. Eventually, the intervention led to a deal that included Israel sending an antidote to the poison Mish'al was administered, and the release of the two Mossad agents in return for the release of Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, the spiritual leader of Hamas, who had been imprisoned in Israel. Sheikh Yassin was transported by private jet to Jordan, where he was visited by King Hussein and President Arafat at the King Hussein (Military) Medical Center in Amman, where Yassin was treated for a series of ailments.²⁶⁵

The year 1998 ended with increased levels of tension between Hamas and the Jordanian government, as well as continued disagreement about Hamas' lack of commitment to refraining from statements and speeches related to the resistance in Palestine.

The "Rift": Seeking an Alternative Strategic Host

On February 7, 1999, King Hussein passed away. One can safely argue that, with his passing, the delicate balance that had governed the relationship between Hamas and the Jordanian regime was "shaken," as Ibrahim Ghosheh would describe the period that followed the death of King Hussein.²⁶⁶

It is likely that many who studied this relationship would also agree with Ghosheh. The death of King Hussein would represent another historical game changer in Hamas' relationship with the Jordanian political regime, for reasons that are presented later in this chapter. Only a few months after King Hussein's death, and while certain leading figures from Hamas were on a visit to Teheran (in late August, 1999), the Jordanian authorities arrested 16 members from the movement, including Sami Khater, a member of the Hamas political bureau. During that period, Mohammad Nazzal and 'Izzat al-Risheq also went into hiding.

Along with these developments, the Hamas office in Amman was shut down; as were other communications and media arms related to the movement, such as the "*Filastin al-Muslima*" (Muslim Palestine) Magazine, and equipment was confiscated from the office. And, what is more

²⁶³ Ibrahim Ghosheh, "The Red Minaret", op. cit., pp. 235-238.

²⁶⁴ Paul McGeough documents and presents, in precise detail, the events surrounding the attack, its preparations and the subsequent and intense crisis between the King and the Israeli governments as well as the mediation efforts made by the American Administration during that crisis; "Kill Khalid", op. cit., 221-263.

²⁶⁵ See Bassam al-'Amoush's account in "Landmarks in the History of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan", op. cit., pp. 195-196.

²⁶⁶ Ibrahim Ghosheh, "The Red Minaret", op. cit., p. 267.

important is the message that was being sent to Hamas that, “its activities in Jordan were now considered a threat (to national security).” Finally, this message was underlined by arrest warrants issued for the leaders of the movement’s political bureau.

According to the official Jordanian account, the justification or pretext for these measures was the discovery of a cache of weapons in the movement’s possession. Also, according to this official version, Hamas was organizing and conducting illegal activities that jeopardized Jordan’s national security. However, it became clear that the authorities had waited for the movement’s leadership to leave the country before taking these measures, because the real intention was to actually prevent them from returning – thus, sending a strong signal to Hamas to seek another location from which to conduct their activities.

In his own version of these events, Ghosheh inevitably rejects the account offered by the Jordanian authorities, insisting that the movement had honored its commitments to the gentlemen’s agreement with the Jordanian government. In an indirect manner, he links the regional situation and mounting international pressure with the decision to ban the movement and its activities in Jordan.

Meanwhile, the leaders of Hamas paid little heed to calls made by the leaders of the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood to wait things out and not return to Amman. Although Ghosheh remains skeptical about the claim that the Muslim Brotherhood’s *Shura* Council actually met, and officially recommended that they not return to Jordan, the General Supervisor of the Brotherhood, at that time, ‘Abd al-Majid Thnaibat, confirms that this meeting did take place. And, at this meeting, a decision was made to ask the leadership of Hamas to refrain from returning to Jordan.

Consequently, Mish’al, Ghosheh, and others accompanying them were arrested at the airport upon their arrival in Amman. They were transported to the Jweideh Prison in the outskirts of Amman, where they remained for 61 days. They were later joined by Mohammad Nazzal and ‘Izzat al-Risheq (members of the Hamas political bureau), who were also arrested later. Abu Marzouq was not amongst these detainees and was already resettled in Damascus, as the Jordanian authorities had already forced him to leave in September of that same year.

During this detention period, local and external interventions and mediation efforts by the Muslim Brotherhood and other Jordanian politicians intensified. In response to these efforts, Jordanian authorities insisted that the detainees declare that they would refrain from conducting any further political or communications activities related to Hamas in Jordan. The justification behind this demand was that as long as these men were Jordanian citizens, they were also banned from belonging to an organization that was not Jordanian. However, the Hamas leadership refused to make this declaration, and insisted on maintaining their position. The incident finally concluded with the mediation of the Qatari Foreign Minister; and, the leaders of the Hamas political bureau left Jordan for Qatar on a Qatari airplane, taking off from the Marka Military Airport in Amman at the end of November in that same year (1999).

Hamas’ leadership maintains that the incident did not conclude with mediation but rather with a deportation order. They insist that they were clear in their refusal to go to Qatar, even while on board the airplane on the runway. Meanwhile, the official Jordanian account is that this action was

not a deportation, but rather a decision made with the consent of the Hamas leadership after they, themselves, asked for the Qatari mediation.

Similarly, ‘Abd al-Ra’ouf al-Rawabdeh, who was prime minister at that time, denies that external pressure on Jordan forced the authorities to deport Hamas. He also denies that this was the result of changes in the regime or Jordan’s leadership. Instead, he believes it was out of pure necessity. In his view, it had become necessary to resolve matters, once and for all, after Hamas had gone too far in its militancy and in its recruitment of members from the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood to Hamas. Furthermore, Hamas had explicitly violated its agreement with the Jordanian government and had infringed upon “Jordanian sovereignty.” All this was notwithstanding the fact that the Jordanian authorities did not deem it normal for a Jordanian citizen to be the leader of a Palestinian organization.²⁶⁷

Dr. Bassam al-‘Amoush also documents al-Rawabdeh’s account of these events in his book, “Landmarks in the History of the Organization of the Muslim Brotherhood,” where al-Rawabdeh explains that a search of Hamas’ offices and the confiscation of 420 computer disks, thousands of documents, and light weapons, led the authorities to the conviction that Hamas was a “non-Jordanian organization operating on Jordanian soil.” Corroborating this conviction were seized documents issued by the executive offices of the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood, which contained information on the criteria used to classify Muslim Brotherhood members in Hamas. Other documents seized also contained disconcerting information, such as the names of officers in the Jordanian security services, the organizational structure of the offices of the Royal Court, Hamas’ alternative work plans, and different action plans for mobilizing the Palestinian community in Jordan.²⁶⁸

Meanwhile, Khalid Mish’al maintains that Hamas’ leadership had no knowledge whatsoever about the terms of the mediation agreed to by the Jordanian and Qatari governments. He claims that the agreement with the Qataris was that Hamas’ leaders would spend a short period in Qatar, and then return to Jordan after the political crisis ended. But, this did not take place; and, the Qataris were put in an awkward position, which, in itself, led to a crisis in Jordanian-Qatari relations.²⁶⁹

In the end, this incident concluded with the leaders of the Hamas political bureau leaving Jordan for Qatar, with correspondence and mediation efforts continuing in an appeal for their return. However, it appears that the Jordanian decision became final with the termination of the 1993 gentlemen’s agreement with Hamas. Finally, the Jordanian power house seemed convinced it was time to discard the Hamas “trump card” from their regional and local calculations.

Despite the official hospitality bestowed upon the Hamas leadership in Qatar, and the apparently cordial relations between the Hamas and Qatari leadership, Hamas’ leaders found themselves restricted and unable to maneuver politically. For many reasons, they felt constrained in their abilities to communicate with the rest of the world, to conduct their political and communications

²⁶⁷ Interview conducted by the researcher with al-Rawabdeh at his home in the Abu Nseir neighborhood, (Amman), September 17, 2009.

²⁶⁸ From the same interview with al-Rawabdeh, and also from al-Amoush’s “Landmarks in the History of the Muslim Brotherhood”, op. cit., pp. 213-219.

²⁶⁹ Interview with Khalid Mish’al, op. cit., October 15, 2009.

activities, and to network with Palestinians inside the Palestinian territories and in the diaspora. Consequently, the eyes of the Hamas leadership became fixed on another place; and, if it was not to be in Amman... then Damascus.

In the period preceding the exile to Qatar, relations between Hamas' leadership and the Syrian regime had begun to improve. Overtures began in 2000, when the movement's leaders had begun to travel back and forth to Damascus more frequently; and, this increased travel corresponded with a growing presence of several other Palestinian opposition factions, which were also becoming increasingly active in Damascus.

Additionally, in 2000, Hamas' new *Shura* Council convened to re-elect Mish'al for a second term, five years after the last session in which Mish'al was appointed head of the movement's political bureau. Ghosheh was also re-elected as head of the *Shura* Council for another term.²⁷⁰

The subsequent election of President Ahmadinejad in Iran, in 2004, and the emergence of a new regional axis, comprised of Damascus, Teheran, Hezbollah and Palestinian opposition factions, would provide Hamas with the final impetus to opt for Damascus as the new strategic host and incubator for its political bureau.

In the interim, in June of 2001, Ibrahim Ghosheh made an attempt "to test the waters with the Jordanian authorities," and tried to return to Amman on board a Qatari airliner, using a one-way ticket. He was arrested and detained in a room at the airport; and, the Qatari airliner was grounded for several days, which led to another political crisis between Qatar and Jordan that further strained relations between the two countries.

Ghosheh remained detained at the airport for 14 days. He was allowed entry into Jordan, after much regional and local mediation, and only after signing a document agreed to by Hamas and Jordan's General Intelligence Department, where he pledged to refrain from participating in or conducting any political activities or communications in Hamas' name while in Jordan. Subsequently, in 2004, Ghosheh was not re-elected as head of the Hamas *Shura* Council, due to the agreement he signed with the Jordanian authorities.²⁷¹

The Hamas political bureau relocated to Damascus. As a result, the relationship between Hamas and the Jordanian government became even more strained and entrenched in a political rift, with the gap between the two sides becoming even more pronounced. Only the most limited and clandestine channels of communications between the two parties would remain open. For the most part, these 'channels of communication' were personified by secret visits made intermittently by Mohammad Nazzal to meet with officers from the General Intelligence Department in Amman.

Despite all this, Mish'al maintains that, throughout all these years, he tried to keep channels of communications open with certain Jordanian authority figures and politicians, past and present. But,

²⁷⁰ Ibrahim Ghosheh, "The Red Minaret", pp. 287-296.

²⁷¹ Ibid. pp. 267-307; where Ghosheh offers his own account of his return, and on details of the events that accompanied the signing of the agreement he made with the Jordanian government, which outlined the conditions of his return to Jordan.

these efforts came to no avail with the decision-making “power house” in Amman, which did not respond to any of Mish‘al’s gestures.

The relationship between Jordan and Hamas remained characterized by deadlock, as other factors proved to be greater agents of change in the international and regional arena during the period that elapsed from 1999 to 2006. Peace talks between the Palestinian Authority and Israel collapsed in the year 2000, giving rise to the Second Intifada, which boosted the popularity of Hamas amongst the Palestinian and Arab masses, particularly amongst Jordanians of Palestinian descent. Then, with the September 11 attacks, the chapters of the so-called “War on Terror” unfolded; and, the political stakes for Jordan began to diverge even further from the choices made by the Hamas movement, and its political thinking and positions.

With the 2003 Invasion of Iraq, the region found itself in complete upheaval. The post-invasion resistance, the complete breakdown of security, and the internal power struggles in Iraq weakened the impact of the new American regional “project;” and, this period would be marked by unfortunate developments and destabilizing crises that would overwhelm the entire region.

In 2004, Israel also assassinated the spiritual leader of the Hamas movement, Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, and, shortly thereafter, Abd al-‘Aziz al-Rantisi, another prominent Hamas leader. In 2005, the late Prime Minister of Lebanon, Rafiq al-Hariri, was assassinated in Beirut in juxtaposition to a deadlocked regional peace process. In the same year, Israel withdrew from Gaza within the framework of Ariel Sharon’s unilateral disengagement plan with the Palestinians.

In summary, these developments produced an entirely new international, regional, local, Palestinian and Jordanian, reality. Indeed, the implications of this new environment on the contexts and formulas governing relations between Jordan and the Hamas movement would become even more pronounced the following year – or, in 2006.

The Political Crisis Erupts: The Politics of Regional Alliances

2006 proved to be a historic year and a turning point in the regional political environment and international policies. During that year, Palestinian legislative elections were held, with Hamas actively participating (after boycotting legislative and presidential elections in 1996).

Regardless of what Hamas’ motives were, or what conditions led to its decision to take part in the elections, and regardless of whether or not it expected the outcome of these elections, the fact remains that Hamas won a landslide victory in the legislative elections. Accordingly, Hamas formed a new Palestinian government. However, this transition of power was not going to unfold peacefully and without conflict, as a power struggle quickly emerged between Hamas and the Fatah movement.

These conditions created a new Palestinian reality on the ground. Hamas, borne of armed resistance, suddenly found itself in a completely new position of political authority, faced with a new set of criteria against which its achievements would be measured. This was especially the case when one

considers the nature of its entanglement with the international community, and the nature of its regional alliances and relations.

In that same year, there was a transformation in American policy perceptions regarding the Iraqi and regional reality. The United States began to focus its attention on the growing influence of Iran in Iraq and in the region. American concerns were particularly sharpened with the rise of President Ahmadinejad's government and the weakening of the reform movement in Iran; and, the outcome of parliamentary elections in Iran had clearly proven the conservatives would dominate the Iranian political scene.²⁷²

Inevitably, the above shift reflected on the region and led to the reformulation of stakes by the players – both governments and movements - in the area. The polarization of the region was further reinforced into two main axes: The “Rejectionist (or Resistance)” camp (comprised of Syria, Palestinian opposition factions, Hezbollah, and Iran); and the so-called “Moderate States” camp (including Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, and the United Arab Emirates), which was more closely aligned with American policy.

These regional polarizations, shifts, and transformations, combined with Hamas' victory in Palestine, produced an obvious ideological and political collision course between Jordanian interests and stakes and Hamas' ideological and political positions. Official Jordanian policy remained fixed on wagering on the peace process and on its relationship with the United States, which inherently placed Jordan on the same side, and in the same political camp, as the Palestinian Authority under the presidency of Mahmoud Abbas. Meanwhile, Hamas was betting on breaking the “international veto” against it, as a movement, and on reinforcing its military capabilities and political alliances with the Damascus-Teheran axis.

These conflicting regional political interests met with a growing apprehension amongst Jordanian policy-makers that Hamas' influence on the domestic political scene was becoming a serious threat. These concerns particularly focused on Hamas' relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood, which was also the major force of political opposition in the country, and which was broadly politically influential in the Jordanian popular base (and particularly amongst Jordanians of Palestinian descent).

During this period, an influential current in official and semi-official Jordanian policy circles reemerged, to reiterate its warnings about Hamas' rising influence and its negative repercussions on domestic political “balances.” Additionally, security considerations and political concerns were reinforced about “whetting the Muslim Brotherhood's appetite for political power” and for changing the rules of the (political) game. The latter concerns were not allayed by certain declarations issued by the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood's leadership, which were “officially” interpreted as presenting discomfiting intentions.²⁷³

²⁷² See Mohammad Abu Rumman, “*Amrika wa al-Islamiyun: Manthur al-Masaleh laa al-Dimuqratiya*” (Lit. “America and the Islamists: An Interest-Based Outlook Not Democracy”), Al-Ghad Jordanian daily newspaper, Amman, March 12, 2008, available at <http://www.alghad.jo/index.php?article=8383>.

²⁷³ See Mohammad Abu Rumman, “*Al-Azma bayna al-Urdun wa Hamas...*” (Lit., “The Crisis between Jordan and Hamas...”), op. cit., <http://www.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/00548C78-FD89-42C7-9C4D-A0356F3401E6.htm>

Official fears surfaced and materialized in the form of tangible steps taken during the municipal and parliamentary elections that took place the following year. A past, high-ranking official confesses that reining back the Islamists and sharply curbing their political representation became a major objective of the policy-makers in Jordan's "power house".

Inversely, relations between Jordan and President Abbas were strengthened by the prevailing environment and the new transformations taking place in the region. Political and security coordination between the two parties intensified; and, Jordanian policy was seen as openly hostile to Hamas. This was evidenced in the Jordanian government's assistance in training the Palestinian Authority's police force in a program led by United States' General Dayton. Jordan's role in this training program did not bode well for Hamas, which interpreted this as directly targeting the movement on both its domestic and external fronts.

In the meantime, the Hamas movement would become more deeply entrenched in the dynamics of regional power struggles. Furthermore, the movement's self-confidence was bolstered by the symbolic victory Hezbollah gained in its war with Israel in 2006, and was reinforced by Hamas' own success in carrying out operation "Vanishing Illusion," which led to the capture of Israeli soldier, Gilad Shalit.

This atmosphere brought the relationship between Jordan and Hamas from the general theater of the "rift" and estrangement stage to an all-out political crisis. Regionally, this crisis was embodied in the Jordanian government's position against the Iranian axis and Iran's support to Hamas in its adversity to President Abbas, and domestically, in the escalation of the crisis between the state and the Muslim Brotherhood, and the linkages that the Jordanian "power house" made between this crisis and the Hamas Movement, and what this "power house" deemed as its growing influence on the Jordanian Brotherhood.

While these dynamics worked at the lower depths of the relationship between the two sides, its symptoms and warning signs began to float to the surface in terms of the Jordanian government's position and attitude towards Hamas, even after it became part of the Palestinian government.

Perhaps the above is best represented in a remarkable incident where the Jordanian authorities announced they had uncovered a cell connected to Hamas that was amassing weapons in Jordan. The authorities accused this cell of planning to carry out an operation on Jordanian soil on the same evening that a visit to Amman had been planned for Mahmoud al-Zahhar – a Hamas authority figure, who was also Foreign Minister in the Palestinian Authority, at that time. The visit was subsequently cancelled.²⁷⁴

And, the crisis did not end there. The Jordanian government went on to accuse other individuals, also connected with Hamas, with forming cells and planning operations that jeopardized Jordan's national security.

²⁷⁴ See "Radio Sawa" report "*Hamas Ta'tabir al-Itihamat al-Urduniya Tabriran li Ilgha' Ziyarat al-Zahhar ila Amman*" (Lit., "Hamas Considers Jordanian Accusations as Pretext to Cancel al-Zahhar's Visit to Amman"), available at <http://www.radiosawa.com/content/article/178425.html>

At the same time, sources close to the Hamas Movement accused Jordan of conspiring with the Palestinian Authority in targeting Hamas both on a political and security level. A Jordanian Salafist Sheikh, Ali al-Halabi, who was seen as allied to the Jordanian state, was accused by Hamas of presenting a *fatwa* (religious edict) to certain persons, who then attempted to assassinate the prime minister of the discharged Hamas government, Isma'il Haniyeh.²⁷⁵

Perhaps the most substantive proof of what the prevailing official position in Jordan really was, at that time, was in its redefinition of what it considered “sources of threats to Jordan’s security.” Internally, the Islamist movement, in general, was considered an integral part of these threats, as was the Syrian-Iranian axis externally. It follows that Hamas was seen as a partner to both – internally in its relationship with the Brotherhood, and externally in its relationship with Iran and with Syria.

A Brief Détente, Followed by a Period of Ambiguity

In July of 2008, in an unexpected move, Jordanian authorities reactivated the channels of communication with Hamas by means of secure contacts made between authority figures in the General Intelligence Department – under the direct supervision of the former Director Lieutenant General Mohammad al-Dahabi – and leading figures from Hamas’ political bureau – specifically, Mohammad Nazzal and Mohammad Nasr.

The meetings were initiated upon Hamas’ request. But, the surprise came in the Jordanian reaction to the initiative. The Jordanians wanted to go beyond partial, routine discussions of everyday issues at the negotiation table and set an in-depth political dialogue process in motion, which would revive the agreement with Hamas in the form of a relationship based on defining the grounds for mutual and shared interests between the two parties.

Despite the fact that these meetings were limited in nature, they found political resonance in the local and international media. They also created questions concerning the relationship between Jordan and its Palestinian ally (the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah) and its regional allies.

The dialogue proceeded to focus on major issues, the most prominent of which was Hamas’ position with regard to the issues of “re-settlement” of refugees and the “alternative” homeland (in Jordan). Another major issue under discussion was Hamas’ role in the Jordanian domestic equation, whether in terms of the accusations made by Jordanian General Intelligence that Hamas was trying to undermine national security or in terms of matters related to the Movement’s relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood.²⁷⁶

²⁷⁵ See “‘Ali al-Halabi: Ma Nusiba ilay Hawla Muhawalat Ightiyal Isma'il Haniyeh Kathib wa Ifтира’ (Lit. “Ali al-Halabi: What Was Attributed to Me Regarding the Assassination Attempt against Ismail Haniyeh Are Lies and Fabrications”), “Al-Ghad” Jordanian daily newspaper, Amman, February, 18, 2008.

²⁷⁶ See Fahad al-Khitan, “*Al-Urdun wa Hamas.. Safha Jadeeda Tatwi Khilafat al-Madi*” (Lit. “Jordan and Hamas: A New Page Turned on Past Conflicts”), “Al-Arab Al-Yawm” Jordanian daily newspaper, Amman, August 17, 2008; and also, Rana al-Sabbagh, “*Hal Yatajadad al-Tafahum Ghayr al-Maktoub bayna al-Urdun wa Hamas*” (Lit. “Will the Unwritten Agreement Between Jordan and Hamas Be Renewed?”), “Al-Arab Al-Yawm” Jordanian daily newspaper, Amman, August 3, 2008.

This “dialogue” project was being engineered by former Director of the General Intelligence Department, Mohammad al-Dahabi. However, his role in opening these unexpected channels with Hamas was later seen as a reason for his dismissal from his post at the end of 2008. Al-Dahabi’s initiatives were considered counter to the general line of overall Jordanian policy, which had recently come to be characterized by animosity towards Hamas and by accusations that the Movement was seen as an extension of the Iranian-Syrian axis. Furthermore, Hamas was seen as standing on the opposite end of the spectrum in terms of Jordan’s national interests, which were seen as being inextricably linked to the success of a peace process that Hamas utterly rejected.

Mohammad Nasr, a Hamas leader who, along with Mohammad Nazzal, participated in this dialogue process, confirms that “the dialogue did not lead to a final or written set of agreements”. He also indicates that he personally felt the concern of leading figures in Amman when it came to two particular issues: The first being resettlement (naturalization of Palestinians) and the right to return; and, the second was that Jordan was the only country left that still had blocked all channels with Hamas at a time other countries were dealing with the Movement.

Later on in this study, we will return to an interpretation of the environment and conditions surrounding this dialogue and its ramifications, within an analytical framework that tries to reconstruct the context that affected and governed Jordan’s relationship with Hamas. What is important to note at this point is that this period was limited in nature, and did not extend to any practical manifestations other than piecemeal measures. Also important to note is that the limited developments with Hamas during this period paralleled discussions that were taking place between the Jordanian state and parliamentary deputies from the Muslim Brotherhood.

The practical outcomes of this dialogue process surfaced in decisions that turned the tide in the opposite direction from the previous stage. The first of these was in granting a license for the “*Al-Sabeel*” weekly newspaper, which was considered pro-Brotherhood and close to Hamas. Permission was also granted to numerous speakers from the Brotherhood to conduct sermons during Friday prayers in various mosques, on condition that these sermons were consistent with the rules and regulations of the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs. And, finally, passports for leading figures in Hamas’ political bureau were renewed, including the passports of Khalid Mish’al and Mohammad Nazzal.

After Al-Dahabi’s departure from the political arena, semi-official sources confirmed that the regime in Amman considered re-opening the channels of communication and dialogue with Hamas and the Brotherhood damaged Jordan’s relationship with its allies. The initiative was considered an “uncalculated and unwarranted risk.” Subsequently, Jordanian authority figures decided to “freeze all political interaction” with Hamas and closed the communication channels that were open with the leadership of the Muslim Brotherhood.

From yet another angle, these developments coincided with a restructuring of political roles in Jordan’s institutional equations. The General Intelligence Department was asked to return to its traditional role of security and asked not to interfere in politics. The Royal Court was asked to confine itself to its administrative role, and remove itself from the pervasive role it had been playing in domestic and external state policy.

All in all, this “restructuring” was seen as an attempt to erase all traces of the fissures, intense political struggles, and press wars taking place in the domestic political and media scenes between two groups: The first group was close to the former Chief of the Royal Court, Bassim Awadallah, and the other group was allied to the former Director of the General Intelligence Department, Mohammad al-Dahabi.

However, the relationship between the Jordanian regime and both Hamas and the Brotherhood would not revert back to the level of crisis witnessed in the previous period, where tensions were so obvious. Perhaps, it would be more accurate to characterize the following period as the “gray” or “static” phase of ambiguous visions. Indeed, this ambiguity may have actually strengthened the influence of certain currents within the formal state institutional structure, as well as amongst the political elite and leading influential figures in the media – all of whom were opposed to opening up to the Hamas Movement and the Brotherhood, and all of whom demanded that the policy of political confrontation be maintained.

2. Behind the Scenes: Domestic and External Factors Shape Transformations in the Relationship between the State and Hamas

In the previous pages, a historical background and framework with regard to the evolution and transformations that took place in the relationship between Jordan and Hamas was presented. This context examines the factors and influential considerations that defined Jordan's official policy towards Hamas, on the one hand, and the Movement's corresponding perception of this relationship and subsequent consequences emanating from this perception, on the other.

The objective was to go beyond the political surface of the changes that took place in the relationship between Jordan and Hamas, and delve further into identifying what visions the parties held with regard to the converging and conflicting interests between them, which affected and governed the evolution of successive stages in the relationship in the past, and which had the potential to influence the future course between them.

The Dialectics of Internal and External Factors: Conflicting and Converging Interests

By returning to the stages of the evolution in the relationship between the two parties, one can analyze the internal and external factors that influenced both sides. These factors changed both in terms of their influence and in terms of their ramifications from one stage to another, depending on the political variables surrounding and affecting that time period.

In the first stage, an active political bureau was established by Hamas in Jordan, influenced by its relationship with the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood and by their convergence in the Organization of the Muslim Brotherhood of Greater Syria (the Brotherhood in Jordan, the West Bank, and Gaza). Subsequently, the political activities of the Movement's political bureau were perceived as similar – in the earlier days – with those of the Muslim Brotherhood, which also represented an institutional and political cover for Hamas' leadership in Amman. The symbiotic relationship with the Brotherhood in the earlier stages assisted in bolstering the role of Hamas' political bureau and its activities in Jordan, and enabled "Hamas outside (the Occupied Territories)" to have more influence and capabilities in terms of its political maneuvering and leeway in the media than "Hamas on the inside," which was suffering from incarcerations and assassinations of great numbers of its members at the hands of the Israeli army.

The Second Gulf War played a major role in the return of the leadership of the Hamas political bureau to Jordan, as the majority held Jordanian passports, and; furthermore, the Movement was still considered in its nascence, with little in the way of friendly relations with other countries that may have provided haven for its activities the way that Jordan did. Thirdly, Jordan was closest in proximity to Palestine and had the greatest gathering of Palestinians outside the Occupied Territories.

The aforementioned is notwithstanding the fact that the path for a peace settlement was also officially in its earliest stages, with neither Jordan nor the Palestine Liberation Organization having signed any peace agreements with Israel. Therefore, there was nothing to officially prevent political support or support in the media for political activities, which reinforced and bolstered the Palestinian resistance “inside” (the Occupied Territories).

Despite the above, Jordanian institutions did not overlook the activities of groups orbiting Hamas, which tried to support the resistance logistically by way of providing arms and military training. Neither did they overlook any activities perceived as threatening security in the Jordanian domestic arena, which explains the arrest of several members of the Brotherhood in 1991 on charges of working in collusion with Hamas in a way that violated Jordanian law.

“Internal considerations” in themselves led to the (unsigned) “gentlemen’s agreement” between the two sides prior to the signing of the Oslo Accords and the Wadi Araba peace treaty. It is clearly evident in the terms of this gentlemen’s agreement that Jordan was careful to obtain a commitment from the Movement not to engage in security and military activities on Jordanian soil and not to interfere in domestic affairs, in any way whatsoever. In return, (Jordanian) “decision-makers” would not mind the Movement conducting communications, media, and political activities that did not pose a security threat to the country.

From its perspective, Hamas achieved some major objectives in this agreement. It guaranteed the Movement a legitimate presence in the Jordanian arena and allowed it the capacity to officially speak in the name of the new Islamic resistance in Palestine, and allowed it to build media and political institutions, with official Jordanian agreement – giving the Movement a strategic advantage in establishing and launching itself in its inceptive phase.

That was on the internal front. As for the regional context, analysts see that Hamas was an influential pressure card played by Jordan in the strained relationship between Jordan and the Palestinian Liberation Organization, and particularly between the late King Hussein and the late President Arafat.

During that historic stage, Jordan was extremely wary of any deals, understandings, or agreements that Arafat may make with the Israelis, which did not take Jordanian concerns or interests into consideration in the context of final status matters, such as the issue of Palestinian refugees (resettlement), the status of Jerusalem, and potential demarcation of borders. These concerns made Hamas an acceptable choice and an influential card that Jordan could use when dealing with President Arafat.

The position of the Palestinian Authority, and the position towards it, indeed forms a major parameter in the reading of the evolution of the relationship between Jordan and Hamas, and the transformations that emerged in the relationship during subsequent years. This became especially the case as the Palestinian Authority increasingly distanced itself from operations carried out by Hamas in the Occupied Territories, which threatened the peace agreement with Israel. From another angle, the prevailing context pointed to the rising presence of another Palestinian player with strong influence (on the ground) other than the Fatah Movement and the Palestinian Authority, who could, one day, actually represent an alternative to the latter.

In addition to the above, the Jordanian decision-making “power house” perceived and considered Hamas as an Islamic movement on the rise, whose impact and spheres of influence, power, and momentum were all increasing, as was its potential of turning into a “key player” in the Palestinian equation. Also of concern was Hamas’ organic relationship with the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood (which, even in the worst case scenarios, had always been able to maintain friendly relations with the regime). These factors combined contributed to the thinking that containing the Movement while maintaining influence over it could be a strategic card in Jordan’s advantage.

Confirming this analysis is the way the head of the Hamas political bureau presents his own reading of the reasons why King Hussein embraced the Movement:

- Firstly, the signing of the agreement came after the discovery of the weapons cache in 1991. And, the late King did not want “to leave domestic security exposed to the risk of the Movement’s interpretations; and, therefore, the agreement was concluded with Hamas in order to legitimate its presence in the Jordanian arena. This way it would remain under the watchful eye of the official authorities, and that way it would not attempt to carry out operations that could cause Jordan undue embarrassment with the Israelis and the Americans.”
- Secondly, King Hussein did not want to let go of a potential Palestinian trump card completely, especially after Arafat had taken over the political representation of the Palestinians in a historic game of tug of war with Jordan over who would represent the Palestinians, especially in the West Bank. The King found in Hamas, which differs from Fatah politically and ideologically, a potential important card in confronting Arafat, especially in the case that Arafat tried to manipulate the Palestinian card in Jordan. Furthermore, Hamas had demonstrated that it understood the complex, compounded constructed relationship between Jordan and Palestine, and had showed that it was ready to discuss and negotiate a future context for this relationship. Finally, nowhere in its history did Hamas threaten Jordanian national security the way other Palestinian organizations and movements had.
- Thirdly, the late King saw in Hamas a rising power in Islamist politics that could be wagered on later in the context of Jordan’s political maneuvering and leverage in the region.

The foundations of these political equations and calculations that led to the agreement, in the first place, began to destabilize and change when Jordan finally signed the Wadi Araba peace treaty with Israel that came into force in 1995. At that point, Israeli and American (and Western) pressure on Jordan began to mount to restrain the Movement’s political and media activities.

These observations are supported by Khalid Mish’al, who sees the golden era in the relationship between Jordan and Hamas as having taken place during that same period – between the signing of the gentlemen’s agreement in 1993 and the year 1995, when the Wadi Araba Agreement came into force. This timeline also coincides with Hamas’ refusal (stated during the Cairo Negotiations with Fatah) to participate in the Palestinian legislative elections that were going to be held the following year.²⁷⁷

²⁷⁷ Private interview with Khalid Mish’al, op. cit, October 15, 2009.

The external pressure mounting on Jordan reflected the tense situation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and the growing strength of the military wing of Hamas. Indeed, the Movement's military operations against both Israel and the Palestinian Authority had begun to increase in impact and gain in influence. And, Jordan was increasingly being put in an awkward position by the statements being made by official Hamas spokespersons in Jordan that praised and supported these operations. Also increasingly embarrassing for Jordan were the Movement's political activities and the public events it was holding inside Jordan, especially after Jordan signed the peace agreement with Israel that included security and political terms that contradicted with Hamas' agenda and military activities in the Occupied Territories.

Of course, this new reality led the regime in Amman to revisit the relationship with Hamas. This new posture resulted in new policies that in themselves carried a message to the outside, such as deporting certain members of the Movement's political bureau from Jordan who did not carry Jordanian passports (specifically Mousa Abu Marzouq and 'Imad al-'Alami). Meanwhile, the fact that other Hamas political leaders in Amman carried Jordanian passports gave the regime some space to maneuver with regard to external pressure. The Jordanian citizenship of Hamas leaders was often used as a pretext for the regime not being able to legally deport Jordanian citizens as long as they were not conducting military or other activities on Jordanian soil that were detrimental to national security.

In the meantime, tensions and transformations in the relationship between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Jordanian regime were in themselves taking place and augmenting with the Brotherhood's opposition to the peace treaty and their refusal to accept the policy of normalization (establishing friendly relations with Israel). Indeed, the Brotherhood was mobilizing public opinion to that effect in their political discourse and speeches, which contradicted with what the regime perceived as the best for Jordan's national interests.

In return, the Jordanian authorities began to take larger measures to reduce the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood and to limit their rising political strength. These measures began with drafting a new election law and culminated with "curtailment initiatives" that affected their influence in mosques, universities, and state institutions. It was a new political policy that was presented as being closer to "restructuring" the role of the Brotherhood and its political influence.

Thus, the Wadi Araba peace treaty led to a change in internal and external "balances" that governed the framework in which the relationship between the state and Hamas existed. External pressure became an element that was now being highly factored into Jordan's perception of its strategic interests in this regard, notwithstanding internal considerations that were changing, especially with the discovery of certain unauthorized Hamas activities being conducted under the cover of the Muslim Brotherhood. According to both a Jordanian authority figure as well as a leading figure in the Brotherhood, these activities were in breach of the Movement's commitment not to interfere in domestic affairs.

Hamas' presence in the Jordanian domestic arena and the popularity of Hamas' military wing's operations in the Occupied Territories and in Israel were seen as provoking serious concerns for the regime. These developments only contradicted the official policy of the regime, which was inching toward a peaceful settlement with Israel. Indeed, the regime was concerned that these activities

were strengthening and reinforcing the influence of Islamists in the internal domestic equation – and that this influence in itself was becoming extraordinary and unilateral in popular, grassroots areas where the popularity and influence of Arab Nationalists, Pan-Arabists, and leftist parties had seriously deteriorated.

New internal and external variables were all pushing towards putting an end to the presence of the Movement on the Jordanian scene, and to rid of a political burden and liability that increased with the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin (by an Israeli extremist), and with America's growing concern over the fate of final status negotiations. As a consequence, the Sharm el-Sheikh Summit was convened in 1996, in which one of its most important resolutions called for refusing shelter, financial, and political support for Islamist movements that wanted to thwart the peace process.

Despite all the aforementioned, the late King wanted to maintain a last thread, or “one of Mu'awiya's hairs,”²⁷⁸ with Hamas, and also circumvented international pressure to carry out certain measures by Jordan against the Movement by ensuring the Movement's leadership did not conduct public political and media activities, and arrested some members to prevent action that was perceived as detrimental to security inside Jordan. At the same time, Jordan could then keep Hamas as a “trump card” in confronting the late Palestinian President Yasser Arafat.

It may be that, in some way, personal factors played a role in the considerations that defined the relationship between the two sides. For, the late King wanted to maintain a role for Jordan in the West Bank. He had insisted on Jordan's participation in any talks linked to the status of Jerusalem and on maintaining his religious custodianship over it. Furthermore, he never reached a “complete fracture” point with the Muslim Brotherhood at any time whatsoever. Indeed, he had a “historical legacy with them and personal ties with certain leaders in the Brotherhood, ties that always helped to “absorb tensions” and curb potentially explosive crises.

It seems that personal factors also played a role with the directors of the General Intelligence Department. Despite the lack of solid and definitive information available that may help clarify the views of the Director of General Intelligence Mustafa al-Qaisi (who was responsible for concluding the gentleman's agreement with Hamas) towards the relationship with the Hamas Movement, testimonies from certain figures from the Movement and other observers allude to the fact that he did not carry any open, personal enmity towards them. According to Ibrahim Ghosheh and other observers, it seems that the situation was clearly different with the new Director of General Intelligence, Samih al-Batikhi, who took over the post in 1996. According to these testimonies, al-Batikhi changed the nature of the political tone used with the leadership of Hamas and showed unfriendly intent with regard to their activities in the Jordanian domestic arena.

Meanwhile, a Jordanian official (who handled the portfolio of the relationship with Hamas for an extended period of time) refused the notion of taking personal factors into consideration when

²⁷⁸ This is a popular Arab proverb attributed to Mu'awiyah Ibn Abī Sufyān; (602 – 680), who was the first Caliph in the Ummayyad Dynasty. He is known for his famous saying, "I do not apply my sword where my lash suffices, nor my lash where my tongue is enough. And even if there be one hair binding me to my fellow men, I do not let it break. When they pull, I loosen, and if they loosen, I pull." Reference: Dar al-Taqwa; available at <http://bewley.virtualave.net/muawiyah.html> [Translator's Note].

constructing a reading of Jordan's relationship with the Hamas Movement. He saw that the relationship was subject to the calculations and readings of Jordan's state institutions and had nothing to do with who was at the helm of the intelligence services or their 'personal' positions.²⁷⁹ But, according to Mish'al, al-Batikhi played a key role in rupturing the relationship between the Movement and Jordan, because he held a negative stance towards Mish'al; and, that al-Batikhi tried to seek out and manipulate conflicts between Mish'al and Abu Marzouq, and between Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood by using the sensitive issue of Hamas' influence within the Brotherhood.

At the same time that Mish'al refers to al-Batikhi's personal attitude as a negative factor, the image painted of Mish'al himself is one that shows the latter as representing the hard-line in Hamas, that he was stubborn, and that he participated in planning armed operations that the al-Qassam military wing carried out – all of which Mish'al denies. Mish'al insists that the military wing in the Movement is fully independent; that the political leadership defines general policy for the Movement and leaves details and operations for the military field office on the "inside" (in Palestine).

Mish'al points to the fact that he only officially met with al-Batikhi one time, by way of mediation efforts of Member of Parliament Abdullah al-Akayleh, who insisted that al-Batikhi meet with Mish'al. Mish'al says that he "felt al-Batikhi was not friendly with him or with any of Hamas's leadership in Amman".²⁸⁰

In summarizing that political period, then, one could say – if one allowed oneself a degree of boldness in drawing conclusions – that the late King Hussein took on a policy of "holding the stick from the middle" in order to create a balance between competing internal and external considerations and conflicting interests when it came to the Hamas Movement. He allowed for the presence of the Movement's leadership on the one hand, but deported some of them (those who did not carry Jordanian passports) and forbade the leadership that remained from conducting media and political activities; and, finally, the security services went on to arrest other members of the Movement.

In the next period, the period of "rift" or "estrangement", which coincided with the earliest days of the new reign of King Abdullah II, the formula that governed this new official outlook on the relationship with Hamas changed in a significant way and on fundamental levels.

On the one side and considering the nature of the new regime, an entire caseload of key, important domestic portfolios was transferred to the General Intelligence apparatus. Indeed, in previous years, the General Intelligence Department had expanded its activities and extended its influence throughout public life, as a consequence, the Hamas 'portfolio' was transferred from being a political case file handled by the late King himself, to a security portfolio handled by the General Intelligence Department.

At that time, the majority of indicators and communications alluded to the fact that the Director of the General Intelligence Department, Samih al-Batikhi, was not in support of the relationship with

²⁷⁹ Private interview with the Jordanian official at his office in Amman on October 20, 2009. The person wished to remain anonymous.

²⁸⁰ Interview with Khalid Mish'al, op. cit.

Hamas. He had already arrested numbers of Hamas individuals and members of the Movement's leadership. And, with the passing of the late King Hussein and with the absence of his historical and personal legacy with the Brotherhood and Hamas, the door was opened for al-Batikhi to change the direction of the relationship; and, he was basically released from the policy of "restraint" or "holding the stick from the middle" when it came to Hamas.

On another angle, when King Abdullah II took over the reigns of governance, he adopted a position that clearly differed from the legacy of the strained relationship between the late King Hussein and the late Palestinian President Yasser Arafat. The new King formed a new strategic outlook based on the principle that the establishment of a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders constituted a strategic interest for Jordan. Accordingly, he worked to put an end to the tensions in the relationship with the Palestinian Authority by emphasizing a new policy that made it clear that Jordan no longer wanted to play a political or security role in Palestine.

And, perhaps, the "ban on the activities of Hamas" (and expelling its leadership from Jordan), was in itself a clear, political message about the King's intentions with regard to the West Bank and the Palestinian Authority, as well as an answer to the enormous external pressures on the state that resulted from the Hamas Movement's communication and political activities in Jordan.

Thus, the Jordanian regime no longer considered Hamas as a handy political trump card in the regional game. The relationship between Jordan and the Palestinian Authority was reinforced at the expense of Hamas, which, as a result, lost the regional incubator it had once enjoyed in the past.

Internally, from the perspective of the General Intelligence Department, increased concerns about the presence of Hamas on Jordanian soil emerged based on the growing problematic institutional overlap between the Movement and the Brotherhood. Calls (even from inside the Brotherhood) to recruit members of the Brotherhood into Hamas were taking place, as well as other activities such as amassing weapons and military training.

These considerations coincided and paralleled with deterioration in the relationship between the state and the Muslim Brotherhood after the Brotherhood boycotted parliamentary elections in 1997. At this point, the new reign also transferred the Brotherhood portfolio from a political case file to one of security. Tensions in the ensuing crisis between the state and the Brotherhood escalated with an increase in the level of official discourse concerned with the growing influence of Hamas on the Jordanian Brotherhood, and the expanding influence of both organizations on the Jordanian street.

At that point, the "relationship" between the two sides (the state and Hamas) simultaneously moved from "rift" to "crisis." By the beginning of 2006, these developments were reflected in concerted efforts and joint considerations on the international, regional, and internal level. This period also represented a pivotal turning point in American policy vis-à-vis the Middle East (especially in the post-September 11th era); and, at the fore of this changing context were two major issues:

The first was a transformation in the American definition of what it considered the sources of threat in the region, and refocused its top priority on Iran's regional influence on al-Qaeda. This new definition, in turn, created a fertile breeding ground for the regional policy of realignment and

imposed a state of acute polarization between the so-called ‘Moderate’ and ‘Rejectionist’ camps in the region.

The second was that pressure from the United States on its Arab allies to introduce democratic reforms had led to the rise of Islamist movements and had led to these movements making great gains in the Egyptian parliamentary elections in 2005, in Palestinian legislative elections in 2006, and in several legislative and municipal elections in numerous Gulf States. All of the latter paralleled with the emergence of the increased Iranian influence and the simultaneous regression of the “American project” in Iraq.²⁸¹

These changing variables prompted a return to the approach of the “Realist School” in American foreign policy, which was founded in prioritizing American strategic interests over the dissemination of democratic values (democracy and human rights) elsewhere. The discourse of this school of thought entailed a return to the logic of “historic pacts” (that dominated the Cold War period) and renewing alliances with Arab regimes in confronting the rise of “political Islam movements” in the region.²⁸²

This new line in American policy (that reemerged in 2006), then, carried with it two principle implications that, together, contributed to the growing gap between Jordan and Hamas. The first of these was represented in the focus on building regional alliances to counter Iran and its allies and, the second lay in renewing the alliance with Arab regimes in an attempt to confront the rise of the Islamist movements.

American policy reflected in a direct way on the regional situation. Iran and Syria and, with them Hamas, Hezbollah, and other Islamist movements, formed the regional axis of the “Rejection” or “Resistance;” whereas, America and the “Moderate Arab” states formed the other (later called the “Arab Solidarity Alliance;”) whose most prominent members included Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan, and the Palestinian Authority.

In the meantime, a reassessment of the sources of regional security threats was taking place. (In Jordan, this reassessment would take place circuitously and on a ‘practical’ level rather than in any ‘official’ direct manner). The idea of Iran’s influence threatening the region was gaining currency, as was the idea of containing this threat, culturally, politically, and on the level of security.

The disparity in the positions between Jordan and Hamas was further reinforced during the Lebanon War in the summer of 2006 that took place between Hezbollah (with Iran and Syria backing it) and Israel. This was then exacerbated by Hamas’ take over in Gaza, in early 2007, when it took over the institutions of the Palestinian Authority and imposed the full control of the Movement over security in the Gaza Strip.

²⁸¹ See Simon Hirsch, “Re-Orientation”, “New Yorker” Magazine reprinted in “Al-Akhbar,” the Beirut-based Arabic language daily newspaper, February, 26, 2007, where he discusses the shift in American policy from focusing on al-Qaeda to focusing on the regional influence of Iran and attempts to create a Sunnite-Arab axis to confront Iran.

²⁸² See Joseph Samaha, “Baker-Hamilton: *’Awdat al-Waqi’iya*” (Lit. “Baker-Hamilton: The Return of Realism”), in “Al-Akhbar” Beirut-based Arabic language daily newspaper, December 8, 2006.

The Jordanians had been wagering that, from the time of Hamas' victory in legislative elections and later, after its take-over in Gaza, it would be weakened before a strengthened Palestinian Authority under the leadership of President Abbas (who was considered an ally). Meanwhile, and according to certain Jordanian officials, Hamas was now considered as having loyalties and interests that converged with Iran. Indeed, one past authority figure took this view to the extent that he described the Hamas political bureau as "the group of followers of *al-Hawza* (a term used to describe the supreme seat of Shiite higher learning) residing in Damascus."

Behind this wager on the weakening of Hamas was the immense gap in the positions of both Jordan and Hamas with regard to a peaceful settlement. The Jordanian state perceived the establishment of a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders as serving a vital Jordanian interest. This view meant that the regime was in a position at the opposite end of the spectrum from the Hamas Movement, which refused the prevailing trajectory the peace process was taking and which specifically rejected any declared agreement to international resolutions in this regard.

The differences between the two sides reflected firstly, on the nature of their subsequent regional and international alliances and, secondly, on the relationship between them and the perceptions each had of one another. For, Jordan saw Hamas as a threat to its national security and as a part of the Iranian axis; and, Hamas saw Jordan as a strategic ally to its Palestinian foe (President Abbas) and saw Jordan as part of what it considered "the American camp in the region".

Meanwhile, the Jordanian political scene in its own right was subject to the dynamics of the regional crises and its ramifications, on the one hand, and subject to domestic considerations, on the other. As a result, a consensus kept growing within official Jordanian political circles on the fact that regional considerations were converging with Jordan's internal considerations. This perspective began to link the Hamas Movement's victory in Palestinian legislative elections with the whetting of the Muslim Brotherhood's appetite for changing the rules of the domestic political game in Jordan. The latter was seen in the context of firstly, concerns that an attempt would be made to replicate this experience and possibly even taking over power and, secondly, in the close relationship between Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood, who together made for a staunch force that would become difficult to reckon with in the framework of Jordan's domestic affairs.

Over and above these considerations, the Hamas-Brotherhood line was deemed to be a compound challenge that fed official fears of the rising power of Islamist movements and what these movements represented in terms of being major players on the domestic scene. These fears also took into account that the Hamas-Brotherhood representation extended across the shores of both the East and West Banks for Palestinians and for Jordanians of Palestinian origin. And, this was exactly the kind of situation the regime in Amman did not want to end up having to deal with.

This continuous escalation in the crisis between the two sides took a sharp turn in the opposite direction when the channels of dialogue were opened between the past Director of the General Intelligence Department, Lieutenant General Mohammad al-Dahabi, and the leaderships of both Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood.

The re-opening of this political line had juxtaposed the failure to come to a peaceful settlement at the Arab-Israeli summit in Annapolis, upon which Jordanian political leadership (and with it the

Moderate Arab states) had attached hopes of reviving the peace process or, in other words, of reaching convincing outcomes. This failure, in turn, hardened and reinforced the “Rejectionist” camp, which was already seriously calling into question the prevailing track of peace negotiations.

The reasons behind the initiative of re-opening up to Hamas and the Brotherhood, according to proponents of this measure, were based on the following rationale:²⁸³

First: The prevailing track of the peace settlement was not going to lead to a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders that was fully sovereign, which put Jordan before the following two realities:

1. Establishing a Palestinian state lacking in sovereignty and lacking in the essential elements required for a real political sustainability, with no hope for the return for the majority of Palestinian refugees. This would put the principle burden on Jordan on two major fronts: first, on the level of the relationship with the West Bank, and second, on the domestic formula in terms of the political and legal status of Jordanians of Palestinian origin and also of Palestinians residing in Jordan, who hold neither Jordanian passports nor national identity numbers.
2. Not establishing a Palestinian state – a reality that would, in the future, reinforce the “Jordanian option” (for resolving the Palestinian issue) and that would put pressures on Jordan’s decision-maker to come up with historic solutions, which would surely be at Jordan’s expense.

According to this reading, then, Jordan’s commitment to its alliance with the United States of America and the current strategic track would limit, to a great extent, Jordan’s ability to resist political pressure as well as its latitude in political maneuverability.

Therefore, certain Jordanian powers-at-be viewed opening up to Hamas and to the Muslim Brotherhood, and amending relations with Syria and Iran, in the context of widening Jordan’s margin of “diplomatic maneuvering” in facing external pressure on Jordan in the future. Jordan was trying to regain some of its trump cards for its hand in regional politics for the sake of reinforcing Jordan’s political standing in the region.

Second: In this perspective’s reading, the emergence of a right-wing government in Israel, at this particular historic juncture, in tandem with Israeli society’s move to the right and the regression of the peace camp in Tel Aviv, reflected at the same time a transformation in Israel’s strategic convictions towards Jordan and a redefinition in Israeli strategic thinking with regard to what constituted sources of threats to it in the region.

For Israel, Jordan had been considered a regional security valve and a buffer state against surrounding Arab countries, which had, in the past few decades, formed a strategic security threat to Israel. But, today, in Israel’s strategic thinking, Jordan was no longer seen in the same light after the sources of threat (to Israel’s security) became externalized in Iran and in Islamist movements, and internalized in terms of the “Palestinian demographic bomb.”²⁸⁴

²⁸³ Interview with the former Chief of the General Intelligence Department, Mohammad al-Dahabi, at his home in Amman on November 1, 2009.

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

What does that mean exactly? It means that Jordan's role as a "buffer" for Israel no longer had the same value, so much so that the Israeli right now seeks for Jordan to be part of the historic solution to the Palestinian issue.²⁸⁵

Third: All of the above raise a fundamental question about what the position of the Palestinian powers-that-be would be when it came to the issue of the "alternative homeland" or the "Jordanian option." And, the question posed itself on whether or not these Palestinians powers-that-be would be willing to let such a solution pass in order to achieve certain Palestinian political gains in Jordan, in conjunction with achieving part of these gains in the Occupied Territories. The latter would make Jordan part of the "Palestinian promise" not only for Palestinians inside the Occupied Territories but in diaspora as well.

Dahabi, and the current he represented, expressed their concern about the inability of the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah – which, along with Jordan, had limited political options – to confront or deal with American and Israeli pressures, in the event that the latter wanted to allow such a scenario to pass. This current also had its doubts about how solid and strong the Fatah Movement and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas really were.²⁸⁶

Thus, opening up to Hamas could be viewed in the context of an attempt to test the position of this rising power in Palestinian society against Jordanian concerns, and as a chance to test the extent to which such a potential partnership could confront such a scenario. Indeed, the few meetings that did take place between the leadership of Hamas and the Jordanian General Intelligence focused on the position Hamas held with regard to the "alternative homeland" scheme, about the issue of resettlement of Palestinians in Jordan (naturalization), and of the "Jordanian option." Finally, the meetings discussed the possibilities of renewing the 'unwritten agreement' with Hamas, which entailed that the Movement refrained from jeopardizing Jordanian national security and from interfering in domestic affairs.

According to this official Jordanian current, this initiative would guarantee for Jordan friendlier relations, a clear agreement on Jordan's strategic interests, and a common ground with another Palestinian party, in the case that Fatah would take any sudden or unexpected moves, or in the case of its weakening or all-out collapse.

Fourth: What was the justification for Jordan to insist on keeping channels closed with Hamas? And, for the relationship between them to remain tense when there were several Arab states that had opened up to them, particularly Egypt and Saudi Arabia – who were also part of the Moderate Arab camp, – notwithstanding the fact that back channels of communications had been opened between Hamas and the Europeans?

Finally, in view of a realistic reading of the situation, which offered proof that Israel was also failing to eradicate the existence of the Movement both politically and militarily, was it any longer

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

logical for Jordan to wager on the weakening of the Hamas Movement or even its eventual failure and collapse?!

According to this Jordanian source, Hamas had become a pivotal player that can no longer be walked over. Hence, rather than continuing to ignore it and trying to overlook its importance, Jordan's strategic interests now called for opening up channels of dialogue with it. Indeed, it could even present an opportunity to restore Jordan's role as mediator between the various Palestinian political forces and rebuild Jordan's political influence in the Occupied Territories, which could help Jordan achieve certain strategic interests and help it protect its national security.

Fifth: This 'realistic' reading inevitably reflects on the domestic equation. For, if the regime in Amman wanted to construct an "alternative vision" (or a plan B) in case the peace process did fail or if the peace process took on a trajectory that could harm Jordan's national security and strategic interests (i.e. the scenario of a "Jordanian" solution to the Palestinian issue), it would mean that the internal front should be consolidated and the nation's immunity be strengthened and reinforced. This possibility also required a "redefinition of the relationship" with the Muslim Brotherhood and reaching an understanding, founded upon a new set of rules that would better govern the internal political role of the Brotherhood and its relationship with the state's formal institutions.

On this basis, those responsible for initiating the "dialogue process with Hamas," so to speak, saw that this step could help contain the Brotherhood and restore its historical role in protecting the regime and in protecting internal political stability. This could be achieved through investing in Hamas' influence on the Brotherhood and investing in the potential of the strong links that already existed between the two movements in order to create a partner that extended across both the East and West Banks, which could represent both Palestinians and Jordanians of Palestinian origin. This kind of "partner" could help create a common ground that both sides could stand on – a common ground that was founded on shared interests, positions, and visions for both the Jordanians and the Palestinians.

However, what is clear is that the proponents of the political vision that led to taking the steps needed to open up to Hamas, and to re-opening channels of dialogue with them, conflicted to a great extent with the vision that governed the previous era of crisis between the two sides. The fears and apprehensions vis-à-vis Hamas, and the considerations of regional alliances, coupled with the concern over "Political Islam," prevailed over the above considerations.

Despite this abrupt change, official Jordanian political discourse and the official media made sure to emphasize that this sudden opening up to the Movement did not reflect a transformation in Jordan's strategic stakes, nor a change in the historic formulation that governed Jordan's relationship with the West, Israel, and friendly Arab states as much as it was a "tactical maneuver" within the historic, traditional, and declared "strategic matrix" of Jordanian diplomacy. The opening up to Hamas and the messages of goodwill and intent delivered to both Iran and Syria should be considered as a "diversification of the basket of diplomatic options before Jordan" and nothing more. None of these initiatives were meant to be considered as either alternatives or an alteration to Jordan's relationship and strategic partnership with the Fatah Movement and the Palestinian Authority, and the United States and the West.

From the point of view of Mohammad Nasr (who participated in this dialogue initiative), al-Dahabi's aim in the dialogue with Hamas was to turn a 'new leaf' with the Movement, while waiting upon regional and international changes to unfold and, particularly, awaiting the outcome of the American presidential elections that took place soon after – as the Democrat's victory in these elections brought about great changes in the American approach to the region.

According to Nasr's analysis, al-Dahabi's initiative was viewed by the Hamas leadership within the context of a preemptive Jordanian reading of impending international and regional challenges and variables, but without fully determining Jordan's strategic options and stakes.²⁸⁷

However, this moment was not to last long, with its potential ramifications evaporating with the end of the service of the General Intelligence Director Mohammad al-Dahabi. Without going into great details on the reasons for his dismissal, especially those linked with the power struggles and the balance of power inside the state's political system, there are numerous indicators that point to a connection between his dismissal and the initiative launched with the Hamas Movement. Indeed, all channels of communication with Hamas and with the Muslim Brotherhood were immediately closed upon al-Dahabi's dismissal. And, the "window of opportunity" flashed by – was closing as quickly and abruptly as it had been opened (according to an expression used by Jordanian political analyst, Fahad al-Khitani). Indeed, the flood of political and media analyses, readings and interpretations of the initiative perhaps outweighed the few weeks in which it existed.

Here, one cannot exclude external considerations from the decision made to shut down the dialogue initiative, especially as the Palestinian Authority was made anxious by it, and there were indications that Washington was also uncomfortable with it, and Israel unhappy.

Mish'al sees that to unlock the secret to that "open and shut" moment, one had to see the four principle sides to the equation that prevailed at that time: The first being that the General Intelligence Director, during that period, Mohammad al-Dahabi understood the importance of opening up to the Movement but, at the same time, wanted to keep the door slightly ajar to any other possibilities and variables. The second was that there were certain powers-that-be within the Jordanian political system that did not support the initiative and actually worked against it. Thirdly, external powers (America, Israel, other Arab states, and the Palestinian Authority) were not at all comfortable with this initiative. And finally, the fourth was Hamas itself, which was prepared to make the steps required to reach a larger agreement with Jordan that could have been guaranteed by the Movement's past track record of not undermining Jordan's domestic security.²⁸⁸

The period that followed the closure of the initiative was unclear and, to this day, remains marked by ambiguity. The ruling elite's perception of the dimensions and implications of this relationship were unclear, in themselves. Whatever the case was, what was clear was that once again, the political proponents in opposition to opening up to Hamas re-emerged. And, that historical, political moment was condemned as being an adventure that undermined Jordan's national interests and whose outcomes were not calculated properly. A demand was made to return to the approach that considered Iran as the major source of threat to the region, that placed Hamas within the same

²⁸⁷ Exclusive interview with Mohammad Nasr Abu 'Omar, member of the Hamas Political Bureau, at his office in Damascus on October 15, 2011.

²⁸⁸ From an interview with Khalid Mish'al, op. cit.

regional alliance as Iran, and that refused the possibility that the Movement become a strategic partner by any definition of Jordan's vital interests, domestic or external.

Jordanian Politicians and Hamas: Conflicting Visions

From the previous analysis of the role of internal and external factors and the other variables and considerations mentioned that dictated the nature of the policies and the positions taken by the regime in Amman with regard to Hamas, one can summarize the views of the Jordanian political elite today when it comes to Hamas by characterizing them into three principle orientations. These orientations are also shared in the political debate and the debate in the media, and each approach reflects a certain perspective in terms of how strategic interests are viewed in this regard.

The First Approach is a "cautious" one. While channels of communication with Hamas would remain open, the alliance with the Palestinian National Authority would continue as well.²⁸⁹ Proponents of this approach, today, are represented by an influential political elite that are close to the regime and are inside the state's institutional framework. This approach is based on a vision of Jordan's strategic interest that is based on the following pillars:

- One: The traditional and logical ally of Jordanian nationalism is Palestinian nationalism. Thus, Jordan's interests are better served with in the presence of a national Palestinian authority, which would accept the two-state solution and would establish a Palestinian state west of the River Jordan and which would guarantee that it, as an authority, would not accept a solution at Jordan's expense.
- Two: Hamas' opposition to a peaceful settlement and its alliance with Iran and the "Rejectionist Camp" means that Hamas is positioned at the opposite side of the spectrum of Jordan's national interests. Indeed, the Movement's position was seen as complementing the position of the Israeli right in its evasion from the implementation of international resolutions and in its insistence that Palestinian partner (to negotiate with) did not exist – all of which helped Israel circumvent international pressure to implement a withdrawal (from the Occupied Territories), to stop building settlements, and to accept painful concessions on final status issues.
- Three: Jordan is an independent, sovereign state that deals directly and reciprocally with a counterpart Palestinian authority and not with political factions. Accordingly, opening up channels of dialogue with Hamas was seen, in this context, as futile; notwithstanding that such initiatives arouses the suspicions of the Palestinian Authority, destabilizing relations between the Palestinian Authority and Jordan, and invoking doubts about Jordan's desire not to interfere in the affairs of the West Bank.

Even in the case that the dialogue with Hamas could be employed by Jordan in Palestinian national reconciliation efforts, that kind of initiative would be seen as sending "unfriendly" signals to Egypt; it would only irritate Egyptian sensitivities about interfering in that field (of

²⁸⁹ This tendency was deduced from a discussion that took place with certain politicians and from interpretation of various newspaper articles, for example, Hamadeh Fara'neh, "Makanak Sir" (Lit. "Move in your Idle Position"), "Al-Ghad" Jordanian daily newspaper, Amman, October 9, 2008; as well as Jamil al-Nimri, "Al-Wataniya al-Filastiniya: al-Nathir wa al-Sadiq wa al-Halif li al-Wataniya al-Urduniya" (Lit. "Palestinian Nationalism: Jordanian Nationalism's Peer, Friend, and National Ally"), "Al-Ghad" Jordanian daily newspaper, Amman, August 9, 2009; and Saleh al-Qallab, "Ra'yuhum am Ra'i Hamas" (Lit. "Their Opinion or the Opinion of Hamas"), "Al-Rai" Jordanian daily newspaper, Amman, August, 27, 2009.

mediation between the Palestinian factions), where Egypt has had the greatest influence as a regional power, and would place Jordan in “competition” with the Egyptians.

- Four: There is a large question mark on the extent to which it was possible to stand on a “common ground” with Hamas in confronting any attempts at naturalization and political resettlement (of Palestinian refugees), or on abandoning the right to return and confronting any resolution of the Palestinian issue at Jordan’s expense. Contrary to public declarations by the Hamas leadership, there was evidence and numerous indicators that the Movement was interfering in Jordanian domestic affairs by way of the “the Brotherhood’s interface” and that the Movement had a long arm, which extended into that organization; and that Hamas and its supporters aimed to turn the Brotherhood into the “representative” of Jordanians of Palestinian origin. That was all notwithstanding the political discourse and discussion in the media of a group close to Hamas (within the Muslim Brotherhood) that still spoke of the Jordanian-Palestinian relationship in the context of Muslim unity and brotherhood – and these were the kinds of statements, which, in the future, could be projected in “code name” to a formal unity between Jordan and the Palestinians, a concept that lies at the core of the “Jordanian option”.
- Despite all of the above, some advocates of this approach did not mind the presence of a “back channel” of communication or dialogue with Hamas in order to resolve pending issues, and to reach an agreement that protected and preserved certain Jordanian national interests. But this was acceptable within the undeclared, limited scope of security interests only, so that it would not instigate any complications or confusion in terms of Jordan’s strategic, political position with and towards the Palestinian National Authority.

The Second Approach called for a “strategic shift” in both Jordan’s international and regional alliance strategy, and called for shifting the historic international-regional matrix more towards the “Rejectionist” camp which is against America and Israel. The advocates of this approach represent a combination of Islamist forces, leftists and Arab Nationalists; and, this inclination is founded in the following premises:

- One: That the American “project” in the region was in regression and for Jordan to pin hope on this project would only undermine Jordan’s regional and domestic standing particularly when the United States and Israeli are close allies. Therefore, giving in to the peace settlement process, in its prevailing form, would be nothing but a waste of time and at the expense of a more trustworthy ally – the Syrian-Iranian axis –, which was seen as being more intrinsically concerned with and protective of nationalist and Islamic interests.
- Two: Even if one were to assume that the peace settlement was to succeed, it would not lead to the establishment of a Palestinian state that would be fully sovereign on all the territories occupied in 1967, but rather produce a “frail Palestinian entity,” which would not possess even the most rudimentary elements required for such a state to survive. Indeed, sooner or later, the latter scenario would inevitably pave the way to reverting back to the “Jordanian option”, and to Jordan carrying the burden of the outcomes of such a historic settlement of the Palestinian cause.
- Three: The Fatah Movement, which in itself forms the backbone of the Palestinian Authority, is no longer a national resistance movement that confronted the occupation. Rather, it has been transformed into a bunch of rival groups vying for economic and personal gains, and which can

no longer be trusted to seriously prepare for the difficulties that will inevitably be posed by final status negotiations.

- Four: On the other hand, Jordan's past experience with the various Palestinian factions indicates that they are untrustworthy and forging a strategic alliance with them is hardly possible. Meanwhile, Jordan's track record with both the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas is one that is void of competition. Indeed, during the difficult periods that the country passed through, these movements actually stood on the side of the regime and supported its political stability.
- Five: In addition to all the aforementioned, Hamas did win in the Palestinian legislative elections, by democratic means. And, it had a majority in the Palestinian Legislative Assembly and had become part of the political system. So, why should the Movement be overlooked and ignored while contact with the Fatah Movement continued, despite the fact that it (Fatah) lost the elections and its government no longer had legislative legitimacy?

The Third Approach advocated "diversifying the basket of political options" before Jordan and advocated safeguarding a number of alternatives for the country.²⁹⁰ This political current was actually a by-product of the past few years and found practical manifestation (amongst official Jordanian political circles) before it was abandoned following the freezing of all channels of communication with Hamas. The third approach was founded in the following premises:

- One: That Jordan should strike a balance between the conditions set forth by the historical-strategic alliance it had with the Moderate Arab states and the West, on the one hand, and maintain certain regional "trump" cards, options, and other exit strategies for the country. This can better help Jordan in case the tides in the regional situation turned against Jordan's national interests and domestic security.
- Two: Opportunities were receding for establishing a fully sovereign Palestinian state in light of the emergence of the Israeli right and the shift in Israeli society towards the right. In addition to the latter, hopes were waning about the effectiveness and seriousness of American pressure on Israel. All of which meant the Jordanian "power house" would have to start thinking about a "Plan B" to be able to deal with worse case scenarios without deviating from the Jordanian strategic matrix.
- Three: Even if Jordanian vital interests today lay with the Palestinian National Authority, and in focusing on diplomatic efforts to ensure the peace process succeeds, and that a Palestinian state is established, this does not necessarily mean that channels of communication and dialogue with the Hamas Movement should stop altogether, especially when one considers that Hamas is a Palestinian faction with strength and influence, and a player that could not be overlooked. That was seen as a "key" to protecting Jordanian security interests in the West Bank, as well as an agreement with Hamas in that regard. This approach, hence, would serve both Jordan and the Palestinian Authority at the same time.

²⁹⁰ See, for example, Fahad al-Khitan, "*Al-Urdun wa Hamas Safha Jadeeda Tatwi 'Alaqaat al-madi'*" (Lit. "'Jordan and Hamas: A New Page Turned on Past Conflicts'") "*Al-Arab Al-Yawm*" Jordanian daily newspaper, Amman, August, 17, 2008; and also 'Oraib al-Rantawi, "*Al-Safha al-Jadeeda bayna al-Urdun wa Hamas.. Kayf, wa Limatha, wa Matha Ba'd?*" (Lit. "The New Page Between Jordan and Hamas: How, Why and What's Next?!") "*Ad-Dustour*" Jordanian daily newspaper, Amman, August, 10, 2008; and, Samih al-Ma'atya, "*Al-Urdun wa Hamas wa 'Alaqaat al-Barnamaj al-Siyasi'*" (Lit. "Jordan and Hamas and the Relationship with the Political Program") "*Al-Ghad*" Jordanian daily newspaper, Amman, November 11, 2008.

- Four: It was Jordan's right, just like any other Arab or Western state, to take any measures and open any channels that help protect its national security interests and meet its strategic interests. This was especially the case as other moderate Arab states had opened communication channels with Hamas and as certain Western states also had back channels open with the Movement. Therefore, why was it that Jordan alone was "banned" from engaging in dialogue with Hamas?
- Five: Opening up to Hamas and engaging in dialogue with the Movement had domestic implications that sprung from Jordan's unique internal social composition, which called for reaching an agreement with Hamas on issues such as its relationship with the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood in addition to any activities it carried out in the Jordanian domestic arena.

What is evident is that there is considerable diversity in the various positions held by the Jordanian political elite and in their assessments of the situation with Hamas. Of course and as made apparent in the previous paragraphs, it is also obvious that each approach's assessment was subject to a different reading (in terms of the others' perceptions) of the main criteria that should be used to define the context that framed the relationship. The most important criteria that were being factored into defining this context were most notably: The relationship with the United States of America, the West, regional polarities, the efficacy of the peace process, and finally, the domestic equation in Jordan.

At the moment, the approach that is closest to the position of the regime " is the first approach, with major indications that this, indeed, is the case that communications with Hamas have been halted and that negative signals towards it continue. Meanwhile, the second approach reflects the position of the political opposition (in general), which, in the current context (domestically and externally), has no real chance to convince the monarch otherwise. Finally, the third approach reflects the opinion of a certain group of political elite, which is not very far from that of the regime but lacks the right proponents that can carry this approach further and defend it from within the state's institutional framework. The latter is especially the case in the wake of all the diplomatic efforts being rallied behind and pushing for a successful peaceful settlement, and in the fact that much reliance is still being made on the role of the Americans and in transformations in the international community's position, as well as in attempts to isolate the right-wing Israeli government, which has reduced the parameters of the peace process to an economic and administrative solution and not a political solution of any historical significance.

Hamas' Strategic Vision of Jordan: An Arena to Influence or to Reach Consensus over Mutual Interests?

Unlike the debate existing on the Jordanian side, there is little "debate" within Hamas that could help one test for the presence of differing or conflicting trends within the Movement itself with regard to the relationship with Jordan. And, although some have spoken of differences in visions and perceptions between Hamas in Gaza and the Movement's political bureau (outside) – and even within the political bureau itself –, there is nothing found to corroborate this matter for the purposes of this study.

However, to this effect, in his book, “Kill Khalid”, Paul McGeough offers the story of the struggle between Mish’al and Dr. Mousa Abu Marzouq, as well as with Sheikh Ahmad Yassin previously. McGeough describes Abu Marzouq as more pragmatic and closer in vision to the decision-makers in Amman, and particularly the late King Hussein Bin Talal. McGeough refers to private discussions with Abu Marzouq and several individuals in Hamas about the conflicts between Mish’al and Abu Marzouq, but without reaching the point of being able to present a clear view of Hamas’ strategic vision with regard to Jordan.²⁹¹

The question posed with regard to Hamas’ strategic perspective towards Jordan lies in the extent to which this perspective matches, differs, or perhaps even contradicts what Hamas declares publicly in terms of its position towards Jordan and between how it actually behaves on the ground and in reality.

Perhaps the last statements that Mish’al made in Amman, in particular, present the clearest view of Hamas’ discourse when it comes to Jordan (and its relationship with Jordan). The most important points made by Mish’al were the following:²⁹²

- Reaffirming Hamas’ refusal of any Israeli plans for resolving the Palestinian issue at Jordan’s expense: “Palestine is Palestine and Jordan is Jordan.”
- Differentiating between “brotherly sentiments” and the “extraordinary Palestinian-Jordanian equation,” and not allowing this relationship to be exploited by the Israelis, which means rejecting the “alternative homeland” option and naturalization/resettlement (of refugees): “We will never accept resettlement at Jordan’s expense, or that of any other Arab state for that matter. I beg to make that very clear and I ask that you, the people of Jordan, are reassured by the fact that we are with you. And, that we will be the hand that protects Jordan.”
- Hamas’ refusal to interfere in the domestic affairs of Jordan in any direct way or through the Muslim Brotherhood: “Hamas will not ever allow itself to be an internal problem in Jordan. It

²⁹¹ Paul McGeough, “Kill Khalid”, op. cit., pp. 283-309.

²⁹² See the Associated French Press (AFP) news report on this speech taken from the “Ad-Dustour” Arabic language daily newspaper (Amman) in which the head of Hamas political bureau, Khalid Mish’al, confirms that the movement stands by its commitment to the Palestinian right to return and rejects resettlement. These statements to the press were made by Khalid Mish’al during his visit to Jordan for the purposes of participating in his father’s funeral and wake: The semi-governmental “Ad-Dustour” Jordanian daily newspaper quoted the following statements made by Mish’al, at sundown on the Saturday of his father’s wake, in the al-Kamaliya area in northern Amman, that, “Hamas respects the fundamentals... And, (therefore) the Movement rejects the (options of the) “alternative homeland” and resettlement (of refugees) “naturalization”, or any other arrangements made – prior to the liberation of its lands – that allows for an easy solution for the Zionists at Jordan’s expense. Because politically, Palestine is Palestine and politically, Jordan is Jordan.” He added, “I want the Jordanian leadership and the Jordanian people to rest assured that Hamas will not take any position that is contrary to Jordan’s interests, as Hamas also understands the (prevailing) international and regional circumstances”. He continued, “We, in Hamas, understand matters well. And, we differentiate between unity in finding a solution and the Jordanian-Palestinian relationship. We understand the importance of the necessity of politically dealing with the Jordanian-Palestinian relationship with the utmost care in order to protect this relationship from interference and infiltration by any one.” And, Mish’al pointed to the fact that “Hamas will not stand for any American-Israeli project that impairs the rights of Jordan, or any project that tries to damage it (Jordan). And, the movement will not allow for anything to be passed at the expense of Jordan.” He then went on to say that “Hamas has no interest in the creation of any divisions within the Jordanian arena or of any interference in Jordan’s domestic affairs, whether on the level of the Islamist movement or any other level, thereof...” He added that the “movement wants a nationally united Jordan.” And he clarified that, “Hamas is careful in its decisions and has a vision and a political course that does not spring from differences and conflicts, or personal interests; it is committed to the land, to Jerusalem, to the right of return and to the resistance in liberating Palestine, in addition to the diplomatic and political approach, as well as other means.”

will not be part of the Jordanian domestic equation, not through the Islamist movement nor on any other level that may be.”

While Mish'al's speech was welcomed by Jordanian politicians and the Jordanian media, because it presented clear points with regard to the relationship between the two sides, doubts nonetheless remained inside the Brotherhood and outside it (on the part of a certain political elite and members of the media) about the credibility of this speech when it came to the reality on the ground. There were contradictions that, according to official sources, indicated otherwise, such as the discovery of certain cells linked to Hamas that were caught caching weapons in Jordan and conducting military training not only in the Occupied Territories but also on Jordanian soil.

Official Jordanian sources have indicated that their past experience with Hamas made it difficult to trust the said speech by Mish'al. For, there were numerous cases of persons arrested with links to Hamas, and weapons without permits and documents containing sensitive 'internal' information being confiscated, which provoked fears and concerns about the causes and reasons for these being in the Movement's possession. These official accusations emerged after the arrest of leading figures in Hamas, and after their offices were raided and searched, in 1999; and once before, in 1991, when a group was arrested under the suspicion of having links to Hamas and to caching weapons on Jordanian soil.²⁹³

Furthermore, in the year 2006, a cell was accused of conducting training in Syria and of purchasing weapons from Iraq in order to conduct operations inside Jordanian territory.²⁹⁴ And more recently, a member of the Muslim Brotherhood was arrested in the city of al-Zarqa and accused of working with Hamas' military wing before he was released.

The more important question regarding the influence of the Hamas Movement is particularly connected to the Muslim Brotherhood – whose membership is made up predominantly by Jordanians of Palestinian origin, who belong to the very womb of the Muslim Brotherhood, itself, and the Muslim Brotherhood Organization of Greater Syria (previously) that united Jordanian and Palestinian 'Brothers' under one organizational umbrella. And, several declarations and positions point to the Movement as seeing Jordan as a "sphere of influence" for it, especially in terms of the Jordanian-Palestinian community – a community which Hamas could not do without in its current struggle with Fatah and the Palestinian Liberation Organization over the representation of the Palestinians.

In his book, "The Red Minaret", Ibrahim Ghosheh points to discussions that took place between him and other Hamas leading figures in Tehran, before their return to Amman (after which they were arrested in 1999), in which he says to them "... We must return to Jordan. The Jordanian arena is one of the most important ones for us and we cannot let go of it."²⁹⁵

²⁹³ From an interview with a Jordanian security official at his office on October 20, 2009. Op. cit.

²⁹⁴ Refer to "Al-Tamyeez Tu'ayed Edanat 5 A'daa min Hamas" (Lit. "Cassation Court Supports the Conviction of Five Hamas Members"), on "Khaberni.com" Jordanian news website, September, 9, 2009.

²⁹⁵ Ibrahim Ghosheh, "The Red Minaret", op. cit., p. 268.

Ibrahim Ghosheh himself gave a statement to the “*Al-Sabeeh*” weekly newspaper in which he says, “that Hamas represents Jordanians of Palestinian origin.”²⁹⁶ This statement was made during the time he and other Hamas leaders were detained (during negotiations). And, in both these statements there is an implicit indication to two fundamental points in Hamas’ strategic vision with regard to Jordan:

- That Jordan is a key arena, or sphere of influence, for the Movement and its organizational and political activities, because it encompasses the largest gathering of Palestinian refugees outside the Occupied Territories. Furthermore, Jordan is going to be a future candidate in serving “some sort of formula” dealing with the Palestinians. Thus, Hamas is going to take great care in maintaining a certain active presence for itself in Jordan, notwithstanding that this presence serves the purposes of its struggle with the other Palestinian factions.
- Through “the Brotherhood’s front”, Hamas and its influence on the Brotherhood’s leadership implicitly means that they seek to be an indirect party to be factored into the Jordanian domestic equation, by virtue of their “representation of Jordanians of Palestinian origin” and of Palestinians residing in Jordan. This is especially the case when one considers the context of the growing question of the impact and the ramifications of the role that this broad segment of Jordanian society might play inside Jordan’s political system in the near future.

Therefore, we stand before two differing outlooks on Hamas’ vision with regard to Jordan:

- The official and declared position of the Movement, which is non-interference in Jordanian domestic affairs, including through the Muslim Brotherhood, and which rejects the options of resettlement of refugees and the “alternative homeland” or any other resolution to the Palestinian problem at the expense of Jordan.
- The position of the rivals of the Movement, who see that Hamas considers Jordan as an arena or sphere in which they can use their influence and in which they can conduct their political (and military) activism; and, who think that Hamas uses the Brotherhood as a “front” to reinforce the Movement’s presence within Jordanian society (and specifically the community of Jordanians of Palestinian origin).

Prior to any attempt to initiate an in-depth discussion that aims to extricate each side’s perception of the other (Jordan and Hamas), and prior to any attempt to exit the “grey areas of ambiguity” when trying to build a perspective for the following period, and trying to present all the potential scenarios and options before each side, one must first reflect on the question of the relationship between the Brotherhood and the Hamas Movement. Indeed, the dynamics of this relationship represent a major factor in putting forward a paradigm that explains the context of the relationship and the determinants of the relationship between the two movements, on the one hand, and of the two movements with the Jordanian regime, on the other.

²⁹⁶ Bassam al-‘Amoush, “Landmarks in the History of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan”, op. cit., p. 217.

3. The Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas: Questions of Identity and Power

Today, the struggle inside the Muslim Brotherhood between its two major wings (the centrists in alliance with the doves, – later known as the ‘reform current, and the hawks in alliance with the ‘fourth trend, – those close to Hamas) is a complex issue with one dimension affecting the Brotherhood, internally, and another dimension affecting the ‘external’ relationship between the Brotherhood and the Hamas Movement.

Indeed, the decision to establish the Muslim Brotherhood Organization of the Levant (that included Jordan, the West Bank, and Gaza) in 1978 was an important historical milestone in the evolution of the relationship between the Brotherhood in Jordan and the Brotherhood in Palestine. Declaring the launch of Hamas was yet another major turn of events. Finally, Hamas’ decision in 2006 to disengage from the Jordanian Brotherhood, and its organizational elections in 2009 were also major landmarks in the course of the relationship. All these milestones posed questions about the political identity of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan and in the way their relationship with Hamas would be defined, as well as the subsequent consequences of this relationship on the Brotherhood’s internal structure and statutes, its priorities, and its relationship with the Jordanian regime.

Deconstructing the relationship between Hamas and the Brotherhood, and defining its various dimensions, the current axes of conflict, and future probabilities require a review of the historical stages the relationship has been through up until today. After the official launch of Hamas, it is possible to divide the major stages that the relationship between Hamas and the Brotherhood has been through into three principle periods:

- The “Shadow Organization” within the Brotherhood [1991-1999]
- The Expulsion of Hamas and its Gaining International Stature [1999-2006]
- The Disengagement and Establishing an Organizational Structure and Statutes

The Period of Active Engagement in Jordan: A Shadow Organization Develops within the Brotherhood

The return of the Hamas Movement’s political bureau from Kuwait in the wake of the Second Gulf War and the launch of their political and organizational activities in Jordan marked the beginning of a new stage in the relationship between the Movement and the Muslim Brotherhood.

In the beginning, Hamas’ political and communications activities were initiated through the organizational structure in Palestine. And in that period, the General Supervisor of the Muslim Brotherhood would attend Hamas’ *Shura* Council meetings, investing in their “Palestinian front.” Meanwhile, members of Hamas became active and moved within the circles of the Brotherhood’s institutions.

When Hamas reached its unsigned gentleman’s agreement with the Jordanian government, in 1993, it began to take the steps required to establish its own independent offices. These offices were not confined to the activities of the political bureau, but also included establishing communications and

media bodies, research centers and even commercial enterprises. In parallel, members from within the Muslim Brotherhood were recruited into the Hamas Movement, with the Brotherhood's consent, in order to serve the goals of the Movement and its diverse range of activities. At the same time, the Muslim Brotherhood established media bodies and outlets such as the "*Al-Sabeel*" newspaper, research centers, and the "Muslim Palestine" magazine, whose offices were later shut down by the Jordanian government.

Previous General Supervisor of the Muslim Brotherhood, 'Abd al-Majid Thunaibat, offers this testimony about that phase in the relationship between Hamas and the Brotherhood:

"The new (at the time) Press and Publications Law required that newspapers had certain financial liquidity and accounts. The Brotherhood did not have enough to provide for the publication of its '*Al-Rebat*' weekly newspaper, which was the Brotherhood's official news outlet at that time; never mind, that the Brotherhood was already strapped for the resources required to maintain the publication of a weekly newspaper. So, the Hamas Movement offered the Brotherhood to replace the '*Al-Rebat*' with another, new publication, with independent financing and management that would be tied to both the Brotherhood and Hamas. And that is actually what took place and the '*Al-Sabeel*' weekly newspaper was born to light."

Thunaibat also insists that the agreement with Hamas with regard to identifying and recruiting certain members of the Brotherhood into the Movement was conditional upon Hamas notifying the Brotherhood's leadership and of Hamas providing a list of names in this regard. The agreement also stipulated that none of the persons recruited to the Movement would hold positions of leadership within the Brotherhood. But, every once and a while, the Brotherhood's leadership were surprised to find that certain members had been recruited without its prior notification; and these activities often led to problems between the two organizations.

The organizational overlap and the continued differences between Hamas and the centrists in the Brotherhood, whose influence inside the organization had been expanding noticeably since the mid-1990s until it peaked in 1997, planted the seeds for a new kind of polarization within the Brotherhood – between that trend, the centrists, which represented mostly third and fourth generation Brotherhood members, and between the Hamas Movement and its supporters within the Brotherhood.

The main issue of contention revolved around Hamas' influence on the Brotherhood and around the Brotherhood's priorities. For, the centrists were pushing for prioritizing local and Jordanian affairs, and issues related to development and political reform (later this trend was called the "Jordanianizers" wing), whereas Hamas and its supporters wanted to focus on treating Jordan as a dynamic stage and vital ground from which to support the work of the resistance in Palestine.

During those same years, the presence of the Muslim Brotherhood amongst the Eastern Jordanian society began to decline, while its popularity began to increase inside the Jordanian-Palestinian communities. This transformation inevitably reflected the rising popularity of Hamas in Palestine and the increasing impact its armed operations were having – all of which was taking place at the same time that the peace process was losing ground.

The declaration by the Jordanian government that banned Hamas and its political and media activities in Jordan, and expelling the Movement's political bureau from Amman in 1999, constituted a major turning point in the state of polarization within the Brotherhood. The proverbial spark was lit when Hamas leaders issued statements and implicit messages, during that crisis and in its wake, that described the position of the Brotherhood leadership, particularly the centrist current, as "negative" in regards to the way they dealt with the issue of the arrests of Hamas members. This particular situation later led to the emergence of a new current inside the Brotherhood, where members employed by the Movement, recruited by it or sympathetic to it, became the other pole within the Brotherhood.²⁹⁷

Commenting on that period, Ibrahim Ghosheh is critical of the approach of the Brotherhood's leadership (of which a majority came from the centrist wing) during the crisis, and the way they dealt with this crisis – that they behaved more like mediators between Hamas and the government, and not a party on the side of Hamas. Ghosheh attributes this growing conflict with the Brotherhood's leadership to the period before, and particularly the year 1998; he says, "During that time, discrepancies in the policies between the leadership of the Brotherhood and that of Hamas began to surface. There was, in the Muslim Brotherhood, a line that called for prioritizing domestic, local affairs. Or, in other words, the Jordanian dimension was what should concern the Brotherhood; and that it was imperative for the Brotherhood not to become immersed with the Palestinian dimension, or any other dimension, for that matter. They wanted to focus on issues that were more educational, social, charitable, and environmental in nature. And, unfortunately, when the Movement was exposed to that harsh blow in 1999, that particular current or line of thinking in the Brotherhood worked against the Movement by inciting matters and taking sides. What is more important is that the differences between the leaderships of the Brotherhood and Hamas grew. And, one of the outcomes of these differences included barring Khalid Mish'al from using one of the rooms in the Brotherhood's headquarters, which was once his to use... It was taken away from him."²⁹⁸

These words of Ghosheh reveal, with a great degree of clarity and honesty, to what degree the level of conflict had reached between Hamas with the Brotherhood's centrists. For, Ghosheh blatantly accuses this current of actually "taking sides and inciting" against the Movement. Furthermore, he raises doubts about the position the General Supervisor of the Brotherhood, at that time, 'Abd al-Majid Thunaibat, took against Hamas.

Ibrahim Gharaibeh (one of the more prominent figures in the centrist current at that time) disagrees with Ghosheh's version of events and the position Ghosheh takes with regard to the Brotherhood's centrists. Gharaibeh attributes the conflict between the centrist current and the leadership of Hamas to Hamas' establishment of a "shadow organization" within the Muslim Brotherhood, from the period between 1991 and 1999 – or, in other words, the period in which Hamas' political bureau actually had a legal presence in Jordan.

Indeed, the return of the Hamas political bureau to Amman took place at the same time that the doves took power of the Brotherhood's executive office. The Brotherhood's executive office had

²⁹⁷Ibrahim Ghosheh, "The Red Minaret", op. cit., p. 278.

²⁹⁸Ibid. p. 257.

actually opened the door wide open before Hamas' work and activities, but on condition that they would not recruit anyone from the Brotherhood without prior notification to the executive office, on the one hand, and that no one employed or recruited by Hamas from the Brotherhood would be given senior positions, on the other. This condition was made in order to avoid putting the Brotherhood in the predicament of duplicity in leadership and in organization, and to avoid putting them in an awkward position before the regime and before public opinion.

However, according to Gharaibeh, Hamas did not keep to its promises and, instead, was building another organization within the Brotherhood. Hamas was expanding its recruitment of Brotherhood members into Hamas, without notifying the Brotherhood's leadership, who would later discover that this had taken place from confessions taken from these persons' after their arrest by Jordanian General Intelligence Department.

At the same time, Hamas' political bureau was keen for those who were recruited to reach positions of leadership and senior administration in the Brotherhood, which created a breach of trust and produced an internal crisis between the two organizations that began to take root and expand with time.

Hamas Becomes a Regional Player: Restructuring “Polarities” inside the Muslim Brotherhood

The internal composition inside the Brotherhood experienced a structural change after Hamas' leadership left Jordan. The angry statements made by Hamas against the Brotherhood's leaders (or the centrist current in particular) planted the seeds of this change. A group of active young men close to Hamas, who had once been aligned with the centrist current, publicly emerged to the surface with stinging criticisms directed against the leadership of the Brotherhood. Internal leaks to the press escalated, particularly against the Vice General Supervisor at the time, Imad Abu Diyeh, who was the most important and number one figure in the centrist movement.

This all took place around the same time that the Second Palestinian Intifada erupted in the year 2000. The Second Intifada would cast its shadow on the relationship between the Brotherhood and the state, especially in that period, where demonstrations and protests were dealt with by the state quite severely.

Despite all that, the majority of slogans and banners held by the Brotherhood during these demonstrations called for the “return of Hamas' leaders to Jordan.” According to a leading figure from the doves in the Brotherhood, a group seen as being close to Hamas took advantage of the outpouring of impassioned sentiments at that time, and capitalized on reaping the benefits of this rise in the popularity of Hamas by promoting themselves within the ranks of the Brotherhood as the group closest to Hamas and to the Movement's leadership outside.

Meanwhile, Hamas was beginning to acquire international stature and began to draw the features of regional alliance with Damascus and Teheran; and, it began to actively engage with other Arab countries. It got to the point that its status of being organizationally situated under the wing and control of the “umbrella in Palestine” no longer seemed appropriate for its new size.

The self-declared birth of the “fourth trend” (a current considered close to Hamas) and its vigorous efforts to reinforce its presence and influence within the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood led to a restructuring of alignments inside the organization, according to the new formulations in which Hamas played a hand as an indirect party. After the “fourth” current distinguished itself, it allied with the “hawks,” whereas the centrist current reestablished its alignment with the “doves”; and, internal organizational elections took place in the Muslim Brotherhood in 2002 on this basis.

As a consequence of the weight of the conflicts with Hamas, and leaks to the press and internal efforts to mobilize against the centrists, the fourth current won a majority in the Brotherhood’s *Shura* Council and executive office. The centrist wing and the doves were cornered and left outside the leadership of the Brotherhood, with only ‘Abd al-Majid Thunaibat (the General Supervisor of the Muslim Brotherhood) keeping his position. Even Thunaibat’s presence was a mere shadow of the Brotherhood’s once tradition that the General Supervisor be a Trans-Jordanian. However and in the meantime, the centrist wing and the doves were able to maintain their seats in the executive office of the IAF.²⁹⁹

The surprise came with the return of parliamentary elections in 2003 (after parliament had been dissolved and had remained idle for over two years). The Brotherhood took the decision to participate in these elections by way of a group of young men, who were not from the executive offices of neither the Brotherhood nor the IAF. The majority of these young men were of Palestinian origin. And, the situation made the centrists and doves question whether or not this represented some sort of a pact between the regime and the Brotherhood’s hawks and those close to Hamas. The implications of such a pact was that it could herald in new arrangements in the future when one considered the context of the regional environment, with the occupation of Iraq and growing American pressure on Arab governments to introduce political reform, which was clearly reflected in the Middle East Reform Initiative declared by the then Secretary of State Colin Powell.

What is worth noting, at this point, is that the Brotherhood gained seventeen seats during the 2003 elections, fourteen of which were held by young men of Palestinian origin.

In the meantime, in 2005, the IAF launched its new political reform platform at the same time as the Muslim Brotherhood movements in both Egypt and Syria did. These reform platforms included accepting the tenets of democracy and pluralism. They went beyond the historical conflict between the hawks and the doves about these contentious issues. The initiative put the internal debate within the Brotherhood on a completely different track, which began to center around questions of the Brotherhood’s identity and its priorities.³⁰⁰

In 2004, Hamas withstood some harsh military and security blows that culminated in the assassination of the Movement’s spiritual leader, Ahmad Yassin, and one of the Movement’s most prominent leading figures, ‘Abd al-‘Aziz al-Rantisi. At the same time, the noose was being

²⁹⁹ See Mohammad Abu Rumman, “*Al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun fi al-Intikhabat al-Niyabiya 2007: Naksa ‘Abira am Ta’akul fi al-Sha’biya*” (Lit. “The Muslim Brotherhood in the Jordanian Parliamentary Elections 2007: A Passing ‘Political Setback’ or Declining Popularity”), op. cit., 2008.

³⁰⁰ See the text of initiative (in Arabic) on the main page of the Islamic Action Front website; available at <http://www.jabha.net/index.asp>.

tightened around the neck of Hamas' military wing. Consequently, by the beginning of 2006, the signs and precursors of change began to emerge with regard to Hamas' position towards participating in the political processes in the Occupied Territories, leading to the decision to participate in upcoming legislative elections in which Hamas won an overwhelming majority in the Legislative Assembly.

The real surprise came with the internal organizational elections inside the Brotherhood that took place only a few weeks after the Palestinian legislative elections. The centrist wing and doves won a majority in the *Shura* Council and stripped the leadership, once again, from the hands of the fourth current and the hawks.

However, and according to the Brotherhood's statutes and by-laws, the previous *Shura* Council had already appointed the Secretary General of the IAF (Zaki Bani Ersheid, who the doves and centrist wing considered part of the "Hamas group"). This awkward situation carried the internal crisis to an even more advanced stage. Bani Ersheid now governed over an executive office where the doves, the centrist wing, and independents held a majority and the new leadership in the Brotherhood came from the same current.

To the "misfortune" of the doves and the centrist wing, the appointment of Zaki Bani Ersheid came with their return to the leadership of the Brotherhood and coincided with Hamas' landslide victory in the Palestinian legislative elections. Furthermore, it paralleled with an even more increased level of concern from within the state about Hamas' influence on the Brotherhood and about the Brotherhood's growing political ambitions.³⁰¹

This historic moment "plunged" the Brotherhood's leadership into a series of crises with the regime. The crises began with a fierce attack by the Jordanian authorities on the appointment of Bani Ersheid, which was subsequently met by statements made by the latter that further added fuel to fire. It then continued with the arrest and trial of four members of parliament who visited the home of Abu Mu'sab al-Zarqawi (upon his death), and ended with the Brotherhood's leadership signing a declaration that affirmed their commitment to "centrism" and to the "pillars of the state."³⁰²

The crisis took further root with the upcoming municipal and parliamentary elections, where the state (with the admission of politicians and state figures) targeted the Brotherhood and its political influence, and pushed for a restructuring of the role of the "Brotherhood" in the domestic political equation. One of the first manifestations of this state policy was in the expropriation of the Muslim Brotherhood's Islamic Center Association.³⁰³

³⁰¹ The first message from the state was sent through the semi-governmental "Al-Ra'i" Arabic daily newspaper (Amman), in an article signed by the "Editor" under the headline, "*Hal Sahih anna Hamas Satu'ayin Amin 'Am Jabhat al-'Amal al-Islami al-Jadid?*" (Lit. "Is it True that Hamas will Appoint the New Secretary General of the Islamic Action Front?"), "Al-Rai" Jordanian daily newspaper, March 7, 2006.

³⁰² See <http://www.aljazeera.net/News/archive/archive?ArchiveId=330910>.

³⁰³ See Mohammad Abu Rumman, "*Al-Ikhwan Yujaddidun Awraq I'timadhim*" (Lit. "The Brotherhood Renews its Credentials"), "Al-Ghad" Jordanian daily newspaper, Amman, September 29, 2007; and also, "*Majlis Shura Ikhwan al-Urdun Yabhath Azmat al-Istiqalat wa al-Bakhit Yajtami' ma' Za'eem al-Jama'ah*" (Lit. "The Jordanian Brotherhood's *Shura* Council Probes Resignations and al-Bakhit Meets with the Brotherhood's Leader"), "Al-Sharq Al-Awsat," London-based daily newspaper, July 22, 2007, available at <http://www.aawsat.com/details.asp?section=4&article=374388&issueno=10098>.

During that period, the doves and centrist wing did not conceal their political agenda, which was made clear in statements made by the former General Supervisor, Salem al-Falahat. Falahat made it perfectly clear that the Brotherhood intended to make national and local affairs a priority; that, from now on, it wanted to focus on the issues of political reform and the concerns of the Jordanian citizen in its discourse and its activities. These declarations also represented an implicit, “coded message”, so to speak, to the other current in the organization which was placing the Palestinian cause on a front burner and making it the defining position of the Brotherhood. .³⁰⁴

All of the above took place in juxtaposition with the region entering into a state of acute polarization between the “Rejectionist” and “Moderate” camps, which in turn, further reinforced the internal dispute inside the Brotherhood with regard to its political agenda and position.

Meanwhile, the doves and the centrist wing were making efforts to move towards reconciliation with the state. They affirmed their independence from Hamas, organizationally and politically (while maintaining their support for it) and made it clear that they believed in the need to preserve and protect the “domestic equation” from the upheaval and stormy conditions engulfing the region. But, the real predicament that befell the doves’ and centrist wing’s agenda was that it got caught between that of the state and that of the other current in the organization, both of which were conditioned upon regional calculations!

On the one hand, the regime in Amman was becoming very concerned about the growing influence of Hamas in the Occupied Territories and about its friendly relations with the regional Rejectionist camp. Furthermore, the regime linked the Brotherhood into this context, and refused to acknowledge the sincerity of the doves’ and centrist wing’s agenda. From the state’s point of view their agenda did not really touch upon the core of the Brotherhood’s approach, nor did it deny the profound transformations that were taking place in the way in which the Brotherhood was evolving, or in its deviations from the traditional equation that had historically governed the relationship between the Brotherhood and the regime.

The objective of the official policy of weakening the Brotherhood was, indeed, two-fold: on the hand, it targeted the Brotherhood and worked to contain its political influence and on the other hand it protected the domestic front from Hamas’ influence and power, which emanated from its relationship with the regional Rejectionist camp.

On the other hand, leading figures from the hawks and the fourth current, who were not part of the elected leadership of the Brotherhood, continued to raise the ceiling in terms of their political discourse and pushed the crisis with the regime to an even higher level – which put the center-aligned leadership between a rock and a hard place. At the same time, the hawks began to mobilize the ranks in the Brotherhood against the “weak positions” of the organization’s leadership in confronting the regime’s harsh policies against the Brotherhood.

³⁰⁴ See discussions held by Ibrahim Gharaibeh with Salim al-Falahat, (the past) General Supervisor of the Muslim Brotherhood, on the “Amman Times” website, on September 11, 2007.

If anything, the 2007 parliamentary elections represented a defining moment in the internal formulation of the Muslim Brotherhood and subsequently generated an extensive debate within the organization. The doves and the centrist wing were keen to present a list of candidates that was free of any contentious names and that could be considered ‘moderate,’ and that would be represented by a majority of East Banker candidates. The doves and center wing took this stand in order to send a clear, multi-faceted political message: In its first dimension, the message was internal; it was meant to allow for the Brotherhood’s parliamentary representation to embody the line taken by the doves and the centrist wing – thereby organizationally weakening the other current in the Brotherhood. In its second political dimension, a message was being sent to the regime to prove that the intentions of the “centrist leadership” were to preserve the relationship and communications channels with the state. In the end, the Brotherhood limited their list of nominees to only thirty candidates, confirming the Brotherhood’s unwillingness to change the rules of the domestic political game.

At the same time, the (previous) centrist-oriented executive office worked to change the composition of the Brotherhood’s *Shura* Council by reducing the share of the Brotherhood’s administrative offices in the Gulf States (which was closer in approach to Hamas) in the Council. This decision reduced the Brotherhood’s Gulf States’ seats from ten to only four. The remaining eight seats were redistributed amongst “Jordanian” Brotherhood branches throughout the kingdom, which guaranteed the presence and position of the centrist wing’s power inside the realm of the leadership, despite the numerical majority of Jordanians of Palestinian origin, which was closer to the pro-Hamas current in the organization.

The decisive blow came with the parliamentary elections. The state worked to bring down the Islamist list and, combined with the efforts made to undermine the list by the hawks and the fourth current, the Brotherhood incurred heavy losses in the elections – a loss never experienced before in previous decades. They only won six seats of a 110-seat parliament.³⁰⁵

Commenting on this period, one of the leading figures from the doves and centrist wing says, “The set of policies that the past executive office took were aimed at redirecting the Brotherhood’s compass towards national concerns and at putting a limit to Hamas’ influence. That is why the district representation in the *Shura* Council was changed; and, that is why a moderate list was chosen. Had that list won, it would have reinforced the power of the centrists and of the doves to a great extent, internally at least. But the (gift) from the state to the other current [in the Brotherhood] was quite precious; for they brought down the leadership and put it in a real predicament!”³⁰⁶

The outcome of the parliamentary elections reflected in an overwhelming and direct way on the internal struggle in the Brotherhood. It granted the other current a strong boost of morale in their confrontation with the doves and centrist wing. The crisis also pushed towards holding early elections for the Brotherhood’s *Shura* Council in which the fourth current and Hawks had the upper hand. The executive office was reshuffled and split almost in half between the hawks and the doves (four seats to five respectively), and for the first and unprecedented time in their history, the

³⁰⁵ See Mohammad Abu Rumman, “The Muslim Brotherhood in the Jordanian Parliamentary Elections 2007...”, op. cit.

³⁰⁶ From a documented discussion with this leading figure in the leadership of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Brotherhood elected a General Supervisor, Dr. Hammam Sa'id, who was not only aligned with the hawks but was also of Palestinian origin.

In the *Shura* Council, the hawks and the fourth current gained 26 seats in comparison to 25 provisional seats for their opponents.

The crisis in the Brotherhood did not recede after the elections. The conflict remained in effect between the two opposing wings in the Brotherhood despite all the understandings and deals that took place between them.

The repercussions of the Brotherhood's crisis led to the dissolution of the executive office of the IAF and to the resignation (or dismissal) of its Secretary General, Zaki Bani Ersheid, who was considered to be aligned with those close to Hamas. A new executive office was elected outside the framework of the inter-organizational competition and polarization, with Dr. Ishaq al-Farhan at its head. Al-Farhan was considered one of the leading figures amongst the doves, although he had managed to keep distance from the conflict inside the organization during the previous years.

After the Decision to Disengage from the Brotherhood: The Question of Political Identity and Influence

One of the most important historical twists that the Organization of the Muslim Brotherhood experienced was the decision by Hamas to disengage, or break ties, with the Brotherhood. This official disengagement led to the establishment of an officially independent organizational structure for Hamas that combined the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood in the West Bank and Gaza with the Palestinians of the Diaspora. A practical consequence of this decision meant the end of the Organization of the Muslim Brotherhood of Greater Syria established in 1978 (Gaza had been added to the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan and in the West Bank, after which the Palestine apparatus was established, which came to oversee the launch of the Intifada).

The secession of Hamas reinforced the state of inter-organizational polarization within the Brotherhood and elevated this polarity to a more serious level for two major reasons:

The first was related to issues linked with the administrative offices in the Arab Gulf States (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar). These offices once formed a principle cornerstone of the Organization of the Muslim Brotherhood in Greater Syria. Their representation had reached 12 seats in the Brotherhood's *Shura* Council before the previous (centrist) executive office reduced these to four, after Hamas announced it was breaking official ties with the Jordanian Brotherhood.

The disagreement regarding the administrative offices in the Gulf States was an issue that had a two-pronged point of origin: the first point originated as a result of the dynamics in the relationship between the Brotherhood and Hamas; and, the second originated from within the Brotherhood's organization itself.

The offices in the Gulf States included a mix of Jordanians and Palestinians (some of them held Jordanian national identity numbers³⁰⁷ while others did not). The question of the representations of these offices emerged after Hamas seceded from the Brotherhood. Hamas had called for their “dual representation” in both the *Shura* Councils of the Brotherhood and of Hamas.

The doves and centrist wing in the Brotherhood rejected this notion of dual representation, which would create an institutional overlap between the organizations which, according to the doves, violated the internal organizational statutes of the Brotherhood, notwithstanding the fact that it created a problematic overlap between the Jordanian and the Palestinian fields of operation. The latter was seen as creating a major legal and political crisis for the Brotherhood, which was further compounded by the profound, fundamental differences in the natures of the Palestinian and Jordanian political arenas.

The matter was referred to the Global Guidance Office of the Brotherhood and Hamas’ request to secede was approved (despite the opposition to this decision by a majority of the Jordanian Brotherhood’s *Shura* Council). In the meantime, it was decided that the representative seats of the Gulf States administrative offices in both Hamas and in the Brotherhood would remain vacant until an agreement would be reached between the two sides.³⁰⁸

Soon after, elections in the Hamas *Shura* Council were held and Khalid Mish‘al was re-elected (for a fourth consecutive term). In the meantime, the Gulf States administrative offices’ seats remained vacant as discussions continued inside the Brotherhood and between the Brotherhood and Hamas about the fate of this representation.

While this was taking place, the doves and centrist wing adopted the attitude of “wait and see” (leaving all options open). This approach included forming a committee that visited the Gulf States administrative offices and held discussions with the Brothers there, who carried Jordanian national identity numbers, about the political and legal ramifications and consequences that came with choosing either the Brotherhood or Hamas. Members would then be asked to choose between the two organizations in order to guarantee that the organizational independence of both sides would be comprehensively ensured.

According to this approach, those who chose to remain inside the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood would not be represented in the Brotherhood’s *Shura* Council. Members of the administrative offices in the Gulf would no longer be dealt with in their previous capacity, but rather as “expatriate Jordanian Brothers.”³⁰⁹

Behind the hard line approach that the doves and the centrist wing took towards the representation of the Gulf State administrative offices was confronting the great fixation to the idea of reserving 12 seats in the *Shura* Council for these offices. The rationale was that, in the majority, these offices had their loyalties tied to Hamas and worked with the Movement. Twelve seats for them in the *Shura* Council would, thus, significantly tip the balance in the internal composition of the

³⁰⁷ To be a carrier of a Jordanian national identity number means that an individual has full Jordanian citizenship or a five-year renewable passport [Translator’s note].

³⁰⁸ See the letter that the Doves wing directed to the head of the Muslim Brotherhood’s *Shura* Council appended to this study.

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

Brotherhood to the advantage of those close to Hamas, and would turn the Brotherhood into a behind-the-scenes “sphere of influence” for Hamas.

Conversely, Khalid Mish'al has rejected the notion of trying to attribute conflicts inside the Brotherhood to Hamas. He maintains that the Movement remained equidistant from both wings in the Brotherhood, and that it had nothing to do with “those who used it (Hamas) for or against the Brotherhood.” He saw what was taking place as purely internal conflicts. He further emphasized that Hamas had advised the Brotherhood to put an end to what was going on inside the organization; and, that Hamas would accept any agreement that resolved the conflict pertaining to the administrative offices (in the Gulf States).

As for the story about the “shadow organization” inside the Jordanian Brotherhood, Mish'al views that these claims may be attributed to attempts by the previous Director of General Intelligence Department, Samih al-Batikh, to create a rift between the Brotherhood and Hamas and to instigate an internal crisis in the Brotherhood. He maintains that Hamas had no influence or “shadow” organization within the Muslim Brotherhood and that the decision had been taken within the institutions of the Movement not to interfere in the internal affairs of the Brotherhood.

Mish'al also dismissed the claims that Hamas funded the hard line wing in the Brotherhood and maintains that such financial support, from the outside, had always been remitted to the Brotherhood on a continuous basis, but not by way of Hamas.³¹⁰

The second reason was linked to the question of the Brotherhood's political identity. For, after Hamas officially broke ties with the Brotherhood and set up its own independent organizational by-laws and statutes, the doves and the centrist wing saw the need to revisit the path before the Brotherhood in Jordan and its institutional statutes, priorities, and the framework of its relationship with Hamas.

It is in this context that the problem of the “shadow organization” emerged, whose front today is represented by the hawks and those close to Hamas. For, as soon as the centrist wing proposed the need to enforce and implement the complete organizational separation from the Hamas Movement, and presented the need to reformulate the political and reform agenda for the Brotherhood, according to national, Jordanian considerations, the other wing pushed towards deepening ties with Hamas. The latter has consistently held a vague position with regard to the disengagement between the West Bank and Jordan (announced by the late King Hussein in 1988), which also implicitly meant that, according to this wing's overall outlook, an overlap did exist between the Palestinian and Jordanian arenas.³¹¹

³¹⁰ Interview with Mish'al, op. cit., October 15, 2009.

³¹¹ See statements made by Zaki Bani Ersheid on the Al-Jazeera website in the report, “*Taqrir li al-Ikhwan Yuthir Zoba'a*” (Lit. “A Report to the Brotherhood Instigates a Tornado,”) August 26, 2009, in which Bani Ersheid is quoted as saying, “Today, there are those in the organization of the Brotherhood who are trying to flex their muscles in passing the project of the so-called Organization of the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood, which is congruent with that of the official position on the disengagement”; and, he continues by saying, “Those in the Brotherhood, who are involved in this scheme, are living the delusions of a dream in which they are offering the sacrifice of weakening the organization; and in the end, they will not receive any gifts from the other party, which continues its scheme to liquidate the Brotherhood and weaken them, whoever these members are and whatever color they represent inside the organization.”

The conflict inevitably reflected upon the relationship and interaction of the Brotherhood with Jordan's national and official political environment. It had to define itself either as a Jordanian Islamic movement or an extension of the Hamas Movement in Jordan; and, in both cases the benefits and the liabilities would be different.

One of the repercussions of this crisis, at this stage, was the resignation of members of the Brotherhood's executive office, who were considered among the doves and centrist wing. These resignations were attributed to a series of direct and indirect causes that pushed towards this end. Of these reasons was the relationship with Hamas and the contentious issues related to the administrative offices in the Gulf States.

Meanwhile, the position that the state took with regard to the crisis inside the Brotherhood was that of an "observer." It appears that this transformation in the state's outlook was represented in its indirect support for the doves and centrist wing, after it had previously refused to acknowledge this wing and considered it as fragile and weak. Indeed, today, the state is counting on the role of this wing in curtailing the influence of Hamas inside the Brotherhood. However, if this was the official position of the state, the state did not take any clear or strong steps in that regard, but rather alluded to this position through certain intimations and partial leaks from the sidelines, here and there.

With that, and in general, it does not appear that the regime in Amman was willing to let go of its "strategic hand" in weakening the Brotherhood. Indeed, it perceived the current internal crisis taking place within the Brotherhood as a "precious gift" to the state – it appeared as though the Brotherhood's leadership was busy undermining its own political strength and its popularity through the principle of "by my own hands and not by any other."

In a press release issued by Ahmad al-Kafaween (who spoke in the name of the independents in the executive office), the birth of the "reform current" in the Brotherhood, as an offspring of the doves and centrists wing, was circuitously announced. In itself, the declaration pointed to the nature of the debate taking place within the Brotherhood that, today, became subject to new premises and evaluations, which were quite different from that of previous years.³¹²

For, the political debate in the Brotherhood was no longer just a matter of a conflict between the hawks (who refused the concept of democracy, labeled the regime is "*kafir*" (an un-believing regime), and who belonged to the hardline school of Sayyid Qutb) and the doves (representing the moderate, pragmatic current when it came to their position with regard to the state and the regime). Indeed, this "recipe" had ceased to exist years before.

As a matter of fact, the conflict today runs between two principle currents:

The first renamed itself as the "reform current". It adopted an agenda that focused on internal political reform, the role the Brotherhood could play in national development in Jordanian society, with independent institutional frameworks for the Brotherhood and the Islamic Action Front Party, on the one hand, and for dealing with the state and its institutions, on the other.

This current maintained that the Brotherhood's political identity was as a "national Jordanian Islamic movement" that sympathized with and supported Hamas, but was entirely independent of it.

³¹² See the text of the declaration appended to this book.

This current also rejected the idea of organizational duality and pushed for establishing new institutional statutes for the Brotherhood that affirmed its belief in and commitment to the tenets of Jordanian national statehood.³¹³

The second current never clearly declared or named itself (although certain sources in the media close to this current have used the term “unity” current to describe it).³¹⁴ It moved within the institutional framework of the Brotherhood in a more organized and structured manner. This current’s agenda was centered on the ‘unity of position’ with Hamas and on giving regional considerations (the relation with the Palestinian cause) priority over national interests when defining the coordinates that positioned the Brotherhood. Some members of this current have even been inclined to indirectly defining the Brotherhood as an “Islamic movement that represents Jordanians of Palestinian origin.”

