How and Why Has the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan Changed since 2011?

Neven Bondokji and Mohammad Abu Rumman

After 2015, many younger members of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan left the movement and established new political parties due to ideological shifts over the nature of the state and questions of civil liberties. Four factors influenced this transformation: identity crises, organizational rigidity, personal experiences during and after the Arab Spring, and the desire to separate political campaigning from religious outreach.

Despite its turbulent history with the regime,[1] the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan remains the most influential political and social organization in the country. The Brotherhood started in Jordan as a social organization in 1946 with a focus on educational, health, and charity services in addition to religious preaching. After 30 years under emergency rule, Jordan organized parliamentary elections in 1989, and the Brotherhood enjoyed remarkable success, with the candidates it supported winning 25 percent of seats in the legislature. Three years later, when it became possible to estalish political parties, the Brotherhood registered its own: the Islamic Action Front (IAF).

This sustained influence in Jordanian politics comes despite a long history of divisions inside the Brotherhood. Prominent examples include the debate on whether to boycott elections or embrace democracy in the mid-1980s, the relationship with the Palestinian organization Hamas in mid-2000s, and the position on constitutional monarchy in Jordan, especially in 2008 and 2011. As these issues came up, a well-documented conflict between reformers and hard-liners within the Brotherhood and the IAF intensified. Reformers wanted the movement to focus more on Jordanian concerns

---

Neven Bondokji is a researcher specializing in political Islam, radicalization, and conflict transformation. She is the author of *Hamas: Social Identity, Violent Resistance and Power Politics* (Manak Publications, 2013) and numerous policy papers for the WANA Institute and the Brookings Doha Center, which she was affiliated with while researching this article. She is presently a research manager at the Carnegie Middle East Center.

Mohammad Abu Rumman is a researcher at the Center for Strategic Studies, University of Jordan. He is the author of أنا سلفي: بحث في الهوية الواقعية والمتخيلة لدى السلفيين [*I Am a Salafi: A Study of the Actual and Imagined Identities of Salafis*] (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2014) and coauthor of several books, including سوسيولوجيا التطرف والإرهاب في الأردن: دراسة ميدانية وتحليلية [*Sociology of Extremism and Terrorism in Jordan: Empirical and Analytical Study* (University of Jordan, 2018), with Musa Shteiwi, and others. From June 2018 until November 2019, Dr. Abu Rumman served as Minister of Culture and Minister of Youth for the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. The views expressed in this article do not represent the Jordanian government.

Some of the interviews and focus group data previously in a book cowritten by the authors, entitled من الخلافة الإسلامية إلى الدولة المدنية: الإسلاميون الشباب في الأردن وتحولات الربيع العربي [*From Caliphate to Civil State: The Young Face of Political Islam in Jordan after the Arab Spring*] (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2018).

1. Particularly up until the mid-1990s, when the relationship became more confrontational, the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan was variously described as a "loyal" and "quiescent" opposition to the regime, by Quintan Wiktorowicz and Jillian Schwedler, respectively. See Wiktorowicz, *The Management of Islamic Activism: Salafis, the Muslim Brotherhood, and State Power in Jordan* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 9; Schwedler, "Jordan: The Quiescent Opposition," Wilson Center, *The Islamists*, August 27, 2015, www.wilsoncenter.org/article/jordan-the-quiescent-opposition.

than on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and advocated for democracy as the ultimate goal for sharing power in Jordan. Meanwhile, hard-liners stood firm with Hamas in its resistance against Israel and considered democracy as but a means to achieve power.[2]

Reformers also pushed for organizational changes within the Brotherhood, growing more frustrated as these efforts continued to stall. Eventually, prominent reformist leaders took steps that resulted in the formation of three new movements. The Zamzam Initiative, launched in 2013 by Ruhayl Gharayiba and Nabil Kofahi, left the Brotherhood in 2016 to become the Zamzam Party (officially the National Congress Party–Zamzam). In 2015 'Abd al-Majid Dhunaybat, a former comptroller-general of the Brotherhood, applied to register and license the movement. This resulted in there being two entities operating in Jordan, engaged in a legal fight over the movement's financial assets and resources: the original Muslim Brotherhood (*Jama'at al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin*), registered as a charity and social organization in 1946 but operating with the IAF as its political arm, and the recently licensed Muslim Brotherhood Society (*Jam'iyyat Jama'at al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin*), committed to only functioning as a religious movement.[3] In 2016 a group of reformers left the Brotherhood to create the Partnership and Rescue Party (PRP), which was officially registered the following year. Through these three waves, nearly all the reformers in the Brotherhood had left the organization.

While this was happening, the Brotherhood found itself facing a significant challenge from its younger members, who started to critically reexamine the organization's ideological foundations and political choices. This article argues that personal experiences and ideological deliberations among young members of the Muslim Brotherhood and the IAF have led to a transformation within the Jordanian Islamist movement. While some have left the organization altogether, others have remained. This article attempts to answer two questions. First, what are the ideological deliberations taking place among young Islamists in Jordan that illustrate this unfolding process of transformation? Second, why did some Brotherhood members leave to join new offshoot parties? The discussion elaborates on the idea of Jordan as a "civil state," debates over personal freedoms, the question of what identity the Islamist movement should promote, organizational rigidity, lessons from the Arab Spring, and the push for a separation between religious outreach and political organizing.

This article offers insights on individual experiences influencing these changes, building on views directly solicited from young members of the IAF, the Zamzam Party, and the PRP. This focus on individuals is rarely examined in the existing literature on the "moderation" of Islamist political groups. A prevailing view in this literature is what is called the "inclusion-moderation hypothesis," wherein religious political parties or other extremist groups become more moderate as they are allowed to engage in participatory politics, since effective campaigning requires the art of compromise.

---

2. Mohammad Abu Rumman, "أزمة الإخوان المسلمين بالأردن.. نهاية الصراع الدائري وبداية التعويم السياسي" ["The Muslim Brotherhood's crisis in Jordan: The end of the circular conflict and the start of the political game"], Al Jazeera Centre for Studies, June 15, 2016, http://studies.aljazeera.net/ar/reports/2016/06/160615121451366.html. For an inside perspective on this conflict, see Salem Falahat, الحركة الإسلامية في الأردن: الإخوان المسلمون [The Islamic movement in Jordan: The Muslim Brotherhood] ('Amman: Dar 'Ammar, 2017).

3. Mohammad al-Fadilat, "Jordan's Brotherhood: 'We'll Be Here Forever,'" *The New Arab*, February 25, 2015, https://english.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/7fc80038-7cf6-46c5-834f-c04221d69069.

While this theory is usually examined on the level of political parties and group actors, in a notable survey of this literature, Jillian Schwedler showed that the hypothesis could be tested on the individual level as well.[4] Continuing in this vein, this article offers a unique perspective into the political shifts among individuals in (or formerly in) the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan that led to the movement's evolution in the 2010s and its fragmentation into offshoot parties. However, we are *not* arguing that these views prove moderation, however defined, but instead we try to document markers in a process of transformation. Thus far, this transformation has only occurred at the ideological level and not in electoral politics, since the offshoot parties have not had the chance to participate in elections due to their relatively recent formation.

This article disagrees with the argument of Ghaith al-Qudat — a leader of the PRP — that it was ideological changes within the Brotherhood that led to its fracture.[5] Fragmentation within the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan since 2011 has been well documented,[6] and the Brotherhood had sustained itself for decades prior despite having significant internal ideological differences.[7] The fracture in the 2010s was the result of a combination of government pressures,[8] regional changes,[9] and internal challenges.

Several scholars have analyzed the historical context of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan, its relationship with the monarchy, and its shift toward moderation.[10] These studies offer important grounds for understanding the questions addressed here. For

───

4. For her discussion of individual-level studies of moderation, see Jillian Schwedler, "Can Islamists Become Moderates? Rethinking the Inclusion-Moderation Hypothesis," *World Politics* 63, no. 2 (Apr. 2011): 361–64, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0043887111000050.

5. Ghaith al-Qudat, "الشراكة والإنقاذ: المبررات، الأهداف والآفاق" ["The Partnership and Rescue Party: Rationale, Goals, and Prospects"] in آفاق الإسلام السياسي في إقليم مضطرب: الإسلاميون وتحديات "ما بعد الربيع العربي" [*The Prospects of Political Islam in a Troubled Region: Islamists and Post–Arab Spring Challenges*], ed. Mohammed Abu Rumman ('Amman: Friedrch Ebert Stiftung, 2017), 155–60.

