

The more things change, the more they stay the same: Jordanian Islamist responses in spring and fall

WORKING PAPER

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SUMMARY: The events of the post-Arab Spring period have not fundamentally altered the goals and tactics of the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood or changed the dynamic of its relationship with Jordan's monarchy. The 2015 split within the group initiated by the Zamzam Initiative reflects long-growing divides between Palestinian-Jordanian Islamists and Transjordanian Islamists that preceded the Arab Spring.

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Analysts often describe the historical relationship between the Hashemite monarchy of Jordan and the local branch of the Muslim Brotherhood as “symbiotic” and, compared to elsewhere in the Arab world, relatively non-confrontational.¹ The Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood has never been driven underground; its leaders were never systematically jailed. Its organizations survived the banning of political parties under martial law in 1957, after which the movement operated openly as a registered charitable society and, in 1992, formed a political party. The Brotherhood was allowed, even encouraged, to expand throughout the Kingdom when it offered an alternative to pan-Arab and leftist movements that the monarchy considered a greater threat than political Islamism. In return, the Brotherhood never challenged the legitimacy of the Hashemite regime, including during the 1970-71 Jordanian Civil War and after the Israel-Jordan Peace Treaty of 1994. The consistency of this relationship differentiates the Jordanian Islamic Movement² from its sister movements elsewhere, where periods of persecution and suppression by regimes impacted Islamists’ organization, leadership, strategy, and “habits of thought and behavior.”³ The “twin shocks” of the fall of Mohamed Morsi in Egypt and the rise of ISIS in neighboring Iraq and Syria have not fundamentally changed this relationship between Jordan’s Islamic movement and its monarchy.

The Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood has a broad conception of reform and seeks to gradually “reestablish the Islamic way of life” in the Kingdom.⁴ It enthusiastically participated in elections when parliamentary life in Jordan resumed in 1989. Since the election of 1993, the relationship between the regime and the Muslim Brotherhood can be characterized by a repeated strategic interaction. In the months leading up to each anticipated election, 1) The Muslim Brotherhood publicly calls for specific changes to the electoral system, such as the number of votes each voter can cast, apportionment, and redistricting. 2) The regime then announces incremental changes to the system, after which 3) the Muslim Brotherhood decides if it should participate in or boycott the imminent election. The interaction is guided by a belief that a Muslim Brotherhood boycott “de-legitimizes,” to some extent, the election and resulting parliament in the eyes of the Jordanian public or the international community or both.

Before the beginning of the so-called Arab Spring, this strategic interaction had been repeated five times: prior to the 1997, 2003, 2007, and 2010 parliamentary elections.⁵ It also characterized the dynamics leading up to the election in January 2013, despite the election of Mohamed Morsi in Egypt in June 2012. In other words, the Arab Uprisings, including the coming to power and fall of Muslim Brotherhood allies in Tunisia and Egypt and the rise of ISIS, did not alter the *nature* of the strategic dynamic between the Hashemite monarchy and the Jordanian

¹ Ali Bassam Al-Omoush, *Mahattat fi tarikh Jama‘at al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin fi al-Urdun* [Stations in the History of the Society of the Muslim Brothers in Jordan], (Amman: Academic for Publishing and Distribution Co., 2008)

Marion Boulby, *The Muslim Brotherhood and the Kings of Jordan, 1945-1993*, (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999).

² Although a variety of Islamist movements exist in Jordan – such as Hizb al-Tahrir and salafi groupings – Jordanian newspapers, academics, and politicians have long used the expression “The Islamic Movement” as a synonym for the Muslim Brotherhood and its affiliated organizations (e.g., the Islamic Action Front Party). Brotherhood leaders often use the expressions interchangeably in interviews, and they are used similarly in this chapter.

³ Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood: Evolution of an Islamist Movement* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013).

⁴ The Islamic Movement Jordan. 2005. “The Islamic Movement’s vision for Reform in Jordan.” Public document, Amman.

⁵ The Muslim Brotherhood and its political party boycotted in 1997 and 2010 and participated in 2003 and 2007.

Muslim Brotherhood. It only affected the parameters of the interaction, such as the electoral reforms the Brotherhood demanded and perhaps shifting their “reservation point,” the minimum set of reforms under which they would participate. But the fates of sister movements and emergence of ISIS did not fundamentally alter the gradualist goals of the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood. The Muslim Brotherhood demanded electoral reforms, the palace announced incremental reforms, and the Muslim Brotherhood then decided whether or not to boycott the imminent parliamentary election. Despite some amount of organizational upheaval, including the defection of several prominent leaders, the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood’s agenda changed little as a consequence of the Arab Spring. Its tactics and posture do not appear to have evolved.

