The Jordanian Monarchy
Islamic Social Hegemony versus Authoritarian Liberalism?

Draft Paper

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What may be specific to the Jordanian case is the maintaining of a regime which however does not have any hegemony over the society. Hegemony is always thought of as a creation of those in power, even indirectly. In Jordan, however, the social hegemony is Islamist, although such groups have never been at the head of political power. If I use the Gramsci categories (Gramsci, 1978, p 314): the direct domination apparatus belongs to the monarchy, but the social and cultural hegemony is now in the hands of the Islamists. The monarchy has never been the source of the main ideology. Therefore, on a more theoretical level, this case leads us to reconceptualize usual categories such as hegemony and ideology in a manner that is less centred on the state.

Theories of ideology are indeed mainly theories of distortion, whose purpose is to legitimate the power system (Ricoeur, 1997, p 17).

The question of the workshop: '*How has the monarchy succeeded in remaining in power?*' can hence be reformulated in a more specific way: 'How does a regime construct legitimacy and control a society, faced with a direct challenger for social hegemony (but not for the State apparatus)?'. This configuration is different from another, more usual, one in which he regime gets little consent, and in which strict domination is wielded directly.

Following the thesis described above, I will analyze three main levels in relation to the stability of the regime and the way they concur in effect to legitimize the regime, but also their limits and factors favouring rather delegimization:

 The first concerns the institutionalization of the regime

 The second concerns the handling of the opposition

The third deals with the evolution of the regime in its orientations and the kind of actors it relies on, from Hussein to Abdallah II.

1. The institutionalization of the State

Jordan is a relatively new state (created in 1921) and was not based on any prior specific national movement, even if Arab nationalist anti-colonialist movements were present.

It is often locally considered as a pure creation of the British. However, 80 years later, even its most extreme opponents, who still argue on its artificiality, position themselves within the State framework. The actors permanently refer to its institutions, even if they often do not recognize the legitimacy of the monarchy and consider it to be subordinated to American foreign policy. It is not only because Jordan is a repressive state and they fear its police that they refer to it on a daily basis; institutions have played their integrative role, especially the army and the law. A specific Jordanian identity has been created from nowhere and it is one of the greatest successes of the Hashemite monarchy.

Part of the strategy used by the monarchy since the 1950s to build a specific "Jordanity"" was gradually to transform the post-1948 Palestinian Jordanians and the Palestinian national movement into a foreign figure, an "Other" (Massad, 2001, p 274). King Hussein in the same paradoxical movement called for unity and fostered divisions between the two groups by specifically relying on the Transjordanians for administration. Palestinians mainly remained in the private sector.

The differential treatment of the two populations by the monarchy, their assignation to be Palestinian or Transjordanian, has then in reality created two different communities with different backgrounds -which was not necessarily the case at the beginning. Now these differences are often denied: most political leaders say that they do not make any distinction. What happened during September 1970 events is up to now often taboo and not spoken about. Yet at the same time identifying somebody as Transjordanian or Palestinian is essential information for anybody. On the post-1948 Palestinian Jordanian side, they often mention the presence of certain branches of their family in Jordan before the creation of Jordan, underlining the unity of the region at that time and the importance of communication between the two banks. This evocation is a way to underline the legitimacy of their presence in Jordan and to dissociate the two "labels" of Palestinians and refugees. Beyond this reference to history, they clearly position themselves inside the Jordanian state with its characteristics. The state institutions have produced their effects.

if it is clear that even without any previous national movement, the monarchy was able to create recognized institutions and national identity, it does not mean that it was not challenged by opponents.

2. The opposition to the monarchy

2.1. The Islamist opposition: an integrated opposition?

The Islamists have been present in Jordan since its independence in 1946. However, the movement started to gather real social support during the first intifada when it organized a campaign to support it under the slogan "Islam is the solution", one that it still proclaimed. To this theme, they added internal demands concerning political freedom, social justice and the fight against corruption. All these issues have also won them the support of the population.

At the same time, they developed a charitable and social network which was a real alternative to failing State institutions.

Their growing influence can be measured through the parliamentary elections of 1984 (which concerned only 8 seats) and especially those of 1989, when they obtained 22 seats out of 80, 32 if one adds the independent Islamists to the Muslim Brothers (MBs). Their role has also increased in professional associations, the main place for expressing political activity in Jordan, as no real democratic political scene exists. These associations had been traditionally dominated by activists of the leftwing and the PLO since the 1950s. However, Islamists have slowly been replacing them from the mid 1980s[1].