6. Curtis R. Ryan and Jillian Schwedler, "Return to Democratization or New Hybrid Regime? The 2003 Elections in Jordan," *Middle East Policy* 11, No. 2 (June 2004): 138–51. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1061-1924.2004.00158.x; Nur Köprülü, "Is Jordan's Muslim Brotherhood Still the Loyal Opposition?" *Middle East Quarterly* 24, No. 2 (Spring 2017); David Siddhartha Patel, "The Communal Fracturing of the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood," Brandeis University Crown Center for Middle East Studies, Middle East Brief no. 113 (Jan. 2018).

7. Marion Boulby, *The Muslim Brotherhood and the Kings of Jordan, 1945–1993* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999); Janine Astrid Clark and Jillian Schwedler, "Who Opened the Window? Women's Activism in Islamist Parties," *Comparative Politics* 35, no. 3 (Apr. 2003): 293–312. https://doi.org/10.2307/4150178; Neven Bondokji, "آفاق الحركات والأحزاب الإسلامية في الأردن" ["The Prospects of Islamic Movements and Parties in Jordan"] in آفاق الإسلام السياسي [*Prospects of Political Islam*], ed. Abu Rumman, 161–71.

8. Mohammad Abu Rumman, "خيارات المشاركة السياسية في ديمقراطية مفيدة: حالة الإخوان المسلمين في الأردن" ["The choices of political participation in a restricted democracy: The state of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan"], *Majallat Ittihad al-Jami'at al-'Arabiyya li-l-Adab* 12, no. 2 (Spring 2015): 447–84.

9. These include, most notably, the toppling of President Mohamed Morsi in Egypt in 2013 and the classification of the Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist organization by the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia the following year.

10. Glenn E. Robinson, "Defensive Democratization in Jordan," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 30, no. 3 (Aug. 1998): 387–410. https://doi.org/10.1017/S002074380006623X; Shadi Hamid, *Temptations of Power: Islamists and Illiberal Power in a New Middle East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Mohammad Abu Rumman and Hassan Abu Hanieh, "الحل الإسلامي" في الأردن: الإسلاميون والدولة ورهانات الديمقراطية والأمن [*The "Islamic Solution" in Jordan: Islamists, the State and the Ventures of Democracy and Security*] ('Amman: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2012), 21–59.

space limitations, the discussion briefly refers to these studies. Readers unfamiliar with the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan may find it helpful to consult this literature.

After explaining methodology and limitations, we then delve into two issues young Islamists in Jordan are engaging with — the character of the state and personal freedoms — to illustrate their ideological deliberations. After that we analyze four of the push factors that encouraged some of the younger members of the Brotherhood to leave the movement for offshoot parties, and we look at how current IAF members responded to the same phenomena.

METHODOLOGY AND LIMITATIONS

This article focuses on the experiences of younger members and former members of the Muslim Brotherhood, mostly between 18 and 35 years of age, who experienced the Arab Spring moment in Jordan, have been shaped by its successes and failures, and underwent a process of critical reexamination of their identity and their party affiliation. In December 2017 and January 2018, we organized four focus group discussions with 30 active members of the three parties at each of their headquarters in 'Amman, and we conducted interviews with five leaders of these parties. The field research was conducted in Arabic and then coded and analyzed following a grounded theory approach. This allows for an in-depth understanding of the drivers of our subjects' transformations without necessarily building a larger framework, as is usually expected in grounded theory.[11]

Membership in the Zamzam Party, the Partnership and Rescue Party, and the Islamic Action Front is open to Jordanian citizens regardless of their ideological background. But given the research question, the activists we met were limited to current or former Muslim Brotherhood members in these parties. The IAF members we met are still, of course, belong to the Brotherhood today. The Zamzam members all had once been in the Brotherhood but were expelled from the movement by a decision in 2014, the year after the Zamzam Initiative was first launched. The PRP members that we met varied: some were still active Brotherhood members, while others had left the movement. The Brotherhood had not expelled those who supported the PRP, unlike with Zamzam, in order to avoid another stage of internal confrontation and fragmentation.[12]

Because of this common Islamist background, all the activists we met shared at least some of the Muslim Brotherhood worldview. It was therefore hoped that these groups would provide the best capable to reflect on the individual experiences that have affected the Brotherhood's constituencies among Jordanian youth and young adults. The term *Islamist* is used to refer to movements, ideologies, and parties that envisage a role for Islam for political change and that aim for establishing a form of *an* Islamic state.[13] We use the term strictly to denote former or current membership in the Brotherhood and not to refer to supporters of other groups or ideologies.

---

11. Juliet M. Corbin and Anselm Strauss, "Grounded Theory Research: Procedures, Canons, and Evaluative Criteria," *Qualitative Sociology* 13, no. 1 (Spring 1990): 3–21. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00988593.

12. Interview by the authors with Zaki Bani Irshayd, January 7, 2018, 'Amman.

13. For an overview of the term in the broader sense, see Peter Mandaville, *Global Political Islam* (London: Routledge, 2007).

The interviews we conducted with the Islamist movement leaders were designed to serve two analytical purposes. First, it was important to understand the role of the generational gap in Zamzam and the PRP. Second, the leaders of Zamzam and PRP had been prominent Brotherhood leaders for years, and their frustrations with failed internal reforms were likely the most important drivers on their decision, especially compared to the push factors that drove their younger followers to embrace their new parties. Interviews with IAF leaders were used to cross-examine any common views among leaders of the three parties.

Two limitations mark this research. First, the small sample size cannot represent all current and former young members of the Brotherhood. Instead, the research findings offer a number of interesting entry points to understand the transformations of young Islamists in Jordan. Future research can offer an in-depth analysis of one or two factors across the three parties. Another approach would be to analyze the transformation among members of one party only or comparing these changes to those that affected young Brotherhood members in Egypt or in Morocco for comparative purposes.

Another limitation pertains to the young women who are members in the three parties. This research did not draw on their views, however, because no young women joined the focus group discussions, despite our best efforts. It is important for future research to examine the transformations among women Islamists.

EXAMPLES OF IDEOLOGICAL DELIBERATIONS

Two questions illustrate the ideological deliberations that younger Islamists were engaging with at the time of this research. Generally, the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan has been influenced by the ideology of the global movement, which was originally founded in Egypt.[14] As a result, the Brotherhood in Jordan lacks a well-articulated view on its political role, the state it envisages, and the relationship between Muslim and non-Muslim citizens in its imagined Islamic state.

Nevertheless, one can identify specific changes in the Brotherhood in Jordan's political thinking. In the late 1980s it resolved the perceived ideological contradiction between Islam and democracy and joined party politics. Later, in the mid-1990s, the Brotherhood opposed peace with Israel. By the new millennium, it had moved its focus on the social contract and political reform.

From 2007 onward, but particularly since late 2013, internal debates within the Brotherhood shifted toward the concept of the "civil state" (*dawla madaniyya*) and personal freedoms. Although the debate on these issues is still in its infancy in Jordan, fault lines between the Brotherhood and its party, the Islamic Action Front, and between it and the new splinter parties, Zamam and the Partnership and Rescue Party, center today around these questions.

———

14. Janine Clark, "Social Movement Theory and Patron-Clientelism: Islamic Social Institutions and the Middle Class in Egypt, Jordan, and Yemen," *Comparative Political Studies* 37, no. 8 (2004): 941–68. https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414004267982; Boulby, *The Muslim Brotherhood and the Kings of Jordan.*

The Civil State

The modern concept of a civil state has been debated in the Arab world since the 19th century. In the Jordanian context the term generally refers to the idea that the state should guarantee rights to all citizens equally — regardless of religion, ethnicity, or tribal affiliation — and that religious groups are not allowed to violate individual rights but are afforded protection against discrimination as long as they follow the law. Calls for a civil state in Jordan emerged gradually but steadily over the last few years. The most notable example was a secularist parliamentary list called Ma'an ("together"), which ran in the 2016 parliamentary elections with this goal in mind. Those inter-viewed for this article supported this call but differed on the grounds for their support, clarifying where they have shifted from Muslim Brotherhood ideology.

