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# ARAB ISLAMIST PARTIES: LOSING ON PURPOSE?

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Most major political parties advocate popular policies in order to win elections, or they try to win elections in order to implement preferred policies. Either way, political parties (except those with a regional or single-issue focus) aim to govern. Supposedly, Islamist parties are no different. If anything, they are thought to be particularly obsessed with gaining power.

In most Arab countries, Islamist groups are the only ones capable of winning free and fair elections. With secular and liberal opposition parties weak or nonexistent across much of the region, many analysts have argued that the full inclusion of Islamist parties is critical to any meaningful process of democratization. In other words, the future of Islamist movements and the future of Arab democracy are inextricably intertwined. It will be difficult to achieve the latter without the participation of the former. Furthermore, as mainstream Islamists—defined here as those who renounce violence and commit to the democratic process—have increasingly adopted more moderate positions and policies, they have suggested a readiness to assume the responsibilities of power.

Rarely, however, have scholars dwelled on an intriguing possibility—that Islamist parties may not be particularly interested in actually winning elections in the first place. A careful consideration of their electoral strategy suggests an ambivalence and, in some cases, even an aversion to power. It is not a stretch to say that Islamists lose elections on purpose. With surprising frequency, they do just that.

In a recent article in these pages, Charles Kurzman and Ijlal Naqvi

wrote that “the electoral performance of Islamic parties has generally been unimpressive.” After tallying the 89 parliamentary contests held throughout the Muslim world over the last forty years, they found that “median Islamic-party performance is 15.5 percent of votes and 15 percent of seats.”<sup>1</sup> Given this poor record, suggest Kurzman and Naqvi, Western powers should let go of their paranoia about Islamists: Even if there were free elections, Islamists probably would not win.

This, of course, assumes that Islamists are *trying* to win. Yet in Arab countries, Islamist groups rarely contest the total number of available parliamentary seats. Instead, they field “partial slates,” usually running candidates for less than 50 percent of all available seats. This article focuses on the Arab world, which features a distinctive combination of domestic and international factors that make Islamist parties particularly averse to the very notion of winning elections.<sup>2</sup>

There are six Arab countries where the Islamist opposition actively contests elections on a regular basis—Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, and Yemen.<sup>3</sup> If we focus on the last two election cycles and consider the electoral slates of the largest mainstream groups in each country, the average portion of seats contested, as shown in the Table on page 70, is a mere 35.9 percent.<sup>4</sup> Limited contestation is coupled with remarkably high win percentages unheard of outside the Middle East. Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood (MB) won 88 seats in 2005—the most any opposition group has won since the 1952 revolution—while contesting only 161 out of a possible 444 seats. In 1989, the Jordanian MB won 22 of the 26 seats that it contested (85 percent). In 2006, the Islamic National Accord Society—a Shia grouping known as al-Wifaq and Bahrain’s largest Islamist opposition group—won 17 of the 18 seats that it contested (94 percent).

Islamists, as it turns out, are good at winning when they want to. Often, however, winning is not what they want. To be sure, few parties are willing to win elections by any means necessary. Yet most make temporary tactical compromises in order to better their chances for future victory. In contrast, Islamist parties go out of their way to *avoid* increasing their share of parliamentary seats, even when doing so would appear both possible and in their self-interest. In fact, they often coordinate with the regimes in power to ensure that they do not exceed an accepted “threshold” of seats.

It could be argued that Islamists limit their gains because doing too well might invite the wrath of incumbent regimes (never mind that, in authoritarian contexts, opposition parties are *supposed* to take risks for democratization). In this regard, the case of Jordan is illustrative. There, the consequences of Islamist electoral success are considerably less dire than they would be in countries such as Egypt, where overt violence and mass imprisonment frequently befall the opposition. Formed in 1993, the Islamic Action Front (IAF), the political arm of the Jordanian MB, is

TABLE—ELECTION RESULTS IN THE ARAB WORLD

COUNTRY	PARTY	ELECTION YEAR	SEATS CONTESTED	TOTAL SEATS	% OF SEATS CONTESTED
Bahrain	al-Wifaq	2002		Boycott	
		2006	18	40	45
Egypt	Muslim Brotherhood	2000	70	444	15.8
		2005	161	444	36.3
Jordan	Islamic Action Front	2003	30	110	27.3
		2007	22	110	20
Kuwait	Islamic Constitutional Movement	2008	11	50	22
		2009	8	50	16
Morocco*	Justice and Development Party	2002	56	95	58.9
		2007	94	95	98.9
Yemen	Islah	1997	241	301	80
		2003	185	301	61.5