Indeed, the second current’s position would lead to an overlap between the Jordanian and Palestinian arenas, and would keep the relationship with Hamas irrefutably ambiguous.

With the Brotherhood’s decision to boycott the 2010 parliamentary elections, the features of a centralized orientation began to emerge. This orientation would attempt to overcome the previous differences and give priority to issues of political reform, particularly with the eruption of Arab revolutions, which would grant domestic affairs and the principle of actualizing democracy utmost priority.

Yet, until now, the extent of the Muslim Brotherhood’s ability to overcome the internal crisis has not been tested; neither has been the nature of the future relationship with Hamas and its influence on the Muslim Brotherhood organization and its relationship with the state. It is expected, nonetheless, that the democratic “tsunami” in the Arab region would play a major role in restructuring and reformulating the alliances and polarizations within the movement.³¹⁵

³¹³ See Mohammad Abu Rumman, “*Inbithaq al-Tayyar al-Islahi fi al-Ikhwān.. Nihayat al-Suqur wa al-Hama'im*” (Lit. “The Launch of the Reform Movement in the Brotherhood.. and the End of the Hawks and the Doves”), “Al-Ghad” Jordanian daily newspaper, Amman, September 16, 2007.

³¹⁴ See the newspaper report in the “Al-Majd” weekly newspaper, which is close to the hawks in the Brotherhood, under the headline, “*Limatha Turiduna al-Taba'ud 'an Fakhrikum wa Sayfikum wa Rayatikum al-Khaffaqa?*” (Lit. “Why Do You Want to Distance Yourself from Your Pride, Your Sword and Your Fluttering Banner”), Issue No. 583, September 14, 2009.

³¹⁵ On the rise of the “centralized” approach and efforts to overcome internal differences, See chapter 3 of this study.

4. The Triumph of Apprehension, Ambiguity and the “Gap in Mutual Interests”

After an examination of the historical stages that Jordan’s relationship with Hamas has been through and an analysis of the internal and external factors that influenced and affected this relationship, leading up to the situation that prevails today, it is clearly evident that we stand before an “ambiguity” on the official Jordanian side, with regard to defining which interests converge and which interests conflict when it comes to its relationship with Hamas. Simultaneously, there are “gray areas” that exist in the Movement’s political discourse and in its practice with regard to Jordan.

In the past few years, and particularly since the period of rift and “estrangement” and the following period of intermittent crises, the channels of communication and dialogue between the two sides definitively weakened. Apprehensions and suspicions prevailed over the image each held of the other. And, this happened at the expense of working towards defining a “common ground” that both sides could stand upon, which could act as a platform for reaching understandings and agreements, and at the same time, would not necessarily negate the vast gap in their differing stakes – at least, for the time being. But, it would allow for “conflict management,” and for avoiding certain crises and arriving at a minimum common denominator of mutual interests with which to face the current conflict in visions.

The Absence of Strategic Dialogue, and a “Mutual Breach of Trust”

So, there is an official political Jordanian current that still insists on rejecting any embarking upon strategic dialogue with Hamas for all the reasons previously mentioned, and because of what this political current would call a “breach of trust.” This breach of trust, in their opinion, stems from Hamas’ disregard for its commitments to and agreements with Jordan, which in turn, makes trusting the outcomes of any dialogue with Hamas unrealistic and impractical.

Mish’al’s reply to the above is that there are no understandings or standing agreements today between Jordan and Hamas for it to break or to commit to, especially when it comes to Jordan’s domestic security or when it comes to influence on the Muslim Brotherhood from within. With that, Mish’al says that one of the major tenets of Hamas has always been not to interfere in or jeopardize the national security of any Arab state, not just Jordan. So, it was not a policy of the movement to disrupt or manipulate the national security of any state.

Mish’al adds that Hamas is even more careful and more insistent on not interfering in the domestic affairs of Jordan, in particular, because of the sensitivities that surround that relationship. The Palestinian-Jordanian relationship, according to Mish’al, is complicated in nature and in its overlapping social, political, and geographic dimensions. But, this did not prevent the Movement from taking all measures and means to “support the resistance in Palestine. And, that can only be done from neighboring countries.” And, in Mish’al’s opinion, this was the Movement’s right.³¹⁶

³¹⁶ Interview with Mish’al, op. cit., October 15, 2009.

Perhaps, what Mish'al was not saying, directly, was that what was being alluded to by the Jordanians about Hamas' security activities were not tied to the domestic Jordanian arena but rather the Palestinian. And, perhaps there is a degree of risk in presenting the analysis or reading, so to speak, that "Jordan was considered a conduit rather than the base for Hamas' military activities".

In relation to this context, Mohammad Nasr argues that the subject of Hamas' military activities was discussed in the meeting held with certain senior figures in Jordan's security apparatus. And, in that meeting, Hamas denied anything to do with targeting Jordan's national security and emphasized that the activity under discussion only concerned the Occupied Territories. Conversely, Mish'al points to the fact that, indeed, the Movement was also subjected to security breaches by the Jordanians.³¹⁷

With that, Mish'al maintains that the Movement was willing to reach an agreement with Jordan that included an understanding on every point of contention and on all important issues, in a way that suited both parties, and in a way that met Jordanian strategic interests and would help rebuild the trust between the two sides.³¹⁸

On the other hand, past attempts by Mish'al to convince Jordanian authority figures and politicians, who were responsible for handling Hamas portfolio, fell on deaf ears. These individuals assert that there are "unjustified" security-related activities being carried out by the Movement, in which individuals from the Muslim Brotherhood have been used (the authorities refused to reveal details due to security considerations). These activities were seen as significantly weakening Mish'al's credibility with regard to the Movement's intentions towards Jordan.³¹⁹

A Jordanian official adds that what was even more dangerous was that Hamas' security-related activities (even if one were to presume they were targeted at the Occupied Territories) were dependent on Jordanians (even Jordanians of Palestinian origin, since they had full Jordanian citizenship), which, in itself, violated Jordanian law and the obligations required of citizens thereof, on the one hand, and violated Jordan's regional and international commitments, on the other.

According to this official, these kinds of matters did not require agreements or understandings, as one of the fundamental tenets of international law and in the relationship between states, movements, and organizations was to respect the sovereignty of states and not to interfere in their affairs. Furthermore, striking a deal with Hamas would make Jordan appear weak and incapable of protecting its own security without the consent of an external party; and, that was something that was absolutely unacceptable.³²⁰

In addition to all of the aforementioned, this Jordanian authority figure points to statements made and positions taken by the Brotherhood's reform wing, which contradict claims made by Hamas that it did not interfere in the affairs of the Jordanian Brotherhood, and that Hamas stood at equal distance from both wings in the Brotherhood. The position of the reform wing is notwithstanding

³¹⁷ Interview with Mohammad Nasr, op. cit., October 15, 2011.

³¹⁸ Interview with Mish'al, op. cit.

³¹⁹ From an interview with a senior Jordanian security figure in Amman, op. cit., October 20, 2009.

³²⁰ Ibid.

the substantiated information official Jordanian institutions had about Hamas' widespread and broad infiltration into the organization of the Jordanian Brotherhood.

Therefore, the perceived breach of trust and lack of the Movement's credibility slipped further in the wake of the crisis between Jordan and Hamas – a crisis that, till this day, has the Jordanians rejecting the idea of initiating any form of strategic dialogue with Hamas.³²¹

Exploring Gray Areas: Political Ambiguity versus the “Shadow Organization”

The relationship between Jordan and Hamas remains riddled by extensive ‘gray’ areas and broad ambiguities, which have not allowed for any form of in-depth, reasonable discussion that could lead to some sort of understanding.

On their part, Jordan's formal institutions have not offered any specific, strategic definitions of what they want or expect from Hamas, or the grievances they have against it, for that matter. Indeed, the Jordanian attitude towards Hamas has been riddled by vacillating anxiety and concern, and the approach of short-winded attitudes (that change from one day to the next). This reality has led to a profound breach of trust and made these policies and approach captive to regional and domestic variables, on the one hand, and to the moods and opinions of senior officials on the other hand!

It would not be an exaggeration to say that the vast disparities in Jordanian policy with regard to both the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas are of the major reasons for the vast ambiguities and inconsistencies that plague the relationship between the two sides today.

By quickly revisiting the context in which the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas evolved, one will find that the Jordanian regime in itself played a decisive role in the current outcomes.

For in the 1970s, successive Jordanian governments worked on replacing Palestinian factions in the Jordanian political arena by the Muslim Brotherhood. And, the Muslim Brotherhood included the Palestinian Brotherhood. The Brotherhood was granted a golden opportunity to develop, thrive, and expand until it became a key player to reckon with that dwells in the community of Jordanians of Palestinian origin. Hence, the Brotherhood captured the overwhelming margin of political influence and recognition amongst the population that once belonged to the Palestinian factions.³²²

Furthermore, the regime's policies, particularly in the 1990s, worked to empty the Muslim Brotherhood of Trans-Jordanians. Therefore, the Brotherhood's presence in Jordanian cities, villages, and rural areas has declined. Numerous political leaders (of Trans-Jordan origin) left the womb of the Brotherhood at the same time and in parallel with the expansion of the influence of Hamas and the expansion of the Brotherhood in the cities and neighborhoods with an overwhelming Palestinian population.

³²¹ Ibid.

³²² See Mohammad Abu Rumman, “The Muslim Brotherhood in the Jordanian Parliamentary Elections 2007: A Passing ‘Political Setback’ or Declining Popularity”, op cit., pp. 16-32, also refer to chapter two of this study on the development of the relationship between the state and the Muslim Brotherhood.

These policies eventually led to a disruption in the organizational composition of the Brotherhood and destabilized its previous internal equilibrium. The Brotherhood began to gravitate towards the Palestinian community in a significant way. Indeed, the parliamentary and municipality elections became important indicators that pointed to the overwhelming influence of the Brotherhood within the Palestinian community. Conversely, the presence of Trans-Jordanians in the Brotherhood has become limited among the grassroots and more at the leadership level.

This “structural imbalance” paralleled the rise of Hamas inside the Palestinian territories on an extensive scale. It was only natural that Hamas would also find a presence and a place of influence in the community of Jordanians of Palestinian origin, due to complex political and social factors. Indeed, the Palestinian community in Jordan was a natural social incubator for Hamas, as the case was (albeit with differences in geography, society, and in the state) for the Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan and Pashtun communities.

Sensing this imbalance, the state adopted harsh and decisive measures against Hamas in an attempt to undermine its influence within Jordanian society by way of policies that were defensive in nature. However, these policies fell short and were unable to present a strategic recipe for restoring the balance and filling the pits in the relationship between the state and both the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas.

In addition to the above, regional transformations and other external and internal factors pushed Jordan to take a negative, critical stand against Hamas and led to shutting the doors completely on any attempts to build a reasonable, pragmatic dialogue between the two sides, which could ensure the preservation of Jordan’s interests and achieving part of those of Hamas in Jordan.

On the other hand, and from Hamas’ side, the position of the Movement with regard to sensitive issues related to their relationship with the Jordanian regime also remained ambiguous and unclear in nature.

In a recapitulation of the past, the gentlemen’s agreement between Hamas and Jordan committed the Movement to non-interference in Jordan’s political affairs, as did the agreement reached between the Movement’s political bureau and the leadership of the Brotherhood in Jordan. However, according to claims made by both the state and the reform wing within the Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas did not fulfill these commitments. Instead, it expanded its operations by recruiting Brotherhood members into its ranks, and it violated the spirit of the agreements it had committed to. It built up its independent media, cultural, and commercial institutions. It also tried to transform the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan into a part of its own sphere of influence within the Palestinian community in Jordan, without paying heed to the lessons-learned from dangerous past experiences that other Palestinian organizations had undergone.

And, when thinking about the prevailing positions, in a more precise manner, we will find ourselves before four parties, not three, which are: the state, Hamas, the “Jordanian reform wing” in the Brotherhood, and the “Palestinian unity wing” in the Brotherhood; each with its own agenda, vision, and outlook.

The predicament the Jordanian reform wing in the Brotherhood lies in perhaps its weak organizational and numerical presence within the Brotherhood today. However, its real value has been embodied in its political role and its presence on the domestic political scene, which has allowed it to transcend the Jordanian-Palestinian duality equation. Despite its weakened state and the siege in which this wing found itself in, it is still alive and is still resisting being taken out of the equation – which would transform the relationship between the Brotherhood and the state into a Jordanian versus Palestinian affair. And, the situation being reduced to a bilateral equation such as the latter would, indeed, threaten social stability and political security at the national level.

Therefore, on the domestic side of this equation, in which Hamas and the Brotherhood and the state are all involved, the solution is embodied in exiting from the “gray areas” in the positions taken by Hamas, and disposing of the ambiguities and suspicions embedded in official Jordanian policy-making. This effort could be done by taking the following, successive steps:

- Reaching clear agreements, with little room for interpretation, between Jordan, Hamas, and the Brotherhood on prohibiting and criminalizing any interference in Jordan’s domestic affairs, on any level, including national security or by means of “shadow activities or organizations” that exploit the façade of the Brotherhood.
- It is not in the security or political interests of the state, nor does it serve Hamas, to weaken the Jordanian reform movement in the Brotherhood. This current’s presence serves the function of maintaining a delicate balance in the Brotherhood’s disposition and in the context within which it plays a political and national role in the domestic scene. And, instead of the government taking forceful security measures, there needs to be an effort to retrieve a balanced political role for the Brotherhood and granting the reform current the conditions required in order to re-establish its presence in a clear manner, so that it can act as a stabilizing factor, politically and socially, in the domestic arena.

Bridging the “Gap” in Mutual Interests: “Conflict Management” and “Positive Neutrality”

Based on the analytical reading presented previously, there are numerous mutual interests, internal and external, that could be built upon to redefine the framework within which the relationship between Jordan and Hamas functions. However, the problem remains in the “gap” or “black hole” in both sides’ outlooks and perceptions that swallows up these interests, prevents any convergence, and reinforces the logic of mutual apprehension and suspicion on both sides.

Of course, separating (Jordanian) domestic factors from the (Palestinian) regional factors in any understanding or agreement with Hamas is hardly possible. In other words, any binding commitments made by Hamas with regard to the domestic arena should be met with a flexible Jordanian stance with regard to the regional arena.

Skeptics and those who hold reservations towards initiating dialogue with Hamas point to four major issues, which can be dealt with:

- Firstly, that Jordan’s strategic alliance is with President Abbas and the Fatah Movement. But, this fact does not have to negate engaging in dialogue with Hamas, which would, in turn, serve the Palestinian dialogue process and strengthen President Abbas’ position, on the one hand, and would protect Jordanian national interests, on the other hand. This is particularly the case as Hamas is no longer just a Palestinian faction, but rather has become “the de facto government” in Gaza, notwithstanding the fact that it has an active presence in the West Bank.
- Secondly, Hamas’ strategic positions do not serve Jordan’s national interest in establishing a Palestinian state. But, engaging in dialogue with the movement does not mean that there is an agreement with its (strategic) positions or implies these positions are justified. Instead, the process could help assist the movement in changing its course, at best, or allow for “managing the conflict” with the movement, at worse – indeed, either of both cases would serve the interests of all the parties involved.
- Thirdly, Hamas’ position with regard to Jordan’s national interests is unclear and remains a “gray area,” particularly in terms of the issue of the disengagement (with the West Bank) and the differentiation between the two arenas, Jordanian and Palestinian. In dealing with such issues, it should be seen as more beneficial to engage in dialogue with the movement, in order to actually reach an understanding on these issues, and not to close down channels of communication and push the movement further to the other axis (the Rejectionist camp). The latter will only reinforce “security concerns” in which the movement will remain a factor of tension rather than stability of Jordan’s domestic front.
- Fourthly, apprehensions that the combined and mutual influence of Hamas and Jordan’s Brotherhood, together, produce a formidable Islamic movement is, in the long run, a serious problem for the political scene in Jordan.

What is obvious is that these reservations embody enmity and animosity firstly, against Islamists, in general, and secondly, raises the levels of suspicions about the intentions of the movement and the degree to which it would really commit to any agreement with Jordan. Nevertheless, using the “security” approach as a weapon also is not the most conducive solution or the “most likely to succeed” approach in dealing with the Islamists. On the contrary, it paves the way for an even more rooted and extremist presence. Indeed, the best solution is rooted in political reform and integrating these elements into the democratic game, and trying to draw them back to political positions and approaches, which are more consistent with realistic interests – as is the case in the Turkish model and experience with the (Islamic-oriented) Turkish Justice and Development Party.

If the current crisis is managed and overcome, and both sides’ reciprocal interests are extrapolated in a manner that allowed for building a new, common ground for the future relationship between the parties, then the main question that remains would be: What can Jordan expect from Hamas with regard to its national interests; and what should Hamas expect from Jordan in return?

On the Jordanian side, reaching an understanding with Hamas and coming to an agreement on Jordan’s strategic interests will allow for political and security guarantees, and will allow for the movement to become a factor that aids internal political stability (through its relationship with Jordan’s Brotherhood and by way of its grassroots popularity in the Jordanian-Palestinian community). This kind of reality would also protect Jordan’s national security with regard to the

Occupied Territories, as well as the other states in the region where Hamas' influence is spread amongst the presence of Palestinian refugees.

Maintaining channels of dialogue and communication and reaching an understanding with Hamas would contribute to granting the regime in Amman broader horizons and choices in case the peace process deteriorates, and the Jordanian stakes that have been wagered on that option fail. It can also help Jordan in case external pressures on Jordan are increased to accept a solution at the expense of Jordan's own national security and domestic stability. In other words, a (healthier) relationship with Hamas gives Jordan certain trump cards in the international game of interests particularly after Jordan has lost some regional trump cards in recent years.

Engaging in dialogue with Hamas will not jeopardize Jordan's strategic matrix or its regional and international relationships if the political discourse and the discourse used in the media are formulated in such a way that clearly and convincingly defines the parameters of the dialogue. However, an exclusive "veto" – by Arab or International players – on Jordan's engagement in dialogue with Hamas must be rejected based on the obvious logic that this "veto" would contradict Jordan's right to take sovereign decisions and its right to protect its strategic national and security interests. Dialogue between Jordan and Hamas would not contest Egypt's historic influence among the Palestinian body politic, and would not undermine the Egyptian role in Pan-Arab affairs. On the contrary, this kind of Jordanian engagement would be confined to ensuring national interests, within minor limits, unless a demand was made to expand this role to include discussions on Palestinian national reconciliation.

The aforementioned requires (at first) one major condition, which is, that Jordan's position towards all Palestinian parties must be seen as being "positively neutral"; or, that it is not on unfriendly terms with any of them, nor is it a partner with one party against the other – with Jordan preserving the right to politically support Abbas' efforts to deal with Israel and in trying to create the conditions conducive for a Palestinian partner to be present in the peace process.

Jordan opening up to Hamas, engaging in dialogue, and maintaining political communication channels with the movement will, at minimum, ensure Jordan's security interests are protected by clear understandings and agreements; and, at best, it would provide a new ceiling under which the movement could find the latitude to change its current alliances and amend its position towards the peace process, if it so desired. It would also grant Jordan an alternative in case the wagers Jordan has placed on the peace process and on President Abbas collapse, as well as a backdoor into a "Plan B". The absence of a "Plan B", till this day, represents the area in which the shortcomings and flaws in Jordanian policy have become most apparent.

On the other hand, what is Hamas' interest in engaging in strategic dialogue with Jordan? There are numerous, dynamic, and vital advantages to building a strategic dialogue with Jordan for Hamas, despite the differences and, at times, even clashes, that exist between their political stakes.

At the fore of the concerns that exist for Hamas would be to break the international embargo against the movement, and to gain access to regional channels that would strengthen the movement's confidence in its existence and allow it to exit from the live-or-die equation it is currently caught in.

Moreover Jordan, which is situated within different matrixes in regional calculations, can help reinforce the movement's propensity and ability to maneuver politically. It would also allow the movement more latitude in its independent, strategic decision-making process in case its relationship with its current regional allies changes – especially in view of the fact that the game of political interests is always an unstable and constantly changing one.

On another level, a great majority of Hamas' leadership and membership carry Jordanian citizenship and have families and extensive social bonds in Jordan. The presence of an understanding and an outlet for them would grant them respite and a "safe haven" on both an individual and social level in view of the embargo and restrictions placed upon the movement, both internationally and regionally.

In addition to all that, Jordan intervening into the Palestinian formula with greater balance and a more positive objectivity would help the movement on many levels and in many dimensions. Firstly, in a national Palestinian reconciliation in the future, and secondly, on the level of humanitarian assistance that Jordan offers to the Palestinian people, especially in the Gaza Strip and, even thirdly, in terms of the logistical role that Jordan has always played with residents of the West Bank.

On Jordan's domestic front, if Hamas aims to reinforce its influence in places where Palestinian refugees dwell, such as Jordan, entering into the direct line of the crisis within the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood would not necessarily lead to Hamas actually achieving this objective. On the contrary, it may lead to the weakening and disintegration of the Brotherhood. It may also push the organization into an even deeper crisis with the Jordanian state and, in the end, lead to Hamas losing a strategic ally inside Jordan. Indeed, accepting an alliance with the Brotherhood is, for Hamas, a safer "bet" than its insistence on transforming the Brotherhood into a "political extension" of the Movement.

Mish'al identifies what the movement wants from Jordan in two fundamental ways:

- First: To have healthy, normal relations between the two parties, as is the case between other states and various organizations, and as is the case between Hamas and other Arab states, whose strategies and stakes also differ from those of Hamas, but who have not put a "veto" on dealing with the Movement.
- Second: In light of the fact that the nature and structure of the Jordanian-Palestinian relationship is complicated and complex, Mish'al calls for engaging in building a mutual (Jordanian and Palestinian) strategic dialogue to clearly define the framework for the relationship to operate under for both sides. This framework would delineate the political interests of the two peoples, the mechanisms and instruments that would be used in the conflict with Israel around final status negotiations and critical and fate-determining issues of common interest to both parties, such as resettlement (naturalization of Palestinians in Jordan) and the right to return, as well as in defining the parameters of the Palestinian state, which would be established on the 1967 borders; and, whether or not Jordan would accept an interim Palestinian state lacking in sovereignty.

According to Mish'al, there are major challenges and fundamental sources of threat common to both the Jordanians and the Palestinians. And, Jordan could construct a common vision with Hamas to confront such challenges and threats, despite the current disagreement between the two sides over political stakes.

As for the movement's position with regard to the decision to disengage from the West Bank (as declared by the late King Hussein in 1988) and the successive consequences and outcomes of this decision on the sovereign, political and legal level in terms of Jordan's domestic formula and in its relationship with the Palestinians, Mish'al responds that the movement is fully aware of the compound nature and complicated dimensions that are embodied in the relationship between the Jordanians and the Palestinians. He says the movement clearly differentiates between the social and political dimensions required for achieving the requirements of the political interests of both the Jordanians and the Palestinians, and for circumventing Israel's schemes. However, he sees that any decision that affects the destiny of both peoples, and that changes the structure and framework of the relationship between them must be the outcome of a core understanding and a consensus on all the various dimensions of such a decision between both sides.³²³

³²³ From an interview with Mish'al, *op. cit.*, October 15, 2009.

Conclusion:

Open-Ended Scenarios and Multiple Factors

During the last stages of reviewing the final draft of this book, new developments took place in the relationship between the Jordanian state and the Hamas Movement, where the Qatari mediation between the two sides came to fruition with a relative opening up between both sides. Warm letters and messages were exchanged among leading figures. Today, there are some speculations of possible new horizons opening up for the relationship between the two sides.³²⁴

The relationship will remain susceptible to developments and changes. A more profound strategic dialogue needs to evolve, which would draw clear lines of separation between interests, challenges, and threats, and which will push both sides to explore the gray areas to eliminate the ambiguity related to both sides' mutual concerns. Only such a dialogue will lead to an "equation" that will help both sides not only reach a mutual understanding, but also allow for putting in order the various Jordanian and Palestinian cards in the matter of the relationship between the two peoples, the Palestinian issue, the peace process, as well as other related complicated and thorny issues.

In the context of reviewing the factors impacting the stakes and choices for both Jordan and Hamas, while keeping account of the many different variables that affect the framework of this relationship, including the third party involved in this dynamic, the Organization of the Muslim Brotherhood, it is difficult to identify future scenarios and possibilities for this relationship, except in a play of numerical probabilities, which cannot provide a defined view of the specific indicators and variables that will determine the future.

The course of the peace process, and its success or failure, will be an important factor. The transformations taking place inside Hamas and inside the domestic Palestinian scene are also determining factors. The policy-making the regime in Amman, the individuals who influence it, as well as the domestic formulations governing the scene in Jordan are all also vital and dynamic factors. All these factors and components are notwithstanding the regional and global dynamics and changes, which will also hold the future of this relationship captive to their will!

Today, the path is paved and ready for working towards arriving at a scenario that guarantees meeting the lowest common denominator of interests required for both parties, represented in a process of dialogue, in communicating, in managing conflict, and positive objectivity. Alternatively, there are many scenarios that may also pave the way to further struggle, crises and conflicts, which would place all three parties (Jordan, the Hamas Movement, and the Muslim Brotherhood) in opposing and perhaps, confrontational trenches.

³²⁴ For more detail on these developments, see an article published in the Al-Sabeel newspaper, entitled, "*al-Majali Yuwalem li Nazzal wa al-Ikhwan*" (Lit. "Majali holds Reception for Nazzal and the Brotherhood"), October 22, 2011; and also see another article published by the same newspaper, "*Tawaqu'at bi Ziyarat Mish'al li Amman Qabl al-'Eid*" (Lit. "A Visit by Mishal to Amman Expected Before the Eid Holiday"), by Tamer al-Smadi, October 25, 2011; also refer to the Ammon News website, "*Mish'al Yuhatef al-Khasawneh Muhani'an wa Nazzal Yazourahou bi Manzilih*" ("Mishal Calls to Congratulate Al-Khasawneh and Nazzal Visits Him at His Home"); available at <http://www.ammonnews.net/article.aspx?articulo=100119>

Chapter Five

Conservative Salafism in Jordan: A Strategy for the “Islamization of Society” and an Ambiguous Relationship with the State

Introduction

The Conservative Salafist movement is one of the three most prominent movements in the Jordanian, grassroots-based Islamist scene. The other two movements include the Organization of the Muslim Brotherhood and the Jihadi Salafist current, with the latter representing the radical face of the Salafist *da'wa*.

Conservative Salafism is not an Islamist “organization” in the classical or hierarchical sense of the word. It is rather closer to a socio-religious current that is loosely structured around the relationships built between the sheikhs (religious leaders) and the students or *atbaa'* (disciples or followers). Conservative Salafists organize and commit by way of religious instruction, classes, seminars, religious circles, joint activities and their own particular scholarly approach or intellectual paradigm. They are further distinguished by a publicly declared refusal to engage or participate in political parties, partisan activities or any other institutionalized political framework, as this is considered contrary to their approach and intellectual paradigm.

Conservative Salafism began to form a presence in Jordan in the early 1980s when one of the most globally renowned sheikhs from the Salafist *da'wa*, Sheikh Mohammad Nasseruddin al-Albani,³²⁵ settled in Amman. The circle of Sheikh al-Albani's followers and students began to proliferate and a network expanded, based on Sheikh al-Albani's form of religious *da'wa* and his *fatwas* (religious edicts), not only inside but also outside Jordan through his and his followers' writings and books.

The nature of Conservative Salafist's thought is characterized by a strategy of direct engagement with its surrounding and prevailing socio-religious culture. Salafists, in general, consider their “mission” as one that rectifies peoples' beliefs, and of purging these beliefs of “*ibtida'a*”³²⁶ or “innovations” that are derived of and based on false, incorrect innovated ideas, notions and behaviors (which are not of the true religion in their perspective).

³²⁵ Sheikh Mohammad Nasserruddin al-Albani (1914-1999) is considered the original founder of the Traditional Salafist movement in Jordan. During his lifetime, he managed to formulate a new school of Salafism, which established him as one of the most prominent figureheads and symbols of the Salafist movement in the second half of the twentieth century, and which granted him an extensive popular reputation and acceptance in the Muslim world. His school of thought is distinguished by having special attributes that distinguish it from other, predecessor Salafist movements such as the Wahhabi Salafist movement in al-Hijaz [Saudi Arabia], the Reform Salafist movement in Egypt and the National Salafist movement in Morocco. However, it shares with all Salafist movements (as reform movements) the call to the return to the Book (Qur'an), the way of the Prophet (*Sunnah*) and the good path of the 'first three blessed generations' after the Prophet (or the Righteous Predecessors or *al-Salaf al-Saleh*). Other major objectives of these movements include rising up from the decline in scientific output, the collapse of the political systems and the colonial domination (in the Muslim world) by calling for a revival of the heritage of Islam, working to restore the pure image of Islam and ridding it of the infidel and innovative, heretical practices that have become associated with Islam over the course of history. The movement's goals are setting and strengthening authentic or original, uncontaminated Islamic moral values as summarized by the fundamental principles of the original monotheistic calling of obedience and of righteousness. [Reference: Mohammad Abu Rumman and Hassan Abu Hanieh's “Jordanian Salafism: A Strategy for the “Islamization of Society” and an Obscure Relationship with the State” (2010), published by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Amman Office.] [Translator's note].

³²⁶ *Ibtidaa'* (or *Bid'aa'*) linguistically means innovation, or creation, or creativity or invention, but also, in the religious sense, as implied, in this study and in the Salafist definition, it is meant in the context of innovating in the sense of originating a notion or attaching an extrinsic “innovation” to the core religion; or creating something that is additional, extrinsic to or not of the original text or religion. [al-Mawrid Arabic-English dictionary, Al-Baalbaki, Dar el-'Ilm li al-Malayin; 4th Edition, 1992 [Translator's note].

In a society such as Jordanian society, which historically had not come into contact with the Salafist *da'wa* as much as it had with Sufism and mysticism – Sufism had a large presence, even inside official and state-sanctioned religious institutions –, one could expect a violent confrontation to take place between the Salafists and their historic enemy, the Sufis. And, this is what would take place – the Salafists would wage a proverbial war against the Sufi school as they contended for a place in the socio-religious “spheres of influence” in Jordanian society.

The struggle with Sufism was not the only war the Salafists waged. Without a doubt, their principle battle was always and will remain to be with the Organization of the Muslim Brotherhood, which has always traditionally enjoyed an extensive presence in Jordan and network of social communications in Jordan’s mosques and popular bases. And, the Brotherhood’s religious and socio-political discourse has always had a clear presence, which has been communicated and entrenched by way of their imams, preachers and missionaries, and even university professors and technocrats who had an active presence within the organization.

From its earliest manifestations in Jordanian society, the Salafist *da'wa* declared its explicit disagreement with and opposition to the Muslim Brotherhood, its methodology and its school of thought. The Salafist opposition to the Muslim Brotherhood originated in the stance declared in Sheikh al-Albani’s intellectual discourse, which opposed any form of political participation and engagement – even if that political participation was Islamist in form or in structure. Indeed, he rejected political participation not only in the form of partisanship but also in any other form deemed part of the political system that operates within the framework of the modern nation-state. Sheikh al-Albani unequivocally and publicly attacked the religious beliefs and tenets of other Islamist groups, as he believed these groups or parties contradicted and violated – in theory, principle, and practice – the beliefs, tenets and *manhaj* (way and method) set forth by the *Salaf al-Saleh*.³²⁷

On the other hand, and on a more pragmatic level, the Conservative Salafists came to an unofficial agreement with the state; and, a sort of “marriage of interests” took place between the two sides. This arrangement partly emerged from the state’s recognition of certain benefits that the declared political position of the Salafists provided. Firstly, the Conservative Salafists outwardly rejected any form of involvement or engagement in the political process. Secondly, they called into question the idea of “political opposition” within the prevailing system of governance. And, finally, they had formally declared that pledging allegiance and obedience (*ta'aa*) to the governor was obligatory according to Islamic law (as the legitimate ruler or the legal guardian of the state). All of the aforementioned was notwithstanding the war the Salafists were waging against other Islamist organizations inside mosques and other social and cultural pulpits, which indirectly assisted successive Jordanian governments in their efforts to keep the influence of these other movements in check, particularly the Muslim Brotherhood, at first, and the Jihadists, later.

³²⁷ *Al-Salaf al-Saleh*: The Righteous (or Pious) Predecessors (or briefly: the *Salaf*) refers to the first and best three generations of Muslims who came after Prophet Mohammad. These three generations begin with the Companions (*Sahaba*) of the Prophet (Peace Be upon Him), their immediate followers (*Tabi'in*) and then the followers of the *Tabi'in*. These were praised by the Prophet (May Peace Be upon Him) as follows, “*The best of people is my generation, then those who come after them, then those who come after them*” [Bukhari and al-Muslim]. According to Salafists today, the term *Salaf* can also apply “to the scholars of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamaa’ah, who came after the first three “blessed” generations, and who followed the way of the Righteous Predecessors in their belief and practices”. [Reference: <http://www.qss.org/articles/salafi/text.html>] [Translator’s note].

Moreover, the official state apparatus benefited from the *fatwas*, lectures, sermons and discourse of the Conservative Salafists, which always supported the state, and thus served the interests of the state and its official policy line. With time, the Salafists were able to wrestle the (Islamist) religious discourse away from the exclusive ownership of all the other Islamist movements – all of whom stood in opposition to the state. In consequence, the prevailing Islamist discourse was soon divided into various positions. This division in the domestic Islamist arena actually permitted the government to gain a competitive edge over other Islamist groups, especially in light of its own official religious institution's paralysis when it came to confronting rival and oppositional religious currents.

Obviously, these Salafist “services” were not gratuitous. In return, the Salafists enjoyed extensive shelter and protection from the state's security, and reaped the benefits from a much larger measure of freedom to conduct their activities in mosques, schools, universities, and elsewhere than any other Islamist group. They were protected by the government from prosecution or accountability, even with regard to the funding that flowed from the Arab Gulf states towards the Salafist efforts, printing their books and in support of their diverse range of activities.

However, there was a dilemma present in this implicit agreement between the state and the Salafists. Indeed, it was a relationship based on a precarious, functional sort of opportunism because, at times, the Salafist discourse was markedly conservative and extreme. And, the government could not adopt or endorse this kind of socially and religiously conservative discourse without embarrassing itself, making the relationship between the two sides controversial, ambiguous and amorphous. For example, the Salafists took a conservative stand on the issue of what they considered proper attire, such as the Arab *thawbs* (a plain cotton gown) for males and the *Jilbab* or full covering dress, for females. They were against political and intellectual pluralism and took a harsh stance against the fine arts, literature, music, and any mixing of the sexes as well as many other manifestations of “modernity and modern society” that prevailed in Jordanian society.

Meanwhile, in the absence of any clear-cut, precise definition and consensus on what Salafism was itself, a struggle broke out between the “Conservative” school and all the other Salafist tendencies. There was an ongoing debate on the very entitlement of “Salafist” with both the Conservatives and the Jihadis claiming they were the only legitimate school that was representative of Salafist thought, of Salafist history and of Salafist politics – with each accusing the other of deviating from the righteous path.

The paradox lies in that Sheikh Nasseruddin al-Albani – the spiritual father of Conservative Salafism in Jordan – was by far one of the most influential and most active figures in forming and in instituting the term “Salafism” in the Islamist domain. He was also a critical figure in insisting and in emphasizing the importance of distinguishing this particular school from any other, to the point that many came to call Jordanian Salafists and the followers of Sheikh al-Albani as “Albanist Salafists”.

However, in the early 1990s and with the emergence of the other face of Salafism – the Jihadists – spawned by the spiritual father of Jihadi Salafism, Abu Mohammad al- Maqdisi, both currents began to spar over the name of “Salafism” and over who had the sole right to carry it.

Despite the serious struggle between these two currents and the very different political postures both held with regard to how one should deal with “modern” governments and regimes, they agreed on particular points of reference and emblematic figures, such as certain historically-influential religious scholars and jurists that had a presence in both currents’ intellectual and religious discourse. These figures included Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyya, Ahmad ibn Hanbal, al-Shawakani, and Mohammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, amongst others.

And, if the Conservative Salafists and the Jihadi Salafists are considered as representing two opposing sides of the Salafist school of thought in Jordan, today, we stand before numerous other, diverse forms of Salafism in the Arab world that go well beyond these two major currents in Jordan.

Undoubtedly, there is not one specific face of Salafism but rather many “Salafisms”. Historically, there is the Revivalist current or the “Enlightened” Salafists, which include the Reformist and Nationalist Salafist movements. These movements traditionally represent the most prominent schools of Salafism in the Arab world, as propagated by Islamic scholars such as Mohammad Rashid Rida and Abd al-Hamid ibn Badis, respectively, until such time that the Conservative Salafists, or the followers of the *da’wa* of Mohammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, began to emerge and spread in the early 1970s (particularly from its cradle in Saudi Arabia).

Conservative Salafism has been supported by oil money whether that support was earmarked for its global “missionary” institutions and structure or its religious publications, taped recordings and communications. An extensive network of individuals also exists, which works to spread the Conservative Salafist *da’wa* during the *hajj* (pilgrimage) and the *umra* (optional lesser pilgrimage), through the active mediation of those working in Saudi Arabia and in the Arab Gulf. These individuals have been imbibed with the education, teachings and ideas of Conservative Salafism through books, lessons, sermons, preaching, taped recordings, and later the Internet. All of the latter is notwithstanding the fact that the Saudi state has explicitly and openly adopted the Salafist creed and school of thought, in its conservative form.

The influence of Saudi support for Conservative Salafism has had a large impact on the rise and spread of this current in Jordan, especially in light of the very close geographic proximity of the two countries. This influence has been further reinforced by the large number of Jordanian expatriates in the Arab Gulf, who have become subject to, and influenced by, these ideas and views. Adding to the above are the thousands of scholarships provided for Jordanian students to attend Saudi universities. Certainly, all of the afore-mentioned factors have greatly facilitated the crossover of this school of Salafism in its religious ideas, discourse, and line of jurisprudence into Jordan and across vast segments of the Jordanian population. However, in an environment bristling with frustration, anger, and disappointment with successive governments, and in a society that directly interacts with politics on a daily basis, Conservative Salafism has yet to convince the Jordanian masses with its political discourse, which is usually in tandem with the state and governments.

In the meantime, one could safely state that in the last three decades the followings of Reform and Nationalist Salafism have progressively waned, and, a significant shift in the favor of Wahhabi Salafism has emerged, with Wahhabi Salafism manifesting itself into several forms that include Jihadi Salafism, the *Harakiya* Salafism, and Conservative Salafism.

In this chapter, first, we will work to methodically map out and extricate the definitions of and differentiations between the numerous forms of Salafism, and clarify where (Jordanian) Conservative Salafism falls within this mapping in order to create the underpinnings and groundwork to delve into the subject of this specific current in a detailed and in-depth manner with regard to its Islamic, social, and cultural context.

We also explore and trace the course taken by the “founding father” of Conservative Salafism in Jordan, Sheikh Nasseruddin al-Albani, and the important stages he underwent in his life that marked and influenced his religious, social, and political outlook and vision. The study then examines the rise of Conservative Salafism in Jordan and the various stages of its evolution and development. It will examine the ideology upon which this current is founded, summarizing its vision and its worldview on society, politics, Islamic heritage and tradition, and modernity. The Conservative Salafist outlook on how to effect “change” and its relationship with politics, theoretically and practically, is then examined. Finally, how all these ideas and postures reflected upon how the Conservative Salafists’ came to view other Islamist groups, (political) parties and movements is presented and analyzed.

The chapter attempts to present an overview and assessment of the Salafist movement’s presence in Jordan by examining its activities and its methodologies for activism. It looks into the way the relationship between its members, its leadership, and its followers, functions and examines its recruitment methodology. It presents an overview on the areas in which the movement has spread and the intellectual and socio-cultural background of its followers. The chapter also discusses Jordanian state policy with regard to Conservative Salafism.

1. Hybrid Ideological Maps: Conflicting and Converging Salafist Paths

The Conservative Salafist movement in Jordan is considered as one of the branches of the Salafist schools of thought in the Arab and Muslim world. But, relative to its widespread prevalence, what “Salafism” actually entails is quite ambiguous as the range of views in the prevailing terminology used to describe Salafism and define what it stands for vastly differs.³²⁸

The term *al-salafiya* is linguistically defined (in Arabic) as “of, related to (or relative) to a/the predecessor”; and, according to the dictionary, *Lisan al-Arab*, *salaf* is defined in singular form as *al-salif* or “the progressive one who came before; the ancestor; the predecessor”; and the word *al-salafiya* is the plural form of *al-salif* or “the progressive ones who came before; the ancestors; the predecessors”. The philologist and *mufasssir* (or exegete), al-Zajjaj, [d. 311 AH] explains the word *salafan* by defining it as “those of the past; those who have predeceased”. Meanwhile, according to al-Razi (d. 666 AH) in his famous dictionary, *Mukhtar al-Sahah*, *salaf* is “the past and the progressive (the advanced).” In the *Mu’jam Maqayees al-Lugha* written by Ibn Faris, it is defined as “the past (or that which has passed), the progressive (the advanced), and the former (the ones who came before) (those who set precedence).” And, according to the Holy Qur’an, God Almighty says:³²⁹ “We made them ‘salafan’ as a lesson for those who come after them and as an example to later generations.” (Al-Zukhruf [Sura 43:55-56]).³³⁰

³²⁸ For more details on the concept of and terminology used to define Salafism, see,

- Dr. Mustafa Hilmi, “*Al-Salafiya bayna al-‘Aqida al-Islamiya wa al-Falsafa al-Gharbiya*” (Lit., “Salafism between the Islamic Faith and Western Philosophy”), Dar al-Kotob al-Ilmiyyah, Beirut, Lebanon; 1st Edition: 2006.
- Dr. Mustafa Hilmi, “*Qawa’ed al-Manhaj al-Salafi fi al-Fikr al-Islami*” (Lit., “The Foundations of the Salafist Model in Islamic Thought”), Dar al Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, Beirut, Lebanon; 1st Edition: 2005.
- Dr. Mohammad Fathi Othman, “*Al-Salafiya fi al-Mujtama’aat al-Mu’asira*” (Lit., “Salafism in Contemporary Societies”), Dar al-Qalam, Kuwait; 2nd Edition: 1981.
- Dr. Mohammad ‘Abed al-Jabiri, “*Al-Haraka al-salafiya wa al-Jamaa’at al-Diniya al-Mu’asira fi al-Maghrib*” (Lit., “The Salafist Movement and the Contemporary Jamaa’at al-Diniya (Religious Group) in Morocco”, in “Contemporary Islamic Movements in the Arab World”, Markaz Dirasat Al-Wihda Al-Arabiyyah (Arab Unity Research Center), Beirut, Lebanon; 4th Edition: 1998; pp 187-236.
- Dr. Haidar Ibrahim, “*Al-Itijah al-Salafi*” (Lit., “The Salafist Trend”), in “Alam al-Fikr” Magazine; Volume 26, Issues 3 & 4; 1988; pp 11-36.
- Dr. Fahmi Jada’an, “*Ma’ana al-Salafiya: Al-Maadi fi al-Hader*” (Lit., “The Meaning of Salafism: The Past in the Present”); al-Mu’assasa al-‘Arabiyya li al-Dirasat wa al-Nashr, Beirut, Lebanon; 1st Edition: 1997; pp 79-104.
- Dr. Fahmi Jada’an, “*Al-Salafiya: Hududuha wa Tahawulatuha*” (Lit., “Salafism’s Boundaries and Transformations”), “Alam al-Fikr” Magazine; Volume 26, Issues 3 & 4; 1988; pp 61-96.
- Dr. Rajih Abd al-Hamid al-Kurdi, “*Al-Itijah al-Salafi bayna al-Asala wa al-Mu’asara*” (Lit., “The Salafist Trend between Tradition and Modernity”), Dar Ammar Publishing House, Amman, Jordan; 1st Edition: 1989.
- Dr. Mohammed Ramadan Sa’eed al-Bouti, “*Al-Salafiya Marhala Zamaniya Mubarakata, La Mathhab Islami*” (Lit., “Salafism: A Blessed Time Period and not an Islamic Sect”), Dar al-Fikr, Damascus, Syria; 1st Edition: 1988.

³²⁹ Translation taken from: <http://www.alquran-english.com/43-az-zukhruf/> and http://www.sarandibmuslims.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=234:a-glimpse-at-the-way-of-the-companions&catid=4:tawheed-&Itemid=7 [Translators note].

³³⁰ Dr. Anwar Abu Taha, “*Al-Salafiya: Itijahaat wa Qadhayaa*” (Lit., “Salafism: Trends and Issues”). The authors of this study benefited from Dr. Abu Taha’s valuable research into the various classifications of Salafism, as they did from the valuable research by Dr. Fahmi Jada’an in his two publications: “*Ma’na al-Salafiya: Al-Madhi fi al-Hader*” (Lit., “The Meaning of Salafism: The Past in the Present”); op. cit., pp 79-104 and “*Al-Salafiya: Hududuha wa Tahawulatuha*” (Lit., “Salafism’s Boundaries and Transformations”), op. cit., pp 61-96.

The above is merely a quick review of some of the linguistic definitions of *al-salafiya* as presented by authentic and credible sources. Undoubtedly, in its terminological references, the words (and concept) of “*salaf*” and “*salafiya*” have passed through long, historical phases and have been affected by profound intellectual transformations. This history of transformation has ultimately resulted in the reproduction of various Salafist trends, currents, groups and movements, all of which are encompassed by the general sphere of what is known as Salafism, today, in which all “Salafists” claim they are the followers or “representatives” of the original *Salaf al-Saleh* (Righteous Predecessors). Finally, in view of the inflexible, rigid and stern nature of all Salafist ideology – a nature which lends itself to constant fracture, division, fragmentation, splintering and dispersal – it continues to reproduce itself and proliferate in variant forms.

Despite the proliferation and diversity of *Salafiya* or “Salafisms” that exist today, all Salafists are united in one strict, unbending fundamental core idea: A return to the roots. However, beyond this core point of origin, they all differ in their terminological references and significations they believe are entailed by the term *al-Salafiya* (or Salafism). These differences in definition depend on which historical evolution of the word or concept, scholarly opinions, theoretical reasoning, and practical postures are followed and believed to be the “correct” reference.

Thus, in the Arab and Muslim worlds, conflicting and contradictory forms of *al-Salafiya* have developed and evolved such as *Da’wa*, Reform, Nationalist and Jihadi Salafism. Nevertheless, the common or prevailing historical reference that unites all forms of *al-Salafiya* points to a particular tendency which propagates following the path and way of the *Salaf al-Saleh*, by adopting them as a role model and precedent for the present. According to Salafist literature, the *Salaf al-Saleh* are “the first and best three generations of the history of *al-Ummah al-Islamiya*.”³³¹ The following Hadith of the Prophet Mohammad (May Peace Be Upon Him) is used as the terminological reference for this Salafist definition: “*The best of people is my generation, then those who come after them, then those who come after them, and after them there will come those who will bear witness, though they will not be asked to bear witness...*”³³²

This historical, terminological reference for *al-Salafiya* or “Salafism”, however, does not necessarily indicate a consensus on one specific notion that signifies a particular group and rejects another. There are those who consider *al-Salafiya* as a reform movement that aims to extract Muslims and the *Ummah* from its current state of scholarly and scientific stagnation, its political collapse and its subjugation under imperial hegemony, through the *da’wa* towards an Islamic revival, resurrection of Islamic tradition, and working towards restoring the pure, unadulterated image of Islam, and in purifying Islam of practices that originate in *bida’*a, customs, traditions and idolatrous and polytheistic practices (known as *Shirk* in Islam) – all of which have become

³³¹ The term *Ummah* should not be confused with the term *watan*: The term used today to signify “nation” or *watan* is a modern one, while the classical term *ummah* is used in a larger context to name a community without national geographic borders – or a community of (Islamic) faith and of common good. *Ummah* (or *al-ummah al-Islamiya*) is often translated into the Muslim nation, the Islamic community or Islamic world community. [Reference: “New Directions in Islamic Thought”, Hassan Hanafi; 2010 Center for International and Regional Studies; Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar; brief No. 4 p.7] [Translator’s note].

³³² From the Prophet’s Hadith (from Sahih al-Muslim and al-Bukhari) and, the Hadith continues [... and they will be treacherous and nobody will trust them, and they will make vows, but not fulfill them...]

[References: <http://www.qss.org/articles/salafi/text.html>; http://www.quranenglish.com/hadith/sahih_bukhari/076.htm] [Author and Translators note].

associated with the religion and have contaminated its purity over the course of time. This would be done simultaneously with the efforts of instilling authentic Islamic moral values and ethics.³³³

There are also those who view *al-Salafiya* as a protest “tendency” or “temperament”, which has risen in protest against developments that have embedded themselves in two of the most fundamental tenets of Islam: intellect and worship. This view sees this protest movement, temperament as having evolved historically without ever labeling itself as “*al-salafiya*” or Salafism. The rationale behind this view is that one does not find any one group or sect that identifies itself with this specific term or name, in the way that numerous other ‘groups’ do such as the Shiites, Khawarij, Mu‘tazila, Murji‘ah, amongst others.³³⁴

However, one can trace clear roots and origins for this “tendency” or “temperament.” We find the term *salaf* often mentioned in the early writings of the Malikiya and Hanbaliya schools of thought in Sunni Islam in the context of early intellectual and philosophical debates between the latter and those historically known as the Mu‘tazila. The debates and arguments that took place during this earlier period of Islamic history revolved around complex metaphysical issues such as the question of the creation and the eternal nature of the Qur’an, the ascribing of attributes to the divine character of God, or the issue of divine predestination in human action and decision.

Henceforth lies the relevance of the Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal (d. 241 AH) for modern-day Salafists, who consider him the first of the *fuqaha*’ (scholars in Islamic jurisprudence) in Sunni Islam. For the Salafists, Imam Hanbal’s frequent and fluctuating use of the word “*salaf*” in general and ambiguous contexts alludes to the Prophet’s *Sahaba* (Companions) and the *Tabi‘in* (those that followed, the followers) who rejected the idea of relying on rational debate and deliberation when dealing with issues and questions related to doctrine and worship. This reading evolved and took firm root in terms of *Ta’sili* (fundamentalist) theory with Ahmad Ibn Taymiyyah (661-728 AH), who used the term “*salaf*” to describe and differentiate Sunni Islamic scholars and the *Ahl al-Hadith* (Scholars of Hadith) from philosophers and theological *kalam* scholars of the Mu‘tazila and Ash‘ariya, among others.

The term “*salaf*” was used again by Sheikh Mohammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1115-1206 AH) in the 18th century (AD), who adopted the “creed” of the *Salaf al-Saleh*, in its Hanbali form (related to the religious doctrine, jurisprudence and scholarship of the Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal) in confronting and challenging other Muslim religious creeds and schools of jurisprudence. During this particular period, the use of the actual term, “*salafiya*”, begins to proliferate and becomes firmly entrenched.

When tracing the historical origins of this “tendency”, which later is actually labeled ‘*al-Itijah al-Salafi*,’ one finds that this tendency was born of no other than that current, which was and is still widely recognized as *Ahl al-Hadith* or *As’hab al-Hadith*. *Ahl al-Hadith* emerged during the second and third centuries of the Hijri calendar as a result of the power struggle, which took place between the *Ahl al-Hadith* and *Ahl al-‘Aqel* or *Ahl al-Ra’i* (“the People of Rhetorical Theology” or literally,

³³³ Taha Abd al-Rahman, “*Al-‘Amal al-Dini wa Tajdid al-‘Aql*” (Lit. “Religious Work and the Revival of Reason”); al-Markiz al-Thaqafi al-Arabi”, (the Arab Cultural Center), Beirut, Lebanon; 2nd Edition: 1997, p. 90.

³³⁴ Dr. Abd al-Hakim Abu Al-Lawz, “*Al-Harakat al-Salafiya fi al-Maghrib (1971-2004)*” (Lit. “Salafist Movements in Morocco: From 1971-2004, a socio-anthropological study”), published by Markaz Dirasat Al-Wihda Al-Arabiyyah, Beirut, Lebanon, 1st Edition: 2009, p. 38.

“the People of Reason or of Opinion”) over the institution and frame of reference that had the legitimate right to “esoteric” interpretation of the text of the Qur’an and the Hadith after the death of the Benevolent Prophet (May Peace Be Upon Him).

In the view of *As’hab al-Hadith*, the *Salaf al-Saleh* of the *Sahaba* were the only reference for esoterically interpreting and illuminating the text. They saw that it was the task of the *Khalaf* (all the Muslims that came after the *Salaf al-Saleh*; literally, “the offspring”) to ascribe to the *Salaf al-Saleh* as they are the origin, the pure source, the ultimate reference, and they were the role model to be followed in Islamic understanding, knowledge and behavior.

As’hab al-Hadith also saw that the current of *Ahl al-Ra’i* and *Ahl al-‘Aqel* (the People of Rhetorical Theology, Reason or Opinion), whose discourse was grounded in the “spirit of the Greeks” (alluding to Greek rhetoric and philosophy), may infringe upon the methodological fundamentals and bases upon which Islam itself was founded. Furthermore, they viewed that these *Ahl al-Kalam* (Scholars of speculative theology) and these people of opinion, rhetoric and the philosophers, would arrive at no more than mere *bid’a* – or “re-inventing of matters” and “innovations” –, which one was duty bound to confront and respond to for the sake of preserving the “pure, unadulterated” Islam against the intrusion of the “alien and extrinsic”.

And, if this “*Tarikhiya* (Historical)” Salafism emerged in response to the rational, rhetorical and separatist (Mu’tazila) tendencies, which also emerged around the time of Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal and *Ahl al-Hadith*, it would face further internal and external challenges in the era of Ibn Taymiyyah. As for Salafism in its Wahhabi form, it would soon become beset by internal stagnation and perversions, which took place in the name of religion, and in defense of its identity and its alleged purity.

With the colonial challenges (from the 19th century onward), which took place across the Muslim world, new hybrid forms of Salafisms came to being. Nationalist Salafism rose as an alternative in the armed struggle against colonialism. Meanwhile and simultaneously, Reform Salafism carried the banner of progress and revival against all forms of Western intrusion, and attacked the West as a civilization in itself. *Harakiya* (Movement) Salafism rose to confront colonial influences in states that had gained their independence, and called for a return to the Caliphate, or Islamic State, which disappeared as a result of colonialism. According to this trend, the disappearance of the Caliphate was embodied in the modern “nation-state” in the Arab and Muslim worlds, which was nothing more than a mere colonialist inheritance. Meanwhile, Jihadi Salafism emerged to use force in fighting the modern nation-state, which they considered “apostate,” and society, which they considered “ignorant” (*Jahili*).

Historical Salafism: The Triumph of Obsession in “Doctrinal-Religious Identity”

Historical (*Tarikhiya*) Salafism is described as a revivalist religious tendency or current that places monumental importance on the issue of its singular identity, its uniqueness and its purity. As a movement, *Tarikhiya* Salafism adheres strictly to the texts attributed to the *Salaf al-Saleh*; and, its main concerns and focus are placed on issues of faith and belief, and related forms of worship.

Tarikhiya Salafism emerged in its first form in the 3rd century (AH), with the founding father of this school of Salafism considered to be Imam Ahmad Bin Hanbal (d. 241 AH).

The calamity produced by the claim that the Qur'an was a (mortal) creation in 218 (AH) is considered a historic turning point in the evolution of the Salafist trend, and its ongoing confrontation with these "innovative" and "Rationalist" currents that base their thought on the principle of *Ta'wil* (esoteric interpretation) rather than submitting to and abiding by the manifest and apparent meanings of Divine revelation, which the Tarikhiya salafists believed in.

With the end of the 'Abbasid Caliphate in the 7th Century (AH), and following the fall of Baghdad at the hand of the Tartars in the year 656 (AH), a second, more mature form of Salafism emerged. This time, this Salafism would be more clear in its following of Ibn Taymiyya (661-728 AH) and his school of thought, which held *Ahl al-Bid'a* (the Innovators) (that included sects such as the Jahmiya, Qadariya, al-Batiniya, as well as mystics, Sufis and philosophers) responsible for the fall of Baghdad and for the degradation of Islam and the Caliphate. Ibn Taymiyya launched a vicious campaign against all these currents, calling for a revival of the creed of *al-Salaf al-Saleh* and their *manhaj* (Method/Approach). He was able to establish a school of thought that attracted a multitude of scholars and *fuqaha* (scholars in Islamic jurisprudence), who were contemporaries of his time.

Tarikhiya Salafism reached its heights of maturity and comprehensiveness with Ibn Taymiyya. The Salafist *manhaj* crystallized, with a clear vision and theological outlook that reflected the new current's rules and issues in a precise and definitive manner. This era defined certain milestones for all the others who would come after Ibn Taymiyya and become adherents of "Salafism".

Over the course of many centuries, Tarikhiya Salafism would be represented by a wide range of scholars, who would be difficult to enumerate in the scope of this study. However, the most important of these scholars included, in the first wave of Salafism, Abu Ja'afar al-Tahawi (d. 321 AH), Ibn Batta al-'Akbari al-Hanbali (d. 387 AH), Abu Bakr Ahmad ibn al-Hussein al-Bayhaqi (d. 458 AH); and, in a second wave, other such scholars included Aba Shaama al-Maqdisi (d. 665 AH), Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751 AH) and Ibn Rajab al-Hanbali (d. 795 AH). Emerging in a subsequent period was Ibn Abi al-'Izz al-Hanafi (d. 792 AH), who elucidated the "Tahawiya Creed" in a treatise that has become a pillar and frame of reference for Tarikhiya Salafist theological scholarship and thought.

The Tarikhiya Salafist system of belief and worship is based on the founding principle of "*al-Itbaa' la al-Ibtidaa'*" or "Following (adhering to and obeying), rather than Innovating (or inventing or originating ideas, or 'heresies' in the opinion of Salafists, which are not part of the text in a fundamental or literal sense). This founding principle finds its roots in a saying attributed to the Companion of the Prophet Abdullah ibn Mass'oud, "*Follow, and do not innovate*"³³⁵ and the saying by Ibn Taymiyya which claims, "that which consummates religion are two fundamental principles: That we worship no other than God, and that we worship Him through no other than that

³³⁵ Narrated by al-Dirami and Ibn Abi Khaythama recounted in the book, "*Al-'Ilm bi Sannad Sahih*" (The Book of Knowledge with Sound Chain of Transmittance), as did al-Baghawi in his exposition on the Sunnah in *Sharh al-Sunnah*, as did al-Lalika'i, al-Harawi and Mohammad ibn Nasr al-Marwazi.

which He has put forth as law. We do not worship him through innovation”³³⁶ – with worship understood as being based in the laws of Islam and following them, and not upon one’s base desires and “innovations”.

These two texts encapsulate the religious position and opinions embraced by Tarikhiya Salafism. They were further outlined by the religious jurist and *faqih* (scholar in Islamic jurisprudence) Abu Abdullah al-Tahawi in his famous doctrine “*Bayan al-Sunnah wa al-Jamaa’ah*”, (A Treatise on the Sunnah and its Followers), which later became a theological constitution and charter for all Salafist currents.³³⁷

Wahhabi Salafism: The Founding of Modern and Contemporary Salafism

Wahhabi Salafism emerged from the womb of Tarikhiya Salafism at the turn of the 18th century (AD) and continued to spread throughout the Arabian Peninsula until the early 19th century through the teachings of its founding father, Mohammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab. The specific form of *da’wa* developed by Mohammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab called for *al-Tawhid*³³⁸ and for rejecting any notions of *al-hulul* (divine incarnation) and *al ittihad* (unity of being) in the religious creed. It strongly emphasized the role and responsibility of the human being in this effort and forbade the creation of any intermediary or intercession with anyone or anything but God in worship and in faith, while it rejected calls for reviving *ijtihad* (intellectual reasoning).

A great number of scholars from various parts of the Islamic world were influenced by Abd al-Wahhab’s calling, with the most prominent of these including Mohammad Nouh al-Ghallati in al-Madina al-Munawara (1752-1803 AD), Vali al-Din al-Dahlawi in India (1702-1762 AD), Mohammad ibn Ali al-Shawkani in Yemen (1760-1834 AD), Shihab al-Din Mahmoud al-Aalousi in Iraq (d. 1803 AD) and Othman ibn Foudi in Africa (b. 1756 AD).

³³⁶ Ibn Taymiyya, Taqi al-Din Abu al-Abbas Ahmad ibn Abd al-Halim, “*Majmou’ Fatawa Sheikh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyya*”, compiled and edited by Abd al-Rahman ibn Mohammad ibn Qassem and his son, The Library of al-Nahda al-Haditha, Holy Mecca, 1404 AH, p. 10.

³³⁷ See Nasser ibn Abdel Karim al-’Aqel, “*Mabaheth fi Aqeedat Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamaa’ah, wa Mawjif al-Harakat al-Islamiya al-Mu’asira minha*” (Lit. “In the Creed and Doctrine of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamaa’ah and the Position of Contemporary Islamist Movements Towards it”) and his other research on contemporary Islamic movements and their stances with regard to this creed and doctrine, Dar al-Watan Publishing House; 1st Edition, 9/12/1412 AH, pp. 40-46.

³³⁸ *Tawhid, al-* (also, *tauheed, tawheed, tauhid*) refers to Islamic monotheism, unification (with God), and the oneness of God and the uniqueness of God, [Reference: *The Life, Teachings and Influence of Muhammad ibn Abdul-Wahhab*, <http://www.sultan.org/books/wahhabism.pdf>] Also, tawhid means to accept and believe in the uniqueness of His Message. It means to worship God alone, and to worship Him in accordance with His legislation. [Reference: “*An Introduction to the Salafi Da’wa*”, <http://www.qss.org/articles/salafi/text.html>] Also, Islam does not recognize any geographic borders or ethnic differences as it transcends all human particularities. The name “Islam” is not derived from the name of a prophet nor is it derived from the name of a people. Rather, Islam is derived from the name of an act of freedom not of surrender, and from a human being not a slave even of God (*Abd*). In slavery, as a psychological structure, mastership may switch from God to the Sultan, ruler, governor, head of state, leader, senior, etc., but the structure of authoritarianism remains the same. Freedom is followed by equality. A society of free men and women is a society of equals, irrespective of ethnicity, heredity, social class, and other kinds of human differences. If social discrepancies between classes do occur, social justice will bring human beings back to a state of equality. These three principles are the outcome of *Tawhid*, or unification. [Reference: “*New Directions in Islamic Thought*”, Hassan Hanafi; 2010 Center for International and Regional Studies; Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar; brief No. 4 p.7] [Translator’s note]

With certainty, Wahhabi Salafism is considered the guiding paradigm for all the Salafisms that followed this period and which emerged later in both the Arab and the Muslim worlds. And, the term “Salafism” has come to be accepted and coined in the terminological reference with which it is recognized today. Indeed, all the forms of modern “Salafisms” present today are borne of the womb of Wahhabi Salafism – a womb from which new Salafisms continue to emerge.

Today, the term Salafism has become interchangeable with the Wahhabi movement. Both have come to be identified by the same terminological reference that represents a certain sect with specific points of views and opinions in the modern Islamic domain. From a religious perspective, Wahhabi Salafism is considered a “reform and purification movement” or a puritan reform mission, which aims to preserve (Islamic) identity by holding fast to the self-evident texts, the Qur’an and the Hadith, and which is founded upon a somewhat literal understanding of these texts with regard to the creed of Islam, its symbolism and rituals.

Wahhabi Salafism has traditionally waged an aggressive battle against Sufi currents and sects and their religious practices, accusing them of acting on sorcery and superstition. In this battle against the other sects, Wahhabi Salafism has called for a return to the purity of *tawhid* and the clarity of the Islamic faith.

Politically, Wahhabism initially came about in rebellion against the Ottoman Caliphate despite the fact that the movement itself did not possess any direct political ambitions or interests. From the very beginning, public affairs in the Arabian Peninsula have been divided up between the House of Aal-Sa’ud and the House of Aal al-Shaikh. The House of Aal al-Shaikh took on the task of religious affairs, which took the form of Wahhabi Salafism, while the House of Aal-Sa’ud took on the task of political affairs. With regard to the way it dealt with political authority, Wahhabi Salafism reverted to the general position and precedent of Tarikhiya Salafism, which called for the obligation of and need for obedience to the political authority as the legal guardians of the state.

Reform Salafism: The Triumph of Revival over Identity

Reform (*Islahiya*) Salafism was influenced by both Wahhabi and Tarikhiya Salafism, with the difference being that Reform Salafism appeared at the same time as the interaction with the West began, following the period of colonization that had permeated both the Arab and Muslim worlds. Subsequently, this movement exchanged its focus away from religious posturing and jurisprudence to what they saw as the priority or problem, becoming preoccupied with the concern of “progress versus regression and backwardness” of the Arab and Muslim worlds in the face of westernization.

There has always been a debate over whether Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838-1897 AD) or Sheikh Mohammad ‘Abduh (1849-1905 AD) had more right to the claim of establishing the original term of Reform Salafism, based on the different approaches both men took to presenting the religious creed of Salafism. However, in general, the student of both scholars, Mohammad Rashid Rida (1865-1935 AD), was likely the closest in terms of his doctrinal *manhaj* (approach) to Tarikhiya Salafism earlier in his life and leaned towards Wahhabi Salafism later.

Reform Salafism emerged in the context of prevailing reactions to the challenges posed by the modern West on the Muslim world, at that time. As a movement, it aimed to reform the problems of the backwardness and regressive Muslim reality and work towards the challenge of instigating an Islamic renaissance and thus, progress. Working towards achieving these aims was the major concern for Reform Salafists; and, it became more important to them than the issue of the “Islamic identity” being threatened by the contemporary modernity of the West.

Perhaps this fundamental difference could be summarized in Reform Salafism’s “rational” bent, and, this rationality came with the recognition by a majority of politically inclined Salafists – who supported al-Afghani’s doctrine – that, indeed, took the task to mobilize people with the goal of gathering popular support for al-Afghani’s reform program. Sheikh Mohammad Rashid Rida himself was not far from this rational tendency before he returned to a form of Salafism closer to Tarikhiya Salafism, and a Wahhabi form of Tarikhiya Salafism, to be specific.³³⁹

Reform Salafism worked towards reviving the *ummah* by calling for the *ummah* to acquire from the industry and scientific advances of the West – especially as Reform Salafists considered these advances as being original and authentic to Islam, in any case – and to use these advances as tools in confronting the challenges coming to the Arab and Muslim worlds from Europe. Reform Salafism was not to be satisfied with a mere reform of the religious creed, or unifying the internal front in their opinions on matters of faith, worship and in fighting *al-bid'a* as did other Salafist movements, rather, it eagerly pushed for the reform and rehabilitation of the deteriorating conditions in the political and social affairs of Muslims.

Nationalist Salafism: A Marriage between Reform and Political Liberation

Nationalist (*Wataniya*) Salafism is a term that is used to describe religious Salafist movements whose focus centered on opposing and resisting Western colonization of Muslim lands, based on the belief in the concept and logic of Islamic jihad (struggle) as a legitimate means and instrument that can be used to oppose aggression and occupation. This “resistance” had as its ultimate aim the establishment of an Islamic state and nation, following the fall of colonization and the subsequent independence of modern Arab and Muslim nations.

Nationalist Salafism had its largest presence and was mainly concentrated in the Maghreb (the North African Arab Countries (or *al-Maghreb al-Arabi*). The most prominent pioneers of Nationalist Salafism in the Maghreb included Abd al-Hamid ibn Badis (1889-1940 AD), ‘Allal al-Fassi (1910-1974 AD), Sheikh Abu Shu‘ayb al-Dakkali (1878-1937 AD) and Sheikh al-Islam Mohammad ibn al-‘Arabi al-‘Alawi (1880-1964 AD) in Morocco.

Nationalist Salafism combined concerns for revival and reform with the nationalist cause of liberation from colonization. Sheikh al-Islam Mohammad ibn al-‘Arabi al-‘Alawi emerged as the most influential figure in the evolution of Nationalist Salafism in the Maghreb. He was not only

³³⁹ See Muhammad Abu Rumman’s “*Bayna Hakimiyyat Allah wa Sultat al-Ummah: Al-Fikr al-Siyasi li al-Shaikh Muhammad Rashid Rida*” (Lit., “Between Divine Governance and Sovereignty and the Ummah’s Authority: The Political Thought of Sheikh Mohammad Rashid Rida”), *Mashrou‘ al-Qira‘a li al-Jamee‘* (The Reading for All Project), Maktabat al-Usra al-Urduniya, Ministry of Culture, Amman, Jordan, 2010, pp. 9-15.

content with merely combating Sufi currents, which were loyal to the local authorities (protectorate authorities, who administered local affairs for colonialist powers), but also embarked upon directly resisting French colonialism by denigrating its policies and inciting popular efforts against it. The latter was in addition to his joining the ranks of revolutionaries from the more rural areas and populations and continually advocating the cause for national liberation, despite the arbitrary harassment and arrest he continuously suffered.³⁴⁰

Thus, Tarikhiya or Traditional Salafism in its Wahhabi form was transformed by ibn al-'Arabi al-'Alawi in Morocco into a religious ideology, which was later adopted by the *Makhzan* (of the ruling regimes Morocco) as a tool against the recalcitrance of the Tuareg and their rebellions. Nationalist Salafism transformed into a nationalist struggle Salafism, and created the first generation of men in the national resistance movements in Morocco and offered them the Arab and Islamic intellectual foundation for their modernist revivalist aspirations and their political struggle.

Harakiya Salafism: Combining between Salafi Da'wa and Institutionalization

Harakiya (Movement/Organizational) Salafism emerged from the womb of the Muslim Brotherhood, which was founded by Imam Hassan al-Banna (1906-1948 AD) at a time when Islamic reform parties were confronted by cultural and political crises and an inability to transcend traditional Islamic thinking or develop appropriate alternatives for contemporary realities.

The Muslim Brotherhood came about as a counter reaction to the crises in thought and consciousness suffered by revivalist and reform activism. In its nascent stage, the Brotherhood was a revivalist movement concerned with matters of worship and rituals, as well as the issues of Islamic identity and ethics. During its first decade, it did not concern itself with the larger political, nationalist and social issues at hand. Yet, what differentiated the Brotherhood from all the other reform movements at that time was the fact that it was a populist rather than an elitist movement.

Perhaps the greatest influence in transforming the Brotherhood's reformist vision came at the hands of Sayyid Qutb (despite the fact that Qutb is not readily acknowledged by Salafist scholars or researchers of contemporary thought, yet he is actually considered the spiritual father of Jihadi Salafism, particularly in terms of its political dimension). Sayyid Qutb initiated and launched an open (and, thus not underground) Harakiya Salafist movement that criticized the very foundations of the state in modern Islamic countries and, for that matter, in the world in its entirety. He called for re-establishing the Islamic state based on the concept of "*al-Hakimiya*,"³⁴¹ where governance

³⁴⁰ See the translation of Muhammad ibn al-Arabi al-'Alawi at the website of the *Tawhid wa al-Islah al-Maghribiya* movement, June 10, 2010 available at <http://www.alislah.ma/2009-10-07-11-58-22/item/14704-%D9%85%D8%AD%D9%85%D8%AF-%D8%A8%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%B1%D8%A8%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%88%D9%8A.html>

³⁴¹ *Al-Hakimiya* is the notion that divine governance and sovereignty is the ideal form of governance versus the contemporary state of ignorance, which the Salafists call "*al-Jahiliya*"; [Reference: "*The Jihadi Salafist Movement in Jordan after Zarqawi: Identity, Leadership Crisis and Obscured Vision*" by Mohammad Abu Rumman and Hassan Abu Haniyeh, published by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Amman Office]. [Translator's note]

and sovereignty was for God alone and his core ideas were presented in his book, “*Ma’alim fi al-Tareeq*” (known as “Milestones”), which paved the way for the birth of Jihadi Salafism.³⁴²

Jihadi Salafism: The Shift towards Open Confrontation with Ruling Regimes

Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966 AD) is considered the original founding father of contemporary Jihadi Salafist movements. Qutb’s ideas formed an intellectual rupture in the school of thought in Islamic reform, just as his book “Milestones” became the constitution and the declaration upon which the ideology of all Jihadi movements would be based. “Milestones” was a cornerstone in the formation of their vision, their organizational model and approach and the methodology for their work and for affecting change. This was all notwithstanding the fundamental principles upon which Jihadi Salafism was founded, which stemmed from Qutb’s founding concepts of “*al-Hakimiya*” and “*al-Jahiliya*” (contemporary state of ignorance, as in the pre-Islamic days in Arabia) that became the moral backbone for their confrontational nature, both domestically and on a global scale.³⁴³

The first of the modern Jihadi Salafist movements made its appearance in 1973 when Dr. Saleh Sariyah established an organization that later became known as *al-Faniya al-Askariyah* (the Military Technical Unit). Sariyah’s organization attempted a military coup in Egypt in 1974.³⁴⁴ Sariyah is considered the first to develop a comprehensive vision for the work of Jihadi Salafists in his book “*Risalat al-Eman*” (“The Message of Faith”).³⁴⁵ Indeed, the most renowned organization, belonging to the school of Jihadi Salafism, was *Tanthim al-Jihad* (“The Jihad Organization”), its most prominent leader being Mohammad Abd al-Salam Faraj,³⁴⁶ who authored the book “*al-Farida al-Gha’ibah*” (“The Neglected Duty”). In this book, he integrates many of the ideas of Tarikhiya Salafism with Wahhabi and Harakiya Salafism.

³⁴² Regarding the transformations brought about by Sayyid Qutb in the thought of the Muslim Brotherhood, and how he paved the way for the rise of other manifestations of Islamist movements, see Muhammad Abu Rumman, “*Al-Islah al-Siyasi fi al-Fikr al-Islami*” (Political Reform in Islamic Thought), op. cit, pp. 181-190.

³⁴³ For more discussions on these concepts and the confrontations, see chapter 6 of this study on Jihadi Salafism.

³⁴⁴ After the attempted coup that was planned by the organization at the Military Technical Academy in Egypt in 1974, Saleh Sariyah (and Kareem al-Anadouli) received death sentences and various sentences were issued against others. After that, Engineer Ahmad Saleh was elected from among those who were acquitted as the general leader of the organization, which was then reshaped. The security apparatus dealt a blow to the organization in 1977 and a large number of its leaders and members were tried in what was known in the media as the ‘Jihadi Organization Case’. Ahmad Saleh was sentenced to ten years in prison, while the others received different sentences. [Reference: “*History of the Jihad Group in Egypt: A Summary*”, by Abdel-Mon’em Moneeb Islamist Writer, available at http://www.islamonline.net/servelet/Satellite?c=Article_C&cid=1201958066022&pagename=Zone-English-Living_Shariah%2FLSELayout] [Translator’s note]

³⁴⁵ Regarding the role of Saleh Sariyah and the treatise of “*Risalat al-Eman*”, see the reading by Muntasir al-Zayyat, a lawyer of Islamist groups in Egypt, on his website entitled “*Safahat min Tarikh al-Haraka al-Islamiya al-Mu’asira*” (Lit. “Pages from the History of the Contemporary Islamist Movement”), (III), March 20, 2004.

³⁴⁶ Mohammad ‘Abd al-Salam Faraj (1952-1982) was an Egyptian engineer who was one of Egypt’s most important Islamic revolutionary theorists and organizers. His contribution to the Qutbist/Jihadi theory of Islamic revolution was ultimately unsuccessful in that his group was quickly crushed without succeeding in overthrowing established authority in Egypt, much less establishing an Islamic state. However, Faraj’s ideas are important to subsequent revolutionary models. Faraj is clearly part of the post-1966 Salafist movement, being inspired by Maulana Maududi (<http://www.pwhce.org/maududi.html>) and Muslim Brother Sayyid Qutub and their interpretation of Ibn Taymiyyah’s writings. He rejected many of his contemporary Salafists, including the Muslim Brotherhood, for seeking integration with prevailing political process and for allegedly shirking the duty of jihad. [Reference: PWHCE Middle East Project, found on the following link: <http://www.pwhce.org/faraj.html>] [Translator’s note]. See the text of Al-Jihad: Al-Farida al-Gha’iba on the Al-Kalema Salafist available at <http://www.alkalema.net/algehada.htm>

The jihad in Afghanistan also played a large role in advancing the proliferation of Jihadi Salafism. Indeed, its spread assumed great energy and speed in the Arab and Muslim worlds after the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the collapse of the Socialist paradigm itself. During this period, dozens of Jihadi Salafist movements were established and launched throughout the Arab and Muslim worlds. This phenomenon led later to the evolution and establishment of the *al-Qaeda* organization under the command of Osama Bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri, who worked towards globalizing a Jihadi Salafism from which numerous theorists and sheikhs emerged, The most prominent of which are ‘Abdullah ‘Azzam, Abu Mohammad al-Maqdisi, Abu Qatada al-Filastini, Abu Yahya al-Libi, amongst others.

Conservative Salafism: A Match Made between Tarikhiya and Wahhabi Salafism

Some prefer to call Conservative Salafism “Theological” Salafism, while others refer to this particular form of Salafism as “Scholarly” or “Traditional” Salafism. The market for this form of Salafism began to evolve in a noteworthy manner in the early 1970s. This “emerging market” reflected the impact of oil money and the growing Saudi role and influence on the spread of the Wahhabi Salafist *da‘wa* during the Cold War period, and in the ongoing confrontation and struggle between the West’s capitalist camp and the East’s Communist camp.

During that period, religious, “missionary” and charitable institutions and organizations were also established and supported by Saudi Arabia flourished in a bid to confront the rebellious leftist “calling” in the Arab world, which was posing a serious threat to conservative Arab regimes. Subsequently, the “official” religious establishment was also reinvigorated and given extensive authority in alliance and coordination with the state.

These vigorous Saudi-supported endeavors echoed and reflected upon several countries – including Jordan. This dynamic contributed to the rise of the Conservative (or Traditional) Salafist School, which integrated the Tarikhiya Salafist’s focus on religious identity, on the one hand, with Wahhabi Salafism’s confrontational nature when it came to *ibtidaa’* or “innovation” and deviant behavior, on the other hand. But, this particular form of Salafism had one novel characteristic relative to the other Salafisms in its alliance with conservative Arab governments, which, in return, provided the Conservative (Traditional) Salafists with all kinds of legal entitlements.

In Saudi Arabia, the most notable face of Conservative Salafism has been embodied by the Council of Supreme Scholars, which is also considered the higher representative body of the official religious authority in the country. The Saudi council included such imminent figures as Ibn Baaz and Ibn al-‘Athaymin, both of whom are considered the spiritual fathers of Traditional Salafism. Meanwhile, Sheikh Mohammad Nasseruddin al-Albani is considered the actual founder of Conservative Salafism in Jordan.

Hence, Jordanian Conservative Salafism may be classified under this latter framework of (Traditional) Salafism. It is marked by hybrid characteristics that combine the Tarikhiya Salafist creed in its focus on religious doctrine and in its claim of representing *Ahl al-Hadith* and the doctrine of Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Ibn Taymiyya, and Mohammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, as well as the

spiritual paternity ascribed to Nasseruddin al-Albani, on the one hand, and between Wahhabi Salafism in its focus on waging war against *al-bid'a*, or innovations, and deviant behavior, on the other.

2. Nasseruddin al-Albani: The “Founding Father” of Conservative Salafism in Jordan

The path of Conservative Salafism in Jordan was impressed upon and impacted by the life of its founding sheikh, Mohammad Nasseruddin al-Albani (1914-1999). Sheikh al-Albani’s life took place during an era of prolonged and volatile historical periods in the Arab and Muslim worlds. His arduous personal journey and his observations on the socio-political environment he experienced throughout his life resulted in his coronation as one of the prominent and leading sheikhs and Salafist scholars in the Arab world in particular, and in the Muslim world in general.

Reviewing the course of his life and the major milestones he passed through allows one to better identify the circumstances and conditions that led him to “establish” his school of Traditional Salafism, which reconciled itself with the state and its political regimes and one that suffered from clashes with society and with other Islamist movements, and was brimming with “ideological rigidity”.

Al-Albani emigrated with his family from Albania to Damascus in Syria in 1922, after Ahmad Zagho took over power in Albania. Following the footsteps of Atatürk, Zagho took extensive measures to lead the country into secular modernization after the fall of the Ottoman Caliphate State.

Consequently, al-Albani grew up in the shadow of the colonization that the Muslim world was subjected to, and under which Syria had been turned into a French mandate by 1920. He also grew up in a poor family, which was conservatively religious and which followed the Hanafiya *madhab* (school of law in *fiqh* or Islamic jurisprudence within Sunni Islam).³⁴⁷ His Salafist leanings began to evolve through his readings of “*al-Manar*” magazine, a publication issued by Mohammad Rashid Rida (1865-1935 AD) and his followers.³⁴⁸

His interest began with studying the Prophet’s Hadith at an early age; and, he received an education that was parallel to and outside the regular school system, as the regular schools operated under a colonialist policy. The socio-political changes that were taking place at the time al-Albani was growing up played an important role in his character formation, in addition to his own personal motivation and religious incentives.

As an ethnic Albanian, who also came from a marginalized and impoverished class, he did not enjoy the kind of patronage and shelter of relatives or relations, which was required in order to engage and advance in the local game of wealth and authority. Perhaps this mix was the incentive that led al-Albani to focus on a different path, and to work towards breaking social, economic and political barriers instead of trying to achieve symbolic positions of prestige and influence in the manifest, material world. Thus, he devoted a majority of his time to learning the Prophet’s Hadith

³⁴⁷ Mohammad ibn Ibrahim al-Shaibani, “*Hayat al-Albani wa Atharuhu wa Thanaa’ al-’Ulama’ ‘Alaiyhi*” (Lit., “The Life of al-Albani, His Influence and the Praise of Scholars upon Him”), Manuscripts and Heritage Center, Kuwait; 2nd Edition, 2004, 1/400.

³⁴⁸ Issam Mousa Hadi, “*Muhaddith al-’Asr al-Imam Muhammad Nasseruddin al-Albani Kama ‘Arifuh*” (Lit., “Imam Mohammad Nasseruddin al-Albani as I Knew Him”), Dar al-Saddiq, al-Jubail, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; 1st Edition, 2003, p. 11.

and participated in the cultural activities that flourished during that period of the French mandate, which aimed to preserve Islamic identity and impede the process of Westernization that came with French colonization.³⁴⁹

Numerous publications also emerged during that same period. The “*Al-Tamadun al-Islami*” (“Islamic Civility”) magazine, published by the Islamic Civilization Society in Damascus, was the magazine and publication of most interest for al-Albani. Several essays written by al-Albani that focused on the study of the Prophet’s Hadith were published in this magazine.³⁵⁰

In the 1930s, Syria experienced the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood, which established itself through a charitable organization founded in 1939.³⁵¹ The Brotherhood had established many other charitable organizations and societies throughout Syria. However, during its fifth conference held in 1944, which was considered the founding conference for the organization, the “*Shabab Mohammad*” (“Mohammad’s Youth”) organization was officially transformed into the Organization of the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria and Lebanon.³⁵²

Al-Albani developed close ties with the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria, although he never officially joined the organization. He was particularly close to the Salafist wing of the Damascene Brotherhood, which was headed by Mustafa al-Siba’ai, then Issam al-‘Attar, followed by Zuhair al-Shaweesh. He engaged in numerous debates with the Ash’ari Sufis, who formed a wing in the Aleppo Brotherhood led by Abd al-Fattah Abu Ghuddah, and had conflicting opinions with the Hama Brotherhood, which was led by Sa’eed Hawwa.³⁵³

During that period, al-Albani became one of the world’s most important and notable Salafist figureheads. He worked diligently to develop a clear vision on the methodologies required to bring about change. After the Ba’ath party forcibly took over power in Syria, al-Albani was imprisoned twice due to hearsay that he did not support the governing regime because it did not govern

³⁴⁹ During the period of the French mandate, a great number of charitable organizations were established in Syria, the most prominent of which was the *Al-Hidaya* Association, founded in 1930, the Islamic Civilization Society, founded in 1931, and the Society for Islamic Awareness, Islamic Welfare Organization, the Welfare and Morals Society, in addition to numerous other organizations – all of which assumed similar names and titles that showed their protestation of the Western colonial model. [Refer to Dr. Habib al-Jinhani, “*Al-Sahwa al-Islamiya fi Bilad al-Sham: Mithal Suriya*” (Lit. “The Islamic Awakening in Greater Syria: The Syrian Example”), in “Contemporary Islamic Movements in the Arab Nation”, Markaz Dirasat Al-Wihda Al-Arabiyyah (Arab Unity Research Center), Beirut, Lebanon; 2nd Edition, 1998, pp. 105-154]

³⁵⁰ Mohammad Nasserruddin al-Albani, “*Khutbat al-Haja*” (Lit., “The Sermon of Need”), The Islamic Library, Beirut, Lebanon; 4th Edition, 1400 AH, p. 6; this treatise was just one of the essays that al-Albani published in the “Islamic Civility” magazine as referred to in this paragraph of the study.

³⁵¹ Prior to the establishment of the Charitable Organization of the Muslim Brotherhood, several other organizations had been established, such as “Dar al-Arqaam” in Aleppo in 1936, The “Rabitah al-Diniya” in Homs, and “Ansar al-Haq” in Deir al-Zour in 1939. The latter were all fronts for the Organization of the Muslim Brotherhood and were united under the umbrella of “Shabab Mohammad” (“The Prophet Mohammad’s Youth”); [Refer to Dr. Is’haq Mousa al-Husseini, “*Al-Ikhwān al-Muslimun Kubra al-Harakat al-Islamiya al-Haditha*” (Lit., “The Muslim Brotherhood: The Largest of the Contemporary Islamic Movements”), Dar Beirut Printing; 1st Edition, 1952, pp. 122-124].

³⁵² Mohammad Jamal Barout’s essay, “*Suriya: Usul Ta’arujat al-Sira’ bayna al-Madrasatayn al-Taqlidiyya wa al-Radicaliyya*” (Lit., “Syria: The Origins of the Ongoing Struggle between the Traditional and Radical Schools” in the book, “*Fi al-Ahزاب wa al-Harakat wa al-Jama’aat al-Islamiya*” (Lit., “A View into Islamic Parties, Movements and Groups”), edited by Dr. Faisal Darraj and Jamal Barout, al-Markaz al-Arabi li al-Dirasat al-Istratejiyya (The Arab Center for Strategic Studies), Damascus; 4th Edition, 2006, pp. 255-256.

³⁵³ Mohammad Nasserruddin al-Albani, “*Kashf al-Niqab ‘amma fi Kalimat Abu Ghuddah min al-Abateel wa al-Iffira’aat*” (Lit. “Removing the Veil from the Falsities and Fabrications of Abi Ghuddah’s Words,”) unpublished; 1st Edition, 1975.

according to Islam and the *Sharia* (Islamic Law).³⁵⁴ Among the many charges against him was the promotion the “Wahhabi *da'wa*”, a call that distorted Islam and confused Muslims.

With the rise of his Salafist orientation, al-Albani was invited to continue his studies in Saudi Arabia at the newly established Islamic University in al-Madina al-Munawara. He was also chosen to serve as a member of the higher council at the university. Indeed, prior to his death in 1999, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia had awarded al-Albani with the King Faisal Global Award for Islamic Studies in recognition of his efforts in the Salafist *da'wa* and for his scholarly contributions to the study of the Prophetic Hadith.

Al-Albani's vision of Conservative Salafism began to develop more clearly after the strategies and policies followed by other Salafist groups failed to take hold in the Muslim world. Reform Salafism itself atrophied after the deaths of al-Afghani, 'Abduh and Rida. Nationalist Salafism in the Maghreb lost its luster after the countries of the Arab North Africa achieved their independence and direct colonization ended. This was furthered by the absence of any charismatic, scholarly figures in the Nationalist Salafist movement after independence, such as 'Allal al-Fassi and Malik Bin Nabi. Also, in Saudi Arabia, Wahhabi Salafism eventually became diluted after its progressive absorption into a series of weak councils and institutions within the state apparatus. At the same time, the Arab world was witnessing a rise in secular nationalist and leftist movements, which came to dominate all aspects of political, economic and social life in the region.

Finally, Reformist Islamic thought was in decline. In its place, more radical and revolutionary Islamist currents began to emerge, all of which adopted a Jihadi Salafist discourse after the nation-state proved its failure in achieving full independence, progress and prosperity.

By the end of the 1970s, the Muslim world witnessed the progressive rise and spread of Jihadi Salafist movements. The *al-Gama'a al-Islamiya* (the Islamic Group) and the *Gama'at al-Jihad* (The Jihad Group) emerged in Egypt. In Syria, *al-Tali'a al-Muqatila* (The Fighting Vanguard) emerged as an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood. In Afghanistan, the “Afghani Jihad” began to attract new recruits on a global scale. And, in 1981, the Juhaiman Movement emerged in Saudi Arabia. In fact, al-Albani was accused of being the principle mastermind behind the Juhaiman Movement – and was subsequently denied entry into Saudi Arabia thereafter.³⁵⁵

Al-Albani's outlook and vision of Conservative Salafism finally crystallized into consistent form after he decided to reside permanently in Jordan in the early 1980s. A group of young men began to flock around al-Albani, calling themselves *Talabat al-'Ilm al-Shari'i* (the students of Islamic legal

³⁵⁴ Ibrahim Mohammad al-'Ali, “*Muhammad Nasseruddin al-Albani: Muhaddith al-'Asr wa Naasser al-Sunnah*” (Lit. “Mohammad Nasserruddin al-Albani: The Hadith Scholar of Our Times and Champion of the Sunnah”), Dar al-Qalam, Damascus; 1st Ed, 2001, p. 26.

³⁵⁵ Al-Albani was accused of being the mastermind behind the Juhaiman rebellion in Saudi Arabia in 1979. Letters and books written by several Salafists in Saudi Arabia were published which accused al-Albani of exporting his political ideas. See the writings of Dr. Mousa al-Dweish, and especially his book, “*al-Tawajjuh al-Siyasi al-Haraki 'inda al-sheikh Muhammad Nasserudin al-Albani*” (Lit., “The Political Activist Orientation of Sheikh Mohammad Nasserruddin al-Albani”); and see Dr. Abd al-Latif Bashmil, “*al-Fateh al-Rabbani fi al-Rad 'ala Akhtaa' Da'wat al-Albani*” (Lit., “A Religious Response to the Errors in al-Albani's Da'wa (Calling)”); also relevant to this context are the writings of Abdul Aziz al-'Askar.

studies). They eventually evolved into a Salafist current that was based on a 'traditional' vision, particularly when it came to the kind of Islamist activism they endorsed.

The most notable representatives of this current amongst al-Albani's students included Mohammad Ibrahim Shaqra, 'Ali al-Halaby, Salim al-Hilali, Mohammad Mousa Nasr and Mashhoor Salman. This group began working on issuing a publication called "*al-Asaala*" Magazine. They then established the Imam Al-Albani Center in Jordan's capital, Amman. Hence, the Conservative Salafist discourse appeared to be clearer and more distinct than other Salafisms such as the Reform, Nationalist, Harakiya, Jihadi and others forms of Salafism.

In his earlier years, Sheikh al-Albani began to develop his concept or, the saying, which have later become the overriding axiom for his form of *da'wa*; and, that was "*al-Tasfiyah wa al-Tarbiyah*" ("purification and education"). This axiom was a practical translation of what the Conservative Salafists preached in their lessons and in the sermons they conducted while touring through all the different cities and districts of Syria, in addition to the lessons and lectures he was invited to give in Jordan, organized by the Muslim Brotherhood, particularly the al-Zarqa branch of the Jordanian Brotherhood. Members of the al-Zarqa branch, such as 'Abdullah 'Azzam and Sheikh Dhib Anis, were quite close in their ideological disposition to the more Conservative Salafist tendency and similar in their ways of thinking. The lectures were attended by a number of Jordanian academicians and intellectuals in Jordan such as Dr. Ahmad Nawfal and Mohammad Ibrahim Shaqra, amongst others.

Despite his preoccupation with his writings and his concentration on developing his *da'wa*, al-Albani continued to work in his small watch repair shop, which he took over from his father to make a living. Later, however, he devoted all his time to working out of the Islamic Office, which belonged to his friend Zuhair al-Shaweesh. During his time at the Islamic Office, he was able to produce a great number of written works, chief among them was his booklet entitled, "*Irwa' al-Ghalil fi Takhrij Ahadith Manar al-Sabeel*" (Quenching the Yearning for Extracting the Hadith of the Enlightened Path).³⁵⁶

He spent almost two decades living in Amman (from the early 1980s until the end of the 1990s). During that period, he worked on writing books and editing literature on Islamic heritage, and particularly that aspect of Islam related to the Prophet's Hadith. He also gave lessons from his home, because he was not allowed to preach or teach in mosques. And despite the ban, his followers and students progressively and continuously grew in number. By the 1990s, his followers had grown to such a point that they actually competed in size, number and influence with the largest Islamist movement in Jordan, the Muslim Brotherhood. Indeed, they became a force to be reckoned with in the mosques and in public gatherings, in providing lessons and conducting charitable work, and in their volunteerism and religious activism.

³⁵⁶ Al-Albani's wrote more than 216 different works, including volumes of essays and independent booklets, the majority of which were related to the study of the Prophet's Hadith. [Refer to Samir Bin Amin al-Zuhairi, "*Muhaddith al-'Asr Al-Albani*" (Lit., "Al-Albani: The Hadith Scholar of Our Times"), Dar al-Mughni Publishing and Distribution, Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; 2nd Edition, 1421 AH; also refer to Ibrahim Mohammad al-Ali, "*Muhammad Nasseruddin al-Albani: Muhaddith al-'Asr wa Naaser al-Sunnah*" (Lit., "Mohammad Nasserruddin al-Albani: The Hadith Scholar of Our Times and Champion of the Sunnah"), op. cit.

Sheikh Mohammad Nasseruddin al-Albani passed away in Amman in 1999, after founding and firmly rooting Conservative Salafism in Jordan. Following his death, the Conservative Salafist movement in Jordan became embroiled in disputes, conflict, divisions and schisms. The most important and greatest of these disputes was about who would be the rightful successor to Sheikh al-Albani. In fact, this conflict and debate is still taking place. Sometimes the debate takes on a scholarly form, other times it is dogmatic in nature while, yet at other times, it can even become financial.

3. The Evolution and Rise of Conservative Salafism: A Truce with the State and Conflict with other Islamists

The rise of Conservative Salafism in Jordan is considered a relatively new phenomenon. As a movement, it emerged in a more distinct form in the beginnings of the 1980s, after its founding sheikh Mohammad Nasseruddin al-Albani moved to Jordan. Indeed, numerous Islamist movements and groups already existed and had a presence in Jordan prior to the foundation and rise of Conservative Salafism.

Certainly, during the time in which the Trans-Jordan emirate was established in 1921, there was no real presence of Islamist movements, parties and groups with clear-cut characteristics, attributes, visions, influence or views. Indeed, at that time, the Islam that prevailed in Jordan was that of a Sufi and popular nature.

In fact, the vast majority of Islamist movements established in Jordan were introduced as branches from other organizations, parties and groups, which were based out of other countries in the Arab and Muslim worlds after the collapse of colonialism and in the post-colonial period. For example, in the founding period of the modern Jordanian nation-state, and after Jordan's independence was declared in 1946, the first branch of the mother organization of the Muslim Brotherhood (which was established by Sheikh Hassan al-Banna in Egypt in 1928) was instituted and proclaimed in Jordan. And, the environment in which the Jordanian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood was created was one in which the head of the state, King Abdullah I, was quite welcoming and tolerant.

The year 1948 was a turning point in the formation of the modern Jordanian state. Following the creation of the state of Israel on Palestinian territories and the War of 1948, a new reality was imposed upon Jordan that led to the unification of the East and West Banks of the Jordan River in 1949-1950. In the end, the outcome of all these events was embodied in fundamental changes in the country's demographics, which imposed a complicated new socio-political and socio-economic reality. These structural changes led to the introduction of political reforms by the regime, which ultimately resulted in the creation of a new constitution for the country in 1952.

During that same year, or 1952, *Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami* (the Islamic Party of Liberation) was established in Jerusalem by Sheikh Taqiuddin al-Nabhani (1909-1977). Following thereafter, the *Jamaa'at al-Da'wa wa al-Tabligh* was declared in Jordan in 1964 as a branch of the mother organization founded by Sheikh Mohammad Elias al-Kandahlavi in the Indian sub-continent in 1924.

The War of 1967 and the subsequent Israeli occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem imposed yet another reality upon Jordan, the impact of which would affect every aspect of political, economic, social and religious life in the country. This period is considered a pivotal point in the history of *da'wa*, political and jihadi Islam. For, the 1967 defeat was in itself considered a humiliating defeat for the pan-nationalist, leftist and nationalist ideologies; and, it was in this

context that Salafism, in all its forms and spectra of trends, emerged throughout the Muslim world.³⁵⁷

Thereafter, nationalist and leftist Palestinian factions lost their influence to a certain extent following their clash with the regime in Jordan in 1970. The 1970 clashes ultimately forced the Palestinian Liberation Organization to leave Jordan to seek refuge in Lebanon. It was during this period that Traditional Salafism emerged, only to be reinforced later by Sheikh Mohammad Nasseruddin al-Albani, who himself sought refuge in Jordan and established his permanent residence there in 1980. However, not all of this means that, since the time the emirate in Jordan was established, there were no Salafists tendencies and orientations during that whole period.

The roots of Salafism in Jordan began with the more radical and extreme wing of the Organization of the Muslim Brotherhood. Indeed, since the time of its establishment, the Muslim Brotherhood had always two principle currents within its organization: the first being pragmatic and committed to the line established by Imam Hassan al-Banna and whose creed was delineated by Hassan al-Hudhaibi in his book, "*Dua'a La Qudaa*" (Preachers not Judges); the second wing being much more extreme and committed to the line established by the teacher, Sayyid Qutb, who left his mark on Salafists worldwide in his book "*Ma'alem fi al-Tareeq*" (Milestones). Also contributing to the growth of this second tendency were several of Qutb's followers and students who studied in Saudi Arabia, and were exposed to Salafism in its Wahhabi form.³⁵⁸

Sheikh Mohammad Ibrahim Shaqra is considered one of the first Salafists in Jordan. At the beginning, he was a committed member of the Muslim Brotherhood prior to embarking on an independent path after he left for Saudi Arabia to study at the Islamic University there in the early 1960s. But, according to Sheikh Shaqra himself, Sheikh Abd al-Rahim Sa'ad was the first real Salafist in Jordan (Sheikh Sa'eed is the father of Hammam Sa'eed, who was the current General Supervisor of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan at the time this study was conducted and written).

The 1970s was an era in which the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood witnessed the progressive growth of "Qutbian Salafism" within the organization (a form of Salafism in which Salafist combine the Salafist religious doctrine and creed with Sayyid Qutb's political thinking). Furthermore, the experience of the *Mu'askarat al-Sheiyoukh* (The Sheikhs' Encampments) had a profound impact on the formation and rise of an organized Salafist current, with an identifiable character and clear-cut attributes.

The experience of *Mu'askarat al-Sheiyoukh* was the first attempt made by the Jordanian Brotherhood to depart from the Organization's reformist approach. Under the influence of the 1967 defeat and under serious pressure from the extremist wing in the movement, the Brotherhood entered into the domain of jihad. And thus, between the years of 1968-1970, the Muslim Brotherhood set up between four to seven military encampments in which hundreds of Arab

³⁵⁷ 'Ali al-Halaby made great efforts in his bid to establish historical evidence to support and explain the presence of Salafism in Jordan. However, he only arrived at weak links. [See his article: "*Al-Da'wa al-Salafiya fi al-Urdun*" (Lit., "On Salafist Da'wa in Jordan"), al-Ghad daily newspaper, Jordan; on the following link: <http://www.alghad.com/?news=189686>

³⁵⁸ See Mohammad Abu Rumman, "The Muslim Brotherhood in the 2007 Jordanian Parliamentary Elections: A Passing 'Political Setback' or Declining Popularity" published by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Amman Office, 2007. Also see chapter two of this book, particularly on the "Hawks" current, whose leaders studied in Saudi Arabia.

Brotherhood members participated and trained until the events of September 1970, in which the Jordanian military clashed with Palestinian factions. During these events, the Muslim Brotherhood decided to close down its military encampments in a move made to prove and affirm their choice to remain neutral during that complicated phase.

Conservative Salafism had not yet formed or entirely crystallized in al-Albani's mind during that period in the 1970s. And, relations between al-Albani and the Brotherhood were good at that time. While living in Syria, al-Albani was close to the Damascene Salafists inside the Syrian Brotherhood; and, the majority of his lessons were made possible through the facilitation of the Muslim Brotherhood there. Indeed, he entered the Jordanian Islamist scene through a "gateway" opened and facilitated by the Muslim Brotherhood.

Sheikh al-Albani began to make monthly visits to Jordan on invitation from the "Qutbian Salafists" inside the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood, and particularly the al-Zarqa Branch headed by Sheikh Dhib Anis, in order for Sheikh al-Albani to give lessons and lectures to its members. Several of the leaders in the Muslim Brotherhood also attended these lessons including 'Abdullah 'Azzam, Ahmad Nawfal, amongst others.

Organized "Qutbian Salafist" manifestations began to extend beyond the ranks of the traditional framework of the Muslim Brotherhood in the 1970s. The first organization based on the foundations set by Sayyid Qutb's school of thought emerged during that time in Jordan; and, indeed, the establishment of this organization represented the first open defection and schism that affected the ranks of the Muslim Brotherhood. This group was organized by Sheikh Mohammad Ra'afat Sa'eed Saleh in 1973 after he returned from his studies at the Islamic University in Saudi Arabia in 1972. Sheikh Mohammad Ra'afat had been a member of the Muslim Brotherhood's *Shura* Council. But, he had adopted all of Sayyid Qutb's radical thinking, which led him to engage in ongoing conflicts and debates with the more pragmatic wing of the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood.

When Ra'fat fell into despair over his failure to divert the path of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan, he went to work to establish the *Tali'at al-Ba'ath al-Islami* (The Vanguard of the Islamic Rebirth). Several others, who also had strong convictions about the teachings and ideology of Sayyid Qutb, left the organization with him. Mohammad Ra'fat began his own *da'wa* (calling) and began to recruit new members to his group, using Sayyid Qutb's methodology for organizing and recruiting followers. He also adopted the revolutionary ideas founded in the principle of *al-Hakimiya*, which aimed to establish an Islamic state through jihadi force.

The experience of the *Tali'at al-Ba'ath al-Islami* did not last long as Mohammad Ra'afat reneged upon his way of thinking. He worked to dismantle the organization shortly thereafter. These retractions all took place after lengthy debates and discussions took place between him and Sheikh Mohammad Nasseruddin al-Albani. Mohammad Ra'afat himself says, "Were it not for our rectification, by the grace and benevolence of God Almighty, who brought forth the teacher, Sheikh al-Albani, the fundamentalism of the extremist thinking of the embittered dissidents of this contemporary era would have taken hold, and the idea of spreading Islam and increasing the

numbers of Muslims would have ceased to exist.”³⁵⁹ Soon after, Ra’afat became aligned with the Traditional Salafist current led by Sheikh al-Albani. In 1997, he would even run for a seat in parliamentary elections and win a seat representing the al-Baq’a refugee camp in the al-Balqaa’ District.

Severing Ties with the Brotherhood: An Organizational and Intellectual Clash

At some point, the leadership of the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood began to become apprehensive of al-Albani’s *da’wa*. By the middle of the 1970s, the Brotherhood’s leadership commenced with publishing internal flyers and memos that cautioned members from attending Sheikh al-Albani’s seminars and lectures. They, and particularly Dr. Mohammad Abu Faris and ‘Abdullah ‘Azzam, began to attack al-Albani during their lessons and sermons in an attempt to fend off al-Albani’s increasingly growing appeal with members of the Brotherhood – an appeal that proved to be very effective later.

The precursors and signs of the pending evolution and spread of Traditional Salafism in Jordan were indeed emerging, especially after al-Albani permanently settled in Jordan in 1980.³⁶⁰ As a result, in 1982, and due to pressure and lobbying from the Muslim Brotherhood, an attempt was made to exile al-Albani from Jordan after he succeeded in attracting a group of young men who had begun to attend his lessons regularly. However, a mediation effort put forth by Sheikh Mohammad Ibrahim Shaqra, who was close to certain decision-making circles, was critical in reversing the decision. Sheikh al-Albani was allowed to remain in Jordan but only on the condition that he would no longer conduct public lessons or lectures. Al-Albani indeed abided by this restriction up until the time of his death.

By the early 1980s, the seeds of the concrete manifestations of Conservative Salafism began to emerge. A circle of new young men flocked to Sheikh al-Albani, the most important of these new students included Abd al-Fattah Omar, Marwan al-Qaisi, ‘Ali al-Halaby, Wafiq al-Naddaf, Salim al-Hilali, Murad Shukri, Shaker al-‘Aarouri, Ahmad al-Kuwaiti, Hussein al-‘Awasheh and Abu Laila Mohammad Ahmad (who also became al-Albani’s deputy. Abu Leila recorded and documented all of al-Albani’s lessons, lectures and *fatwas*). Joining this group later were ‘Omar Mahmoud Abu ‘Omar (also known as Abu Qatada al-Filastini, who would later change tacks and

³⁵⁹ See Mohammad Ra’afat Sa’id Saleh, “*Nasa’eh wa Tawjihaat*” (Lit., “Advice and Guidance”), in “*Nasa’eh wa Tawjihaat al-Mufakireen wa ‘Ulamaa’ al-Islam li al-Jama’aat wa al-Ahزاب al-Islamiya*” (Lit., “The Advice and Guidance of Islamic Thinkers and Scholars for Islamic Groups and Parties”, edited by Nitham Salameh Sakijha, Al-Maktaba Al-Islamiyya (The Islamic Library), Amman; 1st Edition, 1993, p. 378.

³⁶⁰ See a review of the administrative decisions taken by the Muslim Brotherhood in Zarqa, in 11/6/1975, with regard to the notice of caution, circulated to all Brotherhood members, about invitations to attend al-Albani’s lessons in the unpublished study on, “*Al-Jama’aat al-Islamiya fi Daw’ al-Kitab wa al-Sunnah*” (Lit., “Islamic Groups from the Perspective of the Book [Qur’an] and the Sunnah” by Salim al-Hilali and Ziad al-Dabeej; 2nd Edition, 1981, pp. 101-104.

who soon became one of the most prominent theorists of Jihadi Salafism in the world) and Mashhoor Hassan Salman, amongst others.³⁶¹

With all that, Salafism in itself was limited in its proliferation and expansion. The other Islamist groups were more organized and more widespread, particularly the Muslim Brotherhood, which also enjoyed warm and friendly relations with the regime during this period. At the same time, Conservative Salafism was not presenting or offering itself as a “group” or “movement.” In fact, in their approach or *manhaj*, they adopted the principle that establishing organizations, groups, parties or even charitable associations, was unsanctified and heretical. They considered themselves a “tendency” or a “current,” which represented Islam itself, based on the premise that “purification and education” was the only proper means and method for affecting and bringing about change.

In the meantime, the Salafists busied themselves and focused their attention on the matter of whether or not other Islamist groups were actually legitimate. The Muslim Brotherhood got the lion’s share of this Salafist “attention.” Indeed, the Salafists did not hold back in their vilification of the Brotherhood and targeted the organization with criticism and accusations of “innovation.”

The question of which group was the legitimate representative and voice of Islam was the predominant theme of the majority of the debate that took place during this particular period. Indeed, all the Islamist groups were striving to prove and establish themselves as the sole, legitimate representative of Islam. They all tried to monopolize the claim that they were the group of “*al-Firqa al-Naaqiya*” (the salvation sect). It was during this particular period that Conservative Salafism began to take on a definite shape and form, and began to spread throughout the different areas in the country.

The majority of the followers and constituents of Salafism came from the working classes and from the more impoverished and economically, politically and socially marginalized communities in the country. The majority of them were also of Palestinian origin, as the spread of Salafism was concentrated in the more wretched Palestinian refugee camps, slums and outskirts of cities – particularly the city of al-Zarqa, which, until this day, remains the main hub of Salafism in Jordan.

Furthermore, due to its rigid ideological nature, Salafism was constantly subject to rifts and schisms. Members leaving this ideological framework, while others joining it, became a never-ending phenomenon in an ongoing cycle of rupture and secession. But, despite this volatility, Conservative Salafism was able to maintain relative coherence under the leadership of its founder,

³⁶¹ The Islamic Library (Al-Maktaba Al-Islamiyya), which was owned by Sheikh Nitham Saleh Sakihijah, undertook the task of transcribing taped recordings of al-Albani’s *fatwas* (scholarly opinions and rulings) over ten year ago. Sheikh Nasseruddin al-Albani’s scholarly opinion and rulings (*fatwas*) were documented in more than 18 volumes, which were due to be printed shortly after publication of this study. Al-Albani’s scholarly opinions and rulings represent an important source for the research and study of al-Albani’s life and his tendencies because the books he wrote were particularly specialized in the study of the Prophet’s Hadith, with the exception of some small essays. But, through his books, it is not possible to deduce and track his overall outlook and approach in a comprehensive manner. The same applies to the majority of the literature that his students translated, which are also concerned with and deal directly in the study of the Hadith, or the objections and criticism that al-Albani was subject to on this matter. Thus, one cannot benefit from the latter literature in attempting to shed light upon Sheikh Albani’s *da’wa* (calling) and *manhaj* (approach). In the end, a conflict erupted between al-Albani and Abu Laila over the rights and financial royalties of the publication of al-Albani’s material, which led to a distancing and a cooling off in the relationship between the two men.

Sheikh al-Albani, who was accepted by all as the ultimate reference when it came to resolving most doctrinal, religious, or organizational conflicts.

In 1991, the Second Gulf War took the region off guard. Iraq's entry into Kuwait had immense ramifications on the fundamental premises presented by Salafism, in all its various theoretical orientations and practical applications. This was furthered by transformations in the international balance of power after the Soviet Union's withdrawal from Afghanistan and the subsequent collapse of Socialism there, the return of the "Arab Afghans," and the advent of the age of globalization. All these important factors contributed to the profound, structural transformations that would take place in the Salafist tendency on a local, regional and global scale. These transformations led to a new process of vetting and polarization, which crystallized into new forms of fragmented Salafisms in the historic stronghold of Wahhabi Salafism in Saudi Arabia – and which cast a heavy pall over all other the forms of Salafism in the Arab world, in general, and in Jordan, in particular.³⁶²

However, despite the Salafist fragmentation in its traditional stronghold, Saudi Arabia, the Traditional Salafists in Jordan under the leadership of Sheikh al-Albani, maintained relative independence. Sheikh al-Albani's strict postures and his scholarly position were strong enough to maintain the cohesion of the group. Events unfolded back then revealed how difficult it was to use him for political ends. For example, despite the prevailing pressures at that time, he issued a *fatwa* where he ruled that it was an obligation to fight the Americans in the Gulf War (then) and that the use of foreign troops to expel Iraq from Kuwait was prohibited in his opinion.³⁶³ Sheikh al-Albani's independence would prove itself several times after that. And, it proved very difficult for anyone to attempt to politically employ and exploit his *fatwas*.

Perhaps, Sheikh al-Albani's most infamous *fatwa* was that which called on the Palestinians to leave the lands of Palestine (as it was now a *dar kufri*),³⁶⁴ regardless of the official Jordanian policy of maintaining a consistent and stern position against the controversial issue of the "alternative

³⁶² The Second Gulf War revealed the emergence of several forms of Salafisms within the Salafist school itself: The first was Wahhabi Salafism, which had managed to maintain its historical relationship with the authorities. This relationship was embodied by the Council of Supreme Scholars, under the leadership of Sheikh Ibn Baaz, which made a *fatwa* (or ruling) that using foreign troops was sanctified (in expelling Iraq from Kuwait). The second was Jihadi Salafism, which adopted the mission of expelling "the idolaters from the Arabian Peninsula", under the leadership of Sheikh Osama Bin Laden. And, the third was Harakiya Salafism, which had reservations about the subject of using foreign troops and demanded reform in the institution of the state and in society, under the leadership of Sheikh Safar al-Hawali, Salman al-'Odeh and Nasser al-Amer. Finally, there was Traditional Salafism, which was identified with the state, under the leadership of Sheikh Mohammad Aman al-Jammi and Sheikh Rabee'al-Madkhali.