For example, young members of the Partnership and Rescue Party argued that a civil state prioritizes rule of law, where the law is equally enforced without cronyism or special protections for those in power. They considered this a key factor to advanc-ing good governance and a guard against the rampant corruption in Jordan.[15] Likewise, Zamzam Party members stressed accountability as a key value in a civil state, which could help overcome the power imbalances in Jordan between powerful elites and mar-ginalized citizens.[16]

The argument for a civil state among Islamic Action Front members, however, related more to the party's direct experiences in elections. For them, a civil state is desired in Jordan to entrench democratic norms and the regular transfer of power through the ballot box. This comes in light of state attempts to limit the Brother-hood's ability to win seats in parliament.[17] Election laws, particularly the single nontransferable vote system that was applied from 1993 to 2013, was specifically designed to block the IAF's chances of forming a parliamentary majority.[18] The same applies to the 2013 election law, though it included some changes in response to public pressures during the Arab Spring–protests of 2011 and 2012.[19]

Therefore, young members of all three parties support the call for a civil state. Yet this support appears to contradict their upbringing in the Muslim Brotherhood, where the goal has been Islamizing society and establishing an Islamic state. When asked whether they have given up on this dream, respondents varied in their answers. Mem-bers of all three parties, however, did agree that PRP members had shifted away from Brotherhood ideology. Despite this, young Zamzam supporters generally criticized the Brotherhood more vigorously as an organization, though they — like their peers in the IAF —agreed that the founding principles of an Islamic state should be similar to

---

15. Focus group discussion with PRP members, January 10, 2018. For reference, Transparency International scored 49 out of 100 on its 2018 Corruption Perceptions Index, ranking it 58th out of 180 countries, see www.transparency.org/cpi2018. On its 2019 index, Jordan's score dropped to 48, and its rank to 60th, see www.transparency.org/cpi2019.

16. Focus group discussion with Zamzam members, January 17, 2018.

17. Hamid, *Temptations of Power*, 101–12.

18. Sean L. Yom, "Jordan: Ten More Years of Autocracy," *Journal of Democracy* 20, no. 4 (Oct. 2009): 154, https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.0.0125.

19. Andrew Spath and Michael Makara, "Elections in Jordan: Victory for Reform or More of the Same" Foreign Policy Research Institute *E-Notes* (Feb. 2013), www.fpri.org/docs/MEMM_2013_02_spath_makara.pdf.

those of the civil state. These would include the rule of law, accountability, transparency, and a peaceful and orderly transfer of power. Therefore, young Zamzam and IAF supporters did not see much difference between the two concepts and thus no contradiction with Brotherhood ideology. Young IAF members went so far as to uphold as a model for a civil state the Constitution of Medina, a document traditionally believed to have been promulgated in 622 by the Prophet Muhammad that guaranteed the rights of Jews, Christians, and Muslims in the first state in Islamic history.[20] In this regard, even a Zamzam member, 37-year-old doctor Muhammad Hasan Dhunaybat, opposed the comparison between an Islamic state and a civil state on epistemological grounds, saying it implied that an Islamic state could not also be a civil state.[21]

The above views do not mark an ideological shift, but PRP members still criticized the notion of an Islamic state. They admitted that, throughout their years in the Brotherhood, they had a romanticized and unrealistic image of the sought-after Islamic state. According to 32-year-old party member Hassan Dhunaybat (not to be confused with the aforementioned Muhammad Hasan in Zamzam), "It was the image of a man in turban on a red carpet!"[22] Today the PRP rejects an Islamic state of any sort to avoid the overlap between religion as a belief system and politics with its focus on negotiated interests. The party prefers a civil state in a more secular sense that guarantees constitutional authority, government accountability, and equality before the law.[23] It can therefore be argued that PRP members have moved wholeheartedly to the camp calling for civil state in Jordan. This conforms also with the political discourse of the party in its charter and slogans, which are the product of the ideological diversity of its members.

The Zamzam Party, however, has focused its political literature on Jordanian national identity, pluralism, and democracy, arguing that a civil state is most viable for Jordanians today. As party cofounder Nabil Kofahi clarified to us:

> Zamzam aims for establishing a modern civil state based on values of citizenhood, freedom, justice, equal opportunity, human dignity, and national partnerships. It also works to maintain social stability and developing political life based on programmatic competition between parties so that a wide political and social partnership can be achieved.[24]

By comparison, the IAF decided to postpone its decision on a civil state after it held an internal seminar on the topic in early 2017. Three papers were presented for and against the motion, reflecting a diversity of opinions on the matter among its members.[25]

The ideological grounds that young members of the parties offered for their positions varied considerably. Young IAF and Zamzam members also used phrases like having an "Islamic point of reference" (*marji'iyya Islamiyya*) for the sought-after civil state without clarifying the constitutional implications or how such a position might

---

20. Focus group with IAF members, January 13, 2018.
21. Muhammad Hasan Dhunaybat, Zamzam focus group, Jan. 2018.
22. Hassan Dhunaybat, PRP focus group, Jan. 2018.
23. PRP focus group, Jan. 2018.
24. Interview by Mohammad Abu Rumman, December 26, 2017, 'Amman.
25. Hadeel Ghabboun, "'العمل الإسلامي' يتحفظ على مفهوم 'الدولة المدنية'" ["The Islamic Action (Front) has reservations about the 'civil state' concept"], *Alghad*, January 7, 2017, https://alghad.com/?p=416993.

affect cooperation with secular or leftist parties.[26] Since the purpose of this article it to offer an example of the ideological questions that young Islamists are discussing, this sort of exploration of their implications would be an interesting jumping-off point for another study or further research.

PERSONAL FREEDOMS VERSUS ISLAMIZATION

Critics of Islamist parties are generally concerned that their electoral gains will be used to enforce shari'a law, posing threats to personal freedoms, including minority rights and gender equality. In comparison to the traditional texts of the Muslim Brotherhood, the young Islamists interviewed in our study all espoused relatively progressive positions on the rights of Christians, women's equality, and on personal freedoms generally.

The young members of the Islamic Action Front, the Zamzam Party, and the Partnership and Rescue Party all embraced the ideal of meritocracy, stressing that qualifications rather than ideological alignment should serve as the key criteria for appointing government officials. They all expressed that there is no place for discrimination based on gender or religion in the state they aspire to. Zamzam includes Christian members, and PRP and IAF leaders have been participating in regular Christian-Muslim dialogues.[27] In the 2016 parliamentary elections, for example, the IAF list included four Christian candidates, most notably Audeh Quawas, who had previously been in parliament as an independent from 2003 to 2007. Since Christians only constitute 4 percent of Jordan's citizen population, and Druzes and other religious minorities make up another 1 percent,[28] testing the practical implementation of these principles in Jordan remains limited.

The leaders and young men we spoke with in these Islamist parties all expressed desire for increased women's participation, including in party activities. In our interviews, when we asked about why women were not more active in their parties, our interlocutors pointed to the broader culture in Jordan where women refrain from taking public political positions and prefer to focus on charity and social services. This was reflective of an earlier interview one of us conducted with IAF spokeswoman Dima Tahboub, who went even further, saying that Islamic political parties had done little to advance the position of women, even within their organizations. Men in Islamist

---

26. This term has been used in recent decades by Brotherhood-affiliated parties throughout the Middle East, signifying a shift from the movement's traditional call for an Islamic state. For example, see Hadeel Ghabbon, "العمل الإسلامي': نؤيد الدولة المدنية بمرجعية إسلامية" ["The Islamic Action (Front): We support a civil state with an Islamic point of reference"], *Alghad*, January 13, 2017, https://alghad.com/?p=516391. The party formally adopted this rhetoric into its platform in 2019, see "الوثيقة السياسية للحركة الإسلامية في الأردن" ["Political Charter of the Islamic Movement of Jordan"], 2019, article IV, item no. 6, https://ikhwanjo.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/watheqa.pdf.

27. Interview, Zaki Bani Irshayd, Jan. 2018, 'Amman; interview by the authors with Salem Falahat, January 7, 2018, 'Amman.

28. Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Department of Statistics, الكتاب الإحصائي السنوي 2017 [*Jordan Statistical Yearbook 2017*] (2018), 5. This reference was removed from website version, see also Muhammad al-Najjar, "كنائس الأردن تؤيد قرار حكومتها بطرد أربعين فرقة تبشيرية" ["Jordan's churches support the government's decision to expel 40 missionary groups"], *Al Jazeera*, February 17, 2008, www.aljazeera.net/news/arabic/2008/2/17/كنائس-الأردن-تؤيد-قرار-حكومتها-بطرد-أربعين-فرقة-تبشيرية.

organizations, however, often express in more participation by women as a means to avoid Western scrutiny.[29] Although all three parties have women members, they rarely appear under the spotlight, and, as mentioned, no women agreed to join the focus group discussions for this research.

It is clear that personal views are largely shaped by the broader surrounding culture, yet how this plays out in the political campaigns of the new Islamist parties remains untested. As one preacher and member of the PRP noted, "I am a product of my patriarchal society. My personal convictions might be against having a woman as a prime minister, but I will abide by the party's decision and will respect majority voting in parliament if a woman is elected for this position."[30] This statement reveals where men in the Islamist parties will draw a line between their personal convictions and political behavior. It also alerts against taking positive assertions by PRP and Zamzam members at face value. The broader cultural context determines matters related to civil rights and personal freedoms.