\*Numbers for Morocco indicate contested districts (not seats).

a legal party that has had a cooperative, though often tense, relationship with the monarchy. This less contentious tenor of regime-opposition relations has often manifested itself during elections: The government “protects” some parliamentary seats, meaning that the IAF will not contest them or will work with the authorities to defeat other opposition candidates. Ziad Abu Ghanimeh, the MB’s official spokesman at the time, recounts Islamist participation in the 1993 election:

Without the knowledge of many of the leaders of the Brotherhood and IAF, there were secret meetings with the government. . . . The agreement being that the IAF would enter the elections and receive 16 seats, and the government would have a say on who the names were. In other words, they would choose who they wanted. . . . There was a deal.<sup>5</sup>

Later, in election-eve negotiations with regime representatives (which ultimately failed), IAF leaders agreed to “accept” a dozen parliamentary seats in exchange for the regime’s withdrawal of the “one-vote” electoral law, a now-infamous piece of legislation designed to limit Islamist gains at the polls.<sup>6</sup>

In the 2007 elections, the IAF ran only 22 candidates, the lowest number in its history. It adopted an odd campaign motto for a political party—*musharika wa laisa mughaliba*—which means “participating but not seeking a majority.” In the lead-up to the polls, IAF leaders reached an understanding with the government, agreeing to contest fewer seats and not to run explicitly pro-Hamas and antigovernment candidates.<sup>7</sup> In a series

of interviews that I conducted with senior IAF figures, they readily admitted that the reason for contesting so few seats was to avoid offending the regime and to demonstrate that the party had no interest in escalating tensions.<sup>8</sup> One senior party official explained it this way: “I don’t deny that there was coordination between some members of the opposition and the government. This is something natural [and] in the interest of the country, and I support this kind of coordination because the government is a critical part of the nation. We are all in the same boat.”<sup>9</sup>

At first blush, the case of Morocco is similarly mystifying. In 2002, Morocco’s main Islamist party, the Justice and Development Party (PJD), ran in only 56 of 95 districts—well under the number that the major leftist and liberal parties were contesting. Michael Willis, one of the first scholars to note the PJD’s peculiar electoral behavior, writes: “The PJD’s modesty about its electoral chances not only contrasted with the pre-election rhetoric of most political parties, but also seemed to run counter to widespread predictions that the party was likely to perform well at the forthcoming elections.”<sup>10</sup>

Despite running a limited slate, the PJD won 42 seats, while the Socialist Union of Popular Forces (USFP) came in first, winning 50 seats and the opportunity to form a government. Interestingly, several newspapers claimed that the PJD had, in fact, ended up with more than 50 seats but, in last-minute negotiations with the palace, agreed to have the final tally changed. The PJD did not officially deny the allegations.

As with the case of Jordan, fear of government repression does not provide a sufficient explanation, particularly given Morocco’s status as the only Arab country (save Lebanon) that had previously allowed for limited alternation of power (during 1998’s *alternance*, when USFP leader Abderrahmane Youssoufi led a left-of-center government). Moreover, although Islamist parties tend to represent the only organized opposition to existing regimes, which is why they are so often feared, this was not the case in Morocco, where well-established secular parties had a long tradition of participation. Yet in the 2003 municipal elections, the PJD reduced its coverage to only 16 percent of all districts, again raising the question of why Islamists, despite being capable of winning considerably more seats, chose not to.

### Islamist Exceptionalism

Although fear of regime repression cannot be discounted as a factor, it is not unique to the Arab world. What may be unique, however, is how Islamists respond to repression. Islamist groups exhibit several features that set them apart. To begin with, they do not necessarily need to rule in order to fulfill their original objective—the Islamization of society. Contrary to the experience of Western Europe’s socialist parties, which could make society “socialist” only if they held power—and perhaps

not even then, really—society in the Middle East can be made “Islamic” even if Islamists consistently lose elections. This has arguably already happened in a number of Arab countries, where voters may be even more conservative than Islamist groups themselves.<sup>11</sup>