³⁶³ Refer to the letters that were written and distributed by Sheikh al-Albani's student, Mohammad Ibrahim Shaqra, during the Gulf Crisis in "*Hatha Bayan li al-Naas*" (Lit., "This is a Declaration for the People"); the letter was printed and distributed with an anonymous author.

³⁶⁴ *Dar al-Islam* is defined as the land which is governed by the laws of Islam and whose security (*aman*) is maintained by the security of Islam, i.e. by the authority and protection of Muslims inside and outside the land, even if the majority of its inhabitants are non-Muslims. *Dar al-kufri* is the land which is governed by the laws of *kufri* (unbelief), and whose security is not maintained by the security of Islam, i.e. by other than the authority and security of Muslims, even if the majority of its inhabitants are Muslims. [Translator's note]

homeland.” Indeed, this *fatwa* caused widespread indignation throughout the Muslim world – and subsequently, al-Albani had to modify and amend this *fatwa* more than once.³⁶⁵

The Second Gulf War and the Emergence of Conflicting Salafisms

The throes of the Second Gulf War led to the introduction of a diverse array of Salafisms into Jordan with the return of more than 300,000 Jordanian nationals from various Arab Gulf States, and particularly Kuwait. Indeed, these Gulf state returnees brought with them all sorts of “hybrid” Salafisms that previously had no presence in Jordanian society.

During the Second Gulf War, an attempt was made to establish the first group of Reform Salafists in Jordan by a group of young men led by ‘Omar Mahmoud Abu ‘Omar (Abu Qatada al-Filastini) under the name, *Haraket Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamaa‘ah* (The Movement of the People and the Followers of the Sunnah). The group began to issue a publication entitled “*al-Manar*,” with the title chosen for their publication having great significance as it was named after the most famous Reform Salafist magazine in the Muslim world founded by Sheikh Mohammad Rashid Rida (which remained in print from 1899-1935).

But, that organizational attempt did not last long as Abu Qatada decided to leave the country. He moved to Malaysia where his new ideological choices began to crystalize. His new resolve and postures led him to Pakistan’s Peshawar, after which he finally decided to settle in London. In the meantime, Jihadi Salafism was on the brink of announcing its presence in Jordan through the work of several groups and collectives such as *Jaysh Mohammad* (Mohammad’s Army), *Al-Afghan al-Arab* (the Arab Afghans) and later, *Bay‘at al-Imam* (the Allegiance to the Imam group). ‘Issam al-Barqawi, who is better known as Abu Mohammad al-Maqdisi, who moved back to Jordan from Kuwait after the Second Gulf War, played a fundamental role in developing the Jihadi current.

The year 1993 witnessed another attempt at reviving Reformist Salafism with the establishment of the charitable association called *Al-Kitab wa al-Sunnah* (The Book and the Sunnah Association), which made a distinction between its posture and that of Conservative and Jihadi Salafism by combining its Reformist Salafist identity with components from Jihadi, Conservative and Harakiya Salafism. It succeeded in attracting a group of young men and issued a magazine entitled “*al-Qibla*.” But, the association was harassed and its efforts thwarted by the state and by the Conservative Salafists. The embittering experience this group suffered led to the withdrawal of many of its members, who then found alternatives in other Salafist currents. Despite the fact that it has survived and sustained itself until this day, its role and influence has been further and significantly weakened in the recent past.³⁶⁶

Another major current of Salafisms that emerged after the Second Gulf War was Harakiya Salafism. The returnees from the Arab Gulf States, and particularly Kuwait, clearly contributed to the

³⁶⁵ Listen to the text of this *fatwa* on cassette tape recording, number 1/730, dated: the 29th day of Shawwal, 1413 AH. There were several responses to this *fatwa* in the Jordanian newspaper “al-Liwa’”; refer to the newspaper issues dated from 27/7/1993-11/8/1993. And, finally, refer to Sheikh al-Albani’s student, Mohammad Ibrahim Shaqra, who came to the Sheikh’s defense in his book entitled, “*Matha Yanqimuna min al-Shaykh*” (Lit., “What They Resent about the Sheikh”), to which Al-Albani himself authored its forward.

³⁶⁶ On the *Al-Kitab wa al-Sunnah* Association, see their official website available at <http://www.ktabsona.com>

development of this form of Salafism. It included a number of teachers and sheikhs such as Dr. Mohammad Abu Erhaim, Dr. Khalid al-Hayek, Abu Qutaiba Mohammad Abd al-‘Aziz, Ihsan ‘Ayyesh and Abu Talha Jamal al-Basha, amongst others.

On the whole, the debate during this period amongst Salafists focused on a series of issues and questions that were raised by the Gulf War experience, such as organized and group activism and the legality of such forms of organization and work; what is faith, Islam, and *kufr* (disbelief); the fundamental notion of *al-Hakimiya*; the notion of “obedience to the political guardians (rulers)”; and, last but not least, the issue of jihad.³⁶⁷

Furthermore, allegiance to Sayyid Qutb, his followers, and his school of thought became a benchmark against which various Salafisms were differentiated from each other. Indeed, during this period, dozens of books, letters, and critiques were published that dealt with these core issues, which were the subject of great debate between the different followers of the various forms of Salafisms in the Arab world, particularly in Saudi Arabia and Jordan.

Despite all of the afore-mentioned, Conservative Salafism remained relatively cohesive during the lifetime of Sheikh Nasseruddin al-Albani. But, after his death in 1999, evident differences and latent polarities came to surface; and, the idea of “pluralistic” or “multiple” Salafisms became reality.

The Post-Albani Era: Bolstering Relations with the State in the Confrontation with Other Islamists

The year 2001 was a decisive in the institutionalization of Conservative Salafism in Jordan. The project to establish the Imam al-Albani Center was completed that year by Salim al-Hilali, ‘Ali al-Halaby, Mashhoor Hassan Salman, Mohammad Mousa Nasr and Hussein al-‘Awaishah. Interestingly, the events of September 11th, 2001 contributed to strengthening the ties and relations between Sheikh al-Albani’s successors, or those known in some circles as the “Albani Caliphs”, and certain official state institutions – particularly the security apparatus, which oversaw the security portfolio related to Islamist movements.

These strengthened connections with the Conservative Salafists bolstered state policy during the period that came to be known as the “War on Terror.” The state linked up with – and pleaded to – the Traditional Conservatives in order to fight the Jihadi Salafists, and to deal more effectively with

³⁶⁷ See examples of these debates in the books, letters and responses found in “*Ihkam al-Taqrir li Ahkam Mas’alat al-Takfir*” (Lit., “Rulings on the Question of *Takfir*”) by Murad Shukri and introduced by ‘Ali al-Halaby; and, “*Al-Tahthir min Fitnat al-Takfir*” (Lit., “A Warning of the Strife Caused by *Takfir*”) by ‘Ali al-Halaby, which presented research on different schools of thought by different Islamic scholars, Hadith scholars, jurists and theologians; and, also by Ali al-Halaby’s “*Al-Ta’arif wa al-Tanbih bi Ta’seelat al-‘Allama al-Sheikh Imam Assad al-Sunnah al-Humam Mohammad Nasserruddin al-Albani fi Masa’il al-Iman wa al-Rad ‘ala al-Murji’ah*” (Lit., “Defining and Highlighting the Firm Foundations Presented by the Scholar and Lion of the Sunnah, Sheikh Mohammad Nasserruddin al-Albani with regard to the Issue of Faith and the Response to the Murji’ah”). Also refer to “*Al-Tabsir bi Qawa’id al-Takfir*” (Lit., “An In-Depth Look at the Fundamental Rules of *Takfir*”); and “*Fitmat al-Takfir*” (Lit., “The Dissension Caused by *Takfir*”) by Mohammad Nasserruddin al-Albani, edited by Ali Bin Hassan Abd al-Hamid, Dar Ibn Khuzaima Publishing; 2nd Edition; and, “*Sayhat Nathir Bi Khatar al-Takfir*” (Lit., “A Call Made by A Scholar on the Dangers of *Takfir*”) by ‘Ali al-Halaby.

the Harakiya Salafists and other politically motivated and involved Islamist movements, and at their fore, the Muslim Brotherhood.

The Imam al-Albani Center attracted many influential members such as Dr. ‘Assim al-Qaryiuti, Dr. Bassim al-Jawabirah, Akram Ziadah, and Ziad al-‘Abbadi as well as a group of Egyptian Conservative Salafists, who resided in Jordan, such as Abu Islam Saleh Taha and Abu al-Yusr Ahmad al-Khashab.

During this particular phase, Conservative Salafism enjoyed a period of unprecedented support and protection. They also enjoyed a large presence in a wide array of televised media. Numerous satellite stations promoting this particular current suddenly appeared such as the *al-Athar* (The Impact) station, *al-Naas* (The People’s) station, and *al-Rahmah* (The Mercy) station, amongst others. And, thousands of websites and forums proliferated in the infinite platform of electronic space on the World Wide Web.³⁶⁸

Dividing Lines and Splintering Paths

The strict and rigid nature of the Salafist ideology and the marginalized, socio-economic composition of the majority of the following of Conservative Salafism in itself pose problematic and complex challenges for the movement. The current is constantly under threat by a never-ending series of rifts, conflicts, divisions, and polarization. Indeed, and in parallel to the Conservative Salafists’ ongoing war and struggle with other Islamist groups, there is always a fierce power struggle and vehement war raging between the members inside the movement, who continue to fight over influence, benefits and gains.

The dividing lines, splintering paths, and struggle that continue to take place within the movement have been over two major issues in the current: The first is the question of who will represent the Conservative Salafists; and, second is the question of the scholarly and social function as members within the movement.

The question and struggle over representation vehemently emerged between the two sides after the death of the current’s founding sheikh, Nasseruddin al-Albani. One side of this conflict emerged out of the initiative made to establish the Imam al-Albani Center in 2001 and included: ‘Ali al-Halaby, Salim al-Hilali, Mashhoor Salman, and Mohammad Mousa Nasr, amongst others. The other side included Sheikh Mohammad Ibrahim Shaqra and others.

The members of the Imam al-Albani Center issued a series of *fatwas* that accused Mohammad Ibrahim Shaqra of having Jihadi Salafist leanings, and that he supported Harakiya Salafism and its

³⁶⁸ Of the most important Traditional Salafist sites based out of Jordan are:

- The Islamic Menhaj site: <http://www.almenhaj.net>
- The Imam al-Albani Center site: <http://www.albani-center.com>
- The “All Salafists” forums, moderated by ‘Ali al-Halaby: <http://www.kulalsalafiyeen.com>
- Sheikh Mohammad Nasserruddin al-Albani’s site: <http://www.alalbany.net>
- Sheikh Ali al-Halaby’s site: <http://www.alhalaby.com>
- Sheikh Mashhoor Hassan Salman’s site: <http://www.mashhoor.net>
- Sheikh Salim al-Hilali’s site: <http://www.islam-future.com>
- Sheikh Mohammad Mousa Nasr’s site: <http://www.m-alnaser.com>

pioneer, Sayyid Qutb.³⁶⁹ Sheikh Shaqra responded to these claims with counter accusations that the “*al-Asala*” magazine had deviated from the *manhaj* or ‘approach’ of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamaa’ah* (The People and Followers of the Sunnah) and had betrayed the *manhaj* set forth by Sheikh Nasseruddin al-Albani.³⁷⁰

The ongoing debate over which side was the true representative of Salafism became one of the most important battlegrounds and became the frontline of the verbal and media wars that took place between the warring parties. For, being close to Harakiya Salafism was not acceptable, defending Sayyid Qutb was forbidden, and praising Qutb or having any affiliation with his school of thought was considered aberrant.³⁷¹

Jordanian Conservative Salafists themselves were not spared from these allegations when it came to the brothers in Traditional-Conservative Salafism based in Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries. Even ‘Ali al-Halaby, himself, was accused in the recent past of these same offenses after he published a book entitled, “*Manhaj Al-Salaf al-Saleh*” (“The Way [or Approach] of the Righteous Predecessors”).³⁷² Indeed, he was accused of belonging to the school of thought represented by Harakiya Salafism, and of praising and bestowing flattery upon its followers and representatives in Egypt such as Abu Is’haq al-Huwaini, Mohammad Hassan, Mohammad Hussein Ya’qoub; Harakiya Salafists in Morocco such as Abd al-Rahman al-Mughrawi; and in Yemen, people such as Abu al-Hassan al-Ma’aribi. This is notwithstanding other Salafist associations such as the charitable societies and associations of *Jam’iyat Ihyiaa’ al-Turath al-Islamiya* (The Islamic Heritage Revival Society) in Kuwait and the *Al-Birr* (The Goodwill) Foundation in the United Arab Emirates. The latter were considered by Traditional Salafists as being charitable foundations that were Qutbian and/or Muslim Brotherhood-oriented in nature.³⁷³

The verbal war between the two sides over who was the legitimate representative of Conservative Salafism was marked by an unparalleled level of abusive language, which reflected their general ideological rigidity and a fear of losing some of the interests and benefits that were associated with being the successor of Sheikh al-Albani in the movement. Also, in the process of trying to strip the other side of legitimacy, accusations of financial theft and theft of intellectual rights became

³⁶⁹ See the summary of accusations fielded at Mohammad Ibrahim Shaqra published in two issues of the Magazine “*Al-Asala*”, which was published by the Conservative Salafists. See issue numbers 25 and 26, dated 15th of Muharram and 15th of Rabi’i al-Awal, 1421 AH.

³⁷⁰ See Assim Mohammad Ibrahim Shaqra’s “*Al-Rudoud al-’Ilmiya al-Sunniya*” (Lit., “Scholarly Sunni Responses”), unpublished; 2001.

³⁷¹ For more on this debate between the Traditional Salafists over Sayyid Qutb, see Wa’el ‘Ali al-Batiri’s “*Kalimat Haq li al-Muhadith al-Albani fi al-Ustath Sayyid Qutb*” (Lit., “A Word of Truth Put Forth By the Hadith Scholar Al-Albani With Regard to the Teacher Sayyid Qutb”), introduced by Sheikh Mohammad Ibrahim Shaqra and Dr. Salah al-Khalidi; Al-Barq Library, Zarqa, Amman; 1st Edition, 2005. See also Wa’el ‘Ali al-Batiri’s “*Rad al-Aqwal al-lati Naqalaha Salim al-Hilali ‘an Kutub al-Shahid Sayyid Qutb illa Mathaniha al-Sahiha wa Taswibiha*” (“To Correct the Suppositions of Salim al-Hilali with regard to the Writings of the Martyr Sayyid Qutb and To Put Them in Their Proper Place”).

³⁷² See Ali al-Halaby’s “*Manhaj al-Salaf al-Saleh fi Tarikh al-Masaleh wa Tatwih al-Mafaasid wa al-Qaba’ih fi Ussoul al-Naqd wa al-Jarh wa al-Nasa’ih*” (“The Way of the Righteous Predecessors...”) available at <http://www.alhalaby.com/play.php?catsmktba=1342>

³⁷³ See, for example, a sampling of the allegations, which accused ‘Ali al-Halaby of being affiliated with Qutbian Salafism in Ahmad ibn ‘Omar Bazmoul’s “*Siyanat al-Salafi min Wasswasat wa Talbeesat ‘Ali al-Halaby*” (Lit., “‘Repairing’ the Salafi from the Hearsay and Fabrications of Ali al-Halaby”) available at <http://www.sahab.net/forums/showthread.php?t=364751>; and Abu Abd al-Rahman ibn Hassan al-Zindi al-Kurdi, “*Talee’ at al-Tankil bima fi Aqwal al-Halabi min Abateel*” available at <http://vb.alaqasasalafi.com/showthread.php?t=> ;

widespread and commonplace while trying to prove the ethical and intellectual bankruptcy of the other side. Indeed, there is a rich literature documenting this struggle, which was printed and published on the Internet. Indeed, the Internet itself became yet another stage for waging this fierce battle.³⁷⁴

Despite attempts to cover up certain practices, allegations of financial theft began to surface in Jordan. Indeed, this issue could no longer be contained when the representatives of the Imam al-Albani Center recently published a memorandum confirming that there were thefts of funds donated by outside organizations such as the *Ihya al-Turath* (Reviving the Heritage) foundation, as well as evidence of embezzlement of donations made by individual benefactors. They further claimed that the individual who carried out these thefts was Salim al-Hilali, which led to a defamation of his character and his dismissal from the movement.³⁷⁵ Indeed, Mohammad Mousa Nasr wrote a very aggressive article entitled, “*Ith Inba’atha Ashqaha*” (“And If the Most Wretched is Sent Forth”).³⁷⁶ In the same vein, Akram Ziadah wrote an article entitled, “*Fasaad al-Salafi La Fasaad al-Salafiya*” (The Corrupt Salafist and not a Corrupt Salafism).³⁷⁷

Indeed, some of Conservative Salafism’s most prominent personalities came from impoverished and economically marginalized classes, and were clearly able to improve their financial situation after joining the movement – which may help explain some of the attraction of the movement and its proliferation amongst the more destitute classes.

The afore-mentioned crisis also reflected the decentralized nature of the movement, despite the existence of the Imam al-Albani Center, which represented a sort of central institution for the Conservative Salafists. Indeed, the movement’s preferred methodology and working structure was that of the “sheikh system,” which is based on the existence of cellular groupings of a sheikh and his students and disciples. Hence, this kind of decentralized system is also highly susceptible and subject to unremitting waves of divisions, continuous conflict and constant splintering, which ultimately leads to allegations, counter accusations, and serious ruptures and breaches.

³⁷⁴ Refer to some of this documentation in the following publications and letters regarding the theft of intellectual rights:

- Ahmad al-Kuwaiti, “*Al-Kashf al-Mithali ‘an Sariqaat Salim al-Hilali*” (Lit. “The Ultimate Revelation of Salim al-Hilali’s Thefts”), no publisher; 1st Edition, 1993;
- Ra’ed Sabri’s “*Kashf al-Mastour ‘an Sariqaat Mashhoor*” (Lit. “Removing the Veil off (Sheikh) Mashhoor’s Thefts”) and “*Qara’ al-Tambour li Sariqaat Mashhoor*” (Lit. “Ringing the Tambourine on Mashhoor’s Thefts”) available at <http://www.addyaia.com/TitleView.aspx?refId=194>;
- Bin Hamad al-’Athari, “*Muthakira fi al-Rudoud ‘ala Jahalat al-Halaby wa Sariqatihi al-’Ilmiya*” (Lit. “A Memo on the Reactions to al-Halaby’s Ignorance and His Intellectual Thefts”) available at: www.alathary.net
- Abu Abd al-Rahman Sa’ad Bin Fathi al-Zu’aitari, “*Tanbih al-Fateen Li Tahafut Ta’isilat al-Halaby al-Maskeen*” (Lit. “A Warning of the Rifts Created by the Ridiculous Fabrications about the Poor al-Halaby”) available at <http://bayenahsalaf.com/vb/showthread.php?t=176>;
- Sheikh Abd al-Aziz ibn Faisal al-Rajihii, “*Al-Farq bayn al-Muhaqiq wa al-Saariq*” (Lit. “The Difference between the Inquisitor and the Thief”); available at <http://www.ahlalheedh.com/vb/showthread.php?t=36017>.

³⁷⁵ Regarding the exchange of accusations, see the article entitled “*Al-Sandouq al-Aswad*” (Lit. “The Black Box”), by Salim al-Hilali on al-Saha al-’Arabiya website, March 19, 2010. See the following link:

<http://www.alsaha.com/sahat/6/topics/>

³⁷⁶ Refer to the article written by Mohammad Mousa Nasr “*Ith Inba’atha Ashqaha*” (Lit. “And If the Most Wretched is Sent Forth”), available at <http://www.ajurry.com/vb/showthread.php?t=2796>.

³⁷⁷ See the article written by Akram Mohammad Ziadah, “*Fasaad al-Salafi, La Fasaad al-salafiya*” (Lit. “The Corrupt Salafi, not a Corrupt Salafism”), available at <http://www.almenhaj.net/makal.php?linkid=994>.

4. The Conservative Salafist Ideology

Although Sheikh Nasseruddin al-Albani was actually imprisoned in Syria for several months, the reasons for his imprisonment were not directly political, and the reasons for his adoption of a strategy of Islamization through purification and education were not directly political either. Indeed, al-Albani did not delve into the domain of politics, nor did he involve himself in theorizing or speculating on political issues, with the exception of relatively few *fatwas*, which he issued only after being asked to elaborate on specific subjects (These *fatwas* are documented and available on several taped recordings of al-Albani).

Al-Albani's ideological outlook and vision evolved into a more comprehensive, consistent, and mature form after he moved to Jordan in early 1980s. This ideological maturity was accompanied at the same time with a wide dissemination of al-Albani's speeches, sermons, and general discourse through taped recordings, magazines, and books written by him and his followers, not only throughout Jordan but outside the country as well.

In general, the Conservative Salafist ideology in its "Albanian form" was founded upon the fundamental principle of "a return to Islam" – and a return to the first form of Islam, which was still pure and before it became contaminated by "both antiquated and modern vagaries, whims, and innovations." Conservative Salafism was also grounded in the idea of working towards building a strong, solid foundation for this "return to Islam," which focused on the individual and not the collective in society, as was the case with the more institutionalized Islamist groups, structured organizations, or parties – indeed, the latter forms of working structures were ones that al-Albani had already ruled against rejected as *haram* (forbidden and prohibited).

Almost certainly, the circumstances and conditions surrounding his relocation to Jordan, and the fact that he was to become permanently settled there helped in transforming his version of Conservative Salafism into a school of thought that was more "appeasing," "conciliatory," and "passive" when it came to dealing with the state and local authorities. In any case, his vision for how to bring about "change and reform" was based on purifying and re-educating society. And, that would eventually lead to the required end of establishing an Islamic state anyway; and, this inevitable evolution, towards this "ultimate end", did not require a confrontation with the prevailing authorities in the meantime. It also did not require any questioning of the legitimacy of the current authorities – as the ultimate aim would take place, with time, despite the current state of affairs.

The latter is the overall philosophy that is often reiterated and presented under the general heading of "objectives of the Salafist *da'wa*," a title often printed on pamphlets or the covers of all the magazines and publications issued by Sheikh al-Albani's followers. For example, the "*al-Asala*" magazine preaches, "to present realistic Islamic solutions to the contemporary problems of these modern times, to strive for the resumption of a mature, orthodox Islamic life based on the Prophetic *manhaj*, to establish a Godly society, and to apply the Law of God on earth, based on the method of 'purification and education'."

The Epistemological Foundations of the Conservative Salafist Intellectual Discourse

The major broad lines that delineate the scholarly discourse of the “Albanian” Conservative Salafists are taken almost directly from the discourse presented by *Ahl al-Hadith*, who, for the Salafists, represent the genesis, point of origin, and source of reference in Islam when it came to matters of the Islamic faith, ethics, and behavior. To properly and strictly “follow” the model and precedence set by *Ahl al-Hadith*, one was required to commit and be true to this “pure line”, which was also representative of the proper, pure and true Islam – an Islam which is far and free from the intrusion of customs and traditions, innovations and sectarian indoctrination.³⁷⁸

Sheikh al-Albani’s intellectual discourse had a definitive bias towards *Ahl al-Hadith* that was clearly reflected in his writings and in his *fatwas*. His religious consciousness conformed wholly to *Ahl al-Hadith*, a current which emerged at the turn of the 3rd century (AH) in response and in opposition to *Ahl al-Ra’i*. *Ahl al-Ra’i* was a parallel and counter current, which emerged at that same time, which adopted a rational approach, based on a reading and interpretation of the texts of the *Sharia* using human reason. Indeed, *Ahl al-Hadith* viewed the approach and *manhaj* taken by *Ahl al-Ra’i* as being a tremendous threat to the Islamic identity, and as a clear deviation from Islam in its pure form.

According to al-Albani, the Salafist creed in its ultimate form is summarized in “a submission and surrendering” to the texts of the Book and the Sunnah; and to accept these texts in literal form without further construction, allegorical or esoteric interpretation (*ta’wil*). Accordingly, the fundamentals are three: the Book, the Sunnah, and the consensus (*ijmaa’*) of the *ummah*. For al-Albani, *Ahl al-Qibla* (the direction of the Ka’aba) are faithful Muslims; and, no one had “the right to label *takfir* on any member of *Ahl al-Qibla*, without lawful justification or the legal right to do so. For him, Salafism was based on the belief that religion before God is Islam, and that Islam is the median between *al-ghulou* (excess, the extreme) and *al-taqseer* (not doing enough, negligence), and between *al-tashbih* (anthropomorphism/assimilation) and *al-ta’fil* (divesting God of all attributes), and between *al-jabr* (that which has been forced upon you) and *al-qadar* (that which is predestined for you by God).

Finally, Islam was innocent of all that is whimsical and Islam was innocent of all the sects in breach of Islam such as the Mushbiha, the Mu’tazila, the Jahmiya, the Jabriya’ and the Qadariya.”³⁷⁹

This ideological perspective characterizes al-Albani’s discourse and consequently, that of Conservative Salafism, with delineations within the framework of the following major attributes and principle characteristics:

- A concentration and focus on the religious texts to a much greater degree than on the mind (or rational thinking); a commitment to a traditional reading of religious texts; and, a rejection of

³⁷⁸ See Mohammad Nasserruddin al-Albani, “*Sifat Salat al-Nabi Salla Allahu Alaihi Wasallam min al-Takbir ila al-Taslim Ka’anaka Taraha*” (Lit., “A Description of the Prophet’s (PBUH) Prayer from *Takbir* (Praising God as the Greatest “*Allahu Akbar*”) to concluding, as if you are witnessing it taking place now”), published by the al-Ma’arif Library, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia; 1st Edition (of the reprint), 1992, pp.43-45.

³⁷⁹ See, for example, Mohammad Nasserruddin al-Albani’s “*Al-Aqeeda al-Tahawiya: Sharh wa Ta’liq*” (Lit., “Al-Tahawi’s Creed: An Explanation and Commentary”, Al-Maktaba al-Islamiyya (The Islamic Library), Beirut, Lebanon; 2nd Edition, 1993.

new and modernist readings and esoteric interpretations of these texts. It is a “literal” or “doctrinal” discourse (or “school” so to speak), par excellence.

- Creating theological links between political and intellectual posturing, and faith and creed in relation to current events; indeed, “faith and creed” occupy a considerable part of this current’s discourse and thought, thus making this discourse rigid. For this reason Conservative Salafism is limited in its doctrinal ability to maneuver, negotiate, and compete with the intellectual, doctrinal postures and discourses of other currents and schools of thought.
- Unipolar and narrow outlook in its doctrinal, jurisprudential, and intellectual vision coupled with an aversion to and often complete rejection of pluralism and diversity. What reinforces this particular attribute of Conservative Salafism is one of the major premises of its discourse, which is “There is only one truth; and, it is indivisible.” The rejection of pluralism and diversity takes on a further critical and often ominous dimension, which is embodied by their religious posture that regards the “other” as contravening, deviating, and straying from the righteous path and of Islamic *Sharia*. The “other” is, therefore, viewed as being subject to severe and harsh earthly and heavenly penalties or punishment – all of which makes it very difficult for the Conservative Salafists to find a “common ground” in which to meet and interact with the “other”.

The latter characteristic is embodied by the constant presence of religious, jurisprudential, and historical conflicts in the discourse of the Traditional Salafist ideology, which then impresses itself and reflects upon its struggle with contemporary realities on the ground and upon its conflict with other parties and political forces. Subsequently, the relationship between Traditional Salafists and other Islamist parties and groups, and even secular groups, is of a sharply conflicting and confrontational nature.

Al-Albani’s strict, rigid and stern view of other Islamist groups is clearly highlighted in the following statement, “The only remedy is a return to the religion. But, this religion – as everyone knows, and particularly religious scholars and jurists – is wrought with the most extreme of disputes. This dispute or conflict is not – as many writers or religious scholars would think – confined to a few, peripheral issues. This conflict, indeed, extends itself to matters of faith and creed. For, there is great disagreement between al-Asha’ariya and al-Maturidiya; and there is a conflict between these Mu’tazila, as well as others. All of them are deemed Muslims [like us]; or, all of them are subject to the Hadith that says, *‘God has cast a shadow upon all of you, which He shall not cast off until all of you return to your religion’*... It is therefore that I find that any reform – which must be carried out by the callers to Islam, and those loyally and faithfully calling forth for the establishment of an Islamic state – requires a return, first, to understanding themselves, and second, for the *ummah* to understand the religion that was brought forth by the Prophet (May Peace Be Upon Him) – a task than can be achieved by no means other than studying the Book and the Sunnah.”³⁸⁰

³⁸⁰ Mohammad Nasserruddin al-Albani, “*Al-Tasfiya wa al-Tarbiya wa Hajat al-Muslimeen ilayha*” (Lit., “Purification and Education and the Need of Muslims for Both”), al-Maktaba al-Islamiyya (The Islamic Library); 1st Edition, 1421 AH, p. 30.

The Politics of Islamization: From the Individual to Society... then the State

The Conservative Salafist's perception and knowledge of their socio-economic environment combined with their understanding of the nature of Islam as a religion helped produce an idyllic concept and strategy for "reforming" the dysfunctions inherent in the modern Muslim world, a strategy that came to be presented under the idyllic heading of "purification and education." Indeed, this principle has enjoyed a special distinction and has come to have a heavy presence in the rhetoric of the full range of the Conservative Salafist discourse. The idea of "purification and education" also carries with it certain implicit political significations as, according to this "strategy", there is only "one path" to bringing about a revival and renaissance in the Muslim world, in its modern reality; and, only "one path" to the resumption of the Islamic way of life; and, only "one path" to achieving the ultimate aim of establishing the Islamic state (the Caliphate).

The principle of "purification and education" is founded on the rationale that the "secret behind the contemporary decadence" of the modern world, according to al-Albani, was the direct outcome of society's deviation from Islam. Consequently, it was imperative to respect, understand, commit to, and faithfully follow Islam as Al-Albani delineated in his statement above.³⁸¹

Therefore, the *manhaj* of "purification and education" soon became the cornerstone for the ideological construct and framework upon which Jordanian Conservative Salafism was founded. Of course, this *manhaj* is a derivative of the other fundamental principle of Tarikhiya (historical) Salafism, which is summarized in the simple statement of "*al-Itbaa' la al-Ibtidaa'*" "following and not innovating." Indeed, *itbaa'* (following/immolating) is the essence of the theory of "purification," according to Sheikh al-Albani, and "purification" cannot materialize or succeed except by exposing the *bid'a* or innovations that have contaminated the true faith; and it cannot crystallize until they have acted against these innovations, cast them off and purged society of the damage and ills they have caused it.³⁸²

Indeed, the majority of al-Albani's writings – whether they were books, letters or essays – were replete with pleas "urging for a strict following of the religion, and the abandonment of all *bid'a*. This entreaty was grounded in al-Albani's firm conviction that the direct cause of the backwardness, decline and decadence of the modern Muslim world was the presence of sects, which were of *Ahl al-Bid'a* "The Innovators" and of the fabricators, who have distorted the pure form of faith and worship in Islam. For al-Albani, at the fore of these sects of "Innovators" or *Ahl al-Bid'a* were *Ahl al-Ra'i*. The "virtuous" were only those who followed or represented the *Salaf al-Saleh*. Those who followed or represented the *Salaf al-Saleh* were *Ahl al-Hadith* – these were the true representatives of the "salvation sect" who have faithfully upheld that which was sent forth by the Prophet Mohammad (May Peace be upon Him) and His companions.

Sheikh al-Albani promotes and reinforces the concept of "purification and education" as follows, "Educators must take on the task of cultivating and raising the new Muslim generations according to what was sent forth by the Book and the Sunnah. We must not call upon the people to follow

³⁸¹ Ibid., pp. 14-15.

³⁸² Mohammad Nasserruddin al-Albani, "*Musajala 'Ilmiya bayn al-Imamayn al-Jalilayn al-'Izz ibn Abd al-Salam wa Ibn al-Salah*" (Lit., "A Scholarly Debate between the Venerable Imams al-Izziddin Bin Abd al-Salam and Ibn al-Salah", al-Maktaba al-Islamiyya (The Islamic Library); 1st Edition, 1405 AH, p. 12-13.

inherited concepts and incorrect notions – some of which are understood as definitively false by the *ummah*, and some of which have caused serious disagreement amongst them. Indeed, there are many forms of *ijtihad* (intellectual reasoning), points of view and opinions about these matters; and, indeed, some of this *ijtihad* and some of these opinions contradict the Sunnah. Thus, after purging the religion of these matters and after clarifying what it is that must be initiated and what it is that must be sustained, we must educate and cultivate a new generation based on this proper and sound knowledge. This education and cultivation is what shall reap, for us, a pure, uncontaminated Islamic society; and, thereby, establish, for us, the Islamic state. Without these two introductions, ‘sound knowledge’ and ‘proper education’ based on this sound knowledge, it is my belief that it will be impossible for the Islamic project to succeed, or for Islamic rule or the Islamic state to come about.”³⁸³

He continues to say that the cornerstone of “purification and education” is proper and diligent religious sciences, because “the key to returning to the glory of Islam is the application of useful knowledge and to engage in good, righteous work. This is what is venerated; this is what is admirable. Muslims cannot reach this goal except through the *manhaj* of ‘purification and education’ and, this will not take place until, firstly, the following obligations are fulfilled:

First: Purging the Islamic faith of that which is foreign to it, such as *al-shirk* (associating deities with God), or denying the divine character or interpreting the attributes of the divine; and, by restoring the Hadith to its proper and righteous connection with and place in the faith.

Second: Purging Islamic *fiqh* or jurisprudence of all *ijtihad* or rationalizations that are incorrect and that contravene the Book and the Sunnah; and, liberating minds from the influence of inherited rituals, customs and traditions, and from the darkness of fanaticism.

Third: Purging all texts and treatises on matters of exegesis and jurisprudence, as well as other such texts, of any weak or extrinsic Hadith, and of any *Israeliyyat* (influences or that which was extrinsically applied from the Jewish scriptures) or *munkarat* (things that have been forbidden, prohibited, or deemed unacceptable by the Book and the Sunnah).

Hence, the final obligation is to educate, cultivate and rear the new Muslim generations in line with this Islam, which has been purged of all that was aforementioned, an Islamic education and cultivation that is proper and true, from the earliest moments of their childhood “when their nails are still soft,” without any of the influences of the un-Islamic (*kafir*) Western education or way of life.³⁸⁴

In Conservative Salafism, there is no other means but that of “purification and education” to achieving the ultimate goal, the Islamic state. Indeed, Al-Albani excludes any other strategy that does not follow or employ the process of “purification and education,” or in other words – the “Islamization of society” – in establishing the Islamic state. And, the “purification and education” or “Islamization” of society cannot be achieved by engaging directly in politics, either by way of

³⁸³ See Mohammad Nasserruddin al-Albani’s *Al-Tasfiya wa Al-Tarbiya* (Lit. “Purification and Education and the Need of Muslims for both”), op. cit., p. 30-31.

³⁸⁴ Mohammad Nasserruddin al-Albani, “*Su’al wa Jawab Hawl Fiqh al-Waqi’i*” (Lit. “Questions and Answers with regard to Fiqh of Contemporary Reality”); al-Maktaba al-Islamiyya (The Islamic Library); 2nd Ed. 1422 AH, pp. 40-44.

political participation (democratically, as this is considered an un-Islamic process) or by way of a coup or a revolution, because these are all instruments and means that are considered fabrications and innovations that have been imposed on the way and approach – or the *manhaj* – advocated by the Prophet (May Peace Be upon Him).

According to the theory of “purification and education,” the process of re-Islamization of society must operate on several, parallel external and domestic fronts. The first level is “purification”, which involves: Firstly, to bring about reform and change through the purification and purging of the Islamic faith from all that has intruded upon it, and all that is strange to it, such as *shirk*, or denying the divine character, or interpreting the attributes of the divine, or falsifying the Prophet’s true Hadith, or employing and exploiting weak Hadiths. Secondly, to purge Islamic *fiqh* or jurisprudence of all *ijtihad* or rationalizations that are incorrect or contravene the Sunnah, and all interpretation influenced by the *Israeliyyat* (influences or that which was extrinsically applied from the Jewish scriptures) and deviances.³⁸⁵

Once this “purification” has taken place, then education can work towards purifying the Islamic identity from the deviances, which has come about as an outcome of imitating the ways and education of the un-Islamic (*kafir*) West. According to al-Albani, their duty was to “Raise and cultivate the next generation in this Islam, purged of all the aforementioned, by providing a proper Islamic education to the new generation from as early as the time ‘when their nails are still soft’, and ensuring there are no un-Islamic Western influences in their education and in their upbringing.”³⁸⁶

A fixation on identity also appears to have a strong presence in the Conservative Salafist discourse. The narcissistic wound of identity has become a force in the movement’s discourse, which is seeking out a “pure” identity – an imagined identity, as it has never before been attained in history, but rather in the minds of some. This proposed identity concentrates on an education and upbringing from the earliest age, or as often stated in their discourse, “When the nails of children are still soft.” This way, the offspring of Conservative Salafism would never be touched by outside Western and thus, *kafir* influences, or by the deviant education and upbringing of internal forces such as other Islamist groups and sects, which they classify as misguided groups and sectarian influences gone astray – or, “doomed sects.”

The challenge of identity is considered one of the most difficult and most important obstacles that stand before the task of establishing an Islamic state. Furthermore, the issue of identity is perceived as being one of the major factors that led to the collapse of the Caliphate system. According to al-Albani, “It is obvious that a *da’wa* such as this would be impossible to uphold after the intrusion of that which does not belong to it by the intrigues made against the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) in the alleged name of the ‘Hadith,’ and by the intrigues that have befallen the various explanations made of the Qur’an in the alleged name of ‘esoteric interpretation’ (*ta’wil*). Therefore, serious, scholarly efforts must be made to purge the aforementioned references from all that which has intruded upon them, in order to allow for the purification of Islam from all these different ideas,

³⁸⁵ Mohammad Nasserruddin al-Albani, “*Silsilat al-Ahadith al-Da’ifa*” (“The Series of Weak Hadiths”); Maktabat al-Ma’rif, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, 5th Edition, 2/d.

³⁸⁶ Ibid, 2/d.

opinions, and doctrines, which have become so proliferate amongst Islamic groups and sects – and even those amongst them that belong to the Sunnah. And, it is my belief that any *da'wa*, which does not emanate from this proper, purifying process and foundation, will find that it will not be destined for a success that is worthy of this God's immortal religion."³⁸⁷

Thus, all other approaches followed by the other Islamist groups and movements were sentenced to failure due to their inability to achieve the proper and right conditions required for the Islamic revival and for reform. This judgment was further endorsed by the fact that all these groups and movements were tainted by the *bid'a* or innovations, which contradicted the *manhaj* of the *Salaf al-Saleh*. Sheikh al-Albani says, "There is a great conflict taking place between all the Islamic movements that exist in this field today – this field of reform –, all of whom are involved in the efforts being made to resurrect the Islamic way of life, and to bring about a return to an Islamic life, and to reestablish an Islamic state. It is with great regret that I say that these different groups are in a very sharp disagreement over the starting point of reform. We disagree with all the other Islamic groups on this point. We see that one must simultaneously commence with purification and education. But to begin with political matters...! Those who busy themselves with politics will find their faith and creed in desolate ruin. And, their actions and behavior from an Islamic standpoint is far from what is considered legitimate and lawful by Islamic *Sharia*. These groups raise their voices in the call for divine governance and sovereignty, and that governance must be only with that which was set forth by God. Of course, these are words of truth. But as the saying goes, 'He, who does not have, cannot give.' Thus, if the majority of Muslims today do not, in themselves, apply the laws of divine governance and sovereignty upon themselves, but ask others to live according to the rule of God in their countries; then, they cannot possibly achieve success in this lofty goal... For those who do not have, cannot give."³⁸⁸

And, with this *manhaj* at hand, al-Albani launched a relentless campaign against contemporary Islamist groups and movements for their engagement in and preoccupation with the political and economic arenas. He says in the course of his criticism of the latter, "the bulk of their attention appears to be geared towards Islamic ethics, while others amongst them appear to work on nothing more than educating their followers in politics and in economics... And, it is towards this end that most of their writers talk about today. With that, they all claim they are striving for an Islamic society, and for establishing Islamic rule... I wish it were so... I wish it were so..."³⁸⁹

Sheikh al-Albani sets the foundation of his *manhaj* of "purification and education" on the notion of the "surviving party" (meaning the Traditional Salafists' alleging the possession of the religious truth). And, he justifies this *manhaj* and on the conviction that the "salvation sect", which is referred to in the Prophet's Hadith, is actually *Ahl al-Hadith*, who represent the purity of Islam, purged of the deviances and the distortions that were brought forth by all those who hail from the "doomed" parties, sects and factions.

³⁸⁷ Mohammad Nasseruddin al-Albani, "*Mukhtassar al-'Ulou li al-'Ali al-Ghaffar*", (Lit. "The Heights of the Merciful AlMighty"), authored by al-Hafith Shamsuddine al-Thahabi, Al-Maktaba al-Islamiyya (The Islamic Library), Beirut, Lebanon; 2nd Ed, 1991, p. 58.

³⁸⁸ Mohammad Nasseruddin al-Albani, "*Al-Tariq al-Rashid Nahwou al-Kayan al-Islami*" (Lit. "The Guided Path towards Building the Islamic Entity"), Al-Maktaba al-Islamiyya (The Islamic Library), Beirut, Lebanon; pp. 378-379.

³⁸⁹ Mohammad Nasseruddin al-Albani, "*Mukhtassar al-'Ulou li al-'Ali al-Ghaffar*", (Lit. "The Heights of the Merciful AlMighty"), op. cit., pp. 58-59.

In the midst of one of his declarations, al-Albani affirms what he considers is the core definition of the emerging, “victorious sect,” through an explanation he makes on the following Hadith, “*There is a sect amongst my ummah that remains true, until the hour of reckoning.*” Al-Albani sees the “rising” sect or “surviving” sect, as being *Ahl al-Hadith* because:

Firstly, by virtue of their focus and specialization in the study of the Sunnah, *Ahl al-Hadith* were, without exception, the most learned and knowledgeable in the Prophet’s (May Peace Be upon Him) Sunnah, His guidance, His ethics, His battles, and all that is connected to Him (May Peace Be upon Him).

Secondly, the *ummah* was divided into many groups and sects, which did not exist in the first century (Hijri); and each of these sects has its own particular origins, branches, and Hadiths upon which they depend on for guidance. The individual who belongs to any one of these sects, is prejudiced and loyal to his sect, and upholds all that comes forth from within his sect. Whereas, *Ahl al-Hadith* are not as such; for, they adopt every Hadith that has been authenticated by sound transmittance from any of the schools of thought.³⁹⁰

Furthermore, Sheikh al-Albani places all the contemporary Islamist groups in the same category as the “doomed parties or sects” due to their misguided faith. According to him, “It is evident to every Muslim, who is learned in the Book, the Sunnah and in the way of our *Salaf al-Saleh* (May God’s Blessings Be Upon Them), that factionalism and clustering into groups are, firstly, based on differences in ways of thinking and of ideas, and secondly in differences in *manhaj* (approach) and in means. There is no Islam in this but that which God Almighty forbade in more than one verse in the Holy Qur’an, in one of which He states, “*Do not be amongst the idolaters, [or] amongst those who have broken the unity of their faith and have become sects, each group exalting (rejoicing) in but what they themselves hold.*”³⁹¹ And God Almighty states, “*If thy Lord had so willed, He could have made mankind one people: but they will not cease to dispute. Except those on whom thy Lord hath bestowed His Mercy: and for this did He create them.*”³⁹² For God, the Almighty and the Exalted, excluded or prohibited this controversy, which does exist on an earthly basis but which is still deemed unlawful; and He thus excluded the blessed community when He said, “*Except those on whom thy Lord hath bestowed His Mercy.*”³⁹³

Al-Albani affirms on these verses by saying: “We firmly believe that every group whose platform is not founded on the bases of the Qur’an and the sunnah, and who does not expound on the study of the approach of *al-Salaf al-Saleh* which encompasses all of Islam’s rulings, the big and the small, the fundamental and the peripheral, indeed this group is not from amongst the salvation sect.”³⁹⁴

³⁹⁰ Mohammad Bin Ibrahim al-Shaibani, “*Hayat al-Albani wa Aatharuhu*” (Lit. “The Life of al-Albani, His Influence and the Praise of Scholars upon Him”), op. cit., p. 436.

³⁹¹ Or, another translation: “*Those who split up their Religion, and become Sects, each sect exulting in its tenets.*” (7) Surat Al-Nissa (4:115) [Translator’s note]

³⁹² Taken directly from the Yusuf Ali translation of the three offered translations of the English translation of the Qur’an of the same verses in Surat al-Hud 011: Verses 118; 119, [Reference: “English Translations of the Quran”; available at <http://www.alquran-english.com/11-hud/>] [Translator’s note].

³⁹³ Mohammad Nasserruddin al-Albani, “*Jamaa’ah Wahida fi al-Islam La Jamaa’at*” (Lit. “One Group in Islam Not Groups”), Maktabet al-Furqan, Ajman, United Arab Emirates; 2nd Edition, 2003, pp 10-11.

³⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 31-32.

Al-Albani's *manhaj* triggered widespread reactions amongst other Islamist groups and movements as well as amongst a wide circle of Islamic jurists and scholars. Several individuals from the Jihadi Salafist current published dozens of books and essays responding critically to al-Albani's *manhaj*, as did individuals from the Muslim Brotherhood, Hizb ut-Tahrir, and dozens of other Islamic jurists, scholars, and thinkers such as Sheikh 'Abd al-Fattah Abu Ghuddah, Mohammed Sa'id Ramadan al-Bouti, Mohammad al-Ghazali, amongst others.³⁹⁵ The vast majority of the criticism directed at Sheikh al-Albani revolved around the issue of al-Albani being a *muhadith*, or an individual specialized in the study of the Prophet's Hadith, and not a jurist who was qualified to theorize on current events and contemporary matters. Indeed, some of his opponents even discredited him and dismissed his qualifications as a *muhadith*.

³⁹⁵ Saleh Sariyah's presented his opposition to al-Albani's *manhaj* in his publication, "*Risalat al-Eman*" ("A Message of Faith", as did Mohammad 'Abd al-Salam Faraj in his book, "*Al-Farida al-Gha'iba*" ("The Missing Obligation"); and, al-Zawahiri singled him out in his essay entitled, "*Al-Rad ala Shubha Khatira li al-Sheikh al-Albani bi Sha'in al-Sukout 'an al-Hukkam al-Murtaddin*" (Lit. "A Response to Sheikh Al-Albani's Dangerous Misguidance with regard to Keeping Silent about the Apostate Leaders and Regimes"), as did Abu Buseer al-Tartousi in his book "*Madhahib al-Naas fi al-Sheikh Mohammad Nasserruddin al-Albani*" (Lit. "The Sects of People in Al-Sheikh Mohammad Nasserruddin al-Albani"); and, Abu Qatada al-Filastini, in his "*Rasa'il al-Jarh wa al-Ta'adil*" ("The Essays of the Science of Criticism and Praise [in Hadith]"), amongst others.

5. An Ambiguous Stance towards Politics: Closing the Front Door while Keeping the Backdoor Open

As mentioned previously in this study, the Conservative Salafist approach for bringing about change and its outlook on political work and engagement were established and developed by its founding sheikh, Mohammad Nasseruddin al-Albani, and were presented in his theory of “purification and education.” Necessarily and as a direct result of their declared creed, these particular Salafists did not show any direct opposition to the state or question its legitimacy, except when utmost needed. Instead, they focused their attention on society and on individuals who were active within society.

In fact, Sheikh al-Albani’s strategic outlook clearly materialized after the June 1967 defeat. After that war, he reached a realization that victory and empowerment were clearly impossible without a long-term strategy and methodology for reforming and preparing the society and the state. This conviction was further reinforced after the bloody confrontations that took place between the Islamist movements, and particularly the Muslim Brotherhood, with the regime in Syria. These were all part of the critical, historical turning points that helped define the intellectual process and political course that led to the Albanist-Salafist *da’wa*, which clearly manifested in the period after al-Albani permanently settled in Jordan in 1980 until his death in 1999.³⁹⁶

In general, Sheikh al-Albani’s form of *da’wa* prohibited direct interference and engagement in political matters. He attempted to draw an intellectual iron curtain between his form of *da’wa* and the types of organized political work and activism that he rejected outright. However, and despite his prohibition, in practice, al-Albani’s followers indirectly engaged in political equations and political matters, through proxy intellectual and political battles they waged in lieu of the government in its confrontation with other Islamist currents.

The fact was that the Conservative Salafists closed the proverbial front door on politics and instead, engaged in the political game through the backdoor.

Politics between Two Bounds: Islamic Legitimacy vs. the *Kufr* of the West

Islam, according to Sheikh al-Albani, is a holistic religion that, in itself, is comprehensive and complete. According to him, Islam contains the definitive answers to every problem and issue that could possibly arise. Thus, the religion does not require anything extrinsic or any input from the outside in order to complete it. In his opinion, today, the problem was with the Muslims and not with Islam itself. And, Islam had been historically subjected to misrepresentations, manipulation, and perversions, which distorted and disfigured the pure image it once possessed during the era of the companions of the Prophet and the *Salaf al-Saleh*. For, *bid’a* and age-old social and political customs and traditions had done their work to distort Islam.

³⁹⁶ Mohammad Nasserruddin al-Albani, “*Rafi’i al-Astar ‘an Adillat al-Qa’ilin Bifanaa’ al Nar*” (Lit. “Unveiling the Evidence Covered up by of Those Who Deny that There is a Hellfire”) from *Al-Maktaba al-Islamiyya* (The Islamic Library), Beirut, Lebanon; 1st Ed. p. 5.

For al-Albani, there was no doubt that a return to the original “spring” or source from which Islam emerged was required. And, that original source was the one which the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) brought forth and that was embodied by only two things: the Book and the Sunnah. A return to the religion meant a return to the Qur’an and the Sunnah, because this is, by the consensus of all of the *ummah*, the true religion. Finally, a return to the Book and the Sunnah was the only way to safeguard the religion from deviance and distortion, and from falling into the darkness of misguided faith. Sheikh al-Albani summarized all the aforementioned by citing the Hadith in which the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) says, “*I have left amongst you two things which, if you hold fast to them, you will never stray: the Book of God, and my Sunnah and they will never be separated until they have reached al-Hawd* (the place where the Prophet will stand on Judgment Day).³⁹⁷

By virtue of a mere return to the Qur’an and the Sunnah, reform and renewal would become a fait accompli. But, this could not be achieved save through following the legitimate representatives of the proper and pure Islam; who are, according to the Traditional Salafists, *Ahl al-Hadith*, who were the only true “salvation sect” – the only sect, which preserved the purity and clarity of Islam.³⁹⁸

As for the rest of the doctrinal, political, and historical sects and groups such as the Mu’tazila, the Ash’ariya, the Shiites, the Sufis and others, they are but lost or “doomed” sects.³⁹⁹ And the judgment of being guilty of *ibtidaa’* (innovation) and of being doomed, having gone astray and of being misguided also applies to contemporary Islamic groups, movements and parties. It is the same even for other sects that follow the Islamic *fiqh* of the Hanafiya, Malikiya, Shafi’iya and Hanbaliya schools of thought, as well as others, who have helped reinforce divisions and fanaticism, and have helped contribute to the current state of *ibtidaa’*, backwardness, and disunity.⁴⁰⁰

Politics, according to al-Albani, is already embedded in the Islam, and decreed as such by Islamic *Sharia*.⁴⁰¹ Yet, he emphatically stresses this point of view in his *fatwa* that says, “It is political to abandon politics.”⁴⁰² And, in this, his position is close to that of the pious, purely “missionary” religious movements, such as Jamaa’at al-Da’wa wa al-Tabligh, which also do not engage directly in politics or political matters. These kinds of movements also believe that politics is an aim inevitably achieved through the policies endemic in the Islamization of society, and hold the conviction that submerging and influencing society at the broadest, grassroots level was in itself an indispensable and requisite strategy, which must be applied prior to entering into such matters as reviving and restoring an Islamic way of life and an Islamic state.

³⁹⁷ Sahih al-Muslim, related by Malik as *mursal*, and related twice as *musnad* by al-Hakim. [Translator’s note] Referenced by Mohammad Nasserruddin al-Albani in “*Al-Tasfiya wa al-Tarbiya...*” (Lit. “Purification and Education...”), op. cit., p. 29.

³⁹⁸ Mohammad Nasserruddin al-Albani, “*Sifat Sallat al-Nabi...*” (Lit. “The Description of the Prophet’s (MPBUH) Prayer...”), op. cit., pp.43-45.

³⁹⁹ Mohammad Nasserruddin al-Albani, “*Mukhtassar al-’Ilou...*”, (Lit. “The Heights of the Merciful Almighty”) op. cit., p. 58.

⁴⁰⁰ Mohammad Nasserruddin al-Albani, “*Sifat Salat al-Nabi...*” (Lit. The Description of the Prophet’s Prayer...”), op. cit., , p. 45.

⁴⁰¹ Mohammad Nasserruddin al-Albani, “*Silsalat al-Huda wa al-Nour*” (Lit. “Guidance and Enlightenment Series”); taped recording, cassette number 347.

⁴⁰² Abi Obeida Mashhoor Hassan al-Salman, “*Al-Siyyasa al-lati Yudirahou al-Salafiyoun*” (Lit. “The Politics that Salafists Want”), Dar al-’Athriya, Amman, Jordan; 1st Edition, 2004, p. 33.

Conservative Salafism views politics in its modern context and definition as being a Western innovation, based on un-Islamic principles founded in prevarication, hypocrisy, and fraud. Mashhoor Hassan al-Salman sees contemporary politics as “decadent and degenerate and meant only to defraud the weak, to devour them and to kill their capacity to digest and grasp (that which is around them), and to trick those who are still awake to sleep and, to rock the sleeping gently so that they may not awaken. Indeed, *there is no strength or power except in God.*”⁴⁰³

It is because of this kind of understanding of modern politics that the followers of Conservative Salafism emphatically reject any description of the Salafi movement as being – in this inferior and base understanding of the meaning – a “political” movement. Sheikh Mohammad Ibrahim Shaqra confirms this opinion in his statement, which asserts that Salafism is “a word that, by virtue of its own innate definition, negates any meaning or significance alluding to or pointing to a political movement.”⁴⁰⁴ And, Shaqra stresses upon their opinion of the perversion and disparaged nature of (modern) politics when he continues to say, “And, I do not mean the political work, which is known to all in the name of various theories and their contrasting governing regimes, which have all strayed far from the requirements set by the *Sharia*. These do not accord authority to ‘*Aqida* (doctrine)... In truth, this is the religion of ‘politics,’ in its teachings and its culture, and in its prevarications and its falsifications.”⁴⁰⁵

And, if politics, in its modern context and prevailing meaning, entailed such connotations of censure and vilification in the Traditional Salafist discourse, because of its departure from what was viewed as “legitimate politics” and what was considered “lawfully political,” then obviously, any contact with it was not permissible: “It is on this premise that engaging in political behavior, in the form in which it (modern politics) exists today, is not appropriate. There is nothing permissible in it to remove it from the domain of legal prohibitions. And, those who engage in it, sin; and, those who repent, God will forgive.”⁴⁰⁶

Mohammad Shaqra concludes with a summary of the principles that have set the basis for establishing the Conservative Salafist outlook on politics and political work, that is: that politics and political work is, in any case, part of the general Islamic system of governance – when there is an Islamic state that exists to protect this Islamic system. However, in this contemporary era, it is considered part of the legal prohibitions and violations of the *Sharia*, because “politics” in its modern form contravenes the fundamentals of the faith and all that which comes out from *Sharia*.⁴⁰⁷

The followers of the Conservative Salafist school of thought have all reached a consensus on this vision and outlook on “politics.” ‘Ali al-Halaby views legitimate politics as that which exists in the “legal/*Shari‘i*” form that is in accordance to the tenets of the Islamic religion. Yet, he finds the

⁴⁰³ Ibid, p. 32.

⁴⁰⁴ Mohammad Ibrahim Shaqra, “*La Difa ‘aan ‘an al Salafiya, bal Difa ‘aan ‘Anha*” (Lit. “Not in Defense of the Salafiya but Rather Defending It”), without a publisher, p. 3.

⁴⁰⁵ Mohammad Ibrahim, Shaqra “*Hiyya al-Salafiya: Nisbatan wa ‘Aqidatan wa Manhajan*” (Lit. “This is Salafiya: In its Origins, its Faith and in its *Manhaj* (Approach)”), without a publisher; 2nd Edition, 2000, p. 173.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid, p. 179.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid, p. 185.

unrestrained, contemporary concept of what is “modern politics” as reprehensible. Thus, for him, the Salafist *da'wa* is not a political movement and would never accept to be that.⁴⁰⁸

However, the Conservative Salafists offer their view on what differentiates religiously legal politics from modern politics without any real critical analysis of what is contemporary politics. Mohammad Mousa Nasr sees that “for the Salafists, politics is of the religion. But, the question is, which politics are we talking about? Is it the politics of newspapers, magazines and Jewish and Crusader news agencies? Or, is it the politics of the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) and the politics of his Companions? Is it the politics of the democrats, who cite the *Kafir* saying: ‘the rule of the people by the people for the people’? Or, is it the politics of the people of Islam that say: ‘the rule of God Almighty by the Book of God and His Prophet’s Sunnah, which is imparted by the principle of the *Shura* (mutual consultation) as decreed by Islam? Is it the politics of finding the truth by the number of hands raised in a representative assembly or parliament ... even if this count is in support of that which is immoral, evil, or idolatrous... or a night club or a factory in which alcohol is brewed?! Or, is it the politics of: ‘there is no command or governance except by God’s rule alone and you will worship none other than Him?’”⁴⁰⁹

The political discourse of the Conservative Salafists can be replete with contradictions, ambiguities, allegories and metaphor. For them, politics is religiously required; but this politics is religious politics (*al-Siyasa al-Shar‘iya*). But, contemporary politics is unbelief, hypocrisy, fraud, and deception; and, modern regimes, which do not comply and apply divine governance (the rule and command of God), are considered outside of realm of Islam. For the Conservative Salafists, today, Islam is living the greatest alienation it has ever experienced. According to Sheikh al-Albani, Muslims today “are surrounded by infidel unbelieving states, which are very powerful in their wealth. They are plagued by rulers, many of whom do not rule by that which God has brought forth, with the exception of certain cases (and rules of law) but not in others.”⁴¹⁰

What is politics? Al-Albani responds: “If what is meant by politics is the politics of the *ummah*, then the truth is that politics is not the work of an individual amongst those that make up the *ummah*, but rather it is the obligation of the Muslim state. If what is meant by politics, in its rightful meaning, is the politics of the *ummah* and the administration of the affairs of the *ummah* in accordance to what is most beneficial to its religious and its earthly requirements... then, this is a communal obligation. However, it is not the obligation of those individuals, who neither possess a state nor power, authority, influence, and who possess neither the capacity nor possibility to benefit or harm”⁴¹¹

⁴⁰⁸ ‘Ali al-Halaby, “*Hawl al-Da’wa al-Salafiya Marra Ukhra wa Laysat Akhira*” (Lit. “About the Salafist Da’wa Once Again, but not for the Last Time”); al-Ghad daily newspaper, Amman, Jordan; Friday, May 25th, 2007, Issue Number 1017, p. 7.

⁴⁰⁹ Mohammad Mousa Nasr, “*Matha Yanqamoun min al-Salafiya*” (Lit. “What They Resent About Salafism”), Dar al-Imam Ahmad, Cairo, Egypt; 1st Edition, 2004, p. 54.

⁴¹⁰ Mohammad Nasseruddin al-Albani, “*Al-Tariq al-Rashid Nahwou al-Kayan al-Islami*” (Lit. “The Guided Path towards Building the Islamic Entity”), op. cit., pp. 1/377.

⁴¹¹ Mohammad Nasseruddin al-Albani, “*Masa’il wa Ajwabatuhu*” (Lit., “Questions and Answers”), “al-Asala” magazine; issue no. 18, Muharram 15th, 1419 (AH), p. 71.

Takfir of Democracy and Rejecting Pluralism and Elections

Democracy, according to the Conservative Salafist discourse, is an illegitimate, infidel system imported from the outside (the West). It is a concept that violates the *Sharia*. Al-Albani stresses that “democracy is by virtue of the definition accorded to it by its authors and adherents: the rule of the people by the people for the people, and that the ‘people’ are the ultimate reference and source of all authority. Indeed, it is exactly this matter, in point, that is in contradiction with Islamic *Sharia* and the Islamic doctrine... because democracy is a system of *al-taghout* (that which is worshipped without God); and, God ordered us to declare as *kufir* all forms of idolatry (*takfir al-taghout*). Democracy and Islam are two incompatible systems that will never meet! It is either faith in God and governing by that which He brought forth to us – or faith in *al-taghout* and governing by that. And, all those who violate God’s *Sharia* are *kuffar* (unbelievers, infidels) and idolatrous (of *al-taghout*). Those who attempt to include it as part of the system of the Islamic *Shura* (consultation) are of no consequence, because the texts of the *Shura* make no mention of this. And the ‘people of authority’ in these matters are the pious ones. It follows that democracy is in violation of the religion and all that is pious and sanctioned by it, as previously noted.”⁴¹²

“As for the multi-party system, this is merely a “branch” or corollary of the system of democracy; and, it is comprised of two major components: political pluralism and intellectual-doctrinal pluralism. The significance of doctrinal (ideological) pluralism is that, under the shadow of a democratic system, people have the freedom to believe in any doctrine as they see fit or desire. Thus, it is possible for them to leave Islam for any other faith, religion, or creed – even if that creed was Jewish or Nazarene (Christian), Communist, Socialist, or Secular... And, this, in itself, is pure “*Ridda*” (apostasy). As for political pluralism: It means opening the way for any and all parties, regardless of their beliefs or creed, to govern Muslims by way of the electoral process. This makes Muslims equal to all others; and, this, in itself, violates all the peremptory doctrine which explicitly forbids that Muslims be governed by those who are not Muslim. Finally, plurality leads to dissension, divisions, disunity, and conflicts that are punishable by God.”⁴¹³

“As for the electoral process: In its democratic form, elections are *haram* (forbidden by Islamic law) and under no circumstances should it be allowed. Legislative or representative assemblies or parliaments, which do not govern by the Qur’an and the Prophet’s Sunnah and, instead, govern by ‘majority rule’, are nothing but *taghout* assemblies. Thus, the Muslim must not acknowledge or recognize such assemblies much less assist in establishing them, or cooperating in making their existence possible while they wage war against God’s law (*Sharia*); and, because it is a foreign method and instrument devised by the Jews and the Christians and, according to Islamic *Sharia*, it is not permissible to imitate them.”⁴¹⁴

Declaring the *takfir* of democracy, pluralism, and the electoral process is of the major constants and precepts in the Conservative Salafist discourse. In the book, “*Madarik al-Nathar fi al-Siyasa*” (Insightful Perspectives on Politics), in which al-Albani wrote the forward address, the following is stated, “The electoral process is a *kafir* system; because it makes Muslims equal to non-Muslims

⁴¹² Mohammad Nasseruddin al-Albani and Muqbil Bin Hadi al-Wadi’i and others in “*Masa’el ‘Asriyya fi al-Siyasa al-Shari’ya*” (Lit. “Contemporary Questions about Legitimate Politics [that is in Accordance with the Sharia]”), “al-Asala” magazine, 15 Jumada al-Akhira, 1413, issue number 2, p. 17.

⁴¹³ Ibid., pp. 18-19.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid., p. 22.

and *kuffar* (unbelievers, infidels). What is even greater is that it equates Islam with the *kufir* that makes all votes equal in weight in its scales... I took it upon myself to research this electoral list and platform [here, al-Albani means the electoral platform and list of the Algerian Islamic Salvation Front] in order to find something about ‘governing by that which was sent forth by God’ or ‘the application of Islamic *Sharia*’; but, I could not find a single word in it – not even once. Instead, I only found these soft words – which would not disturb the guardians of their parliament – such as when they would say things like ‘the Islamic project’ and the ‘Islamic cause.’ In the meantime, they mention ‘the people’ and ‘the constitution’ over 47 times in a document that is only two and a half pages long! This is out of their keenness that command and sovereignty are complete for them; and, there is no share for God Almighty in either. Ponder that! For, in their talk, it is all about the victory of ‘the choice of the people’ and ‘the will of the people’ and ‘the stipulations of the constitution’, and so on. God defiles this religion (!), which has left nothing for God but turned it into no more than an offering, a sacrifice to its *taghout*... This is the religion of democracy... And, these obscene terms come from its lexicon... a lexicon in which they have replaced Revelation with desecration and within which they have debased their religion.”⁴¹⁵

The principle of *al-Hakimiya* (Divine sovereignty) is wider in meaning and in its significance in the Conservative Salafist discourse than what is generally purported by others. In Salim al-Hilali’s view, “The meaning of *al-Hakimiya*, in the words of God and His Prophet, is wider in scope than what is generally believed or understood by most laymen, and even the partially educated, who think it solely relates to or deals with those who govern or with rulers. Meanwhile, the scope of *al-Hakimiya* extends well beyond any one individual.”⁴¹⁶

Political awareness in the discourse of Conservative Salafism is understood within the context of the view taken by those who see Islam as a religion that contains within it all the answers to any or everything related to earthly issues and matters. The Conservative Salafist *manhaj* sees itself as that which represents the “surviving and victorious sect.” They see themselves as the sect responsible for and charged with protecting and preserving the Islamic identity from contamination, deviation, and from its descent into oblivion. Indeed, Conservative Salafism is of the view that the modern Muslim world, which today is founded on the democratic, politically pluralistic system, has deviated from Islam and has entered into the domain of *kufir*, and has surrendered itself to *al-taghout*. In the meantime, the Albanist Salafists, with this harsh knowledge and awareness of the political reality of their day and age, have distanced themselves from directly engaging in any political work or activity. For them, what is obligatory is to work with and in society through its individuals, and far from the framework of the prevailing authorities and the state in the form in which they exist today.

Thus and based on all of the aforementioned, the strategy of the Albanist Salafists emerges from the fundamental premise of first remedying and redressing the ills of society and its masses and popular base, from within, prior to resorting to any prospects of working on official authority structures or

⁴¹⁵ Abd al-Malik ibn Ahmad ibn al-Mubarak Ramadani al-Jaza’iri, “*Madarik al-Nathar fi al-Siyasa Bayn al-Tatbiqaat al-Shar’iyya wa al-Infi’alat al-Hamasiya*” (Lit. “Insightful Perspectives on Politics between that which is Religiously Legal Applications and that which is Overzealous Action”); read by and edited by the ‘Allama (Scholar) and Sheikh Mohammad Nasserruddin al-Albani; Dar Ahl al-Hadith; 2nd Edition (revised and expanded version), 1418, pp. 240-241.

⁴¹⁶ Salim al-Hilali, “*Kulkum Ra’in*” (Lit., “You are all Shepherds”), “al-Asala” magazine, 15 Jumada al-Akhar, 1414, Issue Number 8, p. 39.

in the state. It is based on a long-term policy that channels its energy and efforts to important matters and political issues by reforming the people in their doctrine and faith, in their worship, in their dealings, and in their relations with one another in society. Ultimately, according to Albanist Salafism, this strategy, based on the long-term policy of “purification and education” of society, will lead to the restoration of and return to an Islamic way of life and, that this “Islamization” of society will eventually lead to the establishment of the proper and true Caliphate state.

Women in the Perspective of Conservative Salafism: The Triumph of Rejection of “Westernization”

The Conservative Salafist perspective on women and women’s issues is grounded in quite solid qualitative foundations. Sheikh al-Albani established the parameters of this particular issue by first setting a solid base that, primarily, excluded women from the public space. He specifically defined her place and her work as being confined to the framework of managing her household and to child rearing, within the context of the strategy of “purification and education.” And, although he affirmed that men and women were equal in creation, he determined that, “The righteous place for the women is to be confined to her house, based on God’s words addressing women: “*Dwell (remain) in your homes.*” Indeed, the women of the *Salaf al-Saleh* did not interfere or engage in politics.”⁴¹⁷

Traditional Salafism stresses the need for women to remain confined to their homes. And, while affirming women’s equality to men in creation and in composition, they made it clear that women should not demand equality with men in all their rights. Sheikh al-Albani asked that women accept this and adhere to this condition, saying, “The wife does not ask, for example, to be equal to the man in all of his rights... And, specifically, a woman must obey her husband in his demands of her, to the utmost of her abilities. For, God favored men over women in two verses, which state that “*and men shall take full care (are the guardians) of women...(Al-Nissa’ 4:34)*” and “*men are a degree above them (Al-Baqara 2:228).*” And, there are several Hadith also confirm this superior status of men.”⁴¹⁸

Despite the fact that Wahhabi and Conservative Salafism share this emphasis on the importance of women remaining confined to their homes, Conservative-Albanist Salafism is generally more lenient than its Salafist counterpart in Saudi Arabia when it comes to a woman’s attire, in particular. Sheikh al-Albani dedicated several books to the subject of what was the proper dress required for the Muslim woman. In one of these books, entitled “*Hijab al-Mara’a al-Muslimah*” (The Proper Veiling of the Muslim Woman), he sets eight stipulations for ensuring the proper attire of a woman.

⁴¹⁷ Mohammad Nasserruddin al-Albani, a comment in the footnote of the book, “*Huquq al-Nissa’ fi al-Islam: Nidaa’ illa al-Jins al-Latif*” (Lit. “Women’s Rights in Islam: An Appeal to the Fairer Sex”), authored by Mohammad Rashid Rida, Al-Maktab Al-Islami; 1975, p. 11.

⁴¹⁸ Mohammad Nasserruddin al-Albani, “*Adab al-Zafaf fi al-Sunnah al-Mutahara*” (Lit. “The Ethics of Marriage in the Purified Sunnah”); Dar Ibn Hazem, Beirut, Lebanon and Al-Maktaba Al-Islamiya, Jubaiha, Jordan; 3rd Edition, 1996, pp. 279-289.

In summary, these eight conditions may be summarized in requiring the woman to cover her entire body, totally, with the exception of “the face and the hands.”⁴¹⁹

The issue of Westernization and imitating the West are focal notions that prevail over the overall thought of Conservative Salafism. These two issues are considered of the most important and most threatening challenges that face the Muslim world today. Indeed, Westernization of society and the Westernization of women are seen as direct consequences of imitating the *kuffar*. The latter premise is the rationale behind al-Albani’s warning against all forms and images of “imitation” of the West. In his view, “Muslim men and women must not imitate the *kuffar* in their worship, in their holidays, and in the attire that is specific to them. And, it is with great regret that, today, many Muslims have deviated from this major tenet of the Islamic *Sharia*. Unfortunately, many Muslims, even those to whom matters of the religion and its *da’wa* are of great importance, due to ignorance of their religion follow their whims, or deviate towards the ways and customs of modern times and the infidel Europe – even if these are of the causes for the humiliation of the Muslims, and the reasons for their weakness, and for their subjugation by foreigners, and for their colonization.”⁴²⁰

And in the Conservative-Albanist Salafist discourse, the domain of “change” and the parameters of working towards “change” is also defined according to specific tenets in which it is considered a “male” domain – a domain in which there is no place for the woman and no need for her presence. In the context of clashing values between civilizations, Conservative Salafist worldview perceives that the essence of the Islamic being is marked by purity and absolute goodness; whereas, the essence of the contemporary, modern being is no more than a ruin founded upon hypocrisy, corruption, and fraud. Accordingly, for the Traditional Salafists, there was no way that the woman should have a presence or be involved in this modern world of politics.

The Traditional Salafist awareness and understanding of their environment and their socio-economic reality, and their own understanding of the nature of the religion of Islam, itself, generated a view in which, essentially, women were considered inferior. With that, Traditional Salafists worked to employ the woman as an instrument within the framework of their strategy of “purification and education.” Also, in the past few years, slight developments have taken place when it comes to the role of women in the *da’wa* of Traditional Salafism. For example, a women’s committee has been established under the umbrella of the Imam Al-Albani Center whose mission is to connect and communicate with other women in their homes, and to conduct lectures and lessons for other women in own their homes.⁴²¹

It would appear that Conservative Salafism represents an obstacle in the path of women’s progress, particularly in terms of their civil and political rights. For, Conservative Salafism is based on the firm conviction that the experience of Islam and the way of Islam is wholly comprehensive and complete, and, this firm conviction does not take into account any historical variables and changes

⁴¹⁹ Mohammad Nasserruddin al-Albani, “*Julbab al-Mara’a al-Muslima fi al-Kitab wa al-Sunnah*” (Lit. “The Proper Cover for the Muslim Woman in the Qur’an and in the Sunnah”); Dar Ibn Hazem, Beirut, Lebanon and Al-Maktaba Al-Islamiya, Jubaiha, Jordan; 4th Edition, p. 37.

⁴²⁰ See Mohammad Nasserruddin al-Albani, “*Sifat Salat al-Nabi...*” (Lit., “A Description of the Prophet’s (MPBUH) prayer...”), op. cit., pp.43.

⁴²¹ Refer to the women’s committee’s “*Ma’an’ala Tareeq al-Najah wa al-Tafawuq li al-Fard wa al-Usra wa al-Talib wa al-Madrassa*” (Lit. “Together on the Path of the Success and Excellence of the Individual, the Family, the Student and the School”); Dar al-Athiriyya, Amman, Jordan.

that may have taken place (since the time of the *Salaf al-Saleh*, for example). It insists on confining the role and work of women to the private space of their homes and of taking care of their family affairs, according to a very strict interpretation of the phrase and notion of men's *qawama*, where the Qur'anic verse states: "... and men shall take full care (are the guardians) of women..." Furthermore, and according to their manifest and literal reading and interpretation of Islam, Conservative Salafists see that the status which was bestowed upon women in Islam guarantees her rights in any case. They see in this status absolute perfection and in "other" only evil and corruption.

Therefore, and according to such an outlook, revival and progress was but a mere elementary matter and a fait accompli if one simply returns to the Qur'an and the Sunnah according to the model and understanding of the *Salaf al-Saleh*. Consequently, taking on or benefiting from other civilizations was nothing more than regression, *ibtida'* and deviation from the proper and righteous path of the religion. According to Sheikh Mashhoor Salman, "The Islamic library is rich with studies about women, and about their rights and duties; and, it is rich with proof of the conspiracies being made against women by the agents of Westernization, and refutes the empty delusions and claims made by the enemy and the fraudulent calls of the secularists."⁴²²

According to this perspective and outlook, the modern woman, in her modern reality, has become nothing more than "a net for collecting money, a trap for young men, an instrument of corruption and of corrupting, and a ladder with which to achieve certain goals. The reason for all this is: Leaving behind proper judgment and the provisions in which mankind's true happiness lies."⁴²³

On his part, Mohammad Mousa Nasr sees women's rights organizations as nothing more than a conspiracy against the Muslim woman and as an instrument of promoting Westernization and corruption. He says, "We must take heed of the conspiracies set forth by the enemies of Islam. They are conspiracies (*mu'amaraat*) and not conferences (*mu'tamaraat*). These are conferences in which they regurgitate what the Jews dictate to them, and what the devils amongst mankind and the jinn dictate to them... For, they want our societies to fall into the mire of vice... And, they want our societies to chase, gasping, after shameful decadence... Because the fall into moral decay always precedes military occupation. That is why the Islamic *ummah* must fall into decay and that is why the Muslim woman must be corrupted."⁴²⁴

As for the modern notion of "women's rights" and celebrating "international women's day," these are merely examples of holidays and ploys used by the enemies of Islam in order to inflict the Western woman on the Arab and Muslim woman, and in order to ruin Muslim societies and to corrupt the Muslim family... So that the Arab and Muslim woman becomes just like the foreign and Western woman, who does not shy her hand away from a [male's touch/greeting], and whose husband has no guardianship over her, and whose father has no authority over her."⁴²⁵

⁴²² Mashhoor Hassan Salman, "*Hukum 'Amal al-Mara'a fi al-Fiqh al-Islami*" (Lit. "Rulings on Women's Work in Islamic Jurisprudence"), authored by Adnan Bin Daif Allah al-Shawabka, Dar al-Athriya, Amman; 1st Edition, 1428 (AH), p. 5.

⁴²³ Ibid, p. 6.

⁴²⁴ Mohammad Mousa Nasr, "*Huqouq al-Mara'a fi al-Islam*" (Lit. "The Rights of Women in Islam"); taped recording, cassette number 14.

⁴²⁵ Ibid.

In result, the theoretical discourse of Conservative Salafism is based on a puritanical and orthodox vision of society and the state, and it has a categorical certainty about which instruments and methods are required to affect change, and what the targets and objectives of this change must be. The grassroots and popular base of society is the fundamental target for the work of comprehensive change; and this, for them, is politics.

In the course of declaring the Conservative Salafist political *manhaj* for bringing about change and in response to the political approach presented by the Jihadi Salafists, Sheikh al-Albani says:

“They declared and avowed that the rulers are *kuffar*; and, that the rulers are *kuffar* who are guilty of apostasy... But what can you all do? The infidels occupied the lands of Muslims, while, with great regret, here, we have been beset by the occupation of Palestine by the Jews. But, what can you all... and we... do about them that you think you can do with these rulers, whom you believe are *kuffar*? You all have left this aspect of the matter aside; and purport to commence with setting the foundations upon which the Islamic government will be founded... Does the path towards achieving that end begin with declaring a revolution against these leaders, who you believe are *kuffar*?”

It seems that this is what they believe ... and, with all this belief – and it is a mistaken belief – they still cannot do anything! What is the *manhaj* proposed? What is the path? There is no doubt that the path is that which the Prophet (May Peace Be Upon Him) recited, and was remembered by His Companions of in every sermon, “The best guidance is the guidance of Mohammad (May Peace Be Upon Him).” Therefore, it is the duty of every Muslim, and especially those amongst the Muslims who are concerned with the restoration of Islamic rule, to begin where the Prophet (May Peace Be Upon Him) began; and, that is what we have dubbed in two true words ‘purification and education...’

Thus, it is essential that we begin with educating people in Islam, the way the Prophet (May Peace Be Upon Him) began. But, we do not limit ourselves to education alone, because there are things that have intruded into the religion, which do not belong to the religion and which have no connection with it, at all... Therefore, it is obligatory for those carrying out the *da’wa* to commence with purging this Islam of all that does not belong to it. And, the second thing is to ensure that in juxtaposition with this purification process that the new generations of young Muslim generations are educated and cultivated in this lofty, chosen Islam.⁴²⁶

The Conservative Salafist *manhaj* for bringing about reform and change in order to pave the way for the establishment of the Islamic state is based on a revivalist vision founded in safeguarding the Islamic identity and preserving it through processes and strategies, which aim to purify society; and purge it of the *bid’a* and *shirk* that has plagued it; and to fight sins; and to carry out one’s duties towards society, because, society is the base, the foundation which must undergo processes of purification and education, in order to prepare it for directly engaging in political work that, in the end, will inevitably lead to the establishment of the Islamic state.

⁴²⁶ Mohammad Nasseruddin al-Albani, “*Jaridat al-Muslimun*” (Lit., “The Muslims’ Newspaper”), 5/5/1416 (AH), issue number 2556, p. 7.

However, this vision changed, partially, after the death of Sheikh al-Albani and after the movement went through several upheavals, schisms, and divisions. The Conservative Salafists began to lean towards a more reconciliatory policy towards the state and allied itself closer to the authorities by issuing political *fatwas* that were in support of or in line with official state policy when it came to certain thorny, sensitive political issues. Indeed, Salafist Sheikhs have issued hundreds of *fatwas*, which fall under this category.⁴²⁷ Several essays and books, which dealt with the subject of “obedience to the guardians (the rulers)”, were also published, in the spirit of the fragile alliance that was perceived, by both sides, as being mutually beneficial. It resembled a deal in which the state would allow the Traditional Salafists complete freedom to conduct their “*da’wa*” activities, and would turn a blind eye to their “digressions,” in return for the Conservative Salafists acting as an agent, that was of little or no cost to the state, which countered, counteracted, and offset the state’s more irksome Islamic opponents, such as the Jihadi Salafists and the Harakiya Salafists. This was all notwithstanding the fact that the Traditional-Conservative Salafists were spreading a sociology of hope, which led to individual heavenly salvation amongst the poor and the marginalized, and which helped relieve some of the burden on the state to face up to the country’s socio-economic problems and ills.

But, as the politics of this alliance between the Conservative Salafists and the state⁴²⁸ was not grounded in a solid foundation based on longer-term, mutually intellectual, political, or ideological commonalities, this political pact could be considered under the framework of temporary, short-term alliances – as was the case in the past with the Muslim Brotherhood, which the state once allied with and employed in confronting Leftist and Nationalist parties and currents.

Indeed, when it comes to the religious domain, the relationship between the Salafists, in general, and the state is not based on a balanced, integrative, and comprehensive strategy. In fact, there is no national reform agenda, which would reproduce and reintegrate religion and politics, while using a reformative perspective that works to integrate all the active political forces, in all their ideological diversities, based on a solid foundation and based on the aim of achieving social justice and genuine political participation.

⁴²⁷ With regard to issues related to the Jihadi Salafists and domestic and external terrorism, see, for example: Mohammad Mousa Nasr, Salim al-Hilali, ‘Ali al-Halaby, “*Sad al-‘Udwan ‘an Amman*” (Lit. Countering the Aggression against Amman”), publications issued by the Imam Al-Albani Center and “*Kalima Manhajiya Haadiya fi Ba’dh al-Ahdath al-Jariya*” (Lit. “A Methodological and Guiding Word with regard to Certain Current Events”); the Imam Al-Albani Center for Scholarly Studies and Methodological Research; 24 Muharram, 1431 (AH) (10/1/2010) by Sheikh Mashhoor Bin Hassan Al Salman, Dr. Bassem Faisal al-Jawabira, Dr. Mohammad Bin Mousa Aal Nasr, Dr. Ziyad Bin Salim al-‘Abbad, Sheikh ‘Ali ibn Hassan al-Halaby. And for issues related to Iraq, see “*Al-Fatawa al-Shamiya fi Masa’il al-Nazila al-Iraqiya*” (Lit. “Levantine Fatwas about Current Iraqi Affairs”) by Sheikh Mohammad Nasserruddin al-Albani, Mashhoor Hassan Salman, Ali Hassan al-Halaby, Salim al-Hilali, compiled and edited and commented on by Abu Humam Hareth ibn Abd al-Karim al-Shami; Without a publisher.

⁴²⁸ The politics of alliance between the Traditional Salafists and the state was also used in several other Arab states such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Algeria and Morocco to confront Jihadi and other political Islamist movements. See the Algerian case, in particular, in “Salafism and Radical Politics in Post conflict Algeria”, Amel Boubekeur Carnegie Paper, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, October 2008, (available in English and Arabic) <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=22293> As for Morocco, it amended this policy after the events of May 16, 2003 when it uncovered a connection between the Traditional Salafists and the Jihadi and Harakiya Salafists, after which, the authorities worked to restrict the activities of the Traditional Salafists there who were led by Sheikh Abd al-Rahman al-Maghrabi; [See: Dr. ‘Abd al- Hakim Abu al-Lawz, “*Al-Harakat al-Salafiyya fi al-Maghrib*” (Lit. “Salafist Movements in Morocco”), p. 381-388].

The World in the Eyes of the Salafists: An Obsession with Religious Identity

The Conservative Salafists view the world from a fundamentally dualist perspective, which is based on a logic that is embroiled in the conflict between the “good” and “evil.” According to the Salafists, the pure essence of the Islamic character conveys and carries absolute “good,” with no room for doubt. As for the “other,” contemporary character, it is no more than a ruin comprised of fraud, immorality, hypocrisy, and deceit, and based on “evil,” whose trappings and trickery must be worked against and avoided at all cost.

This worldview means the Conservative Salafist discourse rejects any engagement in contemporary politics and adopts a political vision that concentrates entirely on issues related to the religion, its creed, and jurisprudence and centers its focus on society rather than the state. Society, in its individuals, is the primary and fundamental target for the Conservative Salafist message. On the other hand, they hold that the state and its institutions are entities from which they should maintain a distance, and with which they should avoid any engagement or connection.

The discourse of the Conservative Salafists is entrenched in a view of the world, the state, and of society that saw in all three a deviation from the Qur’an, the Sunnah, and the *manhaj* of the *Salaf al-Saleh*. One of its claims in its preaching is that the poisons – that have drained the strength of the Muslims, paralyzed their very abilities and polluted their pool – were not the swords of the infidels, which gathered in malice and spite against Islam, its people and its state, but rather the malignant germs, which have infiltrated the very core of the giant Islamic corpus over long periods of time. And, despite the slow infiltration of these germs, they were nevertheless unceasing, progressive, and certainly effective.⁴²⁹

Salim al-Hilali sees that the fortresses of Islam were threatened from within “so that the Islamic *ummah* could not awaken from the prick of the poisonous needle, filled with the deadly germs with the aim of plunging it into oblivion... For, the leaders of *kufir* have worked to instill programs of indoctrination inside the Islamic *ummah*, which produce poisons from within... And this is what the masters of the *Feranj* (the European West) and the Jews have schemed and plotted for – and what these prostrating slaves, who have come to have power over our lands, carry out. Today, these dark forces still raise their voices and banners high over our lands, calling the *ummah* forth to hellfire. May God forbid! For, here are the preachers of democracy, screaming... and, here are the fathers of socialism, hee-hawing... and, here are the guardians of nationalism, barking... and the people follow them, gasping... because they have not been illuminated with the light of knowledge and learning, and they have not sought out higher grounds, where decisions are trustworthy and sound.”⁴³⁰

The political reality in the Muslim world, according to Conservative Salafism, was disastrous due to the weakness of the Muslims; and, this was a result of the *ummah*’s deviation from the Qur’an and the Sunnah; and a result of the international conspiracies that have plotted against it, whose aim is to corrupt it and loot it of its riches. Sheikh al-Albani confirms this view, when he says, commenting on the following Prophet’s Hadith “*There will be treasures extracted by the most evil of people*”... “There is no doubt that the most wicked of people alluded to in this Hadith are the

⁴²⁹ Salim Bin Eid al-Hilali, “*Wa Fihi Dakham*” (“Lit. And There is Malice”), “al-Asala” Magazine, 15th of Thu al-Qi’ada, 1414 (AH), issue number 11, p. 12.

⁴³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 13-15.

kuffar (the unbelievers); and that the Prophet is alluding to that which the Muslims are plagued with today brought forth by the Europeans and the Americans to our Arab lands to extract its resources and wealth ... and *from God we seek assistance*.”⁴³¹

But even with al-Albani’s affirmation of the cause behind the humiliation of the Muslim *ummah* and its enslavement by the outside West, he also affirms the importance of the internal factor in perpetuating this reality. Indeed, he stresses in the following statement that, “The ailment that keeps the Muslims in the current state in which they are in, humiliated and enslaved by the infidels – even the Jews – in some of the Muslim countries, is not the ignorance of so many of the scholars in the *fiqh* of this reality, or of the inability to make a stand against the plots and scheming of the infidels, which they carry out as they wish.”⁴³² According to al-Albani, knowing and understanding this reality is easy “but the problem is... their negligence in carrying out and working according to the ways and rules of the religion, as it was brought forth in its Book and in its Sunnah”.⁴³³

‘Ali al-Halaby lends his endorsement to this conspiratorial view of the world when he says, “What is exported by Western media, whether it is by television, radio, or magazines, and new agencies, when it comes to Islam and the Muslims, and their malevolence towards both, and in their schemes to oppress them, is embodied by two intentions – one of which or both of which must be achieved: The first is to keep the Muslims occupied in the problems of the East, while they continue to scheme in the West, and continue to divert the attention of Muslims away from the reality of their wicked scheming and this malicious reality that they are working on carrying out! The second is to make themselves appear great in the hearts of Muslims... that they are shrewd, and that they are planners and thinkers... and, that they do not miss a thing! ... And, that they are in control... Knowing all of this, how can we remain tempted by their experts and expert analyses?”⁴³⁴

Imitating the *kuffar*, in the view of Conservative Salafists, and following the path and method of the infidel were of the main factors that led to the backwardness, *ibtidaa’*, and *kufur* that has become so rampant in the Muslim world. And, all Western (and Westernized) political regimes had no place or chance in Islam.

According to the Conservative Salafists, “What was brought forth by the Book and the Sunnah, and all that was set forth by the *Salaf al-Saleh* as examples and precedents in their goals, conduct, methods, and means are enough for the *ummah*. However, it can be said, with all accuracy, that the reason some people permit themselves to devise and innovate other ways is because they lend themselves license to imitate the *kuffar* in their means and in their method, which they adopt in order to achieve what is so-called democracy – or so they claim – and social justice, or any of those other terms, which are so lacking in any truth. For, they – and here I mean, certain Muslims, permit themselves to imitate the *kuffar* with these methods. For us, our God – the Almighty – enriched us with our *Sharia*, in the way which has been explained in detail above, so that we will not be

⁴³¹ Mohammad Nasserruddin al-Albani, “*Silsalat al-Ahadith al-Sahihah*” (Lit. “The Series of Sound Hadiths”), Maktabat al-Ma’arif, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia; 1995, 4/507.

⁴³² Mohammad Nasserruddin al-Albani, “*Fiqh al-Waqi’i*” (Lit. “A Scholarly Understanding of Reality”), Al-Maktaba al-Islamiyya, Amman, Jordan; 2nd Edition, 1422 (AH), pp. 39-40.

⁴³³ *Ibid*, p. 43.

⁴³⁴ Ali Hassan Ali Abd al-Hamid al-Halabi al-‘Athary, “*Ru’yya Waqi’iyya fil Manahij al-Da’awiya*” (Lit. “A Realistic Outlook on the Da’wa Approaches”), Dar al-Sawab lil Kitab, Amman, Jordan and Dar al-Imam Ahmad, Cairo, Egypt; 1st Ed, 2006, p. 49.

dependent on the *kuffar*. And, if we take their path, we will have deviated from the path of the believers; and we will have taken the path of the *kuffar* and the idolaters (those who commit *shirk*).”⁴³⁵

Perhaps, anyone who attempts a thorough reading of the “*al-Asala*” Magazine, which is one of the official mouthpieces for the Conservative Salafist movement, would be alarmed by the conspiratorial tone and discourse that permeates every single issue. Indeed, the editorial committee of “*al-Asala*” clearly states in one of its editorials entitled, “*Ahwal al-‘Alam al-Islami*” (The Conditions of the Muslim World) that, “they bore their fangs, scowling, as they folded the deceitful pages of their democracy, and revealed what was hidden in their hearts... These are fabricated claims and decadent slogans... Boasted and flaunted by the Western politicians when it comes to anything and everything but Islam and *Salam* (Peace).”⁴³⁶ The fundamental view of the Conservative Albanist-Salafists with regard to external factors does not differ much from its opinion of the internal factors. Indeed, their stance and relations with regard to the other, contemporary Islamist groups, movements, and parties is also based entirely on the heritage left by *Ahl al-Hadith* and *Ahl al-Hadith*’s struggle with other Islamist groups and sects that existed during their time.

Indeed, the *da‘wa* work of the Conservative Salafist movement was firmly obsessed to realize its one major objective: To protect, revive, and reproduce the discourse of *Ahl al-Hadith* and to apply that discourse to its contemporary, modern reality. The picture of pure Islam in their imagination governs all aspects of their exhaustive discourse, and works to form and construct it. For, there is only one Islam, not many, and, there is only one understanding of Islam, which could not differ. There is no path to Islam through pluralism and differences of opinions or otherwise.

This solitary unipolar vision produced a traditional way of thinking that is insular and marked by rigidity. It also generated a discourse that was fraught with aggressive and confrontational language, which systematically struggles to preserve the “purity of the identity of Islam” – an Islam that only exists in their imagination, which does not take into account the course of history, the differing time periods between the era in which *Ahl al-Hadith* existed and today, and all the developments and transformations that society had undergone since then.

Their discourse and vision also did not take into consideration the structure and nature of language that allows for debate, differences, and diversities in opinions. Indeed, according to the Conservative Salafist reading of matters, there is only one text with only one meaning, a static reality that never changes and a mind that does not reproduce or expand upon matters; and, finally, there is no use or reason for debate or for differences in opinion. This kind of thinking generated a dualist vision of the world, which is governed by the concept that the world is ruled by the antagonistic forces of good versus evil, right versus wrong, the Sunnah versus *al-bid‘a* and innovation, and endless other dualisms.

This discourse remains one that creates divisions under the pretext of “unification” and “consensus.” In the eyes of Conservative Salafism, all other Islamist groups, movements, and

⁴³⁵ Mohammad Nasserruddin al-Albani, “*Masa‘il wa Ajwibatuha*” (Lit., “Questions and Answers”), op. cit., p. 77.

⁴³⁶ Refer to the editorial written by its editorial committee, “*Ahwal al-‘Alam al-Islami*” (Lit. “The Conditions of the Muslim World”) in “*al-Asala*” Magazine; Issue Number 8, 15th of Jumada al-Akhar, 1414 (AH), p. 79.

parties, which existed in the past or exist today, fall under the circle of the “doomed sects.” The only surviving sect is that which is represented by the “victorious sect”, which is *Ahl al-Hadith* and no other sect.

6. The “Intellectual War” against other Islamists: The Domination of the “Surviving Sect”

Conservative Albanist-Salafism’s position with regard to other Islamist groups, movements, and parties that exist today is defined by an absolute, macro-vision, which is premised in unity and separation. This position is founded and dependent upon the overriding Conservative Salafist notion that there is a single, straight, pure path from which there must be no deviation.

In this context, the Hadith, which is considered the reference for the way the *ummah* was divided is taken on the authority of Abu Hurairah (a Companion of the Prophet) (May God Be Pleased With Him) who said, “The Messenger of God (May God Bless Him and Grant Him Peace) said ‘*The Jews split up into seventy-one sects; one in Paradise and seventy in the Fire. The Christians split up into seventy-two sects; seventy-one in the Fire and one in Paradise; and, by Him in whose Hand is the life of Muhammad! My ummah will split-up into seventy-three sects; one in Paradise and seventy-two are in the Fire.*” And, on the authority of the Companion Anas ibn Malik, (May God Be Pleased With Him), it was said: “O Messenger of God! Who are they?” And, He replied, “*The Jamaa’ah.*”⁴³⁷

The above is the reference upon which Conservative Salafism builds its opinion about all the other contemporary Islamist groups, movements, and parties, who are seen as falling within the framework of the “doomed” sects or groups. Al-Albani confirms the latter in saying:

“It is evident to every Muslim, who is learned in the Book, the Sunnah, and in our *Salaf al-Saleh* (God’s Blessings Be Upon Them), that factionalism and clustering into groups are, firstly, based on differences in ways of thinking and of ideas, and secondly in differences in *manhaj* and in approach... There is no Islam in this...”⁴³⁸

The Conservative Salafist threshold on this subject is delineated by one red line; and that is, there is only one division and this division cannot withstand more than two groups – one group for God and the other for the devil. Al-Albani confirms this notion when he says, “There is no successful party except for the party of God that the Qur’an speaks to us about. Therefore, if a party is not of the party of God, then it is of the party of the devil and not from the party of the Merciful.”⁴³⁹

In the perspective of the followers of Conservative Salafism, being part of the “surviving” and “victorious” sect cannot be attained except through *Ahl al-Hadith* and the followers of the *Salaf al-Saleh*. Sheikh Salim al-Hilali says, “We did our research on all the groups, in the past history and in our modern times; and, we did not find one group that meets the standards that would be approved by the Gracious Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) except for *Ahl al-Hadith* and the followers of the *Salaf al-Saleh*. For, they went forward in the footsteps of the Prophet and of His companions (May God Be Pleased With Them) in their creed, in their behavior, in their education, in their upbringing,

⁴³⁷ English translation quoted from “*Tasfiyyah and Tarbiyyah*”: “Who is the Victorious Group?” By the Sheikh Salim al-Hilali, in “Al-Ibaanah”, Issue No.2, Rabi’ul-Awwal 1416H / August 1995; Al-Ibaanah Online available at http://www.Sunnahonline.com/ilm/ibaanah/vol2_o.htm [Translator’s note]

⁴³⁸ Mohammad Nasserruddin al-Albani, “*Jamaa’ah Wahida bil Islam La Jama’aat*” (Lit. “One Group in Islam Not Groups”), Maktabet al-Furqan, Ajman, United Arab Emirates; 2nd Edition, 2003, pp 10-11.

⁴³⁹ Ibid, p. 13.

in their *da'wa*, and in their politics. And, in this, the milestones and tenets of the *manhaj* of the 'surviving sect' and the 'victorious sect' were set."⁴⁴⁰

Al-Hilali goes on to stress the satanic nature of the divisions and partisanship and the impact these have had on the religion when he says, "Thus, the devil's party understood the death that became known to the Pharaoh and his soldiers. They continued on the path of corruption, and took it upon themselves to transform societies into remnants, drowning it in divisions and parties that were too preoccupied with each other to wake up and know the righteous path."⁴⁴¹

Sheikh Mohammad Mousa Nasr reaches the same conclusion, saying, "The bountiful and righteous centuries (and generations) witnessed neither sectarianism nor partisanship. These differences and divided affiliations took place after them."⁴⁴² Nasr summarizes the "pestilence" of divisions and partisanship as being a form of *al-walaa' wa al-baraa'* (allegiance and disavowal) and a form of chauvinism to a specific party under the pretext of Islam, which is something that inevitably leads to political engagement; and, it is no more than a *bid'a* or an excuse to gain authority and domination over other Muslims. This is to be expected of divisions and differences; and, of rigidity and of insularity; and, it is contrary to the *manhaj* of the *Salaf al-Saleh*; and, it lacks the proper values required for maintaining the righteous path and the methodology to collective and *da'wa* work.⁴⁴³

Sheikh Mohammad Ibrahim Shaqra also sees the other contemporary Islamist groups and parties as being an extension of the "doomed sects," because he sees that partisanship and divided affiliations are nothing more than a regression and diversion from the path of Islam. According to his experience and his reading of this matter, he says, "Anyone who reviews the history of Islam, knows with all certainty that the groups, which are renowned in this history, are not of *Ahl al-Sunnah wal Jamaa'ah*. They are all misguided groups and sects. And, there is no excuse for anyone who uses the absence of the Imam as a reason to ponder over any form of partisan clustering and thinking in terms of political affiliations. The (*ta'wil*) interpretation of general texts, which overzealous Muslims fell prey to in an attempt to legitimize their organized partisan activities, will not guide one to reach the truth and to what is right."⁴⁴⁴

In the same vein of this Conservative Salafist position on the prohibition of divided affiliations and partisanship, Sheikh' Ali al-Halaby stresses on the corrupting nature of partisanship and its contradiction of the tenets of Islam because, in his words, "Islam cannot bear another organization within it as the basis of such an organization and its principle foundations would be set in *al-walaa' wa al-baraa'* (allegiance and disavowal)... For, the Hadith is to the effect that partisanship, divided

⁴⁴⁰ Salim ibn 'Eid al-Hilali, "*Man Hiyya al-Ta'ifa al-Mansoura*" (Lit. "Who is the Victorious Sect"), "al-Asala" magazine; Issue number 2, 15th Jamadi al-Akhar, 1413, p. 38.

⁴⁴¹ Salim ibn 'Eid al-Hilali, "*al-Maqlul al-Salafiya fi al-'Aqida wa al-Da'wa wa al-Manhaj wa al-Waq'i*" (Lit. "Salafist Sayings Regarding the Faith, the Da'wa, the Approach, and Reality"), Maktabat al-Furqan, Ajman, the United Arab Emirates; 2nd Edition, 2002, p. 83.

⁴⁴² Mohammad Mousa Nasr, "*Min Ma'alem al-Manhaj al-Nabawi fi al-Da'wa illa Allah*" (Lit. "From the Milestones of the Prophetic Manhaj in the Da'wa to God"), Dar al-Imam Ahmad, Cairo, Egypt; 1st E, 2004, p. 35.

⁴⁴³ Ibid., pp. 35-39.

⁴⁴⁴ Mohammad Ibrahim Shaqra, "*Muqademat al-Da'wa illa Allah Bayn al-Tajamou' al-Hizbi wa al-Ta'awon al-Shari'i*" (Lit. "An Introduction to Da'wa to God: The Difference between Partisan Affiliation and Grouping and Legitimate Cooperation"), Maktabat al-Sahaba, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia; 2nd Edition, 1993, pp. 14-15.

affiliations, and the separation into groups and parties is a matter which is inapplicable and contradictory to the meaning of Islam and does not emanate from it.”⁴⁴⁵

The Conservative Salafist view of partisanship does not depart from the confines of their notion of *ibtidaa'*, misguidance and falsehood; that is why Islamist parties are viewed by them from within the framework of the “doomed sects.” Al-Albani confirms all of the aforementioned when he says, “We do not believe that these parties are on the righteous path; indeed, we are certain that they are on that path where, at the head of every other path branching from it, the devil stands calling people forth to him”.⁴⁴⁶

According to al-Albani, these groups are not rooted in and do not follow the *manhaj* of the *Salaf al-Saleh*, nor the followers of the Qur’an and the Sunnah; he says, “Any Islamic party or clustering or grouping that has not based its group or party on the foundations of the Qur’an and the Sunnah of God’s Messenger, nor on the *manhaj* of the *Salaf al-Saleh*, is hence clearly mistaken and misguided. There is no doubt that any party, which is not based on these three references and sources, loses in all matters as a consequence of their error.”⁴⁴⁷

And, thus, it would appear that, in the eyes of the Conservative Salafists, the *manhaj* of all the other, different Islamist groups and parties are in contradiction of the fundamental rules and proper foundations for assembly and collective work. So, what are the principles, rules, and proper foundations for assembly and collective work according to the followers of this current?

The General Salafist Stance towards other Islamist Groups

Those who follow the history, evolution, and formation of Conservative Salafism will take note of the transformations that took place in the Salafist position with regard to what they deem to be legitimate forms of collective work and assembly, and in their stance with regard to the organized work of other Islamist groups and parties, and cooperating with them.

Indeed, in the earlier periods of his life, Sheikh Nasseruddin al-Albani showed a willingness to cooperate with certain Islamist groups, such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria, then the Brotherhood in Jordan. He used to give lessons in various branches of the Brotherhood and was close to many of its leading figures.⁴⁴⁸

Also during this period and prior to his decision to reside permanently in Jordan, his stance towards other Islamist groups in Syria was also characterized by leniency and flexibility, and a willingness

⁴⁴⁵ ‘Ali ibn Hassan ibn ‘Ali ibn Abd al-Hamid Al-Halaby, “Al-Da’wa illa Allah Bayn al-Tajamou’ al-Hizbi wa al-Ta’awun al-Shari’i” (Lit., “the Da’wa to God...”), Maktabat al-Sahaba, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia; 2nd Edition, 1993, pp.103-104.

⁴⁴⁶ Mohammad Nasserruddin al-Albani, “*Hathihi al-Jamaa’at min al-Ithnatyn wa Sab’ain Firqa*” (Lit. “These Groups are of the Seventy Two Sects”); Maktabat al-Furqan, Ajman, United Arab Emirates; 2nd Edition, 2003, p. 12.

⁴⁴⁷ Mohammad Nasserruddin al-Albani, “*Al-Maqalat al-Sunniya fi Hizb ut Tahrir wa al-Jamaa’at al-Takfiriya*” (Lit., “Sunni Reviews on Hizb ut Tahrir and the Takfiri Groups”); prepared by Mousa ibn Abdullah Aal Abd al-Aziz in Kitab al-Salafiyya, Dar al-Buhouth wa al-Dirasat al-Mu’asira wa al-Tarajim (Center for Contemporary Research, Studies, and Translations), Riyadh, Saudi Arabia; 1st Edition, 2006, p. 70.

⁴⁴⁸ Mohammad ibn Ibrahim al-Shaibani, “*Hayat al-Albani wa Atharuhu...*” (Lit., “The Life of al-Albani, His Influence and the Praise of Scholars upon Him”), op. cit., 1/401-402.

to offer his advice and his cooperation. At that time, he was in favor of the establishment of Islamist groups, and says, with regard to the legitimacy of these kinds of initiatives: “I support the establishment of Islamic groups. And, I endorse the idea that each of these groups focuses on a particular specialization and takes on a specialized role, whether that specialization be political, economic, social, or otherwise. However, I have put forth one stipulation and that is, that the circle of Islam is what unites all these groups... I call upon all Muslims to return to their proper and true religion; and, in that, to depend on the Qur’an and the Sunnah, first, and on the authentic and sound Sunnah, second. And I insist on this *da’wa*... I say this as I remember the long years in which I lived in Syria, when members of the Brotherhood used to attend my lessons, as did brothers from Hizb ut-Tahrir, Jamaa’at al-Tabligh as well as others from other sects and schools of thought... So how is it that after all this, we are accused of waging a war against Islamic groups?”⁴⁴⁹

In fact, al-Albani issued a clear *fatwa* about the obligation that collective work and assembly be free of any partisanship. In his words, “gathering and assembling to work for the sake of the Islam of the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) is a command and an obligation over which no two will differ; or, as the saying goes, over which two rams will not butt heads... Indeed, the rise of Muslims will not take place, and a Muslim society will not be achieved, and the Islamic state will not be established, except through this kind of assembly. But this is conditional on the premise that there will be no prejudice or allegiance towards a single individual or sect, without the other. And, that the only allegiance will be to God, in what was brought forth by His Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him), and to the *manhaj* of the *Salaf al-Saleh*.”⁴⁵⁰

Collective work, which is built on the principle of cooperation, is not discounted by Sheikh al-Albani. Indeed, he encourages it and stresses that it cannot be discounted, as long as it does not emanate from, or lead to any kind of partisanship and divided affiliations. Indeed, he sees collective work as being venerated in many verses, such as “Be amongst the truthful”, “Do not hoard amongst yourselves the food of the poor” and “Cooperate in goodwill, righteousness and piety.” Indeed, this kind of collective cooperation cannot be denied by any means because Islam is founded on this kind of cooperation.⁴⁵¹

However, this collective work based on cooperation must be carried out according to the Qur’an and the proper Sunnah, and must not work towards creating differences and divided affiliations between Muslims. To this end, al-Albani cites the word of God, “*Turn repentant towards Him; and fear Him, and be steadfast in prayer; and be not of the idolaters (31) Of those who have divided their religion and become sects, each party exalting (rejoicing) in what they have...(32).*” [Surat Al-Rum 30:31-32]

Al-Albani continues, “the excess and proliferation of parties and partisanship in the Muslim world is manifest and evident to every Muslim today. Each party has an approach and its own organizational structure and statutes. These parties are not harmonious and are reprehensible, in complete contradiction of the intended purpose of Islamic clustering and grouping— each with their

⁴⁴⁹ Mohammad Nasserruddin al-Albani, “*Ra’i al-Sheikh fi al-Jamaa’at al-Islamiya*” in “Hayat al-Albani” (Lit., “The Opinion of the Sheikh in Islamic Groups” in Mohammad Bin Ibrahim al-Shaibani, “The Life of al-Albani, His Influence and the Praise of Scholars upon Him”, op. cit., 2004, 1/395.

⁴⁵⁰ Mohammad Nasserruddin al-Albani, “*Masa’il wa Ajwibatuhā*” (Lit., “Questions and Answers”), op. cit., p. 71.

⁴⁵¹ Ibid., p. 70.

own *manhaj*, each with their own leader and each with their own sect. And, none of these converge or agree with the other.”⁴⁵²

Al-Albani puts emphasis on the stipulation that every Muslim, or Muslim group or party strictly commit to the Qur’an and the Sunnah, and the *manhaj* of the *Salaf al-Saleh*. With that, he was more lenient with this condition earlier in his life only to return to a more extreme position later, which is embodied by his declaration that, “We do not believe that these parties are on the righteous path; indeed, we are certain that they are on that path where, at the head of every path branching from it, the devil stands calling people forth to him.”⁴⁵³

As for Sheikh ‘Ali al-Halaby, he reaffirms that partisanship and parties are a form of *ibtidaa’* and are forbidden if they are not in strict accordance with the Salafist *manhaj*. He says, “there is no place for partisanship, divisions, or polarization... but only assembling and uniting under the *manhaj* and the righteous approach and the manifest path of goodness.”⁴⁵⁴

The followers and supporters of Conservative Salafism all agree on the importance of cooperation between Muslims, albeit based on the right foundations that, in the end, are defined as a commitment to the Salafist notions of what is proper and legitimate assembly. Yet the idea that partisanship was innovative in nature and thus, prohibited was a given in the eyes of the Conservative Salafists.

Perhaps this position on partisanship originates from the more general view the Albanist-Salafists have taken with regard to engaging in politics. The Albanist Salafists see that contemporary politics was something that they should distance themselves from; and, instead their focus should be on their version of politics, based on the strategy and principle of “purification and education.” Only that way would society be prepared and ready to enter the horizons of engaging directly in politics and in the Islamic state.

Accordingly then, the declared objective of the Albanist-Salafists of restoring an Islamic way of life does not mean they have to engage directly in politics, in the way that politics is understood in its modern and contemporary context. Therefore, and according to the Albanist vision, the only obligation that they are bound by and that is imperative is that of working towards “purifying and educating” individuals in society.

Indeed, the foundation of the Albanist-Salafist outlook on collective work, assembly, and partisanship was quite theoretical in nature and was based on a very stringent and strict understanding of Islam and a dualist worldview. The stance of the Conservative Salafists with regard to contemporary Islamist groups and movements was thus characterized by a rigid set of criteria, the most important of which were governed by the Salafist understanding of the notions of *al-Tawhid* and *al-‘Aqida* (creed), and the notion of the ‘victorious sect.’ Other criteria were set in the context of the war they were waging against *al-ibtidas’*, which was also understood from a

⁴⁵² Ibid., p. 71.

⁴⁵³ Mohammad Nasserruddin al-Albani, “*Hathihi al-Jamaa’at....*” (Lit. “These Groups are of the Seventy Two Sects”); op. cit, p. 12.

⁴⁵⁴ Ali ibn Hassan ibn Ali ibn al-Hamid al-Hlaby, “*Al-Da’wa illa Allah...*” (Lit., “The Da’wa to God...”), op. cit., p. 101.

position that was closer to a unipolar and dualist vision that viewed and judged all matters in terms of “black or white.”

Thus and based on all the aforementioned, the majority of contemporary Islamist groups and movements, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, Hizb ut-Tahrir, Jamaa‘at al-Tabligh and the Jihadi Salafists, fall under the framework of the “doomed” and “innovative” sects, according to Conservative Albanist-Salafism.

The Conservative Salafist Position towards the Muslim Brotherhood

Sheikh al-Albani’s position with regard to the Muslim Brotherhood went through two different stages. The first was when he was still residing in Syria when the relationship between him and the Brotherhood was marked by warmth and cooperation, despite the fact that he never joined their ranks. During that period, al-Albani used to give lessons in several Brotherhood centers in both Syria and Jordan. He also used to write articles that were published in the Muslim Brotherhood’s newspapers and magazines, particularly the “*Al-Tamadun al-Islami*” (“Islamic Civility”) Magazine.⁴⁵⁵ He remembers this stage, saying, “I remember the long years in which I lived in Syria, when members of the Brotherhood used to attend my lessons, as did brothers from Hizb ut-Tahrir, Jamaa‘at al-Tabligh and others from other sects and schools of thought... and of these, there were those who declared being my disciples and expressed gratitude. So, how is it that after all this, we are accused of waging a war against Islamic groups?”⁴⁵⁶

For a while, al-Albani’s position was more flexible towards the Muslim Brotherhood than it was towards other Islamist groups. But that position significantly changed after Sheikh al-Albani moved and settled in Jordan in 1980. The friendly relations with the Brotherhood, whose various branches and centers actually hosted al-Albani’s lessons at one time, transformed into a conflict, which ultimately led the Brotherhood to issue a statement warning its members from attending al-Albani’s lectures and sermons, and warning those who did attend that they risked being expelled from the organization, notwithstanding that at the time, al-Albani was holding his lessons in the Brotherhood’s various branches and centers.⁴⁵⁷

At one point, Sheikh al-Albani decided that the Brotherhood was a failed project. The reason for this failure, in his opinion, lay in their lack of understanding of the truth of Islam and of the *manhaj* of the *Salaf al-Saleh*; and that they had lost the capacity to advise one other. In his words, “the Muslim Brotherhood operates from a foundation that was set by their first leader, and by that I mean the foundation set by Hassan al-Banna. For this reason, one cannot find an effective synergy amongst them... The truth, as you know, is that which is not false; and falsehood has an origin and it has corollaries; and, all that violates what is right is false. This statement explains why, after practically seventy years, the Muslim Brotherhood remains intellectually far from understanding

⁴⁵⁵ Mohammad Bin Ibrahim al-Shaibani, “*Hayat al-Albani...*” (Lit., “The Life of al-Albani...”), op. cit., 1/401-402.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid, 1/395.