Some took time to weigh between different arguments before declaring their stand, others voiced their opposition immediately, and still others used the statement "freedom takes precedence over shari'a" when justifying their positions, especially on abstract concepts like the civil state or personal freedoms.[31] But these same individuals disagreed among themselves when it came to other practical policy questions, like allowing Jordanians to eat in public during the Ramadan fast. Almost without hesitation, they repeatedly stressed that Jordanian society is conservative and that even Christians respect the Islamic holy month.

The young Islamists were all shocked, however, when we asked what their position on the more controversial issue of what would happen if prostitution were legalized in Jordan. IAF and PRP members dismissed the question, arguing that Jordanian society is generally conservative and that such a law would never be proposed in the first place. The PRP members acknowledged the financial benefit that legalizing prostitution might bring the state but said they would nevertheless oppose it. The Zamzam members stated clearly that they would oppose the law, lobby against it, and fight it based on their convictions. Still, they would abide by majority voting in parliament.

In making these arguments, on both abstract and particular issues, the young Islamists did not define their concepts or clarify where they would draw the line between personal freedoms and between Islam as guiding value system for society or Jordan's conservative culture. All were willing to think about these questions, to discuss and disagree among themselves, and to accept their differences. This was especially significant considering how many came out of the Muslim Brotherhood's learning groups, known for rigidity in thought.

Proponents of the inclusion-moderation hypothesis should be careful not to test these views against a liberal definition of moderation. After all, *moderation* is a relative term whose definition is contested.[32] The views expressed in our discussions clarified the ideologically loaded questions these young Islamists are grappling with, but

---

29. Neven Bondokji, "The Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan: Time to Reform," Brookings Doha Center, Policy Briefing (Apr. 2015): 5–6.

30. Malik 'Umari, PRP focus group, Jan. 2018.

31. 'Ala Furukh, Zamzam focus group, Jan. 2018.

32. Schwedler, "Islamists Become Moderates?"

whether this indicates moderation depends largely on how these views compare with the former and current stands of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan (a potentially fascinating subject for another study).

It is important to note again that the political positions of many of those we interviewed are largely untested. While the IAF has been in existence since the 1990s, only five Zamzam members ran in the most recent elections in 2016, as independents and not on a party list, while the PRP was not even established in 2017.[33] Actual participating in politics during the 2020 elections (if they are not delayed by the coronavirus crisis) and after will shape these positions one way or the other.

WHAT CAUSES THE TRANSFORMATION PROCESS?

The young Islamists we met referred to four common experiences that affected the evolution of their views: tensions between their Jordanian and Islamic identities, frustrations with the Muslim Brotherhood as an organization, direct involvement in the popular protests of 2011 and 2012, and political praxis. We try to offer insights on the political trajectories of this generation of young Islamists based on these shared experiences. While skeptics may dismiss youth transformation as a normal part of political maturation, it is clear that these experiences pushed some to reorient their political identities and join new parties, such as the Zamzam Party and the Partnership and Rescue Party, while others remained active in the Brotherhood and loyal to the Islamic Action Front.

THE QUESTION OF IDENTITY

Scholarship on Islamism, and on Islam generally, has argued that individuals' sense of religious identity can often surpass their national affiliation. This is based on the prevalence of the idea of an all-encompassing community of Muslims, the *umma*, that offers a stronger identity marker compared to other allegiances.[34] But at the same time, there are a variety of different opinions within Muslim Brotherhood–affiliated movements about the relationship between Islam and national identity. For example, among Palestinians, the Islamic Resistance Movement (known as Hamas, from the Arabic *Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiyya*) has combined Brotherhood ideology with Palestinian nationalism, arguing that that nationality is "part and parcel of religion."[35] Simmilarly, Tunisia's Ennahdha Movement (from *al-nahda*, "the revival") had formulated a Tunisian Islamic identity before reorienting itself as a strictly nationalist party in 2016.[36]

––––––

33. Jordan Independent Election Commission, 2016 Parliamentary Election, https://iec.jo/en/content/2016-parliamentary-election

34. Paul Brykczynski, "Radical Islam and the Nation: The Relationship between Religion and Nationalism in the Political Thought of Hassan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb," *History of Intellectual Culture* 5, no. 1 (2005); Elisabeth Özdalga, "Islamism and Nationalism as Sister Ideologies: Reflections on the Politicization of Islam in a *Longue Durée* Perspective," *Middle Eastern Studies* 45, no. 3 (2009): 407–23. https://doi.org/10.1080/00263200902853405.

35. See the English translation of Hamas's 1989 charter, appended in Khalid Hroub, *Hamas: Political Thought and Practice* (Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 2000), 267–91.

36. Hamza Meddeb, "Ennahda's Uneasy Exit from Political Islam," Carnegie Middle East Center, paper (Sept. 2019), https://carnegieendowment.org/files/WP_Meddeb_Ennahda1.pdf.

In Egypt, Hasan al-Banna established the Brotherhood in 1928 in response to the alienation he observed between the Western values pervading society at the time and the religious heritage of the country's majority Muslim population. He focused on crafting an Islamic identity for his organization and aimed to Islamize Egyptian society, promoting a religious identity that transcended nationalism.[37] Decades later, the famous Brotherhood intellectual Sayyid Qutb argued that a pan-Islamic *umma* could be a concrete reality with a territorial basis,[38,] limiting full belonging only to Muslims.[39]

In Jordan, the Islamic Action Front has operated as a political party within a national framework, but the Brotherhood has been more ambiguous, not clarifying where it stands on Banna's original call for an international entity that binds Muslims together. For Ghaith al-Qudat, a cofounder of the Participation and Rescue Party, the Brotherhood had failed to understand that the social contract of the modern state is based on geography instead of religion. Throughout his years in the Brotherhood, the organization never clarified for him what kind of state it wanted in Jordan, how the country related to the Islamic world as a whole, and how it would react to a reestablished caliphate. For Qudat, this was a crucial ideological gap whereby the Brotherhood allowed its members to define their own end goals, preoccupying the organization with internal schisms and its turbulent relationship with the regime. By failing to establish its identitarian orientation, whether it represented its members as Jordanians or as Muslims, the organization was also failing to clarify its aims.[40] At a 2008 meeting in IAF headquarters, a member of the Brotherhood's advisory council (and a future Zamzam Party cofounder), Ruhayl Gharayiba, argued for a constitutional monarchy in Jordan, which was followed up by the distribution of a position paper advocating such within movement circles.[41] This was a rare attempt by a prominent Brotherhood member to address questions of Jordan's social contract. The position did not attract much attention, however, until Gharayiba reiterated it at a movement conference on the eve of the 2011 Arab Spring protests, and word reached the press. The Brotherhood was quick to distance itself from this position to avoid clashes with the palace, while Gharayiba insisted that he had approval from the relevant Brotherhood councils.[42] The episode augmented concerns among some Brotherhood members about where the organization stood in Jordanian politics and what is its long-term agenda was. For younger members, this episode brought to the forefront the contradictions they felt between their Jordanian identity and their membership in the Muslim Brotherhood.

One of the young Zamzam members we spoke with, 33-year-old psychologist Dr. 'Ala Furukh, explained to us that, before the Zamzam Initiative was launched, political actors in Jordan could be classified into four categories: Islamists who undermined the

37. Khalil al-Anani, *Inside the Muslim Brotherhood: Religion, Identity and Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 130–35.

38. Oliver Roy, *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 30.

39. Albert J. Bergesen (ed.), *The Sayyid Qutb Reader: Selected Writings on Politics, Religion, and Society* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 21.

40. Al-Qudat, "The Partnership and Rescue Party."

41. Telephone interview by Mohammad Rumman with Nabil Kofahi, March 28, 2020.

42. Muhammad al-Najjar, "إخوان الأردن يناقشون الملكية الدستورية" ["Jordan's Brotherhood discusses constitutional monarchy"], *Al Jazeera*, December 6, 2010, www.aljazeera.net/news/reportsandinterviews/2010/12/6/إخوان-الأردن-يناقشون-الملكية-الدستورية.

nation-state, nationalists who opposed Islamists, pro-government actors, and a political opposition that only sought to oppose the government without any clear alternative vision. Islamists who were proud of both their Islamic and Jordanian identities had no entity to represent them. Therefore, when the Zamzam Party was established, it sought to attract those who wanted a political movement to represent both identities.[43]

On a personal level, 26-year-old Zamzam member Muhammad Ta'amina clarified how questions of identity influenced his consciousness early on. He related:

> I studied in an Islamic school, and my family identified with the Brotherhood. But I had an identity crisis. I come from a village, and I am a member of a tribe, and like all villagers my sense of patriotism is exaggerated. . . . I felt that the Brotherhood did not represent me as a patriot. After two years as a member of the Muslim Brotherhood [as a child], I left the group and remained without any political affiliation from 1999 until I joined Zamzam in 2015.[44]