Mainstream Islamist parties act politically with a mind to nonpolitical considerations. Most are political wings of religious movements, or at least remain tied to such movements through informal links and overlapping memberships. The IAF is the political arm of the Jordanian MB, while the PJD remains closely linked to Morocco’s Movement for Unity and Reform. These parties cannot use a strict electoral calculus when adopting public positions or deciding how many candidates to field in an election. They must take into account the interests of the parent organization, from which they derive much of their legitimacy, grassroots support, and financial backing. Moreover, they do not always have a choice. The IAF has at times had its plans overruled by the MB, which maintains a strong influence over the IAF despite technically being administratively and financially separate.<sup>12</sup> Prior to the 1997 elections, for example, the IAF held primaries to select candidates and announced that it would aggressively contest a greater number of seats. The Brotherhood, however, pressured it to reverse course and boycott the election. The subsequent boycott announcement was made under the Brotherhood’s name and letterhead rather than those of the IAF.

### Parties versus Movements

The case of the Egyptian MB illustrates this party-versus-movement conflict even more clearly. The Brotherhood, while sometimes acting like a party, is not a party. It is a religious movement, or *gama’ a*, meaning “society.” It participates in elections for local and national bodies as well as in trade syndicates and universities. Yet this is just one facet—albeit the one most visible to Western observers—of the group’s wide-ranging work. The MB operates as a kind of state-within-a-state, with its own set of parallel institutions, including hospitals, schools, banks, cooperatives, daycare centers, thrift shops, social clubs, facilities for the disabled, and even Boy Scout troops. Millions depend on this vast social infrastructure for everything from access to jobs and affordable healthcare to small grants for starting businesses and even financial support to get married.

There is also the preaching (*da’ wa*) wing of the organization, which is, in some ways, the foundation upon which everything else is built. The MB is concerned with strengthening the religious and moral character of its members through an extensive educational process with its own structured curriculum. Unlike in most traditional parties, becoming a member is a choice that brings with it a set of obligations, expecta-

tions, and strict standards of moral conduct. Each member is part of an *usra* (family) that meets on a weekly basis to discuss religious topics and other matters relevant to the organization.

In sum, the Brotherhood's political concerns must compete with its educational and religious activities. While a political party acts in its own interest, often calculating how to increase representation in elected bodies, a social movement or subsection of a social movement acts in the interest of the *movement*. The two sets of interests sometimes diverge.

Because their legitimacy and grassroots support come primarily from their social and educational activities and not from parliamentary representation as such, Islamist groups in the Arab world privilege self-preservation over political contestation. Their electoral success is dependent on the success of their charity and social-service activities, and not the other way around. Both Islamists and secularists find themselves at an overwhelming disadvantage *vis-à-vis* the state. Opposition groups are allowed only limited access to broadcast and print media, and are rarely permitted to stage protests or rallies. Thus they have few available avenues for disseminating their message to voters. Islamists overcome this hurdle and attract new supporters—and votes—by providing services and putting down deep institutional roots in society. Through their network of institutions, Islamist groups strengthen the public's perception that they have succeeded where the state has failed—that they care about helping ordinary people, provide high-quality services at affordable prices, and are less corrupt than their secular counterparts.

Starting in the late 1980s and peaking in the early 1990s, Islamists in Egypt and Jordan took control of most major professional syndicates. They began offering a host of state-like services, including low-cost health-insurance plans, interest-free loans, and pension plans. Under Islamist leadership, syndicate quality and performance improved markedly. For example, through investments, commercial enterprises, and membership dues, deposits in Egypt's engineering syndicate rose from 14 million Egyptian pounds in 1985 to 170 million just nine years later. Likewise, the medical syndicate launched a popular health-insurance program for its members and their families, boasting participation rates above 60 percent.<sup>13</sup>

The perception that Islamists are in tune with society's needs is crucial to their electoral prospects, particularly as it helps them to attract non-Islamist voters not naturally drawn to the religious component of their message. The Islamists' success in running hospitals and syndicates has convinced many that they would be similarly successful in running municipalities and—if given the chance—national governments.

If Islamist groups are viewed more as states-within-states rather than as political parties, their organizational instinct for self-preservation becomes more obvious. Above all else, a state must keep functioning in order to serve the constituents who depend on it for their livelihood.