The only political movement that has never been forbidden in Jordan (Budeiri, 1997, p 199), unlike the left wing, it has slowly gained a real social hegemony over the population while the other movements (leftist and nationalist) have almost disappeared as such. Their relation to the monarchy is very ambivalent however. The Islamists have never really been against the monarchy, which has let them occupy the social field as they did not really ask for political power. In spite of their opposition, they frequently had the same enemies as the monarchy during their history, which has created a bond between them[2]. They organize campaigns to

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[1] "*An example of the diminishing leftist bloc and PLO influence at this time was that while the Engineering Association Council was completely dominated by the leftist bloc in the 70s and early 80s, the Islamic movement won all the Council's seats in 89. One of the reasons for this change was the division between some Arab States and the PLO; another reason was the Government's direct intervention in labour and professional organizations which clearly weakened the leftist hold on them. As the left declined, the gap was filled by the Islamic movement.*" (Khazendar, 1997, p 112).

[2] In the 1950s and 1960s, the pan-Arabist and anti Muslim Brothers campaign of Gamal ' abd el Nasser resulted in the monarchy and the Islamists coming closer for the first time. A situation which the decline of the left and

support Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, which is one of the reasons for the support they have had. They refer, however, more to an incantatory nationalism as they never really oppose the King's peace process policy with Israel.

From 1984 on, the MBs expressed in parliament their support for the Palestinian cause, and their criticism of the Jordanian government's non-democratic practices. Their activists bore the brunt of governmental retaliatory measures, and some of them were detained. The Jordanian left was subjected to the same measures by Prince Hassan and Prime Minister at that time Zaid Al Rifa'i. The MBs however never reacted in a militant manner to this repression. On the contrary, they even had a calming influence during riots against the rise in the cost of living (1989), or during student revolts in 1984 an 1986 (due to the increase in tuition fees) at Yarmouk University[3].

The religious legitimacy at stake

Once they established a solid grassroots base assured through their charitable network, the Muslim Brothers became more directly involved in Jordanian policy. They maintained an ambiguous position, challenging the regime while at the same time searching for integration. Their main challenge to the Jordanian monarchy concerns religious legitimacy. As Gudrun Krämer remarks (1994, p 278): " *Overbidding to decide who represents correct Islam and real Islam and who is the best defender of the faith and of the civil society constitutes in fact one of the axes of the political debate* ". In fact, insistence on this aspect allows the Muslim Brothers to compete with the monarchy on behalf of a higher legitimacy. The monarchy then debates with them at that level insisting on the religious aspect and its belonging to the lineage of the prophet.

Conflicting participation

Once legitimized, the Muslims Brothers went a step further by trying to gain a place in the Jordanian political system in order to be able to influence decision-taking on the social level. They maintain here their delicate position of **conflicting participation**, as described by Gudrun Krämer. They receive the greater part of their legitimacy through an aura of purity and integrity due to their distance from political power. They want at the same time to maintain this critical position while entering the political game enough to influence it. A

the growing popularity of the Islamists changed in the 1970s, whereas they supported Iran and the monarchy Iraq during the conflict. But, in 1979 , noting the Jordanian support for the Syrian Muslim Brothers against the Syrian regime, the Muslim Brothers did not oppose Jordanian positions favorable to the Reagan plan and plan of Fes in 1982. In this period, they made rather an alliance with the government against the left.

[3] Following the analyses of Sami al Khazendar (1997, pp 142-145).

position all the more delicate, as "since *the critical decline of the left, the Islamist movement has become the main target of the strategies of cooptation and exclusion from the government*" (Krämer, 1994, p 278). As practically the only adversary to the monarchy, they have become the central actor in the political game. They have become a proof that there is indeed a real democratic process since there is opposition. So Islamists often face a cooptation strategy more than repression. They have lost part of their radicalism and one may speak of **an integrated opposition,** which rather consolidates the position of the monarchy.