The feeling that they had to choose between their Jordanian and Islamic identities was too disturbing for some. While Furukh and Ta'amina grappled between their national and religious identities, a similar dilemma was summarized for fellow Zamzam member Ahmad 'Akayila, aged 29 during our focus group, in one question: "Am I a Tafili first or a Muslim Brother first?" 'Akayila was positioning himself not just as a Jordanian but as a native of the marginalized city of Tafila in the south. Although he did not put it in this way, the question indicates a conflict between his socioeconomic and political concerns as opposed to those of advancing the Islamic *umma*. He continued, "I realized that we were brought up [in the Brotherhood] with an *umma*-based ideology that sought to withdraw us from our community. This identity question was so deep that it made me rethink all of my previous convictions."[45]

This tendency among Brotherhood members in Jordan to continuously examine ideological alternatives is reflective of the structural conflict within the organization over national and religious identities. For 37-year-old Zamzam member Dr. Muhammad Hasan Dhunaybat, this led to fundamental changes in how he has come to perceive the Brotherhood:

> Rigidity in the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan is not ideological; the Brotherhood includes Salafis, Sufis, Ash'aris, and representatives of the different groups in Islam. Instead, it exhibits an organizational rigidity to disguise its position toward the state. It is not against protecting the national identity of Tunisia, or asserting Egyptian national concerns in Egypt. But when it comes to Jordan, it is sensitive to any calls about asserting Jordanian national identity. It covers this up with a strict organizational hierarchy.[46]

It was no coincidence that all the Zamzam members we met were "East Bankers" or Transjordanians, people whose families were living in what is now Jordan before the first wave of migration by Palestinian refugees in the 1947–49 Arab-Israeli war. For

---

43. 'Ala Furukh, Zamzam focus group, Jan. 2018.
44. Muhammad Ta'amina, Zamzam focus group Jan. 2018.
45. Zamzam focus group, Jan. 2018.
46. Zamzam focus group, Jan. 2018

members of this group, a minority in Jordan despite seeing themselves as the authentic Jordanians, finding pride and satisfaction in their communal identity explains their political transformation, reflecting a common finding in social-psychology research on why individuals shift group alliances.[47]

This identity crisis was also marked by the concern over how the idea of the *umma* was used to overshadow the Muslim Brotherhood's Jordanian national interests. This became evident in the mid-1990s, as the influence of Hamas grew within the Brotherhood in Jordan, with hard-liners favoring a focus on Palestinian issues at the expense of domestic concerns. In the aftermath of the Gulf War in 1991, a large number of Palestinian Jordanians who had been living in Kuwait were forced to return to Jordan, including members of Hamas. Concerns emerged later over the influence of Hamas within the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan in what was known as the "shadow organization."[48] This evolved into a conflict with reformers in the Brotherhood, who happened to be mostly Transjordanians and who pushed for pragmatism toward the state. The reformers argued for a separation between the Brotherhood and Hamas in order to prioritize Jordanian concerns, arguing that Hamas could manage and prioritize those of Palestinians. The hard-liners, who were mostly but not strictly of Palestinian origin, favored pro-Hamas, anti-Israel, and anti-American rhetoric, adopting antagonistic positions toward the Jordanian state.

The issue of Hamas's influence in Jordan was never resolved by the Muslim Brotherhood there but only came to a resolution in May 2017 when the Palestinian movement published a new charter that severed its ties from the global Muslim Brotherhood movement altogether.[49] With the Brotherhood in Jordan's internal conflict over national priorities and its continuous failure to make organizational changes, reformers left the organization in three stages: in 2013, with the Zamzam Initiative; in 2015, with the Muslim Brotherhood Society; and finally in 2017, with the Partnership and Rescue Party. With the departure of reform-minded members, mostly of Transjordanian origin, the current makeup of the Muslim Brotherhood is mainly of hard-line Islamist Jordanians of Palestinian origin. The demographic makeup of reformers and hard-liners, albeit not a neat division, reflects the lingering tension in Jordan between those of Transjordanian origins and those of Palestinian origins. The Brotherhood has traditionally included members of both groups, although the IAF's most realiable electoral strongholds have been 'Amman and Zarqa, cities where most inhabitants are Jordanians of Palestinian origin.[50] Analysts often refer to the Palestinian-Transjordanian divide when

---

47. The research on social identity theory and intergroup conflict demonstrates that individuals change group affiliation in search for group membership that offers them pride and a sense of purpose. See John Turner and Rupert Brown, "Social Status, Cognitive Alternatives and Intergroup Relations," in *Differentiation between Social Groups: Studies in the Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, ed. Henri Tajfel (London: Academic Press, 1978), 201–26.

48. Abu Rumman and Abu Hanieh, "الحل الإسلامي" في الأردن [*The "Islamic Solution" in Jordan*], 196–99.

49. Patrick Wintour, "Hamas Presents New Charter Accepting a Palestine Based on 1967 Borders," *The Guardian*, May 1, 2017, www.gu.com/world/2017/may/01/hamas-new-charter-palestine-israel-1967-borders. For a review on the ties between Hamas and the Brotherhood in Jordans and their impact on internal Brotherhood conflicts, see Adnan Abu Amer, "حماس تنفي علاقتها بخلافات الإخوان المسلمين الأردنيين" ["Hamas Accused of Interfering in Jordanian MB"], *al-Monitor*, March 5, 2015, http://almon.co/2dqj.

50. Kirk H. Sowell, "Takeaways From Jordan's Elections," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, *Sada*, September 30,2016, https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/64749.

analyzing the internal conflicts within the Brotherhood in Jordan.[51] But in the recent history of the movement, this tension has materialized in debates about national identity and religious interest.

ORGANIZATIONAL RIGIDITY

According to a former Muslim Brotherhood member who has joined the Zamzam Party, one key driver for their leaving the Brotherhood was the movement's hierarchal decision-making process.[52] A centralized structure binds the organization together, despite its ideological diversity and an extensive network of local chapters. Practically, this hierarchy means that the Brotherhood does not tolerate any of its members acting politically against its bylaws or without prior approval. For this reason, two prominent leaders within the Brotherhood, Ruhayl Gharayiba and Nabil Kofahi, were expelled when they launched the Zamzam Initiative in 2013.[53] Similarly 'Abd al-Majid Dhunaybat, a comptroller-general of the Brotherhood from 1994 to 2006, was expelled in 2015 when he registered the Muslim Brotherhood Society as a separate organization. These were far from the only such expulsions: in 1997, the Brotherhood had expelled a group of members who ran for parliament as independents after the organization had decided to boycott the elections.[54]

This strict organizational hierarchy has also been used to block reform initiatives. Salem Falahat, who served as the Brotherhood's comptroller-general from 2006 to 2008, explained to us that when a Brotherhood member introduces a new ideological perspective or reform initiative, he is immediately questioned on his contributions to the movement. Questions on the number of public events has he organized and how many people participated in each are used to undermine his legitimacy. It is the dominance of these organizational concerns that "have worked systematically to suffocate the reformers within the Brotherhood."[55] Although some reform steps have been taken within the Brotherhood, they have been limited to addressing structural issues. For example, in 2013 the Islamic Action Front changed its charter to limit the Brotherhood's influence within the party, giving its own consultative council — rather than that of Brotherhood — the power to censure its executive council.[56] More recently, the IAF restructured the women and youth committees as party "sectors," effectively giving them more decision-making power within the party hierarchy. [57]

These changes were unsatisfactory for reformers who envisioned a different role for the Brotherhood based on ideological propositions that not only build on the traditional teaching of Hasan al-Banna but also reorient the Brotherhood in Jordan to

---

51. Patel, "The Communal Fracturing;" Hisham Bustani, "Jordan's New Opposition and the Traps of Identity and Ambiguity," *Jadaliyya*, April 20, 2011, www.jadaliyya.com/Details/23912.

52. Muhammad Hasan Dhunaybat, focus group with Zamzam members, Jan. 2018.

53. Taylor Luck, "Muslim Brotherhood Expels Three over 'Zamzam' Initiative," *Jordan Times*, April 21,2014, www.jordantimes.com/news/local/muslim-brotherhood-expels-three-over-zamzam'-initiative.