In this respect, Islamist groups bear some resemblance to what Robert Michels calls “subversive parties,” which are interested not only in replacing the current order but in transforming it. The subversive party “organizes the *framework* of the social revolution. For this reason it continually endeavors to strengthen its positions, to extend its bureaucratic mechanism, to store up its energies and its funds.”<sup>14</sup> Ironically, the “revolutionary” component of the party’s activities leads it to seek accommodation with the state, as has been the case in Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, and elsewhere.

The party’s vast organizational infrastructure can operate effectively only with the grudging tolerance of authorities. It must therefore avoid provoking the regime, as the costs of a crackdown on its social institutions—essentially the Islamist lifeline—would be severe. Even where there is toleration, the threat of repression (although wielded subtly through ostensibly legal means) can serve as an effective constraint on Islamist social institutions and, by extension, Islamist electoral behavior. Whether repressive measures are actually exercised is not the point. The point is that they *can* be. This fear creates self-enforcing norms that encourage accommodation with the state and discourage political confrontation.

Significantly, these tendencies are compounded by international factors that may be unique to the Arab context. Islamist leaders often speak of the “American veto”—the idea that the United States can block democratic outcomes not to its liking. In the Arab world, the tragic experience of Algeria continues to loom large. In 1992, the Algerian military, supported to varying degrees by Europe and the United States, canceled elections after the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) looked poised to win a commanding majority in parliament. An estimated 100,000 Algerians perished in the civil war that followed.

Since then, no Sunni Islamist party in the Arab world has entered an election intending to win. “Our phobia is Algeria,” the Jordanian Islamist Ishaq Farhan once said.<sup>15</sup> Despite loudly raising the specter of U.S. decline, Islamists have perhaps come to overestimate the West’s ability to determine Arab fortunes. Essam el-Erian, a prominent reformist in the Egyptian Brotherhood, notes: “Even if you come to power through democratic means, you are facing an international community that doesn’t accept the existence of Islamist representation . . . I think this will continue to present an obstacle for us.”<sup>16</sup> Erian is on to something. According to one study, international condemnation of regime repression is positively correlated with the success of nonviolent opposition activity.<sup>17</sup> But outrage over the repression of Islamists is exceedingly rare, and without international cover, Islamist groups are less likely to take the risks necessary to aggressively challenge incumbent regimes.

Islamist groups, then, *are* “exceptional,” not because of assumptions about ideology or claims that they fail to act in their own self-interest, but because their roots in social movements lead them to place a high



priority on organizational preservation. This, in turn, has a distorting effect on political behavior, leading Islamist groups to act in ways that contradict expectations of how traditional political parties normally behave.

### Are Islamist Parties an Obstacle to Reform?

The last twenty years have seen a fascinating change within the world of political Islam. During the 1990s and even more so after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, mainstream Islamists began to revise their political programs and embrace many of the foundational components of democratic life, including alternation of power and popular sovereignty. Moreover, Islamist groups themselves have been democratizing internally. The Egyptian Brotherhood held elections in 2004 and 2005, introducing the vote at every level of the organization. For the first time, each branch (*shu'ba*), region (*mantaqa*), and governorate (*muhafaza*) would have its own elected council. Jordan's IAF, however, "may be the most democratic party in the region in terms of its internal operations."<sup>18</sup> Its internal structure mirrors that of a democratic state, with a complex set of institutional checks and balances among the party's three "branches"—executive (executive bureau), legislative (*shura* council), and judicial (internal court)—while the mechanism of *istitla'* (internal polling of members on key decisions) allows for greater accountability of party officials.

These are all positive developments. A whole body of literature explores how, when, and why Islamists moderate. But moderation alone is not enough. Transitions to democracy require opposition parties that are willing not only to participate in elections, but to assume power once they have won.

One study examining when and how competitive authoritarian regimes lose power as a result of elections has identified a strong, unified, and mobilized opposition coalition as the most significant factor.<sup>19</sup> Although Arab countries—which lack meaningful contestation for power at the executive level—are not usually considered "competitive authoritarian,"<sup>20</sup> this finding is nonetheless relevant in the Arab context, where Islamist groups have had trouble sustaining cross-ideological coalitions. And while they may be strong, Islamists have, with few exceptions, proven unwilling to fully mobilize their resources, institutional networks, and massive memberships against existing regimes. To be sure, this is not solely the fault of Islamist groups. Arab governments are particularly good at sowing divisions within opposition ranks, and secular and liberal groups have often been hesitant to forge close ties with their Islamist counterparts. As the largest parties in most opposition alliances, however, Islamists do shoulder a significant share of the blame.