Disaffection and radicalization of some activists

However, this tendency also has consequences on the perception of the Muslim brothers and their popular support. Their legitimacy has gradually decreased because they seem more and more associated with the Jordanian leaders, and to be guaranteeing their policy. According to a report of international Crisis Group (on 2005, p 6), in 1993 , "*Youths were angered by steps to normalize the relations with Israel and felt abandoned by Jordan's mainstream MB which refuses to clash openly with the government over this issue.*" Some of their sympathizers have turned towards what they consider a more radical and less integrated opposition: Salafist movements in Jordan. The latter may have recruited among the poorer classes, the most affected by the economic crisis. According to Quintan Wiktorowicz, the number of their activists is said to be very limited, but that of their sympathizers border that of the MB, a phenomenon difficult to estimate. The Salafist Movement in Jordan is distinguished by its refusal of any cooperation with the regime and its informal network structure, kept as such to avoid repression. It is divided mainly between reformist and jihadist Salafists on the possibility or not to wield political violence. Strategically opposed, they nevertheless lean on the same textual references (Wiktorowicz, May 2000, pp 223-224).

The Muslim Brothers are also blamed for reverting to a tribal way of making policy. A criticism all the more problematic for them as part of the support for Islamists, beyond the Jordanian case, indeed relies on their challenging of community management. They notably strengthen the position of the youth with regard to that of the elders by claiming a higher religious legitimacy.

Finally, the undistinguishing repression against MBs during certain periods, whether they preach cooperation or radical opposition, has also concurred to the delegitimization of the cooperation option and to the radicalization of Islamist groups.

The last elections: marginalization and radicalization of the Islamists

What happened during the last elections was particularly representative of the limits of this "conflicting participation" policy on the part of the Islamists, while the monarchy has increased the repression and tried to destabilize them.

In 1992, the monarchy changed the electoral law into the famous "one- man one-vote" law whose purpose is to favour a vote along tribal rather than partisan lines. The strategy has been successful and was part of the Hussein's policy for the retribalization of the society. It was seen as a method to depoliticize the society and to weaken the opposition. Since 2005, the Islamists have been confronted with an intensification of the intervention of the government which has made new laws forbidding speeches in the mosque, tightening the control on the Media and limiting the activities of professional associations. (ICG, 2005, p 15).

It has also made new laws against the parties and intervened during the electoral campaign making known which candidates had its support while exerting pressures on the others to withdraw. Confronted with this situation, two trends were present inside the Islamic Action Front: "the doves and the hawks". One supported a cooperative attitude with the regime under the motto "participating not overpowering", the other favoured more confrontational ways, some calling for the boycott of the elections. During the primaries inside the movements, the militants favoured candidates from the "hawks". The party leadership however decided not to take this choice into account and appointed "dove" candidates. They were accused of cooperation with the government on the one hand, while being repressed by it on the other, and became the real losers of the elections with only 6 seats in the 110-member Parliament. The results have strongly destabilized the doves inside the party.

So the policy of destabilization of the Islamists undermines the moderates and leads to a radicalization of the movement or the support for other Islamist movements. This marginalization creates a real political vacuum as it does not come from the success of another trend but rather from dissatisfaction with this trend (Hroub, 2007, p 3). In the long view, this could be one of the main dangers for the monarchy: delegitimizing the moderate Islamist policy leads to radicalization.

2.2. The disappearance of the leftist and nationalist opposition

Apart from the Islamists is there any other real opposition in Jordan? The nationalist and leftist opposition has been strongly weakened by the failures of Arab nationalism on one hand and the collapse of the Soviet Union on the other. I will not elaborate on it here. In Jordan, this opposition, especially the communist one, had to face severe repression until

1989. Even after political parties were authorized in 1992, they have never regained any real social support as such and have systematically lost all their positions to the Islamists.

Under the banner of anti-imperialism, a coalition including the left wing was constituted in Jordan in 2002. Part of the Marxist vocabulary was already integrated into the Islamist vocabulary, as well as some slogans of radical nationalism. Reference to Islam has not presented any specific problems for the communists, whose atheism always was relative. Most communist and nationalist activists consider Islam as a cultural constituent of Arabic nationalism.