54. Falahat, الحركة الإسلامية في الأردن [The Islamic movement in Jordan], 45–53.

55. Interview, Jan. 2018, 'Amman.

56. Bondokji, "The Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan," 5.

57. Interview by the authors with IAF spokesperson (now secretary-general) Murad al-'Adayila, January 7, 2018, 'Amman.

act as a national entity fully invested in domestic political concerns. In our interview, Kofahi noted that, despite some flexibility in discussing new ideas and reform initiatives, there was never any serious reexamination of Brotherhood ideology or political ideas.[58] One such example was Gharayiba's aforementioned call for constitutional monarchy: the Brotherhood could have distanced itself from what was a costly political idea at the time while still opening the door for ideological discussions to reinvent itself more than 60 years (at that point) after it was first established in Jordan. Although the IAF leaders we spoke with openly discuss disagreements and the ideological changes within the party and the Brotherhood,[59] the younger members we spoke to seemed oblivious of such debates, arguing against the need to reexamine the Brotherhood's ideological positions.[60] While, in 2010, the Brotherhood held on an internal conference to discuss matters related to national identity, the state, and the movement, the papers from it have since disappeared. The ideas in them were not mentioned by any of the active Brotherhood or IAF members we interviewed, and none claimed to have ever heard of the conference.[61]

Likewise, the younger IAF members argued that their positions had "matured" with experience but had not changed.[62] Generally, IAF and Brotherhood members hesitated to acknowledge changes in their ideology out of fear that they would be perceived as having given up on long-held "Islamic" commitments. IAF member Muhammad Bassam, a 28-year-old engineer, explained during our focus group, "the Brotherhood does not need to change its ideology, because the mistakes of the Brotherhood are limited to its political choices, not to the ideology."[63]

This ideological commitment was precisely what members of the Partnership and Rescue Party and the Zamzam Party argued against: "Pragmatism and flexibility are keys to political sustainability."[64] In this sense, organizational rigidity has probably insulated young members of the Brotherhood from internal disagreements. This rigidity further extends to the movement's strict learning environment, which reinforces a relatively immature political awareness. Compared to their Zamzam and PRP counterparts, young members of the IAF offered weaker arguments in our discussions to justify their positions, appearing less exposed both to Islamic political thought and critiques of political Islam. IAF member 'Amru Mansur, a 27-year-old engineer, pointed out that, when their shaykhs change their convictions, it leads to changes in the ideas of young members.[65] While changes in leaders' convictions will eventually impact the kind of questions young Brotherhood members ask in study groups, this confirms the view that the educational system within the Brotherhood does not encourage independent think-

——

58. Interview, Dec. 2017, 'Amman.

59. For example, in our interviews, Zaki Bani Irshayd openly discussed some of the ideological disagreements, while Murad al-'Adayila acknowledged them without going into details.

60. Muhammad Bassam, Mu'tazz Hurut, and Riyad al-Sunayd, IAF focus group, Jan. 2018.

61. Interview, Salem Falahat, Jan. 2018, 'Amman. For more on the conference, see Mohamad Abu Rumman, "الإخوان المسلمون ما بعد مقاطعة انتخابات 2010: إعادة ترسيم الدور السياسي للحركة" ["The Muslim Brotherhood after boycotting the 2010 elections: Redrawing the political role of the movement"], Center for Strategic Studies paper (2010).

62. Muhammad Bassam and Mu'tazz Hurut, IAF focus group with IAF members.

63. IAF focus group, Jan. 2018.

64. Hamza Yasin, PRP focus group, Jan. 2018.

65. IAF focus group, Jan. 2018.

ing. Salem Falahat, who had been responsible for the Brotherhood educational system for almost 20 years before cofounding the PRP, acknowledged his responsibility in not encouraging independent and critical thinking within the movement in the past.[66] Today, there are no signs that this shortcoming is being addressed.

In this way, the strict hierarchy within the Brotherhood constrains the chances for organizational development in four ways. First, it creates a generational gap between leaders and younger members, with the latter unaware of the ideological shifts and conflicts among the former. Second, it isolates IAF members from crucial and emerging political debates in Jordan that members of other political parties are engaging in, thus leaving them isolated from their society. Third, it encourages a level of political immaturity whereby IAF members refuse to admit that their parent organization is changing, preferring to live in denial. In our discussions IAF members did not seem to appreciate that change and continuity go hand in hand, particularly for an organization like the Brotherhood that existed in Jordan for more than seven decades. Finally, the hierarchy constricts members' engagement with different experiences and limits their ability for critical evaluation of their party as a result.

This organizational rigidity may have sustained the Brotherhood in previous decades despite internal disagreements, but the vibrant youth activism of today's national and regional context has changed so significantly that young Jordanian Islamists can no longer insulate themselves from broader calls for accountability and transparency, starting with political parties. Even with increased repression, the secrecy of the hierarchy is no longer tolerated.[67] In addition, young movement members today are connected through cyberspace and influenced by changes far beyond the immediate context. It is therefore safe to argue that the Brotherhood will need to loosen its organizational grip if it is to survive. This should be evident in the fact that many of its younger members decided to leave the organization for offshoot parties, like the PRP and Zamzam.

New Readings and Novel Experiences

In Jordan, the Muslim Brotherhood was late in joining the popular protests of 2011 and 2012. Like the Brotherhood had done in Egypt in 2011, this was a tactic to gauge public support for the demonstrations and to calculate the risks of antagonizing the regime.[68] When the Brotherhood in Jordan did join protests, it never crossed the redlines of the regime nor break the rules of its unstated bargain with the monarchy.[69] Nevertheless, some Brotherhood members individually joined protests early before the organization's decision. This proved to be an eye-opener to the common ground these Brotherhood members shared with their political rivals, pavingthe way for the young members we spoke with to endorse political pluralism and cross-party cooperation.

───

66. Interview, Jan. 2018, 'Amman.

67. Al-Qudat, "الشراكة والإنقاذ" ["The Partnership and Rescue Party"].

68. For a brief explanation, see Khalid Soliman, "كيف أفسد الإخوان المسلمون ثورات الربيع العربي؟" ["How did the Muslim Brotherhood spoil the revolutions of the Arab Spring?"], *Sasa Post*, October 12, 2016, www.sasapost.com/opinion/how-spoiled-the-muslim-brotherhood-the-arab-spring/.

69. Köprülü, "Is Jordan's Muslim Brotherhood Still the Loyal Opposition?"

In contrast to their closed environment within the Brotherhood, the young Islamists in the movement embraced the protests and joined in the calls for social justice and political reform with leftist and pan-Arabist parties.[70] The former Brotherhood members from our focus groups with the Participation and Rescue Party and the Zamzam Party all acknowledged that it was while demonstrating in city squares that they realized they were closer they were to their left-wing peers than to fellow Islamists who decided not to join the protests.[71] This experience became a turning point for many of the young people who would later join the PRP and Zamzam, as they were mainly concerned with strengthening national institutions, the rule of law, and accountability, while other Brotherhood members who were more preoccupied with advocating for universal Islamic values.

Brotherhood leaders, both those who left the movement and those who remain, also experienced similar transformations at different stages. Zaki Bani Irshayd, who was serving as deputy comptroller-general of the Brotherhood after 2016 and is usually considered a hard-liner, noted that his participation in regular Muslim-Christian dialogue meetings in the months before we interviewed him helped him understand that both religious communities can advocate for a common agenda.[72] Before cofounding the PRP, Salem Falahat had arrived at a similar conclusion through his individual correspondence and meetings with Christian leaders in Jordan since the mid-1990s.

But, in our interview with him, Falahat made clear that it was his participation in the Gaza Freedom Flotilla in 2010 that truly challenged his former convictions.[73] He related how a Swedish man with an appearance that is usually dismissed by Brotherhood supporters (visible tattoos, long hair, etc.) gave a short talk on the *Mavi Marmara* about his sense of humiliation while watching news about the suffering of children in the Gaza Strip as he sat comfortably with his family at home in Sweden, doing nothing to help the Palestinians in the blockaded enclave. Later, when Israeli commandos raided the ship and handcuffed non-Westerners on board, a woman member of the British parliament helped bring water to their detained shipmates. Seeing this kindness and humane behavior from members of the social and religious "Other" made Falahat realize that working to instill good values "is not limited to one party."[74] This fundamentally undermined his previous conviction in the superiority of Muslims over others and of the Brotherhood over other political actors.

The young Islamists we spoke with did not elaborate as much on specific direct experiences leading to their evolution, but all were eager to share how political questions during the Arab Spring pushed them to expand their readings beyond the traditional literature of the Brotherhood to include critics of the group. For example,

───

70. Hamza Yasin, PRP focus group, Jan. 2018.

71. Hassan Dhunaybat, PRP focus group, Jan. 2018; Ahmad 'Akayila, Zamzam focus group, Jan. 2018.

72. For many years, reformers within the Brotherhood considered Bani Irshayd the most influential voice in blocking reform attempts in the organization. However, his rhetoric has turned more moderate. He resigned from his position in August 2018 but remains a Brotherhood member.

73. For more on the 2010 Gaza Freedom Flotilla, in which Israel raided a private ship delivering supplies in contravention of the blockade on the Gaza Strip, killing nine activists, see "Gaza Flotilla: Turkey Threat to Israel Ties over Raid," *BBC*, June 4, 2010, https://bbc.in/3ahPixP.