⁴⁵⁷ Hasan Abu Haniyeh, “*Ishkaliyat al-‘Alaaqa bayn al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin wa al-Sulta fi al-Urdun*” (Lit. “The Problematic Relationship between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Jordanian Authorities”); unpublished research paper, p. 16.

Islam properly; and thereby, remains far from being able to apply Islam on a practical level. Because, as the saying goes, ‘those who do not have cannot give...’⁴⁵⁸

The question of “*al-bay’a*” (oath of allegiance), which was characteristic of many Islamist organizations and particularly the Muslim Brotherhood, was considered one of the main issues that dictated al-Albani’s position with regard to the Muslim Brotherhood. For the Conservative Salafists, the notion of *al-bay’a* was considered a reprehensible *bid’a* (innovation). But, the question of *al-bay’a* carried great importance for them when it came to determining their position on whether or not Islamist groups and movements were guilty of *ibtida’a* (innovation).

Sheikh ‘Ali al-Halaby wrote an entire treatise on the question of *al-bay’a*. In this lengthy essay, he concludes that these groups and movements are indeed guilty of *ibtidas’* and lacked legitimacy. He also determines that this form of *al-bay’a* was one of the major causes for the divisions and fracturing that had taken place in the name of Islam. Indeed, al-Halaby launched a fierce campaign that specifically targeted the Muslim Brotherhood on this issue in particular.⁴⁵⁹

Sheikh Salim al-Hilali, on the other hand, summarized the deviation of the Brotherhood in three fundamental points (that he found the Brotherhood guilty of): firstly, *al-bid’a* in the creed – and innovation in the creed which glorifying Sufism and denying the divine attributes sprung forth (according to al-Hilali); secondly, sectarianism and dogmatism towards schools of thought rather than “*Itibaa’*” (following) – in the sense of the axiom “*itbaa’ la al-ibtidaa’*” or “following and not innovating”; and, thirdly: polarization on an organizational level, in a manner that is unlawful according to the *Sharia*.⁴⁶⁰

It appears that one of the most prominent figureheads and symbols of the Muslim Brotherhood, Sayyid Qutb, received the lion’s share of the most aggressive Albanist-Salafist attacks against the movement. The Albanist-Salafists published several volumes critical of the Qutbian-Brotherhood approach, which went to the extent of accusing the movement of *kufir* and of blaspheming and exceeding the religion.

During earlier periods in his life, al-Albani had actually commended Sayyid Qutb, describing him as the “learned-teacher”. However, towards the end of his life, he became much more severe in his criticism and extreme in his stand. Meanwhile, his followers used a most obscene manner to describe him, which went anywhere from accusing him of being guilty of *ibtidaa’* and misguidance to being guilty of *kufir* and at some extremes, even of apostasy.⁴⁶¹

⁴⁵⁸ Abu al-Ashbal Ahmad Salem al-Masri, “*Fatawa al-‘Ulama al-Kibar fi al-Irhab wa al-Tadmīr wa Dawabit al-Jihad wa al-Takfir wa Mu‘amalāt al-Kuffār*” (Lit., “The Fatwas of Great Scholars [Ulama] on Terrorism, Destruction and the Conditions for Jihad, Declaring Others Apostate [Takfir], and Dealing with Unbelievers [Kuffār]), Dar al-Kitāb; 1st Edition, 2005, pp. 423-424.

⁴⁵⁹ Ali Hassan Ali Abd al-Hamid al-Halaby, “*Al-Bay’a Bayn al-Sunnah wa al-Bida’a ‘ind al-Jama‘aat al-Islamiyya*” (Lit. “Pledging Allegiance: Between the sunnah and the Innovation amongst Islamist Groups”), Al-Maktaba Al-Islamiya (The Islamic Library), Amman, Jordan; 1st Edition, 1406 (AH).

⁴⁶⁰ Salim al-Hilali and Ziad al-Dabeej, “*Al-Jama‘aat al-Islamiyya fi Daw’ al-Kitāb wa al-Sunnah*” (Lit., “Islamist Groups in Light of the Qur’an and the Sunnah”); 2nd Edition, 1981, p. 108-133.

⁴⁶¹ Several books were published criticizing Sayyid Qutb, including several books by Rabih al-Madkhali, ‘Ali al-Halaby and Salim al-Hilali, amongst others.

Generally, a very aggressive and severe discourse characterizes the Albanist-Salafist position towards, and stance against, the Muslim Brotherhood. For them, the Brotherhood is classified as being amongst the “doomed sects” and of being amongst the innovators who hailed from *Ahl al-Ahwa’* (The Whimsical). They are accused of being guilty of Sufi thinking in their creed, and innovative partisanship in their work, and of lacking of a holistic Salafist vision. They are accused of not adhering to the *fiqh* of evidence or to the *manhaj* of the (true) followers; of being flawed by their chauvinistic partisanship and dogmatism to their school of thought; in their understanding of *al-Tawhid*; and, that their concept of *al-Tawhid* does not follow the jurisprudence and precedence set by the *Salaf al-Saleh*. Also, according to Albanist-Salafists, the Brotherhood belongs to the reprehensible fold of Sufism. Therefore, they belong to the “doomed sects” of the Ash’ariya and the Mu’tazila when it came to issues such as *al-Tawhid* and the divine attributes. The *manhaj* of assembly and collective work followed by the Brotherhood is also, in their opinion, in breach of the Sunnah; and, the form of *al-bay’a*, or allegiance, which they require of their followers and of their members was considered a part of the realm of *bid’a*, whim, and fabrication.

The Conservative Salafist Position towards Jamaa’at al-Tabligh

Conservative Salafism views Jamaa’at al-Tabligh as being another group that belongs to the “doomed sects” of innovators. Sheikh al-Albani presented a *fatwa* that prohibited any engagement or interaction with Jamaa’at al-Tabligh, which was seen as being guilty of acting outside the *manhaj* set forth by the Qur’an and the Sunnah. In this regard, al-Albani says, “Jamaa’at al-Tabligh is not based on the *manhaj* of the Book of God, nor the Sunnah of the Prophet (May Peace Be Upon Him), nor the precedence set by our *Salaf al-Saleh*. For this reason, it is forbidden to engage with them, because it is contrary to our *manhaj* of invoking and promoting the *manhaj* of the *Salaf al-Saleh*. Additionally, they are not concerned with the *da’wa* of the Book and the Sunnah, as a general principle. Instead, they consider this *da’wa* divisive; and in this, they are similar to the Muslim Brotherhood. There is no creed that unites them. One is Maturidi, another is Ash’ari, and yet another is Sufi, and one more adheres to no sect, this is because their *da’wa* is based on the principle of “Congregate then Assemble then Educate.” The fact is that they have no culture to educate, for over half a century, not a single scholar has sprung from amongst them. As for us, we say: “Educate, and then Assemble; so that assembly would be on an unequivocal basis and a principle. The Jamaa’at al-Tabligh is a contemporary form of Sufism that calls for morals and ethics. But, as for reforming the creeds of society, they do not move a finger; that is because in their claims, such would cause divisions. Hence, Jamaa’at al-Tabligh has no practical *manhaj*, their approach instead depends on the place where they dwell, for they take many colors.”⁴⁶²

The previous text is considered a clear summation of the position that the Albanist-Salafists generally hold towards Jamaa’at al-Tabligh. Indeed, Salim al-Hilali, ‘Ali al-Halaby, Mashhoor Hassan, and Mahmoud Mousa Nasr repeat the same logic and justifications: that Jamaa’at al-Tabligh does not adhere to the *manhaj* of the *Salaf al-Saleh*, and that their group embraces dangerous *bid’a* (innovations), a corrupt Sufi *manhaj*, and is an innovative sect.

⁴⁶² Abu al-Ashbal Ahmad Salem al-Masri, “*Fatawa al-‘Ulama al-Kibar...*” (Lit., “The Fatwas of Great Scholars...”), op. cit., pp. 415-416.

The Conservative Salafist Position towards Hizb ut-Tahrir

The position of the Conservative Salafists towards Hizb ut-Tahrir is considered by far the most severe and extreme. They are considered by Sheikh al-Albani as being the offspring of the Mu'tazila and then, the Neo-Mu'tazila, for they use the rational mind and govern by it in their *ijtihad* (intellectual reasoning), in their positions and in their approach, which is contrary to the Qur'an and the Sunnah, according to the Conservative Albanist-Salafists. Therefore, they fall in the realm of *ibtidaa'* (innovation); and hence, the description of "doomed sect" applies to them.

In the course of his criticism of the party, their corrupt *manhaj* and their misguided creed, al-Albani says, "this truth is lost upon all the contemporary Islamist parties, as it was on all the misguided and lost parties that came before them, especially Hizb ut-Tahrir, which is particularly distinct from any other Islamic party. It lends more weight to the human mind than Islam does. It is on this point that we draw attention to the form of *da'wa* followed by Hizb ut-Tahrir, which shows the influence of the Mu'tazila in the path they have chosen in their faith. Indeed, "*Tareeq al-Eman*" ("The Path of Faith") is the title of a study they present in the book "*Nitham al-Islam*" ("The Islamic System") that was authored by their leader, Taquiuddin al-Nabhani, may God have mercy on his soul. I met with him more than once and know him very well; and, I know what Hizb ut-Tahrir stands for very well. The first point against them is that they gave the (rational) mind more credit than they should have – this is where the Mu'tazila deviated long ago. For, the Mu'tazila denied very many great truths that are clear in the *Sharia* because they gave their reason too much authority over the texts of the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Subsequently, they distorted these texts, and altered and changed them. In the words of the Salafist '*ulama* (scholars), 'they rendered the texts of the Book and the Sunnah inoperable.' Therefore, we suffice with what we said before with regard to their misguided premise, which states that, "The Muslim is not required to build his faith upon Hadith, which has not been validated in authentication, but is valid in proof and indication". Where did they come up with this? Is there no evidence in the Qur'an and the Sunnah, and in the precedence of the *Salaf al-Saleh*? The precedence set by the *Salaf al-Saleh* contradicts this. Indeed, this idea was adopted by some of the *Khalaf* (those who followed after the *Salaf al-Saleh*), who were the Mu'tazila of long ago; and this idea was adopted by their contemporary followers, in creed at least – and today, they are Hizb ut-Tahrir."⁴⁶³

Indeed, the position of the Conservative Salafists towards Hizb ut-Tahrir is considered by far the fiercest against any of the Islamist groups and movements. For the Conservative salafists, Hizb ut-Tahrir belongs to the misguided Mu'tazila factions who give preference to reason over Divine revelation, and follow an "innovative" approach in collective work and partisanship. The Conservative Salafists find Hizb ut-Tahrir's claims regarding the authenticity and significance of a Hadith *Ahaad* to be reprehensible and refuted as lacking in legal proof. Hizb ut-Tahrir, according to the Conservative Salafists, does not stand on a sound *manhaj* because they do not adhere to the Qur'an, the Sunnah, and the *manhaj* of the *Salaf al-Saleh*.

⁴⁶³ Mousa ibn Abdullah Aal Abd al-Aziz, "*Al-Maqalat al-Manhajiya fi Hizb ut-Tahrir wa al-Jamaa'at al-Takfiriyya*", (Lit. "Articles in the Methodologies of Hizb ut-Tahrir and the Takfiri Groups"), in the Salafist magazine of the Imams Ibn Baaz and al-Albani in "*Kitab al-Salafiyya*" (Lit. The Book of Salafism), Dar al-Buhouth wa al-Dirasat al-Mu'asira wa al-Tarajum (Center for Contemporary Research, Studies and Translations), Riyadh, Saudi Arabia; 1st Edition, 2006, pp. 74-89.

The Battle between Conservative and Jihadi Salafisms

The intellectual stance and discourse that characterizes the position Conservative Salafists have taken towards Jihadi Salafist groups is particularly fierce and aggressive. This severity is attributed to the theoretical fundamentalism both groups have in common, and to the fact that both groups belong to the school of Salafism, in all the broad lines entailed by this school's framework. Indeed, both adopt a *manhaj* that is necessarily based on focusing on the core issues of *al-Tawhid*, creed ('*Aqida*), and the fundamentalist "origins" of Islam (*al-Usul*). And, both groups call for a strict following of the Qur'an, the Sunnah, and the *manhaj* of the *Salaf al-Saleh*, as well as the notion of *al-Tazkiya* (purification of the soul).

The stance that the Conservative Salafists took against the Jihadi Salafists was unparalleled when compared to any other position the Conservative Salafists took with regard to all the other Islamist groups or movements. Indeed, both sides exchanged harsh accusations when it came to questions of faith or activism. Indeed, the Jihadis accused the Traditionalists of being regressive in their faith, and of being idealistic in the *manhaj* they followed in their work – which is based on the principle of "purification and education" that focuses on educating society before engaging in any political activity, and before trying to establish the Islamic state. Meanwhile, the Jihadi Salafists hold to a *manhaj* that is grounded in bringing about change by use of force, based on their understanding of the concept of jihad.

Sheikh al-Albani believed that Jihadi Salafist thinking was based on that of the *Khawarij* (the Seceders/Rebels) when it came to *takfir* and when it came to their extremism. To this, he says, "The question of *takfir*, in general, is not a matter of those who govern alone, but also relates to the governed. It is a long-standing and divisive matter and a great controversy, which was adopted by one party from the ancient parties better known as *al-Khawarij*. And I say, with great regret, that some of those who partake in the *da'wa* and other enthusiasts have fallen into the trap of deviating from the Qur'an and the Sunnah, in the name of the Qur'an and the Sunnah."⁴⁶⁴ Indeed, al-Albani sees that "Those who excommunicate others and tenaciously drive Muslims out of their religion are not of the salvation sect. Indeed, they are of the misguided and lost sects that God's Messenger spoke of."⁴⁶⁵

The question of *al-Hakimiya* and the issues that branched out of it within the framework of "jihad" against the leaders, and in regime-change, were considered of the most important issues that determined the stand the Conservative Salafist took against Jihadi groups and movements. To that end, al-Albani depicts the followers of Jihadi Salafism as being inciters, extremists and ignorant, saying, "we know the truth is lost on them, or to be more accurate, is ignored by those extremists and inciters, who have nothing better to do but declare the *takfir* of leaders; and then, nothing else – other than continuing to declare the *takfir* of leaders. And, nothing comes of them but discord and strife. What has been taking place these past few years, which you know began with the problems and strife that took place in Holy Mosque in Mecca, then in Egypt with the assassination of Anwar Sadat; and, the blood of many Muslims has been shed because of this strife, then it was followed by

⁴⁶⁴ Mohammad Nasserruddin al-Albani, "*Fitnat al-Takfir*" (Lit. "Strife of Takfir"); edited by Ali Bin Hassan Abdel Hamid, Dar Ibn Juzaima; 2nd Edition, 1997, p. 13.

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 20.

more strife in Syria, then now in Egypt and Algeria – with great regret – all this is due to the fact that they have violated many of the texts of the Qur’an and the Sunnah.”⁴⁶⁶

The followers of Conservative Salafism produced dozens of articles and books, which were very critical of the Jihadi Salafist groups, based on its view of what was proper in terms of theory and practice: and, for the Conservative Salafists this was grounded in the principles of focusing efforts on “purification and education”, avoiding any direct engagement in political work, the belief that partisan work and organization was a *bid’a* (innovation), not to mention other issues of faith and other factors that the Conservative Salafists believe impede the faith, and confuse questions of governance and *al-Hakimiya*, obedience and seceding and rebellion against rulers, fighting and jihad.

The position of both groups, against each other, was marked by a violent rhetoric characterized by a harsh exchange of accusations. The situation ultimately culminated in a complete rupture in relations, which was increasingly characterized by an even more aggressive rhetoric in their debates, arguments and responses to one another in the absence of any productive dialogue and constructive exchange and platform for their differences of opinions.

In summary, the Conservative Salafist belief system was cast in the idea that there is only one straight and righteous path representing proper Islam, which Muslims must follow without deviation, interpretation, questioning or obstruction. This paradigm produces a literal, manifest reading of the texts of the Qur’an and the Sunnah, which does not take into consideration any esoteric interpretive or innovative readings that is based on the intents and purposes of Islamic legislation in the *Sharia* (*Maqasid al-Sharia*), or the historical context of events – all of which lead to a hostile attitude towards the “other”. Indeed, Islamist parties, movements and groups are seen as belonging to the realm of *ibtidaa’* (innovation), modernization, misguidance, and whim. This was notwithstanding the belief that there should be, and there is, only one “*Jamaa’ah*” (group) and not many. For, according to the Albanist-Salafists, the outcome of pluralism and diversity is division, dissent, schism, and rupture. They also believe that partisanship is an illness that has infected the Islamic world, and that working in politics is a dangerous deviation. For the Conservative Albanist-Salafists, politics, in its contemporary form and modern context, is not a gateway that would lead back to Islam, or restore the pride of the Muslims. That mission could only be achieved by depending on the *manhaj* of “purification and education;” and this *manhaj* is the only road to salvation from the fires of hell, and to achieving *al-Tawhid*, and to restoring the Islamic way of life and Islamic state.

It could be argued that Conservative Salafism – with its absolute conviction in the correctness of its *manhaj* – can be viewed as an exemplary model of the fundamentalist, revivalist movement. Its exclusive and dogmatic view of the world, of the texts, and of the human being has produced a dualist mentality par excellence. For, it is either *al-Tawhid* (monotheism, the oneness of God) or *al-Shirk* (polytheism, idolatry), *al-itbaa’* (proper following/adherence) or *al-ibtidaa’* (innovation), or *al-khair* (good) or *al-sharr* (evil). This is what governs the framework of the Traditional Salafist discourse and which sets the context for its hostile attitude and position towards the “other,” based

⁴⁶⁶ Mohammad Nasserruddin al-Albani, “*Maqalat al-Sunniya fi Hizb-ut-Tahrir wa al-Jamaa’at al-Takfiriya*” (Lit. “A Sunni Review of Hizb ut Tahrir and the Takfiri Groups”); authored by Mousa Bin Abdullah Al Abdul Aziz, op. cit., p. 31.

on quite strict and severe comparative criteria. For example, the Muslim Brotherhood are the same as *Ahl al-Kalam* (The philosophers of rhetoric), and Hizb ut-Tahrir are the same as the Mu'tazila (the Rationalists), and Jamaa'at al-Tabligh are the same as the Sufis, and the Jihadi Salafists are the same as the Khawarij (the Seceders/Rebels). There is no path to entering into the dimension of *al-Tawhid* and *itbaa'* (following, adherence) except by identifying, agreeing, following and adhering to the Traditional Salafist vision. Otherwise, one is doomed, misguided, and lost; and, the punishment of hellfire is awaiting those who deviate from the straight, righteous, Traditional Salafist path.

7. The Social Presence of Conservative Salafism: Spaces to Proliferate and Modes of Work

Conservative Salafism neither acts as a movement nor has an organized presence or hierarchical structure in the way other Islamist movements, parties and groups (such as the Muslim Brotherhood and Hizb ut-Tahrir) have. It rather maintains a loose, amorphous presence and structure for itself, which has no regulatory or institutional dimension, and is anything but regimented by organizational standards. The current is structured around relationships built between a sheikh and his disciples and followers, or between a scholar and his students. Salafist groups cluster around and emerge out of lessons, lecture circles, and Friday sermons conducted by their sheikhs – a phenomenon that, to a certain degree, reveals the size of the current, the numbers of individuals influenced by it in Jordanian society, and the areas in which it has proliferated most.

Semi-official sources estimate that the number of followers of Salafism, who are directly affiliated to the Traditional-Conservative current, is around 5,000 individuals, although one must bear in mind that these numbers are continuously waning or increasing. There are inconsistencies in the numbers available. With the lack of precise indicators with which one can make a solid, scientific measure, some observers think that the number of followers is actually twice as much.⁴⁶⁷

Despite the fact that the Salafists have spread to all parts of the Kingdom, it appears they have a more concentrated presence in specific areas and cities such as East Amman, al-Zarqa and al-Rusaifah – cities which have a high concentration of Jordanians of Palestinian origin amongst their populations. With that, they do have a strong presence in certain Jordanian cities such as al-Ramtha, al-Tafileh and to a lesser degree in al-Salt, Aqaba and al-Karak.

The fold of Conservative Salafism includes individuals from a diverse range of social backgrounds, economic classes, origins and upbringings. Its followers do not appear to be confined to a certain socio-economic and demographic profile, although some contend that the great majority of its adherents are from the poorer (and not middle) classes; and, they are mostly Jordanians of Palestinian origin. However, there is no real explanation to support this contention except for the fact that religiosity and religious inclination do indeed appear to be more concentrated amongst these categories of the population, i.e. Jordanians of Palestinian origin and the poorer to lower middle-classes (where economic life is predominately comprised of tradesmen, craftsmen, skilled workers and other vocational professionals and the kind of socio-economic environment of technocrats in which the Organization of the Muslim Brotherhood gained its grassroots popularity).

The relationships between individual Salafists are concentrated and built around lessons and lecture circles that focus on studying the Islamic *Sharia* sciences, which is what distinguishes this particular current from others. They also form the basis for recruiting and initiating new members and increasing the scope for expansion within the current. Consequently, theological books on Islam and Islamic religious scholarship are of paramount importance for the individual followers of this current.

⁴⁶⁷ From an interview with a security official handling the state portfolio of Salafists. Interview conducted at his office in Amman, February 5th, 2010.

Indeed, their lessons and studies in the Islamic faith and creed, jurisprudence, and Hadith actually “ideologize” knowledge – or, transform learning into “ideological knowledge” where the focus is concentrated on what distinguishes the Salafist creed and jurisprudence from other Islamic groups, sects and movements. And, this “ideological knowledge” cultivates a dialectic tendency and confrontational logic in the current’s individuals – especially when it comes to other Islamist groups or movements – a tendency that manifests from the moment they are recruited and initiated into the current and from their first lesson in Conservative Salafism.

Today, the Imam Al-Albani Scholarly Research and Study Center represents the main institutional structure and scholarly frame of reference of the current. The center produces the “*al-Asala*” Magazine and issues “approved” *fatwas* validated by the signature of the Sheikhs of the current. It also organizes and conducts seminars and lectures; and, it has become the focal point of Conservative Salafism where individuals in the current have a place to meet, assemble, and communicate with one another.

The Internet has also come represent a very important and dynamic channel of communication for these Salafists. It has become one of the most important tools used for disseminating their thought and discourse, and in recruiting more individuals to their form of Salafism, such as the *Kul al-Salafiyyin* (All the Salafists)⁴⁶⁸ forum and website, which is overseen by ‘Ali al-Halaby, and which is playing a major role in creating a communications network and platform for ongoing dialogue between the individuals in this current through forums for discussion on critical and important issues.

The circle of individuals who filled the first rank in the current has also changed since the life and death of its founder, Sheikh al-Albani. While al-Albani was alive, the second man in the current, so to speak, was Mohammad Ibrahim Shaqra. However, after al-Albani’s death, Shaqra entered into in a fierce battle with the rest of the Sheikh’s students in what appeared, at the surface, to be a conflict over certain *fatwas* and rulings. But in reality, the struggle was over who was actually the legitimate successor to Sheikh al-Albani.

After Shaqra, the next in line in the current’s “first rank” included ‘Ali al-Halaby, Mashhoor Hassan, Salim al-Hilali, Murad Shukri, Mousa Nasr and Hussein al-‘Awaishah. However, the power struggle and differences that took place after al-Albani’s death led to the ousting of Salim al-Hilali and Murad Shukri from the circle of the “accepted leadership,” for which the Imam Al-Albani Center remains the official headquarters. Indeed, today, declarations, announcements, and *fatwas* issued from the center are signed only by ‘Ali al-Halaby, Mashhoor Hassan, Hussein al-‘Awaishah, Bassim al-Jawabira, and Mousa Nasr. Of these leaders, ‘Ali al-Halaby and Mashhoor Hassan never completed their higher learning in the Islamic *Sharia*, whereas Hussein al-‘Awaishah, Bassim al-Jawabira, and Mousa Nasr all attained higher degrees in the Islamic *Sharia*; and, most of them teach at universities until this day.

Inside Conservative Salafism, an academic degree is not considered a measure of an individual’s level of scholarship and knowledge, or a criterion for scholarly authority. For example, ‘Ali al-Halaby is considered the most prominent figure in the current, and he never attained an academic

⁴⁶⁸ <http://www.kulalsalafiyeen.com/vb/>

degree, as was the case with the founder of Conservative Salafism itself, Sheikh al-Albani. However, an increased interest in attaining academic degrees has been noted in the Salafist ranks. Indeed, dozens of Salafists have shown an ambition to complete their higher education; and, this is seen as having led to a noticeable change in the outlook of individuals in the current who were not previously concerned with academic achievement.⁴⁶⁹

The majority of the followers of Conservative Salafism also have a characteristic appearance that distinguishes them from the rest of the Islamist movements and currents. They claim that their appearance is the only one that strictly adheres to the Prophet's Sunnah in terms of attire, behavior and in their interaction with others. They distinguish their appearance by maintaining long beards and by wearing the *thawb* (garb) that fall short of the ankles – and, this *thawb* is usually a traditional Arab Gulf *thawb*. They speak in classical Arabic and fanatically adhere to religious precepts, such as performing their prayers in mosques. They also forbid singing and listening to music, as well as any mingling of the sexes. They show no concern for politics or the media (excluding their leadership), and are very attentive to distancing themselves from mainstream traditions, behavior, and appearances.

The matter of attire, customs, and behavior is one that is divisive and varies between one Islamist group and another in Jordan. For example, although the Muslim Brotherhood is concerned with behavior, their attention to beards and attire is not as great a concern as it is for the Salafists. And, it appears that Hizb ut-Tahrir is the least concerned about appearances and behavior, whereas individuals from the Jihadi Salafist movement are much closer to the Conservative Salafists in their attention and adherence to strict behavior and attire, and to maintaining their religious precepts. Jihadi Salafists however distinguish themselves in “Islamic” attire, which is less like that of the Conservatives and more in the vein of the Pakistani and Afghani garb, which is more like a long shirt over loose pants, and a head cover that looks more like a turban or a skullcap.

What lies behind the rise of Salafism?

There is a general consensus amongst scholars and observers that money from neighboring Saudi Arabia has played a significant role in providing support and backing for Salafist activities. Indeed, Saudi Arabian money provides all the funding for Jordanian Salafists to produce, publish and distribute tapes and books. This money is also used to encourage preaching and other “*da'wa*” activities. Furthermore, several leaders of this current have been “adopted” by the formal religious apparatus in Saudi Arabia.

Certainly, there is also a large role being played by Jordanian expatriates, who live and work in the Arab Gulf states, and particularly Saudi Arabia, where expatriates number in the tens of thousands. These expatriates are influenced by the prevailing rhetoric and discourse in the Gulf – which is Salafist and, on the most part, conservative in nature and supported by the governments. Furthermore, in addition to these expatriates, who have been satiated by Salafist thinking and significantly influenced by it, there are hundreds of Jordanian students studying Islamic *Sharia* in Islamic universities throughout Saudi Arabia.

⁴⁶⁹ Interview with Osama Shehadeh, an observer of the Conservative Salafist trend. Interview conducted at the offices of Al Ghad Jordanian daily newspaper on October 14, 2010.

When one looks at the evolution and rise of Salafism, it is clear that the period of the 1990s was a turning point for the movement. After former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait, hundreds of thousands of Jordanians returned from the Arab Gulf states, which led to a significantly noticeable rise in the presence of Salafism in Jordan, in all its different forms and shapes, including the Conservative.

But, the question is: what is it in Salafism that attracts these young men in Jordanian society, especially those of Palestinian origin, who have a direct and immediate link to the Palestinian cause, which is an issue that has a continuous presence and is politically charged on a daily basis? Why is it that these young men adopt this religious discourse and thinking? Why do they identify with a current that has so clearly declared its rejection of engaging and interfering in politics and political affairs?

Osama Shehadeh, who is close to the Conservative Salafist trend, explains in answering this question by noting that the idea of distancing oneself from politics is perhaps what attracts these young men most. Many of them are depressed and frustrated with the political situation, which they feel they are unable to change or affect in any way, and in which they feel the futility of their involvement. Meanwhile, all the other, more prominent Islamist groups, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, Hizb ut-Tahrir, and the Jihadi Salafists, are heavily involved in politics and in political affairs. Thus, one will find that many of the young men who have become Salafists have found safe haven from their feeling of constant frustration and depression, by distancing themselves from all matters “political.” Instead, they have found an alternative and a way of thinking that makes them feel they can become agents of change, far from the emptiness and futility of the vicious cycle of political work.⁴⁷⁰

Another factor that supports the previous observation presented by Osama Shehadeh is that Conservative Salafism focuses its attention – to a much greater degree than any other Islamist group or movement – on the study of Islamic *Sharia* sciences. The latter is seen as a major factor in attracting a certain segment of young men, because this focus actually makes this form of Salafism appear to be driven by religious and not political objectives, and that Conservative Salafism is not interested in becoming entangled in the problems, crises and often, consequences and penalties that come with being active in political work and affairs.⁴⁷¹

Furthermore, being a student of *Sharia* sciences can make a great impression. It gives the one who possesses this kind of scholarly ability “authority,” “information,” “knowledge” and the ability to issue “*fatwas*” on the tenets of Islamic *Sharia*. This, in itself, provides one with presence and status in society, which can make up for partisan or political activism.

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁷¹ Ibid.

8. The State and the Conservative Salafists: The Policies of the “Security Game”

The other Islamist groups and movements view the Conservative Salafists as the “spoiled child” of the state. The Conservative Salafists have not been subject to many of the obstructions and disadvantages they face, such as being prevented from public speaking and preaching. The Conservative Salafists also are seen to enjoy better opportunities in employment and appointments in certain public sector jobs and ministries, such as the Ministry of Religious Endowments and the Ministry of Education (in departments dealing with Islamic studies). On top of that, they do not suffer from the “security clearances and bans” at universities that the great majority of the members of the Muslim Brotherhood, Jihadists, and Hizb ut-Tahrir are subject to.

However, an official reading (by individuals from within the state) finds the afore-mentioned observations are “superficial”, imprecise, and lacking in depth. The security services in Jordan are in charge of the portfolio that deals with Islamist groups and movements (with the exception of the Organization of the Muslim Brotherhood, which has had their own security portfolio for almost the past ten years – before that, they had been dealt with by the late King Hussein personally).

The great majority of Islamists are not active in direct political or parliamentary life. They are viewed as being more a “social” rather than “political” agent of “change.” Therefore, the relationship between the state and the various Islamist groups, including Conservative Salafism, is managed and governed from the point of view of a “security” angle.

A high-standing official involved in managing this portfolio makes it clear that the “golden rule” which governs the relationship between the state’s security apparatuses and all the Islamist groups, is embodied by one major benchmark and criterion; and, that is national security and what is in the interests of the state; and, whether or not these groups serve the interests of the state and its security or harm it. He states that these criteria or benchmarks are very often defined, delineated, and even amended according to the dictates of official policy.⁴⁷²

Therefore, and according to this security “perspective,” all the Islamist groups and movements, without exception (despite the fact that they may differ (tactically) from one group to another when it comes to certain issues; despite their inner struggles; and, despite their wide range of positions on political affairs and their varying positions with regard to the prevailing government and state) share one strategic objective of “establishing an Islamic state.” The latter ultimately means, in one form or another, overturning the current form of governance, the state, the constitution, and the prevailing laws – either by direct or indirect coup, or through a short- or long-term strategy.⁴⁷³

Accordingly, the state and its security apparatus differentiate between short-term and long-term strategies when dealing with all the Islamist movements. In the short-term, these groups and movements are dealt with and differentiated from one another on the basis of the question which of them serve the national security and interests of the state – as it stands today. But, when it comes to

⁴⁷² Interview with a senior official related to handling the portfolio of Islamists. Interview conducted at his office in Amman on September 15, 2010.

⁴⁷³ Ibid.

long-term policy, all these groups remain under surveillance and are strictly monitored by the state so that none deviate from the redlines defined by the security interests of the state, and that none become a source of threat or danger to the security and the political regime in the future.

When one places the previously stated “golden rule” in the context of state policy in terms of the Conservative Salafists, then, the state security apparatus, and particularly the General Intelligence Department (GID), is directly responsible for managing this portfolio. Also, by necessity, this relationship is subject to the same security status and criteria that all other Islamist groups or movements are – without any interference or supervision from the government. Thus, from a short-term perspective and in general, the relationship between the state and the Conservative Salafists appears fine and friendly. It appears negative friction rarely occurs between the security services and the Conservative Salafist leadership in particular. Because, according to security policy, the fact that the Conservative Salafists have declared their policy of isolation and disengagement from political affairs, and the fact that they have adopted the rule of thumb stated by their renowned sheikh, Mohammad Nasseruddin al-Albani, that is, “It is political to abstain from politics”, is encouraging and reassuring – and serves the interests of the state and its security.

In the same vein, the position the Conservative Salafists have taken on several other aspects has also reassured the state and its security; and these include: The Conservative Salafists openly reject the principle of partisanship and openly reject the work of political parties; they have called for “obedience to the guardian (the ruler)”; they have refused to act in public or political opposition to the regime; they have made an official stand against public demonstrations, marches, or protests; and, they have had a public falling out with Islamist movements and currents that act in opposition to the government (either as a legal opposition, such as is the case with the Muslim Brotherhood or in radical opposition, such as is the case with the Jihadi Salafists). In terms of official policy, all these positions are seen as a service to the needs of state security, for now.

It also appears that the relationship between the leaders of the current and the state are quite friendly because both sides have a mutual “service” of each other’s “interests.” Thus, the security apparatus facilitates the activities of this current and facilitates its dealings with the state; and meanwhile, the Conservative Salafist leadership issues religious *fatwas* (which, one should note, are not necessarily in contradiction with the current’s discourse and rhetoric), which may be used by the state against other Islamist parties, groups, and movements.

In addition to the general political and intellectual stances of the Conservative Salafists, which serve the state’s interests according to those responsible for state security, the current’s leadership is also waging the “state’s religious battle” – by proxy – against the other Islamist groups and movements – whether that war takes on the form of *fatwas* issued for that purpose, or through what is said in their lectures or Friday sermons. The latter are indeed used as a “tool,” which allows the state to compete with other Islamist movements active in society. This tool goes beyond the official religious institution – which, in general, does not enjoy much support or credibility at the popular and grassroots level.

Certainly, the above-mentioned rationale does not mean a total surrender on the part of the state’s security to maintain continuously warm and friendly relationship with the Salafists. Indeed, certain causes for concerns and fears remain with regard to the Conservative Salafist’s long-term goal – the

“Islamization of the state.” There is concern despite the fact that this goal is not clearly defined in the Salafist rhetoric and discourse. And, it is often hard to discern whether or not the Conservative Salafists are seriously thinking about this goal, after the “Islamization of society” – or whether it is a “theoretical pretext” in Salafist ideology, which has been placed within their stated objectives as a movement in order to be able to confront and compete with other Islamist groups and movements.

The other major concern, which surfaces when it comes to the way the state views the Conservative Salafists (and other groups such as the *Jamaa’at al-Tabligh wa al-Da’wa*, which also has declared its rejection of engaging in politics or in any form of armed resistance), is the state’s apprehension regarding the “great fluidity” within the Islamist arena, between the various groups and particularly within the numerous Salafist currents. For, there is a one, solid, common doctrinal and intellectual ground between all of them; and, if an individual finds himself or herself in conflict with the political stance of the current he or she is in, moving from one current such as the Conservative or Reform Salafist current to another such as the Jihadi Salafist current, is quite easy. And, this has often taken place in the past. Indeed, this “fluidity” makes it imperative for the surveillance and monitoring of the Conservative Salafists to continue, even if the overall relationship between the current and the state’s official institutions remains and appears friendly.

The security perspective also does not take into consideration or show any great concern about the problematic contradictions inherent in the socio-religious discourse of Conservative Salafism – which is extremely antagonistic towards modernity, the arts, the new sciences, and social progress – and the attempts made by the state to pave the way for combining the needs of modernity and modernization with the message of Islam. The state’s attempt at amalgamating these needs with Islam is carried out by trying to concentrate on and highlight the values of openness, tolerance, and interaction with Western civilization, and in continuing an ongoing interfaith and inter-sectarian dialogue. Indeed, this goal of the state is far from not only the aim of Conservative Salafist activities alone but also clashes directly with a great part of the core tenets of Conservative Salafism, and its overall ideology when it comes to social, cultural and educational issues.⁴⁷⁴

But, from the point of view of security, and the very clear objectives the security apparatus has to fulfill to protect national security, and the ability to build realistic instruments on the ground that can also serve state policy in confronting threats to the state, the concerns clearly stop there. However, that does not exclude other institutions inside the state from thinking about these contradictions and differences, which have clearly placed the state’s declared policies in one place and its “security game” of balancing its security needs and interests in an entirely different place.

⁴⁷⁴ For more discussion on the lack of concern towards the task of “enlightening” in the formulation of the state’s official religious policies, see to chapter one of this study.

Conclusion: Future Prospects

There are numerous, interrelated and complex factors that will govern the future prospects of Salafism in Jordan and to what extent it will achieve its declared aims of “Islamization of society in the short-term and the Islamic state in the long-term”.

There are internal factors related to the question of the internal unity of Conservative Salafism especially after the divisions and struggles inside the current surfaced. These divisions have become obvious since the death of its founding sheikh al-Albani. These schisms and disagreements led to the ousting of the second man in the current, Mohammad Ibrahim Shaqra and soon thereafter, Murad Shukri and Salim al-Hilali. The latter were all sheikhs of the first rank in the current; and, their ousting is an ominous sign for the sustainability and continuity of the current in the shadow of the absence of its institutional mindset, and in the framework of the relationships that directly bind individual members in the current with their sheikhs.

Furthermore, there are numerous political, social, and cultural factors that define the extent to which the current will spread, the extent to which its Salafist way of thinking will be accepted, and the strength of its social undercurrent and attractiveness at the grassroots level. These factors include the crisis in socio-political identity, the weakness of any enlightened-reform tendency in society, and the political crisis, which is obstructing the path towards establishing a pluralistic, democratic state – in which there are peaceful alternation in power, and in which people do not feel suspicious and apprehensive of politics, political affairs, and political work.

In the case that prevailing conditions do persist on all its various levels – political, social, educational, and cultural – then the phenomenon of Conservative Salafism will likely to endure in remaining a reality, and perhaps even grow. In the case that current conditions actually deteriorate, this kind of movement, as well as all the other forms of the Salafist *da'wa*, will find an excellent breeding ground within which to flourish.

Yet, the sudden emergence of the “Democratic Arab Spring” and the era of revolutions of Arab societies have casted heavy shadows and posed critical discomfoting questions to the ideology of Conservative Salafism – one that is satiated with praise of rulers, emphasis on obedience to them, and abstinence from political activism. The new reality is in sharp contradiction with this ideology and the premises upon which it stands, a reality that has pushed Salafist currents in Egypt to reconsider their overall political stances, and attempt to circumvent its previous ideological positions. Indeed, some of these currents even worked to engage and assimilate in this new reality

by founding political parties and engaging in public political debates, a matter that is essentially in complete contradiction with Salafist maxims vis-à-vis politics.⁴⁷⁵

The other question is one that backfires on official policy. There are vast and clear contradictions between the state's "Security perspective," which aims to meet the state's security needs – a task which operates in one reality – and, meeting the needs of the state's official policy in terms of its religious and political objectives – which operates in a completely different reality!

Obviously, Conservative Salafism is like all the other Islamist currents and movements in its overall objective of the "Islamization of society" and perhaps even the state, even if it does disagree with the others on the overall strategy for affecting change and in its relationship with the state.

The important and fundamental conflict here, which is lost upon the state's official policy, is the "significance and content" inherent in the concept of the "Islamization" that Conservative Salafism believes in and strives for, and which is the vital backbone of this current's ideology. And, here, the question remains whether this "content" will be compatible with the needs required for building a progressive, modern and open society, and a civil democratic state; or, whether this "content" will lead to a regression to a past model, and a suspicious and paranoid view of policies of modernization and openness, democracy, and political and cultural pluralism, which may eventually be rejected outright.

The previous pages of this study indicate that an answer to these questions is quite self-evident: there is no satisfactory answer found amongst official circles. How can this extensive gap in the contradiction between the security perspective and the strategic political policy perspective be narrowed?

This question requires an answer from the state and its official policy circles on whether the sacrifice will be on the part of the strategic aim of enlightenment, rationality, openness, and modernization at the cost of immediate considerations and needs, which require an alliance with and an exploitation of the "Traditional-Salafist current," or, is the priority an enlightened political strategy that seeks an Islamic partner, who serves the process of building a civil, modern nation and society, which is reconciled with itself, and in which there are no contradictions between the requirements of modernity and that of the religion and the faith. It remains that Conservative Salafism is susceptible to fragmentation, rupture, and even rebellion against the state merely by a change in the conditions of the "game."

⁴⁷⁵ See Khalid al-Shafi'i, "*Al-Thawra al-Misriya wa al-Tayyar al-Salafi: Azmat Ghiyab al-Tajdid*" (Lit., "The Egyptian Revolution and the Salafist Current: The Crisis of the Absence of Renewal"), available at www.onislam.net on March 8, 2011. Also see The Arab Center for the Study of Humanities in Cairo, "*Haqiqat Mawqif al-Salafiya min Thawrat 25 Yanayer*" (Lit., "The Truth about Salafist Position Towards the January 25th Revolution"), available at http://www.arab-center.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=167:25jan-revolution&catid=41:analysis-articles&Itemid=79. Also see Owen Bennett Jones, "*Nufuth Mutazayed li al-Jamaa'at al-Salafiya fi Misr ba'd al-Thawra*" (Lit., "Increased Influence of Salafist Groups in Post-Revolution Egypt"), British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), published on April 7, 2011 available at http://www.bbc.co.uk/arabic/middleeast/2011/04/110406_salafists_egypt_revolution.shtml

Chapter Six

The Jihadi Salafist Movement in Jordan after Al-Zarqawi: Identity, Leadership Crisis, and Obscured Vision

Introduction

After the American “War on Terror” was launched in Afghanistan on the 7th of October, 2001, Western intelligence reports began to make mention to allude to a “mysterious figure” leading the fundamentalist cells in Europe who went by the nom de guerre of Abu Mus’ab al-Zarqawi⁴⁷⁶.

On the 5th of February 2003, the Secretary of State of the most powerful nation in the world, Colin Powell, stood before the United Nations Security Council and spoke of al-Zarqawi. Secretary of State Powell introduced al-Zarqawi to the world as the man who embodied the extension of al-Qaeda network in Iraq – the aim being to use this information as one of the major pretexts for build the case for the upcoming American invasion of Iraq.

Not surprisingly, the name was not unfamiliar to Jordanian security services; nor, for that matter, was it unfamiliar to members of al-Qaeda, who prefer to refer to themselves as “*al-Muwahhidun*”⁴⁷⁷ (*the Unitarians*). Simultaneously, matter was truly a shock for all of them! Al-Zarqawi had only

⁴⁷⁶ Abu Musab al-Zarqawi’s real name is Ahmad Fadil Nazzal al-Khalayleh. He was born in the city of Zarqa, Jordan on the 20th of October 1966 and belonged to al-Khalayleh clan, which is one of the Bani Hassan tribes. He left school in the 11th grade and worked as an employee in the al-Zarqa Municipality in 1983. In 1984, he entered the Jordanian Army to do his two-year mandatory military service. During this time, he fell into a phase of personal imbalance and recklessness, after which he became devoutly religious. In 1989, he left Jordan to Afghanistan via Peshawar, Pakistan to join the Jihad against the Soviets, who had actually withdrawn from Afghanistan prior to al-Zarqawi’s arrival. While in Peshawar, al-Zarqawi met Abu Mohammad al-Maqdisi, and worked for a while at the “*al-Bunyan al-Marsous*” magazine. In Afghanistan, al-Zarqawi underwent military training in several training camps and in particular, the “Sada” training camp.

Early in 1993, he returned to Jordan, where he met al-Maqdisi again. The two joined forces to promote the calling (*da’wa*) to Jihadi Salafism. He was arrested for affiliation with a group known as “*Bay ‘at al-Imam*” (Pledging Allegiance to the Imam) and was sentenced to 15 years. During his time in prison, al-Zarqawi emerged as a field commander, and became the ‘emir’ for the Jihadi Salafist group, originally established by al-Maqdisi. In 1999, he was released from prison by a royal pardon. In the summer of that same year, he left to Pakistan and then continued on to Afghanistan.

In early 2000, al-Zarqawi settled in the Herat area (in Afghanistan), where he established a training camp for Jordanians and Palestinians. The camp attracted other nationalities as well. After the attacks of September 11, 2001, he began to move between Iran, Iraq and Syria. In 2002, al-Zarqawi established his own Jihadi network, and with a number of his followers, planned and coordinated the assassination of an American diplomat in Amman. It was during this period that the name “al-Zarqawi” began to emerge. After the American occupation of Iraq in March 2003, al-Zarqawi began to carry out an extensive guerilla-style war in Iraq in which he employed very violent fighting tactics. Numerous Arab, foreign and Iraqi fighters joined him. A turning point in the evolution of the network took place when Sheikh Abu Anas al-Shami joined al-Zarqawi. The network soon evolved into an organization known as “(*Jama’at*) *al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad*” with Abu Anas al-Shami as the official leader of the group.

In 2004, al-Zarqawi began to export his violence from Iraq to Jordan, when a massive operation [(attributed to “*Kata’ib al-Tawhid*” (the Tawhid Brigades)], targeting the Prime Ministry and the National Security and Intelligence buildings in Jordan, was thwarted. Al-Zarqawi and his organization “*Al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad*” joined the al-Qaeda network on October 17, 2004. On November 9, 2005 al-Zarqawi organized a simultaneous attack on three hotels in Amman using suicide bombers. The attacks killed 60 people and injured more than 100. On June 9, 2006, an announcement was made that al-Zarqawi had been killed that day by way of an American airstrike.

⁴⁷⁷ Members of this movement and its followers prefer this name as it is a derivative of the word “*al-Tawhid*” (or Unitarianism (monotheism); the affirmation of the Oneness of God: Muslims regard this as the first part of the First creed of Islam, the second part is accepting Muhammad as the messenger of God). The members of the movement consider themselves as the true adherents of “*al-Tawhid*” in its first part, and their struggle is against the *kufir* and the *taghut* and its political manifestations, as revealed in the *kafir* governments, constitutions and regimes, which are not governed by Islamic Law (*Sharia*) or by faith and belief in God alone – or by the political manifestation of the tenet of “*al-Hakimiya al-Ilahiya*” (Divine Governance and Sovereignty). “*Al-Hakimiya*” dictates that God alone has the right to legislate – an act forbidden to human beings. And according to this belief, the true “*Tawhid*” and Islam, in its proper and pure form, requires its followers to adhere to none but the laws of Islam (*Sharia*); and therefore, they disavow as unbelieving (“*takfir*”) all those who do not rule by “that which was decreed by God” in terms of law and legislation.

emerged a few years back with a small number of his *Muwahhidun* fellows... And, there he was today, suddenly a major theme of discussion in international, regional, and local forums, and of who books, research, and articles were written, and legends and tales were weaved.

Indeed, al-Zarqawi would not disappoint the intelligence reports and various writings about him. After the occupation of Iraq, he became the commander of the Iraqi branch of al-Qaeda, which continued to thrive and expand until it turned Iraq into the regional battleground for its operations and activities. Al-Zarqawi's al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) would soon become a prototype model for similar groups that came to adopt its discourse and political postures in several other countries.

After numerous attempts, on November 9, 2005, al-Zarqawi succeeded in carrying out the largest security breach and terrorist operation Jordan has ever witnessed, the Amman Hotel Bombings, which was the result of a decision taken by al-Zarqawi himself, supervised by him personally, and carried out by several Iraqi members of al-Zarqawi's al-Qaeda.

The triple bombings in Amman represented a milestone in the struggle between the Jordanian government and al-Qaeda, and specifically al-Qaeda in Iraq, and led to a major restructuring of the country's security strategy. A few months later, the American forces in Iraq ended the "Zarqawi legend"; and his *Qaeda* (base) began to lose ground – even in Iraq –; its impact on the region began slowly but surely withering away.

Snuffing out al-Zarqawi's "star," however, did not put an end to the questions surrounding "Jordanian leaderships" tied to al-Qaeda, both in discourse and as a movement. Al-Zarqawi's sheikh (or mentor), otherwise known as Abu Mohammad al-Maqdisi⁴⁷⁸ (who recently presented a "critical approach" of al-Zarqawi) is considered one of the most prominent thinkers and theorists in developing the ideology of the "global" Jihadi Salafist movement. His ideas and opinions have played a very large role in influencing the views and principles that guide the disciples of the movement.

⁴⁷⁸ 'Issam Bin Mohammad Taher al-Barqawi's alias (or nom de guerre) is Abu Mohammad, and known as al-Maqdisi, with his lineage going back to 'Otaiba. He was born in the outskirts of Nablus in Palestine in 1959. His family left to Kuwait when he was three or four years old. In Kuwait, he finished his high school studies and then moved on to the University of Mossul in Northern Iraq to study sciences. He enjoyed ties with various Islamist movements and groups and, in particular, the "Srouriya Salafists," who follow the teachings and traditions of Sheikh Mohammad Srour, the "Juhaiman" group and a number of Qutbian Sheikhs (followers of Sayyid Qutb). After university, he traveled between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia where he became learned in "Wahhabi Salafism" and where he studied the traditions of the Najdian (of the area of Najd in central Saudi Arabia) imams of the "da'wa."

His Jihadi Salafist tendencies appeared during his numerous travels to Pakistan and Afghanistan. During this period, he wrote his first and most famous book, "*Millat Ibrahim*" (Abraham's Creed). In 1992 and after the Second Gulf War, he and his family settled in Jordan, where he began to actively call and recruit others to Jihadi Salafism. His position and stances were clearly articulated in another book he wrote during that time entitled, "*Al-Dimuqratiya Din*" (Democracy is a Religion). In this book, al-Maqdisi declares and disavows democracy as *kufur*. Simultaneously, he entered into an open, public debate with the followers of the "Traditional Salafist" school of thought and actively worked to spread his Jihadi Salafist word throughout Jordan.

He was arrested, along with Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, in 1993 for being affiliated with the "*Bay'at al-Imam*" (Pledging Allegiance to the Imam) group. Like al-Zarqawi, Al-Maqdisi was sentenced to 15 years but released in 1999 by a royal pardon. However, he was arrested several times after his release on charges of being affiliated to various movements, and only recently was released from his last arrest.

His writings are a reference for Jihadi Salafism not only in Jordan but all over the world; his essays, letters and "*fatwas*" (opinions of a religious scholar) are numerous and include: "*Millat Ibrahim (Abraham's Creed)*", "*Al-Kawashif al-Jaliya fi Kufur al-Dawla al-Sa'udia (Clear Evidence of the Blasphemy of the Saudi State)*", amongst many others, and has a website called *Minbar al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad*.

Al-Maqdisi's experience with the Jordanian government is not without incidence; indeed, it is an experience fraught with its own clashes and confrontations. Al-Maqdisi spent most of his adult years – since 1994 – in and out of Jordanian prisons for his association with armed local groups and on charges of influencing specific individuals who carried out armed operations in other Arab countries.

In another part of the world, in London, another Jordanian star belonging to the same movement began to “shine.” Until very recently, he was considered the spiritual leader of Jihadi groups in the Arab Maghreb and North Africa, as well as al-Qaeda's man in Europe. He is Abu Qatada al-Filastini (the Palestinian)⁴⁷⁹. Abu Qatada was later arrested in London, and lived under house arrest in London. On 7 July 2013, he was extradited to Jordan after extensive negotiations between the British and Jordanian governments. At the time of the publishing of this book, he is detained at Muwaqqar prison near Amman and is awaiting a retrial on terrorism charges.

Under the wings of these three “commanders,” a large number of Jordanians have taken part in al-Qaeda operations inside and outside Jordan. Many have been killed in Iraq and in other parts of the world, while others sit in American or other Western prisons. Many have been convicted and are incarcerated in Jordan. Additionally, others are still subject to continuous security surveillance.

Perhaps the greatest questions, which arise whenever one hears the names of these Jordanian “stars,” who have become symbols of al-Qaeda, are: To what extent do these individuals represent an expansion of the movement in Jordan? What are this movement's strengths, capacity, and abilities? Finally, is it the movement that is responsible for producing such personas or are there other factors that should be considered?

⁴⁷⁹ Abu Qatada al-Filastini's real name is Omar Mahmoud Othman Abu Omar. He was born in 1961 and is a Jordanian of Palestinian descent. He originally came from the village of Deir el-Shaikh, in the outskirts of Jerusalem. He studied at the *Sharia* (Islamic Law) College at the University of Jordan, and received a bachelor's degree in Islamic Law in 1984. He began his career in the *da'wa* with the “*Jama'at al-Da'wa wa al-Tabligh*” before he moved to the ranks of the Jihadi Salafists. He worked for four years as a religious guide (preacher) in the Jordanian army and worked to establish a reformist Salafist group, which was known as “*Harakat Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah*” (The Movement of the Followers of the Way of the Prophet”). In the early 1990s, after the Second Gulf War, he left to Malaysia and continued on to Pakistan where his affiliation to the Jihadi Salafist movement reinforced. In 1994, he settled in Great Britain as a political refugee. In London, he emerged as a leading thinker in the Jihadi Salafist movement, and began to issue the “al-Ansar” publication, which particularly supports the Armed Islamic Group in Algeria. He also contributed to the “al-Fajr” publication, which supports the Fighting Muslims Group in Libya. Thereafter, he published another magazine entitled “al-Manhaj,” which specializes in spreading the traditions and word of Global Jihadi Salafism. In 1998, in Jordan, he was charged with being affiliated to an organization known as “*Al-Islah wa al-Tahaddi*” (the “Reform and Challenge” group) and was sentenced to 15 years in absentia. He, along with al-Maqdisi, was also charged in connection with al-Qaeda in Jordan. After the attacks of September 11, 2001, he was arrested under a new law enacted against terrorism, but was released due to a lack of evidence linking him to the attacks. He is known worldwide as the spiritual leader of al-Qaeda in Europe and in North Africa. He was arrested again in 2005, with Jordan demanding his extradition from Great Britain; however, Abu Qatada won a court battle against the extradition and the British authorities were obliged to release him recently (June 16, 2008), but under strict conditions restricting his activities. Abu Qatada has written extensively theorizing on Jihadi Salafism, amongst them, “*Al-Jihad wa al-Ijtihad: Ta'amulat fi al-Manhaj*” (Jihad and Ijtihad: Contemplations on the Prospectus), “*Ma'alim al-Ta'ifa al-Mansoura*” (Signs of the Victorious Sect), “*Limatha al-Jihad*” (Why Jihad), “*Al-'Awlama*” (Globalization), “*Sarayaa al-Jihad*” (The Troops of the Jihad) and “*Al-Islam wa Amreeka*” (Islam and America), as well as dozens of other essays and articles.

Answering these fundamental questions requires a thorough scrutinizing of the causes and conditions that triggered the rise and growth of movements, which embrace a Jihadi Salafist ideology, and an analysis of its manifestation as a movement within the Jordanian context. Indeed, over the past 15 years, there has been no ebb in the number of official announcements declaring this armed group or that armed group of Jihadi Salafists has been discovered. And, that these groups had intended or did actually carry out subversive or armed activities inside Jordan, or were involved in banned political activities that are considered a threat to national security. Some of these groups succeeded while others were exposed in time and therefore their operations were foiled. Certainly, the State Security Court in the capital Amman has been inundated with the names of hundreds charged in cases related to the country's "national security." Thus, it would be safe to claim that the broad circumstances surrounding these cases and the groups tried before the national security courts are mostly related to individuals who are followers of Jihadi Salafism.

This "movement" began to take shape and grow in the early 1990s, adopting a discourse founded on the principle of "*takfir*" (disavowal as unbelieving or infidel). The movement finds all contemporary Arab governments guilty of *kufir*. They shun the very principle of politics and reject the notion of participating in public political life, as well as democracy, representative assemblies, and elections. Their ideological cornerstone is based on the belief that subversive, armed struggle and action are the only means for transforming today's political reality.

This "movement" represents only one of the faces of political Islam. Indeed, there are other Islamist movements and groups that have declared and acknowledged their acceptance of the modern political formula, and participate in public and civic life, such as the Muslim Brotherhood (which always acts as an opposition party in the Jordanian political arena) and the Islamic Centrist Party (which is more closely allied to the Jordanian government).

All these factors present compelling cause and incentive for a better understanding of this movement and for an answer to the following pivotal question: To what extent did the killing of al-Zarqawi impact the Jihadi Salafist movement on the level of the movement's leadership, its vision, and its cohesiveness? Without a doubt, the latter question leads to a series of subsequent questions, which need to be answered (in order to determine the entire dimensions of an explanation): What are the causes that led to the rise and growth of the movement in Jordanian society? How far does its influence go? To what extent has the movement spread? Does it exist in a social and political environment that acts as an incubator and fertile grounds for the movement? Do the movement and its ideology represent a strategic threat to Jordanian national security? What is the potential breadth of the movement in the next phase and in the future? What are the implications of the conflict that took place between Abu Mohammad al-Maqdisi and Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi on the vision, priorities, and overall future of the movement?

1. The Jihadi Salafist Movement's Nascent Stages and the Blueprint for Expansion: From “*Bay‘at al-Imam*” to the “Amman Hotel Bombings”

After the resumption of parliamentary life in Jordan, the results of the first elections (1989) revealed how strong and well-organized the Muslim Brotherhood had become and the significant extent of its influence and presence. At the same time and over the following years, the first signs of the rise of Jihadi Salafism began to come to the fore in Jordan – particularly after those who had taken part in the Afghani Jihad against the former Soviet Union returned, feeling the pride and strength of victory. Also, amongst the 300,000 Jordanian nationals returning from Kuwait and other Gulf countries, during the Second Gulf Crisis and after the 1991 Second Gulf War, were individuals who were indoctrinated with the ideology of “Jihadi Salafism.”

Indeed, the 1991 Gulf War proved to be the first historical milestone and a major turning point in the evolution of Jihadi Salafism. During the 1990s, underground and armed Islamist movements and organizations flourished in a way never witnessed before. Jordanian courts were flooded with dozens of cases, and jails were replete with hundreds of detainees and inmates⁴⁸⁰. What is significant about this wave of violence that took place in Jordan was its concurrence with the concomitant ascendance of other movements and other bouts of violence in several other Arab and Muslim states – a situation that led numerous analysts to describe this “era” as the “Second Wave of Violence.”⁴⁸¹

Prior to al-Maqdisi’s appearance on the Jordanian political scene in the 1990s, there were clusters of independent groups of Salafist Islamists. Their theoretical and organizational frameworks were vague and blurry; and they depended on general Salafist frames of reference and ideas and a broad range of Islamist literature and writings such as those of Sayyid Qutb, Abu al-A‘la al-Mawdudi, as well as other historical pioneers, theorists and scholars from the Salafist school of thought such as Ibn Taymiyya, Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab and al-Shawkani, amongst others.

But, what all these organizations and movements did have in common was their radical nature – a radicalism founded on the principles of rejecting contemporary political regimes (in the Arab and Muslim worlds) and disassociating themselves from them. They were also united in their opposition

⁴⁸⁰ The 1990s was a decade that experienced a noticeable proliferation of secret groups and organizations. The earliest examples of this phenomena were “*Jaysh Muhammad*” (The Army of Mohammad) in 1991; “*Al-Nafir al-Islami*” in 1992 and the Mu’tah University Military Troops” in 1993 – of which Jordanian members of parliament, Laith Shbeilat and Ya’coub Qarrash, were accused of being involved with. The two parliamentarians were later exonerated of all charges by the Court of Cassation. Other examples of these kinds of groups and their activities include the “*Al-Afghan al-Urduniyyun*” (Jordanian Afghans) in 1994; the attempted assassination of a French diplomat in 1995; the case that came to be known as “*Bay‘at al-Imam*” (Pledging of Allegiance to the Imam) in 1994; the case of the “Baq’aa Intelligence Department Building Attack”; the “*Al-Islah wa al-Tahadi*” (Reform and Challenge) group in 1997; the “*Al-Tajdid al-Islami*” (The Islam Revival) group in 1994; and “*Mu‘amarat al-Alfiya*” (The Millennium Conspiracy) operations in 2000, which were uncovered by American intelligence in cooperation with the Jordanian intelligence services; – as well as many other cases and organizations.

⁴⁸¹ See Ibrahim Gharaibeh, “*Al-Urdun wa Isteerad Azmat al-‘Unf wa al-Tataruf*” (Lit. “Jordan Imports the Crisis of Violence and Extremism”); on www.aljazeera.net. The article refers to the ‘first wave’ of violence, which begins in the 1970s with the rise of armed Islamic movements in Egypt early in that decade, the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979, and what is known as the Siege of Mecca on November 20, 1979, as well as the assassination of Egyptian President Mohammad Anwar Sadat in October 1981.

to the Muslim Brotherhood that had accepted to co-exist – albeit in opposition – with the state, and whose members mainly came from the middle class and had moderate political and social tendencies.

This dissenting Islamist school of thought, derived on repudiation and rejection of the prevailing reality, began to grow in the 1990s as did the number of cases before the State Security Court. Indeed, these cluster organizations (at the beginning) tried to convince leading members of the “hawks” trend within the Muslim Brotherhood (who were closer to Sayyid Qutb’s school of thought) to join their ranks – both on a theoretical and organizational level. However, the Brotherhood hawks refused despite the similarity in their thinking on certain Salafist political principles such as “*al-Hakimiya*” and “*al-Walaa’ wa al-Baraa’*.”⁴⁸²

Both al-Maqdisi and al-Zarqawi were able to establish a movement rooted in “Jihadi Salafist” principles in the local Jordanian arena during the 1990s; al-Zarqawi would later export this movement to the regional and international scene at the end of 1999, after leaving Jordan for Afghanistan, Kurdistan, and finally Iraq. This transformation changed the nature of their threat to national and international security, and allowed for the methodology of the Jihadi Salafist movement and its organizational capacity to develop and mature. It also created a state of dynamic, reciprocal interaction between the members of the movement inside Jordan and the network al-Zarqawi established outside with his Jordanian, Arab, and other Muslim followers and supporters of the movement outside the country.

Jihadi Salafism finally reached its peak with the rise of al-Zarqawi to “stardom” as the commander of the Iraqi branch of al-Qaeda network – a situation that would reflect directly on Jordan’s national security in a most obvious and massive manner –culminating with the largest bombing operation targeting Jordan in its modern history (the Amman Hotel Bombings in 2005).

These bombings in themselves represented the start of a reverse countdown for al-Qaeda in Iraq, and summoned the beginning of the end of al-Zarqawi’s stardom, culminating in his assassination by an American missile strike in the middle of 2006. Al-Zarqawi also left behind a legacy of mounting crisis between al-Qaeda and the Iraqi Sunni community that would escalate into outright conflict and to a proverbial divorce between the two parties.

The Story Behind “*Bay’at al-Imam*”: The Founding and Planning Phase

The case that came to be known as the “*Case of ‘Bay’at al-Imam*” (the Pledging of Allegiance to the Imam)” in Jordan was a milestone in bringing the “Jihadi Salafist *da’wa* out into the public fore. The movement had, indeed, developed from small, disjointed groups scattered throughout the kingdom into a single, unified ideological movement. Even if many times it lacked a common organizational framework, it had a unified intellectual and spiritual leadership.

⁴⁸² According to the testimony of a former member in these organizations, in an interview with Al Ghad Jordanian daily newspaper, Amman, November 22, 2009.

The first signs of Jihadi Salafism appeared in Jordan in 1989 when Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi decided to turn to adopting an Islamic way of thinking, albeit in its most extreme form. After a brief period in his newfound religious devotion, he decided to travel to Afghanistan with several friends and acquaintances to take part in the Afghani Jihad. But first, he made a stop in Peshawar, Pakistan, where he settled in Peshawar's outskirts in the town of Jalalabad. Jalalabad is considered a major base for Arab and Afghani *Mujahiddin* and home to *Bayt al-Ansar*, which belonged to Bin Laden's al-Qaeda network and the "Services Office" run by 'Abdullah 'Azzam. Both "institutions" were considered way-stations for greeting and orienting incoming volunteer fighters.

In the spring of 1989, al-Zarqawi traveled to the area of Khost in eastern Afghanistan with several other new volunteer fighters. However, al-Zarqawi would not partake in any fighting because the war against the Soviets was over by the time he arrived. Instead, it was not until 1993 that he took part in some of the fighting that took place between Islamist factions and factions loyal to communism.

During this period, al-Zarqawi met Abu Mohammad al-Maqdisi for the first time in Peshawar, by way of Abu Walid al-Ansari al-Filastini, a close companion of Abu Qatada al-Filastini⁴⁸³. Al-Zarqawi and al-Maqdisi began to coordinate and work together. Al-Maqdisi had left Kuwait for Peshawar during the Gulf Crisis and was known amongst the *Mujahiddin* as a theorist and religious jurist by way of his books, "*Millat Ibrahim*" (Abraham's Creed) and "*Al-Kawashif al-Jaliyya fi Kufri al-Dawla al-Sa'udia*" (Clear Evidence of the Unbelief of the Saudi State), amongst others. And, in Peshawar, al-Zarqawi witnessed the assassination of 'Abdullah 'Azzam in September of 1989.

Shortly afterwards, Abu Qatada al-Filastini would also leave Jordan (after the Second Gulf War in 1991). But, before leaving he worked to establish a group known by the name of "*Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah*" (The People of the Sunnah), in which his ideological tendencies began to clearly and strongly lean towards Jihadi Salafism. After finishing this task, Abu Qatada left for Malaysia and then continued on to Peshawar.

Thus, the synergy began. Circumstances and events began to intertwine until a tight knit relationship evolved between Abu Qatada, al-Maqdisi and al-Zarqawi. However, rapidly changing developments – the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, the start of the civil war between the *Mujahiddin* factions (in Afghanistan after the Soviet withdrawal), the end of the Second Gulf War and finally the hunt for the "Arab Afghanis" in Peshawar – forced certain choices upon the three men: Abu Qatada decided to seek asylum in Great Britain; al-Maqdisi returned to Jordan; and, al-Zarqawi chose to remain in Afghanistan where he joined the military camp of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and took part in the "second wave" of the Afghani civil war battles at the side of Jalalludin Haqqani.

Al-Zarqawi trained in several military camps and, in particular, the "Sada" training camp near the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. At Sada, he met several Jordanian and Arab fighters, including Abu

⁴⁸³ Abu Mohammad al-Maqdisi, "*Al-Zarqawi Munasara wa Munasaha*" (Lit. "Al-Zarqawi: Advocacy and Advise") available at www.tawhed.ws/r?u=dtwiam56.

Abdullah al-Liby Salim Bin Soueid, who, several years later, was assigned the task of assassinating the American diplomat Lawrence Foley in Amman in 2002.

Early in 1993, al-Zarqawi made a decision to return to Jordan. In fact, this was a period of returning home for many Jordanian fighters that had engaged in the Afghani Jihad, and upon their return, joined various organizations and militias such as Jaysh Mohammad (The Army of Mohammad) and the “Jordanian Afghans,” amongst others.

The 1990s was a decade that witnessed the initiation of several Jihadi fronts in different parts of the Islamic world such as Bosnia and Chechnya, at the same time that other violent confrontations began to materialize in several Arab countries such as Egypt and Algeria. At the center of these conflicts were the “Arab Afghans” returning from the warfront in Afghanistan. And during this period, Sudan became a safe haven for many of them, particularly Bin Laden and Zawahiri (after the coup d'état in Sudan known as the “Revolution for National Salvation” in 1989, led by Omar Hassan al-Bashir and Dr. Hassan al-Turabi). In the meantime, Jordanian intelligence and national security services were successful in dismantling most of the Jihadi Salafist networks that had emerged locally.

Meanwhile, the “star” of Abu Qatada al-Filastini was on the rise in London, or what was referred to as “Londonstan,” as London was transformed into a communications, media, and logistics center for supporting and reinforcing Jihadi movements throughout the world. Abu Qatada became the number one scholar and spiritual leader for the Jihadi Salafist movement in Europe and North Africa. He gave his open support to the “Armed Islamic Group in Algeria” and the “Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG)” through his publications “*Al-Ansar*” and “*Al-Manhaj*,” both of which were also being secretly distributed throughout Jordan.

Upon his return to Jordan, al-Zarqawi re-initiated contact with al-Maqdisi with the objective of working together with him to spread the Jihadi Salafist *da'wa*. Al-Maqdisi says, “I met with Abu Mus'ab for the first time in Peshawar... Then, when he returned from Afghanistan, he visited me at my home, eager for the triumph of the calling to God and for *al-Tawhid*. Abu Walid was the one who gave him my contacts in Jordan, and who advised him to call me if he wanted to work for the sake of God's religion in Jordan... So, we cooperated together in this capacity. I arranged lessons to be conducted in all parts of the country. We began to publish and distribute some of my literature amongst the people; and, young men began to flock towards this *da'wa*, and began to exchange its books and articles.”⁴⁸⁴

And thus, the groundwork to establish and launch a Jordanian Jihadi Salafist group was laid. This development came to represent a critical juncture in the history of Jihadi Salafism in Jordan; and the organization that was formed by these two men would later become known to the media and to the Jordanian security apparatus as the “*Bay'at al-Imam*” (Pledging Allegiance to the Imam) group.

This organization was considered the fruit of the union between al-Zarqawi and al-Maqdisi's joint activities in disseminating Jihadi Salafism, and between the complementary expertise of al-Maqdisi's theories and intellect and al-Zarqawi's practical experience. In a brief period of time,

⁴⁸⁴ Abu Mohammad al-Maqdisi, “*Al-Zarqawi: Munasara wa Munasaha*” (Lit., “Al-Zarqawi: Advocacy and Advise”); op. cit.

indeed, they would prove successful in attracting numerous followers and members. They called themselves “*al-Muwahhidin*” (the Unitarians) or the “*Jamaa’at al-Tawhid*” and not “*Bay’at al-Imam*”, to which al-Maqdisi contests, “I refuse that we be named by any name other than that given to us by God.”⁴⁸⁵

According to the testimony of one of the members of the “*Bay’at al-Imam*” group, Mohammad Wasfi (Abu al-Muntasir), al-Zarqawi visited him with Sulaiman Hamzah, Sharif Abd al-Fattah (Abu Ashraf), and Khalid al-‘Aarouri (Abu al-Qassam) in August of 1993. The objective of that visit was to urge Abu al-Muntasir to establish an organization rooted in the principle of “*al-Hakimiya*” (Divine Governance and Sovereignty), which disavows the contemporary regimes, constitutions, laws, and legislations as *kufri*. Events progressed rapidly after that day. Abu al-Muntasir says, “The next morning Abu Mu’sab and Abu al-Qassam showed up and took me with them to Abu Mohammad al-Maqdisi’s house, which was in the al-Rashid neighborhood in the Ruseifi area. Abu Mus’ab explained to al-Maqdisi all that had transpired between us the previous day; and then said, ‘Now, we, together, should conclude the issue of the (group’s) *emir*’. The discussions around the emir ended with an agreement that Issam al-Barqawi (Abu Mohammad al-Maqdisi) would be appointed the *emir* of the *Da’wa* wing of the organization and Abu Mus’ab would be the *emir* of the *Jamaa’ah* (organization). Abu al-Qassam was appointed to the Council of *Shura* and “*Ahl al-Hal wa al-‘Aqd*” (those who Loose and Bind).⁴⁸⁶

The group began its work in an environment marked by rapidly changing developments and circumstances – Jordan was on the verge of signing a peace treaty with Israel and it was preparing for parliamentary elections to take place in a few months (1993). At that time, the nascent movement’s priorities were to organize lessons and lectures and to disseminate essays and books that revealed the *kufri* of the ruling regime and of democratic systems. These publications also advocated a religious prohibition on participating in any form of representative assembly elections (according to their interpretation and their *takfir* of the concept of democracy). At the fore, they also attacked the Muslim Brotherhood and any other Islamists who believed in the peaceful participation in state electoral processes and in political life. Indeed, according to Sharif Abd al-Fattah (Abu Ashraf), “Al-Maqdisi used to conduct lessons in my house, where more than 30 individuals would gather. We used to distribute flyers that considered (participating in) electoral processes and democracy as idolatrous and *kufri* acts that were utterly forbidden”.⁴⁸⁷

After the Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait, al-Maqdisi’s returned to Jordan in 1992 with a certain quantity of ammunition (five anti-personnel mines, seven hand grenades, and several missiles),

⁴⁸⁵ See: Abu Mohammad al-Maqdisi, “*Kashf al-Litham ‘anman Wusifu bi Bay’at al-Imam*” (Lit. “Unmasking those Described as ‘*Bay’at al-Imam*’ (the ‘Pledging of Allegiance to the Imam’ group)”; available at <http://www.tawhed.wsr?idtwiam56>). This description (pledging allegiance...) was not arbitrarily arrived at; indeed, it came from the affidavit of one of its members, Nabil Abu Harithiya, who had previously established an organization known as the “*Harakat Bay’at al-Imam – Haba*” (The Movement for Pledging Allegiance to the Imam- Haba with Ghanem Abdu – a former member of “*Hizb ut-Tahrir*”, who called himself the “Emir of the Muslims” and considered the state regime as *kafir*. Abdu died in Ma’an prison (Jordan) in early 1995. Abu Harithiya and Ghanem Abdu established their movement during the Gulf War, issuing numerous statements in the name of this movement, although it never received much fame or success. Abu Harithiya offered membership to his organization to a wide array of Islamist activists, including Abu Mohammad al-Maqdisi and Abu Mus’ab al-Zarqawi; but al-Maqdisi and al-Zarqawi were themselves busy working on establishing their own group.

⁴⁸⁶ Affidavit by Abu Muntasir from: Fu’ad Hussein’s “*Al-Zarqawi: Jeel Thami li al-Qa’eda*” (Lit. “Al-Zarqawi: The Second Generation of al-Qaeda”); Dar al-Khayyal Publishing House, 1st Edition, 2005, p. 87.

⁴⁸⁷ Interview with Sharif Abd al-Fattah (Abu Ashraf), in his home in al-Zarqa on August 18, 2009.

which he hid inside the furniture in his home. However, under interrogation, he insisted that he was keeping these munitions in order to use them against Israel.

It appears that the members of the organization were at odds and confused about defining the way they envisioned their platform of activities in Jordan, despite their agreement on an ideological level. After the events at the Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron in 1993, some of the movement's members decided to carry out suicide (martyring) operations against Israel. According to an affidavit by al-Zarqawi, al-Maqqisi gave him bombs and mines, which he later returned (al-Zarqawi allegedly kept two bombs for himself that he saved for Sulaiman Hamza and Abd al-Hadi Daghlass to carry out a guerilla operation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories). These ideas, in their opinion, were part of an immediate 'crisis' response to the Ibrahimi Mosque incident.⁴⁸⁸

In any case, the Jordanian national security services arrested all the members of the organization before they were able to carry out any of their "planned" operations.⁴⁸⁹ Affidavits taken from the members revealed the differences in opinions on the operational strategies of the organization. For example, Khalid al-'Aarouri (Abu al-Qassam), who worked in the International Islamic Relief Organization in Pakistan in 1991 before he returned to Jordan in 1992, objected to the attempted assassinations of a member of the anti-terrorist squad in the Jordanian General Intelligence Department and of Ya'qoub Zayadeen, the honorary president of the Jordanian Communist Party. He also objected to the idea of targeting the headquarters of the General Intelligence Department.⁴⁹⁰

Another example in which the lack of clarity in the organization's strategic vision is evident was an incident where al-Maqqisi gave Yanal Jankhout a bomb as a gift; then, shortly afterwards, Mustafa Hassan (al-Maqqisi's brother-in-law) brought the same man a quantity of acetone-peroxide with directions on how to convert this material into an explosive. (Mustafa Hassan had used this material previously as a member of *Jaysh Muhammad* in a case for which he was arrested). Then, in yet another visit, Hassan briefed Jankhout on how to use a greeting card bomb to assassinate Walid

⁴⁸⁸ From the confessions of Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi; the State Security Court, Case Number 95/300, August 1994.

⁴⁸⁹ After the organization was exposed, al-Zarqawi and al-Maqqisi did not turn themselves in and instead attempted to flee; Abu Ashraf remembers that al-Zarqawi was moving about, hiding from the authorities and fully armed. This is also made quite clear in an affidavit by al-Zarqawi where he says, "I was ready to do the impossible not to go to them; and I was going to resist if they tried to capture me; when I found out that I was wanted, I went out and bought myself a machine gun; I paid 800 Jordanian Dinars for it. I did that with the aim of resisting if the police came to my home... I had three clips for that gun and thirty bullets." Among the most prominent names in the organization were Abu Muhammad al-Maqqisi, Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, Mustafa Hassan Mousa, Khalid Mustafa al-'Aarouri (Abu al-Qassam), Sulaiman Talib Damra (Abu al-Mu'tasim), Muhammad Wasfi Omar (abu al-Muntasir), Nasri 'Izzuddin al-Tahayna (Abu al-'Izz), Nabil Yousuf abu Harithiya (Abu Mujahid), Sharif Ibrahim Abd al-Fattah (Abu Ashraf), Ahmad Abdullah Yusuf al-Zeitawi, Muhammad Abd al-Karim Ahmad al-Rawashdeh, Muhammad Fakhri Mousa al-Saleh, 'Alaauddin 'Atef, Sa'adat 'Abd al-Jawad, Talal Kayed al-Badawi, and 'Abd al-Majid al-Majali (Abu Qutaiba). That said, al-Zarqawi was arrested on March 29, 1994, and Al-Maqqisi was arrested five days later. Several charges were brought against them by the Military Prosecutor, including: participation in founding an illegal organization, possession of explosives and unlicensed weapons, forging passports, and offending the king. Al-Zarqawi signed his details affidavit before the military prosecutor and said: "I am guilty of possession illegal and unlicensed bombs and mines, and for participating in forging a passport and using it. I affirm to that and sign. (From al-Zarqawi's affidavit at the State Security Court). Al-Maqqisi also signed affidavits in the same context, and went further to denounce terrorism. He stated: "The bombs, mines, and weapons I had in my possession were not intended for terrorist operations inside Jordan, but rather to resist the Israeli enemy. I am against all people who commit terrorist attacks against police forces, intelligence agents, cinemas, and alcohol shops." (From al-Maqqisi's affidavit before the State Security Court).

⁴⁹⁰ From the confessions of Khalid al-'Aarouri; the State Security Court, Case Number 95/300, August 31, 1994.

Abu Thahr, the editor-in-chief of the Paris-based “*Al-Watan al-Arabi*” magazine.⁴⁹¹ In the end, the assassination attempt failed; and anyway, Walid Abu Thahr died later of natural causes in 2004.

Al-Maqdisi’s advocacy work *da’wa* to Jihadi Salafism did not face much difficulty in attracting followers and new sympathizers. Indeed, there were already numerous small groups of individuals, dispersed amongst several Jordanian cities and districts, a majority of which were already followers of the thought of Sayyid Qutb and his stance on “*al-Hakimiya*,” on the *takfir* of contemporary governments and constitutions, and on rejecting and shunning any notion of political life. However, up until the arrival of al-Maqdisi and al-Zarqawi on the scene, these groups and individuals did not possess any intellectual or organizational structure or leadership as such.

In the city of al-Salt, for example, a follower of an “extremist sheikhs” fell into the grasp of al-Maqdisi; this “sheikh” had suddenly transformed from a non-religious person to a radical Islamist preacher who adopted Sayyid Qutb’s ideas in *takfir* of contemporary regimes and labeling them as unbelieving. The paradox was that he became a major influence and one of the spiritual leaders that influenced members of an organization that later became known as the “*Jamaa’at Mu’tah al-‘Askariya*” (The Military Mu’tah Group) – a group accused of attempting to assassinate the Jordanian king in 1992. The members of this “al-Salt Group” were quickly drawn to al-Maqdisi and several of them emerged as ardent supporters of Jihadi Salafism, with Ra’ed Khreisat (Abu Abd al-Rahman al-Shami) at the fore. Soon Khreisat would become one of the members of al-Zarqawi’s larger network and would establish the “*Jund al-Sham*” (Soldiers of the Levant) group in northern Kurdistan prior to al-Zarqawi’s arrival there.

In the city of Ma’n, the Jihadi Salafist *da’wa* also took a very strong hold. Among the most prominent Ma’ani Jihadi Salafists was Mohammad al-Shalabi (Abu Sayyaf), who later became the leader of the Jihadi Salafist movement in that city. The State Security Court tried him in what was known as the “al-Mafraq Case” (city in Jordan) in which he was accused of establishing a terrorist organization with Abu Mohammad al-Maqdisi.

In addition to these cities (al-Salt, Ma’an and al-Mafraq) supporters of Jihadi Salafism became active in the cities of al-Zarqa and Irbid, as well as certain poorer Eastern Amman neighborhoods and in the various Palestinian refugee camps throughout Jordan.

After Jordanian intelligence and security services were successful in dismantling the “*Bay’at al-Imam*” group and taking its members into custody, 13 of them were tried by the State Security Court in November of 1996. Al-Zarqawi and al-Maqdisi were sentenced to 15 years each. After investigations with the defendants were finished inside the intelligence services detention center, they were transferred to different prisons scattered across the kingdom. Later, the two were held together for a period in the Suwaqa Prison. Al-Maqdisi says, “We were transferred from solitary confinement to regular cells when the time came for our trials. They isolated me in a prison in the north of the country as I was classified as the primary defendant. Abu Mus’ab was the secondary defendant and was kept in a prison in the central part of the country... The rest of our brothers were

⁴⁹¹ From the confessions of Abu Mohammad al-Maqdisi; the State Security Court; Case Number 95/300.

kept in a prison in the south... Then, after several months, they transferred us all together to the Suwaqa Prison in the south.”⁴⁹²

The “Organizational Structure” in Prison and the Expansion Beyond

For Jihadi Salafists, prison came to be seen as a “school” in which an individual’s patience and endurance is tested; they even called it “the Yousufian School” after the Prophet Yousuf (Peace Be Upon Him), who spent part of his life in prison. Prison was considered a “station of trial and tribulation, for testing the fortitude of a believer, his faith and his religion,” and a place for breeding support and followers for the movement. The prison culture and community also helped reinforce and instill the ideological convictions (of Jihadi Salafism) in members already in the movement and strengthen their organizational and personal bonds.

More importantly, prison became a place for recruiting new supporters and followers amongst convicts imprisoned for crimes unrelated to Islamist activities. In any prison community, influence lies in the hands of the strongest inmates; and, al-Zarqawi and his supporters enjoyed an aura of endurance, perseverance, and strength inside the prison that drove other inmates to seek their protection. Convicted felons and repeat offenders were indeed duly impressed by the Jihadi Salafists’ abilities in confronting the state’s security apparatus, according to the testimony of Dr. Yousuf Rababa’ah, who was in prison at that time over his political opposition stances.⁴⁹³

The matter of the “Islamic Emirate” in prison revealed the breadth of the organization and the exactitude its Jihadi Salafist members enjoyed. From the moment they arrived in Suwaqa Prison, they appointed al-Maqdisi as *emir*. However, after several months, al-Zarqawi’s “deposed” al-Maqdisi and became *emir* by virtue of his strength and magnitude. According to Sharif Abd al-Fattah (Abu Ashraf), al-Maqdisi “saw that it was of wisdom to deal with and engage the prison administration and its inmates; whereas al-Zarqawi imbued strength; he was firm and protective over his brothers, checking up on them every night and disbursing money amongst them that came from the outside.”⁴⁹⁴ Abu Qutaiba al-Majali confirmed this by saying, “They used to accuse me of flattery; and Abu Mus’ab and his boys beat up one of the officers, and beat Abu Mujahid (Nabil Harithiya)... Their fortitude was not without its negative side.”⁴⁹⁵

The “prison phase” was an important stage in the evolution of Jihadi Salafism in Jordan. It was marked by the movement’s first open and blatant proclamation of its strict ideology without fear and without reckoning. The notions of the “*kufr* of the state”, the “*kufr* of representative assemblies”, the apostasy of the Arab regimes (their lack of religious authority and legitimacy), and the Jihadi Salafist principles of “*al-Hakimiya*”, “*al-Taghout*” (Rule of the Impure and of False Deities) and “*al-Walaa’ wa al-Baraa*” (Allegiance and Disavowal) continued to spread quickly and became commonplace. The state’s courts became an opportunity and a podium to openly

⁴⁹² Abu Mohammad al-Maqdisi, “*Al-Zarqawi: Amaal wa Alaam, Munasara wa Munasaha*” (Lit. “Al-Zarqawi: Hopes and Pain: Advocacy and Advise”; p. 1.

⁴⁹³ Testimony of Yousuf Rababa’ah, who was imprisoned for the ‘Ajlun Bombings at the same time as members of the “*Bay’at al-Imam*” (Pledging of Allegiance to the Imam group) were in prison. Private interview conducted at the offices of Al Ghad Jordanian daily newspaper, November 12, 2009.

⁴⁹⁴ Interview with Sharif Abd al-Fattah (Abu Ashraf), op. cit.

⁴⁹⁵ Interview with Abd al-Majeed al-Majali (Abu Qutaiba), in his home in Amman, October 14, 2009.

express these concepts and ideas, a precedent set by Al-Maqdisi, who presented a historical defense (after he and those with him refused to appoint a lawyer to present their defense, a precedent that would be followed by other Jihadi Salafists during their trials) in which he openly condemned the constitution and the justice system, and firmly and blatantly declared his position on the *kufri* and illegitimacy of Arab governments.⁴⁹⁶

Following suit, al-Zarqawi would also present his own defense that he called “The Affidavit of a Prisoner” in which he declared, “O my people! What of me?... I call you to salvation and you call me to hell’s fire”; he continued, “Oh Judge, who makes judgment with that which God has not sent forth. And, If you know this... And blatant unbelief, clear polytheism and idolatry appear before you, judge not by any law that has not been legislated by God himself... Any law not of the Divine is not law or legal or legitimate – even if it has been ‘legislated’ by a scholar, a ruler, a parliamentarian or tribal chief.”⁴⁹⁷

These defense pleas were published outside the courts and prisons and circulated with great speed. Abu Qatada al-Filastini published them in his magazine “*Al-Manhaj*” in London. Al-Maqdisi describes this particular period with the following statement, “The period of the trials went well, thanks be to God... With the grace of God, we were successful in using this period to reveal our *da’wa* and to publicly proclaim that we accuse the state-regime of *kufri* and that we utterly reject and are innocent of its laws. We made these declarations openly, loud and clear from the court’s cage before the journalists and all those present.”⁴⁹⁸

The period spent in prison provided al-Maqdisi with ample time and space to devote himself to theorizing, writing, and recruiting. He wrote dozens of essays and indeed, wrote most of his books during this period. And, despite the prison administration’s awareness of the speed with which Jihadi Salafism was spreading amongst the inmates, and of the Jihadi Salafists’ success in recruiting new members, isolating them did nothing more than increase their strength, perseverance, and determination. When the prison administration decided in 1997 to transfer and disperse the Jihadi Salafists to various prisons across the kingdom – in the towns of al-Salt, al-Jafar, and Qafqafa – it actually afforded them with new terrain in which to recruit and make contact with supporters. For example, in al-Salt, Jihadi Salafists were able to enjoy periodic visits by Ra’ed Khreisat (Abu Abd al-Rahman al-Shami) and other members of his group; in Ma’an, Mohammad al-Shalabi (Abu Sayyaf) made the same effort; and the same took place in other cities in the kingdom, helping the

⁴⁹⁶The plea for the defense was entitled, “*Muhakamat Mahkamat Amn al-Dawla wa Qudatuha ila Shar’ Allah*” (Lit. “The Trial of the State Security Court and its Judges by Islamic Law”); and in this defense were the following statements: 1) The accused: The ruler of this country and all the rulers of this era, and all those who supported them and aided and abetted legalizing their statutory legislation; 2) The State Security Court judge and all those who assist him, and all those who judge according to state (statutory) legislation; 3) Their intelligence services, their soldiers, their supporters and all those associated with allowing their statutory legislation to triumph; 4) Their misguided scholars, their false pontiffs, priests, rabbis, and their followers who advocate and justify the null and void religion of idolatrous democracy or “the rule of law of the people, for the people”; 5) All those who supported and applauded them; all those who spoke in their name and partnered in their void religion “democracy”.

[Reference: Abu Mohammad al-Maqdisi, “*Muhakamat Mahkamat Amn al-Dawla wa Qudatuha ila Shar’ Allah*” (Lit. “The Trial of the State Security Court and its Judges by Islamic Law.”)]

⁴⁹⁷ Abu Mus’ab al-Zarqawi, “*Ifadat Aseer: Ya Qawm Mali Ad’oukum ila al-Janna wa Tad’ouni ila al-Nar*” (Lit. “Affidavit of a Prisoner: O my people! What of me, I call you to salvation and you call me to hell’s fire”); available at <http://www.tawhed.ws/r/?i=ou3wjvb3>

⁴⁹⁸ Abu Mohammad al-Maqdisi, “*Al-Zarqawi: Munasara wa Munasaha*” (Lit., “Al-Zarqawi: Advocacy and Advise”); op. cit.

Jihadi Salafists solidify and deepen old relationships and develop new ones – all of which enabled them to further recruit new members.

Al-Maqdisi describes this phase and the nature of its activities and work with the following, “The regime was feeling the threat of the proliferation of the *da’wa* to Jihadi Salafism amongst the general prison population, and feeling the risk of it spreading beyond the prison bars to the outside; and the dissemination of my books and publications while I was still bound by my shackles. They tried to isolate us first from the rest of the prisoners; they kept a tight reign on them and banned them from praying with us. They punished anyone who tried to make contact with us, even greet us. Then, they completely isolated us from them in dorms set aside solely for us – No one else was allowed to come in; then, they started to move us to different prisons also set aside just for us; the last one was the al-Jafar Prison, in the desert near the border, where they tried to isolate us from the whole world. But they did not succeed. Because every thing they did brought us closer together. And, they made it easier for us to contact a wider range of our brothers, which is what happened when they transferred us to the prison in al-Salt – they made it easier for our brothers from al-Salt to visit us after suffering the distances to the prison in Suwaqa; so that transfer made it easier for us to remain in contact with them. When they transferred us to the prison in al-Jafar, we became close to the city of Ma’an and that made it easier for us to communicate with our brothers there, as well as provided us with another opportunity to get to know new people from that city.”⁴⁹⁹

During that period, other groups of Jihadi Salafists began to emerge, the most prominent of which was called the “*al-Islah wa al-Tahhadi*” (Reform and Challenge) movement, which appeared on the scene in 1997. Abu Qatada al-Filastini was accused of commanding this group from his headquarters in London although the Court of Cassation exonerated all those charged in a case related to them. Meanwhile, another group of Jihadi Salafists based in the al-Baq’a were dismantled by the security services in September 1998. At the same time, numerous cases connected to the Jihadi Salafist movement were also tried before the State Security Court. Most of these cases were defamation and libel cases (proclaiming the Jordanian state and regime as unbelieving and slandering the head of state). Another phenomenon that surfaced at this time was cases of insubordination in which members of the armed forces, influenced by Jihadi Salafist thought, refused their orders or duties (Jihadi Salafism prohibits working in or cooperating with the state’s security apparatus or armed forces).

Furthermore, and during this period, communication channels and contact between the Global Jihadi Salafist and the Jordanian Jihadi Salafist movements were actually quite easy and effortless. For example, without much difficulty, al-Maqdisi received a visit from Abd al-Aziz al-Mu’atham while in prison to seek the former’s counsel on several issues (al-Mu’atham was convicted for the *Al-Aliyya* Riyadh Bombings of 1996). Funds also easily made their way from “Europe’s Jihadis” by way of Abu Qatada in London, another Islamist based in Denmark, as well as Abu al-Dahdah, the leader of the al-Qaeda cell in Spain.⁵⁰⁰

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁰ Mshari al-Thaydie, “*Shuyukh al-’Unf Kathirun wa Yabqaa Abu Muhammad al-Aham*” (Lit. “The Sheikhs of Violence are Many, with Abu Mohammad at the Fore”); al-Sharq al-Awsat Newspaper, London, January 14, 2004; available at <http://www.asharqalawsat.com/details.asp?section=4&article=212637&issueno=9178>.

Although the Jihadi Salafist movement made great strides during the “prison period” – where they made use of this time both on an ideological as well as pragmatic, organizational level –, it also produced the first seeds of internal conflict between al-Zarqawi and al-Maqdisi. The opposing choices made by both men developed and evolved into very differing forms. Al-Maqdisi preferred a more long-term strategy based on first spreading the Jihadi Salafist ideology, ensuring that the movement remained in Jordan, working on spreading the *da’wa* without getting caught up in armed confrontations with the regime, and not abandoning the country for other Jihadist fronts. Meanwhile, on the other hand, al-Zarqawi, who emerged as a solid field commander, was successful in recruiting a large number of Jihadi Salafists based on his view that placed increasing emphasis and importance on armed operations in the field, inside and outside the country – a choice that would become clearly manifest after all the Jihadi Salafists and other Islamists were released from prison by a royal pardon covering all Jordanian prisoners (In one of his first initiatives as the new king, King Abdullah II declared a general amnesty (royal pardon) of all prisoners in a televised news broadcast on March 23, 1999).

The release of the movement’s members from prison under the command of al-Zarqawi and al-Maqdisi was perceived as a great “symbolic victory” by the movement’s followers, who greeted and celebrated them as crowned heroes. The paradox was that the moment of their release was also the moment that the movement would find itself divided in its future course.

Al-Zarqawi began to turn his attention towards Afghanistan, where the alliance between al-Qaeda and the Taliban had crystallized in a most concrete way. At the same time, the Afghans pledged their allegiance to Mullah Mohammad Omar, as *Amir al-Mu’minin*” (Prince of the Faithful (Muslims)), and the Global Jihadi Front to Fight against the Crusaders and the Jews had announced its formation – all of which enticed al-Zarqawi and key figures from the group to take leave and pursue other global Jihadist fronts.

On the other hand, al-Maqdisi opted to remain in Jordan to continue his *da’wa* to Jihadi Salafism, which signaled that al-Maqdisi’s real hopes and ambitions were in transporting the “call to Jihadi Salafism” west of the River Jordan, i.e. Palestine – a bone of contention that lay at the core of the fundamental conflict in vision that would emerge later between al-Maqdisi and al-Zarqawi.

The “External” Command and “Internal” Subversive Activities

The movement found itself facing a dual reality the moment al-Zarqawi and his group left the country: An “external” division under the command of al-Zarqawi, which relentlessly continued to recruit followers and to carry out operations inside Jordan; and an “internal” division that manifested in a split between those who supported al-Zarqawi and those who supported al-Maqdisi. The signs of conflict between the two men began to take shape; and al-Maqdisi directed his attention to writing a book in which he criticized the extremist aspects of “certain” members of the movement and the religious red lines crossed unjustifiably in the name of the Jihadi Salafist discourse.

In the meantime, the Jihadi Salafist compass began to increasingly point out from the “inside” to the “outside,” with numerous members of the movement leaving Jordan for other “fronts.” At the same

time, the internal arena became a breeding ground for subversive rather than “guidance or advocacy” activities. Indeed, the planning, organization, coordination, and financing of militant or armed operations began – most of the time under the supervision of al-Zarqawi and his followers and carried out by members of the movement in Jordan or from other Arab countries.

Al-Zarqawi’s first stop after leaving Jordan was Pakistan, where he remained for a limited period of time. Several testimonies suggest that he was actually arrested in Pakistan and upon his release continued to Afghanistan. In any case, once in Afghanistan, al-Zarqawi established the “Herat Military Training Camp” under the supervision and direction of the “Director of Security” of the al-Qaeda mother organization, Saif al-’Adl.⁵⁰¹ The camp attracted approximately 40 individuals at the beginning; and, many of these persons would play an active role in assisting al-Zarqawi later.⁵⁰²

The attacks of September 11, 2001 unfolded and the subsequent upheaval in the international equation took place. A global war was declared between al-Qaeda and the satellite groups orbiting it ideologically and institutionally, on the one hand, and the United States of America, its superpower allies and numerous Arab states, on the other. The bloody conflict was initiated through

⁵⁰¹There are strong indications that Saif al-’Adl is present in Iran today; numerous eyewitnesses claim to have seen him there. However, there are conflicting opinions on the status or context of his presence there. There are many analysts and researchers who argue that he is in Iran with several other leaders from the organization (al-Qaeda) in what are known as “safe houses.” Others claim that they are actually all under arrest in Iran. It should be noted here that the relationship between Saif al-’Adl and Abu Mus’ab al-Zarqawi became close during the time the latter stayed in Afghanistan; and, many attribute al-Zarqawi’s move to Iraq to Saif al-’Adl. Abu Mohammad, one of al-Zarqawi’s closest companions, says that it was actually Saif al-’Adl who came up with the idea of establishing the Herat Military Training Camp and adds, “He (Saif al-’Adl) was the one who also put forth the idea of establishing “*Jund al-Sham*” (the Soldiers of the Levant), and gave al-Zarqawi \$35,000 (for that purpose)”. [Reference: Special interview with ‘Ali al-’Abed (Abu Mohammad), September 23, 2009.]

⁵⁰² In early 2000, there were around 40 recruits at the Herat Military Training Camp; most of these recruits were Jordanian or other Arabs. The most prominent of these were Khalid al-’Arouri (Abu al-Qassam), who is said to be imprisoned in Iran; Abd al-Hadi Daghlass (Abu ‘Ubaida), who was killed in Kurdistan, Iraq; Ra’ed Khreisat (Abu ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Shami), who was killed in Iraq’s Kurdistan prior to the American occupation; ‘Azmi al-Jayyousi, who was imprisoned in Jordan for attempting to blow up the General Intelligence Department building (as a member of “*Kata’ib al-Tawhid*”); Nidal ‘Arabiyat, who was killed in Iraq; Mu’ammarr al-Jaghbeer, imprisoned in Jordan for the assassination of the American Diplomat, Lawrence Foley; and hailing from Syria, Sulaiman Khalid Darwish (Abu al-Ghadiya); Abu Mohammad al-Lubnani (the Lebanese), both of whom were killed in Iraq by the American Armed Forces.

In Iraq, al-Zarqawi was in charge of several training camps in the Serghat area of Kurdistan, Iraq. According to the testimony of Abu Mohammad al-Rayati, who was captured by the Americans in Kurdistan, Iraq and handed over to Jordanian authorities, al-Zarqawi, from as early as 1999, encouraged Jordanians and others to enlist in training camps in Afghanistan, then in Kurdistan – that was how a multi-national group was formed in Kurdistan made up of Jordanians, Iraqis, Afghans and Chechens, amongst others. [Reference: “*Al-Urdun Yakshif ‘an Jama‘at Ansar al-Islam al-Murtabita bi al-Qa‘eda*” (Lit. “Jordan Discloses Information on the Ansar al-Islam Group, which has Ties with al-Qaeda”); al-Ra’i Jordanian daily Newspaper, September 13, 2003.]

the War on Afghanistan, which eventually led to the collapse of the Taliban regime thus pushing al-Qaeda to go underground, and with them, al-Zarqawi.⁵⁰³

In the aftermath of the War on Afghanistan, al-Zarqawi and a number of his followers fled the Herat Military Training Camp for Iran⁵⁰⁴, then continued to the Kurdish region of northern Iraq after several of al-Zarqawi's followers (at the fore, Ra'ed Khreisat, alias Abu Abd al-Rahman al-Shami) established the "*Jund al-Sham*" (The Soldiers of the Levant) organization. Subsequently, they made an alliance with an extremist Kurdish faction (a group which split from the "*al-Jamaa'ah al-Islamiya*" commanded by Raya Saleh (Abu 'Abdullah al-Shami) and Mullah Krekar); and eventually, this alliance developed into the organization known as "*Ansar al-Islam*."

Al-Zarqawi remained in Kurdistan; and from there, used to sneak back and forth across the border to Syria where individuals close to al-Zarqawi claim he established another cell. Others confirm that al-Zarqawi actually made his way secretly into Jordan, and during this "visit," he personally supervised the assassination of the American diplomat Lawrence Foley (October 28, 2002).⁵⁰⁵

This period was also marked by attempts by al-Zarqawi to establish cells and network Jordanians and Arabs in organizations, such as "*Jund al-Sham*," which were supposed to focus on carrying out activities in other countries in the region. During his stay in Kurdistan, it was clear that al-Zarqawi was successful in recruiting numerous Iraqi followers and other Arabs fleeing from the war in Afghanistan and that he made use of those who were with him in the Herat Training Camp, in addition to other Jordanians and Palestinians residing in Syria and Lebanon, for that purpose.

⁵⁰³ Al-Qaeda attacked the United States on September 11, 2001 with a storm of civilian airplanes, which targeted New York City's World Trade Center Twin Towers and the Pentagon in Washington D.C. The attack led to the death of 2,823 individuals. A direct outcome of these attacks was the United States' creation of an international coalition, which invaded Afghanistan with the objective of toppling the Taliban regime and eliminating al-Qaeda. And, despite the Taliban's almost immediate collapse, the commanders and leaders of al-Qaeda managed to flee to the tribal regions of Afghanistan and Waziristan in Pakistan. During the American attack on Afghanistan, a meeting was convened in the city of Kandahar that included al-Zarqawi, Abu Zubeidah, Saif al-'Adl and Ramzi bin al-Shaybah – the man who coordinated what was known as the "Hamburg Cell." Abu Zubeidah claims that it was during this meeting that al-Zarqawi announced his decision to take a group of 12 to 15 fighters secretly out of Afghanistan and go to Iraq. Abu Zubeidah added that an American missile targeted the house in Kandahar while they were meeting and al-Zarqawi had to be removed from the rubble, but was only slightly wounded. [Reference: The full report by the crime unit of the German police on Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, produced in 2004; Jean Charles Barbazar, "Abu Musab Zarqawi: The Other Face of al-Qaeda"; op. cit., pp. 125-126.]

⁵⁰⁴ Al Zarqawi organized his and his followers escape to Iran with the assistance of his cell in Germany, known as the "*Tawhid*" cell. On December 12, 2002, he crossed the southern borders of Afghanistan, stopping in Zahedan (a town in southeastern Iran that borders Afghanistan and Pakistan) on his way to Tehran, where he remained until April 4, 2002. From there, he contacted his German "*Tawhid*" cell to insure that he got what he needed. The German cell sent al-Zarqawi and his group false passports and money before the cell was discovered and dismantled by the German police on the 23rd of April 2002. The members of the German "*Tawhid*" cell included Yasser Hassan (Abu Ali) (Iraqi national), Zeidan Imad Abd al-Hadi (Iraqi national), Osama Ahmad (Kuwaiti national), Ashraf al-Daghmeh (Jordanian national) and Ismail Shalabi (Jordanian national), amongst others. According to the German police report, Abu Ali had discussed carrying out operations in Europe with al-Zarqawi. During an interrogation about the cell, Shadi Abdullah confirmed that al-Zarqawi and his group were arrested by the Iranian security services. Indeed, Iran had several members of al-Qaeda in custody, the most prominent of which were Saif al-'Adl and Saad Osama Bin Laden, as well as several members of al-Zarqawi's group, the most prominent of which was al-Zarqawi's right-hand man, Khalid al-Arouri (Abu al-Kassem). Others were extradited from Iran to Jordan. After his release by the Iranians, al-Zarqawi began to travel intermittently between Iraq and Syria. [References: Jean Charles Barbazar, "Abu Musab Zarqawi: The Other Face of al-Qaeda"; op. cit., pp 128-129; as well as excerpts from an interview with Sharif Abd al-Fattah (Abu Ashraf), op. cit.]

⁵⁰⁵ According to information gathered from the investigation by the State Security Court into the Foley assassination; and according to excerpts from an interview with Sharif Abd al-Fattah (Abu Ashraf), op. cit.

What came to be known as “Al-Qaeda 2000” or the “Millennium Conspiracy” represented one of the most prominent of these larger groups or organizations. The objective of this organization, according to accusations and charges laid against them, was to carry out militant operations against popular tourist sites. The members of this organization charged in court numbered close to 28, of which only 16 were tried in person (with Khader Abu Hauwshar at the fore). Meanwhile, the most prominent members escaped justice, including: Abu Zubaidah, Abu Qatada al-Filastini and al-Zarqawi. Al-Maqqdisi was also arrested on charges related to this organization; however, the courts exonerated him of these charges. A man named Khalil al-Deek was also extradited to Jordan from Pakistan over accusations of conspiring with Abu Zubaidah in the same case, but was later released due to insufficient evidence.

People all over the world watched this case with avid interest because of the nature of the group’s targets – which were all major sites in Jordan, such as the Radisson SAS Hotel in Amman, the Baptism Site on the Jordan River and the King Hussein Crossing (which bridges northern Jordan to Israel). The case was also quite massive in terms of the numbers accused and the diversity of their nationalities. And, it was a prime example of the coordinated efforts of Abu Zubaidah al-Filastini, al-Zarqawi and Khalid al-’Arouri. Furthermore, one of the accused was the infamous Kurdish leader of the “*Ansar al-Islam*” organization, Najmuddin Faraj Ahmad, otherwise known as “Mullah Krekar.” As a note, al-Zarqawi was sentenced in absentia to 15 years in prison.⁵⁰⁶

A series of other cases followed the latter, including: The case of “*Ansar al-Islam*” (2003) in which several Jordanians, Kurdish Iraqis and other nationals faced a number of charges⁵⁰⁷, one of which was the assassination of the American Diplomat Lawrence Foley (in 2002)⁵⁰⁸; the case of the al-Mafraq Jihadi Salafists, in which al-Maqqdisi was charged (and exonerated of these charges by the courts while he remained in custody); and the case concerning Mohammad al-Shalabi (Abu Sayyaf), who was the key to the Jihadi Salafist movement in the city of Ma’an⁵⁰⁹ – whose members were dispersed between the cities of al-Mafraq, Ma’an, al-Zarqa and abroad. One of the most notorious of these cases dealt with the attempted assassination of the director of the anti-terrorist unit in the General Intelligence Department (February 2002). In this case, seven individuals were charged and two persons killed, one was Iraqi and the other Egyptian.⁵¹⁰ Other operations of a more local taint were attempted by groups such as the “*Khalaaya*” (Cells) organization (in 2002), whose

⁵⁰⁶ The most prominent names of those who were charged in this case were: Khader Abu Hauwsher, Khalid Maghamis, Osama Sammar, Ra’ed Barbar, Hussein Mohammad, Sa’id Hijazi, Isma’il al-Khatib, Mohammad al-’Awartani, Rami Tantawi, Samer Jbara, Mohammad al-Qar’awi, Dirar Sulaiman, Munir Maqdaq, Mohammad ’Issa, Abu Mohammad al-Maqqdisi, Yasser Abu Ghalous, Rashid Khalaf, Dirar al-Qar’awi, Jamal al-Tahrawi, Ibrahiim Abu Hilaiwah, Ra’ed Hijazi, Omar Abu Omar, Zein al-Abidin Hassan, Ahmad al-Gharwi (Abd al-Mu’ti) and Ahmad al-Rayati.

⁵⁰⁷ The most prominent names of the persons charged in this case were: Abd al-Hadi Daghllass, Abu Mohammad al-Shami, Jamal al-’Utaibi, Mu’ath al-Nsour, Shehadeh al-Kilani, Munther Abu Shamma, Mohammad Qteishat, Ahmad al-Riyati, Khalid al-’Arouri, Muwfaq ’Adwan, Salahuddin al-’Utaibi, Mohammad Ismail al-Safadi, Sari Mohammad Shehab, Najmuddin Faraj (Mullah Krekar), ’Omar ’Izzudin Issam al-’Utaibi, Raya Saleh (Abu Abdullah al-Shami).

⁵⁰⁸ Charged in this case were: Abu Mus’ab al-Zarqawi (tried in absentia), Salem al-Soueidi (Abu Abdullah al-Liby) (executed), Yasser Fathi Freihat, Mohammad Amin Nu’man al-Hirsh, Shaker al-Qaisi, Mohammad Ahmad Tayourah, Mohammad Issa Da’mas, Ahmad Hussein Hassoun, Mahmud Abd al-Rahman Dhaher.

⁵⁰⁹ Charged in this case were: Samer al-Hisban, Mohammad al-Sarhan, Faisal al-Khalidi, Jala’a Hleibar, Abd al-Hadi Daghllass and Sa’ud al-Khalayleh.

⁵¹⁰ The most prominent names amongst the persons charged in this case were: Mustafa Yousef Siyam (tried in absentia), ’Ahed Khreizat (tried in absentia), Mohammad ’Arafat Hijazi, Mohammad Jamil ’Arabiyyat, Mu’awayya Hassan al-Nabulsi, ’Ali Abd al-Fattah Nassar, and Mohammad Adnan and Mohammad Awad (suspects).

members came mostly from Eastern Amman⁵¹¹, and attempts to infiltrate the West Bank in order to carry out military operations against Israel also continued throughout this period.⁵¹²

This period (from when al-Zarqawi left Jordan at the end of 1999 until the occupation of Iraq in 2003) was characterized by the following major features:

- Parallel duality of work and activities: While al-Zarqawi was busy organizing groups of local and foreign individuals to carry out militant operations that he and his group coordinated and planned, the movement in Jordan was characterized by a foggy, gelatinous nature – some of its members were organized, others were tied to and loyal to al-Zarqawi, while still others were satisfied to work in the field of *da'wa*, advocating the Jihadi Salafist discourse and mobilizing society towards this ideology. Some incidents took on a local nature, or depended on personal initiatives with limited organization, and most depended only “intellectually” on al-Qaeda.
- Al-Zarqawi emerged as a unique, and even sole leader of the movement, enjoying its followers’ support, loyalty, and awe whereas al-Maqdisi’s presence abated, as did his role, which regressed to the level of religious and intellectual theorization and scholarship – this is notwithstanding the fact that he faced many different charges and was in custody or in prison during most of this period (despite the fact that he was exonerated of all charges laid against him in every case).
- This period witnessed a great migration from Jordan abroad; some members followed al-Zarqawi to Afghanistan while others, particularly the locals from the city of al-Salt, followed Ra’ed Khreisat (Abu Abd al-Rahman al-Shami) to the Kurdistan region in northern Iraq. The majority of this exodus took place across Syria to Turkey, then to Iran, Iraq or Afghanistan.⁵¹³
- The preparation, planning, and coordination of operations were becoming more and more sophisticated and professional relative to previous periods (or prior to al-Zarqawi leaving Jordan); however, they remained less complex and less potent than the operations that were carried out after the occupation of Iraq.

Al-Zarqawi’s Rise to “Stardom” and the “Jordanian Ramifications” on al-Qaeda in Iraq

On the 9th of April 2003, the American Armed Forces occupied Baghdad and toppled Saddam Hussein’s regime. A new page in Iraq’s modern history and in the history of the region was turned. Another era had begun, with new ruling political elite of a completely different kind drastically altering the balance of political and military power in Iraq.