However, the dominant position of the Islamists in the coalition has allowed them to impose their themes and it seems to many activists of the liberal leftwing that this step was a strategic error: they have not been able to oppose the Islamist argumentation. As one of them expresses it: "*it is very difficult to convince people with our left discourse because you always have to face the fact that it comes from Western countries and then to explain that not everything that comes from the Western countries is bad. Whereas Islamist argumentation is very simple: when we were good Moslems, we created empires, since we have left Islam, we have been divided. Besides, the Islamists have never ruled, which has spared them depreciation concerning governmental failure[4].*"

The left wing indeed faces double difficulties: firstly the delegitimization linked to their association with Western values and organizations, secondly the difficulties linked to political life under repression. The Jordan State promoted in 1989 a relative democratic opening to control social dissatisfaction. The same strategy was used in 2003 to weaken troubles linked to the war in Iraq and to opposition to the Jordan policy which supports the American strategy. These openings can be considered as kind of "defensive democratisation" (Bennani-Chraïbi and Fillieule, 2003, p 44) meaning that it is associated with a tight control of associations, NGOs, and any political activities. In 2005 new laws reinforced the control of the State (Wiktorowicz, oct 2000, p 43).

This legislation especially handicapped the leftist opposition as many of their militants have reconverted to work in human rights associations and NGOs. They have understood the fact that the army very obviously voted during the last elections (often using the possibility to vote publicly as illiterate), as a clear message from the power[5].

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[4] Interview, Amman, December 2005.

[5] Interviews, Amman, March 2008.

3. The State orientations and their consequences: from retribalization to authoritarian liberalism?

Therefore the monarchy deals on the one hand with the conflicting participation of the Islamists who have legitimacy and a real social anchorage and, on the other hand with old and new militants reconverted in human rights association and NGO members. They have difficulties inside their own society but are embedded in international networks and can bid for international funding. The relative weakness and ambivalence of the opposition, the repression system and the institutionalization processes partially explained the stability of the monarchy. It has also developed specific strategies to find actors to rely on and to define the orientations of the Jordan state. It has been all the more challenging for it that internationally the Jordan state is in a subaltern position and only partially define its policy and agenda, which has important consequences for its legitimacy and the consent it can receive. Here are classical questions about power relations between States and the consequences on internal policy. Jordan also badly depends on the political situation in the region which directly impacts its own demography: after the post-1948 and 1967 Palestinian refugees, about 500 000 Iraqi refugees have recently come to Jordan (FAFO report, 2007, p 7).

The creation of links between the monarchy and the tribal networks, and the retribalization of political life was one of the ways for the monarchy to find a social basis in King Hussein's time. It does not mean by the way that tribal networks necessarily support the monarchy. The new role they have been given, notably through electoral laws which under-represent urban areas, have conferred renewed importance on these networks as ethnographic studies show (Chatelard, 2004, p 333). From Hussein to Abdallah II, there is however a real change at that level. Abdallah II has not been the expert in tribal networks that Hussein was. As he came to power, he was almost described as a foreigner speaking better English than Arabic (the subject of numerous political jokes). People allowed themselves much more political criticism at that time. Some years later, however, the atmosphere changed as Abdallah II steered the monarchy into a kind of authoritarian liberalism with a strong priority given to economic reforms. It also means that the monarchy henceforth relies more on businessmen and experts than tribal networks (even if the two are not incompatible). One of the results of the last elections was that the newly-termed "old guard" lost its seats to an economic - and very wealthy - new guard. Some electors sold their votes to it. Economic questions are indeed central as Jordan is again confronted with huge price rises. This new guard pushes for

example for the lifting of government subsidies on petrol and bread. That could provoke reactions in a context of impoverishment of the population, as happened before.

Conclusion

The growing gap in Jordan between economic elites and political power on the one hand and an impoverished population on the other could be one of the main factors of destabilization of Jordan, if political forces emerge from it. It is not only a question of standard and cost of living. References are different. The former position themselves inside a political vision of economic efficiency and expertise linked to Western liberalism and the agendas of international organizations. The latter are more sensible to the social justice and anti-imperialism slogans of the Islamists. It is more a question of references and networks, of position in a political scene, than of values as the latter for example do not necessarily position themselves against liberalism. A good example of this growing incomprehension is the discrepancy between many of the development projects based on the latest agenda of international organizations and the expectations of the people, who often prefer the religious charitable networks which seem more adapted to them. With regard to the democratization of the political system itself, it does not seem, regarding the latest developments in Jordan, that its strong dependence on international development funds has had influence in this direction.

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