74. Interview, Jan. 2018, 'Amman.

Hasan al-Turabi's writings on the nation-state in Islam were a key factor in shaping Zamzam member Dr. Ala Furukh's current critique of the Brotherhood about the tension between his Islamic and Jordanian identities.[75] Similarly, Zamzam member Ahmad 'Akayila diversified his readings across the whole spectrum of Islamic political thought in his search for identity. This included the writings of Jordanian al-Qa'ida ideologue Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, the Moroccan Sufi philosopher of ethics Taha Abderrahmane, and the young Syrian analyst of armed revolutions Ahmad Abazeid. A significant impact on 'Akayila came from a 1985 book by Egyptian Islamic scholar Muhamed Emara, *Al-Islam wa-huquq al-insan: Dururat . . . la huquq* (published in English as *Islam and Human Rights: Requisite Necessities Rather than Mere Rights*), which made him realize that "a rights-based approach is not limited to secularism, and Islam can also be a ground force for advancing human rights."[76]

This openness to new ideas extended even to engaging with critiques of Islamism and of Islam itself. Both 'Akayila and his fellow Zamzam member Muhammad Ta'amina said their transformations were also tremendously influenced by the writings of the late Jordanian writer Nahed Hattar. Raised a Christian and famously open about his atheism, Hattar was a staunch opponent of Islamism and was killed by a fundamentalist in September 2016 after sharing a social media post of a cartoon mocking God. 'Akayila clarified, "I disagreed with Hattar daily because he represented the radical extreme of Jordanian national identity, but he influenced me a lot and I was really shaken by his death."[77] For a former Muslim Brotherhood member to find answers to his ideological questions in the writings of an atheist shows two transformations: first, in the recognition of different, un-Islamic views and second, in reformulating convictions away from the mindset and assumptions of superiority that often mark the views of Brotherhood members. This exploration of ideas has encouraged more critical voices from young Brotherhood members to explore what common ground they may have with their political "Other" and to challenge the Brotherhood's political rhetoric. This is similar to the experiences of younger members of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt on blogs in the 2000s,[78] although the young Jordanian Islamists did not express their views as publicly. In Jordan, like in Egypt, young Brotherhood members who grew disillusioned with the movement left the organization.[79]

In the wider Middle East, the failure and success of Muslim Brotherhood–affiliated movements in the aftermath of Arab Spring has encouraged a new reading of history. Observers have noted that the rise and fall of the Brotherhood in Egypt has had

75. Zamzam focus group, Jan. 2018. For a discussion of Turabi's ideas, see Hellen Gheorghe, "Islamic Revivalism: The Case of Hassan Turabi and the Islamic State," *Asfar e-Journal* (Apr. 2015), www.asfar.org.uk/islamic-revivalism-the-case-of-hassan-turabi-and-the-islamic-state/.

76. Zamzam focus group, Jan. 2018.

77. Zamzam focus group, Jan. 2018. Hattar's views on national identity can be classified as chauvinist, since he argued against granting Jordanians of Palestinian origins their full rights. For a brief account on Hattar's views, see "Who Was Nahed Hattar?" *The New Arab*, September 25, 2016, www.alaraby.co.uk/english/society/2016/9/25/who-was-nahed-hattar.

78. Marc Lynch, "Young Brothers in Cyberspace," *Middle East Report* no. 245 (Winter 2007): 26–33.

79. Ahmad Noureldeen, "الإخوان العدميون: من ورق البنا الورق ال «البفرة»" ["The nihilist Brotherhood: From the papers of (Hasan) al-Banna to Bafra (tobacco) papers"], *Sasa Post*, April 20, 2017, www.sasapost.com/the-nihilist-brotherhood-from-banna-paper-to-bafra/.

a major impact on Islamists throughout the region,[80] and Jordan is no exception. While this remains the single most influential episode on former and current Brotherhood members in Jordan, by own their account, it is by no means the only one.

The success of Brotherhood-backed candidate Mohamed Morsi in the Egyptian presidential elections in May/June 2012, the popular protests against his presidency in the following months, his ouster by the military exactly on the anniversary of his inauguration, and the imprisonment and execution of hundreds of Brotherhood members and supporters without fair trial represented a harsh awakening for Islamists throughout the Middle East.[81] The IAF members we interviewed recounted going through a phase of resignation and despair after 2013,[82] but this was part of the general feeling in the region and was not limited to them.[83] More crucially, IAF member 'Amru Mansur argued that this episode proved how "political empowerment is more important than ascending to power." The Brotherhood may have attained power in Egypt, but there was little consideration for the partnerships needed to sustain it once Morsi won the presidency.[84]

The failure in Egypt led some PRP members to go back and study the role of 'Abbassi Madani, the founder of the Algeria's Islamic Salvation Front (FIS, from the French *Front islamique du salut*). Jordanian Islamists rarely refer in public discussions to the Algerian case since the FIS launched a prolonged, costly, and ultimately failed guerilla insurgency after being overthrown in a military coup in 1992. It was therefore intriguing for us when PRP member 'Ala al-Quda, a 24-year-old doctor, referred to Madani as being responsible for Algeria's descent toward civil war.[85] Quda explained that Madani's shortsightedness and arrogant refusal to form partnerships with other political actors ended up leading to decades of violence. For Quda, this failure was one that the Brotherhood should have tried to avoid in Egypt and elsewhere.[86] He saw the Brotherhood's inability to adapt its political choices as an explanation for why it had ignored important values on political partnerships and pluralism.

Zamzam and PRP members also drew upon the success of Brotherhood-affiliated Islamists in Tunisia. After winning a plurality in the 2011 constituent assembly elections, the Ennahdha Movement led the long process of writing a new democratic constitution for the North African country, which was finally completed in January 2014. The process was marked by mutual mistrust between secularists and Islamists, the latter of whom also risked losing a significant percentage of their constituency because of the bitter internal deliberations over what compromises Ennahdha would make in the

---

80. For a county-by-country review, see Harriet Sherwood et. al., "Egypt's Upheaval Makes Waves Across Region," *The Guardian*, July 12, 2013, http://www.gu.com/world/2013/jul/12/egypt-upheaval-region-mohamed-morsi; Samia Nakhoul, "Insight: Egypt Seen as Graveyard of Islamist Ambitions for Power," *Reuters*, August 18, 2013, https://reut.rs/16Y8aN9.

81. For example, see "Egypt Mass Trial Sees Hundreds Imprisoned Over 2013 Protests," *BBC*, September 18, 2017, https://bbc.in/33SvVsW.

82. Muhammad Bassam, IAF focus group, Jan. 2018.

83. Firas Qattan, IAF focus group, Jan. 2018.

84. IAF ocus group, Jan. 2018.

85. PRP focus group, Jan. 2018. For more on 'Abbassi Madani and the Algerian Civil War, see Mohammed M. Hafez, "Armed Islamist Movements and Political Violence in Algeria," *The Middle East Journal* 54, no. 4 (Autumn 2000): 572–91.

86. PRP focus group, Jan. 2018.

process.[87] Some supporters perceived the party as ready to sacrifice its Islamic values for political gains, whereas the Ennahdha leadership stressed the need to partner with non-Islamist groups for reform in Tunisia.[88]

Whereas the young IAF members we spoke with focused mainly on the downfall of Morsi in Egypt, the young members of both Zamzam and PRP compared the Egyptian and Tunisian experiences to articulate their positions. They argued that a comparison between these cases shows that compromises are necessary and that political success is a function of balancing ideological interests for the greater good. Their own personal experiences during the Arab Spring–inspired protests in Jordan offered new insights in this regard. Thus it was not surprising to find Zamzam and PRP members stressing the importance of values like pluralism and democracy.

The Religious and Political Roles of Islamic Parties

With exposure to different practical experiences and theories, young members of the the Islamic Action Front, the Zamzam Party, and the Partnership and Rescue Party started to grapple with questions on separating their movements' religious and political roles. This debate gained momentum in 2014,[89] but it was influenced by the discussions about political Islam and what was called "post-Islamism" that began in the mid-1990s.[90] In their new readings after 2011, former Muslim Brotherhood members encountered the works of the Moroccan Islamist writer and politician Saâdeddine El Othmani (who has served as prime minister in Morocco since 2017), which distinguished the religious role of Prophet Muhammad from his political role, thereby laying the ground for their arguments to separate religious outreach and political campaigning.[91]

These arguments have usually focused on three areas: First, separation would allow for organizational and institutional development whereby parties could focus on politics in parliament, professional syndicates, and local elections, while their affiliated social movements could focus on charity and preaching. A step toward this kind of institutionalism would put an end to the Brotherhood's control over the IAF and protect Brotherhood charity activities from the political repercussions if the IAF's relationship with the state were to deteriorate. A second area is in rhetoric. A separation would necessitate parties to focus on economic and political programs in their election platforms

87. Monica L. Marks, "Convince, Coerce, or Compromise? Ennahda's Approach to Tunisia's Constitution," Brooking Doha Center analysis paper no. 10 (Feb. 2014).