⁵¹¹ The most prominent names amongst the persons charged in this case were: ‘Awwad Khreisat, Ja’afar Walid ‘Awad, Jamal al-Mughrabi, Yousef ‘Alauddin, Zaid al-Nsour, Abd al-Razzaq Khreisat, Mahmoud Yassin, Yasser Mubarak, Bader Mohammad, Niyazi al-Harbawi, Jamal Jassem, Sufian Walid and Wassif Saleh.

⁵¹² Many cases of attempted infiltrations across the borders into Palestine were recorded, such as the attempt in which Zaher Mizher and Mahmoud ‘Aabdin were charged.

⁵¹³ From the testimony of Hamdan Khalid al-Khatib Ghneimat, one of the young men who tried to enlist in “*Jund el-Sham*” (The Soldiers of the Levant) in Kurdistan, Iraq. Refer to Mohammad Abu Rumman, “*Min al-Salt ila Kurdistan: Hiwar ma’ a Ahad Afrad al-Tayyar al-Salafi al-Jihadi*” (Lit. “From Salt to Kurdistan: Discussions with One of the Members of the Jihadi Salafist Movement”); al-‘Asr Magazine, available at <http://www.alasr.ws/index.cfm?method=home.con&contentID=5700&keywords>

Subsequent to this transformation, al-Zarqawi made his way from northern Iraq to Baghdad to take advantage of this new “golden” opportunity. The nucleus that had formed his small group of followers began to expand and to swell quickly due to four major factors:

- First: There was already a large presence of Arab volunteer fighters in Iraq who had been allowed into the country and armed by the previous regime in an attempt to confront the impending invasion. Many of these volunteer fighters decided to stay after the occupation and join the insurgency. At the same time, there was no one group on the scene that was able to recruit or mobilize such a large number of fighters for the new fight other than al-Zarqawi’s group; and, the Sunni Iraqi insurgency had not yet come together in any significant form.
- Second: The dismissal of thousands of soldiers from the previous regime’s army and the dismantling of all its security apparatus pushed many individuals, armed with their weapons and military experience, towards the insurgency. And, al-Zarqawi’s group was successful in attracting and mobilizing a good portion of this vital segment into its ranks.
- Third: The overall disposition of Iraq’s Sunni population was poised against the new political process and the new era that Iraq was entering into, for many reasons – the first was the feeling amongst the Sunnis that they were going to lose their historical role of authority in the country, and the second was the conflicting signals they were getting from the Americans and the Iraqi Shiites, which were perceived as hostile by the Sunni population. These conditions further bolstered the general shift of this community towards the option of armed resistance to the new status quo.
- Fourth: In the beginning, the identity of the “Iraqi Insurgency” was not clear. On the other hand, al-Zarqawi’s group proposed and possessed a distinctly strict and unwavering theoretical and political discourse that gave it the impetus to become a major player in the power map of the Sunni armed resistance to the American occupation.

In result, al-Zarqawi and his group found themselves accepted by and within a very fertile social setting inside Iraq’s Sunni community, which gave them further strength and momentum. The latter was notwithstanding the fact that their military capacities were suddenly expanded and reinforced by the numerous ex-officers from the Iraqi army and volunteer Arab fighters, who had previous fighting experience in the battlefield. A synergy indeed developed and evolved between these accumulated experiences within the framework of “the armed struggle.”

Al-Zarqawi immediately went to work, restructuring and rebuilding his network in Iraq. His first efforts began with developing extensive contacts and networking with others. He quickly succeeded in establishing a group that depended, at least in the beginning, on Arab volunteer fighters whom he added to his original nucleus of Jordanian followers. Then, through a series of massive and terrifying suicide operations, he was able to impose himself on the Iraqi scene as a major force to be reckoned with. Of these operations, the most infamous was the one that took place on August 19, 2003 in which his group successfully targeted the United Nations Headquarters in Baghdad, killing 22 persons, among them the top UN envoy to Iraq, Sergio Vieira de Mello, and wounding almost one hundred others. The Jordanian embassy in Baghdad was also targeted, although al-Zarqawi did not claim responsibility for this particular operation.

A month later, the United States declared it was freezing all of al-Zarqawi’s assets and finances, and offered a five million dollar reward to anyone who could provide information that would lead

to his capture. Al-Zarqawi was then accused of the Istanbul bombings that took place on November 20, 2003, and of the massive operation that assassinated the head of the Islamic Revolutionary Council in Iraq, Mohammad Baqir al-Hakim, and killed 83 others and wounded 125. The assassination of al-Hakim was carried out by means of a suicide car bombing that was actually carried out by al-Zarqawi's father-in-law (of al-Zarqawi's second wife), Yassin Jarrad. Other operations included the November 12 attack on the Italian army base in Nassiriya in which 19 Italians were killed, and on December 27, a suicide attack in the historic city of Karbala killed 19, including seven coalition soldiers, and wounded over 200 others. Karbala was targeted again on March 2, 2004 by massive, parallel and timed attacks against the city's predominantly Shiite population that led to the death of 170 and wounded 550 persons.

To say the least, al-Zarqawi made his presence on Iraqi soils felt with great strength. He began to enjoy huge popularity and gained further support from the Jihadi Salafist movement inside and outside Iraq due to his espousal of a very strict Jihadi Salafist ideology and his military strategy, which depended on widening the scope of "suicide operations." During that time, al-Zarqawi would not accept "fighting" under any other name other than the name he gave it; "*Jamaa'at al-Zarqawi*" (al-Zarqawi Group); and thus, from that point forth his group was known as such. That is, until one of the key figures of al-Qaeda was delegated with the task of developing opportunities for the network in Iraq, 'Omar Yousef Jum'a (Abu Anas al-Shami)⁵¹⁴, met with al-Zarqawi in the middle of 2003.

Abu Anas al-Shami succeeded in convincing al-Zarqawi to declare the launching of a "new" group, under a clear standard and name, which was "*Jama'at al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad*" (The Unitarian and Jihadi Group) – It should be noted that this happens to be the same name used by al-Maqdisi, al-Zarqawi's previous mentor, and the name of al-Maqdisi's website. This group was officially established and announced at the end of September 2003; and, a strict hierarchical structure was constituted under the command of al-Zarqawi and a *Shura* Council, along with several other organizational committees to deal with the media, security, finances and legislation.

The March 2004 bombings in Karbala signaled a dangerous turning point in the conflict inside Iraq. The attacks became the epitome of the soon-to-be dire terrifying Sunni-Shiite conflict there, a conflict that reinforced al-Zarqawi's strength and presence in the "Sunni armed operations," by heightening the sectarian animosity and creating a climate of security chaos that facilitated the work of Al-Qaeda and provided a "safe haven" for it.⁵¹⁵ Indeed, American authorities later disclosed a letter that they claim al-Zarqawi sent to the command center of al-Qaeda, which included a request

⁵¹⁴ Abu Anas al-Shami was born Omar Yousef Jum'a in 1969. A Jordanian of Palestinian descent, he moved to Jordan after the Second Gulf War. He went to Bosnia to partake in the Jihad there as a teacher, and worked in Jordan as an imam in a mosque. He was the director of the Imam Bukhari Foundation, which is affiliated with the (Charitable) Society of *Al-Kitab wa al-Sunnah* (the Qur'an and the Sunnah Society). He met with al-Zarqawi in the middle of 2003, and was successful in convincing al-Zarqawi to declare the launch of a group, under a clear banner and title, which they called "*Jamaa'at al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad*" (The Unitarian and Jihadi Group)(It should be noted that this is the same name as al-Maqdisi's site on the internet). This group was officially declared at the end of September 2003; and a strict hierarchical structure was constituted under the command of Al-Zarqawi and a *Shura* Council, along with several other organizational committees to deal with media, security, finances and a legislative committee.] Abu Anas al-Shami headed the group's legal committee and was killed on September 16, 2004 (the same day as his birthday) during an attempt to storm the Abu Ghraib prison.

⁵¹⁵ On the attacks on Karbala, see "*Bush Yata'ahad bi Sahq al-Mas'oulin 'an 'Itida'at Karbala wa al-Kathimiya*" (Lit., "Bush Vows to Crush those Responsible for the Attacks on Karbala and al-Kathimiya"), in the London-based Al-Sharq al-Aqsa newspaper, March 7, 2004.

for assistance in launching “a sectarian war in Iraq.” On February 2, 2004, American authorities in Iraq declared they were doubling the reward (to 10 million dollars) for anyone with information that would lead to al-Zarqawi’s capture.

The new group was actually able to reinforce and expand its ranks, strength and capacities following the Battle of Falluja⁵¹⁶ as a result of the gaping political and military failure of the American strategy in this town. Indeed, the huge tactical error of the Americans in using massive and indiscriminate shelling in Falluja backfired and only helped increase the number of (al-Zarqawi) followers and supporters inside and outside Iraq. This failure was coupled with certain practices used by some groups from the “Shiite sect” and by death squads. All of these factors worked together to swell the ranks and strengthen support for the “*Jamaa’at al-Tawhid*,” which used to coordinate with the “*Ansar al-Sunnah*” (A Sunni group that carries a similar Salafist ideology).

In terms of the group itself, al-Zarqawi surrounded himself with a small circle of men who harbored extreme loyalty to him; al-Zarqawi was never one to easily trust people. The most important men in al-Zarqawi’s “inner circle” were: Abu Anas al-Shami; Nidal Mohammad ‘Arabiyat (a Jordanian national from the city of al-Salt and an explosives expert – ‘Arabiyat was responsible for assembling most of the car bombs that the group used in carrying out their deadly operations; he was killed in 2003); Mustafa Ramadan Darwish (alias Abu Mohammad al-Lubnani, a Lebanese national); ‘Abdullah al-Jabouri (alias Abu ‘Azzam, Iraqi national); ‘Omar Hadid (alias Abu Khattab, Iraqi national); Mohammad Jassim al-‘Issawi (alias Abu al-Hareth, Iraqi national); and Abu Nasser al-Liby. The majority of these men were killed in 2003 except for Abu ‘Azzam, who was killed in 2005. Of the Jordanians that were in al-Zarqawi’s trust were: Muwafaq ‘Adwan, Jamal al-‘Utaibi, Salahuddin al-‘Utaibi, Mohammad al-Safadi, Mu’ath al-Nsour, Shehadeh al-Kilani, Mohammad Qteishat, Munthir Shiha, Munthir al-Tamouni and ‘Omar al-‘Utaibi.

Al-Zarqawi and the Tawhid group began to communicate with the al-Qaeda mother organization or central command led by Osama Bin Laden in order to attract more members and to further their goal and policy of “globalizing” Jihad. And, despite the insistence by the United States of tying al-Zarqawi to the al-Qaeda network from a very early stage, this inference, in fact, was inaccurate. For, the two parties had disagreements on several ideological, theoretical, strategic, and military levels. But despite these differences, both were in definite agreement on the level of their Jihadi Salafist thinking regarding the overall strategy of fighting the enemy “within” and “abroad”, and in their disavowal of the Shiites (as *kuffar*) and of deliberately targeting them.

Perhaps the major bone of contention between al-Zarqawi and the al-Qaeda central command appeared to be their conflicting strategic priorities. After the downfall of the Taliban regime and the loss of their safe haven, Bin Laden and al-Zawahiri’s had their attention turned to conducting

⁵¹⁶ Cf. Mansour, Ahmad, “*Ma’rakat al-Falluja: Hazeemat Amreeka fi al-‘Iraq*” (Lit. “The Battle of Falluja: The Defeat of the Americans in Iraq”; Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-Arabi, 1st Ed., 2007).

militant and subversive activities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.⁵¹⁷ They also focused on widening the geographic front for their operations to include European, Arab, and Muslim countries. This was perhaps the most significant strategic mistake committed by the central command of al-Qaeda, a mistake that al-Zarqawi and other branches of the organization also fell into. However, al-Zarqawi ultimately forced al-Qaeda's central command not only to recognize him, but also to submit to his strategy of focusing on Iraq.

Al-Zarqawi had indeed emerged as an exceptional commander in the field. He was able to steal the limelight with his strict ideology and terrifying tactics, as well as through his extensive network of relations with other Jihadists from all over the world, which he interwove with meticulousness and with the help of key mentors of the movement such as al-Maqqisi and Abu Qatada. Al-Zarqawi's status was also further elevated by the death of many of the leading field commanders of al-Qaeda, the mother organization.⁵¹⁸

As a result, hundreds of volunteers from the Arab and Muslim world flooded to enlist with al-Zarqawi. And, investigations with members of the "*al-Tawhid*" cell in Germany also revealed the extent of the close-knit relationship between al-Zarqawi, Abu Qatada and al-Maqqisi, and the high degree of influence that this Jordanian Jihadi Salafist network had on a global scale.⁵¹⁹

After months of communications, coordinated by Abu Qatada between "*Jamaa'at al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad*" led by al-Zarqawi and the al-Qaeda central command, al-Zarqawi's "pledge of allegiance" to Bin Laden was declared on October 17, 2004. At this point, the group's name was finally changed from "*al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad*" to "*Tanthim Qa'adat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn*" (The Organization of al-Qaeda's Jihad in Mesopotamia (Iraq).)⁵²⁰

Al-Zarqawi continued to expand the scope of his operations and activities. The roots of his relationship with the Sunni community began to deepen. He imposed his own agenda in Iraq, and

⁵¹⁷ A great debate took place within al-Qaeda between the network's central command, under Bin Laden and Zawahiri, and al-Qaeda in the Arabian peninsula, led by its emir, Yousef al-'Ayiri and the Moroccan Karim Majani. The local al-Qaeda organization in Saudi Arabia refused to initiate an armed struggle before they were fully prepared. However, Bin Laden and al-Zawahiri won the day and operations were launched in May of 2003. Riyadh was targeted by three bomb attacks and confrontations with Saudi security services ensued. However, in the end, the Saudi security services succeeded in killing the al-Qaeda emirs in Saudi Arabia, Yousef al-'Ayiri 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Miqrin, Turki al-Dandani and Saleh al-'Uufi, and imprisoned the majority of its members. [Reference: Anthony Cordesman and Nawaf 'Obeid on al-Qaeda: Report: "Saudi Counter Terrorism Efforts: The Changing Paramilitary and Domestic Security Apparatus"; Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington D.C. February, 2005.]

⁵¹⁸ Such as Abu Haf's al-Misri, who was killed by an American missile attack, and the capture of Abu Zubaida, Ramzi ibn al-Shaiba and Khalid Sheikh Mohammad.

⁵¹⁹ The Jordanian, Shadi 'Abdullah, was one of the members of the "Tawhid" group interrogated by the German authorities. He revealed that the strategic objective of the "Tawhid" cell was to attack Jordan, according to a plan drawn up by al-Zarqawi, in addition to attacking certain targets inside Germany. And, despite the arrest and dismantling of the "Tawhid" cell in March 2002 (persons arrested included the Jordanians Shadi 'Abdullah, Mohammad Abu Dees, Isma'il Shalabi and Jamal Mustafa), the Jordanian Jihadi Salafists continued to enjoy extensive support from the Jihadi Salafist movement in Europe, which considered Abu Qatada (a Jordanian himself) its spiritual leader and strategic thinker. Indeed, the United States considered Abu Qatada as Bin Laden's ambassador in Europe. It was well-known that the relationship between al-Zarqawi and Abu Qatada was very close. In his testimony with German interrogators, Shadi 'Abdullah describes the relationship between the two as very close; he also confirms to the courts that al-Zarqawi, "was unable to make any moves without ensuring he had prior permission from the religious leader Abu Qatada." [Reference: Jean Charles Barbazar, "Abu Musab Zarqawi: The Other Face of al-Qaeda"; op. cit., pp. 204-207.]

⁵²⁰ Abd al-Bari Atwan, "*Al-Qa'eda: al-Tantheem al-Sirri*" (Lit. "Al-Qaeda: The Secret Organization"); Beirut: Saqi Books, 1st. ed. 2007, p. 250.

then moved on, beyond Iraq's borders into neighboring countries, by expanding his organizational ties and by networking with other movements, groups and key actors in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Saudi Arabia.

However, early in 2006, the line bar of al-Zarqawi and his al-Qaeda on the political and power graph began to slip into decline. An impending crisis between al-Zarqawi and other Sunni militant groups and tribes began to grow, despite his numerous attempts to legitimize his presence in Iraq by putting Iraqi nationals in positions of leadership at the top of his organization's hierarchy, and by founding new organizational groups such as the "*Mujahiddin Shura Council*," and his attempts to weave alliances with various Iraqi Sunni tribes. Indeed, his dire attempts were initially successful in signaling his intended formation of a "Sunni Islamic Emirate" in the central and western parts of Iraq, which would represent a regional headquarters for al-Qaeda in the region.

Also, it should be noted within this context, that the strategy of attrition, the violence and the terror tactics that al-Zarqawi employed in Iraq, and which he worked on exporting to Jordan was unrivalled in the history of Jihadi Salafism. He chose his targets according to their sensitivity and liveliness so as to inflict the greatest number of human losses possible to create an environment of continuous instability, chaos, violence, and terror. Suicide operations were considered the cornerstone of this strategy. In al-Zarqawi's own words, he says, "We must intensify our martyr operations in these cities in order to disrupt the enemy's balance; and to force the enemy out of the cities and into locations where they become an easier target. These operations are deadly weapons we have in our possession – weapons with which we can inflict the deepest wound upon our enemy, and with which we can snatch out the hearts of our enemy and increase his malevolence. All of this is notwithstanding the fact that these kinds of operations are of little effort for us; they are uncomplicated and are the least costly for us."⁵²¹

These operations were carried out by way of different suicide bombers carrying explosive belts on their persons, or through car or truck bombs. Al-Zarqawi and his followers justified this kind of operation by using an Islamic ruling that is otherwise known as "*Tataruss*" (the "barricade/barricading" principle) in certain Islamic religious scholarship. This ruling deals with exonerating the death of civilians if they happen to be present at or refuse to leave a legitimate target; i.e. it legitimizes certain civilian collateral damage under specific circumstances. However, al-Zarqawi used and stretched this 'ruling' and religious interpretation in an unprecedented and unparalleled way. Those targeted (by al-Zarqawi and his followers) as "legitimate kills" included not only the American armed forces and any other forces allied with them, but all those who cooperate with the United States, such as the Iraqi government, the governing council, the Iraqi army and police force, as well as the Shiites – and particularly those Shiites allied to the occupation forces, as well as anyone else who fits into their interpretation of being "guilty" under the "*al-Walaa' wa al-Baraa'*" (Loyalty and Disavowal) principle... For, according to al-Zarqawi "There is no difference between an external enemy, as they are by origin "*kaffirin*" (unbelievers) or an internal enemy, as they are "*kaffirin*" by virtue of their apostasy and *kufir*. Indeed, the golden rule of Jihadi Salafism is based on the principle that, "killing is a legitimate branch of the "*takfir*" policy,

⁵²¹ Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, "*Wa 'Aada Ahfad Ibn al-'Alqami*" (Lit. "And the Grandsons of Ibn al-'Alqami Return"); p. 5.

and thus, according to al-Zarqawi, within this context “there is no difference between (one *kaffir* and another) an American, or an Iraqi Kurd, Arab Sunni, or Shiite”,⁵²²

Indeed, monitoring the parallel course of Jihadi Salafism in Jordan and analyzing its evolution cannot be done or viewed separate from the evolution of al-Zarqawi’s movement outside – either before the occupation of Iraq or after –, for numerous reasons. Of these reasons is the fact that al-Zarqawi was perceived as being a very dynamic leader and as a political symbol by the sons of the movement; and thus, individuals – including particularly influential individuals – enlisted with al-Zarqawi in large numbers. Therefore, in practical terms, we are talking about the fact that the movement had a very active leadership outside Jordan. Another reason for not being able to exclude the “al-Zarqawi factor” was that the majority of the largest and most dangerous operations and attempted operations that took place in Jordan were planned for and coordinated outside Jordan, and in most of the cases, by al-Zarqawi himself or by one of his close associates. Finally, the interaction between the movement inside and outside remained active; the lines of communications between them were never interrupted. Therefore, it is without a doubt that the impact of one movement, its operations and groups on the other was constant, consistent, and reciprocal.

It can be said that the “golden era” of al-Qaeda in Iraq, especially during the period between 2004 and the end of 2005, reflected in a massive way on Jordan, in particular and the region, in general. Indeed, the rise of al-Qaeda led to a complete transformation in the entire region’s security environment. And, al-Qaeda became more threatening, more adept, more complex, and more able to impact the national security situation in Jordan than in any other prior period.

“*Kata’ib al-Tawhid*”: A Catastrophe that Almost Happened

Without a doubt, the most massive and dangerous operation that Jordan experienced during this period was the Amman Hotel Bombings that took place on November 9, 2005. However, prior to these bombings, there had been other attempts that were no less dangerous; but they did not succeed. The most prominent of these operations was a chemical attack that was supposed to be carried out by the group known as “*Tanthim Kata’ib al-Tawhid*,” (The Organization of the Tawhid Brigades) commanded by ‘Azmi al-Jayyousi. Al-Zarqawi had begun preparations for this large chemical attack to target the Jordanian General Intelligence Department Headquarters, the United States Embassy in Amman, and the Jordanian Prime Ministry. According to ‘Azmi al-Jayyousi – who appeared on Jordanian national television at the time – the death toll of such an attack was estimated at 80,000.

For the operation to work at the scale planned, the group had produced 20 tons of chemical explosives to be placed in containers on several trucks. Al-Zarqawi coordinated and supervised this operation himself. On April 20, 2004 and before the operation could be carried out, members of the organization were arrested and Muwafaq ‘Adwan and three others were killed in clashes that ensued with the Jordanian security forces.

The man responsible for the operation, Al-Jayyousi, had trained at the Herat Military Training Camp (in Afghanistan) and pledged allegiance to al-Zarqawi before he snuck back into Jordan with

⁵²² See Abu Mus’ab al-Zarqawi, “*Ayanqusanna al-Din wa Ana Hayy*” (Lit. “Nothing Will Be Amiss in the Religion While I am Alive;”) available at <http://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=g4e8hfmj>; in addition to Abu Mus’ab al-Zarqawi, “*Ibn Ahl al-Muru’aat*” (Lit. “The Son of the Chivalrous;”) available at <http://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=58sjkxbg>.

Muwafaq ‘Adwan. He began to purchase the equipment and ingredients required for the operation after al-Zarqawi wired US \$170,000 to him. A group in Syria, under the command of the Syrian national, Sulaiman Khalid Darwish (Abu al-Ghadia), provided al-Jayyousi with the logistical support he needed.⁵²³

The “Aqaba Bombings”: Relying on Non-Jordanians

On August 18, 2005, Katyusha missiles were launched in the Jordanian Red Sea port city of Aqaba in an operation known as the “Aqaba Bombings.” The incident led to the death of one soldier and the wounding of another. The persons arrested for carrying out this operation were Mohammad Hussein al-Sahli, ‘Abdullah Mohammad al-Sahli, ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Sahli – all of whom were Syrian nationals –, as well as the group’s *emir*, Mohammad Hameed, who was an Iraqi national. The State Security Court sentenced the three Syrians and the Iraqi to death.⁵²⁴

The “Amman Hotel Bombings”: A Transformation in the State’s Security Strategy

The Amman Hotel Bombings that took place on November 9, 2005 are considered the most serious security breach to have occurred in Jordan as well as in the history of the extremist Islamist movements there. The operation targeted three hotels in Jordan (the Radisson SAS, Hyatt Amman, and the Days Inn) and was carried out by a group of suicide bombers and supervised and coordinated by al-Zarqawi. The bombings led to the death of 60 civilians and wounded over 100 others.

Al-Zarqawi’s al-Qaeda in Iraq claimed responsibility for this operation and published details about the individuals who carried out the operation, three Iraqi men and one Iraqi woman – the woman, Sajida ‘Atrous al-Rishawi, failed to detonate her explosive belt and was later arrested and sentenced to death.

The Amman Hotel Bombings, the advanced techniques, logistics, and complexity of the planning for this operation revealed the extent to which al-Zarqawi’s al-Qaeda had progressed in its strategy and in its regional influence and impact.

On the other hand, of the most important outcomes of the Amman Hotel Bombings was that it reflected negatively on al-Qaeda in two major ways:

- The relationship of al-Qaeda with the Sunni community – This operation augmented the schism between it and other Sunni factions, all of whom rejected this operation and felt that it damaged their interests in Jordan as Jordan was considered a strategic thoroughfare for them – a friendly place, per se, that provided them with security and with the ability to communicate and meet. The bombings were seen as an incident that would damage and limit the extent of their “benevolent” relationship with Jordan.

⁵²³ For more details, see the Addustour Jordanian daily Newspaper, October 16, 2004, Issue Number 14469.

⁵²⁴ For more details, see London-based al-Sharq al-Awsat Newspaper issued on Friday, December 8, 2006.

- According to opinion polls carried out by the Jordanian Center for Strategic Studies, the level of popular support that al-Qaeda had previously enjoyed in Jordan took a significant nosedive after this incident. A fundamental transformation indeed occurred among Jordanians towards al-Qaeda, in its global form in connection with Bin Laden, and in its regional form embodied by Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi's al-Qaeda in Iraq. While half the Jordanians polled described Bin Laden's al-Qaeda as a terrorist organization, three-quarters described al-Zarqawi's al-Qaeda as a terrorist organization: In 2004 – before the bombings – 67% of Jordanians polled described Bin Laden's al-Qaeda as an “organization of legitimate resistance”, whereas polls after the bombing showed a 20% drop in that perspective. Meanwhile, in the view of those polled towards of al-Qaeda in Iraq (the organization that claimed responsibility for the Hotel Bombings in Amman), 72.2% described it as a terrorist organization against 6.2% who described it as an “organization of legitimate resistance.”⁵²⁵

Jihadi Salafism: The Peak of its Power and the Start of the Reverse Countdown

The Iraqi al-Qaeda under the command of al-Zarqawi witnessed a period where its power and influence peaked in the region, and a period of euphoric support locally. However, the countdown in the reversal of its popularity, power and influence began with the Amman Hotel Bombings, which al-Zarqawi found great difficulty trying to justify, and with the ultimate death of al-Zarqawi himself – which, in itself, had great repercussions on both al-Qaeda in Iraq and on the followers of Jihadi Salafism in Jordan.

Before entering the fourth phase (after the assassination of al-Zarqawi), a short pause is required to review the general characteristics of the dynamic and important period, embodied in the rise of al-Zarqawi, in the course of the movement both inside and outside Jordan:

- The rise of al-Qaeda, its strength, and the momentum of its activities in the region were negatively impacted in a substantial and significant manner by the operations carried out by the organization inside Jordan. Drawing on its experience in Iraq, the network's capacities evolved significantly in terms of their adeptness and complexity, which is clearly evident in the nature of the Amman Hotel Bombings, which in themselves represented an immense, unprecedented “security breach” for the country. And, it is important to note that this breach did not occur due to a weakness in the abilities or negligence on the part of the Jordanian security and intelligence apparatus, but rather to the immense changes in the regional security environment, which required a different methodology for dealing with the challenge and threat posed by al-Qaeda. In the past, Jordanian intelligence and security dealt with local groups that had fighting experience from Afghanistan or other fronts. However, in the majority of these cases, the resources, records and official database (that the state had at hand) were sufficient and effective enough to allow Jordanian intelligence and security to stop operations before they could be implemented.

But, the situation would change after the occupation of Iraq, when the majority of the individuals that al-Zarqawi would use and rely on were Iraqi or other Arab nationals, for whom

⁵²⁵ Dr. Faris Breizat, “*Ma ba'da Taffeerat Amman: Al-Ra'i al-'Aam al-Urdumi wa al-Irhab*” (Lit. “After the Amman Bombings: Terrorism and Jordanian Public Opinion”); Public Opinion Polls Unit, Center for Strategic Studies, University of Jordan, January 2006, p. 4.

Jordanian intelligence lacked an effective and precise database of information. In addition, hundreds of thousands of Iraqis were residing in Jordan at that time and there were never enough resources to assess their political, social, or religious backgrounds. All these factors led to a great change in the nature of the Jordanian national security strategy.

- During this period, members of the Jordanian Jihadi Salafist movement continued in their attempts to sneak into Iraq, most of the time via the Syrian border. Several cases emerged related to organizations that were specialized in recruiting individuals and facilitating their travel to Iraq with the objective of joining al-Qaeda there, as well as working on spreading the *da'wa* to Jihadi Salafism, and its religious and political ideology.⁵²⁶ Perhaps the most remarkable of the Jihadi Salafists activities was the celebration they used to hold to “commemorate” those martyred in Iraq. They named these celebrations “The Martyr’s Wedding,” which goes back to a tradition that was popular in the period prior to the invasion of Iraq (in particular, for the locals of al-Salt who were killed in Kurdistan), and the period immediately after the invasion. However, the government began to crackdown on this type of activity because of the political problems that arose due to some of these “celebrations.”
- The differences between al-Maqdisi and al-Zarqawi also began to emerge and eventually came to the fore during this period. These differences came out into the open through a letter written by al-Maqdisi that was leaked to the public, entitled “Abu Mus’ab al-Zarqawi: Advocacy and Advise”. In this letter, al-Maqdisi is critical of many of al-Zarqawi’s tactics and activities in Iraq. He also suggests that their personality differences went beyond general intellectual differences; and this does become quite evident later. However, by the time these differences emerge, the majority of the members of the movement had already come to favor al-Zarqawi and his more radical discourse.
- It was also during this period that the “electronic activity” of the members of the movement began to increase in light of the efficacy of the “al-Qaeda in Iraq” online and the flourishing market of internet communications and interaction via forums and sites connected to al-Qaeda. In Jordan, the first case of “Electronic Jihad” was recorded in which a few individuals were arrested on charges of participating in electronic forums that belonged to al-Qaeda in Iraq.⁵²⁷
- The most notable observation in this period is, by far, the significant rate in which al-Qaeda operations decreased after the Amman Hotel Bombings. And, actually, no operation of any consequence has taken place since. The Jordanian authorities were successful in foiling an operation (in early 2006) in which a suicide bomber attempted to force the release of a number of al-Qaeda members from prison (‘Azmi al-Jayyousi being one of the prisoners).⁵²⁸ Another

⁵²⁶ Perhaps the most prominent of these cases was the case known as “The Case of Abu al-Janna,” whereby seven persons were accused of creating a cell specialized in training and sending new recruits to Iraq. A Syrian, whose real identity is not revealed in the documents found, was responsible for the training side of the operations. The accused were sentenced to between four and seven years in prison; however, the Court of Cassation reversed the ruling, returning the case to the National Security Court. The most prominent of the persons charged in this case were Zaid Hourani and Khalid Sarkoush. There was another case based on similar charges in which 17 individuals were charged, of which the most important persons were: Ziad al-Nsour, Mu’tasem Mohammad Sulaiman, ‘Ali Abu Raas, Ma’moun Khader, Bashar Abu Rassa’ and Mohammad al-Zou’bi (a Syrian national).

⁵²⁷ The State Security Court charged 24-year old Haitham al-Qaryouti with the crime of using the Internet for the production of explosives [Reference: al-Sharq al-Awsat Newspaper, London, January 3, 2006.] Testimonies of several other persons arrested (and later released) also attest to activities on Internet sites connected with al-Qaeda.

⁵²⁸ For further details about this operation, refer to the investigative report by journalist Hazem al-Amin in the al-Hayat Newspaper, London; March 26, 2006.

operation that was still in its planning stage when it was foiled by the authorities was to blow up Queen Alia International Airport and a number of Jordanian hotels frequented by tourists.⁵²⁹

The Jordanian Jihadis... After al-Zarqawi

The crisis between al-Zarqawi and other Sunni forces became much more pronounced after the Amman Hotel Bombings in 2005. A short time after the release of the video tape that authenticated al-Zarqawi's assassination by way of an American missile strike in June of 2006, al-Qaeda quickly tried to fill the leadership vacuum by appointing "Abu Hamza al-Muhajir" (an Egyptian national) as *emir* of the organization; and, the organization subsequently declared the "Islamic State of Iraq" under the command of the Iraqi national, Abu Omar al-Baghdadi.

However, the severity of the differences between al-Qaeda and the Sunni community finally culminated into armed conflict between the organization and the "*al-Jaysh al-Islami*" (the Islamic Army) and "*Kata'ib Thawrat Tishreen*" (The October Revolution Brigade). These clashes finally led to the formation of the Sunni "Tribal *Sahwa* (Awakening)," a tribal alliance that played a very large and effective role in weakening al-Qaeda, put a stop to the organization's expansion to a great degree and forced them out of a large part of Sunni territory in Iraq.

Indeed, al-Qaeda has retreated in a clear and evident way in this past period. Most of its activities have taken on a more security-oriented or defensive nature, such as the group it established, called the group of "*Abu Bakr al-Siddiq*," to hunt down the leaders of the "Tribal *Sahwa*." Declarations and announcements by al-Qaeda's command made it clear that it considered the "Tribal *Sahwa*" a "poisoned knife" that stabbed the organization in the back and led to "breaking" it today.

The transformations in the Iraqi condition led to a reverse migration on the part of many Arab volunteer fighters to other regions of Iraq or other countries altogether, particularly Afghanistan and Pakistan. Simultaneously, countries neighboring Iraq, and particularly Syria, began to seriously tighten the reigns on groups or organizations with alleged links to al-Qaeda. Borders were now closed to them and the confrontation was reduced to a few remaining "pockets" left hanging in Syria and Lebanon.

Less than two years after al-Zarqawi was killed, his sheikh, al-Maqdisi was released from the Jordanian General Intelligence Department Prison (in March of 2008), with the condition that he abstain from any activities and avoided the media to avoid undue embarrassment to the government (unlike what he did when he was released in July 2005 when he publicly attacked Saudi Arabia on the al-Jazeera satellite news channel – although, in the same televised interview, he also openly criticized major components of the al-Qaeda in Iraq's discourse and practices. He was subsequently arrested again and charged with supporting the Taliban movement).

⁵²⁹ In this case, the Jordanian State Security Court sentenced one Libyan, three Iraqis, and one Saudi national with life in prison with hard labor and exonerated one Iraqi due to lack of evidence. [For further details on the operation see the BBC Arabic website available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/arabic/middle_east_news/newsid_6519000/6519575.stm.

2. The Jihadi Salafist Movement Today: The Struggle over the Movement's Identity and Priorities

The assassination of al-Zarqawi and the decline of al-Qaeda in Iraq dealt a strong blow to the movement's members and its followers in Jordan. This blow was particularly strong because, within the overall picture, there were no telltale signs of a charismatic leadership with nearly the same kind of presence and influence that al-Zarqawi had possessed. This is not to say there were no leaders, but those medium or little-effective leaders who had some impact in certain neighborhoods or cities. And, none of these individuals had the emblematic command required for leading the entire movement across the country.

Another important observation that should be made at this point is that, despite the crackdowns and setbacks that the movement faced at the hands of Jordanian security and intelligence services, the movement and its ideology is still noticeably proliferating throughout the country. This spread may be marginal, but the numbers in the movement have not subsided; and the movement itself has not diminished in size since al-Zarqawi's death and since the al-Qaeda in Iraq lost much of its standing. Perhaps the main cause for this is the prevailing political and socio-economic conditions, which are major factors at play in creating the fertile grounds that this discourse and political vision derives itself from.

On the other hand, the organization has significantly lost sight of its priorities and its orientation. The striking irony in the previous period was that while al-Zarqawi had his eye on Jordan, and was keen on delivering his threats and menacing messages to the Jordanian authorities, members and supporters of the movement in Jordan had their eye on Iraq, and wanted to join al-Zarqawi and his group there because, in their opinion, "that was the open, real, and direct front for 'Jihad' against the enemy with clear battle standards".

But after al-Zarqawi's death, the situation became confused, the orientation and the priorities fragmented, and the "big picture" for the next stage of the movement's activities was unclear. Indeed, initial indicators point to the first signs that we are in front of a new phase where two currents in the movement are forming:

One current will be led by al-Maqqdisi, recently released from prison; it will seek to restore the organizational and intellectual leadership in the movement, based on:

- A return to a peaceful form of *da'wa* to Jihadi Salafism in Jordan, but with the radicalism that is so paradoxical in terms of the general context of prevailing political, cultural and social realities.
- "Cleaning house" or taking stock of matters and restructuring the movement internally, and reducing the level of extremist thinking and exaggerated cruelty in dealing with others and the practice of *takfir*, and seeking to unite the ideological, intellectual, and theoretical frames of reference.
- Working to transport the *da'wa* activities west of the Jordan River (i.e. to Palestine) and forming a wing of the movement there, which would openly declare jihad there, based on the approach and *manhaj* of Jihadi Salafism.

The second current will be led by a group from within the movement that supports and believes in the importance of continuing the “al-Zarqawi legacy” and the path that al-Zarqawi set. This current will not want to lose contact with the al-Qaeda mother organization, at least in the sense of “interfacing” with the intellectual and political agenda of al-Qaeda’s central command – even if this current knows that this means it will remain under tight reigns by Jordanian intelligence and security services, and that it does not have the ability and cannot afford any direct confrontation with the state’s security apparatus.

This current accuses al-Maqdisi and his followers of compromising and backing down from the fundamental and original principles, thinking, and approach (*manhaj*) of “Jihadi Salafism,” and that they failed al-Zarqawi in Iraq; and indeed, warn of any new concessions.

To better understand the nature of these two currents and of the conflict between them on the intellectual level and in their activity platforms, one must return to the nature of the conflict that emerged and grew between al-Maqdisi and al-Zarqawi; and what the repercussions of this conflict were on the course, identity, and future developments of the movement.

The Roots of the Conflict between al-Maqdisi and al-Zarqawi

The importance of investigating and clarifying the nature of the conflict between al-Maqdisi and al-Zarqawi, and the impact this feud had on the course of the movement stems from the importance of these two individuals: They both played a central and fundamental role in the direction that the Jihadi Salafist movement would take in Jordan. Indeed, both men’s influence created a combined extensive ripple effect that continued well beyond Jordan’s borders. And, today, we are witnessing two paradigms for the movement (very much molded by these two men) fighting over the identity and future direction of Jihadi Salafism.

The seeds of the conflict between al-Maqdisi and al-Zarqawi go back to their first days in prison (after being convicted in the case of the “*Bay’at al-Imam*”). The first signs of the conflict were marked by the ‘transfer’ of the position of *emir* from al-Maqdisi to al-Zarqawi. This change in command took place over a short period of time; and the majority of the members of the movement began to flock towards al-Zarqawi and away from al-Maqdisi. To make matters worse for him, Al-Maqdisi was often overwhelmed with problems between him and others in the movement.

The reasoning used to justify this change was the way members of the movement perceived each man when it came to dealing with the state police and the national security apparatus. Al-Maqdisi was accused of being too complacent and accommodating, while al-Zarqawi was seen as being strong, severe, and fierce. However, underlining this ‘declared’ reason was another major misgiving that had begun to spread through the narrow channels and inner circles of the movement, which was embodied by serious reservations about the extent and depth of “al-Maqdisi’s religious integrity!”⁵³⁰

Al-Maqdisi makes reference to the change in leadership and to the differences he had with al-Zarqawi in his famous essay and letter entitled, “al-Zarqawi: Advocacy and Advise” (which al-

⁵³⁰ From an interview with Yousuf Rababa’a, a ex-political prisoner, who was in prison at the same time, and who claims he heard these types of statements from some of the members of the movement in prison with him.

Maqdisi wrote in prison during the period when al-Zarqawi was setting up the “*Jamaa’at al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad*” in Iraq and prior to the conversion of this group to al-Qaeda). In this essay-letter, al-Maqdisi denies the accusations laid forth against him by al-Zarqawi’s supporters and attributes the change in command to his “own personal decision” to step down as an organizational leader in order to devote more attention to his religious scholarship, his writings, intellectual guidance, and issuance of *fatwas* (religious edicts).⁵³¹

The importance of this particular essay-letter was that it meticulously revealed many of the details about the differences between al-Zarqawi and him, as well as presented a historical summary of the experiences that had brought the two men together in the first place. It was replete with scathing criticisms of al-Zarqawi, from the vantage point of al-Maqdisi being “the sheikh, mentor, and scholar” of this new organizational leader, al-Zarqawi: the dissident, rebel pupil!

One of the major points of contention discussed in the paper is al-Zarqawi’s decision to leave Jordan for Afghanistan, taking along with him several key members of the movement. Al-Maqdisi is openly critical of this decision as he considers it as “deserting the local front,” or “vacating the local arena of its *Mujahiddin*.” Furthermore, in a clever, indirect, and subtle manner, al-Maqdisi makes it very clear that al-Zarqawi committed some major errors due to his lack of intellectual and organizational maturity. Through the use of the phrase that al-Zarqawi was a “dissident, rebel pupil,” al-Maqdisi insinuates a very severe message, which he underlines in the following statement; “The leadership of certain members inside prison must not be transferred in all its shallowness and naivety to the organization of the armed struggle (outside the prison walls).”⁵³²

From this point forth, al-Maqdisi enters into a harsh critique of the kind of armed and militant operations that al-Zarqawi used to coordinate and supervise from the outside (from Afghanistan or Kurdistan). Al-Maqdisi emphasizes the failure of the majority of these operations, which resulted in the arrest of the individuals attempting to carry them out; and attributes these failures to one major cause: The “structural faults” in “the movement’s security structure” – alluding to the fact that the movement was being infiltrated with great ease by Jordanian intelligence. It appears that what al-Maqdisi aimed to achieve by focusing on this particular issue, in this particular way, was to make the following three major points:⁵³³

- First: By referring to these operations, al-Maqdisi acknowledges and confirms – albeit implicitly – a series of attempted operations attributed to al-Zarqawi during that period.
- Second: That al-Maqdisi lays the blame for the failure of these operations on al-Zarqawi – operations that he believes failed due to security breaches in the organization, the squandering of funds, and the undue sacrifice of those who were supposed to carry out the (failed) operations.
- Third: Through the above, al-Maqdisi was placing a “question mark” on the competence of al-Zarqawi’s leadership, perhaps in an attempt to ‘reinstate’ himself after being ‘demoted’ from the

⁵³¹ See Text of the letter available at <http://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=dtwiam56>.

⁵³² Ibid.

⁵³³ Reference: Mohammad Abu Rumman, “*Al-Maqdisi wa al-Zarqawi al-Khilaf laysa ‘ala al-Afkar Faqat*” (Lit. “Al-Maqdisi and al-Zarqawi: The Conflict is Not About Ideas Only”); available at <http://www.alasr.ws/index.cfm?method=home.con&contentID=5958&keywords=الخلاف,بين,المقتسي,والزرقاوي>

emirate in prison and being cut-off by a wide segment of the membership in the movement who saw al-Zarqawi as their inspiration and leader.

Another remarkable statement in this essay helps one understand the other dimension of the conflict between the two men. In the part of the essay where al-Maqdisi is explaining the reasons for not leaving with al-Zarqawi to Afghanistan, he says, “I opted for remaining in the country in order to follow up and take care of the *da’wa* that we started with the hope of transferring it west of the (Jordan) River... for, that is where many of my hopes and ambitions lay”.

Originally, al-Maqdisi is a Palestinian (holding a Jordanian passport) and his concerns extended to west of the Jordan River, to Palestine. He viewed Jordan as representing an axis, or point of departure for the *da’wa* to extend to Palestine, wherein al-Maqdisi’s hopes and ambitions lay. On the other hand, when al-Jayyousi suggested to al-Zarqawi (a Jordanian) that they should try to strike Eilat from Aqaba – an operation that had real potential for success – al-Zarqawi refused and insisted on aiming for targets “east of the River” – with one of these targets being an intelligence officer (a target that later evolved into targeting the General Intelligence Department in its entirety).

What appears clear is that this bone of contention and central conflict in priorities is not just due to the different political thinking of both individuals, but also to the differences in their very natures in terms of their upbringing, loyalties, psychological make-up, and social backgrounds. They were the kind of differences that could easily exist between one man, born in Palestine, then moved to the Gulf, suffered a sense of alienation, was an avid scholar and reader on the experiences of Islamist movements and the other, a young man, who grew up without any kind of religious upbringing, in a marginalized, poor community that suffers from many difficult social ills (in the city of al-Zarqa in Jordan).

Another message implied indirectly in al-Maqdisi’s essay was that al-Zarqawi’s experience was limited and that his knowledge and education in the experience of Islamist groups and in Islamist advocacy and on the transformations in Jordan’s political life and other countries was almost non-existent. Indeed, according to al-Maqdisi, the only experience al-Zarqawi really had was from the short period he spent with al-Maqdisi in Afghanistan in the early 1990s, then with the “*Bay’at al-Imam*” group, which was a limited group in itself and existed only at the margins of society.

Yet, despite all of the above, this young man was able to snatch the command and leadership of the movement away from al-Maqdisi; and, he was able to do this precisely because of his psychological make-up, his thinking, his social background, and his upbringing – which was much closer to that of the general base of membership of the movement in Jordan. Indeed, the majority of the members of the movement were young men, not well-educated, not well-informed, and hailed from the poorest, most marginalized classes in society. Al-Maqdisi himself recognized this aspect in his letter, describing most of them as being “newcomers to Islam;” and has admitted this in private conversations where he complains about the behavior and attitude of members of the movement towards him and their “exaggerated” extremism. Indeed, al-Maqdisi was actually one of the first ‘sacrificial lambs’ of a school of thought that he advocated and established! What is more, the situation worsened in light of the angry reaction of many young members to al-Maqdisi’s essay-

Al-Maqqdisi's Criticism of the "Zarqawi Experience" in Iraq

The movement's experience in Iraq is one of the most important cases to study in order to get a clearer understanding of the extent and degree of the conflict and differences between al-Maqqdisi and al-Zarqawi. And, although al-Maqqdisi formulated his "critique" or criticism of al-Zarqawi by using the language of "advising", it is somehow obvious that the underlying goal of this "advice" was to present a comprehensive list of all the errors committed by al-Zarqawi in Iraq, despite the praise bestowed by al-Maqqdisi on al-Zarqawi's role in resisting the occupation, for naming his group "*al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad*" (which is the same name al-Maqqdisi used for his own website on the internet), and likening him to Abu Anas prior to the latter's martyrdom.⁵³⁶

The first and major issue that al-Maqqdisi discussed in his paper is tied to "the Jihadi choices of al-Zarqawi." What al-Maqqdisi meant by that was the militant operations and suicide missions that al-Zarqawi's group chose to undertake. The central issues that al-Maqqdisi kept harping on was the need to "safeguard against the shedding of Muslim blood," and not to take lightly the killing of unarmed and innocent civilians under the pressure and stress of the (armed) struggle against the American enemy. He considered that the placing of explosives and carrying out militant operations in public places like markets and cities, which sacrificed the souls of civilians, helped distort the "illuminating image" of Islam, and sullied the hands of *mujahidin* – "hands that were abluted with the blood of the infallible." Al-Maqqdisi also warned of using tactics that are prohibited in his ideology such as being involved in methods and means that are "unlawful" (by Islamic standards), such as kidnapping or killing of Muslims under the pretext that they "work with the non-believers (*kuffar*)".

Al-Maqqdisi pointed to kidnapping for ransom and to killing, and then filming or photographing these operations as being the cause for what made the "*Mujahiddin*" appear like butchers – butchers, who enjoy killing human beings, without sanction and without any of the justifications required (by Islam) to shed another person's blood.

He also criticized the extensive use of "martyring operations." He warned of distorting the conditions required and defined by Muslim scholars that allow the "legal" use of such operations and of the danger of depending on them as a principal approach in Jihad. He made the point that, in the first place, an operation such as a "martyring operation" should be the exception, not the rule, and ought to be carried out only in cases where it is deemed absolutely necessary. In saying so, al-Maqqdisi was sending an indirect message of criticism directed at the obvious choice made by al-Zarqawi's group to use "martyring operations" as a principal fighting instrument, or as "the rule" and not the exception.

Al-Maqqdisi discussed another major point in this essay-letter, which is linked to the Jihadi Salafist upbringing, 'culture', and education. The manners, behavior, and attitude that the movement should instill in others, when mobilizing and recruiting individuals towards the critical path of resistance against the prevailing realities, is to ensure members of this movement are prepared and ready from a psychological perspective, and by ensuring they are knowledgeable in the profound revolutionary ideology. That is why al-Maqqdisi felt that they did not exhibit the required ethical restraints. Indeed,

⁵³⁶ See details of the critique of the errors committed by al-Zarqawi while in command of al-Qaeda in Iraq in Abu Mohammad al-Maqqdisi's essay, "Zarqawi: Advocacy and Advise", op. cit.

if members are not raised on the ideal of glorifying and aggrandizing the sanctity of Muslim blood, then, “the virtue of fighting for the sake of God will be transformed from its purpose and lose all its restraints; and the *Mujahid* will be transformed into a criminal, who no longer distinguishes between good and evil – all of which runs counter to the principles of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamaa’ah* and will make this movement no different from any other extremist movements”.

Of the other subjects that al-Maqdisi addressed was the excess in “widening the circle of the struggle,” and getting involved in struggles and wars with other groups and communities “including non-believers (*kuffar*) – who are not involved in the fighting – and targeting mosques and churches.”

In al-Maqdisi’s view, another mistake, at some level, was dealing with the Shiites as if they were “one block” under the shadow of the foreign occupation – which, in itself, did not distinguish between Sunni or Shiite and indeed, targeted all Muslims. It is also clear that this view contradicted, at the core, that of al-Zarqawi’s. Al-Zarqawi dealt with the Shiite as “one block” and in a way closer in description to a systematic “disavowal as unbelieving” (“*takfir*”) than anything else. Indeed, this form of “*takfir*” was not outwardly declared or blatant, but rather its stench could be distinctly felt in the discourse of al-Zarqawi’s followers with regard to the Shiites. This issue, in all its angles, clearly represented another fundamental controversy between al-Zarqawi and al-Maqdisi.

In addition, al-Maqdisi was critical of al-Zarqawi and his group’s model of political campaigning and their discourse in the media and in public communications. He warned against casting empty threats at the countries of the world, and of declaring open wars that they were neither capable of and ready for, nor had any real cause for. He advocated the necessity of a communications strategy and discourse that is balanced and able to strongly communicate the message of Jihad and its ethics, and which could refute the accusations, allegations, and the distorted image that the Western press and media, and those affiliated with them, were trying to present about the “*Mujahiddin*.”

What is not said by al-Maqdisi is that al-Zarqawi’s letters, speeches, and communications, especially those published on or broadcast over the internet, did actually help convey this distorted image about Jihad and the message of Jihad; and perhaps, presented the best evidence for Western governments use to distort and damage the image of the Iraqi resistance.

Finally, the greatest of the criticisms, by any standard, was encapsulated in al-Maqdisi’s rejection of al-Zarqawi taking on the command of the Jihad in Iraq; and al-Maqdisi’s insistence that it was essential that this task should be left to an Iraqi national. Al-Maqdisi’s justification for this strong opinion was that the Iraqis had priority and precedence in the Jihad against the enemy in their own country – a matter that would be more convincing before the Iraqi people in specific, and before the world at large. This was in line with the nature of the Iraqi people, and would remove the grounds for all the pretexts used to distort the image of the resistance and of the Jihad in Iraq... and thus, in al-Maqdisi’s opinion, could only be undertaken by a mature, Iraqi leadership.

What is central to recognize here is that al-Maqdisi’s critical view actually represented an objective and rational reading of many of the errors that al-Zarqawi’s group committed in Iraq. What is so latently important about this “Maqdisian testimony” is that it was made by the movement’s most prominent intellect, scholar, and theorist. Therefore, it is a clear letter, or message that confirms that one of the founders of the “intellectual and ideological discourse” of the Jihadi Salafist movement

would not and did not lend any “legitimacy” to much of the activities and operations carried out by al-Zarqawi’s group.

This state of affairs actually represents a microcosm of the breadth and characteristics of the greater conflict that is now playing out on the scene within the Jihadi Salafist movement in Jordan – a conflict represented symbolically on the one side by al-Zarqawi (the leader of the “*al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad*” group) and on the other by al-Maqdisi, “the spiritual father” of the movement.

This letter of “Advocacy and Advice” fueled the conflict between individuals in the movement in Jordan, and was reflected in the sharp debate between its members outside – members influenced by either al-Maqdisi or al-Zarqawi. This widening schism was particularly evident in Saudi Arabia, where the dialogue and debate split the group into two, clear sides. The first represented those that advocated and considered al-Zarqawi as the leader, and attacked “al-Maqdisi’s opinion” with charges that spanned from accusing al-Maqdisi of being weak, to being incapable altogether of keeping up with the momentum and dynamism of Jihad, or of being incapable of working or producing anything tangible – that al-Maqdisi was satisfied in talk (speeches), ideas, and opinions that had no weight and would not “feed the hungry.” On the other hand, the proponents of al-Maqdisi saw him as representing the main line and proper course for the Jihadi Salafist movement, that his opinions and his criticisms of al-Zarqawi were objective and correct; and they called for al-Maqdisi to be reinstated as the leader of the movement.

Taking Stock: An Internal Re-assessment and the Struggle over the “Zarqawi Legacy”

Having spent so many years in different prisons (and following al-Zarqawi’s departure from Jordan), al-Maqdisi’s recent return to the Jordanian scene was preceded by an obvious crisis with a large segment of the movement’s membership – the majority of which had aligned themselves with al-Zarqawi. In addition, al-Maqdisi’s numerous and intermittent written reviews and critiques were telltale of the depth of his conflict with al-Zarqawi.⁵³⁷

Even if the essay “Advocacy and Advice” received the most attention politically and in the media, there were many other scholarly essays and papers by al-Maqdisi that were of no less importance. Perhaps the most significant of these was the essay entitled “*Waqafat ma’a Thamarat al-Jihad*” (Taking Pause at the Fruits of Jihad), which presents a detailed, extensive and layered critique of al-Zarqawi’s vision for action in Iraq and the overall orientation to which al-Zarqawi had led the Jihadi Salafist movement in Jordan.⁵³⁸

Much earlier and immediately after the first time he was released from prison (after 1999) al-Maqdisi wrote a book entitled “*Al-Risala al-Thalathiniya fi al-Tahthir min al-Ghulou fi al-Takfir*”

⁵³⁷ See Mohammad Abu Rumman, “*Al-Maqdisi (Shaykh al-Zarqawi) Kharij al-Qudban: Hal Yukmil Muraja’atihi am Faqada Huduruh*” (Lit. “Al-Maqdisi (Al-Zarqawi’s Sheikh and Mentor) Released from His Shackles: Will He be able to Continue in his Review and Revisions, or has He Lost His Presence”); al-Hayat Newspaper, London, March 13, 2008.

⁵³⁸ Refer to the texts of the essays on al-Maqdisi’s website, “*Minbar al-Jihad wa al-Tawhid*,” available at <http://www.tawhed.ws/f>.

(The 30th Letter of Caution on Exaggerated Disavowal as Unbelieving ('*Takfir*')⁵³⁹, which reveals that al-Maqdisi had seen the “sign” many years ago. In this book, he enumerates the error of his followers when they became too radical in a way that was neither required nor acceptable in the paradigm that al-Maqdisi had developed for change.

It appears that, today, we stand witness before a comprehensive reform project for the movement, so to speak – wished for by al-Maqdisi, who carries under his wing the readiness to pull in the reigns of the intellectual leadership of the movement and possibly even its organizational leadership, and to re-orient Jihadi Salafism back to the vision originally put forth by him – a vision that al-Maqdisi felt al-Zarqawi hijacked and redirected into other different avenues.

In any case, the task before al-Maqdisi will not be easy, bearing in mind the conflict that continued to escalate and intensify with al-Zarqawi in the last period – and especially considering al-Zarqawi's success in inspiring awe in his supporters and in drawing members of the movement to his side. However, several variables may serve to lessen the size of the challenges and obstacles before al-Maqdisi; and, the most important of these variables indeed appears to be the significant weakening of al-Qaeda in Iraq in the recent past, which in turn, has weakened the incentive to follow al-Zarqawi's path.

In addition to the latter conflict, larger cracks and fissures had begun to surface between members and supporters of Jihadi Salafism worldwide, especially with the declaration by the venerated Dr. Fadel (Sayyid Imam al-Sharif) (the previous *emir* of the Egyptian Jihadi Salafist movement), that, after a thorough review, he was renouncing one of his major books on Jihadi Salafism and many of the ideas of the movement. Many of these ideas were indeed considered frames of reference to the movement and ideas that many of the members were raised upon, especially the book entitled “*Al-Umda fi 'Idad al-'Idda*” (The Pillar in Preparing for War).⁵⁴⁰

However, al-Maqdisi today suffers from serious security restrictions. The conditions for his release include avoiding the media and the press, and a ban on him taking part in any of the movement's activities.⁵⁴¹ Furthermore, unlike his Egyptian counterpart (Dr. Fadel), al-Maqdisi has found difficulty in precisely defining his own personal retreat from some of the premises that Jihadi Salafist thinking is built upon. For, al-Maqdisi remains adamant in preserving the original view that they must disassociate themselves and remain completely “innocent” of any aspect of the prevailing political regimes, which he still considers “unbelieving”. He still believes they must be shunned and disavowed (excommunicated religiously). Additionally, he remains committed to certain lines of thinking and activities in the Global Jihadi Salafist movement that al-Qaeda also belongs to. Indeed, it is precisely these ideological postures that the Jordanian government rejects outright and expects al-Maqdisi to abandon.⁵⁴²

⁵³⁹ The text of this book is available (in Arabic) available at <http://www.tawhed.ws/f>.

⁵⁴⁰ For a comparative review, see Mohammad Abu Rumman, “*Muraja'at (Harakat al-Jihad) al-Misriya fi Mir'at Muraja'at (Jihadiyeen) fi al-Urdun*” (Lit. “The Egyptian Jihadi Movement Revisits Itself in the Rearview Mirror of the revisions of Jordanian Jihadists”), al-Hayat Newspaper, London, June 17, 2007.

⁵⁴¹ See <http://www.asharqalawsat.com/details.asp?section=4&article=309753&issue=9715>.

⁵⁴² Mohammad Abu Rumman, “*Al-Maqdisi (Shaikh al-Zarqawi Kharij al-Qudhban*” (Lit., “Al-Maqdisi (Al-Zarqawi's Sheikh and Mentor) Released from His Shackles:”); op. cit.

On the other hand, al-Maqdisi has tried to put a limit to and constrain the overblown tendency of “*takfir*” and the blatant militancy and extremism that members of the movement have developed as a result of the al-Zarqawi paradigm – a paradigm that is considered the most extreme right wing of the Global Jihadi Salafist movement.

To be more precise, what al-Maqdisi desires is to take a few steps back to resume working on the project he originally launched in the early 1990s – which was committing to a novel vision in the frontier of “Islamist activism”; to establish a movement, different from all the others out there, which carries the banner of “*al-Tawhid*” and which strips the façade of religious legitimacy and authority away from modern Arab regimes. His initial vision was to create a new path for “peaceful Islamist activism” in the Jordanian arena (at least in the short term) that focused on changing concepts and ideas; and to initiate a comprehensive point of reference that would address the public with this discourse. His aim was that this experience and model would then be duplicated and transferred to the Palestinian arena – but, this time within a framework of armed resistance and struggle against the Israeli occupation.

One should view that al-Maqdisi’s recent comeback to the “arena of activism” in Jordan is a ‘return’ that will be fraught with the danger of a confrontation with all those who still believe in al-Zarqawi’s vision and in al-Zarqawi’s legacy.

Only a few months have passed, since al-Maqdisi’s release, and the internal conflict has indeed erupted with two sides clearly emerging: The first led by al-Maqdisi and the other led by a group of individuals who hold a harsh and suspicious position towards the man and his revisions and new ideas – individuals who insinuate that there are “security hands” behind this “new reformative movement”.

Quickly, the conflict has come out into the open, and has been rapidly transported onto “Jihadi forums.” Thus, an “electronic war” has begun between both parties, with the goal of further polarizing members to their side, and to shore up legitimacy and support for their arguments in the eyes of supporters of the movement outside.

The side rejecting al-Maqdisi is led by a group unknown to the public; they use aliases to camouflage themselves. One can find several papers written by their aliases to this effect – the most prominent of which was written by an individual under the alias “Abu al-Yaman Abd al-Karim ibn ‘Issa al- Madani” under the title, “*Al-Ijtihad fi Hukm al-Firar min Sahat al-Jihad*” (A Reasoning into the Religious Ruling on Those Who Flee the Battlefields of Jihad). Of the other articles written against al-Maqdisi were posted by individuals who wrote under the aliases of “Abu al-Qassim al-Muhajir” (in “*Al-Maqdisi Yataqaddam ila al-Waraa*” (Al-Maqdisi Progresses Backwards) and “*Na’am Kharajna*” (Yes, We have Exceeded), “Abu al-Qa’qaa’al-Shami, and others such as “Asad bin al-Furat” and “Qahir al-Tawagheet” amongst others (many of these names are a ‘nom de guerre’ that allude to Iraq, Jihad, the fight against the *kuffar* and apostates, etc.).⁵⁴³

The arguments and ideas posited by the anti-Maqdisi side question what is behind the changes in al-Maqdisi’s attitude; what are the dimensions of the circumstances that led to these ‘concessions’ and

⁵⁴³ As published on the Internet forum entitled “*Ana al-Muslim*” (Lit. “I am the Muslim”).

revisions; and finally, posed suspicious questions about those in al-Maqqadi's close circle, such as an individual known as "Nuriddin Beyram" from the city of al-Zarqa, who wrote a book forwarded by al-Maqqadi that criticized "immoderation" and *ghulou* (overstated militancy and extremism).⁵⁴⁴

Some of the battles have raged around issues such as "the Imams of the Mosques." This issue revolves around the imams affiliated with the Ministry of Religious Affairs, who the anti-Maqqadi party find "unbelieving" and refused to pray with – a stand that al-Maqqadi utterly disagrees with and refuses outright. Another of the provocative battles has centered on the position towards the Hamas movement, which members of the anti-al-Maqqadi party are not only satisfied to disagree with (such as al-Maqqadi), but have gone to the extent of labeling and disavowing Hamas members as *kuffar*, as well.

What is interesting to note is that individuals from the 'anti-Maqqadi' side have held suspicions about al-Maqqadi and his entourage that have carried over from al-Zarqawi's past position towards the latter after the conflict between them had ignited. Indeed, they use al-Zarqawi's own words against al-Maqqadi's to try to strip al-Maqqadi of his authority and legitimacy, for example, (in the words of al-Zarqawi, after the publication of the essay "Advocacy and Advice"), "I know, dear Sheikh, that this matter (he means here al-Maqqadi's criticisms of al-Zarqawi's group's activities in Iraq) does not harm me as much as it does this Jihad. For I am merely a man of the "Men of Islam," whose heart has called out to him (here he means to fight or kill). But sadness, all sadness, has come upon the Jihad – its blessings are visible to all those with two eyes who want to undermine it... And, if they get what they want – May God forbid – you will get your lion's share (in that blame)."

It is obvious that the aim of recalling these particular "words" of al-Zarqawi is to create suspicions about what lies behind the "change" in al-Maqqadi's stands (and his calls for restraint). Many of the members of the movement refer back to earlier years, back to the time when they were all in prison – when al-Maqqadi was "exiled" from the "emirate" – in order to raise suspicions about his "credibility" or his "religious devotion and behavior" (relative to their strict and severe standards).

On the other hand, those who have taken al-Maqqadi's side published a very harsh statement against their rivals on numerous Jihadi sites and forums on the internet. In this statement, they describe their rivals as "*Khawarij*" (an Islamist group that was extremist in its religious beliefs, and went beyond the path of orthodox Sunnah (*Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamaa'ah*) to which the Global Jihadi Salafist movement belong).⁵⁴⁵

The declaration (entitled "In Defense of al-Maqqadi") claimed that their rivals were small in number, and limited specifically to the city of al-Zarqa; that they were 'disavowing as unbelieving ("*takfir*") large segments of society and indeed, were doubting the Islam of society in its entirety – an indication that this group was more similar to the "*Takfir wa al-Hijra*" group, renowned in Egypt and other Arab and Muslim countries. What is also interesting in the defense declaration was the

⁵⁴⁴ Refer to the text of this book, "*Fasl al-Maqal fi Hajr Ahl al-Bida' wa al-Dhalal*" (Lit., "A Decisive Ruling in Disassociating with the People of Innovation and Misguidance"), on al-Maqqadi's website Minbar al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad available at www.tawhed.ws/n.

⁵⁴⁵ The text of this statement was published on numerous Jihadi sites and forums such as the *al-Hisba*, *al-Falluja al-Jihadiyya*, and *Minbar al-Islam* sites, amongst others.

call for completely isolating and cutting off this group (their rivals). This call went to the point of insinuating, without saying it in so many words... that anyone who stood with and agreed with this group will “get what they deserve” – a message that was closer to a ciphered code to call others to “action.”

What is more important was this declaration was signed by 26 individuals, most of whom were well-known and key figures in areas where the Jihadi Salafists have a strong presence (such as al-Zarqa, Irbid, al-Salt, Ma’an, Amman and al-Karak). The most prominent of the signatories were: Jarrah al-Rahahleh, Abu Mohammad al-Maqdisi, Abu Mohammad al-Tahawi, Abu ‘Abdullah Ryallat, Abu Qutaiba al-Majali, Sakhir al-Ma’ani, Nour Beyrum, Abu Mohammad al-‘Aabid, ‘Omar Mahdi Zeidan and Jawad al-Faqih.

This declaration went viral on Jihadi sites and forums, and gained credibility relative to the stream of declarations and letters published by the other party, all of which, in turn, reinforced al-Maqdisi’s credibility before the supporters of the Jihadi Salafist movement inside and outside Jordan.

Things did not stop there. Al-Maqdisi’s supporters sent a letter to the well-known Egyptian Salafist living in London, Hani al-Sibaa’i, who owns the al-Maqrizi Institute for Studies, which is a resource center with close ties to al-Qaeda. The letter spoke of al-Maqdisi’s place within Jihadi Salafism and refutes the allegations of those who doubt and suspect him. Al-Sibaa’i, in turn, gave al-Maqdisi his total support and absolute “legitimacy,” and made it known that he considered al-Maqdisi an authority and major icon of the movement; in his words, “Sheikh Abu Mohammad al-Maqdisi has not only proven his trustworthiness, he is a steady and secure figure of sound faith, and a thorn in the throats of the oppressors and their cronies. He is a renowned figure of *Ahl al-Sunnah*; his books and opinions testify to the depth and extent of his knowledge. He is still being subjected to the ordeal of prison because of those who have conceded to evil and backed from the truth! But God has kept him strong and he remains unyieldingly committed to the rope of God.”⁵⁴⁶

These testimonies, declarations, and other information clearly indicate that al-Maqdisi has won the first round of this battle in his ‘new project’. He has proven he was able to regain a base inside the Jihadi Salafist movement in Jordan, and indeed did manage to regain a large part of his respectability and credence amongst supporters of the movement outside Jordan. All of these are points scoring in favor of al-Maqdisi... for the present time, in any case. However, the greater challenge is in how cohesive his group would remain and in his ability to steer it in the path he advocates.

Perhaps the more important question to ask at this time revolves around what were the underlying reasons, which persisted and allowed al-Maqdisi to achieve this temporary success? For, in addition to the weakening of al-Qaeda in Iraq, and the growing concessions in the way of thinking of Jihadi Salafists worldwide, there are three additional and major reasons behind this success:

First, al-Maqdisi did not fully back down from his ideas and his opinions, as was the case with Dr. Fadel and others like him. Indeed, he remained in touch with and preserved many of his original intellectual and political opinions, which are still, in part, within the fundamental principles and

⁵⁴⁶ Al-Sibaa’i’s declaration was published on the *al-Hisba* forum website.

framework of Jihadi Salafism. Furthermore, he never received any breaks or any support from the Jordanian government; in fact, his relationship with the state is still very precarious and tense; and he is susceptible to imprisonment at any moment.

Second, Al-Maqdisi possesses personal charisma and has a well-known record in prison and in custody, despite the conflict with al-Zarqawi. On the other hand, outside Jordan, his rivals are still unknown and remain ‘anonymous’ through their aliases on Jihadi forums. And, inside Jordan, they do not enjoy the same reputation that al-Maqdisi does – a fact that weakens them and limits their influence in the Jihadi Salafist environs.

Third, and perhaps the most important point, is that the Jordanian context is very different from the Iraqi one, even during the period where there was a sort of euphoria hovering around the movement. Indeed, this euphoria was rather symbolic and emotional and never really reflected itself in depth on the general membership of the Jihadi Salafist movement in Jordan. In practical terms, the movement has always remained under tight reigns by the Jordanian state and its security apparatus, was never socially accepted, and has always been marginalized in political life. Indeed they never made any worthy social and political advances. Furthermore, it has never been able to adopt or carry out any form of their “armed struggle” in Jordan nor any real ‘subversive’ activities in terms of national security, that is, without risking a severe and immediate response from the state, which they have never really had the ability to resist or the tools to confront.

Indeed, the Jordanian reality and context has forced members of the movement to accept the “bare minimum” or the “Jordanian limitations” that al-Maqdisi understands and is able to cope with. Al-Maqdisi realized, early on, that they would be better off focusing on the “*da’wa*”, on advocacy and education. He realized that they could not afford and thus needed to avoid, as much as possible, the unequal confrontation with the state and its security apparatus. Therefore, in the Jordanian case at least, the agenda that al-Maqdisi has put forth for the movement is more realistic and more pragmatic than the demands made by the other group (al-Maqdisi’s rivals), which insists on continuing on the path and legacy set by al-Zarqawi.

3. The System of Governance and *Khilafa* in the Perspective of Jihadi Salafist

The previous era witnessed a development and an evolution in the ideas and perceptions of the disciples of the Jihadi Salafist movement worldwide. The movement went through a series of sequential stages in which the movement's authority, identity, political vision, and basic governing principles became rooted and defined; all of which has made this movement unique in the arena of "Islamist activism."

The writings of Sayyid Qutb, particularly the books written during the Nasserite era, including the volume series entitled "*Fi Dhilal al-Qur'an*" (In the Shadow of the Qur'an) and the booklet "*Ma'alim fi al-Tareeq*" (Milestones), constitute principle building blocks in the primary infrastructure and framework of the movement's ideas. Indeed, "Milestones" is considered by many as a kind of a "manifesto" for Jihadi movements.

Qutb's ideas center around the principle concepts of "*al-Hakimiya*" (Divine Governance and Sovereignty), "*al-Jahiliya*" (the Age of Ignorance), "*al-Mufasaala*" (disassociation), and the rejection and *takfir* of the modern political nation-state and the system of democracy, and on advocating for building Muslim communities and Islamic states to be governed by and obey nothing other than Islamic law (*Sharia*).

During the 1960s, Islamist groups that adopted Sayyid Qutb's vision as their ideological base began to emerge from the womb of various prisons throughout the region. These groups adapted Qutb's vision with a fundamental addition: That changing the prevailing reality could only be achieved through "armed struggle and action." Mohammad Abd al-Salam Faraj's book "*Al-Farida al-Gha'iba*" (The Absent Duty) was particularly important in paving the way for this 'new' or additional orientation.

In 1981, the Egyptian Islamic Jihad Movement assassinated Egyptian President Anwar Sadat. During that same decade, thousands of Arab volunteers migrated en masse to join the war or 'Jihad' in Afghanistan (against the Soviet Union and communism). Simultaneously, the core nucleus of the al-Qaeda organization began to take shape; however, its political ideas did not fully develop (in the final form in which it exists today) until the mid-1990s. Indeed, the coming of age of al-Qaeda's ideas was marked by the publication of the book "*Fursan Tahta Raayat al-Nabi*" (Knights under the Banner of the Prophet), written by the then second man in the al-Qaeda mother organization, Ayman al-Zawahiri.

During this new stage, the literature and ideology of Jihadi Salafism would go beyond its basic references. Numerous new books, scholars and theorists began to emerge, and with them a new orientation where the focus turned to the domain of politics and a military, or militant, strategy. This phase was saturated with a plethora of publications and religious edicts (*fatwas*) that were particularly focused on the strategy of military and security confrontation and on the staunch opposition to the international superpowers and Arab and Muslim worlds' realities – which they proposed to confront using armed struggle and militant operations (a subject that has always been problematic in traditional Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*)).

What is interesting to note, at this point, is that from the 1990s onwards Jordanian personalities would play a pivotal and central role in developing and establishing the intellectual and political discourse of the new Jihadi Salafism – not only on a local but also on a global scale. And, if al-Zarqawi found his fame as one of the “stars of al-Qaeda” in relation to the “armed struggle”, both al-Maqqisi and Abu Qatada al-Filastini became renowned for their fundamental roles in building certain aspects of the thinking and ideology of the movement that led to significant transformations in the discourse of the Jihadi Salafist movement globally.

Before al-Maqqisi and Abu Qatada, ‘Abdullah ‘Azzam (another Jordanian and a prominent member of the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood) paved the way for much of the material used in the movement’s first construction of their discourse. ‘Azzam played a critical role in bringing the issue of Jihad to the public fore and in instigating the phenomenon of the “Arab and Jordanians Afghans” – although, it should be noted that ‘Azzam was never really considered one of the icons of the new Jihadi Salafism.

The general concepts and principles that governed the Jihadi Salafist discourse in Jordan was indeed very similar to that in other countries in the Arab and Muslim worlds. The “globalization” of their ideology began to emerge and to totally envelope groups, individuals, and supporters of the movement from all corners of the earth. The advent of the global internet and the subsequent emergence and proliferation of Jihadi sites and forums on it played a major role in increasing awareness about the movement, its “culture,” and its ideology. And finally, different political events simultaneously drew the positions of the movement’s followers together, despite borders and distances.

This part of the study will focus on a more in-depth analysis of the general features characterizing the Jihadi Salafist ideology and the political stand of the movement with regard to contemporary politics, governments, regimes, and democracy. Subsequently, the study will analyze the activities and interventions of the movement’s most prominent intellectual leaders – in specific, the leaders who played a dynamic role in the formation and consolidation of the ideology and the general principles and concepts that govern the movement’s discourse, such as “*al-Hakimiya*” (Divine Governance and Sovereignty), “*al-Taghout*” (Rule of tyrants, and of False Deities), “*al-Jahiliya*” (the Age of Ignorance), and the “*Dar al-Harb*” (Abode of War) and the “*Dar al-Kufr*” (The Abode of Unbelief).

The Movement’s Ideological and Theoretical Characteristics: *Al-Hakimiya* and the Sword

Jihadi Salafist thinking is based on the principle of “*al-Hakimiya*” (Divine Governance and Sovereignty), the core political essence of which is based on rejecting and disavowing as unbelieving the constitutions, regimes, governments and modern political institutions (parliaments, political parties, judiciaries, etc.) and the modern military institutions (armies, state security apparatuses, etc.) in the Arab and Muslim worlds. All of these are disavowed and declared blasphemous due to the fact that they do not practice and commit to the principal of “*Tawhid*,” which means that God *alone* has the right to legislate and govern.

Based on this definition and description of contemporary regimes as the “*al-Taghout*” (the Rule of tyrants, and of False Deities) and as *kuffar* and “*Jahiliya*” (pre-Islamic ignorance), any form of participation in these regimes’ political or military institutions – whether it be in the form of participating in legislative or municipal elections or accepting a post in the government or in its security services or military – is considered as aiding and abetting the legitimization of this corrupt reality and those who oppress Muslims. It is viewed as a form of kneeling before these regimes and assisting them to survive. Therefore, participating in the nominations process, in elections, and even employment in many government institutions are completely prohibited by the movement.

When it comes to civil society and public affairs, al-Maqdisi distinguishes between the types of institutions the movement deems acceptable. In his words, “We do not oppose our members being active or working in institutions such as charitable organizations and the like, which do not contradict the tenets of Islamic law. We do not reject those who are righteous and work in such institutions, as long as they fear God and remain steadfast... However, there are institutions that contravene the very spirit of Islamic law, for example, municipal councils that, within the very nature of their work, issue licenses for the sale of alcohol and for nightclubs, oversee the collection of excise and other taxes as well as commit other unjust violations. We avoid these kinds of institutions; and, we do not cooperate with them in any way, a fortiori all other forms of activities that explicitly contravene the religion such as political parties that do not receive licenses until they pledge allegiance to the *kafir* regime, its constitution and its statutory laws, take an oath to uphold this regime and its institutions and swear to conduct party activities only within its framework.”⁵⁴⁷

On the other hand, the instruments and approaches advocated for bringing about change vary between the different Jihadi Salafist movements in different countries. The movement may be satisfied with nonviolent action such as *da’wa* to Jihadi Salafism in a certain country, “if the conditions for armed struggle do not exist.” In such a case, the movement is expected to focus on spreading Jihadi Salafist political and religious ideas and visions; and, the principle instrument for recruiting new members and supporters is in the form of advocacy on an individual or group basis (individual or group *da’wa*). Meanwhile, in other countries the movement may take up a form of armed struggle against governments they call “*Shawkat al-Nikaya*” (the “Spiteful Thorn”), which is a militant framework that consists of persistent psychological and military warfare until the regime is overturned. An example of the “Spiteful Thorn” method is the gang-style warfare that al-Qaeda has been using in Algeria lately, and to a lesser degree the kind of militant operations that were carried out in Saudi Arabia and some other Arab and Muslim countries.

Al-Maqdisi describes his vision for how the movement should strive to effect change, and how that strategy changes from one environment or context to the next in the following way, “As for the issue of changing the reality prevailing today... even if it is one of our major concerns and our hope, we cannot rush this (change) before its time; because comprehensive and complete change requires planning and capacities as well as the concerted energies of this movement in every place, and focus on the right place at the right time... What many of the individuals and groups in the Jihadi Salafist movement do in the form of Jihad here and there – even if it appears that these are just ‘spiteful’ acts against the enemies of God and do not translate into a rapid change of our current

⁵⁴⁷ From a private discussion with al-Maqdisi; op. cit., see: <http://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=83>.

reality – they are, in the long run, a way to prepare the men who will eventually carry through with the process of change and pave the way for the true and complete change... Because we believe the men qualified to lead the *Ummah* (The world community of Muslims) to this final destination will not come from behind a desk or through elections and ballot boxes. No. They will rise from the trenches of the battlefields and the Jihad will set them apart (from other men).”

He adds, “Until we possess all that is necessary to bring about this comprehensive change, we will work to spread *al-Tawhid* in all its parts, and fight against *kufir* in all its forms, and work to change invalid beliefs, deviated thoughts and ideas, and conflicting loyalties of Muslims in our countries. And, we will call upon them to realize “*al-Tawhid*” and to reject and disavow all forms of polytheism, idolatry, and blasphemy. Indeed, this change is the most important kind of change; without it, there will never be true change... Furthermore, we do not insist on being in control of the reigns of this process of change; and we do not insist that it begins here, from our countries. We are just soldiers in this movement. And, whenever we have seen our brethren – in any spot in any place on this earth – on the brink of change, we have stood by them and have taken their side. For, there is no doubt that a house for all Muslims will be found; and we shall travel there and strengthen this house... Perhaps, thereafter God will open the way for all Muslims to achieve that which they have found so difficult to change. For God is the All Powerful and All Mighty in His Command, although most people are still ignorant of this truth.”⁵⁴⁸

Therefore, the Jihadi Salafist movement sees no strategy other than that of fighting and of Jihad – with the recognition that the right conditions and reasons must exist – for changing the prevailing political reality, and for achieving the ultimate goal of establishing the Islamic state. Abd al-Salam Faraj confirms the supposition that Jihad is a right in rem (*farḍ ‘ayn*) for every Muslim against the leaders of the contemporary regimes; he says, “With regard to these Muslim states... the enemy has come to live in their homes and has come to possess and control the reigns over everything; and, it is these rulers who have brought the command of Muslims to ruin... It is this reality that makes jihad against them an obligation, a right in rem (*farḍ ‘ayn*).”⁵⁴⁹

Within the same vein, Abu Qatada presents a legal and religious opinion about the obligation of Jihad in his article, “*Limatha al-Jihad*” (Why Jihad?). After he presents evidence proving the “*kufir*” of the (Arab/Muslim) leaders and defines the consequences of that *kufir*, he says, “These corrupt leaders who walk the earth, and due to their hatred for the *Ummah* and because they govern using the laws of the devil, God demands that the faithful wage Jihad against the corrupt that walk this earth. All that these leaders have is to fight God and His Prophet, by turning away from the laws (*Sharia*) of Islam, leaving behind governance by the Book (Qur’an) and the Sunnah (Way of the Prophet) and corrupting this earth. It is therefore the duty and obligation of all Muslims to rise up against them with all that they have until this earth is purged of them.”⁵⁵⁰

The Jihadi Salafist perspective on systems of governance is based on a total rejection of modern political institutions on the grounds that it is a Western by-product; and, this same stance is used

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁹ Abd al-Salam Faraj, “*Al-Farida al-Gha’iba*” (Lit. “The Absent Duty”); the text can be found on the “Minbar al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad” website available at <http://www.tawhed.ws/c/?i=39>.

⁵⁵⁰ Abu Qatada al-Filastini, “*Limatha al-Jihad*” (Lit. “Why Jihad”, available at <http://www.tawhed.ws/r/?i=yrvjtyr8>.

against democracy, pluralism, public freedoms, and human rights. Indeed, their vision is closer to a “historical cloning” of the original Caliphate, but according to a religious view that is militantly austere and similar to the “the Taliban model of governance.”⁵⁵¹

As a consequence of this religious and political conception, the movement takes a fierce stance against Islamist parties as well as secular political parties that accept and participate politically in the ‘system’. They hold the same rejectionist stance against the idea of political, intellectual and religious pluralism and sectarianism (the followers of Jihadi Salafism take an extremist stand against the Shiites), as well as such notions as citizenship, human, civil and political rights, and individual and civic freedoms.

The Jihadi Woman... Integration and Utilization in the ‘Program’

As for their standpoint concerning women, the opinion of extremist Jihadi Salafist literature is that Islam gave the (Muslim) woman her rights and put her in a position of high standing, which no woman of any previous or current civilization has ever enjoyed. They also believe that the woman is equal to man in creation and in composition; and see that the woman’s place is in her home where she can assume the role of rearing an exceptional generation socialized on the Qur’an and grounded in exemplary Islamic values; for, the family according to Jihadi Salafism is the spring of society’s moral values.

The difference between an advanced and backwards society, according to the opinion of Jihadi Salafist literature, is the level of a society’s commitment to ethics and not its level of technology and production – and (in achieving this mission), the woman is addressed the same as man in the Holy Qur’an and in the Prophet’s Sunnah. As the Jihadi Salafists consider the community of Islam as having entered into a state of “ignorance” (*jahiliya*) when it abandoned the *Sharia*, and since contemporary political regimes have committed disbelief (*kufr*) by adopting and importing Western models, such as democracy, then it is the duty of the woman to work alongside the man to change society and the state by means of a revolutionary ideology of upheaval, based on the concept of “Jihad” in the name of Islam – and this is the only means available for overthrowing these regimes and reinstating the Caliphate.

The model of the “Jihadi woman” has come to dominate Jihadi Salafist literature, which worked to integrate the woman into its project as one of the cornerstones of its revolutionary ideology of upheaval. They also consider the veil (*hijab*) as one of the symbols of resistance to and of rejecting Western hegemony. The Jihadi woman has indeed become an integral part of the “*Kata’ib al-Istishhadiyah*” (female martyr brigades) and supports the work of Jihadi men, especially in the field of communications and the media, in particular that which is connected to the World Wide Web.

Jihadi Salafism deliberately includes the woman in “Jihadi activism” and, as a result, the phenomenon of the “female martyr” as the role model for the woman in Islam emerged. Sheikh ‘Abdullah ‘Azzam emphasizes this ‘exemplary role’ in a religious scholarly edict (*fatwa*) in which he states that the woman can actually enter into Jihad without the permission of her husband or

⁵⁵¹ For a comparative review, refer to a personal interview with al-Maqdisi available at <http://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=83>.

guardian in the case of an enemy assault on the *Ummah* or in the case of the occupation of Muslim land. He says, “We spoke at length about the rules of conduct for the Jihad in Afghanistan, Palestine, and other raped Muslim lands. And, we have affirmed the ruling by the *Salaf* [the (Righteous) Predecessors] and those who succeeded them in religious scholarship, debate, interpretation, and opinions on the Hadith, as well as other *Usuli* [fundamentals of religion] scholars, that in the case that one inch of Muslim land suffers an assault, then Jihad becomes an irrevocable obligation and duty of all Muslims, including the Muslim woman, who may enter into the Jihad without the permission of her husband (or guardian).”⁵⁵²

It appears that ‘Abdullah ‘Azzam’s religious *fatwa* was further amended after his death; as the woman entered the battlefield in many places after the developments that took place following the events of September 11, 2001. Indeed, the model of the “Jihadi woman” has dominated the literature of Jihadi Salafism that deals with the issue of women, such as the essay written by Yousuf al-‘Aayiri entitled, “The Role of Women in the Jihad against the Enemy: Models of Jihadi Women from the Era of the *Salaf*”.⁵⁵³

Al-Maqdisi has also written a chapter specifically dealing with women’s rights in Islam relative to her “inferior status in Western civilization” in his book “The Greater Middle East Project.” He opens the chapter with, “Women’s rights are yet another string being strummed by the enemies of Islam. And, their tails (followers) in Muslim lands dance to the enemy’s treacherous tunes. They claim that the woman is oppressed... oppressed not in the land of Muslims, who have renounced God’s Law (*Sharia*), but rather by Islam itself... defeated, subjugated by the veil (*hijab*), besieged by restrictions of purity and of chastity, wronged by polygamy, her inheritance half that of a man ... not ‘free’ to marry outside her religion; and thus, they demand to ‘free’ her. Her rejection of what they call archaic customs and traditions are all big, arrogant words spewing from their mouths. They establish women’s organizations with all these different titles and scatter them across the Muslim world ... And they supported these organizations, morally and financially. They publicly incite women to declare their vice and debauchery, encouraging corruption, prostitution, adultery, and fornication under the pretext of freedom, under the auspices of democracy... They forget their Western culture so dark in its history with regard to their women. They close their eyes to her humiliation, oppression and disgrace in so many of their countries that export this ‘call to liberate the woman and to make her equal to the man’ to our lands.”⁵⁵⁴

⁵⁵² ‘Abdullah ‘Azzam, “*Ilhaq bi al-Qafilah*” (Lit. “Get on Board with the Convoy”); published by The Martyr

‘Abdullah ‘Azzam Media Center, Peshawar, Pakistan, p. 45.

⁵⁵³ The text of this essay, “*Dawr al-Nisaa’ fi Jihad al-‘Aadaa’*: *Namathij li al-Mar’a al-Mujahida min Nisaa’ al-Salaf*” (Lit., “The Role of Women in the Jihad against the Enemy: Models of Jihadi Women from the Era of the *Salaf*”), is available at <http://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=8fsj2em2>. Al-‘Aayiri is considered one of the most important Jihadi Salafist scholars and theorists in the world. He is the first *emir* of al-Qaeda in Saudi Arabia. After presenting a list of the many women (from the era of the Prophet and after) who fought and entered into Jihad in the name of Islam, he says, in an attempt to mobilize and galvanize the contemporary Muslim woman, “This, my Muslim sisters, is only a part of the history of the women of our *Salaf*, whose Jihad we have shared with you; and there are many more examples of their Jihad. What prevents us from giving more examples is that it would take too long. We are aware that we have shown you only one aspect of the history of female *Sahaba* (Companions of the Prophet). What if we told you about their worship and their fear of God, their work, their honesty and the rest of their righteous work? Then, we would be talking for a long time. Nonetheless, we hope we have provided you with enough, God willing.”

⁵⁵⁴ The text of this book, “*Mashrou’ al-Sharq al-Awsat al-Kabir*” (Lit., “The Greater Middle East Project”), is available at <http://www.tawhed.ws/f>.

4. The Governing Principles of Jihadi Salafist Ideology

Certain governing principles represent the core structure of the Jihadi Salafist discourse. Al-Maqdisi and Abu Qatada al-Filastini both played a central role in establishing the legitimacy of the movement and creating a theoretical base for it that distinguished it from other Islamist groups. However, prior to al-Maqdisi and Abu Qatada, ‘Abdullah ‘Azzam posited the first bricks in this structure by deliberating and writing about the importance of “Jihad”, why it had become an obligation and why he agreed with and adopted Sayyid Qutb’s ideas on “*al-Hakimiya*” (Divine Governance and Sovereignty), the “*al-Jahiliya*” (Age of Ignorance) and other key concepts that pertained to the Jordanian context. These concepts were adopted by Jihadi Salafism and combined to form a pattern and matrix of complementary ideas that were interwoven to produce a universal political and social outlook for the Jihadi Salafist movement and its political discourse.

As a first step, the movement established for itself a historical frame of reference, considering itself a representative of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamaa’ah*, and a contemporary extension of *Ahl al-Hadith* that followed the time of the Prophet and His Companions. The movement actually considers itself the representative of this time in Islamic history (the ‘Golden Era’) today. At the core of the movement’s religious and political creed is the principle of “*al-Hakimiya*.” Indeed, Jihadi Salafists consider all those who do not abide by this fundamental principle – such as the Arab and Muslim regimes today – as unbelieving (“*kuffar*”) and tyrant false deities (“*al-Taghout*”). According to this creed it was a duty to rise against those who did not abide by it (*al-Hakimiya*), through a movement based on Jihad, which mobilizes (Muslims to join) this path, which is marked by and distinguished in its ideological identity and its activism on the ground – an activism and identity also defined by the creed of “*al-Walaa’ wa al-Baraa’*” (Allegiance and Disavowal) –, and whose strategy stems from the belief that armed struggle (the obligation and duty of Jihad) is the only way to confront these (unbelieving and tyrant) regimes. Amongst the most prominent principles, concepts, and axioms upon which the Jihadi Salafist discourse is founded:

Setting the Foundations for Religious and Historical Legitimacy and Authority: The Badge of *Ahl al-Hadith*

Abu Qatada al-Filastini and Abu Mohammad al-Maqdisi sought to establish Jihadi Salafism as an extension of the Islamic historical experience and era of what is called “*Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamaa’ah*” (The People and Followers of the Sunnah), and particularly “*Ahl al-Hadith*” (the People of the Hadith). Indeed, all Salafist movements and groups, of every form and size, seek the status of being seen as the ‘real’ extension of, or at the very least monopolize the position of the ‘only true representatives’ of this group from “Islam’s Golden Era” in today’s contemporary Islamic reality.

It should be noted here that the Method and approach (*Manhaj*) of *Ahl al-Hadith* was historically constructed and shaped in its clear form, and is particularly identified with the renowned Islamic scholar, Ahmad ibn Hanbal – who lived during a period of the intellectual controversy of the claim that the Qur’an was “created” [in the year 218 in the Hijri calendar, during the reign of the Abbasid Caliph al-Ma’moun, who adopted the opinions of the Mu’tazila (the theological rationalists) and the *Ahl al-Kalam* (The People of theological Rhetoric)].

The Salafist tendency emerged again at the end of the Abbasid Caliphate, following the fall of Baghdad to the Tartars in the year 656 (AH). At that time, the Islamic Hanbali scholar, Ibn Taymiyyah, initiated a massive calling to Muslims to come forth to the defense of Islam. He blamed “*Ahl al-Bid’a*” for the fall and collapse of Baghdad (*Ahl al Bid’a* or the Muslim “Innovators” included philosophers, rhetoricians, Sufis, and at the fore of these ‘Muslim innovators’ were the Mu’tazila, the Ash’ariya, the Jahmiya, the Shiites, in addition to fanatical jurists of the schools of thought of the Hanafiya, the Malikiya, the Shafi’iya, and the Hanbaliya). Ibn Taymiyyah called for a revival of the creed and approach of the righteous *Salaf*; however, the ‘Salafist’ model of renewal he advocated did not last long and was lost to the annals of history with the passage of time.

In the last century of the Ottoman Empire, Sheikh Mohammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab emerged from the Hijaz (Arabian Peninsula) and labored to revive ‘Salafism’ based on the heritage and traditions of “*Ahl al-Hadith*.” Abd al-Wahhab sought to revive the school of Ibn Taymiyya with the objective of confronting the Sufis and the Shiites and with the goal of reinforcing the axioms of the *Ahl al-Hadith* at the level of their creed, jurisprudence, and knowledge of Islam.

However, *Ahl al-Hadith*, to whom the advocates of Jihadi Salafism claim they belong, were not of one color as they are perceived by contemporary Salafist groups and movements. Nevertheless, the latter all compete in trying to prove their belonging to this Islamic reference in order to establish and secure their religious and historical position of authority and legitimacy. To deal with the issue of the great diversity represented by *Ahl al-Hadith*, Abu Qatada presents a methodology for distinguishing what is the right model or representation of *Ahl al-Hadith* that they follow, within a political framework and context, “The men or groups who belong to *Ahl al-Hadith*, or the “Salvation Sect”, are not those who work as servants for the Oppressors (*taghout*); they are not those who exert their utmost energy to defend these tyrants and false deities; they are not those bearing a false taint of legitimacy upon them; they are not the merchants who exploit the Hadith of the God’s Messenger and Prophet [PBUH]; they are not the office boys who spy on those who call out to others to return to God Almighty; they are not the men who unveil Muslims and leave them exposed to the enemies of Islam and of God. No. Those who belong to *Ahl al-Hadith* are not them, but others... They are Ahmad ibn Hanbal, al-Bukhari, and Imam Muslim... and these [righteous imams] are innocent of these pretenders. By God, it is unjust to present these criminals as belonging to *Ahl al-Hadith*.”⁵⁵⁵

Jihadi Salafism worked to construct a vision based on their own, unique reading of the heritage and tradition of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamaa’ah* and especially *Ahl al-Hadith*, and on their particular reading of the contemporary Islamic and global reality. And, these readings and this vision were summarized within a set of key concepts for all those who wanted to enlist in the sphere of Jihadi Salafism.

Understanding and studying these concepts are indeed essential in order to better know and understand the movement. These concepts are all derived from three basic underlying principles, which are an integral part of certain deliberations in Islamic theology; and they are: The principles of *al-Tawhid*, the Caliphate and the Jihad. “*Al-Tawhid*” defines the relationship between human

⁵⁵⁵ Abu Qatada al-Falastini, “*Al-Jihad wa al-Ijtihad...*” (Lit. “The Jihad and Ijtihad...”);op. cit., p. 47.

beings and the Creator; and, this principle is used by the Jihadi Salafists to justify their stance against the current Arab leaders, who do not rule or govern by the word of God or the laws sent forth by God (the *Sharia*). The principle of *Khilafa*, or the ultimate goal of establishing and reviving the Caliphate, is the system of governance that is representative of the proper and genuine Islamic state and not the modern statutory nation-states and governing regimes. And, this system of governance is seen as defining the relationship between the worldly and the afterlife. Finally, the principle of Jihad, ties the use of force to bringing about this ultimate change.

Accordingly and based on this vision, the Jihadi Salafist discourse disavows the contemporary Arab and Muslim regimes as unbelieving. It also claims that the majority of Islamist groups today violate the creed of the People of the Sunnah by accepting to work in programs or activities that are not essentially aimed at changing these regimes, governments, and their constitutions, which violate Islamic law (*Sharia*). In light of this reading of reality, the movement believes that it is the only true religiously and historically legitimate movement, and that this identity is what sets them apart from all other Islamist movements active in the field.

“*Al-Hakimiya al-Ilahiya*” versus the Contemporary “*al-Jahiliya*”

The Jihadist Salafist theoretical structure ties the concept of “*al-Hakimiya*” (Divine Governance and Sovereignty) with *al-Tawhid* and the Islamic doctrine (*Aqida*). Anyone who does not believe in the sole right of God to legislate is considered guilty of *kufir*; anyone who does not commit to governance through the application of Islamic law is also guilty of *kufir*; and, any society or community where ‘divine governance’ by Islamic law does not prevail, and is not governed by Islam through its laws, traditions and provisions is one that dwells in a state of *Jahiliya* (pre-Islamic ignorance).

Indeed, the fundamental aim of focusing on the principle of “*al-Hakimiya*” by Jihadi Salafist scholars and theorists is to prove the illegitimacy of the contemporary and prevailing (Arab and Muslim) regimes. The principle is used to justify the disavowal of these regimes to the point of *kufir*, as “*al-Hakimiya*” is one of the most important characteristics of “*al-Tawhid*”, or the ‘oneness’ of the divinity (the belief in the one God). According to this interpretation of this principle, contemporary regimes have taken away the right to govern and legislate from the only Being who has that right, God Almighty; and in the same vein, any society that accepts to be governed by statutory laws and legislation also commits *kufir*, which is a sin that justifies the killing of anyone that places himself in the status of the Divine.

Sayyid Qutb is considered the most important scholar in developing the principles of “*al-Hakimiya*” and “*al-Jahiliya*” in contemporary Islamist discourse.⁵⁵⁶ His writings are considered of the most important resources and fundamental scholarly references for the followers of Jihadi Salafism. Subsequently, Al-Maqdisi and Abu Qatada both worked on reinforcing these concepts in the structure of the movement’s discourse until they have become key governing principles in both the movement’s discourse and in its form.

Sayyid Qutb employed both principles of “*al-Hakimiya*” and “*al-Jahiliya*” in an extensive and concerted way in his discourse and literature. And, he pushed it to the point of disavowal as unbelief (“*kufir*”).

In his opinion, “*al-Hakimiya*” is the first tenet of the belief in the oneness of the divine, to which he says, “The Oath (*Shahada*) that there is ‘No God but Allah’ means explicitly that God Almighty is alone in his divinity; and that no one or being shares in His creation or in any one of His characteristics and attributes. The first of these divine characteristics or attributes is: The sole right to govern, from which the sole right to legislate is determined (no other being has the right to

⁵⁵⁶ Sayyid Qutb took the concept of “*al-Hakimiya*” (Divine Governance and Sovereignty) from the famous Islamic thinker from the Indian sub-continent, Abu al-A’la al-Mawdudi. However, al-Mawdudi’s theory of *al-Hakimiya* does not go to the extent of disavowing as unbelieving “*takfir*” all those who do not enforce or abide by it (*al-Hakimiya*), but rather defines them as “ignorant” (*jahil*) or as emulating the “*al-Jahiliya*” (the pre-Islamic Age of Ignorance). For al-Mawdudi, Islamic societies guilty of “ignorance” are those that, “Preserve only the superficial features of Islam; where Islam is not genuinely applied or practiced”; and therefore, “a society cannot view or represent itself as Islamic when it chooses a model other than Islam in its way of life”. However, even in this explanation, al-Mawdudi does not disavow as unbelieving (“*takfir*”) these societies, although he does views them as, without a doubt, societies that have chosen or descended into “the culture and traditions of “*al-Jahiliya*”, and its practices of idolatry and polytheism”. Despite the fact that al-Mawdudi did not work according to the logic of “*takfir*”, he nevertheless did lay the foundations and presented the instruments for the practice of “*takfir*” to take place to the furthest dimensions (without coming outright and saying so) in his book, “*Al-Mustalahat al-Arba’a fi al-Qur’an*” (The Four Concepts in the Qur’an), which are “the Divine God (*al-ilaah*), the Lord (*al-Rabb*), worship (*’ibada*), and Religion (*al-din*)”. The conclusion of this book proclaims that (contemporary) Islamic society is a “hostage”, despite the fact that it may repeat the Oath (*Shahadah*) that “There is No God but God”, because this society does not understand what this oath and its essence means.

As for the concept of “*al-Jahiliya*,” Sayyid Qutb borrowed it from another thinker from the Indian sub-continent, Abu al-Hassan al-Nadwi, who used this phrase in his book, “*Matha Khasira al-’Alam bi Inhitat al-Muslimin*” (Lit., “What the World Lost in the Muslims’ Demise.”) This book provides a description of the situation and conditions in which humanity existed prior to the delegation of Prophet Mohammad (Peace Be Upon Him), and names this era as “*al-Jahiliya*.” He then shows how an “Age of Ignorance” (*Jahiliya*) is not measurable in time or eras, but rather describes and is measured by the state or condition of demise and disgrace of certain eras in Islamic history. The book concludes by saying that the world, in its entirety (today) is descending into “*al-Jahiliya*”, and with it the Islamic world, as well. The term “*al-Jahiliya*” first appears in one of the essays of Sheikh Mohammad ibn Abd al- Wahhab (1703-1791 A.D.), the founder of the Wahhabi Da’wa movement. Later, in 1907, the Iraqi Islamic scholar Mahmud Shukri al-Aalouisi expanded upon the idea and described it at great length. In 1924, Muhibuddin al-Khatib further investigated the subject and supplemented previous works with his own analysis in an essay published in Egypt.

[See the following references: Abu al-A’ala al-Mawdudi Books: “*Nathariyat al-Islam wa Hadiyeh fi al-Siyasa wa al-Qanun wa al-Dustour*” (Lit. “The Islamic Theory and its Guidance in Politics, Law, and the Constitution”); translated by Khalil Hassan al-Isslahi, Dar al-Fikir Publishing House, Lahore, Pakistan, 1969, p. 34, p. 153; and “*Al-Mustalahat al-Arba’a fi al-Qur’an*” (Lit. “The Four Concepts in the Qur’an”); translated by Mohammad Kathim Sbiq, Dar al-Kuwaitiya Publishing House, 1st ed, 1969, pp. 8-9.]

[Cf. with the following references: Abu al-Hassan al-Nadwi’s books: “*Matha Khasira al-’Alam bi Inhitat al-Muslimin*” (Lit. “What the World Lost with the Muslims’ Demise.”); The Islamic Da’wa Library, Cairo, Egypt, Sixth Edition, 1965, pp. 135-158; and “*Riddah Wa laa Abu Bakir Laha*” (Meaning “Apostasy that has no Abu Bakr to Deal with it”), Dar al-Mukhtar al-Islami, Cairo, Egypt, 1974, pp. 11-16.] Sayyid Qutb had read al-Nadwi’s book “What the World Lost with the Muslims’ Demise” and wrote a forward for it in 1951.

govern or legislate for His servants); the sole right to put forth the model for the way to conduct one's life; and the sole right to put forth the values upon which this life is based."⁵⁵⁷

And, "*Al-Jahiliya*," according to Sayyid Qutb, is not encapsulated by a certain historical period, but rather is a state or a condition in which a set of circumstances exist in a certain situation or system thereof. Therefore, an "ignorant" society is, "Every society or community which is not Muslim"; it is, "Actually all the societies and communities that prevail today on this earth" including, "those societies and communities that claim they are Muslim... even if they pray, fast and make the pilgrimage; even if they state that God Almighty exists; even if people carry out the rites and rituals of worship in churches and mosques. Today, people are not Muslims. It is thus the task of the *da'wa* to lead them away from their 'state of ignorance' back to Islam, and to make of them Muslims again."⁵⁵⁸ He adds that, "*al-Jahiliya*", "exists when there is an assault on God's sovereignty on earth and particularly, against the nature of the ultimate feature of the Divine, that is of *al-Hakimiya*"; and instead, grants the right to govern to human beings by appropriating the right to set the outlook, values, legislation, laws and systems of governance separate from and in isolation of the comprehensive model for living life set forth by God."⁵⁵⁹

According to this understanding, therefore, the term "*al-Jahiliya*" (the Age of Ignorance) applies to all societies and communities that exist on earth today, due to the absence of God's sole governance; and, thus, the Islamic *Ummah* (The world community of Muslims) no longer exists. For the *Ummah*, according to Sayyid Qutb, is "a group of beings whose way of life, outlook, conditions, systems, values and systems of checks and balances are all derived from the Islamic model and way of life; and this *Ummah*, with these specific characteristics, became extinct the moment they violated the principle of governance through the laws set forth by God (*Sharia*) and the rule of God over every creature on earth."⁵⁶⁰

Abu Mohammad al-Maqdisi reaffirms that the "*Tawhid* of Divine Governance and Sovereignty" (*Tawhid al-Hakimiya*) is indeed a synonym for proper and pure monotheism, or believing in the one God or Divinity (*Tawhid al-Oulouhiya*) – which entails surrendering to the one God, in obedience and in the rule of law. Al-Maqdisi quotes the Islamic scholar, al-Shanqiti from his exegesis work, "*Adwa'a al-Bayan*" (Illuminations of the Declaration) that, "Sharing in the task of governance with God is equal to "*Ishrak*" (idolatry or polytheism: *Ishrak* means believing that God has 'partners' or can be 'partnered' in His work and in His creation). And he concludes, "In summary and at the core of this tenet is God's words, "*His is the creation and the command*" (al-A'araf 7:54) – and this includes the *Tawhid* of Lordship (*Tawhid al-Rububiya*), and the *Tawhid al-Oulouhiya* (Tawhid of the Divine God); which includes the *Tawhid al-Hakimiya* and God's Law (*Sharia*); and, in the words of God, "*The command is for none but God: He hath commanded that ye worship none but*

⁵⁵⁷ Hisham Ahmad 'Awad Ja'afar, "*Al-Ab'ad al-Siyasiyah li Ma'fhum al-Hakimiya: Ru'ya Ma'rifiya*" (Lit. "The Political Dimensions of the Concept of '*al-Hakimiya*' (Divine Governance and Sovereignty): An Epistemological Outlook"); Herndon, VA (USA): The International Institute for Islamic Thought, 1st ed., 1995, p. 225.

⁵⁵⁸ Sayyid Qutb, "*Hatha al-Din Manhaj Munfarid*" (Lit. "This Religion is a Unique Model"); Cairo, Egypt: Dar al-Shuruq Publishing House, p. 7.

⁵⁵⁹ Sayyid Qutb, "*Ma'alim fi al-Tareeq*" (Lit. "Milestones"), Cairo, Beirut: Dar al-Shuruq Publishing House, 8th Ed. (1982), pp. 91-93.

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 10.

Him: that is the right religion, but most men know not..." (Yousuf: 12:40). Therefore, the *Tawhid* of God through *al-Hakimiya* is of the *Tawhid* of God through worship."⁵⁶¹

Abu Qatada continues in the same vein as follows, "The Unitarian nature of Divine Governance and Sovereignty" (*Tawhid al-Hakimiya*) is an integral part of the Unitarian (*Tawhid*) nature of the Divinity (*al-Oulouhiya*), which is equal to the Unitarian requirement of intent and of demand; and on the one hand, since the servant of God is obliged to and is committed to it (*Tawhid*) – and which is of the Unitarian nature of Lordship (*Tawhid al-Rububiya*), which entails acknowledging the Unitarian nature of knowledge and of what is known –, and since God "does", i.e. God is the Governor and the Legislator of all rites and laws... then, what is known as 'Governance' and 'Law' is only for God Almighty, and the sole right of God Almighty".⁵⁶²

The *Kufr* of Democracy and its Representative Assemblies

Jihadi Salafism views democracy as an unbelieving system of governance that is in direct contradiction to Islam precisely because it is based on the right of people to legislate, and not of God. In their view, it is forbidden for any Muslim to be governed by any legal system other than that of Islam. To them, Islam provides a comprehensive and complete system that does not require any supplement whatsoever, in any subject, matter or level.

Hence, democracy violates the very principle of *al-Tawhid*, which exclusively confines the right to govern and to rule to God. Al-Maqdisi actually considers democracy as a "religion" and wrote about this subject in a publication entitled, "*Al-Deemoqratiya Din*" (Democracy is a Religion). In it he states, "The root of this foul word (democracy) is Greek and not Arabic; and it is a combination of two words: 'demos', which means people, and 'cratos', which means rule or authority or legislation. This means that the literal translation of the word 'democracy' is 'rule by the people' or 'authority by the people' or 'legislation by the people'... And this is the fundamental characteristic of democracy. At the same time, the opposite of "*al-Tawhid*" is also the fundamental characteristic of *Kufr*, idolatry and polytheism, and all that is wrong and contrary to Islam and the *Tawhidi* creed."⁵⁶³

Al-Maqdisi emphasizes that democracy and other statutory forms and systems of governance are outside of Islam and contrary to it; he says, "For every creed of the *kufr* creeds are intertwined with this regime and model, which contravenes the religion of Islam; and, it is a religion that they have chosen; and, democracy is a religion not that of the One God Almighty."⁵⁶⁴ And, he attributes the *kufr* of democracy and its violation of the doctrine of *al-Tawhid* to several conditions, "First, because it is a legislation by the masses or the 'rule of the masses, or the rule of tyranny "*Hukm al-Taghout*" rather than the rule of God. Second, because it is "*Hukm al-Taghout*" according to a

⁵⁶¹ Reference: Abu Mohammad al-Maqdisi, "*Ma al-Farq Bayna Tawhid al-Hakimiya wa al-Ulouhiya*" (Lit. "What is the Difference between The Tawhid of Divine Sovereignty and Governance (*Tawhid al-Hakimiya*)" and Unitarianism of the Divine Lordship (*Tawhid al-Ulouhiya*); available at <http://www.tawhed.ws/r/?i=raosd34n>.

⁵⁶² Reference: Abu Qatada al-Filastini, "*Tawhid al-Hakimiya wa ma Huwa Daleeluh*" (Lit., "Tawhid of Divine Governance and Sovereignty (*Tawhid al-Hakimiya*) and its Evidence"); available at <http://www.tawhed.ws/r/?i=ycux7zmn>.

⁵⁶³ The text of this book is available at <http://www.tawhed.ws/f>.

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid.

(man-made) constitution and not the laws of God Almighty. Third, because democracy is the fruit and illegitimate daughter of veiled secularism; and the latter is an unbelieving doctrine that isolates religion from life, or separates religion from the state and the system of governance.”⁵⁶⁵ Therefore, in his view, democracy and its legislative assemblies are, “Rule by the people” or “*Hukm al-Taghout*” (Rule tyrant and of False Deities), and in all cases, it is not the rule of God, the Great, the Almighty.”⁵⁶⁶

In his letter to the ‘followers of democracy,’ Al-Maqdisi calls for the disavowal of and war against democracy. The letter states, “Oh ye slaves of statutory laws and earthly constitutions – Oh ye who legislate, we disavow you and your creed and are innocent of you before God; we disavow you and your idolatrous constitutions and pagan assemblies as unbelieving. The enmity and hatred between us will continue forever more and until you believe in the One God.”⁵⁶⁷

Agreeing with al-Maqdisi on the *kufir* of democracy and its contradiction to Islamic law (*Sharia*) and considering it as a model that is based on secularism as well, Abu Qatada says: “The system of democracy, in all its forms, is based on the sovereign and autonomous right to govern for all but God. And this system is a derivative of the secular doctrine, which views people as free in their right to legislate that which they find suits their mentality, their way of life and their life needs. In the apostate states in our countries, secularism has given birth to a legal system that in its requirements necessitates and perpetuates this path: The political flank of this secular creed is obliged by the: ‘Approach of the democratic model that is founded in the view that the right to govern, to rule and sovereignty is the right of the people’... The cornerstone of this system of democratic governance is the same as that of its legislative authority – Or, in other words, the governor and the governed, the ruler and the ruled; this system of governance entails that the governor or ruler is granted authority by the people to legislate. Therefore, when a law is enacted by a parliament, or representative or popular assembly, it gains its strength and authority by virtue of the fact that it was enacted by a sovereign (human) governor or ruler (who was granted authority by the people); thereby making it a popular, parliamentary democratic and secular system of governance; or, in other words, it is, in the eyes of God Almighty’s religion, a system of idolatrous rule and “*Hukm al-Taghout*.”⁵⁶⁸

Democracy, according to Abu Qatada, is a *kafir* religion that must not be confused with Islam; he says, “Know that the banner of democracy is an unbelieving, idolatrous banner. And, one and all know that Islam and democracy are two distinct religions: Islam is the rule of God over His servants and democracy is the rule of people over each other. And know that the attempt by some to equate Islam with democracy is an attempt by the foul who want to replace the religion of God Almighty with the vagaries and whims of human beings.”⁵⁶⁹

Abu Qatada also attacks Islamist movements that have accepted and adopted the democratic paradigm as a doctrine or as one of the instruments used in Islamist advocacy for Islamization. He

⁵⁶⁵ Ibid. pp. 12-13.

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid. pp.

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid. p. 47.

⁵⁶⁸ Abu Qatada, “*Al-Jihad wa al-Ijtihad...*” (Lit., “The Jihad and Ijtihad...”); op. cit., pp. 103-104.