Despite embracing prodemocracy rhetoric, Islamist groups have

shown a readiness to draw closer to authoritarian regimes when it suits their interests. In Algeria, the largest legal Islamist party, the Movement of Society for Peace, has been part of successive government coalitions since 1997 and is currently a partner in the presidential alliance, which includes the National Liberation Front and the National Democratic Rally. The Moroccan PJD, often considered a “model” of Islamist moderation, is perhaps the most nonconfrontational of the region’s Islamist opposition parties. Holger Albrecht and Eva Wegner use the phrase “anticipatory obedience” to describe the party’s strategy: “From the very beginning of inclusion, the leadership of the [PJD] has aimed to reassure the palace that it would play by its rules. Indeed, the party’s readiness to help legitimize the regime is remarkable.”<sup>21</sup>

Such deference makes it difficult to envision Islamist opposition groups taking significant risks, whether through civil disobedience or mass protest, to weaken Arab autocrats’ tight grip on power. But if not Islamists, then who? If Islamist groups are not willing to win—and liberal and leftist parties are unable to—then democracy will remain an unlikely prospect in the Arab world.

### How to Break the Stalemate

Understanding the peculiarities of Islamist electoral behavior is a crucial step toward thinking more creatively about how to break the region’s political stalemate, a particularly difficult task given Arab regimes’ impressive ability to maintain power.<sup>22</sup> The Jordanian case is again instructive. Even if Islamists did try for a majority, they would face an uphill battle. In 1993, King Hussein unilaterally enacted the *sawt al-wahid* (one-vote) electoral law. The legislation instituted the single nontransferable vote (SNTV), a system that disadvantages organized political parties in particular. It is used on the national level by only two other countries in the world, Afghanistan and Vanuatu.<sup>23</sup> The law also grants the government full discretion to determine the number and size of electoral districts. Remarkably, in Jordan at its most gerrymandered, progovernment regions have been represented by one parliamentarian per 5,700 constituents, while some pro-IAF areas have as few as one MP per 52,000 people.<sup>24</sup> The IAF consistently rails against *sawt al-wahid*. In describing the country’s electoral system, one party leader told me that “it has no parallel anywhere in the world” (*ma ‘andu mithal fi al-‘alim*)—an exaggeration perhaps, but not by much.

Clearly, rigged electoral systems constrain Islamist ambitions. The electoral systems of Morocco and Bahrain likewise were designed to protect the incumbent regimes. When asked why it contests only a limited number of seats, Bahrain’s al-Wifaq pointed to gerrymandering as the main reason.<sup>25</sup> By contrast, the PJD actually supported the Moroccan government’s electoral reforms in 2002 and took credit for being among

the first to advocate a party-list proportional-representation system.<sup>26</sup> Here was yet another peculiar act of electoral self-immolation—a major opposition party advocating changes in the electoral system that would effectively negate its chances to form a majority on its own.

Meanwhile, after the 2006 elections in Kuwait, where leaders of the Islamic Constitutional Movement (ICM) had been pushing for electoral reform, the total number of districts was reduced from 25 to 5. As the best-organized and most ideologically coherent political grouping, the ICM stood to benefit most from the new, larger districts. Despite this seemingly more favorable electoral context, however, the ICM lowered its electoral coverage from 22 percent in 2008 to 16 percent in 2009. Elsewhere in the region, the electoral system explains even less. For example, Egypt and Yemen both have straightforward single-member districts, where a candidate can win with a plurality or majority of the vote. Not surprisingly, electoral reform is the top demand of the Islamist opposition in Jordan, but not in Egypt.

In any case, the odd electoral arrangements of the Arab world can explain only so much. While electoral systems—which Giovanni Sartori has called “the most specific manipulable instrument of politics”<sup>27</sup>—can limit the number of seats that Islamists win, they cannot limit the number of seats that Islamists choose to contest. Moreover, regimes throughout the world have long used electoral engineering to perpetuate their power. Unfair electoral systems are not a permanent fact, however. They can be altered through opposition pressure and mobilization.