88. Karina Piser, "How Tunisia's Islamists Embraced Democracy," *Foreign Policy*, March 31, 2016, https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/03/31/how-tunisias-islamists-embraced-democracy-ennahda/.

89. For example, see Nabil al-Fuli, "فصل السياسي عن الدعوي . . هل يناسب إخوان مصر الآن؟" ["Separating the political from religious outreach: Does it suit Egypt's Brotherhood now?"], *Al Jazeera*, June 2, 2016, www.aljazeera.net/knowledgegate/opinions/2016/6/2/فصل-السياسي-عن-الدعوي-هل-يناسب-إخوان-مصر-الآن;Yasser Garbawy, "3 تحديات تواجه إعلان الغنوشي فصل الدعوي عن السياسي" ["Three challenges facing (Rached) Ghannouchi's announcement of separating religious outreach from the political"], *Al Araby*, May 6, 2016, www.alaraby.co.uk/amp/investigations/2016/5/16/3-تحديات-تواجه-إعلان-الغنوشي-فصل-الدعوي-عن-السياسي.

90. Olivier Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam*, trans. Carol Volk (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994); Asef Bayat, *Making Islam Democratic: Social Movements and the Post-Islamist Turn* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007).

91. See Saâdeddine El Othmani, الدين والسياسة: تمييز لا فصل [Religion and politics: Preference, not separation] (Casablanca: Dar al-Kalima, 2013).

and party documents, leaving no place for religious slogans like the Brotherhood's trademark "Islam is the solution." Finally, a separation would also force political parties' legislative role to focus on public policies, economic planning, rule of law, and majority voting. There would be no place for imposing Islamic practices or shari'a law on society because parties would abide by majority vote in parliament. Any activity on spreading Islamic practices and advocating for shari'a compliance would be the focus of the religious movement in the social sphere.

This general and simplistic understanding of the issue ignores the deep philosophical and historical aspects of such a separation. Is a separation important for the religious work of the Brotherhood or is it a necessity to pragmatically advance the political interests of Islamist parties? This becomes an even more pressing question considering the experiences of Islamist parties in other Arab countries, where they are suppressed not only because of ideology but also because military, tribal, and conservative elites have not wanted to promote democratic practices in the region.[92] These questions remain unsettled and are crucial for Islamists and others to answer before we can see any operationalization of this separation. The conversation today and efforts in this regard are a process in the making without guarantees for its success.

Young Islamists in Jordan have been inspired by the experiences of Ennahdha in Tunisia and Morocco's Justice and Development Party (PJD, from the French *Parti de la justice et du développement*). Under the tutelage of the aforementioned El Othmani, the PJD has succeeded in institutionalizing a separation between its political role and its affiliated preaching organization, the Unification and Reform Movement (*Harakat al-Tawhid wa-al-Islah*).[93] Young members of the IAF, PRP, and Zamzam all referred to the PJD as a model for the success of this political/preaching separation. The PRP members we spoke with said they looked up to the PJD for developing a service-oriented platform to meet citizens' immediate concerns.[94] Moreover, one can reasonably assume that, since both Morocco and Jordan are monarchies, there are other valuable lessons that Jordanian Islamists could learn from the PJD on balancing political interests with palace redlines.

Since Zamzam and the PRP were established at a time when this debate about separation was dominating the Islamist political scene, both parties have opted for a strictly political agenda since their inception.[95] Their members support this separation for different reasons but most importantly to limit the abuse of religion in politics.[96] PRP member Sa'id al-'Azm, a 43-year-old agricultural engineer, argued that, in recent years, different actors presented themselves as Islamic but constantly violated Islamic values and that a separation between religious outreach and politics could limit such abuses of Islam.[97]

92. See Hammam Yahya, "الفصل بين الدعوي والسياسي (4/4): السياسة كقرار أخلاقي" ["Separation between religious outreach and the political, part 4 of 4: Politics as a moral decision"], *Ida2at*, June 14, 2016, www.ida2at.com/separation-of-the-suit-44-politics-as-a-moral-decision/.

93. A. Kadir Yildirim (ed.), "PJD, Islam, and Governance in Post-2011 Morocco," Rice University's Baker Institute for Public Policy, Center for the Middle East, Issue Brief, May 31, 2018, https://www.bakerinstitute.org/media/files/files/8bb7ca6d/cme-pub-carnegie-morocco-060318.pdf.

94. Hamza Yasin, PRP focus group, Jan. 2018.

95. Interview by the authors with Ruhayl Gharayiba, December 29, 2017, 'Amman; interview, Salem Falahat, Jan. 2018, 'Amman.

96. Muhammad Quda, PRP focus group, Jan. 2018.

97. PRP focus group, Jan. 2018.

The young Zamzam members we spoke with made slightly different arguments. For them, it was important to be able to criticize the political choices and programs of any political entity, being human enterprises and thus fallible. But when policy options are represented as Islamic rulings, even good-faith criticism becomes extremely difficult because it can be construed as attacking Islam. Zamzam members related how the blurred boundaries between the religious mission and political ambition of the Muslim Brotherhood limited their ability as onetime members to voice opposition within the movement, contributing to their decision to leave.[98]

The IAF leaders we spoke with acknowledged that institutionalizing a separation between the Brotherhood and the party was simply a matter of time. Party spokesman Murad al-'Adayila, who has since become IAF secretary-general, said that the Brotherhood and the IAF both have separate management structures for their political and missionary functions, whereas Zaki Bani Irshayd felt that that the movement and the party would be able to maintain separate control of their spheres without any overlap.[99] The young members we spoke with were unaware of this internal debate, however, which again points to the generational gap within the Brotherhood. They repeated the broad strokes of 'Adayila's position, but younger IAF members were not able to expound on its implications for the IAF or the Brotherhood.[100]

Although young members of the three parties have engaged with the question of separating religion and politics in their organizations, the IAF members are least comfortable with a full separation. By comparison, Zamzam and PRP had clear-cut positions on this issue, since their parties had successfully attracted Brotherhood members who preferred this separation and who were uncomfortable with the movement combining politics and religious outreach.

CONCLUSION

This article has argued that young Islamists in Jordan are undergoing a process of transformation. In our interviews and focus group discussions, we examined how young members of Islamist political parties relate to the concept of the "civil state" and its relation to the Islamic state envisaged in the Muslim Brotherhood's historical ideology and how they engage with tensions between personal freedoms and Islam. Those we spoke to from the Islamic Action Front, the Zamzam Party, and the Participation and Rescue Party presented different arguments with varying levels of complexity that reflected their personal experiences and those of their parties.

We have also tried to argue that Zamzam and PRP members decided to leave the Muslim Brotherhood due to the tensions they perceived within the movement as to how it engaged with their Jordanian national identity and identity as Muslims in a worldwide Islamic community. They sought an entity that would promote both identities and could offer a clear vision for the Jordanian state. Similarly, the organizational rigidity of the Brotherhood suffocated reformers who felt that hard-liners in leading positions would not allow for alternative views to emerge from within. Young members also left

---

98. Muhammad Ta'amina and Mahmud 'Akayila, Zamzam focus group, Jan. 2018.
99. Interviews with Zaki Bani Irshayd and Murad al-'Adayila, Jan. 2018, 'Amman.
100. Mu'tazz Hurut and Riyad Sunayd, IAF focus group with IAF members, Jan. 2018.

the Brotherhood because they found new and different insights by reading the writings of Islamist groups outside the movement as well as secularists. This exposed the Brotherhood's failures and its ideological limitations. Moreover, these young activists' direct experiences with left-wing allies during Jordan's Arab Spring–inspired protests in 2011 and 2012 also opened their eyes to the value of partnerships. Finally, many young members of the Brotherhood embraced proposals by Zamzam and the PRP to separate their desire to promote their religion from their political advocacy.

Despite the changes that the young Islamists we spoke to were willing to embrace, these views are so far untested. The breakoff political parties that they belong to, Zamzam and the PRP, were established after the most recent parliamentary elections in 2016, and thus the parties have not yet engaged in parliamentary politics. Although IAF members seemed less invested in the process of critical reevaluation and embracing new ideas, and at times clinged to traditional Muslim Brotherhood rhetoric without any reassessment of its validity today, one has to acknowledge the prominence of individual experience, partisan failures, and government pressures in constraining the movement's political successes.