⁵⁶⁹ Abu Qatada, “*Bayna Manhajain*” (Lit. “Between Two Methods”), Number 79; available at <http://www.tawhed.ws/r/?i=usjyghh8>.

views these paradigms as a deviation from the Islamic approach and says, “To begin with, they separated between the Islamic creed (*Aqida*) and democracy, with its means and methods, in order to ‘Islamize’ democracy or to distort Islam. They claim that they just took the instruments, organizational structure, systems, and methods of democracy, while at the same time, refusing it as a creed or an ideology – and, this ‘separation’ has become a frame of reference for some. But, in reality, many became democratic in their belief... and Islam became human and positivist in form, worldly in its rulings, with no relation whatsoever with the eternal and with the afterlife; there is no value placed on the need for religion nor for the sanction and blessings of the Divine.”⁵⁷⁰

Abu Qatada criticizes all the Islamist movements that joined in the democratic game, and considers them misguided, contrived, innovated movements. For the rule of Islam will never come to be through democracy; he says, “Let us say, for the sake of argument, that one of these movements actually comes into power by democratic means; and that it actually governs using Islamic law (*Sharia*). Would it then be Islamic rule? The answer is, without a doubt, no! For a law – even if it meets the standards of Islamic law (*Sharia*) in its limits and in implementation – if it is enacted by way of parliament, and the choice of the people is not Islamic, then it is a *kafir*, false and tyrannical (*Taghout*) law.”⁵⁷¹

In Abu Qatada’s opinion, the legal and practical way to apply Islamic law (*Sharia*) can never be by way of democracy. It can only be accomplished through the struggle and the Jihad – a point he emphasizes as follows: “There has never been a state amongst states that has ever been able to secure itself, its root, or its presence except after blood and carnage. There is not one state on the face of this earth, today, tomorrow, or yesterday, which is independent and invulnerable except after war after war, and after fighting... Thus, one must not be tempted by what one sees as democracy is in the Western world... when one observes the ease with which the alternation of power occurs between parties, and the ease with which their rulers leave their seats; and thus, one is tempted to think that Muslims may be able to achieve a position of higher authority by these same means. This is a gross mistake... For circumstances (in the West) did not stabilize except after fierce, crushing battles.”⁵⁷²

Indeed, the Jihadi Salafist literature critical of democracy would continue to multiply and grow, particularly after the spread of this system (democracy) in many countries of the Muslim world in the 1990s, and the trend that ensued where many Islamist parties began to take part in the ‘democratic game’.

This literature judges legislative assemblies as *kafir* due to the fact that they are one of the requirements of a democracy. On this point, Abu Mohammad al-Maqdisi says, “What we believe and condemn, in the name of God, is participation in these ungodly, unbelieving, idolatrous assemblies – whether they exist in the apostate states that claim they are Islamic, or whether they exist in the “originally” *kafir* states (non-Muslim to begin with; i.e. Western nations). For these

⁵⁷⁰ Ibid; Number 75; available at <http://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=y2pdxv>.

⁵⁷¹ Ibid; Number 45; available at <http://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=8tmaobw>.

⁵⁷² Ibid; Number 41; available at <http://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=qdcg2js8>

assemblies turn the sole right to legislate over to the people and not to God.”⁵⁷³ He continues, “With all honesty and sincerity, I called upon the people to disavow and remain innocent of statutory laws, and to disavow as unbelieving the legislative assemblies; and, I sincerely warned them of participating in their elections.”⁵⁷⁴

Abu Qatada reaffirms the “idoltrous” nature of legislative assemblies (and their place outside Islam) by saying, “We know that parliament is an idoltrous, tyrannical assembly (*Shirki Taghouti*) because, in them, is the deification of those who are not God; and, these are the legislators of the religion of secularism.”⁵⁷⁵

Despite the fact that legislative assemblies are considered *kufir*, al-Maqdisi and Abu Qatada distinguish between those who participate in (democratic) elections while being aware of the true nature of legislative assemblies, and who nevertheless insist on voting – and who are, therefore, committing *kufir*; and those who participate in elections but are unaware, and therefore, are absolved of their *kufir* because of their ‘ignorance’ (*jahl*). To this effect, al-Maqdisi says, “Whoever elected them (parliamentary representatives), knowingly and for that purpose, have committed *kufir*; because, they have granted these people their representation or power of attorney to represent them in an unbelieving practice; and, therefore have aided, abetted and joined them in the practice of the religion of democracy, which is the rule and law of the people by the people for the people and not the law of God... However, we have excused the masses, the commoners, because they have made an unbelieving choice without that intention. As we all know, many of them are not aware and do not know about these assemblies and their true nature; and they would not have made these choices if they did not think they were legal or legitimate... They do not know better; therefore, they do not mean to, or have the conscious intention of committing an unbelieving act; they mean to do something else.”⁵⁷⁶

Abu Qatada supports al-Maqdisi’s opinion on making this distinction; he says, “The reality of legislative electoral processes, as is the case with ‘their’ constitutions, does not make it very clear to those who are in a place of influence amongst the general public, such as scholars, sheikhs and other community leaders – who remain in a state of ignorance... The excuse of ignorance is real, and with no doubt, a reality... Especially as it exists within this new modernity of which the “*Salaf*” (Righteous Predecessors) did not speak of, in order for it to be clear to the (contemporary) *Ummah*. For, ignorance about this reality is indeed one of the aspects that exonerate one from being subject to this ruling (of being disavowed as *kafir*).”⁵⁷⁷

⁵⁷³ Abu Mohammad al-Maqdisi, “*Hukm al-Musharaka fi Intikhabat al-Majalis al-Tashri’iya fi Bilad al-Kufr al-Asli*” (Lit. “A Ruling on the Participation in Legislative Assembly Elections in Originally Unbelieving (non-Muslim) Countries”); available at <http://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=p86ymspg>.

⁵⁷⁴ From an interview with Abu Mohammad al-Maqdisi, in the “*Nida’ a al-Islam*” magazine, Issue Number 1408.

⁵⁷⁵ Abu Qatada, “*Al-Jihad wa al-Ijtihad...*” (Lit., “The Jihad and Ijtihad...”); op. cit., p. 106.

⁵⁷⁶ Abu Mohammad al-Maqdisi, “*Al-Nukat al-Lawami’ fi Malhouthat al-Jami’*” (Lit. “Illustrious Jokes from Mosque Notes”); available at <http://www.tawhed.ws/f>; pp. 40-41.

⁵⁷⁷ Abu Qatada, “The Jihad and Ijtihad...”; op. cit., p. 108.

“*Al-Kufr bi al-Taghout*” and Stripping Away the Religious and Political Legitimacy of Contemporary Governments

The concept of “*al-Taghout*,” which means the tyrants, or anything worshipped other than God, i.e. all false deities, is one of the fundamental and governing principles in the discourse of Jihadi Salafism. It is the concept most used and employed by the movement to justify the disavowal of contemporary Islamic regimes as unbelieving or apostate. “*Al-Taghout*” covers the entire scope of legislations, systems, laws, and institutions that are not governed by Islamic law (*Sharia*). Indeed, the concept of “*al-Taghout*” encompasses the ruler, the constitution, the laws, democracy, legislative assemblies, and all relative ideologies such as nationalism, pan-Arabism, socialism, capitalism, and extends to all those individuals who do not govern by Islamic law (*Sharia*). According to the Jihadi Salafist interpretation, the principle of “*al-Kufr bi al-Taghout*” (disavowing as the unbelieving of tyrants and of False Deities) is one of the tenets inherent in “*al-Tawhid*”. And, any form of ignorance in the principles of “*al-Tawhid*” is not excused because “*al-Tawhid*” is the foundation of the *da‘wa* of the Prophet and all of God’s Messengers, in the opinion of Jihadi Salafism.

The principle of “*al-Taghout*” is used extensively and concertedly by Jihadi Salafist scholars and theorists as a proof against “all those who situate themselves in the status and seat of the Divine in the faith and in the rule of law.” Many of them use the definition by the Islamic scholar, Shamsudinne Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, as a reference; he says, “‘*Al-Taghout*’ is every aspect in which a human being (servant of God) exceeds the boundaries set for the worshiper, the adherent, and the obedient; for, ‘*al-Taghout*’ is every people that govern by that which was not sent forth by God and His Messenger; and those who follow and worship other than God, and follow the *Taghout* in a path not set forth by God’s wisdom and judgment, or obey it without knowing that obedience is only for God... These are the tyrants and false deities (pl. ‘*al-Tawaghit*’) in the world. And, if you reflect upon this (sin) and reflect upon the situation of the people, you see that more forego the worship of God for worship the *Taghout* instead, and leave the governance and rule of God and His Messenger to be governed and ruled by ‘*al-Taghout*’; and forego obedience and adherence to His Prophet to obey and follow ‘*al-Taghout*’.”⁵⁷⁸

Many statements and declarations made by Sayyid Qutb, ‘Abdullah ‘Azzam, al-Maqdisi, and Abu Qatada emphasize the correlation between “*al-Tawhid*” and the significance of “*al-Kufr bi al-Taghout*” (disavowing as unbelieving the tyrants and False Deities). In terms of the political dimension of “*al-Kufr bi al-Taghout*,” it includes all those persons who claim and take on the right to legislate and govern with that which was not sent forth by God, in addition to all the regimes, the legislation, the laws, the provisions, and any traditions that are not in accordance with Islamic law (*Sharia*).

It appears that the manifest objective of focusing on this notion is to justify stripping away, at the roots, the façade of religious and political legitimacy claimed by contemporary Arab and Muslim governments and, establishing another legal standard tied to notion of the Islamic state and in the Caliphate.

⁵⁷⁸ Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, “*I‘lam al-Muwaq‘een ‘an Rab al-‘Alameen*” (Lit. “Declarations of Those who have become Signatories on Behalf of God Almighty”); Beirut: Dar al-Jabal Publishing House, (1973), 1/73.

On this subject, ‘Abdullah ‘Azzam states, “God has equated governing by ‘*al-Taghout*’ to believing in it; and there is no doubt that believing in ‘*al-Taghout*’ is in itself disbelief in God; and alternatively, disavowing ‘*al-Taghout*’ as *kufr* is in itself faith in God.”⁵⁷⁹ Based on this opinion, anyone who agrees to be governed by that which is not the law of God (*Sharia*) is guilty of the sin of idolatry, as is the case for anyone who governs or rules by that which is not Islamic law (*Sharia*). For governing and being governed are integral to the nature of ‘*al-Tawhid*’ and governing and governance is only for God, and the sole right of God.

In his role as scholar and theorist, al-Maqdisi takes “*al-Taghout*” to a step further in the literature of Jihadi Salafism by his extensive use of this notion in his discourse, and by extending it to all those who govern or are governed by that which is not Islamic law (*Sharia*). He considers this a principle condition and tenet of the faith, and relates it to the kind of *kufr* of which ignorance cannot be excused – even if the one who is committing this sin is weak and lacks knowledge. He says, “If one cannot change this reality or declare one’s innocence of them, or reveal the *kufr* in their laws, and cannot call on the people to do the same, then one must, at the very least, disavow this “*Taghout*” for oneself, and be innocent of its kin and its guardians in order to fulfill the requirement of “*al-Tawhid*”, which is the right of God over his servants. And, teach your children that it is *kufr* and to loathe it; teach them loyalty to God, His Messenger, His laws, His wisdom and His judgment, and to His faithful. Teach them to disavow all those who govern by this “*Taghout*” and in whom “*al-Taghout*” has become instilled. Teach them to loathe all those who defend it, protect it, and enslave the people in it – from governments to emirs, to presidents, kings, or armies and the rest – even if they may be of the closest relations.”⁵⁸⁰

Accordingly, al-Maqdisi considers disavowing state constitutions and statutory laws as *kufr* as part of the requirements of “*al-Tawhid*”; he says, “You are required, before anything else, to disavow this ‘*Taghout*’ – the constitution and its laws – as *kufr*; to loathe it, to fight it and to claim innocence of it; to not consent to or surrender to anything but the rule and governance of God alone; so that you may fulfill the true meaning of ‘There is no God but God’”.⁵⁸¹

Al-Maqdisi stresses that “*al-Taghout*” covers all state legislations and laws; he says, “It is blatant idolatry to submit to ‘*al-Taghout*’; and ‘*al-Taghout*’ includes every legislation other than that of God Almighty.”⁵⁸²

Furthermore, according to al-Maqdisi, “*al-Taghout*” does not include only the ruler and the ruled, but also any person who violates the boundaries and limits set (by the religion) and the omnipotence and right of God in faith and in law; he says, “The one who commits what is called ‘*al-Taghout*’ is any one person who positions him/herself as a legislator in juxtaposition with God; whether he/she is governor or governed; or whether he/she is a representative in the legislative authority or allows another to represent him/her by election... Because, by doing so, he/she has violated the boundaries and limits created by God Almighty as he/she was created as a servant of God.”⁵⁸³

⁵⁷⁹ ‘Abdullah ‘Azzam, “*Al-‘Aqida wa Atharaha fi Binaa’ al-Jeel*” (Lit. “The Doctrine and Its Influence in Building the Next Generation”), p. 57.

⁵⁸⁰ Abu Mohammad al-Maqdisi, “*Kashf al-Niqab al-Shari’at al-Ghab*” (Lit. “Removing the Shroud (Veil) from the Law of the Jungle”); available at <http://www.tawhed.ws/f/>; p. 2.

⁵⁸¹ *Ibid*; p. 1.

⁵⁸² *Ibid*.

⁵⁸³ Abu Mohammad al-Maqdisi, “*Al-Dimuqratiya Din*” (Lit. “Democracy is a Religion”); op. cit., p. 5.

Al-Maqdisi is critical of all Islamist movements that commit to or abide by democracy and statutory law, such as the Muslim Brotherhood. He argues that “Their strongest form of resistance for them is this ‘legal’ opposition that they carry on with, without violating or overstepping the state’s law... For them, ‘*al-Taghout*’ is in itself inviolable, untouchable; they dare not approach it.”⁵⁸⁴

Abu Qatada al-Filastini’s position on the matter is no different from that of al-Maqdisi. He also disavows as *kuffar* those who govern or are governed by “*al-Taghout*”, and considers all the rulers and leaders in the Muslim world today as “*Tawagheet*” (in this sense, “Oppressors; Tyrants”), guilty of committing “*al-Taghout*” by replacing Islamic law with the statutory laws through which they govern. He adds, “Those who renounce God are those who claim and allege that they are of the faithful, meanwhile they submit to governing or being governed with that which is not the rule of God; for, this is what God Almighty calls ‘*al-Taghout*’... Therefore, those governors or rulers who have substituted the Law of the Merciful are indeed, *Kuffar* and *Murtaddin* (apostates).”⁵⁸⁵

Thus, Abu Qatada makes it obligatory to fight and carry out the Jihad against those “*Tawagheet*,” and calls on Muslims to claim innocence of them and disavow them; he says, “We will continue to celebrate and declare our joy at every act of Jihad in which the *kuffar* are fought, killed or tormented... We will continue to celebrate and declare our joy at every act of martyrdom in which any bastion of the bastions of ‘*al-Taghout*’ are destroyed, and at every splendid act in which the ‘*Taghout*’ is repulsed and warded off.”⁵⁸⁶

***Al-Walaa’ wa al-Baraa’* in the Movement’s Politics and in Reinforcing Loyalty**

The principle of “*al-Walaa’ wa al-Baraa’*” (Allegiance and Disavowal) also represents a central concept for the followers of Jihadi Salafism. The general meaning behind this notion is in its first part: “*al-Walaa’*” or “loyalty and allegiance”, which is the commitment to the emotion and the conduct of loving God, ones’ parents, all Muslims who are truly committed and of the community of “*Muwahhidin*” (the believers in the one God; the true adherents of “*al-Tawhid*”); and in its second part, “*al-Baraa’*” or “disavowal and disassociation”, which entails disavowing and animosity towards the idolaters (*Mushrikin*), and towards sins, wrong doings, and the *Tawagheet* who go against and violate the laws of God Almighty (*Sharia*).

Jihadi Salafist literature considers “*al-Walaa’ wa al-Baraa’*” as one of the key concepts connected to the doctrine of Islam. For them, it represents a principle criterion for measuring the extent of the sincerity and genuineness of a Muslim’s faith and his/her commitment to Islam.

Indeed, the importance and centrality of this concept in the Jihadi Salafist discourse is evident in a book written and published by al-Maqdisi dedicated entirely to a meticulously detailed explanation of this concept, in content and in essence, to the members and supporters of the movement – the book has also been readily available to the general public.

⁵⁸⁴ From an interview with Abu Mohammad al-Maqdisi in the “Nida’a al-Islam” magazine, Issue Number 1408.

⁵⁸⁵ Abu Qatada, “*Hukm Allah Ta’ala fi al-Hukkam al-Mubadileen li Shari’at al-Rahman*” (Lit. “God’s Ruling on Rulers who Govern Not by the Laws of the Merciful”); available at <http://www.tawhed.ws/f>.

⁵⁸⁶ Abu Qatada, “*Bayna Manhajain*” (Lit., “Between Two Methods”); Number 94, op. cit., p. 3; available at <http://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=et3buxOw>.

The book, entitled, “*Millat Ibrahim wa Asaleeb al-Tughaa fi Tamyee’iha*” (Abraham’s Creed: and the Ways in which the Oppressors Dilute It) is introduced with revolutionary terminology, equivalent to a call to relentlessly awaken and arouse the emotions of individuals, and persuade them to persevere in their adherence to the ideology of Jihadi Salafism. In it, al-Maqdisi says, “Disavow the Oppressors and false deities of every time and of every place... these Oppressors – rulers, emirs, caesars, chieftains, pharaohs, and kings – and their injudicious counselors and misguiding scholars, their guardians, their armies, their police, their bodyguards, and their intelligence and security apparatuses. Say to all of them, at once and for all, ‘I am innocent of you’ (I disavow you) and all your ungodly worship and all that you follow without God’... Say, ‘I disavow and am innocent of all your laws, your paradigms and methods, your constitutions, your petty principles... your governments, your courts, your slogans and your rotten flags’. Say, ‘We disavow you as unbelieving and the confrontation and loathing between you and us has begun and will forever continue until you believe in God alone.”⁵⁸⁷

Al-Maqdisi places the essence of what is meant by “*al-Walaa’ wa al-Baraa’*” at the center of the requirements of “*al-Tawhid*” and the Muslim faith; and this ‘essence’ entails two aspects: “First: The disavowal of and innocence from the oppressors and all false deities worshipped other than God Almighty. This disavowal is a disavowal as *kufir*; and this disavowal cannot be deferred and cannot be delayed... It must be revealed and declared from the start. Second: The disavowal of and innocence from idolatrous nations and the people in themselves if they insist on continuing in their path of delusion and error.”⁵⁸⁸

On his part, Abu Qatada also places much emphasis on the principle of “*al-Walaa’ wa al-Baraa’*” and its importance in distinguishing between a Muslim and a *kafir* – a distinction which is inherent in the principle, in its requirements and in its provisions; he says, “Of the requirements inherent in the doctrine of *al-Walaa’ wa al-Baraa’* is the Muslim’s obligation to confront as an enemy all *kuffar* and hypocrites (*munafiqin*), no matter their nationality, race or language. For, in this matter there are only two camps: The first camp is of the faithful and the community of ‘*Muwahhidun*’ (believers in the one God), no matter their race, color or language – whether they be Arab or non-Arab –; and the other camp is of the *kuffar* and hypocrites, no matter their race, color or language – whether they be Arab or Jew or Christian or of a sect deviant from the righteous path, or followers of the misguided, such as ‘*al-Rafida’*’ (a term used for those who follow the Shiite sect), and other modern unbelieving sects such as the Arab Nationlists and the Baathists.”⁵⁸⁹

What is evident in the discussions and deliberations of both al-Maqdisi and Abu Qatada around this principle of “*al-Walaa’ wa al-Baraa’*” is that both utilize it for the purpose of arousing and mobilizing individuals in the movement, and for stressing and reinforcing their link to the ideology of Jihadi Salafism as the only true and proper doctrine in the face of those who violate the true faith.

⁵⁸⁷ Abu Mohammad al-Maqdisi, “*Millat Ibrahim wa Da’wat al-Anbiyaa’ wa al-Mursaleen wa Asaleeb al-Tughat fi Tamiyi’iha*” (Lit. “Abraham’s Creed: and the Ways in which the Oppressors Dilute It”), p. 1; available at <http://www.tawhed.ws/f>.

⁵⁸⁸ Ibid; p. 22.

⁵⁸⁹ Declaration of a group of scholars entitled, “*Bayan Munasara li al-Mujahidin al-Murabitin fi Aknaf Bayt al-Maqdis*” (Lit. “The Declaration of Support for the Mujahidin in the Folds of the Holy House (‘*Bayt al-Maqdis i..e Jerusalem*’)); p. 3.

This strategy perhaps reveals the premise for the attack Abu Qatada launched against the American-led effort to create or produce “Moderate Islam”; on this matter he says, “Because Islam is the historical enemy of those who represent Satan on this earth... The enemy found “Moderated Islam” as a means with which to deal with (the true) Islam; and this means an Islam that is devoid of its content and the essence of the doctrine of ‘*al-Walaa’ wa al-Baraa’*,’ of which one of its applications is the Jihad for the sake of God Almighty – and it is the core and essence of this doctrine... It is an Islam ‘moderated’ and ‘amended’ on the basis of co-existing with the other; not the co-existence of one equal with the other or a reciprocal co-existence, but rather the co-existence between the slave and his master.”⁵⁹⁰

Distinguishing between “*Dar al-Islam*” and “*Dar al-Kufr*” to Substantiate Religious Rulings and Legal Opinions

In line with other central concepts governing the discourse of Jihadi Salafism is their way of splitting countries and communities into two dichotomic and mutually exclusive camps: Those that belong to the “*Dar al-Islam*” (the “House or Abode of Islam”) and those that belong to “*Dar al-Kufr*” (the “Abode of Unbelief”). The objective in recalling this Islamic tradition and applying it to today’s reality is, on the one hand, to ensure that the ‘façade’ of authority and legitimacy of several contemporary Arab and Muslim countries and governments is exposed, and on the other, to justify and substantiate certain provisions, rulings, and religious opinions (*fatwas*) regarding Jihad and the armed struggle against these governments.

Judging contemporary Arab and Muslim regimes as unbelieving, and the accusation that “*Dar al-Islam*” has been overrun by *kufr* constitute the basis and core justification for the Jihadi Salafist revolutionary ideology’s notion of Jihad and the armed struggle. Indeed, the ultimate objective delineated in this revolutionary ideology is to besiege the Arab and Muslim governments, overturn them, and establish the Caliphate state in which Islamic law (*Sharia*) will finally be applied. This final goal can only be accomplished, in their opinion, by a strategy of armed Jihad, which will pass through different, progressive phases that ultimately will lead to the achievement of the political objectives that the movement strives for.

Al-Maqdisi introduces the concept of “*Dar al-Islam*” and “*Dar al-Kufr*” as follows, “In accordance with the opinions of religious scholars (*fuqaha’a*), we call the ‘House or Abode’ (*dar*) that governs by un-Islamic legislation, and in which the leadership belongs to the unbelieving *kuffar* and their laws, as ‘*Dar al-Kufr*’ (the ‘Abode of Unbelief’). On the other hand, the term ‘*Dar al-Islam*’ (the ‘Abode of Islam’) is used to define the ‘abode’ in which the laws and ways of Islam are upheld; and even if the majority of the members of this House happen to be unbelieving, they are still obliged and subject to Islamic law as *Dhimmi*s (non-Muslims under the protection of the Islamic state) – it is the Abode in which Islamic law is safeguarded and maintained...”⁵⁹¹ Al-Maqdisi finishes the statement with the opinion that the majority of states in the world today fall under the category of what is called the “*Dar al-Kufr*”, whether they are original (i.e. foreign, non-Muslim by origin)

⁵⁹⁰ Abu Qatada al-Filastini, “*Al-Islam wa Amreeka... ‘Alaqaq al-Sayf Yasna’uha*” (Lit. “Islam and America... A Relationship Produced by the Sword”), p. 9; available at <http://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=rpsqsfza>.

⁵⁹¹ Abu Mohammad al-Maqdisi, “*Hathihi ‘Aqidatuna*” (Lit. “This is Our Doctrine”), p. 31; available at <http://www.tawhed.ws/f>.

unbelievers or are so as a matter of contingency and temporary incident. However, al-Maqdisi confirms that “just by virtue of being a resident of this ‘House’ does not necessarily entail that one is a *kafir*”.⁵⁹²

From the point of view of Abu Qatada, the Muslim world today can be described as being both “*Dar al-Islam*” and “*Dar al-Kufr*,” based on the fact that the kin and population of these “Abodes” are in origin Muslim; unless *kufr* has emerged amongst its kin. He says, “The ‘Abode’ and lands of the Muslims, which govern by the rule of *kufr* is an ‘Abode’ that fits both descriptions, that of ‘*Dar al-Kufr*’ and that of ‘*Dar al-Islam*’. In other words, each person in this ‘Abode’ can be categorized as thus: the Muslim is Muslim and the *kafir* is the *kafir*; and the origins of all its kin is Islam, whether or not this condition is manifest or latent.”⁵⁹³

However, Abu Qatada sees that the ‘abode’ can transform from an ‘abode of “*Islam*” to an abode of “*Kufr*” if it is dominated by an external enemy, of *kafir* origins (originally non-Muslim) or if it is dominated by an internal enemy who is *kafir* by contingency or temporary conditions. Thus, it is obligatory to fight these enemies in order to restore *Dar al-Islam*; he says, “If the ruler commits apostasy, it becomes legal and obligatory for all Muslims, without exception and without excuse, to rise up against him and oust him... And this provision, or ruling, has been agreed to by every sect in the community of the Sunnah, without exception or debate. For the domination of the apostates over the lands of the Muslims is due to the original *kuffar* (foreigners/strangers, i.e. Westerners) who entered Muslim lands with their might and thorns; and, it matters not whether they are original *kuffar* or apostates, fighting them both until God’s religion is restored is a duty and obligation for all, without exception... And the swords will come out blazing from their sheaths, and the shrine will be preserved, and the enemy will be shamed and defeated.”⁵⁹⁴

In his opinion, due to the *kufr* and the apostasy of all the contemporary Arab and Muslim regimes and the fact that the concept of the *Ummah* has been lost, Abu Qatada reaches the conclusion that the obligation of Jihad and the armed struggle today is necessary in order to restore the chaste “*Dar al-Islam*” and the Caliphate. Also, in his view, the *kufr* and apostasy that has permeated throughout these countries is due to the triumph of unbelieving democracy and its ungodly laws over God’s law (*Sharia*) and to the battle being waged against Islam and Muslims.⁵⁹⁵

The “Victorious Sect”: How the Movement Distinguishes Itself from Other Islamist Movements

The scholars and theorists of Jihadi Salafism recall a series of Prophetic narratives and stories about the Prophet to emphasize the concept of “*al-Ta’ifa al-Mansoura*” or the “Victorious Sect,” and to

⁵⁹² Abu Mohammad al-Maqdisi, “*Al-Risala al-Thalathiniya...*” (Lit. “The 30th Letter...”), op. cit., p. 92; available at <http://www.tawhed.ws/f>.

⁵⁹³ Abu Qatada, “*Ma’alim al-Ta’ifa al-Mansoura*” (Lit. “The Signs of the Victorious Sect”), available at <http://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=jqmdm3ht>.

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁵ Abu Qatada al-Filastini, “The Jihad and Ijtihad...”; op. cit., pp. 93-109.

instill the unique authority and legitimacy of this “Sect” to which the Jihadi Salafists believe they belong.⁵⁹⁶

Al-Maqdisi describes this sect as follows, “It is the sect that represents the champions of this religion in every era; and it is the sect of Jihad and of armed struggle; it strives to make triumphant God’s religion prevail over everything else and to make His religion victorious in all manners of victory.”⁵⁹⁷

Abu Qatada agrees with al-Maqdisi’s view, pointing to the Prophetic identification of Jihad with this sect; Abu Qatada says, “These Hadith (Prophetic sayings) indicate that the ‘Victorious Sect’, praised by the Messenger of God (Peace Be Upon Him) has as its prerequisite, or identifying mark, its willingness to fight for the sake of God and for the triumph of His religion. And, it is a sect that remains steadfast throughout time, and it is a sect whose presence has never been interrupted... It stands by the truth; and thus, its followers are the followers of the Righteous *Salaf*. It is guided only by the Holy Book and the Sunnah; and it rejects that which is alien to it, and is pure in its commitment to the truth.”⁵⁹⁸

By emphasizing the prerequisite or precondition of Jihad in identifying the “Victorious Sect,” it is evident that both Abu Qatada and al-Maqdisi aim to show that Jihadi Salafism has a distinct identity. At the same time, they use the same rationale to delegitimize other groups and movements. Indeed, Abu Qatada uses this reasoning to inflict his assault on the Muslim Brotherhood, traditional Salafists, and other groups because they have failed to adopt Jihad as a fundamental cornerstone in their ideology and practice; and, in his opinion, the cause for their deviation is due to these groups of Salafists’ incomplete espousal of the Islamic paradigm and method (*manhaj*).⁵⁹⁹

To further prove that Jihadi Salafism is the only legitimate representation of the “Victorious Sect” today, Abu Qatada and al-Maqdisi have aggressively attacked any Islamist groups (who, in their opinion, are in violation of these basic principles), from the traditional Salafists to the Muslim Brotherhood, and all who differ with and from the jihadi Salafists.⁶⁰⁰

In result, Abu Qatada reaches the conclusion that engaging in the ranks of the Jihadi Salafist groups is actually not an option, but an imperative. Abu Qatada emphasizes that the religion will not triumph except through their presence. In his words, “Muslims must realize that joining these groups is a self-evident truth, and not a seasonal event. It is an obligation and duty for each and every Muslim; for it is the obligation and duty of every Muslim to partake in the work of Jihad – either in the calling (*da’wa*) to Jihad or in preparing for it, or in partaking in it. And, one may not be released from this obligation and duty without proper (Islamic) legal cause – for example, to be

⁵⁹⁶ From the Prophet’s Hadith, “A group of my *Ummah* shall remain steadfast, in the truth, victorious, unharmed by those who oppose them, and do not support them, until death or until the Day of Resurrection”, [Sahih al-Bukhari, no. 71 and 3641, and Sahih Muslim, no. 1920]; there are various versions of this Hadith and a discussion on its meanings and the concept of the “Victorious Sect” that are available at <http://www.sunniforum.com/forum/archive/index.php?t-3287.html>.

⁵⁹⁷ Al-Maqdisi, “*Hadithi ‘Aqidatuna*” (Lit., “This is Our Creed”); op. cit., p. 63.

⁵⁹⁸ Abu Qatada al-Filastini, “*Ma’alim al-Ta’ifa al-Mansoura*” (Lit., “The Signs of the Victorious Sect”); op. cit.

⁵⁹⁹ Abu Qatada al-Filastini, “Jihad and Ijtihad...”; op. cit., p. 218.

⁶⁰⁰ Ibid, pp. 216-218; also refer to the text of Abu Mohammad al-Maqdisi’s “*Tahthir al-Bariya min Dhalalat al-Firqa al-Jamiya wa al-Madkhaliya*” (Lit., “Warning the People of the Misguidance of the sects of Al-Jamiya and the Al-Madkhaliya”), available at <http://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=z8k2hrad>.

exempt of this obligation and duty, a person must fit the specific criteria of one of the legal exemptions defined by the gracious law (*Sharia*). For any notion or ideal cannot materialize in this life except through the work of the ‘*Jama’ah*’ (the collective group,) who are the first building block in the structure of implementing any work or any task.”⁶⁰¹

Jihad: The Ideological Backbone of the Movement

“*Al-Tawhid*” and Jihad are the two fundamental cornerstones used by the movement’s scholars and theorists in defining the specific identity of Jihadi Salafism. Indeed, these two distinguishing features are the main elements employed in differentiating this movement from all the other movements and groups.

Pure, unadulterated *Tawhid* is the creed that every individual in the movement upholds. Indeed, this notion or creed is positioned within a political framework that is inextricably tied in with the principle of governance by Islamic law (*Sharia*). Hence, it is also in line with the disavowal as *kuffar* all leaders who do not govern in accordance with Islamic law (*Sharia*), and all laws that violate it (the *Sharia*). And, since reality today is as such, an ‘Age of Ignorance’ (*al-Jahiliya*) where the governance of “*al-Taghout*” has prevailed, therefore, the only strategy that will be effective in bringing about the required change and establish the Islamic state (the Caliphate) is the strategy of “Jihad under the banner of the illuminating light of *al-Tawhid*.”

Based on this view, scholars and theorists of Jihadi Salafism reject any other path or instrument for effecting change, whether that be parliaments, political parties, or any other doctrine or creed that has any kind of direct or indirect contact with the “political tyranny” (“*al-Taghout*”) that governs Muslim countries today.

The literature of ‘Abdullah ‘Azzam was particularly important in establishing and empowering the importance and centrality of the notion of Jihad in the change process and in rooting this strategy within contemporary Islamist activism. ‘Azzam’s writings emphasized that the path of Jihad was one that could not be avoided, even if it was the more difficult and more costly path.

However, ‘Azzam’s literature, and in more general terms, his real life experience was focused on confronting foreign military occupations (especially in Afghanistan), and on several and specific occasions, focused on the role of “Jihad” in confronting *Jahiliya* governments. However, the fact that he was a follower of the school of thought of the Muslim Brotherhood, and in specific, the Qutbian school of thought (based on the teachings and scholarship of Sayyid Qutb), prevented him from going as far in his convictions as the Jihadi Salafist school that views Jihad as the “only” path, even on effecting change on the internal front.⁶⁰²

On the other hand, Abu Qatada played a very significant role in positioning Jihad at the core of the Jihadi Salafist ideology, and in introducing the movement’s theoretical and political identity into local and international political contexts. He argues, “The foundations of *kufir*, in all its forms,

⁶⁰¹ Abu Qatada al-Filastini, “Jihad and Ijtihad...”; op. cit., p. 93.

⁶⁰² ‘Abdullah ‘Azzam, “*Fi al-Jihad: Fiqh wa Ijtihad*” (Lit. “Jurisprudence and Scholarly Reasoning in the issue of Jihad”); The Martyr Azzam Media Center, Peshawar, Pakistan, p. 7.

cannot be shaken or cast out except through armed struggle.”⁶⁰³ Abu Qatada continues to the point that the obligation and duty of Jihad is upon “every Muslim in the Muslim world”, or what he calls *Dar al-Ridda* (the “Abode of Apostasy”) in order to “restore the link of unity for the world community of Muslims that has been displaced and dispersed, or, in other words, to restore the lost state of the Caliphate”.⁶⁰⁴

And, despite the consensus between all the scholars and theorists of Jihadi Salafism throughout the world on the “obligation and duty of Jihad,” and on Jihad being the only strategy to bring about the required change, they differ on many key issues within this scope. Of these issues, the most prominent is the question of priority: Was Jihad to be carried out against the near enemy ‘within’ (the Arab and Muslim governments) or the ‘far enemy (the United States of America and the West). Other points of contention include the questions of the scale of Jihad, and what are the practical conditions and requirements necessary for initiating Jihadi activities. Finally, much debate has ensued around issues such as what methods and approaches should be adopted in implementing their work, for example, should they be using suicide operations, and what are the parameters of the theory of “*Tataross*” [the ‘barricading’ principle in certain Islamic religious interpretations where the death of civilians is exonerated if they happen to be present at a legitimate target (i.e. legitimizes certain civilian collateral damages)] as well as other such problematic issues.

From his point of view, Abu Mohammad al-Maqqdisi underlines the necessity, centrality, and duty of Jihad in the change process, but in the context prioritizing fighting the Arab governments and regimes.⁶⁰⁵ He justifies this priority with the rationale that these governments and regimes are apostate and unbelieving. However, he adds one very significant qualification which is: It is necessary to create the conditions necessary for the Jihad, or creating a “base for Jihad” that can actually carryout the armed struggle, and can handle its needs and its ramifications. In his opinion, therefore, Jihad must be preceded by a phase of *da’wa*, calling people forth to the creed of Jihadi Salafism and creating the appropriate conditions and grounds necessary for it.⁶⁰⁶

Despite al-Maqqdisi’s espousal of the idea of collective work as a movement or group on preparing the grounds in the strategic design for achieving comprehensive and complete change, he supports and endorses individual acts of Jihad. He makes the case that, “This field of work requires a focused, collective group effort that is serious and complementary, and which requires preparation, planning, and logistics before all other types of work. And it is this work that should be given priority over individual efforts. Nevertheless, in saying that, it does not mean that individual efforts in Jihad should be voided and negated; that is, if those efforts are based on a proper paradigm and approach, and are based in sound religious understanding, a realistic vision, and in a balanced knowledge of what brings interest and what brings the opposite.”⁶⁰⁷

As previously stated, although al-Maqqdisi did sanction suicide missions or operations, he nonetheless refused their extensive use and insisted that they be carried out only under specific

⁶⁰³ Abu Qatada al-Filastini, “Jihad and Ijtihad...”; op. cit., p. 87.

⁶⁰⁴ Ibid, p. 93.

⁶⁰⁵ Abu Mohammad al-Maqqdisi, “*Hathihni ‘Aqidatuna*” (Lit., “This is Our Creed”); op. cit., pp. 33-35.

⁶⁰⁶ Refer to the private interview conducted by Mohammad Abu Rumman with al-Maqqdisi; op. cit.

⁶⁰⁷ Abu Mohammad al-Maqqdisi, “*Liqa’ min Khalf al-Qudban*” (Lit. “A Meeting Behind Bars”); from an interview with the magazine “*Nida’ a al-Islam*”, issue no. 1408, op. cit., pp. 16-17.

conditions. In his book, “*Waqafaat ma’ Thamarat al-Jihad’*” (Taking Pause at the Fruits of Jihad), he used religious jurisprudence (*fiqh*) to rationalize and specify these conditions and the use of certain instruments or approaches by Jihadi groups.

And although Abu Qatada al-Filastini agrees with al-Maqdisi on prioritizing the fight against the Arab and Muslim governments and regimes, he warns against neglecting the battle against the ‘outside’ enemy (the United States of America and other countries that are enemies of Islam). He insists that, although the priority is for fighting the near enemy as represented by the Arab and Muslim regimes, there is a connection between the two (enemies); for, the Arab and Muslim regimes would not exist without the support of the foreign regimes.⁶⁰⁸

In drawing the broad lines of the long-term strategy for Jihadi groups and movements in overthrowing the Arab governments and changing the prevailing reality, Abu Qatada differentiates between the “Spiteful Thorn” (*Shawkat al-Nikaya*) and the “Empowerment Thorn” (*Shawkat al-Tamkeen*) wherein he states that there is no doubt that, in the beginning, the confrontation with the regimes must be carried out using the “Spiteful Thorn”; and this stage will entail an accelerating use of violence that utilizes a gang-warfare approach. Afterwards, the stage of “Empowerment” will come, in which the people will be governed by Islam by all means and with the use of force if necessary. He says, “Reaching the stage of ‘Empowerment’ by means of the repeated use of the method and tactics of the ‘Spiteful Thorn’ does not mean we are concerned with satisfying the people by providing them with housing, bread, and employment. We are not in need of getting their approval or their blessing on how they are governed and with what they are governed... For, our *Emir* will govern over them, whether they like it or not. And, we will govern over them with Islam. And, we will decapitate the head raised in opposition to this, because we have been empowered by God alone; and we will not reach ‘Empowerment’ by way of a decision from a ‘White House’ or a black one, but rather through our faith in and worship of God alone and through our disavowal of all the Oppressors (*Tawagheet*) on this earth.”⁶⁰⁹

⁶⁰⁸ Abu Qatada al-Filastini, “*Qital al-Murtadeen wa al-Kuffar wa al-Ta’awun ma’ al-Jama’aat*” (Lit. “Fighting the Apostates and Unbelievers, and Cooperation with Groups and Movements”); available at <http://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=ujnvgr4o>. It should also be noted that Abu Qatada’s position on this subject gave great leeway to justifying the killing of the women and children of members of the Algerian Armed Forces; refer to: “*Fatwa Haama ‘Athimat al-Sha’i*” (Lit. “An Important *Fatwa* (Religious Edict) of Vital Significance”); the “al-Ansar” Magazine, Issue Number 88; March 16, 1995.

⁶⁰⁹ Abu Qatada al-Filastini, “Jihad and Ijtihad...”; op. cit., pp. 175-176.

5. The Social Characteristics of the Movement and its Methods of Mobilization

Despite the fact that Jihadi Salafism has been able to secure a foothold in the Jordanian social and political scene and, in the past few years, was able to make a significant presence for itself, it has not been able to penetrate the core of society and its social fabric. Nor has the movement become ‘socially acceptable’ or perceived as legitimate in the eyes of mainstream society. Instead, it has managed to remain active and effective only at the margins of society, where it is able to target and influence angry, discontented young men that ache for a fundamental change in their reality.

In this part of the study, we will take a closer more in-depth look at the nature of the society of the “*Muwahiddin*” (Those who uphold belief in the one God, as the followers of this movement prefer to call themselves), and at the geographic and social pockets that represent their greatest concentration. The study will attempt to acquire a better understanding of their social characteristics, the nature of their organization and their activism as well as the instruments and methodologies they use to recruit followers and mobilize support. It will also look at and analyze the conditions that have assisted in their rise and evolution as movement and in the expansion of their activities in certain communities.

We will attempt to analyze and determine the numerous variables and indicators tied to certain social characteristics and features of the movement and its members. At the heart of this analysis, we will look at the general social characteristics and features of the individuals who have been tried before the Jordanian State Security Court; first, by conducting a general overview of the national security cases tried before the courts; and second, by looking at the cities and towns that have witnessed a larger percentage of incidents and cases related to the Jihadi Salafist movement. Finally, we will track several testimonies and personal accounts of people close to the movement or who monitor its activities and membership.

Prior to proceeding to the next section of this study, it is important to note that we are not dealing with an institutional or hierarchical phenomenon, or groups of individuals that work out in the open, that one can meet with and speak to in public, or in an open and uninhibited way. For, in addition to the secrecy and gelatinous nature of the movement, the security surveillance that the movement is subject to makes the task of this kind of research and of producing concrete data, criteria, and conclusions all the more difficult. This task is further complicated by the fact that the state does not provide proper databases of information on the movement, which means clear indices, precise data, and exact numbers are either inaccessible or not available at all. Indeed, there is a palpable shortfall in the information and databases available and in use today; furthermore, whatever little information is available has a tendency to be ‘officially monopolized’.

The Geography of Evolution and Expansion

There is a general consensus among those close to the movement and those who closely monitor its activities that the movement’s heaviest concentration and highest rate of expansion is taking place in five principle areas and cities; these include several areas in the capital Amman (particularly

areas in East Amman that are of a more popular character) and the cities of al-Zarqa, al-Salt, Ma'an and Irbid. This deduction is substantiated by several indicators, the most important of which are the number of arrests, incidents, and cases brought before the State Security Court, or with participating in armed struggles outside the country.

The city of al-Zarqa is considered the movement's principle stronghold and one of the cities where the movement has a particularly large presence. Indeed, the nucleus of what later became known as the "*Bay'at al-Imam*" (Pledging Allegiance to the Imam) group was formed there; and both al-Maqdisi and al-Zarqawi as well as many of their comrades were residents of al-Zarqa. The importance of this city for the movement is clear in the sheer numbers of cases and individuals from al-Zarqa, who have been tried before the State Security Court, as well as in the number of arrests and prosecutions of individuals from there, and the number of volunteers who left al-Zarqa to take up Jihad outside Jordan.

Sharing this status is the city of al-Salt, where numerous individuals have been tried before the State Security Court (for operations such as the attempted assassination of a Jordanian intelligence officer). A number of local Jihadi Salafists from al-Salt fought and were killed in Iraq, or have been arrested, or have committed individual acts that went to trial (for example, Mu'ammarr al-Jaghbeer, who was tried in the case of the Foley assassination and for slander, etc.).

The city of Irbid has also witnessed the presence of this phenomenon, especially in the (Palestinian) refugee camps where several individuals, who are either from the movement or are sympathizers with the movement, have been arrested. Indeed, this city and its outlying camps have had their share of their manifestations of Jihadi Salafism.

The city of Ma'an has also witnessed an increased presence of this phenomenon, as well as its share in arrests of individuals belonging to the movement. Several incidents bear witness to the movement's presence and proliferation in Ma'an in the form of groups that carry the Jihadi Salafist ideology and advocate its way of thinking. Several of the sons of Ma'an have been charged in cases tried before the State Security Court; and, members of the movement have attempted to carry out numerous (yet limited) operations in Ma'an in the past few years.⁶¹⁰

In the meantime, the level of the social presence of the movement in the capital Amman is not as clear – although numerous incidents and cases indicate that this presence does exist (such as the incidents involving the "Cells" (*Khalayaa*) organization and before that "The Army of Mohammad" (*Jaysh Muhammad*) particularly in the al-Wihdat Palestinian refugee camp). What presence there is seems to be concentrated mainly in the poorer districts of Eastern and Southern Amman, with almost no traces to be found in Western Amman, which is a more economically up-scale and wealthy area of neighborhoods.

The movement's presence in other areas is also not so clear in public and social settings, such as al-Mafraq governorate (where the *Tantheem al-Mafraq* was established) and the al-Baq'a refugee

⁶¹⁰ See Rana al-Sabbagh, "*Al-Urdun wa al-Takfiriyyun bayna al-Amni wa al-Tammawi wa al-Siyasi*" (Lit. "Jordan and the Excommunicators (Takfiris): Between Security, Development, and Political Dimensions"); al-Arab al-Yawm Jordanian daily newspaper, October 7, 2007; available at http://www.alarabalyawm.net/print.php?articles_id=2644.

camp (where the “Jordanian Afghans” were organized and the case of the attempted bombing of the Baq’aa General Intelligence Department building took place.

It is difficult to estimate the size of the Jihadi Salafist movement in Jordan with little evidence and documentation to corroborate a definitive number for its membership. Some official sources have claimed that the movement had around 800 active members at the turn of the 21st century. However, it appears that the situation and the numbers clearly changed after the occupation of Iraq, which created fertile political grounds for the movement. Furthermore, the flourishing “Electronic Jihad” and the numerous sites tied to al-Qaeda and Jihadi ideology and thinking that have sprung up on the Internet have helped create new communication channels and instruments for mobilizing support and enhancing the movement’s presence.

Official sources have disclosed figures that show almost 1,000 individuals got involved in the fighting in Iraq during the war and after the occupation. And, if it is problematic to claim that all these individuals were members or supporters of the movement, the ability and success of Al-Qaeda in Iraq in absorbing and mobilizing newcomers in the past has likely helped convert a large number of returnees to Jihadi Salafism and its religious and political postures.⁶¹¹

Other indicators that help form a better picture about the size of this phenomenon and the extent of its proliferation are certain social occasions specific to the members and supporters of the movement, such as funerals and wakes, weddings and certain religious occasions (such as Friday sermons and special sermons during Eid holidays). Furthermore, the members of this movement are careful in maintaining a certain physical appearance, such as certain robe-gowns, the length and shape of beards that they don and so on. All in all, persons present at some of these “occasions” estimate that the number of the movement’s members as reaching anywhere from between 1,000 to 2,000 individuals, which is an estimate quite similar to the official estimate.

Another essential factor to keep in mind when considering the size and proliferation of the movement is that these measures are not absolute and defined, and are not in the same degree of adherence and commitment to the movement’s membership. The movement is made up of groups that tend to vary and fluctuate... They may expand suddenly, and shrink in size or disintegrate just as quickly. Furthermore, not every member or supporter has the same level of commitment to the movement’s vision, political positions, and religious and social views. There are believers and sympathizers; there are people who become temporarily involved; and there are those who strongly believe and actively participate in the movement – although many do so in a most secretive manner and without unduly exposing themselves to others.

It is without a doubt that the security services’ crackdowns, arrests, and heavy surveillance have their share of influence on the fluctuations in the size and proliferation of the movement from one period to the next. Every time the security ‘noose’ is tightened around the movement, many of its followers and individuals leave the movement; and the size keeps on shrinking until the security services loosen their reings, at which time the movement begins to expand all over again.

⁶¹¹ See Rana al-Sabbagh, “*Al-Urdun fi Da’irat al-Istihdaf bayna Baqaya al-Mujahidin fi Afghanistan ila al-‘Iraq*” (Lit. “Jordan in the Targeted by remaining Mujahidin from Afghanistan to Iraq”), al-Arab al-Yawm Jordanian daily newspaper, April 8, 2007; available at http://www.alarabalyawm.net/print.php?articles_id=1037.

The Movement's Image and Organizational Links

According to indicators, data, and testimonies available, the number of individuals who are 'permanent' members of al-Qaeda or have a close relationship to it, or are regularly active in organizational or other forms, is quite limited. In general, Jihadi Salafism represents the core of the intellectual structure for the overall ideology and vision of al-Qaeda; and the members of the Jihadi Salafist movement can be considered the "store of human stock" that represents the organizational spine that supports al-Qaeda and supplies it with candidates for its operations and other activities.

Through their activities and advocacy, the members of the Jihadi Salafist movement are, indeed, a fundamental instrument in recruiting others for al-Qaeda, or for influencing public opinion in favor of al-Qaeda's positions and views – notwithstanding that the movement acts as the social breeding ground for al-Qaeda in many other countries and communities.

In light of this introduction, the rudimentary formula behind the relationship between the members and followers of this movement and al-Qaeda, in the Jordanian case at least, is generally represented by a shared ideology, theory, and existential sympathy; and, at times, this is represented in the form of recruiting members, advocating and mobilizing support for al-Qaeda, its activities and operations.

In terms of its organizational structure, the movement does not have a hierarchical structure or institutional nature. It is rather loose and gelatinous in its structure, and is based on assorted gatherings and groups scattered throughout different areas. Some of its members enjoy a symbolic and moral command of sorts, which gives them influence and authority within these groups; however, this authority or influence is neither structured nor defined. Indeed, the 'rebellious', 'radical', apprehensive, and anxious nature of the individuals in the movement means that internal conflicts, disagreements, and suspicions about others is a natural and regular occurrence – and leads to the emergence of disparate wings, diverse opinions and differences within the overall framework of the movement.

In any case, the overall image of the movement - in its "hard core nucleus" form - is distinguished to a great degree by the credibility and level of trust it enjoys in the eyes of its members, groups, and small communities orbiting around or closely linked to it (starting with those closest, most supportive, and most loyal to the movement all the way to its immediate environs, which hosts new and potential recruits, members, supporters and allies for the movement). Meanwhile, communicating within the movement is conducted on a direct, individual-to-individual basis; and this one-to-one communication line is the main method used for networking and for transmitting information, plans and positions, and interacting with events from one member to another.

On the other hand, the framework and formulas in which the germination of individuals, groups, or organizations that cooperate or become linked to the movement's militant activism and operations is quite varied.

One form of this 'organizational linking' is primitive and spontaneous. This kind of 'coordination' entails that a certain group from a certain area calls on another person or group from another area, through a network of personal relations. Through this small-scale linking, they may decide to carry

out a certain operation on the spot, without any prior coordination with any other group or anyone else in the movement.

This kind of organizational linking and coordination is characterized by limited planning, preparation, and methodology, as well as limited financing. And, most of the time, security services succeed in foiling these kinds of missions before they can actually take place – although some have met with certain, limited success. The most prominent examples of this kind of organizational coordination are found in the case of the “Cells” organization in 2002; the attempted assassination of a Jordanian intelligence officer in 2004, the attack on the General Intelligence Department offices in the al-Baq’a in 1994, and other similar-scale operations attempted by small groups like the al-Mafraq Salafist organization in 2003.

Another type of operational linkage specific to the movement is a form that clearly expanded after al-Zarqawi left Jordan and before he settled in Iraq. This type of organizational linking entails coordinating between the leadership outside and a small group or groups inside Jordan, where a commander or some form of command outside the country (most of the time this was done by al-Zarqawi himself, or some other persons), plan, fund, and coordinate an operation or operations that are then implemented by a local group. According to trial documents and State Security Court archives, the assassination of the American diplomat Lawrence Foley was carried out in this fashion, as were the operations attributed to the “*Al-Islah wa al-Tahadi*” (Reform and Challenge) group.⁶¹²

There is yet another form of organizational linking that is similar in kind to the latter. However, in this operational structure the external command not only plans and coordinates, but also aids in the logistics and implementation of operations by sending individuals to Jordan to network with local groups or individuals. Examples of this type of organizational linking are the cases linked to “*Ansar al-Islam*” and the “Millennium Group,” amongst others.

In other circumstances, the planners and perpetrators both come from the outside in order to ensure no security breaches can take place during the process and local security services remain in the dark. These operations are actually implemented without any direct assistance from the local movement or its members. The most prominent examples of this type of operation are the Amman Hotel Bombings and the Aqaba Bombings. However, even in the latter cases, it is very possible and quite likely that there was some sort of underground logistical support from local movement members to facilitate these operations, such as information gathering, scouting potential locations, or facilitating the passage or safe shelter for the individuals delegated with the task of carrying out the operations.

What remains to be said is that, due to the secretive and closed nature of these groups, in particular, and of the entire Jihadi Salafist movement, in general, the dominant feature in the structure and operational linkages that characterizes the movement is the individual relationship based on personal trust. It is obvious, as proven through numerous incidents and cases, that the connection

⁶¹²–Al Zarqawi and several other individuals in the movement outside Jordan were accused of overseeing the operation in which the American diplomat Lawrence Foley was assassinated. On the other hand, the “Reform and Challenge” group were exonerated by the Court of Cassation for the operation they were accused of. As a note, Abu Qatada al-Filastini was also accused of being linked with the latter organization.

between areas, communities, relatives and friends plays a fundamental role in the consensus-building required in forming an underground group willing to risk and undertake subversive activities.⁶¹³

The Community of the Muwahiddin: Its Social Structure and General Features⁶¹⁴

The first feature: The “Community of the *Muwahiddin*” (as the Jihadi Salafists prefer to call themselves), in Jordan, can best be characterized as a community that is “closed” in on itself. Their form of advocating their *da’wa* and their ideas, and their adoption of a political posture that is “extreme” in its opposition to the prevailing political situation in the Arab and Muslim world, in particular, and to the West, in general, also entails that they tend to adopt social and religious postures that are extreme, as well. For example, they adhere to a strict religious code in their attire, where their fully-veiled women also cover their faces and they all adhere to a code of dress and physical appearance that they believe is the way of the Prophetic Sunnah, in how the Prophet and His Companions reportedly dressed and looked – i.e. for the men it can be in the length of their beards and in lining their eyes with kohl. Some members even grow their hair, wear long loose shirts that extend to below the knees over baggy pants and place a skullcap on their heads.

Members of the movement also adhere to a very strict behavioral code. Their community is characterized by a high level of self-monitoring, where anyone who violates this code of behavior is chastised by his or her own community. Indeed, any measure of individual and personal freedom has faded in this regard, with the individual always strictly monitored and under a kind of behavioral surveillance by his/her community.

Furthermore, the members of the movement prohibit music of any kind, particularly lyrical music. They do not watch television except to monitor the news, and even this is done under strict conditions. They do not participate in mass, public, or social events that they believe violate the codes set by Islamic law (*Sharia*), such as mixed events where women are not segregated from men. They are also extreme in their position about non-Muslim minorities, based on their interpretation of the doctrine of “*al-Walaa’ wa al-Baraa’*.”

Some go as far as not sending their children to public schools, because they do not consider public school education as being based on the foundations of an Islamic education. Some believe that the state educational curriculum not only does not give a proper Islamic education, but also works to instill unbelieving concepts such as nationalism, democracy and other corrupt values into students. Indeed, with regard to this particular subject, Abu Mohammad al-Maqdisi wrote a book entitled

⁶¹³ For example, most of the members of the group known as the “*Bay’at al-Imam*” (Pledging of Allegiance to the Imam group) came from al-Zarqa; the members of the group that carried out the assault on the intelligence offices in Baq’aa were from the Baq’aa refugee camp; the “Salafist Movement” group’s members were all from al-Mafraq; the members of the “Cells Organization” were all from Eastern Amman; the “Jordanian Afghanis” were mostly from Baq’aa; the members of “The Army of Mohammad” were from the Wihdat refugee camp and the Bayader Wadi al-Seer neighborhood; and the attempted assassination of Berjak was carried out by a group whose members were all from al-Salt, and so on.

⁶¹⁴ See the Appendix of this study regarding Salafist Jihadi armed operations, its details, and social and demographic significance.

“*Idaad al-Qada al-Fawaris bi Hajr Fasad al-Madaris*” (Preparing the Knightly Leaderships by Abandoning the Corruption of Schools).

It is likely that these strict social postures have also limited the movement’s ability to integrate socially, or for society to accept its radical ideas and extreme views. Many members in the movement actually end up entering into “confrontations” with their families when they try to impose their ways on them.

By closely reviewing cases tried by the State Security Court and arrest and prosecution records, one finds that the “Community of *Muwahiddin*” is mainly made up of two generations – that is if we skip the “first” generation that participated in the Afghani Jihad and joined the movement later. The first generation began to appear in the decade of the 1990s, during the period when the movement and smaller groups orbiting the movement began to flourish. The second generation began to emerge in the beginning of the 2000’s decade, and is mostly comprised of men much younger than those in the first generation.

Indeed, the majority of the members in the movement today range between 20 and 30 years in age; and of these young men, the majority joined the movement when they were less than 25 years old. Obviously, that means that today, the men of the first generation are over 30 years old.⁶¹⁵

The second feature: The majority of members in the movement never received a university education, with the majority obtaining, at the most, a high school degree or a junior high school education.

The third feature: The majority of the members in the movement is from low-income communities, i.e. they come from poor families, are simple day workers, or are unemployed altogether. Others come from the lower-middle classes, and are simple employees with small salaries in the public or private sector. Many of the members are married at quite a young age for “religious” or “moral” reasons.

The fourth feature: The majority of the members in the movement have had little or no previous experience in politics or in any sort of political activism (outside the movement). Indeed, the majority has no organizational or intellectual experience or background outside the movement itself, except in very limited cases.

⁶¹⁵ For example: Twenty-five men were tried and prosecuted for their membership in “The Army of Mohammad” in 1992; of these men, ten were between 20 and 25 years in age, four were between the ages of 25 and 30, and only one was over 30 years old. Four of them were from the Wihdat refugee camp, eight were from the Wadi al-Seer neighborhood, one of them was from the neighborhood of Muqablain and another was from al-Karak. Only one of the 25 men prosecuted had a higher education.

The members of the “*Bay’at al-Imam*” group were ten in number. Two were over 30 year old, seven were between the ages of 25 and 30, and two were under 25 years old. The majority of these members were from lower income classes, some were of the middle lower income classes, and only one had gotten a partial university education (that he did not finish) and another had a diploma. The majority came from the city of al-Zarqa.

And if one was to take a sampling of the members from the city of al-Salt who were tried or arrested for Jihadi Salafist activities, there would be around 30 individuals who could be considered “first generation”, the majority were less than 30 years in age, were uneducated, did not possess any prior political experience and were from the middle to lower income classes of society.

What is worth noting is that the “first generation” represents a more diverse “mix” relative to the “second generation.” In the first generation (even if on a small scale) are individuals who have obtained a higher education, or are from the middle class; meanwhile, in the second generation, the majority never made it to university and come from lower income economic classes.

The difference between these “generations” can be attributed to several major factors. The first generation (of the 1990s) included many university students that were “shocked” and outraged by political events and economic transformations taking place at that point of time and thus, became attracted to the movement and to what the ideas of Jihadi Salafism offered. Furthermore, this period was the period where the movement was still in its formative and evolving stage, it had not yet reached the level of confrontation with the regime.

Perhaps the first catalyst in forming the first generation was the state of disappointment and the depressing political situation that these young men experienced (the First Gulf War defeat, the fading hope and window of opportunity for peaceful change, the way the peace process and negotiations with Israel were unfolding), and the apprehension of the prevailing economic transformations (especially for the those who came from the middle classes, which would later begin to dissipate due to the difficult economic times ahead).

Meanwhile, the second generation emerged during a later phase, when the movement had matured in many of its ideas and had already launched into a harsh confrontation with state security, which carried with it heavier costs and losses. Members began to lose trust in the system and its by-products, and became influenced by the culture and ideas that the movement adopted. They began to become suspicious of education, of its outcomes and of its utility, and began to turn to an education in the culture and religious curriculums of the movement instead.

A figure who monitors the movement from close quarters adds to the latter the following condition and catalyst in distinguishing between the two generations, “The educated generation and the generation that came from the middle classes could not handle the costs of the confrontation with state security or the way the movement was evolving; which became overshadowed in the last period (from the late 1990s until recently) by the vision of al-Zarqawi, which reached the point of direct confrontation, and the firm belief in armed struggle... And, these were difficult and harsh choices that carried high risks in a country where the state has a potent, ready, and powerful security apparatus at hand.”⁶¹⁶

The Conditions of the Movement’s Rise and the Factors behind its Proliferation

The rise of the Jihadi Salafist movement (in Jordan) took place at the same time as the second wave of Global Jihad came to the fore in the early 1990s, particularly after the Gulf War in 1991. During this period, it reached an advanced stage with the announced formation of the “Global Resistance Front against the Jews and the Crusaders”; and, with the escalating confrontations between al-Qaeda and the United States – a confrontation that reached its peak with the events of September 11, 2001 and the United States declaring “War on Terrorism”.

⁶¹⁶ From an interview with an individual who wished to remain anonymous, conducted in Amman, December 11, 2009.

At the same time, the Jihadi Salafist movement in Jordan was in a nascent stage when it experienced certain profound transformations. Some of these ‘transformations’ were connected to and influenced by regional and global events, while others were related to political and socio-economic conditions in Jordan. However, before entering into a discussion on the local factors that led to the movement’s formation and rise, it is important to note that, when trying to understand the general framework of this phenomenon, many external and local factors were inevitably and inextricably interlinked in many of the Arab countries (despite the fact that the extent and influence of some of these factors differed between one country or community and the next).

Indeed, political factors play the most significant role in stimulating the rise and expansion of this kind of a movement. Of these factors, the most important is the “Failed States” syndrome – meaning states with a weak, centralized authority marked by political, economic and social impotence in meeting the most basic needs of its citizens. This syndrome (in the Arab and Muslim worlds) creates the ideal conditions for the rise and growth of such groups and, indeed, strengthens them. Recurrent examples of this condition in areas of Northwestern Pakistan, Somalia, Iraq, and Yemen, as well as several areas in Lebanon and Palestine, are a testament to the presence and significance of this particular factor.

The market for radical-Islamic thinking also flourishes in countries where there is little in the form of genuine democracy and public freedoms and where public and civil society institutions are incapable of channeling the frustration and agitation of citizens into constructive, appropriate and legal outlets. Perhaps this fact is best described by an American diplomat who commented on the events of September 11, 2001 with the following statement, “If there was democracy in Saudi Arabia, Bin Laden would have been an radical member of parliament; he would not be holed up in the mountains threatening the interests of the United States.”⁶¹⁷

Economic and social conditions also play a direct role in nurturing these groups that, in many places, are closer in definition to being “social protest movements based on a religious ideology.” One can see examples of this particular phenomenon in many marginalized, destitute segments of many Arab societies such as in Morocco, Egypt, and Algeria and the Northwestern regions and Baluchistan regions of Pakistan.

There is no denying that global factors, external challenges, and international provocations, such as the American occupation of Iraq and the Israeli occupation in Palestine, and the impotency of local governments to face these challenges, also breeds the urge in groups of young men to fill in the (political) vacuum – a fact that became evident when young Arab men began to volunteer on their own initiative to fight in Iraq.

Indeed, in Jordan, the formation and emergence of the movement is directly tied to political and economic transformations that took place in the early 1990s. Certain external challenges bred an acute awareness in the “first generation” of Jihadi Salafists during the First Gulf War, when Iraq was defeated by an alliance of international forces. Without a doubt, this defeat stunned that generation of young men, who had become saturated and convinced over a period of several months

⁶¹⁷ Private interview with an American diplomat, at his office in Washington D.C., November 3, 2005.

that there was a possibility of victory for Saddam Hussein in an overall environment in which public opinion had become charged in favor of Saddam.

This “shock” took place while another simultaneous local “shock” was taking place, embodied by the Jordanian government’s entry into peace negotiations with Israel. This initiative was actually an attempt by the Jordanian government to break the international economic and political isolation it found itself in after the First Gulf War (as Jordan’s position during the war was perceived as being in favor of Saddam Hussein). However, these peace negotiations were seen as something like a coup to a public raised and socially mobilized to perceive Israel as the enemy. Indeed, the public viewed these negotiations as traitorous to the cause and as conceding the inalienable rights of the Palestinians, Arabs and Muslims.

Furthermore, after the First Gulf War, the state took on a politically motivated strategy of structural readjustment with the goal of reducing the burden on the state and liberalizing the national economy from the costly toll that ensued from the relationship of patronage, which had become the norm between the citizen and the government. The government worked to strengthen the private sector and increase its role in economic life in accordance with dreadful neo-liberal policies.

However, this neo-liberal strategy led to impoverishing wide segments of the population that had become economically dependent on the state. Indeed, for a long time, the state had been subsidizing the public sector in which a large portion of this middle class made its living. This progressive de-regulation and withdrawal of the state from economic life in the context of neo-liberal globalized standards – without first placing measures to protect the middle and poorer classes – led to widening the gap between the state and society. This loss of faith and trust in the state and the rising suspicions that ensued, this time, would become encapsulated within a religious framework and take on a religious aura.

The combination of all these factors produced a fertile breeding ground for movements like the Jihadi Salafists, especially as these conditions were juxtaposed with a tangible and sharp regression in the track of the almost stillborn “nascent democracy.” The government enacted new electoral laws (the Single Non-Transferable Vote system, locally dubbed the “one-man, one-vote” law) designed to weaken the Islamist opposition (in particular, the Muslim Brotherhood); and this policy of ‘weakening the opposition’ then proceeded to target universities, municipalities, and other public institutions, as well as religious institutions that focused on guidance, preaching, and advocacy.

This “siege on the (Islamist) moderates” actually worked to reinforce and strengthen the arguments and discourse of the “radical Islamists”. Indeed, it led certain individuals to seek underground and subversive channels to express their frustrations, ideas, and visions within a discourse that disavowed the state and the constitution, rejected democracy and took a harsh posture with regard to the socio-economic reality – many were ready, at times, to take up arms and use force in an attempt to change this reality.

Feeling the pressures and disappointment of their reality, and seeing no light at the end of the tunnel from their social deprivation, the poorer classes in themselves became a source and channel for the recruitment and mobilization process of this movement. However, on the other hand, the stress and apprehension of the middle classes, and especially the lower-middle classes amongst them, about

the future within these turbulent economic conditions provided another reason for many young, angry men to flock towards the sphere provided by Jihadi Salafism.

Many studies, indeed, point to the fact that the Jordanian middle class has been hurt in the past few years by the economic transformations and reform program in the country. These studies clearly indicate that the middle class is suffering from heavy pressures – particularly the middle class employed by the public sector (a segment in society that historically represents one of the main political and social levers in the country, and a major conduit for deep-rooting the relationship between the state and Jordanian society).⁶¹⁸

This particular issue requires that we take a quick pause to provide a comparative analysis on the Muslim Brotherhood and the Jihadi Salafist movement. The majority of the Muslim Brotherhood's members come from middle class families, particularly the middle class from the private sector, as well as the lower middle class of lesser economic standing, but which is educated and conservative. Meanwhile, the Jihadi Salafist movement's membership is mainly made up of individuals from the poorer, less-educated and uneducated classes. If the middle class from the private sector (mostly Jordanians of Palestinian origin) represents the backbone of the Muslim Brotherhood, then the expansion of Jihadi Salafism in Jordanian cities reflects the crisis of the public sector-based middle class (East Bankers).⁶¹⁹

The role of socio-economic factors in the evolution and expansion of the Jihadi Salafist movement, the supporting data, analyses and testimonies from the State security Court, as well as the arrests and prosecutions, all point to the fact that the majority of the members of the Jihadi Salafist movement belong to either the poor or lower-middle classes, as well as other politically and socially marginalized communities, with some exceptions.

When discussing the causes and conditions that helped foster the rise of Jihadi Salafism, two other major factors require examination. The first is tied to religious sentiment. Within the overall rising mood of conservatism amongst the general public, which has been moving closer and closer to increased religiosity in the more recent past, Jihadi Salafism represents the most radical and extreme right of this spectrum. Jihadi Salafism adopts a religious outlook, vision, and a jurisprudential understanding of Islam that is extreme relative to that which has been adopted by other individuals, groups and movements, which are more open and moderate in terms of their religious outlook, social views, and political and intellectual discourse and positions.

⁶¹⁸ For more details, see the study conducted by Ibrahim Saif and Yasmin al-Tabba'a on the Jordanian middle class and the pressures it is facing, published by the Center for Strategic Studies at the University of Jordan; available at <http://www.css-jordan.org/SubDefaultar.aspx?PageId=79&EventId=158>. Also see report by Usama Abu 'Ajimah on the study "*Dirasa: Al-Tabaqa al-Wusta Tata'arad li Dughut Iqtisadiya lakinaha lam Tandathir*" (A Study: The Middle Class Faces Economic Pressures but it has not Disappeared"), July 14, 2008. Also compare with the study conducted by Sufyan Alissa, "Rethinking Economic Reform in Jordan: Confronting Socioeconomic Realities", which discusses the economic reform program in Jordan and its social and economic impact on the middle and poorer classes; Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Carnegie Paper; available at <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=19465&prog=zgp&proj=zme>.

⁶¹⁹ Refer to Mohammad Abu Rumman, "*Al-Salafiya al-Jihadiya fi al-Salt: Kayfa wa Limatha?*" (Lit. "Jihadi Salafism in al-Salt: How and Why?"), Ammon News website; available at <http://www.ammonnews.net/article.aspx?articleNO=9017>.

The second major factor that requires examination is the Palestinian cause and events related to the Palestinian issue. This factor indeed plays a major role in stirring the emotions of the public, especially the youth, and especially when there is an escalation in the confrontations and clashes between Palestinian factions and the Israeli occupation forces.

It is significant to note, at this point, that Jordan possesses the longest land-borders with Israel. Furthermore, almost half the Jordanian population is of Palestinian origin, with strong and extensive social ties across the Jordan. They still have issue with their political identity and are personally concerned and involved, in a central and dynamic way, with what takes place inside the Occupied Territories. This reality is directly linked to attempts by several of these groups and movements to repeatedly infiltrate the western borders, or smuggle arms, or target the interests of Western countries that are perceived as biased towards Israel and disrupt the peace process.

The Movement's Methodology and Instruments of Recruitment and Mobilization

The methodology and instruments used for recruiting members and attracting supporters to the Jihadi Salafist movement varied. They range from the traditional method of verbal advocacy, or the calling (*da'wa*), and end with the most modern techniques of exploiting cyberspace. Needless to say, internal political, economic, and social factors have nurtured the movement's expansion, evolution and growth. Indeed, the movement presents itself as the Arab and Muslim median and medium, and considers itself, "A movement that represents Islam, in its entirety and in its complete, pure and unadulterated form, without the dismantling of any of its tenets, creeds, doctrines, and laws in a society where Islam constitutes the religion and identity of most of its citizens". It also considers itself as a movement of Jihad and resistance against foreign hegemony and domination.

The strength of Jihadi Salafism's appeal is in the content of its religious and political discourse, which is derived from theoretical opinions on the pure faith, religious concepts, and the principles of *al-Hakimiya*, *al-Walaa' wa al-Baraa'*, *al-Taghout* and Jihad.

In its discourse, the Jihadi Salafists present themselves as the "only representative" of Islam in the struggle against the external, alien, and foreign forces and against internal tyranny. It also considers itself the "Victorious Sect" and the only "Surviving Group", and its members and followers as the "newly-arriving strangers" (*ghurabaa'*) upon whom the responsibility falls to preserve the "identity" of Islam, renew and revive the religion, and restore "*Dar al-Islam*" (the Abode of Islam) – which has been transformed into "*Dar al-Kufr*" (the Abode of Unbelief) since the fall of the Ottoman Caliphate state in the year 1924 by an imperialist invasion, which divided the Muslim world and planted the Zionist entity in Palestine.

Meanwhile, in its discourse, the movement presents Arab governments as regimes that should be seen as an inheritance from this imperialism in the form of "the nation-state." These states adopted nationalist, socialist, and liberal ideologies, and surrendered and abandoned the rule of Islamic law (*Sharia*) and the governance and sovereignty of God. Furthermore, in doing so, these regimes have failed to meet the obligation of liberating Palestine and to oppose the domination and hegemony of the West. Indeed, the Jordanian Jihadi Salafists view the close relationship between Jordan and the United States as an alliance against Islam, which contradicts the principle of "*al-Walaa' wa al-*

Baraa”. Finally, in their view, entering into a peace treaty with Israel has given the state all the more reason and excuse to abandon the Palestinian cause.

The Jihadi Salafist discourse, based on the principles and views enumerated above, easily and effortlessly found a following; and this discourse facilitated the process of recruiting new members to their ranks. Finally, as stated before, existing conditions and prevailing political and socio-economic realities reinforced and supported this discourse.

Through its spiritual leaders and strategists, Jihadi Salafism in Jordan worked on destabilizing the notion of loyalty and belonging to the Jordanian national identity and replacing it with a globalized Jihadi Salafist identity, which connects the self to a tradition that separates the “I” from the “other,” and targeted this discourse at the young men in a ‘young’ society – or a society in which the overwhelming majority of active members are youth.

The traditional instrument of “verbal” *da’wa* is considered by Jihadi Salafists as one of their principle means of recruiting new members and followers. This method entails using one-on-one meetings or meetings of small groups, one at a time, through private visits in which the message of Jihadi Salafism is communicated. Mosques (*masajid*) hold a special place in the process of this *da’wa* and in recruitment. With over 4,000 mosques scattered in every part of every city and town in Jordan, they have come to represent a major station for the movement’s advocacy and mobilization process (this is notwithstanding the hundreds of prayer sites (similar to small chapels) scattered throughout neighborhoods and markets).

Indeed, a careful study of Jihadi Salafist groups in Jordan reveals the importance of the role of the mosque as conduits for the mobilization, recruitment, and communications processes of the movement. Meetings, lectures, classes, and sermons all take place in the mosques; and, they should be considered the principle strongholds from which these groups were and are launched. For example, the Mosque of Ibn Abbas was the place in which the “*Bay’at al-Imam*” (Pledging Allegiance to the Imam) group that included al-Zarqawi and al-Maqdisi was formed.

Family relations also plays an important, central, and dynamic role in the movement’s communications and recruitment structure, as well as in nurturing support and influencing others more quickly. This is especially the case in cities and towns where the social fabric is particularly tribal. When observing Jihadi Salafist groups in al-Salt and Ma’an, for example, the role of family relations is particularly effective and palpable, and directly influences the recruitment process.

The other place where the opportunity for recruiting new members was and is particularly fertile is the prison environment. In prison, a unique community emerged that was quite influential in facilitating the conversion of individuals with aggressive, criminal behavior to the Jihadi Salafist ideology – especially as this ideology provided a space for rebelling against reality, for unburdening and relieving feelings of transgression and wrongdoing, for feeding aggressive behavior and creating an outlet for it under the pretext of the principle of Jihad. Indeed, the desire to rid oneself of feelings of guilt can be a primary motivation to push one to take on an unbridled disavowal of sin. As a result, some of those who have joined Jihadi Salafism came to the movement from a criminal background, and some of these young men were recruited in prison, where convicted

Jihadi Salafists were active in lecturing, in giving classes, and in recruiting new supporters and followers.

In addition to using verbal, one-on-one communications as one of the major instruments for recruiting new members and spreading the *da'wa*, the Jordanian Jihadi Salafists also work to disseminate their movement's books, essays, declarations, and other literature in order to achieve the greatest outreach possible in target areas and communities. Indeed, the presence of spiritual leaders, scholars, theorists, and strategists with a high degree of efficacy in their speaking, writing and rhetorical abilities distinguishes this movement in the Arab and Muslim world. Some of these (Jordanian) men of the movement have become renowned on a globalized scale in the Global Jihadi Salafist context, such as Abu Qatada al-Filastini and Abu Mohammad al-Maqdisi – whose ideas and opinions have spread on a massive scale through the dissemination of their publications through many channels, such as printed and photocopied material.

For example, from his headquarters in London, Abu Qatada al-Filastini has disseminated numerous Jihadi Salafist magazines, books and publications, and has worked to globalize the movement by facilitating the networking between Salafists in Europe and the Arab and Muslim worlds. Abu Qatada even oversaw the publication of several newsletters, magazines and books, which focus on the Salafism of specific countries, such as the “*Al-Ansar*” newsletter, which specializes in the Jihadi Salafist movement in Algeria, the “*Al-Fajr*” newsletter, which specializes in the Jihadi Salafist movement in Libya, and the “*Al-Ma'alim*” newsletter, which specializes in Jihadi Salafism of the countries of Greater Syria (the Levant). Some publications focus on Global Jihadi Salafism, such as the “*Al-Minhaj*” magazine. All of these publications have made their way to Jordan and have been circulated, copied, and disseminated amongst and by the members of the Jihadi Salafist movement there.

By the end of the 1990s, the Jihadi Salafist movement in Jordan entered into a new phase in its recruitment of new members and in attracting new followers and supporters with the help of the communications revolution and electronic networking, which greatly facilitated the expanse of the scope and market for recruitment and mobilization through the internet. Indeed, the Jordanian Jihadi Salafists worked to establish Jihadi websites for all its scholars and theorists. Abu Mohammad al-Maqdisi's site, “*Minbar al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad*,” in particular, is considered one of the most renowned sites for Jihadi Salafism in the world as it provides access to the texts of most of the books and essays related to Global Jihadi Salafism. Jihadi Salafists became aware of the importance of this particular communication channel in cyberspace early on; and, it exploited this means in an extraordinarily effective way to spread its *da'wa* and in recruiting members – so much so that it came to be called “Electronic Jihad.” Indeed, the electronic media is considered one of the main entry points for the globalization of the movement, as this platform greatly facilitated the easy and rapid exchange of information and the coordination of operations

The processes of propagation and recruitment of members to Jihadi Salafism through the Internet reached its apex with Abu Mu'sab al-Zarqawi during his command of al-Qaeda in Iraq. Al-Zarqawi established several sites, one of which was called “*Dharwat al-Sanaam*.” His communications with the network became so rigorous that, at one point, he was making more than eight communications a day, surpassing the central command of al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan in his exploitation of this medium. Al-Zarqawi went on to establish a media and communications committee that

worked to film and broadcast, through the internet, suicide and armed operations, kidnappings and beheadings, which were violent and terrifying in a way never seen before. Through the Internet, he was also able to recruit a great number of Jordanians and other followers from every corner of the world. Indeed, this communications platform came to be one of the most important tools used by the Jihadi Salafists in their recruitment and mobilization methodology and strategy.

6. The State's Strategy in Confronting Jihadi Salafism: A Critical Outlook

The Jordanian state's strategy in confronting the rise of the Jihadi Salafist movement over the last 15 years is a narrative replete with crackdowns, arrests and prosecutions, as well as constant surveillance of the group, its members and their activities. However, in the most part, the nature of this strategy is characterized primarily by "security" measures, which depend on the ability and capacity of the country's security apparatus to infiltrate and closely monitor these groups. Indeed, it is not a strategy that pays attention to or gives enough consideration to "preventive" measures – or, in other words, curtailing the various conditions, causes, and environmental factors that have helped catalyze its rise and nurture its activities.

Following the Amman Hotel Bombings, efforts have been made to focus more on education, culture and the media; first with the "Amman Message," then through the organization of series of intellectual seminars and conferences where the threat of extremism and "terrorism" has dominated the platform. However, these attempts, activities and events have all been characterized more by a vague form of advocacy and a plethora of slogans rather than a tangible, methodological strategy to educate, change cultural attitudes, and increase religious awareness.

More importantly, the state has "skipped" over one major, effective and functional option to cope with the challenge presented by the rise and proliferation of these groups – that is "political reform". The objective of a 'political reform' strategy would be to curb the urge and need to go underground or the affinity for subversive and armed action by providing alternatives, such as legalizing and expanding the scope of civic freedoms and public, organizational, and socio-political activities, and increasing the variety of legal channels in which individuals and groups can more freely express their positions and opinions.

Finally, the state's strategy of using "security" measures to confront the Jihadi Salafist movement has gone through three definitive periods: The first period began in the 1990s and ended with the dawn of the 21st century, the second commenced directly after the September 11th, 2001 attacks; and the third was introduced by the Amman Hotel Bombings – the third period would witness a quantum leap in re-defining the battle – faultlines and in the tactics used to confront the movement.

From Security Breach to "Pre-Emptive Strike"

The official strategy in confronting the manifestations of Jihadi Salafism during the first period, from the early 1990s until September 11, 2001, was characterized by an approach focused on security measures. This approach depended on penetrating and infiltrating the movements and groups using various methods, and worked to abort and foil operations before they could take place – or, nipping these operations in the bud.

This success of this approach was evident in the fact that during this period no operations of any consequence, or that posed any real threat to national security took place. Indeed, at that time, the activities of the groups linked to this movement were quite spontaneous and amateur at best; and,

breaching these operations was not such a complicated task. Most of the groups and many of the individuals planning to conduct operations were prevented from doing so. Instead, they were arrested and tried by the State Security Court before they could carry out any sort of action. Simultaneously, the security apparatus would arrest, detain, and interrogate members who have not reached the “stage” of armed operations, but had embraced and advocate the thought and ideology of the movement.

The second period began with al-Zarqawi’s departure from Jordan to Afghanistan; and, it was marked by the fact that the capacities and methodologies of the movement had begun to evolve and had become more sophisticated. Al-Zarqawi began to depend on members outside Jordan while continuing to use individuals from the movement inside. In the meantime, the state continued in its approach of penetrating the movement. Even with al-Zarqawi outside the country, state security continued its policy of gathering information and pre-emptive operations attempted by members of the movement and al-Zarqawi’s followers.

On the international front, the events of September 11th, 2001 and President George Bush’s declaration of “War on Terror” – which represented historical milestones that would set the future course of international relations – led to a process of “integrating” international efforts in the battle against al-Qaeda.

In the process of integrating efforts to confront this “globalized Jihad,” a “globalization of security” took place. Jordan’s security services joined in on these “globalized” efforts and emerged as a major player with a significant role in the battle against al-Qaeda. This cooperation led to a large scale exchange of information and of members of the movement between Jordanian and other countries’ security services. Indeed, Jordan was able to capture several members from the movement through international surveillance efforts.

Of course, the context and the source of the threats that Jordan had to deal with during this period changed significantly. The movement’s activities and capacities had evolved and had become more complex and professional. They lost their local, spontaneous, and amateur nature that had been the trademark of the earlier period in the 1990s. And, this reality forced a change in the details of the state’s security strategy and a redefinition of parts of its security approach – which, nevertheless, remained focused on a strategy of penetration, infiltration, monitoring, and surveillance of the movement and its members, and finally, bringing them before the courts for prosecution at the judicial level.

The Amman Hotel Bombings introduced and marked the third period in the evolution of the state’s security strategy. This operation in itself represented the greatest and most dangerous breach of state security ever achieved by al-Qaeda on Jordanian soil. The nature of the bombings, its impact, and its implications reflected several new realities: The first of which was that the al-Qaeda’s abilities and its operational capacity had matured significantly. Without a doubt, the organization had become much more professional and thus, much more lethal. It also reflected a major transformation in the region’s security environment after Iraq became the host for al-Qaeda... from Iraq, al-Qaeda would continue to work to spread its tentacles and its operations into the rest of the countries of the region and the world.

In view of these transformations and new threats to national security, the Jordanian state undertook major structural changes in its security strategy. The most important features of this “new” strategy” were:

- Shifting from the principle of ‘breaching’ the movement, or the penetration and infiltration of the movement by the security services, to the principle of the “pre-emptive strike.” This new approach meant not waiting for al-Qaeda, or other groups linked to its network, to begin planning operations targeting Jordan, but rather initiating pre-emptive action against them and hitting them hard before they could even start. Indeed, one major outcome of this new approach was the delegation of the task of carrying out military operations and other tasks concerned with safeguarding Jordanian national security to the *Fursan al-Haq* (Righteous Knights) Division of the Jordanian General Intelligence Department. And, this is exactly what happened: In June of 2006, *Fursan al-Haq* captured and arrested Ziyad al-Karbouli, one of the most notorious members of al-Qaeda in Iraq.⁶²⁰
- Moving from a defensive position to an offensive one: That meant going on the offensive against al-Qaeda by targeting its base, i.e. confronting al-Qaeda inside Iraq by working to create an Iraqi “political veto” against the targeting of Jordan. In this capacity, Jordan partook in supporting the Iraqi Sunni “*Sahwa*” strategy. Indeed, it was these Sunni reactionary factions that later inflicted the decisive, excruciating and final blow against al-Qaeda in Iraq.⁶²¹
- Focusing more attention on “waging war” against the principle of “*takfir*” (disavowing others as unbelievers). This battle strategy included banning the advocacy and support to al-Qaeda (and movements linked to it) in public forums or inside religious institutions. This step was reinforced by a decision taken by the Jordanian Parliament, which enacted laws against “preaching or advocating terrorism” in any form, especially in sermons given at mosques or any other public gathering, and criminalizing any form of “abetting and aiding terrorism” or “advocating terrorism.”⁶²² In the same vein, a declaration known as the “Amman Message” was published under the patronage of the King, which called for dialogue between religions and sects, for cooperation on a humanitarian level, and for rejecting extremism and of violence. This “Message” was seen as an example of the kind of instruments that would be used in ‘intellectually’ confronting extremist thinking on the one hand, and for presenting Jordan as a role model and representative of “moderate Islam”, on the other.

The Absence of the “Political” Dimension, and the “Slogonization” of the Cultural Dimension

Despite Jordan’s success in combating Jihadi Salafism and the success of the state’s security services in containing the threat posed by the movement’s activities and operations, the movement still has a significant presence. Certain testimonies even indicate that the movement is actually

⁶²⁰ Rana al-Sabbagh, “*Bin Laden ith Uhadid al-Urdun min Jadid*” (Lit. “Bin Laden Threatens Jordan Once Again”), Al-Arab All-Yawm Jordanian daily newspaper, op. cit., March 22, 2009.

⁶²¹ Refer to Mohammad Abu Rumman, “*Al-Urdun wa al-‘Iraq: al-Ihtiwai’ Muqabil al-Fawda*” (Lit. “Jordan and Iraq: Containment as Apposed to Chaos”); *Majalat al-Siyasa al-Dawliya* (International Journal of Political Studies), Issue Number 172, April, 2008.

⁶²² See the text of the law against terrorism on the Jordanian Ministry of Interior website; available at <http://www.moi.gov.jo>; also refer to the text of the law against preaching or advocating terrorism on the Jordanian Legal Code website; available at http://www.lob.gov.jo/ui/laws/search_no.jsp?no=7&year=1986.

growing and expanding steadily. In the meantime, the Jordanian strategy in combating this phenomenon appears to remain standing on “one leg” – that of only utilizing a security approach or security measures in its battle against the movement. This approach, on the most part, deals with the ends and not the roots – it is a strategy that combats the results and outcomes of the movement’s activities and operations and not the political and socio-economic ills and underlying causes and conditions that have produced, bred, and nurtured this phenomenon. It is a strategy of deterrence in which a real cure is absent. This approach may indeed be less costly to the country in terms of material resources; however, it does not cope with the real loss: the future of so many young men, who are being drawn to these groups and to this way of thinking.

The politics of “drying up the springs” from which these radical groups emerge must do so by opening windows and letting in some fresh air. It means reviving civic freedoms, and moving forward with a genuine political reform program that is rooted in a parliament which is truly representative of the people, and ensuring the government has the trust of such a representative parliament – which, in the end, means that the people can be held accountable for their choices and the government can act responsibly towards their representatives. Efforts should be made to strengthen civil society and civic activities must find support from the state. Real opportunities have to be created for education youth so that they can truly express their talents and abilities – this is one of the ways that the state can effectively protect and strengthen society’s immunity to extremist thinking. The middle class must be resuscitated and social and economic deprivation must be reduced. To “dry up the springs,” the twin problems of poverty and unemployment must be dealt with at the roots; for, they are the waters that pour into these springs of violence and terrorism.

The “golden rule” – which the previous American administration discovered too late in the game, and never actually implemented properly –, is that Islamist radicalism and the extremist groups are the result of the fertile environment provided by the realities in the Arab and Muslim worlds: In their political corruption, their developmental and economic failure, and in the absence of any real rehabilitation of their societies and of their economies. Indeed, all these factors have created the ideal environment for breeding an extremist discourse and for nurturing its growth and proliferation.

Certainly, the more effective weapon in successfully combating this way of thinking is in pursuing genuine and comprehensive reform in the Arab and Muslim worlds. And, if achieving comprehensive reform is the more difficult path, then, at the very least, steps towards achieving this goal must be taken. Even if the state is facing genuine political and economic problems that obstruct it from achieving the aforementioned “prescriptions” or “recipes,” it must, at the minimum, make a serious effort to reconcile with the discourse of moderate reformist Islamist movements. This is the prerequisite for pulling the rug from under the feet of extremist groups and their religious and political legitimacy in the eyes of many.

For reference, one can look to the case of Saudi Arabia, which has made great strides in weakening al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula after al-Qaeda had reached an advanced stage in its operational capacity, in its activities, and in its popularity amongst young men. The greatest credit in this achievement is not attributed in the first place to Saudi security services alone, but rather to the effective and central role that the Saudi reform movement took in confronting al-Qaeda. The reform movement, indeed, pulled the rug out from under the feet of al-Qaeda in Saudi Arabia and by

undermining the religious legitimacy of its operations. In addition and much to its credit, the Saudi government also took on a 'soft' strategy in the struggle against al-Qaeda by confronting it on an intellectual, theoretical, and ideological level.⁶²³

In fact, today, there are two faces to political Islam in many Arab countries. And, either the opportunity is provided to allow the more moderate Islamist movements into the socio-political process (despite the fact that many questions and reservations do exist with regard to some of their propositions), or allowing this space or vacuum to be filled with the likes of Jihadi Salafists, who will very likely make further advances in their ability to penetrate the social fabric of society.

However, under the pressure and impact of the prevailing political struggle, some Jordanian officials have opted to direct their energies in directly confronting these radical movements. The rationale is that they are less threatening, more obvious in their agenda, ideology and strategy, and less elusive and ambiguous in terms of the general political context! This conviction, indeed, reflects a gross miscalculation and shortsightedness as it reduces the problem to a purely political framework. Within this rationale, the more "moderate" Islamic movements are discounted by logic of "politically-excommunicating" the opposition. In the meantime, it is these kinds of moderate Islamist movements that have come to fill a vital and important space in society. They play a central role in the country's social and political scene and could be a safe ally in the struggle against the proliferation of extremist thinking amongst depressed, angry young men.

Until this day, Jordan has not taken this course, and has not opted for this choice: Of reconciling and coming to an 'agreement' or a 'deal' with the "moderate Islamist movements" so that they can assist in playing a more 'enlightening' social and political role. Indeed, these movements could assist the state in return for more access to legitimate and lawful channels in which these movements can express themselves and work. Instead, the official position has been to wager on a policy of tightening the "security grip," which, in fact, actually reduces the chances of truly impeding the expansion of extremist movements like the Jihadi Salafist movement, and weakening their abilities to recruit more young men and mobilize its ranks in the future.

⁶²³ For further information on this subject, see Christopher Boucek, "*Al-Istratijiya al-Sa'udiya al-Llayina fi Mukafahat al-Irhab*" (Lit. "The Flexibility in the Saudi Counter-terrorism Strategy"); Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Carnegie Paper, September 2008, Issue 97; available at http://carnegieendowment.org/files/cp97_boucek_saudi_arabic.pdf.

Conclusion:

Prevailing Conditions and Potential Scenarios

There are structural conditions that have helped draw and define the course and evolution of Jihadi Salafism in Jordan. These conditions, or contexts, can be categorized into three major, central themes, which may help identify certain scenarios in the future.

The first context is the middle or median “sphere” – or, the movement’s surroundings and immediate environs on the political, economic, and social levels. The second “sphere” is the larger context or the external environment, which is tied to the regional security situation and the implications of this security situation on Jordan internally, as well as on the status of al-Qaeda’s network and the extent of its strength, weaknesses, and influence in Jordan and in the region. Finally, the last context, or the smaller “sphere” includes the factors and determinants connected to the internal situation of the movement itself, and the extent of its cohesiveness and its ability to deal with the different challenges it faces, and will face.

Of course, the three above-mentioned “spheres” do not work independent of each other; they are interconnected and complementary in nature. The importance and influence of each “sphere” on the course of the movement are interchangeable and should be seen as such when attempting to define the upcoming phase and potential horizons of the movement in the future.

The Internal Context of the Movement: Conflict and Schism

We will begin with the smaller “sphere” or the internal context of the movement itself. Today, the movement is marked by the struggle between the group in the movement led by al-Maqdisi (towards “a half-reformed movement”) against the legacy of al-Zarqawi, which engulfed the movement in the past. Certainly, al-Maqdisi has won the first round of this struggle and has managed to bring to his side several major players from key areas where the movement has a significant presence.

Today, we stand before three major trends, which may develop and define the future characteristics and course of the movement, with regard to the movement’s internal situation and context:

- *The first scenario:* The first trend is embodied by a potential victory and success of the “half-reform” wing of the movement – or, the continued success of al-Maqdisi, which will depend on his ability to adroitly walk the tight rope between the wants and desires of the extremist wing that wants to remain committed to the “al-Zarqawi line”, and what the state wants, which is that al-Maqdisi back down completely from the radical stand against the regime, and between his own personal ambitions, which is to build a Jihadi Salafist movement that, in the short-term, takes on a pacifist nature embodied in spreading the *da’wa* without the use of arms and without any direct form of violent confrontation with the state’s security apparatus.

This scenario depends entirely upon al-Maqdisi not falling into the trap of slipping neither to the right nor to the left of this tightrope; and his capacity to maintain his course “adroitly and with caution” between the state, his ambitions and the two sides struggling inside the movement. To do so, he must be able to maintain direct communications with key players and with a diverse

range of large segments in the movement; and he must be able to convince them of the value of his agenda and of his position.

It should be expected that any critical “concessions” by al-Maqdisi will not go to the extent or degree that the Jihadi salafist movement reached in Egypt, nor should the same outcomes be expected either. The political conditions in the country, the movement itself and the movement’s experiences in Jordan were and remain different than that of their Egyptian counterparts. Furthermore, all indications point to the fact that al-Maqdisi has gone as far as he possibly can in the extent of his concessions and revisions, especially when one takes into consideration that, today, the internal crisis in the movement is unfolding between two principle tendencies – the first represented by him and the other represented by the “extremist line” in the party.

This intellectual and organizational tendency and trend witnessed great success in the recent past, and many new key names from outside the movements joined in. This trend revised its approach to lean towards announcing the concept of “non-violent *da’wa*”, that is, before it faced another wave of arrests and trials after the so-called Al-Zarqa events, which took place in April 2011.⁶²⁴

- *The second scenario:* The second trend is tied to the victory of the opposition wing (the extremists) in the movement and to how successful they are in concentrating and focusing their attack on al-Maqdisi; and, whether or not they will be able to weaken his influence in the upcoming phase. Their strategy is to revive and legitimate “the al-Zarqawi model” as the only legitimate course for the movement; and to isolate al-Maqdisi again and to cut him back to size. Indeed, some new, key players have emerged from this “extremist” wing, who are trying to revive and return to the ways of al-Zarqawi. They are using his legacy to try to persuade a vast majority of individuals in the group to come to their side and to redirect them to a line that corresponds with the program and model set by al-Qaeda’s central command outside. The potential for this scenario to succeed, of course, depends on the larger “sphere” (or the international context and environment), the future of al-Qaeda (the mother organization) and the extent of its influence and its activities on a global and regional scale.
- *The third scenario:* The final scenario is the possibility that the “scenario of ongoing fissure” in the movement will prevail. In other words, the struggle between the two wings will continue, without either side gaining any significant victories over the other, leading to a schism and the ultimate split of the movement into two, or even more groups. This final scenario could lead to a situation where the country would be faced with smaller groups of individuals, scattered here and there, working independent of each other, with not one or two, but rather many heads.

The Local Political and Security Context: A Proposed Solution, “Social Impunity”

It is a recognized fact that the Jordanian state is a strong, cohesive, and united entity in terms of its political institutions and security apparatus. It is also obvious that the state possesses a superior internal capacity to safeguard its national interests and security and keep the Jihadi Salafist movement and its activities at bay and under a tight reign. Indeed, this strength will reduce the

⁶²⁴ More on this subject is discussed in the following chapter regarding Salafists and the approach of Arab Democratic Revolutions.

chance that the movement will ever transform into a major first degree threat, because this type of movement thrives, gains strength, and proliferates in a social environment made conducive and nurtured by the manifestations of the “Failed State” syndrome – and, until today, this is not the case in Jordan, at least in relative terms.

On the other hand, this does not mean that the Jihadi Salafist movement in Jordan will wither away anytime soon. Indeed, there is a whole set of factors and conditions that still exist, which can serve as catalysts for the movement’s growth and expansion – despite the limits imposed on the movement in terms of political constraints and security measures, and even the boundaries imposed on the movement by society itself. Marginalized communities in Jordanian society are still quite accessible to the movement; and at its core, the remainder of society can still become an easy target for penetration by the movement. Needless to say, the future of the movement in Jordan will very much depending on the way political, economic, and social conditions and circumstances play out in the country: If there is a move towards political openness and fundamental reform in the country’s political life, then the regime’s ability in containing extremist tendencies will strengthen and improve, and the size of the movement and the ideological justifications for its existence will come under check. However, if the wheels of political reform come to a halt, and if the central role assigned to political institutions and to civil society breaks down, then the opportunities for the movement to recruit and mobilize others will remain unchecked, and the rationale and justifications for its radical ideology will remain operative, effectual, and dynamic.

And herein lies the danger of focusing on a security strategy alone in local political life. It may ensure national security and the public peace, and protect the country from terrorist activity or security chaos like that which exists in countries like Iraq, Lebanon, and Palestine (where the weakness of the central authority is so obvious). However, the persistence in maintaining a security-based strategy and the excessive use of it, coupled with the erosion of public and civic freedoms, and any weakening of the political reform process will carry in their wings the seeds of growth for extremist thinking and for radical groups, who will channel their energies towards subversive activity and armed struggle.

The influence and impact of the way the political-security formula evolves is obvious: The more the spheres of public and civic freedoms expand, and the capacities of political and civil society institutions are strengthened, the more the sphere available for radical and extremist action will shrink and weaken; and, in the same vein, the more political and civic institutions and public freedoms weaken, the more the presence and strength of radical and extremist groups will grow. This reading drives forth the following major prescription for Jordan’s political-security formula, which is that, “security should be an instrument of the political process” and not the opposite.

Certain socio-economic factors and outcomes of the hasty economic reform program, such as pockets of poverty and higher unemployment rates, also played a part in creating an internal environment conducive for the movement. It is obvious that the middle class in Jordan was harmed during the last few years due to the socio-economic ramifications of the rapid implementation of harsh, neoliberal prescriptions for Jordan’s economic ills – measures that led to economic changes that a large segment of the population found great difficulty adapting to, and which increased

feelings of anger, frustration, and deprivation. It is individuals from these suffering classes that have become clear and robust candidates for boarding the “Jihadi Salafist” train.⁶²⁵

The real challenge before the state is whether or not it will be able to redirect the economic reform program towards achieving a greater degree of social and political equilibrium, and reduce the severity of the pockets of poverty in the country and the feelings of social and economic deprivation. The latter requires that the present course of the economic reform program be seriously “revisited.”

If the political and economic situation is too complicated to tackle at the moment – to the point that it may be difficult to enact the necessary and fundamental changes immediately, or achieve the tangible outcomes required in the short term – then priority should be given to a political and ideological reconciliation (and not a temporary reconciliation based on immediate interests, but rather a genuine dialogue towards long-term reconciliation) with moderate Islamist reform movements, which possess the ability and the discourse to play an effective role in confronting the extremist discourse and providing an ‘Islamist alternative’ to it. Making this reconciliation a priority would be taking a step forward in curbing the growth and expansion of the movement and would weaken the rationale used to justify their religious and socio-political legitimacy and authority.

One of the enigmas and predicaments of Jordanian policy is the decision the state made to resort to using the “Traditional Salafist” (*al-Salafiya al-Taqlidiyah*) movement to confront the Jihadi Salafists and the Muslim Brotherhood. The rationale behind this policy was that these Salafists would be a more effective and reliable ally because they were “loyal” to the state, abstained from “political work or activities” and “stressed obedience to the state and government” in their discourse.

The error in this policy orientation is compounded: First, even if this movement does declare “obedience to governance by the state”, it is borne of the same logic, religious understanding, and religious doctrine to which the Jihadi Salafist movement belongs – a fact that makes their scholarly and religious propositions (their social discourse) similar to that of the Jihadi Salafists, despite the differences in their political discourse. Second, the womb of “Traditional Salafism” is quite prone to incubating and giving birth to groups that later transform into Jihadi Salafists, due to the natural “fluidity” between the various Salafist movements.

Furthermore, the “Traditional Salafists” lack “political credibility” in a highly educated society, where university degrees are prolific, and which, therefore, may not readily accept a discourse that requires absolute obedience to the authorities, especially at the expense of certain political and human rights (which is what much of the literature and general discourse of Traditional Salafists call for).

What is more important is that this policy does not produce an enlightened discourse capable of drawing in and integrating “religious youth” into the prevailing framework of social

⁶²⁵ Cf. Mohammad Abu Rumman, “*Al-Tabaqa al-Wusta Akthar min al-Dughut al-Iqtisadiya*” (Lit. “The Middle Class Faces More than just ‘Economic Pressures’”); al-Ghad Daily Newspaper, Jordan, July 14, 2008; available at http://alghad.com/index.php/afkar_wamawaqef/article/9695.html

transformations, which are taking place in the country, and effectively instilling in them a spirit conducive to the environment of the contemporary and modern world. The latter is indeed one of the greatest problems at the root of many of the crises in Arab societies – the clash between the tendency towards zealous religiosity and the needs and provisions required of every day, modern life.

The “Saudi model,” once again, proves the validity of this supposition. For, after the events of September 11th, the Traditional Salafists – who have enjoyed the patronage of the state during the past few decades, and who have been used by the state as an instrument to strike down those who deligitimize its authority – have not been able to face the harsh external aggression and challenges directed at the kingdom, nor have they been able to confront the rise of al-Qaeda; indeed and instead, they were impotent and stood paralyzed before these challenges and threats.

Meanwhile, this task could be undertaken by the reformist Islamist movements, which have already taken it upon themselves to initiate a historical debate and an intellectual discussion with American thinkers, and have presented a progressive vision of Islam in response to American antagonism. At the same time, they have already proven successful in pulling the rug out from under al-Qaeda, and have worked hard to weaken the legitimacy of al-Qaeda’s political and religious discourse.⁶²⁶

Similarly, in Egypt, “Jihadist concessions” helped, to a great degree, to curb the presence and influence of al-Qaeda there. Simultaneously, an elite group of moderate Egyptian Islamic scholars, possessing an enlightened, moderate, and progressive discourse, formed a preventive barrier against extremism and radical Islam. They also possess a great degree of political and social credibility, despite the limitations inherent in their current relationship with the government.⁶²⁷

On the other hand, and relative to other Arab countries, Jordan has a large, legalized, and authoritative Islamist movement, represented by the Muslim Brotherhood; however, the state’s relationship with this movement, in the past and until this day, has been that of a (pragmatic) or ‘security’ nature. The state is far from trying to reach a consensual arrangement with the program of this movement, much of which is based on a reformative and enlightened platform. This reality has, in itself, limited the potential role of the movement in this context; and, instead has led to tainting their discourse with a political brush that has led a large portion of the Brotherhood’s political activists to clash with the government at various levels and in varying degrees.

Meanwhile, there has been little in the way of the kind of strategic thinking that strives towards creating the conditions conducive to the rise of independent Islamic researchers, scholars, intellectuals, and thinkers. Such ‘independents’ could act as an elite group of influential individuals that could assist in creating the kind of “social immunity” required to counter extremist thinking and the rise of groups who adopt the policy of a militant struggle within Jordan’s borders.

There is little choice other than reconciling and reaching agreement with the moderate Islamist movements calling for reform. And, this option should be kept far from the temptations of a

⁶²⁶ On the “Saudi model,” refer to website of *Al-Sakina Campaign*, available at <http://www.assakina.com>.

⁶²⁷ Regarding this ‘elite group’ of moderate Egyptian Islamic scholars, refer to the book by Raymond William Baker “Islam without Fear: Egypt and the New Islamists” available in English, (2006). Also available in Arabic, “*Islam bilaa Khawf: Misr wa al-Islamiyyun al-Judud*,” Amman: the Scientific Center for Political Studies, 1st ed., 2009.

security-minded ‘policy’ and the concrete, direct repercussions of such policies, which produce side effects that, in themselves, create further causes conducive to breeding the rise of extremist groups.

Supporting this reading are two distinct events, which targeted foreign tourists in the heart of the Jordanian capital in Amman. The first incident took place in 2006⁶²⁸; the second took place more recently and targeted a Lebanese musical band⁶²⁹. Despite the success that security services enjoyed in dismantling many groups, and in confronting the expansion of al-Qaeda’s strategies, nothing can stop an individual from using primitive means to attack foreigners. And, indeed, these types of attacks are even more dangerous and lethal than those carried out by groups – which can be infiltrated or stopped (by coordinated security action) – for, taking security measures against an individual and the infiltration of an individual act is impossible. Certainly, the cure more likely to succeed is building up a social and cultural immunity against extremist thinking, and creating alternative political and economic conditions, which are not conducive to breeding and nurturing extremist groups and radical tendencies.⁶³⁰

The Global Context: The Global Security Environment and “Global Jihad”

The impact of these three interacting “spheres” was tangible and obvious during al-Zarqawi’s “golden era” as commander of al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). Indeed, these conditions and the way they worked together led to a transformation in the kind of militant operations and in the types of external threats that would target Jordan. And, despite the fact that the security environment in Jordan played an effective and important role in protecting national security, it also became a factor in strengthening the morale, rebellious spirit, and mobilization capacities of the Jihadi Salafist movement there. Indeed, its members – in the most part – formed the ‘local’ component that aided the threats poised against the nation. What is more dangerous is that these individuals, today, represent a “latent” entity, waiting for the right time and circumstances to take political, and even worse, armed action.

Despite the weakening of al-Qaeda in Iraq recently, certain parts of the country are still hosts to Jihadi Salafism; and, the precarious situation in Iraq still remains a source of potential threat to Jordan’s security. Furthermore, in addition to al-Qaeda, which is not entirely finished in Iraq, there is the threat of further clashes and schisms between the Sunnis and Shiites – a factor that can be exploited in the discourse of the Jihadi Salafist movement in a call to the ‘defense the Sunnis and their interests’ – as was the case with the discourse of this movement in Lebanon recently.

Finally, the most important factor remains the Palestinian issue, especially in light of the impasse in the peace process (and with it the diminishing prospects of peace anytime in the near future) and in light of the internal divisions that have emerged amongst Palestinians of late. The latter all pose as abetting factors tempting young men to shake off the hold of traditional, mainstream authorities

⁶²⁸ For further details about this incident refer to the following link: <http://www.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/D2BAA062-360B-4AF1-AEEB-6A76C7222CB4.htm>.

⁶²⁹ For further details about this incident refer to the following link: <http://www.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/D2BAA062-360B-4AF1-AEEB-6A76C7222CB4.htm>.

⁶³⁰ Cf. Mohammad Abu Rumman, “*Waqfa ma’a Jareemat al-Mudaraj al-Romani*” (Lit. “Pausing at the Crime in the Roman Amphitheatre”); al-Ghad Jordanian Daily Newspaper, September 7, 2006; available at http://alghad.com/index.php/afkar_wamawaqef/article/4619.html.

such as the secular nationalists (Fatah and others), and the Islamist nationalists (Hamas and al-Jihad al-Islami), and turning to more extreme, angry Arab platforms and international alternatives on the scene - which are, no doubt, that of al-Qaeda and the Jihadi Salafists.

Indeed, one can catch sight of the potential of this possibility with the evolution and rising numbers of those who have adopted al-Qaeda's discourse in Palestinian refugee camps in Gaza, Syria, and Lebanon. In Gaza, groups such as "*Jaysh al-Islam*" (The Army of Islam) and "*Jaysh al-Ummah*" (The Army of the Islamic Nation 'Ummah') have emerged; and in Lebanon, the movements of "*Fateh al-Islam*" (Islam's Conquests) and "*Jund al-Islam*" (The Soldiers of Islam) have emerged; and in Syria, a militant group recently emerged that is affiliated with Lebanon's "*Fateh al-Islam*" (which became involved in an armed confrontation with Syrian security on the doorsteps of the al-Yarmouk Palestinian refugee camp). All these point to the rise of Jihadi Salafist groups there.⁶³¹ The potential that Palestinian camps, which are reaching a point of impoverishment equivalent to the lowest form of any life with dignity, are becoming the social incubators for this movement is a fear that is quite in its place.

Despite the fact that, today, the situation in Jordan is still relatively different; and the presence of the Jihadi Salafist movement in the refugee camps in Jordan is limited and under strict surveillance, yet the repercussions of setbacks and the impact of the Palestinian issue on Jordanian society are still very strong and tangible. Nearly half the population of Jordan is of Palestinian origin, of which an extensive segment is comprised of young men, who are ready to take on a political and security gamble under the stress of their religious and nationalist zeal!

⁶³¹ For further details about this incident refer to Mohammad Abu Rumman, "*Suriya wa al-Jihadiyun: Mann Inqalaba 'ala al-Akhar?*" (Lit. "Syrian and the Jihadists: Who Turned Against Who"); al-Ghad Jordanian Daily Newspaper, October 11, 2008; available at <http://www.alghad.jo/index.php?article=10685>.

Chapter Seven

The Jihadi Salafist Approach to the Arab Democratic Revolutions

Introduction

The Jihadi-Salafist movement emerged again in the media spotlight with the wave of Arab democratic revolutions, and particularly when one of their protests, held in the city of al-Zarqa on April 15th, 2011, turned violent with clashes between members of the movement and security forces and a number of counter-protesters present at the scene. According to the narrative of the Public Security Department, members of the Jihadi-Salafist movement, accused by police of using swords, daggers, and knives during the protest, injured nearly 80 security personnel.⁶³²

The account provided by the Public Security Department regarding the al-Zarqa events was supported by photographs and video footage reportedly showing members of the movement waving swords and knives, images that indeed shocked Jordanian public opinion, which had not been accustomed to seeing “bearded sheikhs” carrying swords and attacking police. These images were in complete contradiction to other protests and demonstrations that took place during that time, where political and Islamist activists were the ones being attacked by police and gendarmerie forces, and not the opposite.