Mainstream Islamist groups, despite their promising efforts at moderation, have failed to play the role that true opposition parties must play in order for democracy to emerge. In this respect, Islamist exceptionalism helps to account for the Arab world’s seemingly exceptional resistance to democratization.

With this in mind, the United States and the European Union, as well as prodemocracy NGOs, should recalibrate their democracy-promotion strategies. If the international community is in fact interested in supporting Arab democracy (including alternation of power), it would do well to persuade Islamist groups that they can and should try to win a larger share of parliamentary seats. As long as Islamist parties deliberately lose elections, democratic transitions in the Arab world will remain out of reach. The focus, then, should turn to facilitating the conditions conducive to opposition cooperation and mobilization.

Islamist groups are hesitant to mobilize against regimes out of fear of repression. The international community can address this fear in two ways: by encouraging cross-ideological coalitions and by clearly showing that it supports the right of these groups to participate in the political process. Islamists are more vulnerable to repressive measures when they are isolated from other political forces. At the same time, forming coalitions with more liberal and “respected” groups gives Islamists political cover

and makes it more difficult for governments to crack down on them with impunity. External actors, either directly or indirectly through Track II diplomacy, can promote cooperation between groups with diverse ideologies. A good example of this was the formation of Yemen's Joint Meeting Parties (JMP)—a groundbreaking alliance between the Islamist *Islah* Party and the secularist Yemeni Socialist Party around a compromise presidential candidate in the 2006 elections—which resulted from discussions mediated by the U.S. National Democratic Institute.

In addition, knowing that the international community will back their right to participate will empower opposition groups, particularly Islamists, to take greater risks and push more aggressively for democratic change. More consistent Western support for human rights—not only of liberal groups but of Islamist ones as well—will change the way in which Islamist groups weigh the costs and benefits of mass mobilization. And, apart from the unexpected implosion of a regime, mass mobilization is one of the few paths to real and lasting political change.

The Arab world is often thought of as a place of violent confrontation, where intransigent oppositions are pitted against intransigent regimes. That this characterization has gained currency in the popular imagination is, in some sense, remarkable. The region is dominated by powerful mass-membership organizations that have created their own alternatives to the state. At the same time, these groups are, or have become, exceptionally tame. Despite their unparalleled grassroots support, ample funding sources, and popular legitimacy, mainstream Islamist groups have proven unwilling or unable to launch a decisive bid for power.

But the question remains: Would Islamists actually win if they contested all seats? The argument is sometimes made that Islamist parties “choose the districts where they have the best chances of winning.”<sup>28</sup> This may be true, but it does not change the basic outlook. For example, even if Bahrain's *al-Wifaq* put forward a full slate—running an additional 22 candidates—and none of them won, it would still be able to claim electoral victory. It is worth recalling that in most political systems, a majority is not required to win; a plurality will do.

In Morocco, despite competing against strong, well-established secular parties in an engineered electoral system (and putting aside for a moment the fact that most Moroccan Islamists boycott elections), the PJD *still* won a plurality of the vote in the 2007 elections. In an actual democratic country, it would have been tasked with forming a government. In Jordan, the MB and IAF have won a plurality in every single election that they have contested since the reinstatement of parliamentary politics in 1989. By comparison, liberal, leftist, and secular parties controlled exactly none of the 110 seats in the 2007–2009 Jordanian parliament. Meanwhile, the only time that an Arab Islamist party did actually try to win—the Algerian FIS in 1991—it succeeded. And even when Islamist parties are not trying to win, they sometimes do by accident, as Hamas discovered in 2006.

The Arab electoral context is fluid, and any number of factors could undermine Islamist support. That said, much of the available evidence suggests that, if they chose to contest every seat in free elections, Islamist groups would win either large pluralities or majorities. Given the current context in the Arab world, however, they are unlikely to run full slates anytime soon. This may be just as well considering the world's discomfort with the notion of Islamists in government, however "moderate" they may be. That discomfort has come at a steep price, however. As Islamists have grown comfortable losing elections—and with much of the world comfortable watching them lose—Arab democracy has drifted further out of reach.

## NOTES

1. Charles Kurzman and Ijlal Naqvi, "Do Muslims Vote Islamic?" *Journal of Democracy* 21 (April 2010): 52–53.

2. It should be noted that some non-Arab Islamist groups run partial slates as well. More research is necessary to consider to what extent the arguments laid out here apply to other regional contexts.