The Jordanian government exploited and employed the “images” of the al-Zarqa incident well, using them to reinforce its grumble from the persistent and tireless protests and demonstrations calling for reform, which had been taking place for nearly three months since the spark of Arab democratic revolutions, and more precisely, after the uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt.⁶³³

On the other hand, the Jihadi-Salafists insisted, in their narrative of the al-Zarqa events to the media, that it was the security forces that initiated the attack first, aided by a group of “counter-protesters.” The Jihadists stressed that they were defending themselves against beatings and insults, and asserted that what had taken place was actually an “ambush” prepared for them by the security forces, which lured them into the clashes.⁶³⁴

Immediately following the events, the security forces launched an extensive campaign of arrests of members of the movement, a campaign described by families of the detainees as “vicious and harsh.” The State Security Court later released nearly 70 of the movement’s members, yet meanwhile, decided to put nearly 149 others on trial on charges that included carrying out acts of terrorism, inciting strife and sedition, and rioting.⁶³⁵

However, the page of “Jihadi Salafism” would not turn over following the incident. Instead, families of detained members of the movement returned to protest and demonstrate, calling for

⁶³² For an account of the incident see “Ad-Dustour” Jordanian daily newspaper, available at

<http://www.addustour.com/16097/>

«أحالة%20متورطه%20بأحداث%20الزرقاء%20إلى%20أمن%20الدولة%20بتهمتي%20«الأرهاب%20والشغب

⁶³³ See the report on “Ammon News” Jordanian news site, entitled: “*Al-Bakhit min al-Zarqa: Sanaqif Dhid ay Fitna bi Tariqa Khashina*” (Lit., “Al-Bakhit from al-Zarqa: We Will Stand Against any Strife in a Harsh Manner”):

<http://www.ammonnews.net/article.aspx?articleNO=85293>

⁶³⁴ See “*Al-Salafiyun Yufanidouna al-Riwaya al-Rasmiya bi Sha'n Ahdath al-Zarqa*” (Lit., “Salafists Refute the Official Narrative on the al-Zarqa Events”), on “Zad al-Urdun” news site: <http://jordanzad.com/print.php?id=42018>

⁶³⁵ For more on the charges brought against members of the movement arrested after the al-Zarqa events, see the report on “Al-Bosala” Jordanian news site available at

<http://newsite.albosala.com/Portals/Content/?info=YVdROU1qWXhOamtYzI5MWNtTmxQV4xWWxCaFoyVW1kSGx3WIQweEpnPT0rdQ==pl>

'justice' for their sons and demanding their release. A popular committee was set up to defend the legal and civil rights of the detainees, which included a number of Jordanian political and tribal figures.⁶³⁶

The paradox in the al-Zarqa incident is that the Jihadi-Salafist movement had previously organized a number of other protests and demonstrations, which took place in four main vital locations in Amman, and all of which ended peacefully without any confrontations or arrests. In fact, the previous demonstrations had witnessed a "soft" security presence, working to protect the safety and peacefulness of the protests.⁶³⁷

Among the central questions posed by observers of the movement are the following: What is the reason behind the Jihadi-Salafist's movement sudden emergence into the public sphere of protests, demonstrations, and public expression of their demands and their ideology? Does this emergent manifestation actually reflect an ideological transformation within the movement, or it is rather a tactical "investment" in the political climate that emanated from the wave of Arab democratic revolutions, in general, and the internal political activism demanding reform and democracy in Jordan, in particular? And, has there been any kind of "declarations" by the leadership of the Jihadi-Salafist current in Jordan regarding their perspectives and stances towards public protests and demonstrations, and the objectives and goals aimed to be achieved through these activities?

Such questions call for a discussion over the perspectives and stances taken by the Jihadi-Salafist current in general, and al-Qaeda in particular, towards the Arab democratic revolutions, and whether these movements find in the new climate a degree of harmony and concurrence with their discourse and path. Indeed, the following discussion reveals that there is a level of intersection between the path of Jihadi-Salafism and that of the Arab revolutions in certain aspects, but in others, the two paths remain in complete contradiction, and possibly clash in perspectives. The latter is manifested in the fact that the Arab revolutions focused on peaceful activism with the aim of reaching democratic systems of governance, whereas the Jihadi discourse focused on armed action, with the aim of reaching Islamic systems of governance, perhaps on the model of Somalia's *al-Shabaab al-Mujahidin* or Afghanistan's Taliban emirate (1996-2001).

Finally, a fundamental question arises in regard to the influence and impact these peaceful revolutions have on the cohesiveness and ideology of the Jihadi-Salafist current in Jordan, particularly in light of the ongoing competition and conflict of perspective between the followers of Abu Mohammad al-Maqdisi on the one side, and the followers of the thought and legacy of Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi (killed in 2006), who are adamant on the armed resistance approach?

Necessarily, a discussion of the new developments in the region and the Jihadi-Salafist movement's position towards them entails analysis and an understanding of the size and strength of the movement, itself, and the degree of its proliferation inside Jordan, and whether it has the capacity to "react" to the heavy blow inflicted upon it during and after the al-Zarqa events. Alternatively, this

⁶³⁶ On the campaign launched by the "Popular Committee for the Defense of Detainees", see the report on "Amman Net" news site available at <http://ar.ammannet.net/news/108066>

⁶³⁷ For more on the various protests and demonstrations held by Jihadi-Salafist movement prior to al-Zarqa events, see the report by "Al-Jazeera.net" correspondent in Amman, Mohammad al-Najjar, on March 1st, 2011: available at <http://www.aljazeera.net/news/pages/4e21d5d1-ce14-42d4-9910-8a830bc5d4ae>

discussion also merits the question on whether or not the security apparatus, and the state for that matter, holds the future of the movement in its hands.

1. The Democratic Revolutions in the Arab World in the Perspective of Jihadists

In the opinion of political analysts, the killing of Osama Bin Laden was nothing more than “drawing the curtain” on the rise of al-Qaeda, which, in itself, came as a reflection of the mismanagement and failure of Arab regimes to govern their countries over many decades. Instead, according to these analysts, the excruciating blow to Bin Laden’s base and the real killing of the man are actually represented in the revolutions taking place in the Arab world, which are demanding democracy, and which have offered a new strategic option for young Arabs, as well as an alternative path to that which al-Qaeda has advocated for in confronting the Arab regimes.

Indeed, these popular Arab democratic revolutions have established milestones that are decisively different from those set by Sayyid Qutb and later ‘Abd al-Salam Faraj and al-Zawahiri, amongst others. Instead of the kinds of strategies set forth by the latter, the current revolutions have focused on the importance of establishing a civil state, the right to peaceful resistance, the power of civil disobedience, and the importance of opening up to the world – all of which present a different, if not totally contradictory path to that which has been set by al-Qaeda and its ideological and political postures.

However, the question of al-Qaeda’s stance concerning the Arab democratic revolutions cannot be reduced to the level of mere differences or contradictions. Indeed, if viewed from another and more in depth perspective, these revolutions have also weakened the most ardent enemies of al-Qaeda – the current Arab regimes – which have always staunchly and fiercely opposed al-Qaeda, in particular, as well as other Islamist movements, in general. At the same time, these revolutions have paved the way for more freedom and more independence amongst the Arab masses, which have come to possess the power required to participate in selecting the forms of governance that rule over them – as has been proven the case in post-revolutionary Egypt and Tunisia.

However, it is precisely through examining these converging and diverging visions and perspectives that one may attain a closer reading of al-Qaeda’s position towards these revolutions. Investigating these positions will also allow for a better understanding of the manner in which al-Qaeda has interpreted the implications of these revolutions and the ramifications they have had and will continue to have upon the Arab region. Furthermore, and in order to proceed with this examination, it is important to analyze the discourse and the various speeches made by the most influential leaders of al-Qaeda concerning these revolutions, with conclusions drawn at a more global level, prior to evaluating the impact that the Arab revolutions have had on Jihadi-Salafism in the specific “Jordanian context”.

In a more global context and in relation to the Arab democratic revolutions, the messages relayed by the current ideological theorist and leader of al-Qaeda, Ayman al-Zawahiri would appear to be of the more important “references” in this regard. Particularly important is al-Zawahiri’s speech, referred to as “*Resalat al-Amal wa al-Bushra li Ahlena fi Misr*” (A Message of Hope and Glad

Tidings to Our People in Egypt).⁶³⁸ The same can be said of the article written by al-Qaeda's current religious jurist and *mufti*, Abu Yahya al-Libi⁶³⁹, entitled "*Thawrat al-Shu'oub bayna al-Ta'athur wa al-Ta'thir*" (The Peoples' Revolutions: Between Influencing and Being Influenced), which was published in the "*Tala'e' Khorasan*" (The Vanguard of Khorasan) magazine.⁶⁴⁰ This article by al-Libi also carries some of the more important messages and positions held by al-Qaeda's leadership when it comes to the future of al-Qaeda in the current Arab "revolutionary" context. Finally, the same is true of an article, written originally in English, by one of al-Qaeda's better known ideologues, Anwar al-'Awlaqi⁶⁴¹ (who was killed in an airstrike in Yemen on September 30, 2011), entitled "Tsunami of Change", published in the spring issue of "Inspire" magazine.⁶⁴²

As the leading ideological theorist of al-Qaeda, al-Zawahiri considers and deals with the subject of the Arab revolutions with the belief that they will significantly impact al-Qaeda's future course, direction and mode of thinking. Indeed, al-Zawahiri's views on the subject likely represent and are indicative of the new themes and important alterations in al-Qaeda's discourse.

In his "letter", *A Message of Hope and Glad Tidings to Our People in Egypt*, he devotes the significant part of his message to the Egyptian case, dwelling and elaborating on major yet general points, the most important of which include:

- He considers the Arab democratic revolutions as being complementary to the war that they, al-Qaeda, are waging in Iraq and Afghanistan against the West and against the regimes allied with the West, as the goal of both paths is to liberate nations from tyranny and occupation. He says, "Our *Ummah* is waging one battle against the invaders of the Crusades and their agents, and against our corrupt and corrupting leaders".⁶⁴³

⁶³⁸ This speech was made by al-Zawahiri in April of 2011. The full text of this "message" or letter can be referred to and is available at <http://www.aljihad.com/vb/showthread.php?t=4434>

⁶³⁹ Also considered one of al-Qaeda's younger, more media-friendly, hard-line theologians [Reference: http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/04/26/the_almanac_of_al_qaeda?page=full]; Born c.1963, Al-Libi's name is Mohammad Hassan Qaid, and is considered an Islamist ideologue and leading high-ranking official within al-Qaeda, and an alleged member of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group. He is known to speak Urdu, Pashto, and Arabic. A national of Libya, al-Libi was held in extrajudicial detention in the Bagram interim detention facility. At that time, American counter-terrorism analysts asserted that al-Libi was a member of al-Qaeda. [Reference: "Dead or Alive: Who is al-Qaeda's Abu Yahya al-Libi?" June 5, 2012, available at <http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/06/05/218803.html>] [Translator's note].

⁶⁴⁰ Issue 18; *Rabi' al-Thani*, 1432 AH (April/2011); "*Tala'e' Khorasan*" or "The Vanguard of Khorasan" magazine is considered one of the most influential and popular magazines by al-Qaeda despite the fact that it is published not by al-Qaeda, itself, but rather by the Taliban movement in Pakistan.

⁶⁴¹ Born in the United States in 1971, the late al-'Awlaqi was a U.S. and Yemeni citizen and radical cleric, who was considered to be an important recruiter for al-Qaeda. He was renowned for posting sermons and videos online in English and for calling for attacks on Americans. Several of his operatives are also believed to have been killed with him in the airstrike that took his life in September 2011. Al-'Awlaqi was a leader of the offshoot known as al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), based in eastern Yemen, which has targeted both the Saudi and Yemeni governments, as well as American interests. [Reference: <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/rundown/2011/09/us-born-cleric-anwar-al-awlaki-killed-in-yemen.html> and <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-11658920>] [Translator's note].

⁶⁴² "Inspire" Magazine; March 2011; Issue 5, published by al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) in English; For the full text of this article in English refer to the pdf form of Issue 5 of "Inspire" Magazine available at <http://info.publicintelligence.net/InspireMarch2011.pdf> [Translator's note]. To view a translation of this article into Arabic, see the following link: http://defenderofthelands.blogspot.com/2011/03/blog-post_5449.html.

⁶⁴³ Ayman al-Zawahiri, "*Resalat al-Bushra wa al-Amal li Ahlina fi Misr*" (Lit. "A Message of Hope and Glad Tidings to Our People in Egypt"), op. cit.

- He warns of an American and Western agenda, and questions the value of their support to the Egyptian revolution by emphasizing the point that Western powers do not want to see truly free forms of governance being established in the Arab world – which, in his opinion, would represent an Islamic and *Shura*-based system, reject the occupation of Muslim lands, and confront Israeli ambitions. Instead, al-Zawahiri is of the opinion that America only wants, “regimes that provide the people with limited freedoms, and regimes that do not threaten its interests, and regimes do not affect the security of Israel”.⁶⁴⁴
- Al-Zawahiri also points out the alliance between the United States and the (post-revolutionary) ruling military council in Egypt, and considers that, up until now, the revolution in Egypt has been nothing more than a “revolution that has ended in a military coup”. He also warns that many of the gains achieved in Egypt, thus far, do not amount to what remains unchanged – meaning that the true goals of the revolution have not yet been met; and, instead, the revolution has been swindled by the army and circumvented by the army’s role in this process.
- Perhaps, the most important part of his message is embodied in al-Zawahiri’s warning that the “revolution was being hijacked” because Islamic *Sharia* was not being enforced and Egypt’s Islamic identity was being manipulated. In this same context, he implores Islamists and all Egyptians alike to push the process forward to the goal of applying the Islamic *Sharia*, and not to accept governance by democracy as an alternative to the *Shura* system, emphasizing and expounding upon the clear differences and distinctions, in his view, between the concepts of the Islamic *Shura* and Western democracy.⁶⁴⁵

On the other hand, the message relayed in Yahya al-Libi’s article, *The Peoples’ Revolutions: Between Influencing and being Influenced*, is more precise than the message conveyed by al-Zawahiri. In his message, al-Libi defines – in a decisive, clear, and resolute manner – to the followers of the movement and the current, wherever they may be, what is expected of them, what their goals are, and the parameters of their interactions with the revolutions, so that the loyalty of individuals to al-Qaeda is not affected, intellectually, doctrinally, or organizationally by engaging in these environments affected by the new “revolutionary” spirit.

Al-Libi presents these revolutions to al-Qaeda’s followers as being “a window of opportunity” that must be exploited, without being lured in by the “cries for change” and without losing ground or sight of their goals and what is important. To direct followers clearly, he formulates a key directive or rule of engagement, in which he states, “what is required of the *mujahidin* is that they be adept in mastering their engagement with unfolding events, while safeguarding their jihad and jihadi principles; and that they be careful of the infiltration of any of the distorted and twisted ideas and concepts, which arise in the midst of all the action, heated emotions and enticements that accompany quick and vast changes; and that the foundations and pillars of their path must remain firmly grounded and clearly envisioned in their minds; and that preserving, maintaining,

⁶⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁵ Ibid.

strengthening, and reinforcing these pillars must remain their main concern, above anything else”.⁶⁴⁶

Clearly, the formula established by al-Libi attempts to strike a balance between several elements. On the one hand, he does not want al-Qaeda to appear to be “the loser” in these revolutionary processes; rather, he wants it to appear as though al-Qaeda is on the same path as the revolutions. And, he pushes for engagement in these revolutionary processes so that al-Qaeda can be a part of the “action” and a part of the processes leading to change. Alternatively, he shows a clear concern and fear about followers being “bedazzled and enticed” by the revolutions and being swept away by the excitement surrounding the revolutions thus, weakening al-Qaeda’s discourse and ideological base. Indeed, in his message, the latter remains the core concern for al-Libi, who elaborates on this point extensively and warns against this potential prospect in various parts of his article.

When determining and defining al-Qaeda’s position towards the Arab revolutions, al-Libi uses the analogous example of transferring a prisoner, “who has been held in solitary confinement for a very long period, with his hands and feet shackled, where he has been forbidden from speaking, and where he rarely sees the light, save for tiny filaments of rays that sometimes penetrate through the small holes in his cell’s window” to a spacious, communal room, full of unconstrained prisoners “inside their large cells, where he sees the light, where he speaks freely anytime he wants with his companions, and where he prays with them and dwells with them in the midst of a new room, freed of shackles”.⁶⁴⁷ Thus, he draws a parallel to the current situation as a shift from a “terrible” prison to a prison with “better conditions”, but that this situation does not represent the final release or final liberation, which, in al-Libi’s view, requires the total, unadulterated, and undiminished application of the Islamic *Sharia*. In his opinion, “any other form of governance – no matter how embellished it may be in the eyes of its beholders – cannot be considered anything but the clear and absolute religious description of *Jahili* (ignorant) governance.”

After stressing upon the higher aim of rule and governance by God’s laws (Islamic *Sharia*), al-Libi concludes – in the same fashion as his companion, al-Zawahiri – with warnings against Western and American agendas. Al-Libi emphasizes that these powers are trying to “ride the Arab democratic wave” (the revolutions); and, that their agendas have only two objectives in mind: First, to ensure that any change not be purely Islamic, in the sense of “true and complete independence in policy and decision-making and in relations-building...”; and second, to be vigilant in safeguarding their (American/Western) interests in the region, including the security of Israel.

At the end of his article, al-Libi recapitulates upon the determinants of al-Qaeda’s objectives by comparing these with the objectives of the West, and concludes with the following statement, “What is required is serious, profound, and constructive thinking about how to pragmatically capitalize upon and invest in this atmosphere, so full of courage, boldness and daring, whose rapture the masses are experiencing during this period, and to direct these masses towards the true change we are all yearning for, which is to establish the rule of Almighty God, without disorder,

⁶⁴⁶ Abu Yahya al-Libi, “*Thawrat al-Shu’oub bayna al-Ta’athur wa al-Ta’thir*” (Lit. “The Peoples’ Revolutions: Between Influencing and Being Influenced”), published in “*Tala’ e’ Khorasan*” (The Vanguards of Khorasan) Magazine; Issue 18, *Rabi’ al-Thani*, 1432 AH (April 2011).

⁶⁴⁷ Ibid.

without extemporizing, without superficialities, and without confusing matters, so that the outcomes (of these events) will not be contrary to what we want to achieve”.⁶⁴⁸

The third document that requires review, here, is *Tsunami of Change*, which is an article written by al-Qaeda’s late ideological theorist in Yemen, Anwar al-‘Awlaqi, who was renowned as a man with a special talent in influencing followers and other members of Muslim communities in the West. He established an English-language magazine, “Inspire”, and having grown up in the United States, his experiences with events there and his excellent command of English language contributed to developing and refining his extraordinary ability to impact and influence Muslims, particularly through cyberspace. He also played a leading role in influencing and recruiting young Muslims from the West, including Nidal Malik Hassan, who killed 13 people and injured many others at the Fort Hood American military in Texas in 2010, and ‘Omar Farouq ‘Abd al-Mutallab, who attempted to blow up the American Northwest Airlines flight to Detroit on December 25, 2009.⁶⁴⁹

In his article, al-‘Awlaqi presents a more pragmatic approach than his aforementioned companions, which is more informed when it comes to the American reading of the Arab revolutions, in particular, and al-Qaeda’s influence, in general, as well as the influence of the former on the latter, and vice versa. To support his points, al-‘Awlaqi cites the then US Secretary of State, Hilary Clinton, and journalist and expert on terrorism, Peter Bergen, as well as the renowned journalist and author, Fareed Zakaria.⁶⁵⁰

The main premise that al-‘Awlaqi argues in his article is that, first and foremost, the collapse of the Arab regimes, which were so closely allied to the United States and which were so hostile to the “*mujahidin*”, serves the aims of al-Qaeda and does not harm its interests. At the same time, he decisively excludes the possibility of the rise of new regimes, which would be similar in character and in attributes to the overthrown regimes, anytime in the near future.

Contrary to his colleagues, al-‘Awlaqi does not stress upon the importance or the necessity of these revolutions ending in the application of the Islamic *Sharia* and Islamic rule and governance – as these revolutionary processes are still unfolding and the outcomes of these revolutions remain unclear. What is important, in his view, is that the processes currently taking place will provide the “*mujahidin*” with more space and latitude for action and for mobilizing the *da‘wa* advocated by the movement. He says, “We do not know yet what the outcome would be, and we do not have to. The outcome doesn’t have to be an Islamic government for us to consider what is occurring to be a step in the right direction. Regardless of the outcome, whether it is an Islamic government or the likes of Mohammad el-Baradei, Amro Mousa, or another military figure; whatever the outcome is, our

⁶⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁹ For more on Anwar al-‘Awlaqi (in Arabic), refer to the following link on the “Al Jazeera” news website available at <http://www.aljazeera.net/news/pages/6cf52b21-205b-4a6e-bd93-0d22cddc9ffe>; for more on Anwar al-‘Awlaqi (commonly spelled as al-Awlaki) in English, refer to the following link on the “Al Jazeera” English news website available at <http://www.aljazeera.com/Services/Search/?q=anwar%20al%20awlaki>.

⁶⁵⁰ Anwar al-‘Awlaqi, “Tsunami of Change”, “Inspire” Magazine; Issue No. 5; [English translation taken directly from a copy of the original “Inspire” Magazine, available at <http://info.publicintelligence.net/InspireMarch2011.pdf>; p. 52] [Translator’s note].

mujahidin brothers in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and the rest of the Muslim world will get a chance to breathe again after three decades of suffocation”.⁶⁵¹

Al-‘Awlaqi wagers, then, that the current situation is favorable to al-Qaeda’s interests. In his opinion, al-Qaeda will get rid of hostile regimes, allied to the West; and, at the very least, even the most minimum of gains would offer a better “opportunity” to resurface and to re-engage in their work, their activities, and their *da’wa* towards their greater aims, as long as the possibility of a more facilitating environment emerges for Jihadi-Salafism – as would prove to be the case later.

In comparison, al-‘Awlaqi confers priority and importance to the advantages and opportunities that may emerge for al-Qaeda from the success of Arab democratic revolutions, whereas al-Libi reveals an anxious and fearful concern over the prospect that the revolutionary processes will “stun” its followers. Unlike al-‘Awlaqi, al-Libi is extremely cautious of the fact that the enticements brought forth by the successes of such revolutions may prevail, drawing believers into their wave and whittling away and eventually diminishing the impact and efficacy of al-Qaeda and its ideology.

Finally, in a message recorded one week before he was killed⁶⁵² and broadcast by al-Qaeda after his death, Osama Bin Laden joined the other three leaders in welcoming and embracing the Arab revolutions. The main tenor of his letter however did not carry any additional points or undertones than those which were conferred by al-‘Awlaqi, al-Libi and al-Zawahiri. In his letter, Bin Laden sufficed to welcome the “winds of change” and called upon young men to penetrate and engage in these new movements, defining the end goal as being “liberation from enslavement to the whims of leaders, man-made laws, and Western hegemony”.⁶⁵³

The Main Features of Al-Qaeda’s New “Adapted” Ideology

The main broad lines of al-Qaeda’s ideological attempts to adapt to the new context it finds itself in can be deduced from the premises and analyses presented by its most important leaders, and may be summed up in the following thematic points:

- That al-Qaeda does not consider the events unfolding in the Arab world as requiring a broad review or revision of the ideological base upon which al-Qaeda was founded. Instead, al-Qaeda needs to focus on trying to capitalize on the aftermath and outcomes of these revolutions when it comes to engaging in their work and in advocating their ideological and political *da’wa* by investing in the greater breadth of the “moment” rather than clashing or going against the tide of the “freedom” wave of Arab liberation brought forth by the popular masses.
- That al-Qaeda does not want to appear as though it is on the wrong end of the spectrum of these revolutions. Indeed, its leaders are careful to maintain that al-Qaeda’s role and its activities are complementary to that which the revolutions achieved in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya, as well as that which other revolutions are still trying to achieve in other countries. All the messages presented by al-Qaeda’s leaders stress upon al-Qaeda being in harmony with the popular

⁶⁵¹ Ibid.

⁶⁵² Bin Laden was assassinated in Abbottabad, Pakistan on May 2, 2011 by U.S. Special Forces.

⁶⁵³ Refer to, “*Bin Laden Yamtadih Thawrat al-Arab fi Risala Sawtiya Mudatuha Ithna- ‘Ashar Daqiqa*” (Lit. “Bin Laden Lauds the Revolutions of the Arabs in a 12-Minute Recorded Voice Message”), the London-based “Al-sharq Al-Awsat” daily newspaper, May 20, 2011, Issue No. 11861.

revolutions in waging the same “one war” – a war al-Qaeda is waging globally against the United States and the Western agenda and the war that the popular revolutions are waging to liberate the will of the Arab people from the tyranny of their regimes.

- That the ultimate goal in the “post-revolutionary period” should be embodied by the pure “application of ‘divine governance and sovereignty’ or, the rule of Islamic *Sharia*; and, that al-Qaeda’s mission is to redirect the revolutions towards the Islamic identity and the Islamic character, in order to intersect with the higher goals set by al-Qaeda. This intersection would be embodied by the establishment of regimes, which are not allied to the West, which are not hostile to Islamist movements, and which are closer to the ideas embraced by al-Qaeda, in general.
- That, despite al-Qaeda’s emphasis on “not being at odds” with the new revolutions, some of its leaders are concerned about the impending state of current affairs (the call for and rise of democracy) and fear that the attraction of the possibility of democratic governance may affect the scope and reach of al-Qaeda and its followers, and diminish the strength of the ideology of global jihadism that it established and adopted.
- For the first time, there is less emphasis on “armed jihad” in al-Qaeda’s discourse and there is a tangible distancing from the call for “armed action and operations targeting regimes and American interests”. Instead, armed jihad is being presented less and less as an “objective” and increasingly more as a “means” – and, more importantly, a means which may be substituted by other means, if so required.

It is evident from the texts reviewed earlier that al-Qaeda’s leadership is attempting to initiate a process of “ideological adaptation” by circumventing certain differences that may exist between al-Qaeda and the new democratic revolutions, especially in terms of the means and instruments chosen for affecting or bringing about change, in the ceiling being set for demands, and in the manner in which relations shall be conducted between “religion” and the state in the future.

A comparative analysis of these new messages presented by al-Qaeda’s leadership with the ideology al-Qaeda has created for itself over the past several years will also reveal that the new efforts expended in “ideological adaptation” will not actually touch upon the firm, underlying structure and core of their ideology; that is: the application of Islamic *Sharia* as the sole form of governance is an obligatory duty; that the United States and the West are the enemies, and that these enemies are responsible for all the hostility garnered against the goal of establishing Islamic states and systems of governance; that any regime established upon a system of governance other than that of the complete, pure, unadulterated and solidly-structured Islamic system is utterly rejected and apostatized as unbelieving (*takfir*); and finally, that the overall importance of jihad in confronting the powers-that-be on an international or global level remains firmly entrenched.

Furthermore, the parameters of this ideological adaptation, or ideological displacement, evidenced in the previously reviewed texts, are presented specifically within the context of trying to deal with the challenges posed by the popular, Arab revolutions or, the call for democracy and opting for the path of “peaceful civil resistance to produce change”. Indeed, the path chosen by these revolutions is diametrically opposed to that which al-Qaeda’s ideology postulated: that the use of armed force is

the only means for affecting and producing real change. Subsequently, the current discourse of al-Qaeda's leaders is particularly focused on deliberately circumventing this dichotomy.

Al-Qaeda's leaders do not suggest or offer any retreat from the strategy of using the force of arms and armed resistance to bring about change. They also do not discuss the intellectual, ideological, and jurisprudential implications of this choice on the literature, culture, conduct, and thinking of al-Qaeda; nor do they suggest or offer any intellectual review of the ramifications of this choice and the consequences thereof in the many countries in which al-Qaeda carried out armed operations.

From the messages relayed by all four leaders, Bin Laden, al-Zawahiri, al-Libi, and al-'Awlaqi, it is also possible to discern a unified thread in the discourse that stresses upon the importance of harnessing the potentials of these revolutions and shaping them to their advantage – while steering clear of any discussion about the importance of armed action to achieve al-Qaeda's goals – a strategy which continues to hold a very prominent place in the vast majority of the ideological conduct, literature, and rhetoric of al-Qaeda and Jihadi-Salafists in general.⁶⁵⁴

These texts also steer clear of any mention of the fact that these democratic revolutions have emerged with the goal of eliminating totalitarian rule and of establishing pluralistic, democratic systems of governance. Even Islamist movements, which have actively engaged in these revolutions, particularly the Organization of the Muslim Brotherhood, have declared and still maintain their commitment to the establishment of democratic systems of governance, which, in themselves, necessarily and radically differ from that which is put forth by the ideology of al-Qaeda.

The gaps between the strategies and goals of the Arab democratic revolutions and the strategies and goals set forth by al-Qaeda places al-Qaeda's leadership before several central and critical questions: If democratic regimes are established in Arab countries, how will al-Qaeda's leadership deal with them? Will it insist on the use of armed force or will it accept engaging in the dynamics of political life through the ballot box, with all the implications that this engagement entails in terms of ideological compromise? The ramifications on al-Qaeda, presented by these questions, extend far beyond the choice of peaceful or militarized resistance to reflecting upon the very nature of al-Qaeda's vision of a state, the systems of governance adopted by a state, and the relationship with the world. Indeed, these implications touch upon the very solidity, structural foundations, and fundamental core of al-Qaeda's ideological discourse.

On the other hand, it is evident that there are certain discrepancies that emerge between the different texts concerning potential scenarios, possibilities, and options before al-Qaeda with regard to the questions posed above – or, how al-Qaeda will deal with democratic regimes and systems of governance. In al-Zawahiri's message, he reiterates and reaffirms his rejection of any regime that is not Islamic in its governance, as is the case with al-Libi, who raises serious concerns about al-Qaeda's followers being “stunned,” “enticed,” or “drawn away” by the euphoria surrounding the democratic revolutions and the risk that followers may be inclined to forego their way of thinking. Alternatively, al-'Awlaqi presents scenarios more tempered than those posed by his colleagues. He

⁶⁵⁴ Refer to Mohammad Abu Rumman, “*al-Islah al-Siyasi fi al-Fikr al-Islami*” (Lit. “Political Reform in Islamic Thought”), op. cit., pp. 260-271.

postulates the fact that the revolutions may transform into democratic systems of governance does not, in itself, pose a direct threat to al-Qaeda, initially. He insists that this scenario will remain a better option for al-Qaeda than the current regimes.

Suffice it to say that we are witnessing “attempts” by al-Qaeda’s to adapt to the era of Arab democratic revolutions in a manner that will serve the goals and objectives of the movement. And, we stand before a deliberated intention by al-Qaeda to circumvent and steer clear of all the challenges these revolutions pose to the movement, particularly the core differences between the fundamental structures, goals, and very nature of these revolutions and those embraced by the unwavering, rigid structure, and fundamental base of al-Qaeda’s ideological discourse.

2. The Jordanian Jihadi-Salafist Movement and Perspectives on New Challenges: Engaging in the Public Sphere

The previous readings of events are similarly reflected by the Jihadi-Salafist movement in Jordan, which has also tried to take advantage of the Arab democratic revolutions for several reasons, including finding an exit strategy from their entrenchment in the current “security triangle” – or being dealt with as an alarming and threatening phenomenon in terms of state security policy. This “exit” strategy includes trying to gain political ground and attention in the media through organized rallies, protests, and demonstrations. For the Jihadi-Salafist movement in Jordan, these kinds of activities would provide a broader media attention while, simultaneously, make it more difficult for security services to deal with movement in a heavy-handed manner, as long as it is expressing its demands and positions in a peaceful manner, like the other movements and parties in Jordan.

With these objectives in mind, the Jihadi-Salafist movement in Jordan was able to successfully organize several protest marches and demonstrations. In March of 2011, they organized a demonstration in front of the al-Husseini Mosque in the downtown of Amman, in which the movement displayed significant strength and presence. The event received unprecedented coverage; and, this success convinced the movement’s leadership to continue along this path, organizing a series of demonstrations in front of the Prime Ministry headquarters, followed by more organized protests in different governorates and cities, such as Irbid, al-Salt and Ma’an – all this before the clashes that would take place between the members of the movement and the Jordanian security forces in the city of al-Zarqa on April 15, 2011.

The banners and slogans espoused by the Jihadi-Salafists during these marches and protests varied and ranged from their now familiar ideological discourse concerning the *da’wa* and governance by Islamic *Sharia*, anti-American sentiments, and support for the global al-Qaeda movement to calls for the release of convicted members of the movement, improving prison conditions for their imprisoned brethren, in addition to raising the ceiling of their criticism of the Jordanian regime’s standing policies.

What is different in these new initiatives and attempts at public protest and demonstration is that, for the first time, political language has come to dominate the movement’s discourse where it once barricaded behind purely “religious terminology”. The latter transformation also reflects the growing influence of new, more educated and well-informed members on the movement, who are beginning to affect the traditional image and ‘stereotypes’ about the movement.⁶⁵⁵

But, the movement and, indeed, the country would arrive at a major turning point with a series of events, which unfolded on March 25, 2011, when security forces and crowds opposing the “March 24 Youth Movement” – a movement of mainly young Jordanians who represent a wide range of ideologies – attacked an “open sit-in” being held by the March 24 Movement at the Jamal Abdel Nasser public square in Amman. The day of clashes ended with one person killed and hundreds injured. These incidents were then followed by a series of counter-protests, popularly dubbed as the “loyalist” demonstrations, where members of the “loyalty” camp would continue attacking other

⁶⁵⁵ Refer to Mohammad Abu Rumman, “*Wa li al-Salafiyya al-Jihadiyya, Aydan, Ra’i*” (Lit. “The Jihadi-Salafists also Have an Opinion”), op. cit.

parties as well as any open opposition to the regime. Indeed, this explosive mix would create a tense atmosphere in the country.⁶⁵⁶

Despite the stressed environment prevailing in the country, the Jihadi-Salafist movement decided to proceed with its planned activities. The members of the movement also decided that they would defend themselves in the case they were subjected to the same attacks as the March 24 Youth Movement (which is perceived as being more closely associated with the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan).

The Jihadi-Salafists' levels of self-confidence would increase when officials tried to negotiate with them, asking the movement to cancel a demonstration calling for the release of four of their members, in the same area – the Jamal Abdel Nasser square.⁶⁵⁷ For the first time, the Jihadi-Salafists felt themselves in a position of strength in their dealings with the state and with the government. Morale would also run high amongst the Jihadi-Salafists when, in the southern city of Ma'an, King Abdullah II announced a general amnesty for all convicts tried before the courts, which the Jihadi-Salafists took to understand as a sign that members of the movement from Ma'an, who were being tried before the State Security Court, would also be released.⁶⁵⁸

The infamous events of Friday, April 15, 2011, would soon follow after the Jihadi-Salafists made a public announcement that they planned to proceed with a demonstration in the city of al-Zarqa. The demonstration took place; and, frictions and tensions between the Jihadi-Salafists and groups that arrived at the location to show their opposition to them quickly boiled over and ended up in a serious clash with security forces.

The official narrative said that the al-Zarqa incidents resulted in 80 members of the security forces being injured, with some of these injuries sustained from sword, dagger and knife attacks. Meanwhile, an untold number of members from the movement were also injured; and, these numbers remain unclear as, according to the movement, most of its injured members refused to receive medical attention in hospitals for fear of being arrested.⁶⁵⁹

In the evening, immediately following these incidents, the state presented its account of events to the media in a press conference conducted by the Director of the Public Security Department. Hours later, Jordanian public security forces carried out a particularly harsh and brutal campaign of mass arrests in which almost two hundred members of the movement were taken into custody.

⁶⁵⁶ For more details on these events refer to the "Al-Arab Al-Yawm" Jordanian daily newspaper, available at http://www.alarabalyawm.net/pages.php?news_id=290332

⁶⁵⁷ For more on the release of members of the Jihadi-Salafist movement, refer to a related article on the "Al-Bosala" news website, available at <http://newsite.albosala.com/Portals/Content/?info=YVdROU1qVTFOemdtYz15MWNtTmxOVk4xWWxCaFoyVW1kS Gx3WlQweEpnPT0rdQ==.plx>

⁶⁵⁸ For more details on the king's announcement concerning this general amnesty refer to a related article on the "Ammon" news website, available at <http://www.ammonnews.net/article.aspx?articleNO=85161>

⁶⁵⁹ Refer to a related article in the "Ad-Dastour" Jordanian daily newspaper, available at <http://www.addustour.com/16097/احالة%20136%20ممتورط%20باجداث%20الزرقاء%20الى%20امن%20الدولة%20بشهمتي%20«الدولة%20امن%20الى%20الزرقاء%20باجداث%20ممتورط%20احالة%20136%20»الزرقاء.html>. Also compare the information in the latter article with the account presented by the Jihadi-Salafists in a related article in the "Al-Arab Al-Yawm" daily newspaper, available at http://www.alarabalyawm.net/pages.php?news_id=297875

The government then announced that a large number of the Jihadi-Salafists charged and arrested would be tried before the State Security Court, although the majority of those detained would later be released. The Jihadi-Salafists who did remain in custody would eventually be tried on criminal charges, including committing acts of terror and of sedition.

On the other hand, and according to accounts narrated by the movement concerning the April 15 clashes, the entire incident was presented as a trap set to “ambush” members of the movement. The Jihadi-Salafists also claimed that they were deliberately lured into this ambush by members of the security forces as part of a premeditated campaign to distort their image in society and to turn public opinion against them. They also protested the fact that certain images of some members of the movement wielding swords were exploited to portray them as terrorists in the eyes of the public.⁶⁶⁰

Various readings of the al-Zarqa clashes emerged, including the reading that the state intentionally exploited these events to crack down on other demonstrations and opposition movements, and to turn public opinion against the wave of protests. In fact, this end was partially achieved. Popular political protests and organized public displays of opposition have abated significantly after the al-Zarqa incidents, with the state once again employing the “Jihadis” as a scarecrow to deter people away from demonstrations and from popular demands for reform.⁶⁶¹

Furthermore, reliable sources inside the Jihadi-Salafist movement have disclosed that there were differences of opinion and disagreements inside the movement concerning whether or not to actually go forward with carrying out the al-Zarqa demonstration. These sources say that a debate and dispute took place between members before the demonstration, as signs of a potential clash and confrontations were emerging prior to the event. In fact, evidence of a potential clash was such that a good number of Jihadi-Salafists chose not to participate in that particular demonstration in the hopes that the imminent damage could be warded off, somehow.⁶⁶²

Non-Violence vs. Armed Action and the Arab Democratic Revolutions

The campaign of mass arrests carried out against the Jihadi-Salafists, at that time, dealt a brutal security blow to the movement, particularly as the campaign targeted a large number of the movement’s more active members. However, prior to any discussion pertaining to these arrests, it is important to examine the ideological debate, which was taking place within the movement itself. Indeed, an internal dispute ensued between proponents and opponents of the strategy of demonstrating and protesting publicly. Proponents made the case that this strategy would serve the goals and demands of the movement, whereas opponents of this thinking maintained that the only means to a solution was to resort to armed action, proposing that peaceful demonstrations and protests is a pointless and futile strategy.

⁶⁶⁰ Refer to a statement issued by one of the leaders of the Jihadi-Salafist movement in Jordan published by the Ammon news website, available at <http://www.ammonnews.net/article.aspx?articleNO=86225>

⁶⁶¹ Refer to Mohammad Abu Rumman, “*Baye’ al-Bida’ a al-Kassida*” (Lit. “Selling Stale Goods”), op. cit.

⁶⁶² From an interview conducted with Dr. Munif Samara, one of the Jihadi-Salafist leaders in the city of al-Zarqa, conducted at his private clinic on May 17, 2011.

Indeed, the roots of this conflict date back to the serious divisions that emerged within the movement after the death of the Jordanian leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi (d. 2006), between al-Zarqawi's followers and the followers of his first sheikh, Abu Mohammad al-Maqqdisi, who had become an outspoken critic of the methods and approach used by al-Zarqawi in Iraq and in Jordan.

Making his criticism of al-Zarqawi's approach clear in several texts, letters and declarations, Sheikh al-Maqqdisi developed his own vision for the movement, in which he declares his rejection of the use of armed operations in Jordan, and reaffirms that his form of *da'wa* was to be advocated preferably by non-violent means, if not only by non-violent means. Finally, he stated that one of the main objectives of his vision for the movement was to turn its focus on transferring their *da'wa* across the River Jordan (i.e. to Occupied Palestine).⁶⁶³

To this end, a reliable source within the movement points to a charter that was prepared by al-Maqqdisi and several other influential members of the movement, which includes several major points concerning the "non-violent" nature of the Jihadi-Salafist *da'wa* in Jordan. The charter also provides certain provisions on how to express and relay the nature of this Jihadi-Salafist *da'wa* and its future formulation within a specific framework that would help the movement avoid friction with the state or avoid undue affront to the governing regime.⁶⁶⁴

Despite the fact that Sheikh Abu Mohammad al-Maqqdisi was later arrested and tried on charges of funding and recruiting volunteers for the Taliban movement in Afghanistan⁶⁶⁵, work on his vision would continue and eventually crystallize through other key organizational figures in the movement. These leading figures would relay this vision and their "charter" in interviews and discussions with journalists during and after the period in which the movement was actively pursuing their strategy of demonstrating and protesting publicly in Jordan.

The internal debate and intellectual restructuring within the Jihadi-Salafist movement in Jordan and the manner in which the Arab democratic revolutions reflected upon the thinking of the Jordanian Jihadi-Salafists do not differ to any great degree from the overall visions presented by al-Qaeda's global leaders, discussed in the previous section. Like their global counterparts, the Jordanian Jihadi-Salafists insist upon their ideology of *al-Hakimiya* (Divine governance) and their objective of radical Islamic change. They also all concur in their rejection of governance by democracy as an alternative to Islamic rule. However, at the same time, all the leading thinkers of global and Jordanian Jihadi-Salafism have expressed the importance of investing in this historical "moment" and of capitalizing on and employing this context of emergent popular and revolutionary mobilizations to put forth their *da'wa* and their demands.

Leading this line of thinking in the Jordanian movement is the imprisoned Jihadi-Salafist leader al-Maqqdisi, who has also been calling upon members of the Jihadi-Salafist movement in Syria to

⁶⁶³ Refer to Mohammad Abu Rumman and Hassan Abu Haniyeh, "The Jihadi Salafist Movement in Jordan after Zarqawi: Identity, Leadership Crisis and Obscured Vision", op. cit., pp. 43-52.

⁶⁶⁴ Interview with Dr. Munif Samara; op. cit.

⁶⁶⁵ For more details on this issue, refer to the feature published on the "Al Jazeera" news website by Al Jazeera's correspondent in Amman, Mohammad al-Najjar, available at http://www.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/820C944D-7B43-48FE-BF80-9F662E1F2BBE.htm?wbc_purpose=B.

engage in the demonstrations and protests currently unfolding in that country to help overthrow the regime of Bashar al-Assad. In reference to this invocation to his Syrian brethren, Sheikh al-Maqdisi says, “Since you do not have the capacity and power to overthrow the regime, there is no escaping the fact that this uprising of the people must be supported and, that you must engage with and join the ranks of the demonstrators. What is most important about these demonstrations is that they are mobilizing all the people against the regime”.⁶⁶⁶

In fact, al-Maqdisi has taken an approach that is quite similar to that which was presented by the late al-‘Awlaqi, who supported engaging in the Arab revolutions even if the revolutions do not necessarily lead to “Islamic rule and governance” but rather call for democracy. For both thinkers, perhaps, as could be the case in Syria, these revolutionary processes will open doors and lead to “paving the way for more freedom for the *da‘wa*, which will eventually lead to adherence and subsequently, the application of God’s laws”.⁶⁶⁷ Certainly, al-Maqdisi goes beyond others in the Jihadi-Salafist leadership when he proclaims that taking part in the Arab revolutions and demonstrations is “required for all able Muslims” even if this participation may lead to “a certain amount of fatalities”.⁶⁶⁸

When comparing the opinions of al-Maqdisi with those of al-Zawahiri, al-‘Awlaqi and al-Libi, it is possible to discern the emergence of a consensus around the view that the current democratic revolutions are a step forward towards the ultimate goal set forth by Jihadi-Salafism, which is “establishing a system of governance that applies God’s laws”. Certainly, all of these leaders – implicitly or explicitly – consider a democratic system to be better than the Arab dictatorships that exist today, as democracy is seen as granting more freedom and space for advocating the Islamic *da‘wa* when compared to the harsh constraints imposed by past and prevailing Arab regimes.

One of the more clear-cut and detailed opinions on this subject has actually been provided by ‘Abd al-Qader al-Tahawi, one of the more renowned leading Jihadi-Salafist figures in Jordan, in an interview conducted by the Arabic daily newspaper, *Al-Sabeel*. In this interview, al-Tahawi unequivocally reaffirmed the movement’s ideological dictums concerning various issues, but also offered a decisive and precise outline of the movement’s view when it come to the wave of democratic revolutions sweeping across the Arab world. First and foremost, he stressed upon the fact that the explosion of changes “sparked by Mohammad Bouazizi” (referring to the young Tunisian man whose self-immolation ignited the Tunisian revolution which toppled the regime of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali) has “altered the map of the region in its entirety”; and, that the Jihadi-Salafists support this change. He said, “Although our aspiration is that this change be radical, and that the word of God holds supreme, and that all religions be that of God’s, we nevertheless are with these changes, even if they are not up to the standards desired or required”.⁶⁶⁹

⁶⁶⁶ See statements made by al-Maqdisi on the “Muslim” website, citing the Reuters news agency, available at <http://www.muslm.net/vb/showthread.php?t=434317>. Also, a reliable source within the movement informed the author of this study that al-Maqdisi sent a letter to certain members in the movement, calling upon them to participate in the political protests and to focus on specific demands, such as the release of prisoners, and not on empty slogans.

⁶⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁹ See the interview with Abu Mohammad al-Tahawi published in “Al-Sabeel” Jordanian daily newspaper, April 24, 2011.

He also made it abundantly clear that he believed that the principle benefit derived of these revolutions was that they had granted the people new margins of freedom and that the revolutions had eliminated many of the barriers that the Arab regimes had placed before “delivering the *da’wa*” to the people. Al-Tahawi then situated the following step for the movement within the context of the struggle between Islamic and secular currents over who would lead the new systems of governance and who would impose their concepts amongst the masses and in the street.

Finally, in reference to a question concerning the efficacy of the approach of “non-violent” resistance adopted by the revolutions, he replied, “We do not talk of approaches or methods, but rather of means. For, what these revolutions have established are means. The question that poses itself, here, is: Is this means legitimate before God’s religion? And, the answer is: Yes, this is one of the legitimate means for bringing about change, as long as there is nothing in the *nass* (Lit. “the text”, signifying the Qur’an or the Sunnah) which prohibits this means”.⁶⁷⁰ However, when the interviewer asked al-Tahawi about the preference and comparison between “non-violent means” (i.e. the approach adopted by the popular movements within the Arab democratic revolutions) and “other” means (i.e. armed resistance; the use of armed force adopted by al-Qaeda), al-Tahawi answered with reservation in a manner to safeguard the legitimacy of both, saying, “There are many means that can be employed if the required capacities are available or allow for that. However if the required capacities and conditions are lacking or absent, then we must resort to other means by which we can deliver the proper and right concepts and ideas to the people”.⁶⁷¹ Al-Tahawi’s message essentially reveals that he does not want to entirely preclude the option of armed action or resistance in his responses; and that he links the option of militant means with available capacities.

Al-Tahawi’s perspective is perhaps more reserving of all options, compared to the perspective other leading figures in the Jihadi-Salafist movement in Jordan. Indeed, an alternative view is presented by another of the Jordanian movement’s leading cadres, Dr. Salah al-‘Anani, who, like other Jordanian Jihadi-Salafist leaders, makes it definitively clear that the use of the force of arms or militant action in Jordan was utterly rejected. Al-‘Anani says, “The movement rejects any acts of violence committed on Jordanian soil”.⁶⁷² He then goes to the extent of delimiting the parameters of armed action and determining its use within a specific framework, saying, “The arena of jihad is limited to fighting the Zionists and the occupations in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as in other Muslim states that live under the yoke of foreign tyranny”.⁶⁷³

These important statements made by al-‘Anani explicitly extract Jihadi-Salafism in Jordan from the paradigms adopted by al-Qaeda. Contrary to the approach taken by other Jihadi-Salafists, al-‘Anani does not confine his discourse to discussing the implications of the Arab democratic revolutions, but rather expounds on defining the parameters for armed action (jihad) and limiting its scope to countries that are under occupation and excluding countries where movements are demanding the application of Islamic *Sharia* in the context of (non-violent) political change.

⁶⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁷¹ Ibid.

⁶⁷² Refer to statements made by Dr. Salah al-‘Anani in an interview entitled, “*al-Jihadiyoun: Narfud A’amal ‘Unf ‘Ala al-Arabi al-Urduniya*” (Lit. “The Jihadi-Salafists: We Reject All Acts of Violence on Jordanian Soil”), “Al-Sabeel” Jordanian daily newspaper, April 23, 2011; available at <http://www.assabeel.net/local-news-الجهاديون-نرفض-اعمال-العنف-على-الأرض-الأردنية/بيلادنا/38581-الجهاديون-نرفض-اعمال-العنف-على-الأرض-الأردنية>.

⁶⁷³ Ibid.

Returning to the sheikh of the movement, Abu Mohammad al-Maqdisi, it is important to note that he has never acknowledged, adopted, or claimed responsibility for any armed or militant operation carried out on Jordanian soil. On the contrary, in the past, he publicly announced his differences with al-Zarqawi concerning certain militant operations al-Zarqawi masterminded in Jordan. Meanwhile, also worth noting is that al-Maqdisi never condemned these operations, in principle, and never declared a definitive prohibition over armed or militant operations. Instead, in a manner similar to al-Tahawi, Sheikh al-Maqdisi leaves the door slightly ajar, preferring to link the issue to matters related to appropriate conditions, capacities, and abilities, and to assessing the negative and positive repercussions or balancing between the pros and cons of such action.⁶⁷⁴

⁶⁷⁴ See Mohammad Abu Rumman, "*Al-Salafiya al-Jihadiya fi al-Urdun*" (Lit. "Jihadi Salafism in Jordan"), op. cit., pp. 53-57.

3. Ideological Wavering: Between Al-Qaeda, Strategic Reassessment, or Ideological Retreat

A review of the previous positions offered by the leading cadres of Jihadi-Salafism in Jordan does not point to any ideological reviews or retreat from the basic approach to propagating “change” set by al-Qaeda during recent years. Instead, there are “semblances” between the leading Jordanian perspectives and the positions presented by al-Qaeda’s global leaders (al-Zawahiri, al-‘Awlaqi, al-Libi) – all of which safeguard the theoretical and ideological structure of the movement while simultaneously and tactically exploiting the historical moment and the opportunities offered by the Arab democratic revolutions to expand the scope of the movement’s activities and its *da’wa*.

Despite certain scattered signals emanating from amongst Jordanian Jihadi-Salafists – particularly Salah al-‘Anani’s determinations related to the concept of jihad and its accepted parameters and limitations –, the overall indications emanating from the leading cadres of the Jordanian movement do not suggest any serious level of “retrospection” or “revisions” of or retreat from the traditional Jihadi-Salafist approach regarding armed action, unlike similar Islamist groups such as the Egyptian Islamic Jihad (the EIJ or *Tanzim al-Jihad*) in Egypt⁶⁷⁵, and the “*Al-Jamaa’ah al-Islamiyya al-Muqatilah bi Libya*” (or the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG)).⁶⁷⁶

The latter groups conducted serious reviews of their strategies, which resulted in a more profound critique, refutation, and admission of faults committed in the past and in the manner in which these groups conducted themselves in preceding periods. This collective retrospection also eventually led to an affirmation that using violence and the force of arms to bring about change was not, in itself, an absolutely legitimate form of resistance. Indeed, certain Egyptian Islamist groups, which adopted violent means in the past, have gone as far as apologizing to the Egyptian people for blood spilt in the country in that manner.

With that, tangible developments on the Jordanian scene are emerging, represented in the notions put forth regarding a “non-violent” *da’wa*, which can be construed from a combined reading of al-Maqdisi’s writings and statements and those of al-‘Anani’s and al-Tahawi’s. These developments have also been reinforced by the path recently forged by al-Maqdisi to distance the movement in Jordan from the approaches taken by al-Zarqawi, and in attempts to offer a discourse that implicitly carries within it the advocacy of the principle of a “non-violent” *da’wa*. Alternately, these positions also expose a clear and open dispute with other currents in the movement, which insist on adhering to al-Zarqawi’s legacy, to militancy, and armed resistance, and to absolute loyalty to the ideology of al-Qaeda.

What is also quite clear is that al-Maqdisi has not advocated an ideological retrospection or reassessment, similar to that undertaken by the Jihadi-Salafists in Egypt (the EIJ). On the contrary, al-Maqdisi has implicitly criticized the latter and has maintained his insistence upon an approach

⁶⁷⁵ Refer to Mohammad Abu Rumman, “*Muraja’at al-Jihad Bayn al-Tadkhim wa al-Ikhtizal*” (Lit. “Jihadi Retrospection: Between Intensification and Abatement”), published on the “On Islam” website; December 30, 2007; available at <http://www.onislam.net/arabic/islamyoon/armed-action/103458-2007-12-30%2012-39-27.html>

⁶⁷⁶ Refer to “*Muraja’at al-Jamaa’ah al-Salafiyya al-Muqatila fi Libya*” (Lit. “Reassessments of Salafist Groups Fighting in Libya”), written collectively by a group of analysts and scholars and published on the “On Islam” website; also published by Maktabat Madbouli, Cairo, Egypt; 1st ed.; 2010.

based on principles such as *takfir* of all rulers, systems of governance, and constitutions that do not apply a pure system of Islamic law and governance, including the Saudi regime, which suffers from al-Maqdisi's ideological impact on young Saudis influenced by al-Qaeda.⁶⁷⁷

In result, we stand before a vacillation and a wavering between absolute faith in the Jihadi-Salafist ideology, and specifically when it comes to the *takfir* – or declaring as unbelieving – the prevailing Arab regimes, on the one hand, and the transitory acceptance of a non-violent *da'wa*, based on a rejection of the use of arms in Jordan, in principle, on the other hand. This reality is with the knowledge that, until now and fundamentally, the principle of using the force of arms to propagate and affect political change has not been officially rejected and renounced by the movement's leadership in Jordan. At the same time, there are indications – such as the statements made by Dr. Salah al-'Anani, defining the parameters of jihad within the definitive scope of resisting occupation – that there is a current within the Jihadi-Salafist movement that is advocating more progressive developments and change to the movement's ideological structures.

Jordanian authorities and official circles could very well exploit this intellectual posturing and restructuring by asking the movement's leaders to endorse a declaration that guarantees the movement's rejection of militant or armed activities on Jordanian soil and to advocate a non-violent form of *da'wa* instead. These steps may have a positive impact on other future developments related to the movement's discourse and its relationships with the government, with society, and with other political forces, within its general ideological framework, albeit with the understanding that the movement has the right to freely express its opinion despite its radical discourse.

At the same time, certainly, we should not expect an ideological evolution or progression within the Jihadi-Salafist movement similar to that which was attained by the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood, which declared its endorsement and faith in democratic processes, pluralism, and the monarchy, and where the Brotherhood revisited a large part of its political discourse and revised it within a democratic context. Indeed, this reality is based upon the recognition that there is a significant difference between the Brotherhood's organizational structure and ideological discourse, which is more socially and culturally flexible in nature, and the Jihadi-Salafist movement, which is set on strict and unyielding religious-ideological roots, which inherently lacks the Brotherhood's structural flexibility.

For instance, we should not expect al-Maqdisi to declare, at any time, his endorsement of or faith in democratic processes, or to abandon his belief in *takfir* and in declaring constitutions, governments, and pragmatic politics as unbelieving and apostate, the way the Muslim Brotherhood did. On the other hand, the Maqdisi-line in the Jordanian Jihadi-Salafist movement has the potential to become transformed into a conservative, right wing current within Jordanian society, which continues to advocate its commitment to and insistence upon the application of the provisions set forth by the Islamic *Sharia* and its righteous path – without resorting to the use of arms or violence – which, ultimately, should be the maximum expected from this particular ideological Salafist framework and its movement.

⁶⁷⁷ Refer to the essay by al-Maqdisi entitled, “*al-Thabat al-Thabat fi Zaman al-Tarajua'at*” (Lit. “Persistence, Persistence in the Era of Retreat”), op. cit., available at <http://www.muslim.net/vb/showthread.php?t=313722>

4. The Question of Strength and Presence: The Lack of a Social Incubator

One of the major questions raised by the events in al-Zarqa and the subsequent campaign of arrests targeting members of the Jihadi-Salafist movement is whether the authorities actually expected some sort of counter-response from the movement? Other questions that arise include what is the real size of the movement in Jordan, where does it have a significant presence and where is it proliferating?

Precise figures concerning the size of the movement and the number of its membership do not exist. The authorities also do not offer much in the way of information, data, or documentation that can assist researchers and observers interested in studying the movement. On the contrary, the authorities try as much as possible to keep this “portfolio” confidential and ambiguous, making the task of evaluating, assessing, and monitoring the movement all that more difficult in terms of effort and in terms of accuracy when it comes to the range of different indicators.

Despite this lack of information and a certain ambiguity surrounding the movement, the first point of analysis or indicator we do have is that the movement is not hierarchical or organizationally regulated, in the literal sense of these terms. Rather, the movement is more representative of clusters or “groups”, belonging or loyal to the overall movement, with a presence and spread that geographically revolves around several “hotbeds”. And, despite this loose structure, there are definite “leading figures”, although these leaders are not always in agreement and do not always present a united front. Additionally, the movement often faces divisions and fissures that lead disgruntled leaders, groups, or members to splinter off into even smaller groups, with each group adhering to its own positions and opinions – despite the fact that they all concede to the same overriding ideology or situate themselves under the same ideological “umbrella”.

According to the geographical breakdown of where the movement has held its protest rallies and demonstrations, and based on information gathered about the origins of members of the movement who were arrested and/or tried before the State Security Court, during the last several years, it is safe to say that the major strongholds and focal points for the movement’s presence, activity, and breadth include the city of al-Zarqa, Irbid camp⁶⁷⁸, al-Baq’aa camp⁶⁷⁹, certain areas in East Amman, as well as the cities of al-Salt and Ma’an.

The second important indicator we have been able to approximate is the number of members who belong to the movement in Jordan. This number has been tallied from a combination of official sources and numbers that members of the movement have presented, which is quite similar. This

⁶⁷⁸ Irbid camp was one of four camps established in Jordan for refugees who left Palestine as a result of the 1948 Arab-Israeli war. The camp was set up in 1951 on an area of 0.24 square kilometers near the town of Irbid, in northern Jordan. Over the years the refugees have replaced camp and tent dwellings with concrete shelters and the camp now resembles some of the urban quarters in Irbid. [Reference: <http://www.unrwa.org/etemplate.php?id=125>] [Translator’s note].

⁶⁷⁹ Al-Baq’aa camp was one of six “emergency” camps set up in 1968 to accommodate Palestine refugees and displaced people who left the West Bank and Gaza Strip as a result of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. The camp, which is the largest in Jordan, is about 20km north of Amman. When al-Baq’aa was set up it was already a large camp, with 5,000 tents for 26,000 refugees over an area of 1.4 square kilometers. Between 1969 and 1971, UNRWA replaced the tents with 8,000 prefabricated shelters. Most of the camp’s inhabitants have since built more durable concrete shelters. [Reference: <http://www.unrwa.org/etemplate.php?id=123>] [Translator’s note].

data was analyzed and verified through observations, where, for example, in recent demonstrations held by members of the movement, the number of participants ranged from between 300 to 500 individuals. The latter can be considered representative of what could be termed the “hard core” nucleus of the movement. It is also estimated that 100 to 200 followers of the movement refused to demonstrate or rejected the idea of public participation outright, opting instead to distance themselves from the surveillance of the Jordanian security services. Finally, another 100 to 150 members of the movement are currently in prison.

Considering the ranges presented by the above estimates, it is likely that the number of the movement’s core membership and the number of those peripherally affiliated with the movement likely falls somewhere between 800 and 1,200 individuals. It is also probable that there are additional individuals, distributed sporadically across the kingdom, who practice “political dissimulation” in their ideological thinking, and who do not participate in the movement’s activities or meetings but believe in the movement’s stances and its way of thinking.

The third indicator, and probably the most important or decisive and influential factor is that the movement does not possess a “social incubator” in Jordan, which means the movement remains limited and marginalized, with little social impact and influence. In this context, a “social incubator” refers to a socially conducive environment, which is responsive to and embraces the movement, and which provides the conditions required to protect and safeguard the movement, allowing it to persist and/or compensate for any losses it may suffer.

Examples of these kinds of “social incubators” for Jihadi-Salafists are numerous in other countries, particularly in areas or communities that have an affinity to al-Qaeda, such as the Sunni communities in Iraq, previously, and, today, amongst the Pashtun tribes in Afghanistan and in areas in Waziristan in Pakistan, as well as certain tribal areas in southern Yemen, and amongst certain tribes in Somalia (which, for example, provide safe haven for *Shabab al-Mujahidin*).⁶⁸⁰

Finally, despite the fact that Jihadi-Salafism does have a presence in the Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan, the general social environments in these camps do not confer legitimacy on the movement, nor is the movement popular in these communities. Instead, refugee camp society and communities tend to affiliate themselves with the Muslim Brotherhood, or maintain their neutrality altogether. The movement’s presence in Jordanian tribal areas, such as in the cities of al-Salt and Ma’an, also remains limited and marginalized and lacks any major pillars of support within the local communities there.

A New and Different Rank of Leadership

During the recent period of “public engagement,” where the Jihadi-Salafists were actively demonstrating and protesting in Jordan, several new leading figures distinctively appeared amongst the ranks of the movement. These new personalities proved to be different from the traditional or established membership in the movement. They are better educated and hold higher academic

⁶⁸⁰ *Harakat al-Shabaab al-Mujahideen* (HSM) (Eng. "Mujahideen Youth Movement" or "Movement of Striving Youth"), more commonly known as *al-Shabaab*, is the Somalia-based militant cell of al-Qaeda, formally recognized in 2012.

credentials, which is a noteworthy difference, particularly when it comes to the debate over whether or not these new personalities are capable of steering the movement towards a more non-violent, pragmatic, and mature direction than that which the movement has followed in the past.

New patterns emerging amongst the Jihadi-Salafist leadership can be attributed to the integration of groups into the movement from outside its traditional scope, and which are more closely aligned to al-Maqdisi's position. Furthermore, these groups are joining the movement with their own leadership, with the most prominent new faces coming from various governorates in Jordan. Certainly, the immediate results of this integration between old and new, in juxtaposition with other developments taking place within the traditional ranks of the movement's leadership, have materialized in what can be called the "da'wa line" or the "da'wa wing." This new current in the movement appears to be more focused on spreading the movement's da'wa through non-violent means and distancing itself completely from armed or militant action, particularly on Jordanian soil. It is also distancing itself from certain concepts and ideas that have impeded the movement's integration into society, such as educating their children in schools, praying in mosques affiliated with the Ministry of Awqaf (Religious Endowments) and Religious Affairs, and in taking variant stances when it comes to other groups and other segments of society.

While the traditional leading figures in the movement remain Abu Mohammad al-Maqdisi, Engineer Jarrah Rahahleh, Luqman Ryalat, 'Abd al-Qader al-Tahawi, Wissam al-'Amoush, and Rashad Shtaiwi, the most important of the new emerging personalities in the Jordanian Jihadi-Salafist movement include Dr. Eyad Quneibi, Dr. Sa'ad al-Huneiti, Dr. Salah al-'Anani, Dr. Ayman al-Balawi (the brother of Humam Khalil al-Balawi, otherwise known as Abu Dajana al-Khorasani⁶⁸¹) and Dr. Munif Samara.

Brief profiles: The more prominent, new and emerging personalities in the Jordanian Jihadi-Salafist movement

Dr. Eyad 'Abd al-Hafeth Quneibi: Born in 1975, Eyad Quneibi is a resident of Amman, who received his doctorate in pharmacy from the University of Houston in Texas (USA). He conducted scientific research in Texas from 2000 to 2003 and, today, teaches pharmaceutical sciences at the Applied Science University in Amman. He has also made significant contributions to the fields of poetry and literature and was a preacher at a mosque in Amman until he was banned from sermonizing in 2010. He is married with four children.

Dr. Quneibi is currently being tried, along with Abu Mohammad al-Maqdisi and others, in the Jordanian State Security Court on charges of financing the Taliban movement and recruiting and mobilizing volunteers to fight with the Taliban.

⁶⁸¹ Abu Dajana al-Khorasani is the suicide attacker who blew up himself and seven members of the CIA and one Jordanian intelligence officer when a package of explosives he strapped to his body exploded at a meeting at the CIA's Forward Operating Base Chapman in the Khost province of Afghanistan. He reportedly had been recruited by Jordanian intelligence agents and was taken to Afghanistan to act as a spy on jihadis in the region. He, however, turned out to be a double agent, launching the deadly attack on colleagues who presumed he was on their side, on December 30, 2009. [References: <http://www.wnd.com/2010/01/121283/> and; <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/12/30/AR2009123000201.html?hpid=topnews&sid=ST2009123003189>] [Translator's note].

He established an electronic site entitled “*Minbar al-Furqan*,”⁶⁸² in which his sermons, lectures, ideas and positions are posted. While he remains in detention, his aspirants continue to maintain and manage the website. Quneibi is clearly influenced by the ideas of Sayyid Qutb when it comes to jihad and to the application of the Islamic *Sharia*. However, he has never fully disclosed his ideas and vision regarding the means to propagating political change and to what extent he believes in armed or militant action. Until his arrest, neither he nor any of his followers were considered affiliated to or a part of the Jihadi-Salafist movement in Jordan or otherwise.

Dr. Ayman al-Balawi: Ayman al-Balawi is the brother of Abu Dajana al-Khorasani, the Jordanian who carried out the Khost suicide-bombing operation, which killed seven CIA agents and a Jordanian intelligence officer.⁶⁸³ Ayman al-Balawi recently obtained his doctorate in Islamic *Sharia* and jurisprudence (*Fiqh*) from the University of Jordan. He is close to Dr. Eyad Quneibi and recently conducted a campaign calling for Quneibi’s release,⁶⁸⁴ as well as a campaign entitled, “*Shar‘a*” (lit., “The Law”), which calls for the pure application of the Islamic *Sharia*.⁶⁸⁵ It is unclear how, when, and to what extent he has engaged with Jihadi-Salafism in the past; however, he participated in the movement’s protests at the Jordanian Prime Ministry, where he gave a speech warning against the state’s policies of arrests and torture. He has publicly alluded to the harassment of public security and intelligence officers – politically, legally, and in the media – which, according to his brother, infuriated the security services and subsequently led to his arrest and a barrage of charges being laid against him.

Dr. Sa‘ad al-Huneiti: Sa‘ad al-Huneiti is in his early forties and holds a doctoral degree in education received from a university in Ukraine. He is married and resides in the Abu ‘Alanda area, in the outskirts of Amman, and hails from one of the well-known Jordanian Bedouin tribes. Dr. al-Huneiti has authored one treatise, which is his master’s theses paper on Islamic history and the relationship between “the (Islamic) jurist and the sultan”, which he wrote while attending Aal al-Bayt University in the al-Mafraq Governorate (80 kilometers north of the capital Amman). He was not previously known for his ties to Jihadi-Salafism; however, he emerged in the recent protests and gave several speeches that were of an extreme political nature. In these speeches and during interviews conducted with several satellite broadcast stations, he has spoken at length about what he views is the relationship with Israel, corruption, and the security services in Jordan. He was arrested in his home following the al-Zarqa incidents, after announcing that his car was fired upon while he was en-route to holding a press conference.

Al-Huneiti was also detained several months prior to the latter incident, after writing and trying to publish an essay about the illegitimacy (and thus, prohibition under Islamic law) of the Jordanian armed forces’ participation and cooperation with American armed forces in Afghanistan. The “National Library” refused to approve the permit required to publish or disseminate the essay, and the matter ended with al-Huneiti’s arrest and detention at the General Intelligence Directorate for almost 20 days.

⁶⁸² Refer to: <http://menbar-al-furqan.blogspot.com/>.

⁶⁸³ For the details surrounding the Khost operation, refer to the Arabic CNN website, January 6, 2010; available at http://arabic.cnn.com/2010/world/1/5/cia.jordan_agent/index.html

⁶⁸⁴ For more on this campaign, “*Kuluma Eyad al-Quneibi*” (Lit., “We are all Eyad Quneibi,”) see the video posted by Ayman al-Balawi on Youtube; available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0sgvqUjQ4t0>.

⁶⁸⁵ For more details on Dr. Eyad Quneibi, his arrest and the campaign for the application of the Islamic *Sharia*, see an interview with (Ayman al-Balawi) conducted and posted on the Heil News website; found at the following link: on heilnews.com/electronic website

Dr. Munif Samara (MD): Born in 1964, Dr. Samara is a general physician who practices at his own private clinic in the Hay al-Zawahra neighborhood in the city of al-Zarqa. Recently, his clinic was vandalized and attacked by civilian individuals who objected to his affiliation with the Jihadi-Salafist movement.⁶⁸⁶

Dr. Samara first encountered Jihadi ideology and thought in the Philippines where he studied medicine from 1985-1995. He was arrested at the airport in Jordan upon his return from the Philippines, in 1997, and detained for a period of one week. He authored an unpublished essay entitled, “*Al-Maqdisi: Al-Tharwa al-Wataniya al-Mahdoura*” (Lit., “Al-Maqdisi: A Squandered National Wealth”) in which he discusses the transformative path that al-Maqdisi was forging in an effort to convince “Jihadi youth” to distance themselves from militant action or armed resistance in Jordan and to safeguard the non-violent course of the Jihadi-Salafist *da’wa*.

Dr. Salah al-‘Anani (MD): Dr. Salah al-‘Anani is one of the most important of the new leading figures in the movement. He is a practicing physician working in the public (government-run) hospital in the southern Jordanian city of Ma’an. Like Samara, al-‘Anani studied medicine in the Philippines and returned to Jordan influenced by Jihadi ideology and thought. He, amongst others, is a member of the popular committee that advocates and defends the rights of Jihadi-Salafist detainees and prisoners. He played a significant role in defusing angry counter-reactions and tensions amongst the Jihadi-Salafists after the campaign of arrests that followed the clashes with the Jordanian police and security services in al-Zarqa.

Brief profiles: The traditional leadership in the Jordanian Jihadi-Salafist movement

‘Abd al-Qader Shehada al-Tahawi: Al-Tahawi, otherwise known as “Abu Mohammad”, is in his fifties and was working as a teacher in Saudi Arabia before returning to Jordan after the 1991 Gulf War. He was arrested for various activities and tried on various charges, the most important being establishing and organizing “*Tanthim al-Tahawi*” (The Tahawi Organization), which was accused of planning assassinations and attacks of intelligence officers, journalists, politicians, and other targets.

Jarrah al-Rahahleh: Al-Rahahleh is an engineer, who represents the traditional face of Jihadi-Salafism in Jordan. He hails from the city of al-Salt and is married with several offspring. In his fifties, he has been arrested on numerous occasions for his Jihadi thinking and positions.

Luqman Ryalat: Ryalat is one of the more active members of the movement in the city of al-Salt. He has a bachelor’s degree in political sciences, which he obtained at the University of Jordan. In his late thirties, he has been arrested and detained on numerous occasions.

Wissam al-‘Amoush: Al-‘Amoush, otherwise known as “Abu ‘Obaida”, hails from the well-known Bani Hassan Jordanian Bedouin tribe. He is the imam of a mosque in the Marka al-Shamaliya area in Amman. He was arrested abroad and was terminated from his post after participating in the movement’s recent protests and demonstrations.

⁶⁸⁶ From an interview conducted with Dr. Samara, op. cit.

5. Factors behind the Retreat of Armed Resistance

A significant decline in armed operations and militant activities has been witnessed over the last several years. Certainly, there has been little armed activity attributed to the larger militant groups in the movement, and there have been no official declarations or announcements assuming responsibility for operations by the movement similar to those that were more rampant between the years 2000 and 2006.

Reflecting on the history of militant and armed action conducted by Jihadi-Salafist militants in Jordan, we will find that the movement has gone through specific phases during different periods of time. Specific characteristics and features and varying factors and conditions marked each period or stage.

The movement's activities officially became publicly known with the declaration of the movement's birth when the Jordanian government announced that it had arrested members of the "*Bay'at al-Imam*" (Pledging Allegiance to the Imam) group, for the first time. This first campaign of arrests included certain figures that would play a leading role in the rise and persistence of the Jihadi-Salafist movement in Jordan, such as Abu Mohammad al-Maqdisi and Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, amongst others.

Prior to the case of the "*Bay'at al-Imam*" group, armed and militant activities were the mark of different groups and specific situations, such as the "*Al-Afghanistan al-Urduniyun*" (The Jordanian Afghans) or "*Jaysh Muhammad*" (Mohammad's Army), and other groups and activities, which began to surface on the local scene in the early 1990s. Before that, these kinds of militant groups and activities remained underground and worked in secret, usually with a specific focus on supporting the Palestinian cause (through cross-border activity).

Today, and during the current context, there are specific conditions and factors that have led to a retreat from the strategy of armed action or militant operations on Jordanian soil. Two specific factors are particularly important in this regard:

The first is related to the killing of Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, who had ready access to arms and human and financial resources in Iraq, which allowed him to diversify his methodology, means and objectives. However, these options and resources were not readily available to the movement in Jordan. And, after al-Zarqawi's assassination, al-Qaeda in Iraq would experience a dramatic decline and would find itself under siege, instead of spreading and proliferating as it had in the past. The movement, once under al-Zarqawi's leadership, today finds itself forced to focus purely on the Iraqi front, engaged in a battle of survival – a fact that significantly impacted upon the Jordanian Jihadi-Salafist scene, and particularly the individual members of the movement.

The second factor, and as important as the first, is related to Abu Mohammad Al-Maqdisi's release from prison and his subsequent quest to reclaim the movement's ideological mission after it was "hijacked" by the al-Zarqawi paradigm. After his release, al-Maqdisi worked to reassemble leading figures in the movement, who then worked together with al-Maqdisi to launch a transformative process, aimed at steering the movement towards a non-violent advocacy of their "*da'wa*" without

resorting to the force of arms, and towards reaching a consensus in the movement to reject the use of armed force and militant activities on Jordanian soil.

Dr. Munif Samara, one of the movement's leading figures in the city of al-Zarqa, has confirmed that this group worked together towards developing and establishing a charter related to a non-violent *da'wa*, in order to rectify errors and avoid the negative consequences that resulted from the strategy of armed and militant action in the past. However, an inability to reach an agreement with the Jordanian security services over many of the major points in this "charter" prevented the release and publication of the document. With that, the idea of a "non-violent *da'wa*" remains and prevails as a critical axis of al-Maqdisi's ideology and strategy, as well as most of the other members of the movement in Jordan.⁶⁸⁷

Furthermore and as previously mentioned, over the past two years (2010-2011), new leading personalities, who joined Jihadi-Salafism from outside the framework of the movement's traditional womb, have come to represent the "non-violent *da'wa*" line of Jihadi-Salafism – of course, with the support of much of the traditional leadership which still prevails in the movement today.

However, the future of this "*da'wa*" current is linked to the nature of the internal dynamics of the movement, on the one hand, and to the official policy line that has been taken and will be taken towards the movement, on the other hand.

⁶⁸⁷ From an interview conducted with Dr. Samara, op. cit.

Conclusion: After the Security Clampdown

The recent campaign of arrests that targeted over 170 members of the Jihadi-Salafist movement represents a very harsh blow to the movement. Over 100 members remain in prison today, not including those who were already in prison, waiting for rulings on their cases from the State Security Court. Indeed, the larger and more important part of the movement's membership remains in prison.

On the other hand, the period for serving the remainder of sentences for a large number of convicted Jihadi-Salafists is drawing to a close. However, until now, the direction these individuals and groups in the movement will take concerning accepting or rejecting the new vision offered by the "non-violent *da'wa*" wing remains unclear. Certainly, this decision will be a critical factor in determining the movement's course in the next period and the nature of its expected role in the political scene and within the country's national "security" equation.

Munif Samara offers a view that appears closer to that advocated by the line taken by the non-violent *da'wa* group, which, as previously explained, vacillates anywhere between the positions revealed in the kind of strategic revisions made by the Islamist groups in Egypt and that of al-Qaeda's traditional ideology. This wavering trend remains committed to concepts such as *al-hakimiya*, *takfir* of prevailing rulers, and a refusal to recognize current pragmatic or civil political formulations as legitimate. At the same time, it maintains the "principle of the non-violent *da'wa*" in Jordan, and of engaging in society through social work and open advocacy of the *da'wa*, as well as rejecting the use of the force of arms in Jordan.⁶⁸⁸

In addition, Samara notes a position that steers away from certain stances once adopted by the members of the movement, such as refusing to educate their children in the public school system (al-Maqdisi had actually previously advocated for "deserting public schools" with a *fatwa*) and praying in mosques where imams appointed by the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs sermonize. Instead, this emerging position advocates reducing the movement's social isolationism and encourages public communication and expression of the movement's ideology, within society, and in an open and transparent manner.

Finally, Samara makes no pretenses about what this position entails for the future, and recognizes that these postures require evolving into a non-violent *da'wa* movement within the Jordanian socio-political landscape. He also acknowledges that this line means advocating the Jihadi-Salafist ideology and positions in a clear and transparent manner that targets public opinion, with a particular focus on demanding the application of Islamic *Sharia* in all the policies and in all the governance related to every aspect of society and life.

The success of this line in the Jihadi-Salafist movement in Jordan is theoretically possible. However, certain parts of this success are inextricably linked to the existence of a certain "deal" or "agreement" with the state, which revolves around a concurrence over the principle of a non-violent

⁶⁸⁸ Ibid.

da'wa, while preserving the movement's right to openly advocate its ideology – which is unlikely in light of the official state policy which prevails in the current context.

Certainly, when reflecting upon official state policy, it is clear that policy lines have been governed by security considerations, in general, and not a more rehabilitative “cultural” approach, which would focus on using educational and cultural means to dissuade members of the movement (especially those in prison) from their ideas.⁶⁸⁹ Perhaps the one exception to this security-based approach is the release of Abu Mohammad al-Maqqdisi years before his sentence has been served, albeit on condition that he confine himself to extremely defined and limited public engagements and announcements, with the exception of advocating the principle of the “non-violent *da'wa*”.

However, even the release of al-Maqqdisi has its extreme limitations. Decisions for his release and the conditions of his release have often been reversed. He was later tried and convicted on charges of supporting the Taliban movement in Afghanistan; and, it appears that pressure from neighboring Arab states to re-arrest al-Maqqdisi continue, based on accusations that he is still responsible for militant and armed operations that have taken place on their soil, and is responsible for exerting an intellectual and ideological influence upon Jihadi-Salafists in their countries.

Thus, we conclude with the knowledge that two major factors will impact and determine the future course of Jihadi-Salafism in Jordan: The first is related to the inner character and dynamics of the movement, and the latitudes available for mobility and for change within the movement. The second is related to official state policy towards the movement. Beyond these two factors, it is also clear that the non-violent *da'wa* line in the movement has not yet determined the extent of its ideological review or the extent of the transformations that will be required to implement this new direction for the movement – a determination which could be reinforced and supported, and which could take on a more strategic dimension, if certain levels of concurrence and agreement could be reached between this line in the movement and the state and its official institutions.

⁶⁸⁹ Regarding the state's official policy approach, refer to Mohammad Abu Rumman: “*Al-Salafiya al-Jihadiya...*” (Lit., “Jihadi-Salafism in Jordan...”), op. cit., pp. 103-108.

Chapter Eight

Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami: Ideological and Organizational Evolution

Introduction

From its inception and until this day, the historical and organizational development of *Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami* or, the Islamic Party of Liberation, has always been characterized and greatly influenced by the life of the party's founding father, Sheikh Taqiuddin al-Nabhani. The charismatic persona of Hizb ut-Tahrir's founding sheikh has become an institutional pillar and frame of reference for the movement, governing the course of its direction, every historical milestone and every turn the movement has experienced throughout its evolution. Until this day, Sheikh al-Nabhani's character and life's teachings exercise great power over the members of the movement in a manner unique to any other Islamist movement or party. Thus, it is safe to claim that it would be quite difficult to study and examine Hizb ut-Tahrir without delving into the personality of its founder and the role he played in the formative paths of this version of radical Islam, borne of the womb of the Islamist reform movement, which dominated the cultural and political scenes in both the Arab and Muslim worlds with the end of the 19th century until the middle of the 20th century.⁶⁹⁰

Examining the life of Sheikh Taqiuddin al-Nabhani indeed merits special attention. Certainly, the harsh upheavals and severe volatility experienced by al-Nabhani in his personal life – which were inextricably linked to the series of developments experienced by the region in general, and Palestine, in particular, – had a profound impact and made an indelible impression on the direction and politics of the movement he established for years to come.

⁶⁹⁰ Concepts and ideas related to reform dominated the thinking of the vast majority of intellectuals active in the era of the Arab political and cultural *nahda* (or renaissance). In this context, the educated elite amongst the Islamists remained loyal to this tradition of reform despite the upheavals and volatility experienced by these Islamist elite with the passage of time. Indeed, Islamist thinking would not take a radical course until the first half of the 20th century, when a collective reform paradigm would come to dominate the thinking of successive generations, beginning with the first generation of these elite Islamist thinkers, including Rifa'a al-Tahtawi, Ibn Abi al-Dayyaf, Khair al-Din al-Tunisi, Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Mohammad 'Abdu, and continuing with the second generation of Islamist thinkers with the likes of 'Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi, Mohammad Rashid Rida, Mohammad Hussein Na'ini, and similarly with the third generation including the likes of 'Abd al-Hamid Bin Badis, Hassan al-Banna, Abu al-A'la Mawdudi, Abu al-Hassan al-Nadwi. For more details on this Islamist reform thinking, refer to Dr. Fahmi Jada'an, "*Usus al-Taqadum 'ind Mufakiri al-Islam*" (Lit., "The Pillars of Progress amongst the Islamic Thinkers"), published by Dar al-Shurouq, Amman, Jordan, 3rd Edition, 1988; also refer to Dr. 'Abd al-Ilah Balqaziz, "*al-Dawlah fi al-Fikr al-Islami al-Mu'asir*" (Lit. "The State in Contemporary Islamic Thought"), published by Markaz Dirasat al-Wihda al-Arabiya (The Center for Arab Unity Studies), Beirut, Lebanon, 1st ed., 2002.

1. Taqiuddin al-Nabhani: “The Founding Sheikh” of Hizb ut-Tahrir

Sheikh Taqiuddin al-Nabhani was born to a well-to-do family in the Palestinian village of Ijzim located in the district of Haifa⁶⁹¹. Al-Nabhani’s came from a family renowned for academic and religious education of high stature.

The lineage of the Nabhani clan of which Taqiuddin was a member came from northern Palestine, but the northern clan traces its origins back to the Nabahin clan from the al-Hanajira tribe of Beersheba, with the descendants of the Nabhan branch tracing back to the Banu Sammak tribe, which belonged to the Banu Lakhm tribal confederation, of which the *Sahabi* (or Companion of the Prophet Peace Be Upon Him) al-Jalil Tamim al-Dari⁶⁹² was also a descendant.

Sheikh Taqiuddin al-Nabhani was born Muhammad Taqiuddin ibn Ibrahim ibn Mustafa ibn Isma‘il ibn Yousuf al-Nabhani in 1909.⁶⁹³ His formative years were spent studying in his village, Ijzim. He memorized the Qur’an and learned the fundamentals of the Arabic language, as well as the basic principles of Islamic jurisprudence from his father, Sheikh Ibrahim al-Nabhani. His mother also possessed knowledge in certain matters concerning Islamic law and jurisprudence, which she gained from her own father, Sheikh Yousuf ibn Isma‘il ibn Yousuf al-Nabhani.⁶⁹⁴

Later, Taqiuddin al-Nabhani moved to Acre to pursue his secondary education, which he did not complete. Instead, in 1928, he left Palestine for Cairo to continue his secondary studies at Al-Azhar University, in a quest to fulfill the wishes of his grandfather, Sheikh Yousuf al-Nabhani. He continued his undergraduate studies at the Faculty of Dar al-‘Ulum, which was affiliated with Al-

⁶⁹¹ The village of Ijzim is located 28 kilometers south of Haifa. Ijzim was occupied by Zionist forces on July 22, 1948, with the population of the village fleeing after it was destroyed. In 1949, the (Israeli) settlement of Qiryat Maharl was built upon the remains of the village. Reference: “*al-Mawsou‘ah al-Filastiniya*” (Lit. “The Palestinian Encyclopedia”), compiled and edited by several researchers and scholars, Damascus, Syria, The Palestinian Encyclopedia Committee, 1984, 1/80. Also see Marwan al-Madi’s “*Qaryat Ijzim al-Hamama al-Bayda*” (Lit. “The Village of Ijzim: The White Dove”), Damascus: Dar al-Ahaali, (1994).

⁶⁹² Mustafa Murad al-Dabbagh, “*Billaduna Filastin*” (Lit. “Our Land, Palestine”), Volume VII, Part 2 (*Diyar al-Jalil-Jund al-Urdun* “The Galilee Lands-the Army of Jordan); pp.134-135.

⁶⁹³ Most references record Sheikh Taqiuddin al-Nabhani’s year of birth as 1909; however, in the “*Al-Mawsou‘ah al-Filastiniya*” (“The Palestinian Encyclopedia”) (1/564), his year of birth is recorded as 1910. Alternately, Abu Jamal (a close companion of Sheikh al-Nabhani and a member of *Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami*) claims that, according to Sheikh al-Nabhani himself, the year of his birth was 1913; for the latter, refer to Mohammad Sa‘id ibn Sahou Abu Za‘arour, “*al-Sahwa al-Islamiyya: Bayn al-Waqi‘i wa Tatlu‘at al-Mustaqbal*” (Lit. “The Islamic Awakening: Between Reality and Expectations of the Future”), Amman, Jordan: Dar al-Bayariq, 1st ed., (1999), p.95.

⁶⁹⁴ Sheikh Yousuf ibn Isma‘il al-Nabhani was born in 1849 in the village of Ijzim. He completed his studies in al-Azhar University, after which he became actively engaged in matters of jurisprudence in Palestine, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon. He held the post of the president of the Court of Law in Beirut for over twenty years. After the Ottoman coup of 1908, he left Beirut to a nearby city and remained there until the outbreak of World War I, after which he returned to his village in Palestine and remained there until his death in 1932. During his lifetime, he was a renowned Sufi poet and he wrote 48 books and treatises on the Islamic sciences. References and for more on Sheikh Yousuf al-Nabhani refer to Khair al-Din al-Zarkali, “*al-‘Alam*” (Lit., “The Renowned Figures”), Beirut: Dar al-‘Ilm li al-Malayeen, 2nd ed., 9/289-290; also refer to ‘Omar Rida Kahaleh, “*Mu‘jam al-Mu‘alifeen*” (Lit., “Lexicon of Writers”), Beirut: Dar Ahya’ al-Urath al-‘Arabi; 13/275-276; also refer to Mustafa al-Babi al-Halabi, “*Yousuf al-Nabhani: Jami‘ Karamat al-‘Awliya*” (Lit., “Yousuf al-Nabhani: Embracing the Grandeur of the Elders”), Cairo, pp. 3-10.

Azhar University at that time. During his years studying in Cairo, he attended lectures and seminars held by various sheikhs, including Sheikh Mohammad al-Khader Hussein.⁶⁹⁵

After graduating from Dar al-'Ulum in 1932, al-Nabhani returned to Palestine to begin a practical life as a teacher, first in Haifa, then later at the Hebron Secondary School. In 1938, he transferred to the judiciary and was appointed as a court clerk in Bissan, and later in Tiberius. Between the years 1940 and 1942, he also served as a court clerk at the Jaffa Court, after which he was transferred to the Haifa Court, where he was appointed head clerk in 1945. He also worked as an advisor to the Sharia Court in Jerusalem; and, later was appointed as a Sharia Judge at the Hebron Court, and remained in that post until 1947. He worked for a brief spell with the Sharia Court in Jerusalem, where he worked as a judge for four days, before he was appointed to the Sharia Appellate Court towards the end of the year of 1948.⁶⁹⁶

After the *Nakba* (Palestinian catastrophe of 1948), Sheikh al-Nabhani left Palestine for Beirut, where he and his family settled. However, following the union between the West Bank and Jordan in 1950, al-Nabhani was again appointed as a member of the Sharia Appellate Court in Jerusalem. He later resigned from this post and from the Sharia court circuit, altogether, after he decided to nominate himself and run as a candidate for Jerusalem in parliamentary elections but failed.⁶⁹⁷ Towards the end of 1951, he decided to return to teaching, but this time at the Islamic Scientific College in Amman only to resign from teaching at the college one year later in 1952.⁶⁹⁸

The Throes and Labors of Inception and Formation

After retiring from teaching in 1952, al-Nabhani began working on establishing *Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami*, otherwise known in English as “The Islamic Party of Liberation.” Indeed, he resigned from teaching in order to devote himself entirely to leading the party and tending to its affairs. He began

⁶⁹⁵ Ihsan Samara, “*Maḥmūd al-'Adala al-Ijtima'īya fī al-Fīkr al-Islāmī al-Mu'assir*” (Lit., “The Concept of Social Justice in Contemporary Islamic Thought”), Beirut: Dar al-Nahda al-Islamiya, 2nd ed., (1991), p. 141.

⁶⁹⁶ Ziyad Salameh, “*Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami*” (Lit. “The Islamic Party of Liberation”), p. 127.

⁶⁹⁷ 'Awni Jadou' al-'Obaidi, “*Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami: 'Ard Tarikhi, Dirasa 'Ammā*” (Lit. “The Islamic Party of

Liberation: A General and Historical Overview”), published by Dar al-Liwa' li al-Sahafa wa al-Nasher, (1992), p. 50.

⁶⁹⁸ “*Al-Mawsou'ah al-Filastiniya*” (Lit. “The Palestinian Encyclopedia”), op. cit., 1/564

to travel continuously between Palestine, Jordan, and Syria and finally settled in Beirut, Lebanon, where he remained until his death in 1977.⁶⁹⁹

Al-Nabhani's broader activism began with his membership in *Jam'iyat al-I'tisam* (The Protest Society), which was an Islamic society established by Sheikh Mohammad Nimr al-Khatib in Haifa in 1941. Al-Nabhani assumed the position of deputy head of this society, which defined its objectives within an overall framework of reform and of combating corrupt social manifestations such as prostitution, alcohol consumption, and gambling.

In the meantime, the Organization of the Muslim Brotherhood's influence was growing and became more widespread in Palestine; and, after the first branch was established in Jerusalem on October 26, 1945, a delegation from the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood paid a special visit to Haifa. This delegation, which included Sa'ïd Ramadan, who was the son-in-law of the founder and spiritual leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, Sheikh Hassan al-Banna, came with the intention of trying to convince *Jam'iyat al-I'tisam* to join the Muslim Brotherhood. Subsequent to this visit, the vast majority of the members of *Jam'iyat al-I'tisam* indeed joined the Brotherhood. However, the head of the society, Sheikh al-Khatib, and his deputy, Sheikh al-Nabhani refused to join.⁷⁰⁰

In 1946, Sheikh 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Khayat,⁷⁰¹ who was also one of the first members to join the Organization of the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine, met with Sheikh al-Nabhani, once again. Despite the fact that, at this meeting, al-Nabhani showered much praise upon the Muslim Brotherhood's founder, Hassan al-Banna – who al-Nabhani knew personally from his time in Egypt –, al-Nabhani was also critical of what he felt was al-Banna's "ambiguous ideas when it came to

⁶⁹⁹ Sheikh al-Nabhani died after suffering a stroke and cerebral paralysis on June 20, 1977 (or 25 Rajab, 1398 AH) and was buried at the Martyrs Cemetery in Horsh Beirut. However accounts of the date of his death do differ. The date referenced here has been confirmed by Fahmi Jada'an in "*Usus al-Taqadum 'Inda Mufakiri al-Islam*" (Lit. "The Pillars of Progress amongst the Islamic Thinkers"), op. cit., p. 387; and, Muwafaq Mahadeen in "*al-Ahzb wa al-Quwa al-Siyasiya fi al-Urdun: 1927-1987*" (Lit. "Political Parties and Political Force in Jordan: 1927-1987), Beirut: Dar al-Sadaqa, p. 76; and Ihsan Samara, "*Mafhûm al-'Adala al-Ijtima'iya fi al-Fikr al-Islami al-Mu'assir*" (Lit. "The Concept of Social Justice in Contemporary Islamic Thought"), op. cit., p. 179. However, *Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami* published an obituary for Sheikh al-Nabhani in a special announcement that the party issued in which the date of death was referenced as 1/1/1398 AH (or December 11, 1977 AD). Meanwhile the *Ad-Dastour* Jordanian daily newspaper recorded the date of Sheikh al-Nabhani's death as being 1/19/1398 AH (or December 29, 1977 AD). The date of death that is officially referenced, today, is that which is cited by *Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami* (or December 11, 1977). Refer to Ziyad Salameh, "*Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami*" (Lit. "The Islamic Party of Liberation"), op. cit., p. 130; and Mohammad Abu Za'arour, "*al-Sahwa al-Islamiyya*" (Lit. "The Islamic Awakening"), op. cit., p.102. "The Palestinian Encyclopedia" errs in its reference (1/564) as it cites 1979 as the year of Sheikh al-Nabhani's death; and this error is cited and repeated by the editors of "*al-Mawsou'a al-Muyassarra fi al-Adyan wa al-Madhahib al-Mu'asira*" (Lit., "An Abridged Encyclopedia of Contemporary Religions and Schools of Thought"), Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: al-Nadwa al-'Alamiya li al-Shabab al-Islami, 3rd ed., (1989), p. 135. Dr. Ahmed al-Baghdadi also errs in his account of the year of Sheikh al-Nabhani's death in his book, "*Hizb ut-Tahrir: Dirasa fi Mafhûm al-Dawla al-Islamiyya*" (Lit. "The Islamic Party of Liberation: A Study on the Concept of the Islamic State"), , Kuwait: Dar Qartass, (1994), p. 135, where the author cites the year of Sheikh al-Nabhani's death as being the year of 1978.

⁷⁰⁰ Muhsin Mohammad Saleh, "*al-Tayar al-Islami fi Filastin wa 'Atharahu fi Harakat al-Jihad: 1917-1948*" (Lit. "The Islamist Current in Palestine and its Influence upon the Jihadi Movement: 1917-1948"), Kuwait: Maktabat al-Falah, (1988), p. 444.

⁷⁰¹ Dr. 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Khayat is considered one of the first members of *Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami*. He played a significant role in building and establishing the party, although, he would later withdraw from it. He would also take the portfolio of Minister of Islamic Religious Endowments (*al-Awqaf*) and Holy Sites (*al-Muqadassat*) in Jordan during the reign of five successive governments, or from 1973-1989. Refer to an interview with Dr. 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Khayat conducted by Faisal al-Shboul, published in the "*Al-Wasaf*" magazine, London, United Kingdom, July 10, 1995, Issue No. 180, p. 30.

reinstating Islamic governance.”⁷⁰² Meanwhile, al-Khayat reciprocated this criticism with the claim that al-Nabhani was “himself ambiguous, for he was more interested in calling for Arab nationalism than he was calling for Islam.”⁷⁰³

Towards the end of that decade, or late in the 1940s, Sheikh al-Nabhani would, in fact, turn towards Arab nationalism, joining what was known by the name of *Kutlat al-Qawmiyeen al-‘Arab* (the Arab Nationalist Bloc),⁷⁰⁴ which convened its first meeting in Haifa on June 18, 1947. However, the group was more of a local gathering, which would not be destined for much success or longevity.⁷⁰⁵ This connection and the link between al-Nabhani and Arab nationalism was also confirmed by an account given by ‘Abdullah al-Tal, who was the commander of the battle for Jerusalem, and a leader who would blame the Palestinian “*Nakba*” on the Arab regimes.

Subsequently, al-Tal planned a coup against the king of Jordan, ‘Abdullah I, at that time; and, to do so, al-Tal sought the support of Husni al-Za‘im, who had taken power over in Syria on March 30, 1949, after the first military coup. Al-Tal sent two envoys to meet with al-Za‘im, describing these envoys as: “They were men who had my full confidence and who were tied together by a strong and solid friendship.”⁷⁰⁶ One of these envoys was ‘Abdullah al-Rimawi, one of the main founders of the Arab Ba‘ath Party in Jordan and the first Jordanian national leader of this party,⁷⁰⁷ and the other was Taqiuddin al-Nabhani.⁷⁰⁸

The two men carried with them al-Tal’s political passport in order to submit these to al-Za‘im as a secret sign, previously agreed upon. These emissaries left for Damascus on May 7th on the pretext that they wanted to buy reams of paper for printing the Ba‘ath newspaper in Jordan. They met with Husni al-Za‘im and presented him with a summary of the measures taken for the planned coup, and

⁷⁰² Sheikh ‘Abdullah ‘Azzam confirms that al-Nabhani had a high regard for the Muslim Brotherhood and for its founder, Sheikh Hassan al-Banna; and, that al-Nabhani held both the man and the movement in his praise. Sheikh ‘Azzam is also considered one of the members of the Muslim Brotherhood who is most critical of al-Nabhani. Indeed, ‘Azzam would also publish a book under a pseudonym that was harshly critical of *Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami*. Refer to Sadeq Amin, “*al-Da‘wa al-Islamiya: Farida Shar‘iyya wa Daroura Bashariyyehi*” (Lit., “The Islamic Call (*Da‘wa*): An Obligation under Islamic Law and a Necessity for Mankind”), Amman, Jordan: Jam‘iyyat ‘Umal al-Matabi’, (1976), p. 92.

⁷⁰³ Faisal Darraj and Jamal Barout, editors of “*Al-Ahزاب wa al-Harakat wa al-Jama‘aat al-Islamiya*” (Lit., “Islamic Parties, Movements and Groups”), op. cit., Part II, p. 45.

⁷⁰⁴ There is no relation between this movement and “*Harakat al-Qawmiyeen al-Arab*” (The Arab Pan- Nationalist Movement), which was established at a later stage.

⁷⁰⁵ Bayan Nuwayhid al-Hout, “*al-Qiyadat wa al-Mu‘assasat fi Filastin: 1917-1948*” (Lit., “Leadership and Institutions in Palestine: 1917-1948), Beirut: Mu‘asasat al-Dirasat al-Filastiniya (The Palestine Studies Institute), (1981), p. 901.

⁷⁰⁶ ‘Abdullah al-Tal, “*Karithat Filastin: Muthakarāt ‘Abdullah al-Tal Qa‘ed Ma‘arkat al-Quds*” (Lit., “The Palestinian Catastrophe: The Memoirs of the Commander of the Battle for Jerusalem, ‘Abdullah al-Tal”), Cairo: Dar al-Qalam, 2nd ed., (1959), 1/591.

⁷⁰⁷ Muwafaq Muhadin in “*Al-Ahزاب wa al-Quwaa al-Siyasiya fi al-Urdun: 1927-1987*” (Lit., “Parties and Political Forces in Jordan: 1927-1987), op. cit., pp. 42, 43.

⁷⁰⁸ Afterwards, Sheikh Taqiuddin al-Nabhani turned against Syrian President Husni al-Za‘im, accusing him of working for the Americans. Refer to Dr. Faisal Darraj and Jamal Barout, editors of “*Al-Ahزاب wa al-Harakat...*” (Lit., “Islamic Parties, Movements and Groups”), op. cit., 2/45.

returned with a verbal message meant to reassure al-Tal that his plans had the support of both Syria and Egypt.⁷⁰⁹

During this same period, al-Nabhani authored three books, all of which proffered a vision for a reformative and conciliatory nationalist Islam. His book, “*Nitham al-Mujtama’a*” (The System for Society)⁷¹⁰ was one of the first treatises to be published by al-Nabhani, sometime in 1949.⁷¹¹ The second book, “*Inqath Filastin*” (Saving Palestine) would be published in January of 1950, while the third book, “*Risalat al-‘Arab*” (The Message of the Arabs) was published in August of 1950.⁷¹² For a short period, “The Message of the Arabs” was considered part of Hizb ut-Tahrir’s library; but, later, it was dispensed with by the party.⁷¹³

During this period in his life, al-Nabhani adopted a conciliatory philosophy of Arab nationalism that was grounded in Islam. Accordingly, al-Nabhani asserted that the Western nations, and particularly Great Britain, were quite aware of the threat inherent in the idea that the Arabs would maintain or carry a message of Islam in their own forms of governance and administration. Thus, according to al-Nabhani, these powers worked to strip Arab nationalist ideals from any of its Islamic content or substance. This particular notion became the subject of his first book, “*Nitham al-Mujtama’a*” (The System for Society), where he claims an ideal society is that of a society, which aims for a universal, eternal message that will benefit all other nations, in the same manner in which the Arab “nation” has benefited from this universal, eternal message. To this end, al-Nabhani devoted his third book “*Risalat al-‘Arab*” (The Message of the Arabs) to the idea that “Islam is the eternal messages of the Arabs.”

In his second book, “*Inqath Filastin*” (Saving Palestine) al-Nabhani takes the view that “the Palestinian cause was the most terrible ordeal to have impacted the Arabs and the Muslims in modern history and the most violent shock to be suffered by the East in centuries.” He also professed that there were two paths to “saving Palestine”, and “that one path cannot be taken

⁷⁰⁹ ‘Abdullah al-Tal, “*Karithat Filastin*” (Lit., “The Palestinian Catastrophe”), op. cit., 1/591. Also, Dr. Ahmad al-Mousalli claims that, for a certain time, al-Nabhani adopted the doctrine of the Ba’ath party and that he also belonged to the Muslim Brotherhood during a certain period; however, the members of *Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami* and most scholars deny that al-Nabhani was ever a member of the Muslim Brotherhood. Refer to Dr. Ahmad al-Mousalli, “*Mousou’at al-Harakat al-Islamiyya fi al-Watan al-‘Arabi wa Iran wa Turkiyya*” (Lit., “The Encyclopedia of Islamist Movements in the Arab World, Iran, and Turkey”), published by Markaz al-Wihda al-‘Arabiyya (The Center for Arab Unity), Beirut, Lebanon, 1st Edition, 2004, p. 397. Also, in Jordan, a certain current, which has a limited presence, holds the view that Sheikh Taqiuddin al-Nabhani held a left-wing, communist Jewish vision; indeed, one of the members of this group affirms the latter, when he states, “Al-Nabhani opened the door for socialist political delusions to enter the Muslim world”; refer to ‘Adnan Bin ‘Abd al-Rahim al-Sous, “*Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami*” (Lit., “The Islamic Party of Liberation”), p. 13.

⁷¹⁰ All English translations for the titles of Sheikh Taqiuddin al-Nabhani’s books, cited in this study, were taken directly from the following online links: <http://hizb-america.org/about-us/prominent-members/170-sheikh-muhammad-taqiuddin-al-nabhani>; <http://www.orkut.com/Main#CommMsgs?tid=2515634039010417136&cm=24194747&hl=ar> and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taqiuddin_al-Nabhani [Translator’s note]

⁷¹¹ The probability that this book was published in 1949 is referenced in the fact that al-Nabhani himself refers to this book in another book he wrote, entitled “*Inqath Filastin*” (Lit., “Saving Palestine”), which, according to the latter book’s credits was published on January 24, 1950.

⁷¹² Sadeq Amin, “*Al-Da’wa al-Islamiyya*” (Lit., “The Islamic Call (*Da’wa*)”), op. cit., p. 92.

⁷¹³ See the introduction written by Nimr al-Masri in al-Nabhani’s book, “*Al-Nitham al-Ijtima’i fi al-Islam*” (Lit., “The Social System in Islam”), published by Sader Rihani Printing Press, Beirut, Lebanon, 1952, p. 4. *Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami* would publish the book without al-Masri’s introduction in later editions. See the fourth edition of the book, distributed by *Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami*, and published by Dar al-Ummah in 2003. The edition was credited with the phrase “Validated version.”

without the other”. The first path was “a path that must be taken by Arab governments, which must seek to expose the Zionist threat with complete disclosure, and must empower knowledge of this threat, and arouse the determination and sharpen the will to resist this threat”. However, according to al-Nabhani, this path was not a strategy that could be espoused through the Arab League, themselves, due to the fact that there was little faith in their capacities, but rather by establishing Arab unity. The second path proffered by al-Nabhani was embodied in the urgent need to “reform Arab society”, because Arab society was “in need of a fundamental transformation, and a complete upheaval in its manner of thinking, in its convictions, in its work, and in its relations, both domestic and foreign, and in its economics, and in its science, scholarship and knowledge, and in every aspect of every part of life”. According to al-Nabhani, what was required was not the “liberation of Palestine” alone, but rather the “liberation of all Arabs.” And, the straight path to liberating the Arabs would only be attained by liberating the people, first. Finally, the “liberation of the people,” in al-Nabhani’s theory, would only come to being “in three phases: The first of which requires knowing the system that we want in our lives”; then forming an “organized, partisan bloc”, which becomes “the point of departure”. Only when this bloc comes into being “will the dawn of a new hope on the horizon be revealed (through it) to save Palestine and to liberate the Arab peoples”; and, that is when the Arab people “will rise to the realm of possibilities, and create palaces of happiness and peace in existence. These people must find themselves and offer themselves to being saved”.⁷¹⁴

It transpired that, at this stage in his intellectual evolution, Sheikh al-Nabhani had arrived at the point where he was actively seeking and assessing all the theoretical premises and pragmatic options available to him. Ultimately, this intellectual quest and these mental processes were eventually crystallized into a clear theory of radical Islam that intersected with the notions of conciliatory reform. This intellectual turning point would also take the sheikh far from the path of further developing his line of pan-Arab nationalist thinking, both theoretically and pragmatically, and would herald in the birth of a radical, Islamist political party.

Determining the Path and Establishing the Party

After deciding the path to follow, theoretically and pragmatically, would be “Islam”, Sheikh Taqiuddin al-Nabhani began to communicate with and reach out to certain influential figures in order to initiate the formation of his partisan bloc. Basing himself out of the city of Jerusalem, al-Nabhani began these communications by initiating contacts with Sheikh Ahmad al-Da’our from the town of Qalqilia, Nimr al-Masri and Daoud Hamdan from the cities of al-Lydd and al-Ramla, and Sheikh ‘Abd al-Qadeem Zalloum from the city of Hebron, as well as several others, including ‘Adel al-Nabulsi, Ghanem ‘Abdu, Munir Shuqair, and Sheikh Assad Bayouduh al-Tamimi, amongst others.⁷¹⁵ During this particular period, al-Nabhani maintained close ties with the Organization of the Muslim Brotherhood, despite the fact that he never actually became a member of that movement. Definitely, he made a significant impression on several members of the Muslim Brotherhood’s leadership in Palestine, and particularly Sheikh ‘Abd al-‘Aziz al-Khayat. In the

⁷¹⁴ Taqiuddin al-Nabhani, “*Inqath Filastin*” (“Saving Palestine”), p. 213. Also see Dr. Faisal Darraj and Jamal Barout, editors of “*Al-Ahزاب wa al-Harakat...*” (Lit., “Islamic Parties, Movements...”), op. cit., 2/48.

⁷¹⁵ Ziyad Salameh, “*Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami*” (Lit., “The Islamic Party of Liberation”), p. 54.

course of these close relations, Sheikh al-Nabhani was invited to speak and give lectures at many of the Muslim Brotherhood's different branches in Palestine, and was given the opportunity to write and publish in their magazine.⁷¹⁶

Also during this same period, al-Nabhani would become greatly influenced by Sayyid Qutb, and particularly Qutb's book, "Social Justice in Islam."⁷¹⁷ However, differences between al-Nabhani and the Muslim Brotherhood intensified after al-Nabhani was invited to give a lecture at the Muslim Brotherhood's branch in Jerusalem, where he declared that nations could only rise up by ideas and not by morality and ethics. This notion raised the ire of members in the Muslim Brotherhood who held to a staunch position that focused on the need for conservative moral reform in Palestine. This difference in opinion on ideas and morality eventually led to a total rift between the two parties, especially after a heated discussion ensued with several members of the Muslim Brotherhood during the lecture, and al-Nabhani exited the lecture hall, angrily.⁷¹⁸ After this incident, al-Nabhani launched a relentless campaign against members of the Muslim Brotherhood in his book, "*al-Takatul al-Hizbi*" or "The Party Structure," without mentioning anyone by name, and where he reaffirmed his belief that nations were not formed by morality, but rather through the convictions and ideas held by these nations, and by the systems of governance that these nations apply.⁷¹⁹

In the end, the contacts initiated by Sheikh al-Nabhani eventually led to the birth and establishment of *Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami*, or the Islamic Party of Liberation, in 1952. Subsequently, on November 17, 1952, al-Nabhani applied for a registration license that would grant *Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami* the official status of a political party. The party's organizational structure, as presented in that application included Taqiuddin al-Nabhani as president of the party, Daoud Hamdan as party vice president and secretary, Ghanem Abdu as party treasurer, and Dr. 'Adel al-Nabulsi and Munir Shuqair as party members.⁷²⁰ Based on the submitted application, the party proceeded to rent a

⁷¹⁶ From an interview with Dr. 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Khayat conducted by Faisal al-Shboul, published in the "*Al-Wasaf*" magazine, op. cit., p. 33.

⁷¹⁷ Alternatively, Sheikh 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Khayat remains of the opinion that there no influence of Sayyid Qutb or his ideas on Taqiuddin al-Nabhani. Several scholars also agree with this opinion, such as Dr. Fahmi Jada'an, who denies any Qutbian influence upon al-Nabhani's radical thinking or direction; refer to Fahmi Jada'an, "*Usus al-Taquadum...*" (Lit., "The Pillars of Progress..."), op. cit., p. 387; also refer to the same author, Fahmi Jada'an, "*Nathariyat al-Turath*" (Lit., "The Theory of Heritage"), published by Dar al-Shuruq, Amman, Jordan, 1st Edition, 1985, p. 83. Meanwhile, other scholars disagree, believing that al-Nabhani was duly influenced by Sayyid Qutb and his ideas; refer to 'Awni Jadou' al-'Obeidi, "*Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami: 'Ard Tarikhi, Dirasa 'Amma*" (Lit., "The Islamic Party of Liberation: A General and Historical Overview"), op. cit., p. 124. In his book, Jadou' maintains that al-Nabhani taught Sayyid Qutb's book, "Social Justice in Islam" to his students at the Islamic Scientific College. Al-Jadou' also affirms that al-Nabhani was influenced by Sayyid Qutb's notions of civilization; and, despite the fact that al-Nabhani did show certain reservations about the term "social justice", he continued to use Qutb's book "Social Justice in Islam" as one of his references and even cited Qutb in his book, "*Nitham al-Hukm fi al-Islam*" (Lit., "The Ruling System in Islam"), published by *Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami*, Jerusalem, 2nd Edition, 1953, p. 124. Dr. Faisal Darraj and Jamal Barout also confirm the latter point of view in their book, "*Al-Ahzab wa al-Harakat...*" (Lit., "Islamic Parties, Movements and Groups"), op. cit., pp. 151-163.

⁷¹⁸ Sadeq Amin, "*Al-Da'wa al-Islamiya*" (Lit., "The Islamic Call (*Da'wa*)"), op. cit., p. 93.

⁷¹⁹ Taqiuddin al-Nabhani, "*Al-Takatul al-Hizbi*" (Lit., "Partisan Bloc Assembling"), 4th Edition, *Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami* Publications, 2002, p. 18. Indeed this notion is repeated in several of his books and essays; and, it was an issue that would generate a wrath of criticism against al-Nabhani by other Islamist groups and independent figures.

⁷²⁰ Ihsan Samara, "*Mafhoum al-'Adala al-Ijtima'iya fi al-Fikr al-Islami al-Mu'asir*" (Lit., "The Concept of Social Justice in Contemporary Islamic Thought"), op. cit., p. 146. Also refer to Dr. Mahmud Salem 'Obeidat, "*Athar al-Jama'at al-Islamiya al-Maydaniya Khilal al-Qarn al-'Ishreen*" (Lit., "The Influence of Grassroots Islamist Groups in the 20th Century"), published by Dar al-Fikr, Amman, Jordan, 1989, 1st Edition, p. 230. Also refer to Musa Zaid al-Kilani, "*Al-Harakat al-Islamiya fi al-Urdun*" (Lit., "Islamist Movements in Jordan"), published by Dar al-Bashir, Amman, Jordan, 1st Edition, 1990, p. 87.

space for its headquarters in the city of Jerusalem. However, Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami's application to establish and register a political party was rejected by the Jordanian government in an official letter from the Ministry of the Interior, dated April 14, 1952. The justification for the rejection, as presented in the letter, was that the platform presented by the party contravened the spirit and principles of the constitution.⁷²¹

During the first stages of its inception, Hizb ut-Tahrir signed up other important members in its ranks, whose names were not submitted in the application for official registration as a political party, the most prominent of which included: 'Abd al-Qadeem Zalloum, from Hebron, who took on the post of party president after Sheikh al-Nabhani's death; Sheikh Assad Bayoudh al-Tamimi, who would later withdraw from the party and become the spiritual leader of the Islamic Jihad movement (*Kata'ib Bayt al-Maqdis* or the Jerusalem Brigades); Khalid al-Hassan, who later became a member of the central committee for the Palestinian National Liberation Movement (Fatah); Sheikh Ahmad al-Da'our, who would win a seat in the Jordanian parliament during the 1954 and 1956 elections – and who was the only member of Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami to ever become a member of parliament; and, Dr. 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Khayat, who later became the Minister of Religious Endowments (*Awqaf*) and Holy Sites in Jordan.

After the Jordanian government rejected Hizb ut-Tahrir's application to establish and register the party, it went underground. It also appointed a new leadership, which became known as "*al-Lajnat al-Qiyadiya*" or the "Command Committee" of which Taqiuddin al-Nabhani was appointed "*Emir*."

Also, from the moment the party was founded, Sheikh al-Nabhani worked to author and publish several books, treatises and essays that presented the party's identity, its mission, and its goals and objectives, as well as the party's methodology, composition, and the manner in which it conducted its work. Amongst these party publications, "*Nitham al-Islam*" or "The System of Islam" is considered the first book to be written by al-Nabhani, after the party was established. The book was first published under the title "*Tareeq al-Iman*" or "The Path of Faith"; and, it is still considered one of the most important references for the party. Indeed, until today, newcomers to the party spend almost two years studying this book, despite the fact that the book is quite short in length.⁷²²

Al-Nabhani published several other books and treatises on theory, practice, and thought, including: "*al-Nitham al-Iqtisadi fi al-Islam*" (The Economic System in Islam), "*Nitham al-Hukm fi al-Islam*" (The Ruling System in Islam), "*al-Nitham al-Ijti'ma'i fi al-Islam*" (The Social System in Islam), "*al-Dawla al-Islamiya*" (The Islamic State), "*Usus al-Nahda*" (The Pillars of Revival), and "*al-*

⁷²¹ The official letter submitted by the Jordanian Ministry of the Interior [no. 916/52/70, dated, April 14, 1953 AD], stated the following: "*To the esteemed Sheikh Taqiuddin al-Nabhani and all the respected founding members of Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami: In reference to what was published in the Al-Sareeh Newspaper, issued today, under the title: Editorial Committee, "Official Registration of the Party in Jerusalem", I regret to inform you that what was published as related to the registration of the party, officially in Jerusalem, was not accurate, and that the notice that you received from the head of the Royal Court, that he has received your application is not, according to the Basic Law, considered permission for you (to officially register an active political party). Granting permission to establish political parties, and official recognition of political parties falls under the responsibility of and is the prerogative of the District Administrator, who has presented you with more than one official letter in which he has informed your esteemed selves that your request and application to establish a (political) party has been rejected. [Signed by] Deputy Minister of the Interior, Ali Hasna"; refer to Ihsan Samara, "Majshoum al-Adala al-Ijtimaiya..." (Lit., "The Concept of Social Justice..."), op. cit., p. 147.*

⁷²² Ahmad al-Baghdadi, "*Hizb ut-Tahrir...*" (Lit., "The Islamic Party of Liberation..."), op. cit., p. 12.

Shakhsiya al-Islamiya” (The Islamic Personality), which was published in three volumes. He also published two books on organizational practices and methodologies, entitled “*Nuqtat al-Intilaaq*” (The Point of Launch)⁷²³ and “*al-Takatul al-Hizbi*” (Partisan Bloc Assembling). These books were all published between the years of 1952 and 1953, and are considered part of “Hizb ut-Tahrir Publications”, based out of Jerusalem.

In the 1960s, al-Nabhani published the book, “*al-Khilafa*” (The Caliphate), and in 1973, the book “*al-Tafkir*” (Thinking, sometimes also published as “Thought”). Finally, before his death in 1976, he published the book “*Sur’at al-Badiha*” (Wit). It has also been said that al-Nabhani actively engaged certain members of the party in the authorship of these books. He would often present a draft and set the broad thematic lines covered by a book, and share these with other important intellectuals and thinkers in the party, who would then offer their comments and advice. This collective process would continue until a book evolved into its final form and was ready for publishing.⁷²⁴

Often, al-Nabhani also gave due credit to certain members of the party in his books, such as in the case of “*Ahkam al-Bayinat*” (The Rules of Evidence), where al-Nabhani credited Sheikh Ahmad al-Da’our, although the main author of the book was al-Nabhani himself.⁷²⁵ According to an account given by one of the members of the party, these credits were often used as means to circumventing a legal ban that was imposed on al-Nabhani’s books, including, “*al-Siyasa al-Iqtisadiya al-Muthla*” (The Ideal Economic Policy), “*Naqd al-Ishirakiya al-Marksiya*” (Refutation of Marxist Socialism), “*Kayfa Hudimat al-Khilafa*” (How the Caliphate was Destroyed), “*Ahkam al-Bayinat*” (The Rules of Evidence), “*Nitham al-Uqubat*” (The Penal Code), “*Ahkam al-Salah*” (The Jurisprudence of Prayer), and “*al-Fikr al-Islami*” (Islamic Thought).⁷²⁶ Other books were published without al-Nabhani’s name appearing at all, although the party reaffirms that these books were indeed written by their founding sheikh, such as, “*Mafaheem Hizb ut-Tahrir*” (The Concepts of Hizb ut-Tahrir), “*Mafaheem Siyasia li Hizb ut-Tahrir*” (Political Concepts of Hizb ut-Tahrir), “*Nida’ Haar illa al-Muslimeen*” (A Burning Call to the Muslims from Hizb ut-Tahrir), “*Muqadimat al-Dustour*” (Introduction to the Constitution), and “*al-Dousiyea*” (The Dossier). The latter books are notwithstanding the thousands of leaflets, which were authored and published in succession and according to need, or in response to certain circumstances, issues, current events, or changes in the political scene or political reality. This abundance of books, leaflets and communication material were indeed all part of the party’s editorial and “liberation” discourse, focusing on resuming an

⁷²³ The party no longer refers to or references this particular book authored by Sheikh al-Nabhani; and, it no longer publishes it. It is cited as one of al-Nabhani’s treatises in the “*Al-Mawsou’ah al-Filastiniya*” (“The Palestinian Encyclopedia”), op. cit., 1/564. Also refer to the list of official books and references adopted by the party as published on the party’s website. The fact that al-Nabhani authored this book has also been confirmed by several individuals close to the party, and others who have written about the party, such as Ihsan Samara and ‘Abd al-Halim al-Ramahi.

⁷²⁴ From an interview with Ghanem Abdu conducted by ‘Awni Jadou’ al-‘Obaidi on July 25, 1990; refer to “*Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami: ‘Ard Tarikhi, Dirasa ‘Amma*” (Lit., “The Islamic Party of Liberation: A General and Historical Overview”), op. cit., p. 99.

⁷²⁵ From an interview with Sheikh Ahmad al-Da’our conducted by ‘Awni Jadou’ al-‘Obeidi on December 2, 1989; refer to previous reference.

⁷²⁶ See Ihsan Samara, “*mafhoum Mafhoum al-‘adala Adala al-ijtima ‘iyalJtima ‘iya fi al-fikr al-islami al-mu’assir...*” (Lit., “The Concept of Social Justice in Contemporary Islamic Thought...”) (in Arabic), previous reference op. cit., pp. 150-151. Also refer to ‘Abd al-Halim al-Rahmi, “*al-Al-‘ilam Ilaam al-islamiIslami*” (Lit., “The Islamist Media”), which is a doctoral thesis that remains unpublished, the Islamic University, Islamabad, Pakistan, 1986, pp. 29-30.

Islamic way of life and the caliphate system of governance embodying the pillars of the party's rhetoric, and with the ultimate goal of the party's political work being reinstating the Islamic state.

2. The Concept of “Politics”: Between the State and the Caliphate

The notion of the “Islamic state” maintains a heavy presence and enjoys a special status in Hizb ut-Tahrir’s theoretical framework and structure. Indeed, the idea of the Islamic state overwhelmingly dominates the focus of the party’s work and represents the core of the strategies that have come to shape the party’s direction, its politics and its approach.⁷²⁷

Moreover, if the construction of the conservative political reform movement dictated and heavily influenced the theories offered by the thinkers of the *nahda*⁷²⁸ era, then Sheikh al-Nabhani and Hizb ut-Tahrir have provided this school of thought with a much more politically radical orientation. This political radicalism clearly emerges in the definition used by Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami to introduce itself and its school of thought to others, as follows: “Hizb ut-Tahrir is a political party, whose principle is Islam. Politics is its work, and Islam is its principle. It is a party that works amongst and with the *ummah* so that the *ummah* will adopt Islam as its cause. It is a party that will lead the *ummah* back towards the restoration of the Caliphate and governance by that which was brought forth to corporeal existence by God”. The latter definition is further affirmed by the following dictum adopted by the party: “Hizb ut-Tahrir is a political bloc. It is not a spiritual bloc, nor is it a scholarly, educational, or charitable movement. And, Islam and Islamic thought is its soul, its core and the secret of its life”.⁷²⁹

The party also explicitly stresses that the fundamental reason for establishing the party was “to respond to God Almighty’s verse, ‘*You are the best nation produced [as an example] for mankind. You enjoy what is right and forbid what is wrong and believe in God*’⁷³⁰ in order to revive the

⁷²⁷ Most scholars concur that the idea of the Islamic state and the Caliphate has been central to constructing *Hizb ut-Tahrir*’s theoretical structure; refer to Fahmi Jada’an, “*Nathariyat al-Dawla fi al-Fikr al-‘Arabi al-Islami al-Mua’asir*” (Lit., “Theories Regarding the State in Contemporary Arab and Islamic Thought”) in “*Nathariyat al-Turath wa Dirasat ‘Arabiya wa Islamiya Ukhra*” (Lit., “Traditional Theories and Other Arab and Islamic Studies”), published by Dar al-Shurouq, Amman, Jordan, 1st Edition, 1985, pp. 101-161; also see Dr. Ahmed al-Baghdadi, “*Hizb ut-Tahrir: Dirasa fi Mafhoom al-Dawlah al-Islamiya*” (Lit., “The Islamic Party of Liberation: A Study on the Concept of the Islamic State”), op. cit., p. 127; also see Hammam Sa’id, “*Hizb ut-Tahrir: Dirasa wa Naqd*” (Lit., “Hizb ut-Tahrir: A Critical Study”) from the working papers presented at the seminar “*Itijahat al-Fikr al-Islami al-Mua’asir*” (Lit., “Currents in Contemporary Islamic Thought”), published by Maktab al-Tarabiya al-‘Arabi li Duwal al-Khaleej (Lit., The Center for Arab Education and Scholarship in the Gulf Countries), Bahrain, 1985, p. 618; also refer to Dr. ‘Abd al-Ilah Balqaziz, “*Al-Dawlah fi al-Fikr al-Islami al-Mu’asir*” (Lit., “The State in Contemporary Islamic Thought”), published by Markaz Dirasat al-Wihda al-Arabiya (The Center for Arab Unity Studies), Beirut, Lebanon, 1st Edition, 2002, p. 129; also refer to Dr. ‘Abdullah Fahd al-Nafisi, “*Al-Fikr al-Haraki li al-Tayarat al-Islamiya*” (Lit., “The Organizational Thought of Islamic Movements”), published by Sharikat al-Rabi’ain li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzi’i (The Rabi’ain Company for Publishing and Distribution), Kuwait, 1st Edition, 1995, p. 17.

⁷²⁸ The Arab “*nahda*” or renaissance is a reference to the 19th and early 20th century movement for cultural rebirth and revival in the Arab world. It was an intellectual, cultural and social movement that sought solutions to the challenges of modernity; and, it was made up of a diverse range of voices – sometimes cacophonous and other times harmonious – united by key concerns about the need to revitalize Arab cultural life with some reference to its classical heritage, while remaking the prevailing social orders of their societies. [Reference: The Seeds of Revolution Symposium, April 8, 2011: “*The Arab ‘Nahda’ reconsidered: The 19th and early 20th century Arab Cultural Renaissance in a Global Comparative Frame*,” available at <http://sites.tufts.edu/nahdasymposium/>] [Translator’s note]

⁷²⁹ Refer to the publication entitled “*Hizb ut-Tahrir*” (“The Islamic Party of Liberation”) from Hizb ut-Tahrir’s publications, May 9, 1985, p. 2.

⁷³⁰ English translation of this verse taken from the Sahih International. Surat ‘Aal ‘Imran 3:110, found on quran.com, see to the following link: <http://quran.com/3> [Translator’s note]

Islamic *ummah* and steer it away from its serious decline and from the point to which it has reached, and to liberate it from blasphemous notions of unbelief (*kufri*), and from its regimes and their systems and laws, and from the control and influence of disbelieving and blasphemous states, and to work towards restoring the existence of the Islamic Caliphate state, in order for governance to return to the rule of God through that which was brought forth by Him”.⁷³¹

Finally, the party views itself as working on two parallel tracks, internally and externally, simultaneously, as it sees that, “Society in the Muslim world is in a terrible state; and, the Muslim world, in its entirety, was colonized by Western states and remains colonized despite what appears to be manifestations of self-government. For the Muslim world (the *ummah*) bows to the command and the ideas of capitalist democracy; its governance and its politics are run by democratic regimes; and, its economy is governed by the capitalist system. From a military standpoint, it is led and commanded, armed and trained in all its military arts by the foreigner; and, its foreign policy follows the policy of the foreigner, who colonizes it. Thus, we can say that the Muslim countries are countries which are still colonized; and, are countries in which colonialism is still embedded in them, because colonization is the imposition of military, political, economic and cultural control on vulnerable populations, weakened precisely for the purposes of their exploitation”.⁷³²

According to the party, colonialism worked to distort the identity of the Muslim *ummah* by spreading misconceptions about Islam and Muslims. Thus, the mission of the party is to, “interact with the *ummah* to reach its ultimate aim; and, to combat colonialism and imperialism in all their notions and forms, in order to liberate the *ummah* from the ideological grip of colonialism; and, to uproot all forms of colonialist cultural, political, military, and economic influence from the soils of Muslim countries; and, to change the misconceptions spread by colonialism about Islam’s sole focus on worship and morality”.⁷³³

Hizb ut-Tahrir also identifies the absence of the Islamic Caliphate and state as being the source of the ills, the backwardness, and the underdevelopment of the Muslim world, as well as the cause for its decline and decay. The party sees that this system was the symbol and legal construction, which was undermined and destroyed by colonialism and the West when, “Great Britain (England), the head of infidelity and unbelief (*kufri*) and the greatest enemy of the enemies of Islam, took command of the task of destroying the caliphate and occupied the majority of the Muslim countries – on behalf of all the Western countries – as the Caliphate was seen as the source of the Islamic threat to the West”.⁷³⁴

When describing the state of international affairs, the systems and ideologies of the global contemporary international reality, the party presents the view that the world is struggling between three major principles and forces, which are: “Capitalism, socialism – including communism –, and

⁷³¹ “*Hizb ut-Tahrir*” (“The Islamic Party of Liberation”), op. cit., p. 2.

⁷³² “*Mafahim Hizb ut-Tahrir*” (Lit., “The Concepts of Hizb ut-Tahrir”), Hizb ut-Tahrir Publications, 6th Edition, 2001, pp. 80-81.

⁷³³ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

⁷³⁴ “*Muthakara min Hizb ut-Tahrir*” (Lit., “A Memorandum from Hizb ut-Tahrir”), p. 4; also refer to ‘Abd al-Qadeem Zalloum, “*Kayf Hudimat al-Khilafa*” (Lit., “How the Caliphate was Destroyed”), published by Dar al-Ummah, Beirut, Lebanon, 3rd Edition, 1990.

the third being Islam”⁷³⁵. In the opinion of Hizb ut-Tahrir, the ideologies of capitalism and socialism (and by default from socialism, communism) are defined by the fact that they employ and apply a secular paradigm and approach; and, that these systems work towards spreading this paradigm in the Muslim world and in Muslim countries. For Hizb ut-Tahrir, the latter explains why secularism has spread so profusely amongst the Muslims, through “cultural policies that claim Islam ‘does not have a state’”, or that “Islam is only a spiritual state”.

For the party, the aforementioned claims are notwithstanding the aphorism that is founded upon the claim that “religion is not the state” (or “religion is different from the state”) and therefore, the two must be separated from one another.⁷³⁶ According to Hizb ut-Tahrir, the colonialist state – with Great Britain at the fore – worked towards this end and worked towards eradicating the Ottoman Caliphate on March 3, 1924, through its Jewish agents, and with Ataturk representing the proponent and lever, which would ultimately work to undermine the Islamic succession and caliphate state. Since then, according to the party’s discourse, Islamic rule and governance has been absented from the face of the earth and replaced by tyrannical, despotic, and unbelieving regimes; and, the countries of the Muslim world have been turned into “*diyaar kufi*” (the Abode of Unbelief), with Muslims remaining Muslim with the exception of those who have adopted the secular paradigm, which calls for separating religion from the state. According to one of Hizb ut-Tahrir’s leading sheikhs, ‘Abd al-Qadeem Zalloum, “This is how the Caliphate was destroyed and utterly demolished, and how Islam, as a constitution of state, and as the law of the *ummah*, and as the system of life of the *ummah*, was wrecked... This is how governance by that which was brought forth by God has been eradicated from all corners of the earth; and, why rule and governance continues with that which was not brought forth by God; and, why rule and governance remain unbelieving (*kufi*); and, why rule and governance remain tyrannical and despotic and alone in ruling over and governing all people, everywhere in the world”.⁷³⁷

Meanwhile, according to the party, the obligation and duty of the *ummah* is not to get involved with and entangled in secondary, trivial issues, but rather that it should focus and work towards re-establishing the Islamic state in order to restore Islam to the lives of the people and resume the Islamic way of life, which was severed with the abolishing of the Ottoman Caliphate. For Hizb ut-Tahrir, there could be no Islam without a state to safeguard and nurture it; and, the Islamic state is “a power that is defined and restrained by Islamic law” and “it is a necessary means and instrument, which is available to the *ummah*, consistently and for perpetuity, in order to apply the rule of Islamic law in a society, on both the individuals and groups, in order to perpetuate and propagate the Islamic *da’wa* to the rest of the world”.⁷³⁸ Finally, for the party, the establishment of the Islamic state is a duty and obligation (*fardh*) of all Muslims in all corners of the world; and, the fact that the Islamic state will be established is not only inevitable, but a matter of relentless effort and a matter over which there is no compromise.”⁷³⁹

⁷³⁵ See Taqiuddin al-Nabhani, “*Nitham al-Islam*” (Lit., “The System of Islam”), Hizb ut-Tahrir Publications, 6th Edition, 2001, p. 26.

⁷³⁶ Taqiuddin al-Nabhani, “*Nitham al-Hukm fi al-Islam*” (Lit., “The Ruling System in Islam”), Hizb ut-Tahrir Publications, 6th Edition, 2002, p. 9.

⁷³⁷ ‘Abd al-Qadeem Zalloum, “*Kayfa Hudimat al-Khilafa*” (Lit., “How the Caliphate was Destroyed”), op. cit., pp. 187-188.

⁷³⁸ Taqiuddin al-Nabhani, “*Nitham al-Hukm fi al-Islam*” (“The Ruling System in Islam”), op. cit., p. 19.

⁷³⁹ Taqiuddin al-Nabhani, “*Al-Khilafa*” (“The Caliphate”), Hizb ut-Tahrir Publications, p. 2.

“However, any form of neglecting the obligation to work towards reinstating the Caliphate and a Caliph is considered of the great sins; and, the actual failure to reinstate the Caliphate and a Caliph for the Muslims is of the greatest of the great sins. For, this would be a failure in carrying out an obligation (*fardh*) that is of the most important of obligations (pl. *furoudh*) in Islam, as establishing governance by the provisions of the religion is contingent upon establishing the Caliphate, and the existence of Islam in the realm of everyday life is contingent upon establishing the Caliphate. Indeed, all of the Muslims have committed this great sin in their failure to establish the Caliphate and a Caliph for all Muslims”.⁷⁴⁰ It is then the duty and the obligation of the Caliph to apply the provisions of Islam in all the forms of legal governance that is related to society, the economy, education, foreign policy and domestic governance. Indeed, these were the tasks carried out by the Caliph in the Islamic state, the existence of which remained uninterrupted for centuries.⁷⁴¹

For the purposes of the application of the provisions of the *Sharia* (Islamic law) in the Islamic state, Hizb ut-Tahrir worked on preparing a draft constitution for the Islamic state, which included 89 articles. This draft constitution includes general provisions and also expounds upon the nature of the systems related to society and the economy, as well as educational, political and foreign policies.⁷⁴² The party continued working on developing this draft constitution until it was expanded to include 182 articles, which Hizb ut-Tahrir believed were appropriate for and applicable to every age, time, and place in which an Islamic state is established.⁷⁴³

According to Hizb ut-Tahrir and the constitution it developed, the apparatus of the Islamic state should be comprised of a Caliph (*khalifah*), delegated assistants (*mu'awenin*), governors (*al-wullah*), a judiciary, an administrative apparatus and a *Shura* (Consultation) council (*majlis al-shura*).⁷⁴⁴ Also according to the party's vision of the Islamic state, citizens are not allowed to rebel against the Caliph, and the Caliph cannot be deposed and shall remain in his post as long as he is able to conduct and carry out his obligations and duties; or, in other words, there is no definitive period or term for a Caliph remaining in office or power, as long as he (the Caliph), “safeguards and protects the (Islamic) law and applies its provisions and is able to conduct and carry out the affairs of the state.”⁷⁴⁵ Alternatively, the Caliph shall be deposed and ousted from power if he neglects or is in breach of the (Islamic) law, at which point, “the Muslims will be released from their oath of allegiance to the Caliph and are obliged to ensure the caliph is deposed and removed from power; and, a court of grievances shall determine this (dereliction of duties)”.⁷⁴⁶

Despite the fact that politics overwhelmingly dominates the greater part of reformative Islamist thinking, it can be argued that Hizb ut-Tahrir and its founder, Sheikh Taqiuddin al-Nabhani, were the first to present definitive rules and specific provisions for a system of Islamic rule and

⁷⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 2.

⁷⁴¹ Taqiuddin al-Nabhani, “*Nitham al-Islam*” (“The System of Islam”), op. cit., pp. 45-46.

⁷⁴² Taqiuddin al-Nabhani would present this draft constitution for the first time in his book, “*Nitham al-Islam*” (“The System of Islam”) and would continue working on developing this constitution later. See Taqiuddin al-Nabhani, “*Nitham al-Islam*,” op. cit., pp. 90-126.

⁷⁴³ “*Muqadamat al-Dastour auu al-Asbab al-Muwjiba Lahou*” (Lit., “Introduction to the Constitution or the Reasons That Make it Obligatory”), Hizb ut-Tahrir Publications, 1382 AH or 1963 AD.

⁷⁴⁴ Taqiuddin al-Nabhani, “*Nitham al-Hukm fi al-Islam*” (Lit., “The Ruling System in Islam”), op. cit., p. 45.

⁷⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 49.

⁷⁴⁶ Ibid., Articles 39 and 40, p. 98.

governance in contemporary times. Indeed, the book “*Nitham al-Islam*” (The System of Islam) is considered the party’s main reference, summing its approach and manner of thought. For the party, in general, and al-Nabhani, in particular, the publications that would later follow this book focused mainly on further investigating and exploring these ideas and expanding upon these issues, but never affected or compromised the main premise and core of the party’s political ideas that were set forth in the book “The System of Islam”. Meanwhile, in general, other investigation and scholarship amongst the vast majority of other reform Islamist thinkers remained limited to a range of institutional issues, general principles and concepts such as *shura*, justice and equality.

Finally, despite the fact that Sheikh Taqiuddin al-Nabhani belonged to an academic tradition of Sunni scholarship, he conflicted with religious jurists, who followed the school of thought and provisions of the *al-Ahkam al-Sultaniya* (political thought in Islamic heritage and tradition), which generally adheres to the principle of realistic or pragmatic necessity. Al-Nabhani rather references and prioritizes the provisions of the “ideal” Caliphate that emerged during the brief Rashidun Caliphate (first four Caliphs) period. Indeed, the more idealistic tendencies adopted by al-Nabhani emerged clearly in the manner in which the following fundamental points were advocated by him:

First: Not recognizing the legitimacy of the *mutaghalib* or “taking power by military might”.⁷⁴⁷

Second: Not recognizing the legitimacy of *istikhlaf al-khalifah* or “taking power by matter of inheritance”.

Third: Not recognizing the “condition” that the Caliph must be a “Quraishi”, or, in other words, that a Caliph must trace his lineage back to the al-Quraish clan, to which the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) belonged.⁷⁴⁸

However, this static nature of Hizb ut-Tahrir’s political vision significantly preoccupied the party’s evolution and development. From the time of its establishment and until the present time, the party held fast to a rigid vision, which was not concerned or fraught with local, regional, and international changes. Instead, it remained captive to the vision and worldview embraced by Sheikh al-Nabhani. The idea of colonialism, thus, dominated the party’s literature; and, traditional colonial states, such as Britain and France enjoyed a significant presence in its discourse, despite the fact that the role of these countries would weaken significantly in the international arena. At the same time, the party did not give enough weight or heed to the idea of the Cold War and to the struggle that was taking place between the United States and the Soviet Union. It can also be safely argued that Hizb ut-Tahrir did not pay enough heed to the importance of history, in general, or to the historical power

⁷⁴⁷ Here the reference is to a long-standing tradition of deference to authority acquired by force – or, in other words, a compliance with *imamat al-mutaghalib* (i.e. the legitimacy of military preponderance). [Reference: Najib Ghabbian, “Democratization and the Islamist Challenge in the Arab World”, published by Westview Press, 1997, p. 186, cited in the “International Journal of Middle East Studies”, Publication: Coverage: 1970-2006 (Vols. 1-38), Links to External Content: 2007-2011 (Vol. 39, No. 1 - Vol. 43, No. 4), Published by: Cambridge University Press. Reference is available at <http://www.jstor.org/discover/10.2307/164273?uid=3739832&uid=2129&uid=2&uid=70&uid=4&uid=3739256&sid=21101152875897>]. [Translator’s note]

⁷⁴⁸ “*Muqadamat al-Dastour*” (Lit., “Introduction to the Constitution or the Reasons That Make it Obligatory”), op. cit., pp. 126-128; also refer to Taqiuddin al-Nabhani, “*Nitham al-Islam*” (Lit., “The System of Islam”), op. cit., pp. 94-99.

struggles and ongoing exchanges that continuously affect and change the dynamics of international balances of power.

These issues and the party's staunch, rigid hold to al-Nabhani's static vision became a matter of great importance when it came to the manner in which the party operated and to its dynamics. These issues produced sharp differences and debate within the party's ranks. In fact, these debates extended to the very nature, core, and constitution of Islamism, itself, amongst Hizb ut-Tahrir's members. Consequently, Hizb ut-Tahrir has consistently experienced numerous rifts, with a great deal of its members, such as Saleh Siriyeh, Mohammad Salim al-Rahhal and Sheikh Asa'ad Bayoudh al-Tamimi, amongst others, left the party only to adopt the Jihadi-Salafist model, which works on the premise that the Caliphate can only be established through the use of force and through jihad.

3. Hizb ut-Tahrir's Stance towards Democracy and the Political Game

As the Caliphate system and the Islamic state were seen by Hizb ut-Tahrir as being diametrically incongruent and opposed to other prevailing ideologies that competed with Islam, such as capitalism and socialism, then the political systems borne of these other ideologies – with democracy at the fore – were seen as systems of “*kufir*” (unbelief). Indeed, in the eyes of Hizb ut-Tahrir, democracy posed the most dangerous challenge that faced the modern Muslim world.

Alternatively, the party took a more lenient view towards systems of socialism arising from communism, despite the fact that the party made it quite clear that it believed the goal of socialism was to “destroy and sabotage.”⁷⁴⁹ At the same time, Hizb ut-Tahrir insisted that socialism and thus, communism, had failed in the Muslim world, and that “their failure was only natural, as these ideologies go against human nature and contradict the doctrine of Islam.”⁷⁵⁰ On the other hand, Sheikh al-Nabhani actually proffered the view that communism did have a positive impact in that it “challenged and disrupted Western colonialism.”⁷⁵¹ Russian policy, in general and in his view, did not pose a great threat to the Muslim world; instead, Al-Nabhani actually praised the policies of the Soviet Union, which focused on combating capitalism, and praised the Soviets’ attention to ideas of emancipation and liberation.⁷⁵²

In the end, for Hizb ut-Tahrir, the number one enemy of Islam was the system of capitalism. Indeed, capitalism was seen as a system of “*kufir*” that unequivocally contradicted Islam. The party vehemently stressed upon this premise, saying, “Islam contradicts the system of capitalism. There can be no reconciliation or harmony between these two systems; and, any call for reconciling or harmonizing between Islam and *kufir* is a call for accepting *kufir* and for rejecting Islam”⁷⁵³. Hizb ut-Tahrir also called for a complete break from the forms of capitalism and democracy that dominated the world, today, “For, the modern world means capitalism and with it, democracy and civil law, and the like. And, all these systems in the eyes of Islam are systems of *kufir* that must be combated and eradicated and replaced by Islamic governance”.⁷⁵⁴

Perhaps the most dangerous product and outcome of colonialism and imperialism, in the eyes of the party, was that it worked to change the system of the Islamic state and Caliphate, and subsequently, brought with it the systems of law, administration and politics of capitalist democracy. According to the party, colonialism, “applied the system of capitalism in the economy, and the system of democracy in governance, and Western laws in the administration of the state and in the judicial system.”⁷⁵⁵ Furthermore, for the party, the hegemony of these systems was only made possible with

⁷⁴⁹ Taqiuddin al-Nabhani, “*Al-Takatul al-Hizbi*” (Lit., “The Partisan Bloc Formation”), op. cit., p. 16.

⁷⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁷⁵¹ Ibid.

⁷⁵² “*Nathariyat Siyasiya li Hizb ut-Tahrir*” (Lit., “The Political Theories of Hizb ut-Tahrir”), Hizb ut-Tahrir Publications, Thu’l Hijjah, 1392 AH or January, 1973 AD, pp. 48-64.

⁷⁵³ “*Nida’ a Haar illa al-Muslimeen min Hizb ut-Tahrir*” (Lit., “A Burning Call to the Muslims from Hizb ut-Tahrir”), Hizb ut-Tahrir Publications, Khartoum, Sudan, Rabi’i al-Thani, 1385 AH or August 17, 1965 AD, p. 32.

⁷⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 33.

⁷⁵⁵ Taqiuddin al-Nabhani, “*Al-Dawla al-Islamiya*” (Lit., “The Islamic State”), Hizb ut-Tahrir publications, 1953, p. 174.

the fact that certain Muslims came to adopt these erroneous ideas and misconceptions – that democracy is synonymous with the Islamic *shura*; and, it was only made possible by the fact that these ideas prevailed amongst certain Muslims, which led to the call for a reconciliation between the two, and to claims that Islam is a religion compatible with democracy.⁷⁵⁶

To address the dangers of democracy and the threat posed by democracy to Muslims, Hizb ut-Tahrir published a book entitled, “*al-Demoqratiya Nitham Kufr Yuhram Akhthuha aou Tatbiqouha aou al-Da’wa Ilayha*” (Democracy is a System of *Kufr*: Adopting it, Applying it and Calling for it, is (Religiously) Prohibited).⁷⁵⁷ The book presents a vision on democracy that is summed up in the fact that the party considers it a system of “*kufr*” that was being marketed by the West in Muslim lands; and, it is system which, in all its parts and in its entirety – in its source, its doctrine, its fundamentals and the ideas and systems it brings with it –, contravenes the provisions of Islam. Indeed, for Hizb ut-Tahrir, democracy is seen as a system that has been put in place by human beings and has no relation whatsoever with God’s revelation or with religion. It grants sovereignty to mankind and gives corporeal beings the right to legislate, as the people are considered the source and essence of authority.

Alternatively, in Islam, sovereignty is in the *Sharia* and not in the people, or the *Ummah*. And, in Islam, God alone is the legislator, whereas the authority and governance belongs to the people or to the *Ummah*. Furthermore, leadership in democratic systems is spearheaded by the masses or the majority, whereas in the Islamic system, leadership is exerted by the individual. In addition, the idea of freedoms in democratic systems lowers the human being to a bestial level, whereas the human being in Islam is constrained by the rules and provisions of Islamic law. With that, Hizb ut-Tahrir does not see anything particularly wrong with running for parliamentary elections; albeit with the knowledge that *kufr* is inherent in democracy and inherent in the regimes that govern in the contemporary Muslim world, which operate in accordance with this system. The rationale behind the party’s “tolerance” for participating in electoral processes is explained in their justification that going to the ballot boxes is not in itself considered “democracy” or an acceptance of democracy, but that democracy is an all-encompassing comprehensive system that has been established on secular foundations.⁷⁵⁸

The party also requires that anyone who plans on engaging in electoral processes to do so while declaring that he/she does not believe in the democratic system, and to declare that he/she is working towards exposing its corruption and towards eradicating and changing this system, so that an Islamic system can be established. The platforms of these candidates must also concede to these conditions and work towards these aims; and, candidates must commit to not cooperate with those who have adopted and or who operated according to democratic fundamentals and principles. Subsequently, for the party, these conditions also preclude candidates from joining or running on an electoral list that includes secular candidates. Any candidate who does not abide by these conditions or adhere to these provisions must not be elected; and, Muslims are prohibited (religiously) from

⁷⁵⁶ ‘Abd al-Qadeem Zalloum, “*Kayf Hudimat al-Khilafa*” (Lit., “How the Caliphate was Destroyed”), op. cit., pp. 45-47.

⁷⁵⁷ ‘Abd al-Qadeem Zalloum, “*Al-Demoqratiya Nitham Kufr Yuhram Akhthuha aou Tatbiqouha aou al-Da’wa Ilayha*” (Lit., “Democracy is a System of *Kufr*: Adopting it, Applying it and Calling for it, is (Religiously) Prohibited”), Hizb ut-Tahrir Publications.

⁷⁵⁸ The “*Al-Wa’i*” Magazine, published in Beirut, Lebanon, Issue no. 58, February 1992, p. 35.

electing secular candidates, as electing secular candidates is viewed, by the party, as contributing to supporting and to advocating a system of “*kuffr*”.⁷⁵⁹

Certainly, Sheikh al-Nabhani demonstrated a significant amount of interest in parliamentary processes early on in his political life, as he considered these assemblies as representing a kind of a “podium” for the “*da’wa*.” For instance, he ran as a candidate for a seat in the Jerusalem District in the 1951 elections – or before Hizb ut-Tahrir was actually established – but without success. After this initial failure and after Hizb ut-Tahrir was established, he would turn his focus on running in elections as an Islamic bloc, becoming very involved and engaged in the Jordanian parliamentary elections of 1954. During these particular elections, Hizb ut-Tahrir nominated five candidates on its list, of whom only one, Sheikh Ahmad al-Da’our, won a seat.

After the Jordanian parliament was dissolved in 1956, the party once again participated in the following elections, with all its candidates losing again except for Sheikh Ahmad al-Da’our, who won a second term for the Tulkarem district.⁷⁶⁰ In the meantime, during the period of December 3, 1957 and May 13, 1958, nine members of parliament were stripped of their seats in parliament, including Sheikh Ahmad al-Da’our, who was subsequently tried and imprisoned for a period of two years. After the totality of this experience, the party never filed candidates for parliamentary elections.⁷⁶¹

On another conceptual front, Hizb ut-Tahrir also considered the idea of Arab nationalism as being one of the notions that the imperialist West had worked on instilling and embedding inside the Muslim world, in order to break the bonds of fraternity that existed between Muslims and the *ummah* through Islam. In the party’s opinion, nationalism and nationalist ties worked to weaken the feeling of loyalty and sense of belonging to Islam. The party believed that this Western scheme began in the Balkans, where it stirred up nationalist sentiments and incited the peoples of the Balkans against the Islamic state, which, at that time, was the Ottoman state.⁷⁶²

According to Hizb ut-Tahrir, Western colonialism and imperialism then worked to establish missionary charitable associations in the Arab countries, which subsequently controlled the course and orientation that educated Muslim would take, and the orientation of Arab nationalism and Turkish nationalism for two primary purposes:

First: To separate the Arabs from the Muslim Ottoman state, in order to divide them and cripple the Islamic state, which they would then brand as “Turkey” in order to incite specific ethnic prides and prejudices.

⁷⁵⁹ “*Al-Shurout al-Shari’iya li al-Istihlak fi al-Intikhabat al-Niyabiya*” (Lit., “The Islamically-Legal Conditions for Participating in Parliamentary Elections”), Hizb ut-Tahrir Statement, issued on August 1, 1992.

⁷⁶⁰ Musa Zaid al-Kilani, “*Al-Harakat al-Islamiya fi al-Urdun*” (Lit., “Islamist Movements in Jordan”), op. cit., pp. 93-94.

⁷⁶¹ Ibid., p. 89.

⁷⁶² Taqiuddin al-Nabhani, “*Al-Taftir*” (Lit., “Thinking”, sometimes also cited as “Thought”), Hizb ut-Tahrir Publications, 1st Edition, 1973, p. 84.

Second: To distance Muslims from their original, true ties and loyalties to Islam – considering that Muslims associate with no other ties.⁷⁶³

As for the Arab League and the Organization of Islamic Conference (later became Organization of Islamic Cooperation) and the notions behind these institutions, the party held fast to the view that these kinds of ideals and organizations were merely creations embedded through colonialism and imperialism in the Muslim world, in order to distance Muslims from the system of the Caliphate and a proper Islamic succession.⁷⁶⁴ With that, for Hizb ut-Tahrir, the idea that would attain the highest priority and garner the utmost attention of Western imperialism would be the notion of nationalism. Indeed, and in the eyes of the party, proof of this intention was embodied by the fact that the Western imperialists encouraged and supported the emergence of Arab nationalist movements and Turanian Turkish movements. Finally, in the words of Hizb ut-Tahrir, the imperialists succeeded in gathering numerous Arabs at a special conference, entitled The First Arab Congress of 1913, “So that they could come together and unite as a (nationalist) bloc to fight against the Ottoman state, under the banner and name of Arab independence from that state. This Western culture and these Western notions united them (the Arabs); and, they would be united by this nationalist and pan-Arab sentiment that the Western colonialist unbeliever (*kafir*) instilled in them!”⁷⁶⁵

Undoubtedly, for Hizb ut-Tahrir, “nationalism” represented “the most dangerous threat, dividing the people and the *ummah*, and creating animosities, prejudices, hatred and wars amongst them.”⁷⁶⁶ Furthermore, according to Sheikh Taqiuddin al-Nabhani, these types of ties and linkages could only be established “where intellect is narrow and weak.”⁷⁶⁷

Finally, in his and in his party’s view, these notions could not serve as a proper or legitimate base for uniting people due to three fundamental and unequivocal reasons: First, these forms of ties and linkages were seen as being basically and primitively “tribal”. Second, these ties and linkages were viewed as being formed through emotional connections that were guided and grounded in the most primal and narrow forms of basic survival instinct. Third, they were representative of inhumane and barbaric linkages that only served to produce enmities and animosities between people.⁷⁶⁸ Furthermore, throughout their entire history, the Arabs have never been united save for under the banner and message of Islam, with the modern nationalist calling, in contemporary times, being no more than “a calling that advocates a new form of ignorant pre-Islamic prejudice. It is nothing like Islam. And, the one who calls for nationalism is committing a great sin before God.” In Sheikh al-Nabhani’s view, indeed, national identity and national ties were no different than pan-Arab or ethnic identities and ties, which are borne of deviant and degenerative thoughts that are corrupting on several levels, as they are an emotional identifications and lowly ties derived from base and basic survival instincts.

⁷⁶³ Taqiuddin al-Nabhani, “*Al-Dawla al-Islamiya*” (Lit., “The Islamic State”), op. cit., p.140.

⁷⁶⁴ Taqiuddin al-Nabhani, “*Al-Takatul al-Hizbi*” (Lit., “The Party Structure”), op. cit., p. 7.

⁷⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁷⁶⁶ ‘Abd al-Qadeem Zalloum, “*Kayf Hudimat al-Khilafa*” (Lit., “How the Caliphate was Destroyed”), op. cit., p. 24.

⁷⁶⁷ Taqiuddin al-Nabhani, “*Nitham al-Islam*” (“The System of Islam”), op. cit., p. 24.

⁷⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

Hizb ut-Tahrir's Approach to Political Analysis

Hizb ut-Tahrir attaches particular importance to the issue of "*al-tafkir*," or "thinking," a topic to which Sheikh al-Nabhani gave singular focus in one book he authored under that title. Sheikh al-Nabhani, indeed, was of the firm conviction that ideas and thought had played a very important role in the rise and fall of civilizations and of regimes. In fact, al-Nabhani's intellectual reading of the life of the Prophet Mohammad (Peace Be Upon Him) led him to believe that the Prophet fought a long struggle in order to establish proper and correct thinking, and worked equally as hard to combat corrupting ideas.⁷⁶⁹

Furthermore, according to al-Nabhani, debilitating weaknesses, folly, aberrancies and disequilibrium penetrated the Islamic system and state during the Fifth Century Hijri, when certain Islamic scholars called for barring the practice of *ijtihad*.⁷⁷⁰ In al-Nabhani's own words, this proverbial closing of the intellectual gates on *ijtihad* meant that, "for all intents and practical purposes, the nation (*ummah*) was barred from thinking;"⁷⁷¹ and, this dysfunction produced a lack of knowledge and caused ignorance in the fact that the human being rises "by that which he possesses in thinking and knowledge about life, the universe, the human being and the relations between all these elements before life and after life."⁷⁷²

In terms of its understanding of political thinking, the party's discourse proffers that "(political) thinking is related to the manner in which the affairs of the nation (the *ummah*) are administered and safeguarded,"⁷⁷³ and views "this highest form of thinking as being of the most difficult forms of thinking"⁷⁷⁴.

These specific issues and interpretations would inevitably bring forth sharp criticism of the party from other Islamists and Islamist groups, which came to view Hizb ut-Tahrir as being over-politicized and not appreciative enough of other religious dimensions. However, Hizb ut-Tahrir's vision was the natural by-product of the party's fundamental intellectual origins, roots and its work, which were all, in essence and par excellence, political. As such, it was also only natural that the party would give overwhelming priority and attention to assessing the reality of international affairs, to focusing on the affairs of the state, systems of governance, and the character of prevailing political regimes.

In sum, the party's vision of international politics and international affairs can be epitomized in the fundamental and the static theoretical belief held by the party that becoming "a superpower (or, literally, the "first" state)", and being the strongest and most influential state, is always the ultimate goal in the dynamics that govern international affairs. Thus, for Hizb ut-Tahrir, the continuous struggle between states within the international balances of power inherently and singularly revolves around competing for this rank and possessing this position.

⁷⁶⁹ Taqiuddin al-Nabhani, "*Al-Dawla al-Islamiya*" (Lit., "The Islamic State"), op. cit., p.11.

⁷⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 29.

⁷⁷¹ Taqiuddin al-Nabhani, "*Al-Tafkir*" (Lit., "Thinking"), op. cit., p. 74.

⁷⁷² Taqiuddin al-Nabhani, "*Nitham al-Islam*" (Lit., "The System of Islam"), op. cit., p. 7.

⁷⁷³ Taqiuddin al-Nabhani, "*Al-Khilafa*" ("The Caliphate"), op. cit., p. 159.

⁷⁷⁴ Taqiuddin al-Nabhani, "*Al-Tafkir*" (Lit., "Thinking"), op. cit., p. 163.

However, what may be most remarkable about all this theorizing by Hizb ut-Tahrir is that, despite its overwhelming focus on and attention to political analysis, its publication of thousands of publications and treatises, and its authoring of so many books related to international and political affairs, the party's vision still managed to evolve within the narrow scope of a conspiratorial mentality, especially in the manner in which it viewed the variables and complexities that affect and govern politics, the state and the changing dynamics of the international balances of power.

Consequently, the party neglected the importance of the Cold War that continued for decades between the former Soviet Union (and the socialist bloc) and Western camp, led by the United States and the system of capitalism. Instead, Hizb ut-Tahrir granted more weight and more importance to the influence and impact of the pre-Cold War colonialist powers on international affairs. Finally, this narrow vision led the party to fundamentally flounder in its reading and understanding of the increased confusion and turmoil in international affairs and regional dynamics, particularly after the collapse of the U.S.S.R. and the disintegration of the socialist paradigm.⁷⁷⁵

⁷⁷⁵ Mohammad Moussa, "*Adwa' a 'ala al-'Alaqat al-Douwalia wa al-Nitham al-Douwali*" (Lit., "Shedding Light on International Affairs and the International System"), published by Dar al-Bayariq, Beirut, Lebanon, 1993.

4. Hizb ut-Tahrir's Methodology of Change and Mechanisms of Insurrection

Hizb ut-Tahrir's approach to change is based on a unilateral understanding and reading of the typical contemporary Islamist paradigm, which seeks to revive and uplift the Muslim world from its state of degeneration by following the example of the Prophet's life, and following the way in which He (Peace Be Upon Him) labored for the sake of establishing an Islamic state. Hizb ut-Tahrir particularly holds fast to the conviction that there is only one path and one way to establish the Islamic state and system – and only one path and one way from which society must not deviate, abandon or neglect – as the only rule of law that is binding and obligatory is that of Islamic law.

Hizb ut-Tahrir supports this paradigm with its rationale that the fundamental reason behind the failure of Islamist movements, today, lies in the fact that “they do not know how to execute their ideas; instead, their ideas are haphazard and arbitrary.”⁷⁷⁶ According to the party, Islamist movements have successively failed to understand the Islamic approach to change due to their inability to create a “firm link to the Islamic idea” and “in a manner that will safeguard such a link, and prevent it from separating or disintegrating.”⁷⁷⁷ And this link to the Islamic idea is that, “Islam is a doctrine and creed from which a system for all the affairs of the state and the *ummah* is borne”⁷⁷⁸ and it is “an idea and path from the same genus of this manner of thought.”⁷⁷⁹

According to Hizb ut-Tahrir, this paradigm is further supported by the revealed address to Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) in the Qur'an to state, “Say, *This is my way; I invite to God with insight, I and those who follow me. And exalted is God, and I am not of those who associate others with Him.*” [Surat Yusuf: 108].⁷⁸⁰ For Hizb ut-Tahrir, this verse points to conclusive and categorical evidence that one defined and definitive “means” exists; and, that this “means” is the path and the way that once carried the Islamic *da'wa* and succeeded in establishing and building the Islamic state; and, that this “means” is the path and the way upon which the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) tread. Subsequently, all those who follow the Prophet (PBUH) must tread upon this path and follow this way, “without deviating one hair from this path and this way, in any of its parts or in its entirety, and without making any account, at all, for differences that may exist in different places, eras and times – because the only matters that may differ are the instruments and the forms of these means. But, the core essence and meaning never changed, and will never change, no matter how much time has passed and no matter how much people or countries may differ.”⁷⁸¹

According to Sheikh al-Nabhani's interpretation and reading of the Prophetic path, which is presented in his book, “*al-Dawla al-Islamiya*” (The Islamic State), a clandestine *da'wa* must be the launching point, followed by a period where all the faithful and the believers are united under the auspices and structure of a “*sahaba* bloc” (the bloc of Companions of the Prophet) after they have spent some time in “*halaqat* (or cells) bloc”. The next stage includes passing through an open

⁷⁷⁶ Taqiuddin al-Nabhani, “*Al-Takatul al-Hizbi*” (Lit., “The Party Structure”), op. cit., p. 5.

⁷⁷⁷ “*Mafahim Hizb ut-Tahrir*” (Lit., “The Concepts of Hizb ut-Tahrir”), op. cit., p. 2.

⁷⁷⁸ Taqiuddin al-Nabhani, “*Al-Takatul al-Hizbi*” (Lit., “The Party Structure”), op. cit., p. 8.

⁷⁷⁹ Taqiuddin al-Nabhani, “*Nitham al-Islam*” (“The System of Islam”), op. cit., p. 35.

⁷⁸⁰ English transliteration taken from Sahih International, available at <http://quran.com/12> [Translator's note].

⁷⁸¹ Taqiuddin al-Nabhani, “*Nitham al-Islam*” (“The System of Islam”), op. cit., p. 59.

da'wa after the “bloc of the faithful have become strong and capable of taking on all of society,” with this paradigm and “approach to change” concluding only with the establishment of an Islamic state in al-Madina al-Munawara.

Also in his book “The Islamic State,” al-Nabhani defines three stages required for establishing the Islamic state: The first stage would be comprised of an edification period in which people of faith are sought, who will adopt the idea of the party and its methods for forming a partisan bloc, or political party. The second stage would entail interacting with the *ummah* so that society will re-embrace Islam, and readopt Islam as its cause, and work towards attaining Islam in reality and in everyday life. The third stage would then be the stage in which power and governance is assumed; and, Islam is applied comprehensively and totally; and, where the message of Islam is carried forth to (the rest of) the world.⁷⁸²

These successive stages commence with a “profound idea, a clear and lucid way, and pious human beings;” and, whenever these three components are attainable and become present, then “the first cell, which will then multiply into many cells, shall be the first link or ‘the party’s leadership.’ Whenever the first link becomes present, it will represent the germination of the partisan structure.”⁷⁸³ With this, the party will have entered into its “commencement” period. During this initial or inception stage, the party’s mission and mandate will be limited to finding persons that are, or can be educated in the party’s culture, as the proper bloc or partisan structure can only be established after the member engages in the structure; and, the member can only engage in the structure after that person has been rehabilitated at the partisan level. Finally, partisan rehabilitation can only be achieved by reconciling between thought and emotion; and, this goal can only be achieved if the party member is completely re-educated in accordance to proper principles and a correct education, where a party member’s mind is reshaped and formulated anew.⁷⁸⁴ During this particular stage, “every single individual in the *ummah* must be considered as equally and entirely lacking in culture and in education; and, reeducation and the process of cultural rehabilitation must begin with those who want to join as members of the party, and join with this culture.”⁷⁸⁵ This period, according to al-Nabhani, must be dealt with cautiously and carefully. It cannot be rushed as it is a period of building, of education and of edification.

In the second stage, the party will transform from the framework of edification to engaging in the role of “interacting with the *ummah*”; and, “if a sentiment is established within society based on these principles, then the *da'wa* would have transcended its starting point, and would have achieved its point of departure. The party considers this specific stage delicate; and, success in this period can only be evidenced in the healthy formulation of the party”.⁷⁸⁶

Once this stage has been attained with success, the party can then work on forming and shaping “public opinion” within the *ummah* in a manner that will support Islamic idea. During this stage, the party structure must be cautious and careful not to become sidetracked or engaged in any other work. It must limit itself to the *da'wa* and to ‘thought.’ This focus does not necessarily prohibit

⁷⁸² Refer to the party’s publication entitled “*Hizb ut-Tahrir*” (“The Islamic Party of Liberation”), op. cit., p. 9.

⁷⁸³ Taqiuddin al-Nabhani, “*Al-Takatul al-Hizbi*” (“The Party Structure”), op. cit., p. 23.

⁷⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 14.

⁷⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 37.

⁷⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 43.

individuals from engaging in charitable work, if they so desire. However, the party itself must not become involved in such work, because its work must solely be targeted towards instilling and establishing the *da'wa*.⁷⁸⁷ This stage can only conclude when society has been enabled to accept the Islamic “idea;” for, “the place in which the *da'wa* has come to influence society, but cannot find for itself the right environment, is not fit to be a foundational point, no matter how many individuals are carriers of ‘the principle.’”⁷⁸⁸

The focal and foundational point referred to above is defined by the party as being the formulation of “the state with all the elements and components of a state, and a state with the power and strength of the *da'wa*.”⁷⁸⁹ Hizb ut-Tahrir considers the stages of the commencement and the point of departure as being similar to the Meccan period (prior to the *Hijra* or migration of the Prophet (PBUH) to al-Madina, where any form of jihad or military activity or action is prohibited, as it is period that must be focused only on state-building.

It is during the state-building stage that the party is supposed to assume power, wherever the party has presence and wherever it may be. When the state is established, the application of the Islamic *Sharia* law cannot be progressive or successive, as it is an obligation imperative upon those “in command of the *ummah* to implement a reformative coup, and to execute total and comprehensive insurrectionist reform”⁷⁹⁰ and this period requires those in command “to apply Islam, and execute this application with complete, comprehensive and insurrectionist application.”⁷⁹¹

In his texts and theories, Sheikh al-Nabhani advocates that this “insurrection” paradigm or “insurrectionist” approach is the same approach employed and path followed by the leaders of “*al-Fateh al-Islami*” (the Muslim Conquests); and that they followed this approach and this path without wavering, hesitation, or gradation. According to al-Nabhani, it is the only lawful path and the only legitimate approach that all Islamist movements must follow as their mandate and in their mission.

Later, Hizb ut-Tahrir would transition towards yet another theoretical approach to be used for restoring and establishing the Islamic state, which the party would entitle the “call to victory and support” approach. This method was seen as emulating the manner of the conduct of the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) in the case of the victors at Yathrib, when the Islamic state was first established in al-Madina. According to the “call to champion” approach, the party would call upon individuals in positions of power and strength in society, and Muslims “learned in the ways of resolutions and contracting” (Muslim jurists, sheikhs, community leaders, and influential figures), to rise up with them in overthrowing the prevailing regimes, and assist the party in reinstating the Caliphate state and facilitate the “rise of the caliphate state on corporeal earth.” Indeed, Hizb ut-Tahrir would focus the call to champion towards certain ruling officials, tribal leaders, as well as other important persons in various armies who would constitute influential pressure forces.

⁷⁸⁷ “*Mafahim Hizb ut-Tahrir*” (Lit., “The Concepts of Hizb ut-Tahrir”), op. cit., p. 64.

⁷⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

⁷⁸⁹ Taqiuddin al-Nabhani, “*Al-Dawla al-Islamiya*” (Lit., “The Islamic State”), op. cit., p.191.

⁷⁹⁰ Taqiuddin al-Nabhani, “*Al-Takatul al-Hizbi*” (Lit., “The Party Structure”), op. cit., p. 28.

⁷⁹¹ Taqiuddin al-Nabhani, “*Al-Dawla al-Islamiya*” (Lit., “The Islamic State”), op. cit., p.121.

However, all of the party's attempts to call upon the "powerful" for support would subsequently end in failure.⁷⁹²

⁷⁹² From interview conducted with Sheikh Ahmad al-Da'our on December 2, 1989, published in "*Athar al-Jama'at al-Islamiya al-Maydaniya Khilal al-Qarn al-'Ishreen*" (Lit., "The Impact of Grassroots Islamist Groups in the 20th Century"), by Dr. Mahmud Salim 'Obeidat, op. cit., p. 231.

5. The Self and the Other: Hizb ut-Tahrir and Other Islamist Groups

Hizb ut-Tahrir's view and attitude towards other Islamist movements and groups have been clearly characterized by a significant level of negativity and aggression. The party has persistently attacked different Islamist movements and groups in its books and publications; and, it considers that the vast majority of these groups act in a manner that contravenes the example, or the path, set by the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) for establishing an Islamic state. Hizb ut-Tahrir views that other Islamist movements and groups wager on eccentric visions and implausible aphorisms, where the aspects of morality, ethics, and fighting assume a special place and importance in their plans for restoring the caliphate. In turn, other Islamist movements have reciprocated this same negativity and aggression towards Hizb ut-Tahrir, and have launched harsh and critical campaigns against it.

In one such example, the Organization of the Muslim Brotherhood threatened to terminate the membership of any individual who had ties or communicated with Hizb ut-Tahrir. Moreover, the Brotherhood in Jordan called upon certain members of the Muslim Brotherhood's leadership in Egypt to assist them in confronting Hizb ut-Tahrir, when the latter first began to emerge in Jordan. Of these Egyptian Brotherhood leaders, the most prominent to assist in this effort was Sheikh Sa'id Ramadan, the brother-in-law of Sheikh Hassan al-Banna, who particularly and vehemently opposed Hizb ut-Tahrir and its ideas.⁷⁹³

Many in the Muslim Brotherhood also argue that Sayyid Qutb, himself, advised the Muslim Brotherhood to just ignore Hizb ut-Tahrir, claiming that he said, "Pay them no heed, they will only end where the Brotherhood began."⁷⁹⁴ In the same vein, Sheikh Abu al-'Aala al-Mawdudi, the founder of Jamaat-e-Islami in Pakistan, also advised the Muslim Brotherhood to pay little attention to Hizb ut-Tahrir, saying, "Do not argue with them; leave them be; and, they will merely dissipate and die off with time."⁷⁹⁵

Meanwhile, Sheikh Mohammad al-Hamid from the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood vehemently attacked Hizb ut-Tahrir in his sermons;⁷⁹⁶ and, Sheikh Ali al-Tantawi attacked and mocked the party in an article he wrote for the Muslim Brotherhood's magazine, "*Al-Muslimoun*" (The Muslims), which was published by Sa'id Ramadan. Indeed, in this article, Sheikh al-Tantawi states, with great sarcasm, "They do not call for anything but for the Islamic state – which supposedly will just fall from the sky, as if it were a table, where one finds a meal set on a platter, prepared and ready for consumption."⁷⁹⁷ Sheikh Mohammad Sa'id Ramadan al-Bouti also partook in the criticism directed at Hizb ut-Tahrir in a series of articles he wrote for the magazine, "*Hadarat al-Islam*" (The Civilization of Islam), which was closely affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood. In these articles,

⁷⁹³ From an interview with Dr. 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Khayat conducted by Faisal al-Shboul, published in the "*Al-Wasaf*" magazine, op. cit., pp. 33-34.

⁷⁹⁴ Sadeq Amin, "*Al-Da'wa al-Islamiya...*" (Lit., "The Islamic Call (*Da'wa*)...") op. cit., p. 95.

⁷⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 102.

⁷⁹⁶ Sa'id Houwli, "*Hathihi Tajrubati wa Hathihi Shahadati*" (Lit., "This is My Experience and this is My Testimony"), published by Dar 'Ammar, Amman, Jordan, p. 41.

⁷⁹⁷ Yousuf al-'Athem, "*Ta'iqib 'ala Bahth al-Daktour Hammam Sa'id*" (Lit., "In Response to the Research of Hammam Sa'id"), op. cit., p. 631.

Sheikh al-Bouti warned against “the party’s machinations published in several of their books, which are seriously dangerous and of the utmost gravity.”⁷⁹⁸ He also accused al-Nabhani of having contacts and connections with the British Embassy in Lebanon.⁷⁹⁹

Perhaps the largest attack against Hizb ut-Tahrir, from within the Muslim Brotherhood, came from Sheikh ‘Abdullah ‘Azzam, who attacked Hizb ut-Tahrir’s approach and its insistence on focusing on intellectual issues, while it neglected all matters related to realistic and the practical spheres. Sheikh ‘Azzam accused the party of taking a path that “turned the party’s work and activities into a frigid, never-ending dialectic; and, it has cornered itself within the confines of a debate that has no beginning and no end, and which has no effect or impact on peoples’ reality or lives, particularly in light of the dearth of its members’ rhetoric, and their prioritization of debate and talk over all matters practical.”⁸⁰⁰ ‘Abdullah ‘Azzam also harshly criticized Hizb ut-Tahrir “call for support” approach, as well as the manner in which they dealt with other issues, such as permitting women as members in the party’s ranks, allowing non-Muslims in their *shura* councils, and permitting the kissing of and shaking of hands with foreign women. He also attacked the party over matters related to certain aspects of religious Islamic jurisprudence, such as denying the authoritative authenticity of *al-khabar al-wahid* (Hadith of the Prophet viewed as lacking in chain of transmittance), and that which is associated between this notion and the disbelief in “*adhab al-qabr*” (torment of the grave), as well as the party’s stance on the rise and re-emergence of the Antichrist.⁸⁰¹

Others highly critical of Hizb ut-Tahrir include Sheikh Mohammad al-Ghazzali, who points to more than one issue in which the party’s postures are considered unacceptable, including the party’s claim “that *jihad* in Islam represents a war of aggression and not one of defense” – a view that Sheikh al-Ghazzali utterly rejects.⁸⁰² Another major critic, Sheikh Ghazi al-Taubeh, dedicated an entire section of his book, “*Al-Fikr al-Islami al-Mu’asir*” (Contemporary Islamic Thought), criticizing Hizb ut-Tahrir and Sheikh Taquiddin al-Nabhani, accusing the latter of “intellectual deviancy, due to his exaggerated focus on elevating the status of ideas and thought, and placing undue importance on these elements as the means to changing individuals and societies.” In this chapter, Ghazi al-Taubeh’s also criticized the fact that al-Nabhani and the party “confine the notion of *al-nahda* (revival or religious renaissance) in elevating the intellect and thought, and claim that the collapse of the Islamic state was the outcome of intellectual degeneration.” Al-Taubeh would also see that the “exaggerated focus on intellect” is due to the fact that the “party’s understanding of the human being does not correspond with Islam’s perception of the human being; indeed, its (the party’s) understanding of the soul is incorrect.”⁸⁰³

In the same context, Mohammad al-Hassan puts forth the critical view that Hizb ut-Tahrir’s descent

⁷⁹⁸ Mohammad Sa’id Ramadan al-Bouti, “*Dass Khatir la Yajouz al-Sakout ‘Alayhi*” (“Grave Machinations that Require a Serious Response”), p. 58.

⁷⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

⁸⁰⁰ Sadeq Amin, “*Al-Da’wa al-Islamiya...*” (Lit., “The Islamic Call (*Da’wa*)...”), op. cit., pp. 100-101. It should be noted that Sadeq Amin is the pseudonym that Dr. ‘Abdullah Azzam is known by within the circles of the Muslim Brotherhood.

⁸⁰¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 103-112.

⁸⁰² Mohammad al-Ghazzali, “*Jihad al-Da’wa bayn ‘Ajz al-Dakhil wa Kayd al-Kharif*” (Lit., “The Jihad of *Da’wa* Caught Between a Failed (Inside) Nation and the Avarice and Covetousness of the (Outside) West”), published by Dar al-Qalam, Damascus, Syria, 1991, p. 19.

⁸⁰³ Ghazi al-Taubeh, “*Al-Fikr al-Islami al-Mu’asir: Dirasa wa Taqweem*” (Lit., “Contemporary Islamic Thought: A Study and An Evaluation”), published by Maktabat al-Khulafa al-Rashidoun, 4th Edition, 2004, p. 356.

into the trappings of an incorrect understanding of what education and culture is has led to serious and negative consequences, such as being too lenient with the moral aspect and the practices of worship of members of the party. He also points to the party's continuous engagement in deliberating everything, at every level and during every occasion, so that all are caught in a continuous debate that is marked by a futile, intolerable dialectic. He further points to the fact that the party's concentration on political engagement has led to a confrontation with regimes before focusing on educating individuals. Al-Hassan also takes note of the party's constant and persistent attack on other Islamists figures and groups, as well as the party's faulty understanding of matters and issues related to Islamic jurisprudence, similar to those enumerated by Sheikh 'Abdullah 'Azzam.⁸⁰⁴

Hizb ut-Tahrir was also the subject of sharp criticism from the Salafist currents. Traditional and Conservative Salafist Sheikh Nasruddin al-Albani described the party as not being founded on the Qur'an or on the Sunnah. He considered that "(Hizb ut-Tahrir) this partisanship and this bloc or grouping, which emerged amongst the Islamist groups, today, works only towards enlarging the circle of the strife, discord, and divisions that we inherited following the era of the *Salaf al-Saleh*."⁸⁰⁵ Sheikh al-Albani also criticized Hizb ut-Tahrir's exaggerated dependency on the rational mind, influenced as this party was by the Mu'tazila (the Rationalists), in the sheikh's opinion. It was opinions such as the latter which would lead to allegations that the party denied the authoritative nature of *al-khabar al-wahid*, and the "torments of the grave" subsequent to such denial, as an authoritative and indisputable fact.⁸⁰⁶

Sheikh 'Abd al-Rahman Dimashqiya, another Traditional or Conservative Salafist leader, described Hizb ut-Tahrir in only the most despicable of terms, and dedicated a book solely to responding to the party. Sheikh Dimashqiya made references to several issues that he believed Hizb ut-Tahrir misunderstood and distorted when it came to specific doctrinal and jurisprudential matters, the most important of which – in the sheikh's opinion – were, again, the party's denial of the authoritative nature of *al-khabar al-wahid* and thus, their subsequent denial of the doctrine of the "torments of the grave". Dimashqiya also denied the claim that Sheikh al-Nabhani was a *mujtahid* (a scholar who practices *ijtihad*); and, thus, he believed that the party followed him in his neglect of the divine phenomena and provisions in the rise and fall of states. He, like the others critical of the party, also took special note of the fact that the party exaggerated the importance of the rational mind while it neglected important moral and educational issues, notwithstanding smaller details and matters such

⁸⁰⁴ Mohammad al-Hassan, "*Al-Madhahib wa al-Afkar al-Mu'asira fi al-Tasawur al-Islami*" (Lit., "Contemporary Schools of Thought and Ideas in the Islamic Perceptions"), published by Dar al-Thaqafah, 1st Edition, Doha Qatar, 1986, pp. 161-162 and 165-169.

⁸⁰⁵ 'Ukasha 'Abd al-Mannan al-Tibi, "*Fatawa al-Sheikh al-Albani wa Muqaranatiha bi Fatawa al-'Ulama*" (Lit., "The Religious Edicts (*fatwas*) of Sheikh al-Albani: A Comparative Study with the Religious Edicts of other Religious Scholars ('*Ulama*)"), published by Dar al-Jil, Beirut, Lebanon; also published by Maktabat al-Turath al-Islami, 2nd Edition, Cairo, Egypt, 1995, pp. 472-473.

⁸⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 460-462; 481, 479-486. For more details on the position that Sheikh Nasseruddin al-Albani took towards Hizb ut-Tahrir, refer to Moussa Bin 'Abdulla Aal-'Abd al-'Aziz, "*Al-Maqalat al-Manhajiya fi Hizb ut-Tahrir wa al-Jama'at al-Takfiriya min al-Majala al-Salafiya li al-Imamayn Ibn Baaz wa al-Albani*" (Lit., "Methodical Articles on Hizb ut-Tahrir and Takfiri Groups from the Archives of the Salafist Magazine: Articles by the Imams Ibn Baaz and al-Albani"), in the "The Salafist Book" (or "*Kitab al-Salafiya*"), published by Dar al-Buhouth wa al-Dirasat al-Mu'asira wa al-Tarajim, 1st Edition, Riyadh, The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2006, pp. 70-89.

as permitting the kissing and shaking hands of foreign women, amongst other such conduct.⁸⁰⁷

Meanwhile, Jihadi-Salafist groups found themselves unwittingly in consensus and in agreement with Hizb ut-Tahrir in the belief that the Muslim world, today, is dwelling in *dar al-kufr* (the abode of unbelief). They would also share the same conviction that the prevailing, governing regimes in the Muslim world, today, are guilty of *kufr* and unbelief, as are all democratic regimes. However, Hizb ut-Tahrir, its methodology, path, approach and general doctrines were to become the target of these groups' most severe criticism. Indeed, the campaign of criticism directed against Hizb ut-Tahrir by the Jihadi-Salafists would be unparalleled in its aggression and violence.

In one such example, 'Abd al-Mun'im Halima (otherwise known by the alias, "Abu Baseer"), wrote an essay criticizing the party, entitled, "*Hizb ut-Tahrir wa Siyasat Tasmin al-Khiraf*" (Lit., "Hizb ut-Tahrir and Their Policy of Fattening Sheep") in which he says, "Hizb ut-Tahrir and its followers have taken it upon themselves to carry on a pursuit, where their direction, their *da'wa* and the manner in which they educate the youth of the *ummah* in politics is an approach that only feeds heresies and superstitions – and as these (victims) are fed, ripened and are ready for the taking at the cheapest price – perhaps even at no price. They are being sacrificed and led towards a voluntary slaughter, with total surrender and without the slightest resistance into the guillotine by ruthless hands and henchmen."⁸⁰⁸ In addition to this scathing critique and in reference to other issues, Abu Baseer says, "Have you not seen how they cast suspicion on the intentions and the *jihad* of the *mujahidin*? Have you not seen that they are no more than mere tools led by the hands of puppet regimes? ...For, Hizb ut-Tahrir does not suffice with sitting idly by and taking on the role of the spectator as the sanctities of Muslims are being violated... Hizb ut-Tahrir has gone beyond that point to betray the *mujahidin*".

Abu Baseer also accused the party of working to immobilize and obstruct the obligation of jihad, which is considered the fundamental essence of the Jihadi-Salafist ideology, its approach for propagating change, as well as the means to restoring and establishing the Islamic state. To this end, Abu Baseer says, "You will see the members of Hizb ut-Tahrir working as judges in the temporal-statutory *Sharia* courts, which govern through idolatrous laws... The secret behind all this is that Hizb ut-Tahrir does not see the legality and does not permit *jihad* and fighting these gangs led by the Jews... In this sense, the party is viewed by the former with pleasure, because it proffers a message – intentionally or unintentionally – which is not worthy of the judgment of even the sons of apes and pigs because all this is channeled to service and safeguard the peace and security of the Jews!"⁸⁰⁹ He is also vehemently critical of Hizb ut-Tahrir's principal of "calling (others) to victory," their prioritizing of reason to revelation, and of their denial of the principle of *al-khabar al-wahid*,

⁸⁰⁷ 'Abd al-Rahman Bin Mohammad Bin Sa'id al-Dimashqiya, "*Al-Rad 'ala Hizb ut-Tahrir: Munaqasha 'Ilmiya li Aham Mabadi' al-Hizb wa Rad 'Ilmi Mufasal Hawla Khabar al-Wahid*" (Lit., "Responding to Hizb ut-Tahrir: A Scholarly Discussion of the Most Important Principles held by Hizb ut-Tahrir and a Scholarly, Detailed Response Regarding the doctrine of *Khabar al-Wahid*.")

⁸⁰⁸ Abu Baseer al-Tartousi ('Abd al-Mun'im Mustafa Halima), "*Hizb ut-Tahrir wa Siyasat Tasmin al-Khiraf*" (Lit., "Hizb ut-Tahrir and Their Policy of "Fattening Sheep" (Feeding Heresies and Superstitions)", available www.abubaseer.bizland.com.

⁸⁰⁹ Abu Baseer al-Tartousi ('Abd al-Mun'im Mustafa Halima), "*Al-Tareeq illa Isti'inaf Hayaat Islamiya wa Qiyyam Khilafa Rashida 'ala Daw' al-Kitab wa al-Sunnah*" (Lit., "The Path to Restoring an Islamic Way of Life and Establishing the Rightly-Guided Caliphate According to the Way of the Qur'an and the Sunnah"), p. 11, available at www.abubaseer.bizland.com.

amongst many other issues.⁸¹⁰

In this same context, Abu Qatada joined Abu Baseer in criticizing the doctrine and approach of Hizb ut-Tahrir, summarizing this critique in the following statement, “Hizb ut-Tahrir’s understanding of *iman* (faith) and *tawhid* is not the Sunni manner of understanding. Their understanding of these concepts is closer to the secretions of the Ash’ariya (the Murji’ah), who transformed *tawhid* into a rational doctrine, and where *jihad* amongst the believers would be transformed (from armed) into political resistance”.⁸¹¹

In conclusion, it can safely be argued that the relationship between Hizb ut-Tahrir and other Islamist movements and groups has always been marked by mutual animosity, as well as an aggressive discourse characterized by reciprocated accusatory allegations. A decisive rift has always existed and still exists between these parties, built upon mutual suspicion with little room for dialogue, which points to a serious weakness in the intellectual and communication structures upon which the basis of dialogue and differences of opinion and views are built within the Islamist “domain.” In fact, the vast majority of these movements and groups see themselves as the only “salvation” or the only “victorious sect,” which all must join and follow in order to ensure its dominance and increase its numbers.

⁸¹⁰ Ibid., p. 56.

⁸¹¹ Abu Qatada al-Filastini (‘Omar Mahmoud Abu ‘Omar), “*Al-Jarh wa al-Ta’adil*” (Lit. “The Science of Criticism and Praise (in Hadith Sciences), op. cit., p. 31, available at www.tawhid.ws.

6. Hizb ut-Tahrir's Organizational and Party Structure

The organizational structure of Hizb ut-Tahrir is characterized by a strict hierarchy that reflects and is consistent with its secretive nature. Indeed, this hierarchical and clandestine nature is inevitably inherent to the party's underground, insurrectionist approach, which remains hostile to prevailing systems and regimes.

From what little is known or made public about the party's structure is that it has a special committee, composed of several members, that supervises the party and its activities in each country that the party operates in. This committee is called "*Lajnat al-Wilaya*" (the Governance Committee). There are other committees that then supervise the party's operations in a specific city or area, called "*al-Lajna al-Mahaliya*" (Local Committee). Sometimes, one specific individual member is appointed to supervise the party in a particular city, or specific area, who is called "*al-mu'tamad*" or literally, the "Approved Regulator". Finally, a committee entitled "*Lajnat al-Qiyada*" (Central (Command) Committee) is considered the highest committee in the party's hierarchical pyramid; and, this particular committee is a central committee that is headed by the leader of the party, himself, or the party's "*Emir*".

Over the years, Hizb ut-Tahrir has developed and enacted an internal administrative law for the party, which defines how administrative matters are managed and what procedures regulate the party and its committees, as well as each committee's specific responsibilities. These internal by-laws also include a penal code, where members can be sanctioned by the party if they violate the party's laws or are found in violation of the Islamic *Sharia* law. Additionally, the party has created and implemented a system for establishing and organizing "*halaqa*" or circles, and for defining the responsibilities of each circle's supervisor, as well as other administrative matters linked to the party's operations and management, in general.

A person becomes a member of the party after taking a special oath of allegiance, after that person has demonstrated a mature understanding of the party's culture and ways. The oath itself is as follows, "I swear by God Almighty that I will be an honest and faithful guardian of Islam; and, that I have embraced the views of this *Hizb ut-Tahrir* (party of liberation); and, that I believe in its ideas; and, I have placed my trust in its leadership and will execute its decisions even if these may go against my opinion."⁸¹² Finally, the party's financial resources are limited to gifts from its members and to income generated by selling its books, which are published by the party. There is no specific or obligatory membership fees demanded of party members.⁸¹³

Divisions, Rifts, and Cohesion

From the time of its inception until the present day, Hizb ut-Tahrir has consistently suffered from serious divisions and several major rifts. Although these ruptures have weakened the party significantly, none of these ruptures led to the party's collapse or demise. The first major rift involved certain historically important figures, who had once played an institutional role in

⁸¹² Mohammad Sa'id Bin Sahou Abu Za'arour, "*Al-Sahwa al-Islamiyya...*" (Lit., "The Islamic Awakening..."), op. cit., p.102. [The oath was translated into English by the translator].

⁸¹³ Musa Zaid al-Kilani, "*Al-Harakat al-Islamiya fi al-Urdun*" (Lit., "Islamist Movements in Jordan"), op. cit., p. 100.

founding the party. Hizb ut-Tahrir's first "central command committee" (*Lajnat al-Qiyada*), which was formed in 1953, following the Jordanian government's refusal to license the party, and which included Sheikh al-Nabhani as the party's leader and Daoud Hamdan and Nimr al-Masri, would not last long. Differences of opinion soon erupted between al-Nabhani, Hamdan and al-Masri over whether or not to include Syria as one of the countries in which the party would operate, in order to leave Syria as a safe haven for party members being pursued or persecuted in other countries. Meanwhile, Sheikh Ahmad al-Da'our claims that the stand taken by the two men, Hamdan and al-Masri, was actually driven by personal and business interests.⁸¹⁴ On the other hand, another party member, Ghanem 'Abdu, attributed their exit from the party to a desire to secure their own peace and well-being after several members of the party were persecuted. In the end, Sheikh al-Nabhani replaced Hamdan and al-Masri with Sheikh Ahmad al-Da'our and Sheikh 'Abd al-Qadeem Zalloum.⁸¹⁵

In 1965, Ghanem 'Abdu, another one of the Hizb ut-Tahrir's founders and also someone close to Sheikh al-Nabhani, left the party's ranks over differences of opinion regarding certain issues, the most important of which included the party's strategy of "calling (others) to victory," as well as whether or not to participate in parliamentary elections. 'Abdu was of the view that only people, who were *ahl al-hal wa al-'aqd* (or "those [Muslims] who have binding authority"), and who had all the capacities required by Islam in their doctrine, understanding and commitment to Islam should be "called to victory;" whereas, al-Nabhani and the party were adamant on the principle of "calling to victory" those with certain capabilities and powers, even if they were *kuffar* or unbelievers. Also contrary to al-Nabhani's position on the subject of whether or not to engage in elections, 'Abdu held the conviction that the very notion of elections contravened the Islamic *Sharia* law, and participating in elections meant accepting a constitution that is in contradiction with the *Sharia*.⁸¹⁶

Later, or in the early 1990s, 'Abdu attempted to establish a group, which he called "*Haba*"; and, the first statements issued by this group revealed a clear leaning towards ideas that were closer to the ideology of Jihadi-Salafism. However, in the end, 'Abdu's group was not to be destined for success and would not remain on the scene for long.

Sheikh 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Khayat, one of Hizb ut-Tahrir's first founders, who played an important and principal role in building the party, also withdrew from the party's ranks, due to his repeated attempts at trying to reconcile between Hizb ut-Tahrir and the Organization of the Muslim Brotherhood. Sheikh al-Khayat later assumed the portfolio of the Minister of Religious Affairs and Awqaf (Endowments) in Jordan, and remained in that post throughout the reign of five consecutive governments, or from 1973 until 1989. Of his relation to the party, al-Khayat states, "The core of my efforts revolved around revisiting our work, our methodologies, objectives and outlooks through the Muslim Brotherhood rather than try to establish a new Islamist party, so that the hard efforts of

⁸¹⁴ From an interview with Sheikh Ahmad al-Da'our, op. cit., p. 70. Sa'id al-Hassan views that the departure of Hamdan and al-Masri from the party was because of their request to define the mission and tasks of *Lajnat al-Qiyada*, and because of Sheikh al-Nabhani's "despotic and dominating" nature in monopolizing authority. See: Jamal al-Banna, "*Risalah ila al-Da'awat al-Islamiya*," (Lit., "A Message to Islamic Da'wa Movements"), Dar al-Fikr al-Islami, Cairo, 1991, pp. 76-77.

⁸¹⁵ Ibid., in interview with Ahmad al-Da'our, pp. 70-71.

⁸¹⁶ Ibid., op. cit., p. 71-72.

all those working would not be squandered. My efforts would have succeeded if it were not for the fact that Dr. Mohammad Sa'ad Ramadan obstructed and worked against these efforts".⁸¹⁷

Hizb ut-Tahrir's stance on the Palestinian cause has also been a cause for division and rupture amongst the party ranks. The party's view on this issue has consistently been that the solution to the Palestinian cause is "to reject all agreements, in part and in whole; and, indeed, that the solution to the Palestinian issue requires that no more agreements are made with the Jews. And, there is no way towards this solution save through hard, serious work to restore the Caliphate and ensure the appointment of a Caliph, who pledges allegiance to work only by God's Holy Book and the Prophet's Sunnah until Islam is reinstated and applied completely, and who will declare jihad against the Jews in order to uproot them (from Muslim lands)."⁸¹⁸

Hizb ut-Tahrir's overall ideological vision also resolutely and decisively calls for postponing "jihad" until a Caliph is reinstated. This particular position pushed Sheikh Ass'ad Bayoudh al-Tamimi, one of Hizb ut-Tahrir's oldest members, to also leave the party. After splitting from Hizb ut-Tahrir, Sheikh al-Tamimi founded his own jihadi movement, which he called "*Kata'ib Bayt al-Maqdis*" (The Bayt al-Maqdis (Jerusalem) Brigade). For the same reason and in the same context, Dr. Saleh Siriyeh established his own movement, "*al-Faniya al-'Askariya*" in Egypt in 1974, which was the group that attempted to carry out a coup d'état in Egypt through recruits from the Military Technical College in Cairo. In the end, this failed coup attempt concluded with the trial and execution of Saleh Siriyeh.⁸¹⁹

In fact, Hizb ut-Tahrir's stance on Palestine has weakened the party's overall influence and negatively affected its course and evolution. Furthermore, the "coup" or "political insurrectionist" doctrine held so staunchly by the party was based on the idea that, first, the Arab governments must be overthrown in order to prepare for the Islamic state and pave the way for reinstating and inaugurating a new Caliph. Then, and only then, could "jihad" be declared and "jihad" could only be declared the Caliph. This insurrectionist political philosophy or the belief that the Caliphate must be reinstated before jihad could be effective is why the party rejected any form of armed resistance, and why the party found armed resistance futile (prior to appointing a Caliph). Thus, the party would prohibit the practice of any form of armed resistance from the moment of its inception.⁸²⁰

The party also experienced divisions and splits amongst its different branches in Lebanon, Europe, and Central Asia. Surprisingly, although Hizb ut-Tahrir's ideas and concepts were fairly peculiar and different from the heritage of Central Asia, a branch was established in Uzbekistan, which operated with significant strength and success after the collapse of the Soviet Union. However, the

⁸¹⁷ From the introduction by 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Khayat in 'Awni Jadou' al-'Obeidi's "*Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami: 'Ard Tarikhi, Dirasa 'Amma*" (Lit., "The Islamic Party of Liberation: A General and Historical Overview"), op. cit., p. 16.

⁸¹⁸ Refer to the "*Al-Wa'i*" magazine, published in Beirut, Lebanon, 7th year, Issue no. 75, July 1993, p. 24.

⁸¹⁹ Akram Hijazi, "*Tarikhayat al-Munthamat al-Fida'iya wa al-Jama'at al-Islamiya fi Filastin*" (Lit., "A Historical Overview of Fidayeen Organizations and Islamist Groups in Palestine"), unpublished thesis; pp. 288-292.

⁸²⁰ An Israeli scholar indicates that the leaders of Hizb ut-Tahrir outside Palestine sent clear directives to its supporters and members warning and prohibiting them from partaking in any organized fashion in the popular uprising (intifada), which erupted in the Occupied Palestinian Territories at the end of 1987. Refer to Ze'ev Schiff and Ehud Ya'ari, "Intifada" published by Shukook Publishing House, Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, translated into Arabic by David Sajif, 1990, p. 265. In English, the book is entitled, "Intifada: The Palestinian Uprising-Israel's Third Front", and is published by Simon & Schuster (March 1990).

party in Central Asia was also met by fierce competition and opposition from other groups, and mainly groups with Jihadi-Salafist leanings. The most notable amongst these more militant jihadi groups in Central Asia was the Turkestan Mujahideen movement, which operated within the framework of the Central Asian countries of Turkestan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. However, the Turkestan Mujahideen and its leaders, Taher Yaldtchev and Juma‘a Namnaghani, were also subject to fierce pressures that pushed the movement out of the area and into Afghanistan, where it was adopted and taken under the wings of the Taliban movement.

Despite the competition, Hizb ut-Tahrir continued to operate in Central Asia, albeit more symbolically than anything else, after it was significantly affected by a major split from the movement led by Akram Yaldetchev. Yaldetchev’s split led to the rise of the Ikramiya movement, which transformed the traditional approach taken by Hizb ut-Tahrir into a Jihadi-Salafist approach and adopted a militant insurrectionist paradigm, whose focus was to propagate change through the use of force and armed jihad.

However, and despite these obstacles, pressures, and ruptures suffered by Hizb ut-Tahrir, it continued to operate out of Uzbekistan, although it lost much of its popularity and effectiveness after Yaldetchev’s split that led to the rise of the Ikrami movement. In fact, the greater majority of its members in Central Asia would eventually convert to Jihadi-Salafism and join these kinds of movements. In all events, the experience of Hizb ut-Tahrir in Central Asia was unique in terms of the kinds of rapid transformations that affected the party’s traditional theoretical and operational structures there.

In the same vein, Hizb ut-Tahrir in Europe suffered much of the same divisions as its counterpart did in Central Asia. The most important split to occur within the party structure in Europe took place in the Germany branch, which was led by a group that adopted and followed the teachings of ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Maliki. Al-Maliki and other opposition members in Europe issued a declaration in which they expressed that they would no longer stand by certain ideas held by the party. However, this opposition took on the face of reformism, in principle, and occurred within the ranks and structure of the party, without any single party actually seceding from Hizb ut-Tahrir, itself, or establishing an alternative or separate party.

In Great Britain’s Hizb ut-Tahrir branch, ‘Omar Bakri actually deserted the party and established a new party altogether, which he called the “Muhajireen” movement. However, this movement remained quite limited in scope and did not spread elsewhere in Europe. Bakri himself also showed that he had clear leanings towards Jihadi-Salafism, although he, himself, did not engage in armed activity or militant resistance. Furthermore, his split and his new party did not significantly affect the core structure of the party. Today, Bakri resides in Lebanon and is working on re-establishing and reviving his movement there.

By far, the most important and most threatening rupture to occur in the history of the party took place in 1997, when several members from the party in Jordan left the party over a dispute related to several issues. These members included, at the fore, Mohammad ‘Abd al-Karim Abu Rami, a member of the office of the party’s *Emir* and the *Mu‘tamad* of the party in Jordan, in addition to Sheikh Bakr Salem al-Khawaldeh, the head of the party’s Cultural Committee (*Lajnat al-Thaqafa*);

and several members from the 'Governance' Committee (*Lajnat al-Wilaya*) including Jamil Shaker, 'Eid al-Qawasmeh, Adham 'Awad and Ibrahim Jarrar.

The causes that catalyzed this great rupture revolved around specific issues such as demanding the withdrawal of the party's support for the book "*Hamel al-Da'wa*" (The Carrier of the Calling), and a demand to remove Mohammad Mousa Sabri and Abu Eyass Mahmoud 'Oweida (the author of the afore-mentioned book) from their posts at the office of the party's *emir*, 'Abd al-Qadeem Zalloum. At first, and in order to mitigate tensions, Zalloum agreed to their demands; however, he would pull in the reigns after these disenchanting members proceeded to demand his dismissal as the party's *emir*, and that he be replaced by Mohammad 'Abd al-Karim Abu Rami.⁸²¹

This disaffected group would be termed the "*nakitheen*" (Lit., "the betrayers" or the "oath breakers") by the party, which had this to say of them, "This sedition and betrayal would take place towards the end of the era that the great scholar, 'Abd al-Qadeem Zalloum, was *emir*; and, when the devil overtook the minds of certain individuals, who proceeded to abuse the sheikh's rule. These inciters conspired in the darkness and attempt to push the party to deviate from its straight and righteous path. And, this band of betrayers tried to inflict a gaping wound into the very flesh and blood of the party. However, due to the grace of God Almighty, and due to the wisdom and firm hand of the sheikh, these attempts by the betrayers inflicted no more than a superficial wrinkle, which would find no tether. And, no sooner than this wound was inflicted, the party would recover, stronger than ever; and, with this, the band was extinguished and dissipated into the folds of oblivion."⁸²²

Sheikh 'Abd al-Qadeem Zalloum resigned from his post as party *emir* on March 17, 2003, due to illness and passed away very soon after on April 29, 2003. 'Ata Abu al-Rishte, an engineer by profession, was subsequently appointed to take over the role of party *emir* on April 13, 2003.⁸²³

During this period, another secessionist movement emerged that called itself, "*Al-Haraka al-Tas'heehiya li Hizb ut-Tahrir*" or the "Hizb ut-Tahrir Reform Movement," led by Bakr al-Khawaldeh and a number of other party members. This group issued a statement in November of 2003 (or 12 Ramadan, 1424 AH) in which it declared to the *ummah* and to the members of Hizb ut-Tahrir that it withdrew its endorsement of several key tenants held by the party. The slate of problematic issues relayed in this declaration affected 31 different positions held by the party, to which this group adamantly disagreed. Amongst the more important points was this group's opposition to the manner in which the party had blighted the name of and repudiated the status of Mu'awiya as a *sahaba* or Companion of the Prophet. This group also held that "*al-Quraishiyah*" (to be descendent of the Quraish clan) ought to be a precondition rather than a preference for carrying the post of the caliph of the *ummah*. It also renounced the party's supposition that the caliphate succession must be based on a process of nomination; and, that *wilayat al-'ahd* or the succession of an heir or a specific line of heirs to the caliphate was a heretical notion. The group also renounced the party's repudiation of the "torments of the grave", as well as the manner in which the party

⁸²¹ From an interview conducted with one of the leaders of Hizb ut-Tahrir in Jordan, who asked to remain anonymous, on April 17, 2007.

⁸²² See the "*Al-Wa'i*" Magazine, published in Beirut, Lebanon, Issues no. 234 and 235, August and September 2006, p. 18.

⁸²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

questioned the emergence of the “*Mahdi al-Muntathar*” (the Awaited, Rising or Guided One), the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the rise of the Antichrist. Finally, the group took a stand against the party’s prohibition on joining unions, syndicates, or charitable societies, as well as other specific issues related to the manner in which the party interpreted certain tenants of Islamic jurisprudence.⁸²⁴

⁸²⁴ From a statement issued by Hizb ut-Tahrir’s Reform Movement (in Arabic) on 12 Ramadan, 1424 (or November 2003).

Conclusion: Challenges and Future Prospects

The direction taken by Hizb ut-Tahrir and the course that the party followed in its evolution have amounted to no less than an arduous journey, marked by tortuous meandering, ruptures, and rifts. Its path has disappointed many of the high hopes held by the members of the party, and has been the cause for so many of its leading members to leave the party over the course of its history. For all intents and purposes, arguments that claim Hizb ut-Tahrir died with the passing of its founder, Taqiuddin al-Nabhani, are perhaps quite true to a large extent. Indeed, Sheikh al-Nabhani's character left an indelible mark on the party and his personality shaped the party's very core. The party was never able to produce another thinker of Nabhani's stature and maturity. It was Nabhani's level of education, vast intellect and knowledge of Islam, politics and nationalism, which enabled him to found and establish a party where he was able to bond and synergize his knowledge, experience, and work. From fascism, he would "borrow" and make use of certain concepts related to the "system," the "party" the "cell," and the points of "commencement," "departure," and "positioning." He also borrowed from other revolutionary or insurrectionist paradigms, which emerged in the 1950s, to expound upon his notion of building alliances with the armed forces and recruiting members from other radical nationalist movements to infiltrate the "system" and the echelons of authority.

However, from its inception, Hizb ut-Tahrir remained elitist. The party achieved little success in reaching out and communicating with the fuming masses, a matter which left a vacuum that would eventually be filled by populist Islamist movements, such as the Muslim Brotherhood and other Salafist groups, which were able to penetrate the very social fabric of the common and poorer classes. The latter weakened the presence and role of the party until there was little left of Hizb ut-Tahrir but for its small mark in the annals of history. Its engagement became limited to a symbolic presence that was characterized by their periodical publications. Furthermore, the party's political vision never evolved, became fossilized and remained hostage to a static perspective, which did not take into account the sum of radical changes that were taking place within the international arena, particularly with the rise of globalization. Moreover, Hizb ut-Tahrir's position on the Palestinian cause also symbolized an important point of disadvantage for the party that would turn in favor other Islamist movements, parties and groups, which adopted paradigms that were grounded in popular armed resistance and jihad. Finally, the party remained captive to its overriding notion of restoring the blessed Caliphate, and was left waiting for the victors and the champions who would bring about the awaited Caliph.

Attempts to reform the party and to change the authoritarian nature of its composition and its leadership failed. The party's structure remained closer to the constitution of a Marxist-Leninist party and, indeed, suffered the same fate. Its rigidity and isolationist tendencies, coupled with the absence of renewal, innovative thinking and creativity led to the calcification, retroversion, and regression of Hizb ut-Tahrir until the party became no more than a relic in the museum of history, paving the way for other rising Islamist movements and groups, which were capable of achieving remarkable progress on numerous levels, and which were able to better absorb the reality of

modernity and democratic systems, while being able to retain and preserve an identity that is more closely attuned to the heritage and tradition of its identity.

Conclusion

The “Islamic Solution” in Jordan: Islamists, the State, and the Ventures of Democracy and Security

The unique nature of the “Jordanian model” of relations between the state and Islamists should be viewed from two particular angles and can be seen as fundamentally being the outcome of two major factors:

The first factor, which led to the emergence of a unique Jordanian approach to the Islamists, is related to the state’s religious policy. Jordan has followed a policy of holding the familiar “stick” from the middle. Indeed, Jordan has managed to moderate its position on religious policy in a manner that has allowed it to avoid the trap of committing to either anti-religious secularism or a radical/revolutionary form of Islam. Perhaps, the closest term that may aptly apply to Jordan’s religious policy would be what may be dubbed as “conservative secularism.” For all intents and purposes, the state has never embroiled itself in an ideological clash with Islamists. Nor it has adopted one sectarian line or Islamic jurisprudential approach over others. The overall outcome of this policy management has been that the state has come to be perceived as a “neutral arbiter” among the various Islamist forces that have a significant presence in the country.

The second fundamental point factoring into this unique relationship is associated with the conviction held by the vast majority of Islamist movements and groups that Jordan does not qualify for being the “Islamic state”, in the ideological sense, considering its limited resources and its geopolitical and geostrategic location. This conviction has made opting for coexistence with the state and accepting certain compromises and middle grounds more plausible for the greater majority of these movements and groups, even the more radical amongst them, such as the Jihadi-Salafist trend. Ultimately, even the Jihadi-Salafists in Jordan have declared their willingness to initiate an end to armed action, with some of its members going to the extent of calling for the formation of charitable societies or political parties – meaning civil institutions and political formations – that, up until now, were rejected as (Islamically) prohibited and illegitimate by this particular Salafist ideology.

The above is notwithstanding the fact that there are vast differences and tremendous variations amongst all these Islamist groups and movements. Differences cover a range of issues such as the manner in which they view democracy, pluralism, the civil state, women’s issues and rights, individual and public freedoms. They also include the position on human rights and other controversial issues related to political Islam, its objectives, and the strategies of dealing with it in the region.

Within the spectrum of the power map that represents all these Islamist groups, parties and movements, the Organization of the Muslim Brotherhood, today, appears to be the most likely candidate for becoming a principal political player in the political arena to come. For all practical purposes, the Muslim Brotherhood represents the major opposition party in Jordan. However, the question of how far this movement can move forward and evolve with the premises and positions it offers is still a matter of debate between those who believe that the Muslim Brotherhood has the capacity to become closer to the model of the Justice and Development Party in Turkey and those who believe that Arab political Islam is incapable of achieving this kind of an “ideological quantum leap.”

It is important to note that “cloning” certain socio-political models within other societies, such as the Justice and Development Party in Turkey, would also likely be impossible, as every society has its own unique cultural, social, economic, and political conditions and characteristics. It would also be accurate to argue that, in general, there are fundamental differences between the Turkish and the Arab experiences, which would make the feasibility of duplicating such models unpromising. However, this reality does not mean that societies cannot benefit from the Turkish model and experience in political Islam on many levels, particularly when it comes to its “pragmatic politics,” which was able to produce a different and realistic political discourse that has the potential of being reproduced by the Arabs.

Alternatively, and despite the reassessments being carried out by Jihadi-Salafism, the idea that this particular form of Salafism can transition into the socio-political quadrant that the Muslim Brotherhood exists within, is perhaps too farfetched. We would not expect, for example, to see Abu Mohammad al-Maqisi – the leading sheikh and spiritual leader of the movement in Jordan – professing a newly declared faith in the democratic game, pluralism, and the peaceful alternation of power anytime soon. Nor would we expect him to proffer any changes in his intellectual postures or a new discourse with regard to women’s rights, or to the arts, culture, or music, for that matter. On the other hand, at the very minimum, one could expect and demand from al-Maqisi and his movement to abide by the rule of law, to respect the state, and to commit to non-violent forms of activity, after which he and his followers would be free to adopt and believe in anything they want when it comes to their political views and ideas – even if these notions contradict and go against the prevailing regime – as long as their work and activities remain non-violent and as long as they adhere to the parameters set by the rule of law.

Ultimately, the ideal model that should be wagered upon would be one that is based on the principle of “co-existence” between the state and the Islamists in all their variations and ideological and political spectrums. Indeed, this kind of paradigm could pave the way towards instilling a new culture, which more readily believes in pluralism, the right to differ, and in tolerating and accepting all the contrasting and divergent social and political components that exist in a healthy society.

“Taming” the Jordanian Islamist “bogyman” will be a far more effective and successful process if the Jordanian state focuses on democracy and political alternatives rather than on the kind of security measures and confrontation that other Arab states have employed to the maximum degree. Indeed, harsh security strategies and extreme measures have proven to only reinforce more radical and Islamist tendencies, and have more deeply rooted these tendencies within society. These security-based strategies have also pushed Arab societies into a more introverted and conservative nature thus becoming more insulated from and more confused with regards to modernity and the values inherent in it.

Obviously, certain secularists and leftists fear the possibility of any “deal” between the state and Islamists, which would come at the expense of modernity, enlightenment, and secularization. Yet, these concerns would be unfounded if the terms of such a “deal” were based on a commitment to the democratic process, the ballot box, and other democratic principles, including pluralism, rule of law, and recognition of citizenship as the fundamental principle that governs the relationship between the rulers and the ruled.

In the face of a new era emerging in the region, the Arab states need to provide “political Islam” with a better and fairer chance to participate and to exist under normal circumstances. Perhaps, these conditions would permit and encourage more openness and a chance for these movements’ discourse, political stances, ideological posturing, and social perspectives to develop and evolve. This synergy may well lead to a healthier, new “balance” and formulation in relations, at a higher and more profound level, than would any “magical recipe” to the challenges that are inherent to the dynamics between religion, society, and state in the Arab and Muslim world. Creating these new conditions and latitudes becomes even more important when one considers the fact that these relations have become deadlocked in an impasse and caught in a static predicament in front of a distressed secular discourse, panicked by the very notion of a religious state, and an opposing, systemized Islamist discourse, haunted by its paranoid suspicions of any modernistic, new or innovative ideas.

There is an opportunity, using the democratic process, to attain a new “balance” of the kind that Dr. Fahmi Jada’an proffers in his book, *“Fi al-Khalas al-Niha’i”* (The Final Salvation), which is based on “a liberal, secular Islam.”⁸²⁵ The same opportunities and solutions are discussed by Vali Nasr in his book, *“Forces of Fortune: The Rise of the New Muslim Middle Class and What it Will Mean for Our World”* in which the religious, capitalist middle class that believes in liberalism, democracy, and openness becomes an agent of change and of progress in both society and in the state.⁸²⁶

What we know for certain and are confident of is that the security and exclusionary strategy has exhausted its course. It has produced negative results in the vast majority of Arab countries, in a manner that suggests that wagering on democracy and the option of coexistence between Islamists and the state, and that working towards reconciliation and an “arrangement” that is different from the already-tried measures, is a strategy well worth serious consideration in the upcoming phase. Arriving at new strategies becomes particularly important when one considers the events that have unfolded in other Arab states, which have proven, beyond doubt, that the Islamists are the most complex and challenging factor in the political and social equations permeating the Arab street today.

⁸²⁵ See Dr. Fahmi Jada’an, *“Fi al-Khalas al-Nihai’i: Maqal fi Wou’oud al-Islamiyeen wa al-’Ilmaniyeen wa al-Libraliyeen”* (Lit., “The Final Salvation: An Essay on the Promises of Islamists, Secularists, and Liberals”), published by Dar al-Shurouq, Amman, Jordan, 1st Edition, 2007.

⁸²⁶ See Vali Nasr, *“Quwa al-Tharwa al-Sa’ida: Nahdat al-Tabaka al-Wusta al-Jadida fi al-’Alam al-Islami wa In’ikasatiha ‘ala ‘Aalamina”* published by Dar al-Kitab al-’Arabi, Beirut; translated by Hani Tabari, 1st Edition, 2011. The book was originally published in English under the title *“Forces of Fortune: The Rise of the New Muslim Middle Class and What it Will Mean for Our World,”* Published by Free Press, New York, USA, 1st edition, 2009.

Appendix:

Armed Operations Carried Out by Jihadi-Salafists: Case Analyses of Justifications and Objectives

An in-depth scrutiny of a series of cases of individual and groups, who have been brought before and tried at the Jordanian State Security Court on charges of terrorism and armed activity, uncovers certain key indicators, which may be utilized to reach certain deductive conclusions and indications. However this kind of analysis is more qualitative than it is exact or quantitative, as it depends on journalistic sources, which, by necessity may not always be precise, particularly where official statistics and information remain confidential and, in the most part, are withheld from any public access. Also important to note is that this sampling of cases pertains to certain prominent trials, which gained special attention from the media, whereas numerous other cases and arrests that may have been pertinent could not be included in this sample.

The more prominent cases used in this sample include the arrests and trials of Jihadi Salafists associated with the following charges or cases: Organizing the smuggling of arms to the West Bank; the trial of Iraqi members of the movement (2003); the case of the State vs. Tanthim Ansar al-Islam (2003); the State vs. al-Fiqhi and al-Zarqawi (2004); the State vs. Tanthim Shehadeh al-Tahawi (2004); the State vs. al-Zarqawi and al-Dabbas (2004); the State vs. Tantheem al-Jayyousi (2004); the Aqaba Missiles Case (2005); the State vs. Ziyad al-Karbouli (2006); the State vs. al-Mahdawi and al-Rifa'i (2006); the case of the Aqaba and the Dead Sea Hotels (2005); the State vs. al-Rifa'I (2006); the case of the Attack on the General Intelligence Department Building in al-Baq'aa (2007); The case against Tantheem al-Tahawi (second case) (2008); the last case brought against Abu Mohammad al-Maqisi on charges of providing support to the Taliban movement (2009); and the retrial of Mu'ammam al-Jaghbeer related to the assassination of the American diplomat Laurence Foley in Amman on October 28, 2002.

It is important to note that many of the names and titles of operations and the cases related thereof are often known or published under different names, and that the information available in the press and the media coverage on many of these cases is not clear or precise in detail. Nevertheless, working with what we had at hand and in relation to what we had access to, the qualitative or secondhand observations that were made from the "major sample" we worked with were categorized in the following tables, according to the following variables: (in terms of defendants) social background, education, status and age group, (in terms of operations) targets and type of operation.

Defendants: Social and Educational Background and Place of Residence

Out of 136 defendants in total (defendants in the cases tried by the State Security Court used in the study sample):

Social status	Married	Percentage	Single	Percentage
	56	64.4%	31	35.6%

Education	The majority do not have an undergraduate university degree
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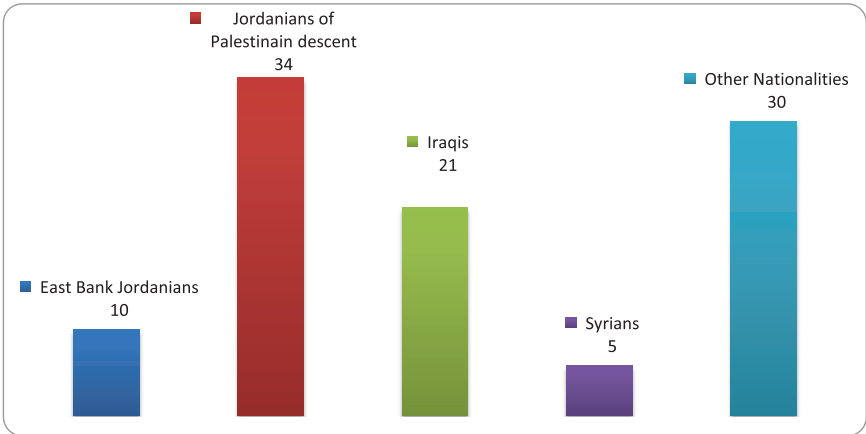
Age ranges of defendants	40 + years of age	%	Between 30-40 years of age	%	Between 20-30 years of age	%	Less than 20 years of age	%
	4	9.5	13	31.0	18	42.9	7	16.7

Governorate	Amman	%	Al-Salt	%	Zarqa	%	Irbid	%
(Defendants' residence)	10	25.0	5	9.1	2	4.5	14	31.8

Refugee camps	13 (or 29.5%) of the defendants in the cases studied were from (Palestinian) refugee camps, the majority of which came from al-Baq'aa Camp (outskirts of Amman), the Jabal al-Hussein Camp (in Amman), and the Souf Camp (outside Jarash)
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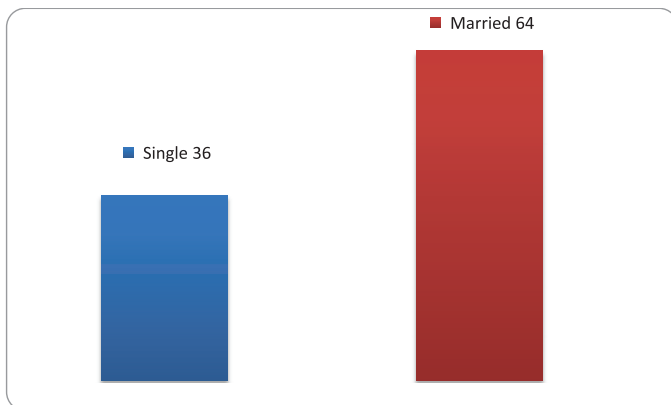
Defendants According to Nationality

Jordanians of Palestinian origins: 34
Jordanians (Trans-Jordanians): 10
Syrians: 5
Iraqis: 21
Other nationalities: 30



Defendants According to Social Status

Married: 64
Single: 36



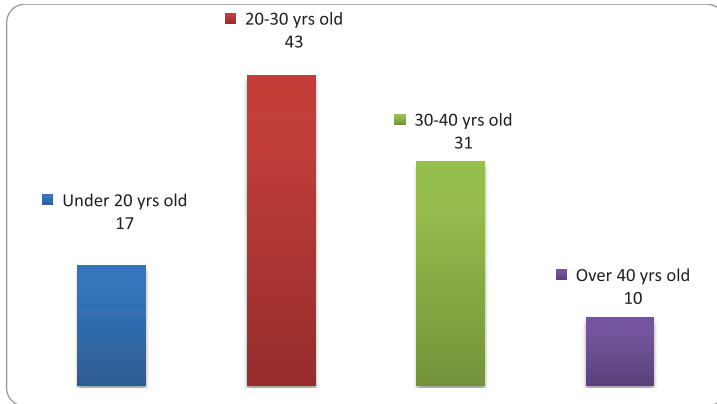
Defendants According to Age Group

Under 20 years of age: 17

20-30 years of age: 43

30-40 years of age: 31

40+ years of age: 10



Operations

Tables covering indicators taken from 32 operations carried out by defendants, the type of operation defendants were charged with and the targets of these operations:

		Total Number of operations	Number of operations of foreign targets	%	Number of operations of local (Jordanian) targets	%
Type of operation	Targeting people	12	5	41.7%	7	58.3%
Type of operation	Targeting Infrastructure	22	11	50%	11	50%

Operations According to the Nature of the Target

Foreign Targets:

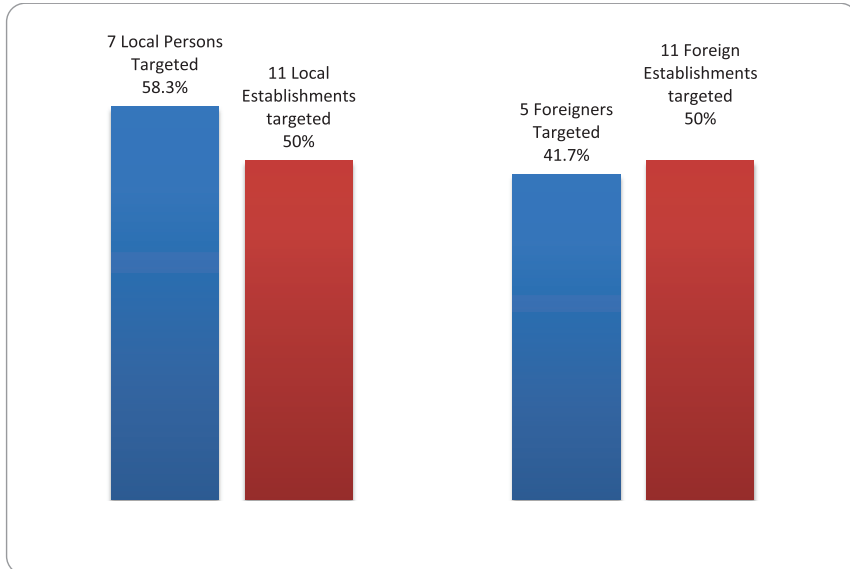
Establishments targeted: 11 (50%)

Persons targeted: 5 (41.7%)

Local (Jordanian) Targets

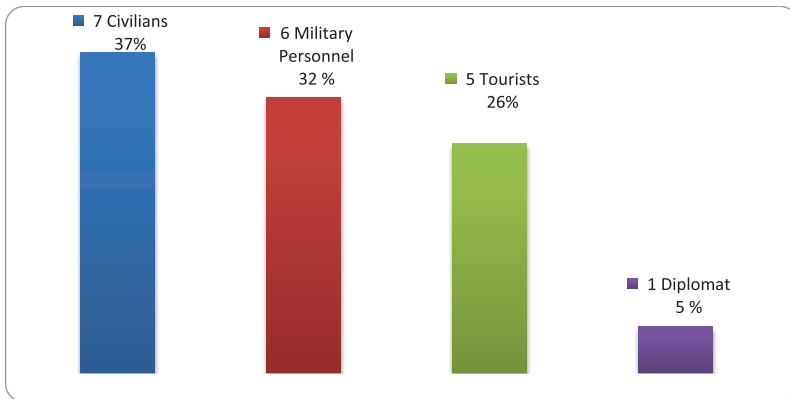
Establishments targeted: 11 (50%)

Persons targeted: 7 (58.3%)



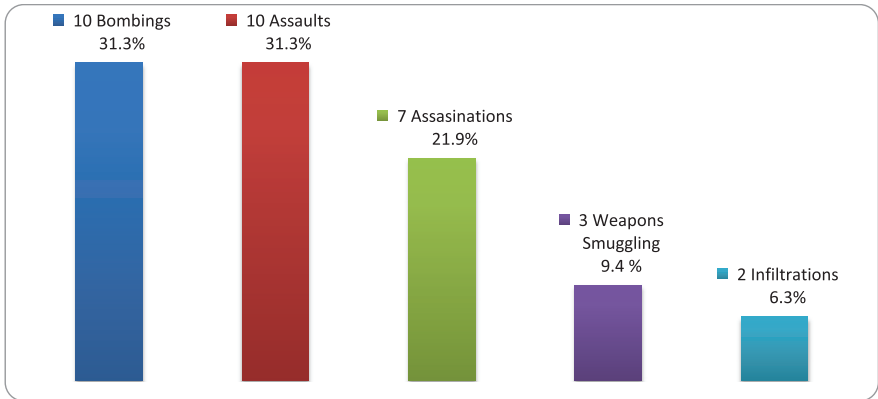
Individuals Targeted According to Profession or Description

Profession/Description	Number	Percentage
Civilians	7	37%
Military personnel	6	32%
Tourists	5	26%
Diplomats	1	5%
Total	19	100%



Operations According to Type

Type of Operation	Number	Percentage
Explosion/Bombing	10	31.3%
Assault	10	31.3%
Assassination	7	21.9%
Weapons Smuggling	3	9.4%
Infiltration	2	6.3%
Total	32	100%



Resources and References

Books⁸²⁷

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This book examines the “Jordanian model” regarding the relationship between the state and the Islamists from various angles. The reader is provided with an in-depth analysis of Jordanian “Political Islam” within the context of the “Arab Spring”.

From a first angle, Jordan’s official policy towards Islamist movements is examined; from a second angle, the book looks at the nature and character of the various movements, their ideological, intellectual and organizational differences, as well as the strength of their social and political presence within Jordanian society; from a third angle, the relationships both among these movements and with the state and society are explored. Finally, the general direction and future prospects of Islamist movements within the Jordanian socio-political landscape will be laid out.

The book furthermore assesses the convictions and the discourse of the Islamist movements regarding democracy, pluralism, human rights and civil liberties, as well as other controversial issues that shape intellectual debates in the Arab world today. It closely examines the internal dynamics of the ideological and organizational transformations, which the Islamist movements are currently undergoing.