3. In Algeria, the Movement of Society for Peace has been part of various government coalitions since 1997, and so cannot be considered an opposition party.

4. This figure does not include Morocco since, due to the particularities of its electoral system, it is only possible to measure districts contested, and not seats contested. Once a party decides to contest a district, it is required by law to contest each seat in the district (through a party list). For example, in a three-member district, the PJD would need to put forward three candidates.

5. Author's interview with Ziad Abu Ghanimeh, Amman, 28 May 2005.

6. Author's interview with Mudar Badran, Amman, 23 February 2005. Badran, a former head of general intelligence and close associate of the late King Hussein, was prime minister during the Brotherhood's participation in the cabinet in 1991.

7. This issue is contested by IAF leaders and has been a source of controversy within the organization. Some to whom I spoke were vigorous in their denials that any "deal" had existed between the government and the IAF. Yet there is ample evidence that there was at least an understanding, although it is unclear how explicit it was or to what extent it was an initiative of individual leaders acting without official authorization from the party. Several senior IAF leaders and former members confirmed the existence of such an "understanding," while others suggested there was some degree of "coordination."

8. Author's interview with Tayseer Fityani, Amman, 19 May 2008; with Ruheil al-Gharaibeh, Amman, 8 June 2008; with Mohammad Bzour, Amman, 15 May 2008; and with Abdul Latif Arabiyat, Amman, 11 June 2008.

9. Author's interview with senior IAF official.

10. Michael Willis, "Morocco's Islamists and the Legislative Elections of 2002: The Strange Case of the Party That Did Not Want to Win," *Mediterranean Politics* 9 (Spring 2004): 60.

11. For example, in the Arab Barometer polling, 79.8 percent of Jordanian respondents either agree or strongly agree that “the government should implement only the laws of sharia” while 77.6 percent agree or strongly agree that banks “must be forbidden from charging interest.” Arab Barometer, multicountry results, 2006; see [www.arabbarometer.org/reports/countryreports/comparisonresults06.html](http://www.arabbarometer.org/reports/countryreports/comparisonresults06.html).

12. The vast majority of IAF leaders are members of the Muslim Brotherhood. For example, as of January 2009, 5 of the 7 members of the IAF’s executive bureau were Muslim Brothers, while in the 2003–2007 parliament, 15 of 17 IAF MPs were Brothers.

13. Geneive Abdo, *No God but God: Egypt and the Triumph of Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 93.

14. Robert Michels, *A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy* (New York: Free Press, 1962), 335.

15. Malik Mufti, “Elite Bargains and the Onset of Political Liberalization in Jordan,” *Comparative Political Studies* 32 (February 1999): 116.

16. Author’s interview with Essam el-Erian, Cairo, 16 July 2008.

17. Maria J. Stephan and Erica Chenoweth, “Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict,” *International Security* 33 (Summer 2008): 7–44.

18. Nathan J. Brown, “Jordan and Its Islamic Movement: The Limits of Inclusion?” Carnegie Paper, no. 74, November 2006, 3.

19. Marc Morjé Howard and Philip G. Roessler, “Liberalizing Electoral Outcomes in Competitive Authoritarian Regimes,” *American Journal of Political Science* 50 (April 2006): 365–81.

20. Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way, “Elections Without Democracy: The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism,” *Journal of Democracy* 13 (April 2002): 54.

21. Holger Albrecht and Eva Wegner, “Autocrats and Islamists: Contenders and Containment in Egypt and Morocco,” *Journal of North African Studies* 11 (June 2006): 132–33.

22. See Steven Heydemann, “Upgrading Authoritarianism in the Arab World,” Analysis Paper no. 13, Saban Center for Middle East Policy, Brookings Institution, October 2007.

23. SNTV was also used for general elections in Japan and Taiwan until 1993 and 2004, respectively.

24. See Democracy Reporting International and Al-Urdun Al-Jadid Research Center, “Assessment of the Electoral Framework: The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan,” Berlin, 2007, 19.

25. Phone interview with al-Wifaq official, August 2010.

26. Willis, “Morocco’s Islamists and the Legislative Elections of 2002,” 63.

27. Giovanni Sartori, “Political Development and Political Engineering,” in John D. Montgomery and Albert O. Hirschman, eds., *Public Policy*, vol. 17 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), 261–98.

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