The remainder of this paper is divided into three parts. Part one elaborates on the argument made above, focusing on what the Muslim Brotherhood did and did not do to advance its agenda when Islamists’ fortunes rose elsewhere in 2011-12. Part two briefly discusses cleavages among Jordanian political Islamists, including the relationship between Salafis and the Muslim Brotherhood and what I argue is the more important but often overlooked cleavage: the ongoing and growing divide between Palestinian Jordanian Islamists and Transjordanian Islamists. The split in the movement caused by the Zamzam Initiative and rise of an alternative Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood group is merely the latest in a series of defections by Transjordanian Islamists. Part three concludes with a royal comment on the relationship between the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood and the Hashemite-led regime.

The Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood, from Spring to Winter

After protests spread to Yemen, Bahrain, Libya, and elsewhere, many analysts, both in the region and elsewhere, thought that Jordan was the most vulnerable regime still standing. This belief was reinforced by the rise of nascent protest movements among tribal, youth, and locally-based “hirak” groups in Transjordanian-majority areas, such as Dhiban and Karak, which are often characterized as part of the heartland of support for the Hashemite monarchy. Although the Muslim Brotherhood joined protests in Amman and urban centers, their demands did not escalate to call for the overthrow of the regime, and coordination with new protest groups remained limited.⁶

The most that can be said about changes to the Jordanian Brotherhood’s demands after the beginning of the Arab Uprisings is that they became more overt in demanding constitutional changes to constrain the monarchy’s institutional power. For example, the Brotherhood called for removing the powers of the king to dissolve parliament, appoint the prime minister without input from parliament, and appoint the Upper House.⁷ Islamic Movement leaders claimed in interviews that this emphasis on constitutional reform marked a real shift and the crossing of a “red line”. This shift to emphasizing constitutional reforms alongside electoral ones, however, is overstated for three reasons. First, the Brotherhood had long talked about such reforms. Their reform statement of 2005 lists as their number one priority for reform “to carry out urgently-

⁶ For one explanation why, see: Patel, David Siddhartha, “Roundabouts and Revolutions: Public Squares, Coordination, and the Diffusion of the Arab Uprisings,” 2013, Unpublished manuscript.

⁷ Tareq Al Naimat, “The Jordanian Regime and the Muslim Brotherhood: A Tug of War,” *Viewpoints*, no. 58 (2014).

needed political and structural reform to activate the section of the Constitution that proclaims that the ruling system is a constitutional monarchy with a representative government, and to ensure that Parliament assumes a position in keeping with this.”⁸ Their post-Arab Spring statements largely are an elaboration of this established point. Second, the Brotherhood’s most vocal statements about constitutional reforms came after the king established a Royal Committee for Constitutional Review in April 2011⁹ and as he issued a series of four “discussion” papers on reform issues.¹⁰ The phrase “*malakiyya dusturiyya*” was already in the air before Muslim Brotherhood leaders started using it; the “red” line had faded to pink. Finally, the Jordanian Brotherhood basically was asking for the same reforms that the Moroccan king had already proposed for himself. In the range of demands that they could have made, the Jordanian Brotherhood selected a set that would not antagonize the monarchy and, perhaps, save face for them within the wider circle of Muslim Brotherhood organizations (more on this below). They did not call for the regime to be overthrown, and they did not challenge the legitimacy of the Hashemites.

Some observers noted that the Muslim Brotherhood organized almost weekly protests in downtown Amman and reported this as evidence of the Arab Uprisings spreading to Jordan. These protests had been recurring, though, since the early to mid-2000s in the exact same place and manner. After Friday prayers at the Grand Husseini Mosque in downtown Amman (Wasat al-Balad), the Muslim Brotherhood would organize, often with smaller leftist allies, a procession to a square at Ras al-Ein. A single Brotherhood truck distributes flags and banners at the beginning of these marches and collects them at the end, serving as an amplification system and stage during the event. All such protests are highly choreographed, controlled by the Brotherhood, and approved by the security forces. Jillian Schwedler has written about the non-transgressive nature of these protests, both before and after the beginning of the Arab Uprising.¹¹ The Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood was not protesting in ways or places they had not done before. Their tactics did not shift. They did not permit members to test the boundaries of what the security services would tolerate.

The Arab Uprisings and rise to power of allies in Egypt and Tunisia did not alter the *nature* of the strategic interaction between the Jordanian Brotherhood and the regime. Instead, what transpired was a repeat of the same interaction that occurred prior to the 1997, 2003, 2007, and 2010 elections. All participants understood what “game” they were playing, and neither side tried to change the game. The Brotherhood demanded “real” constitutional reforms and amendments to the electoral system to make it more representative of the demographics and will of the Jordanian people. The 41 amendments proposed by the Royal Committee were approved, including the creation of a constitutional court to monitor legislation and additional protections to personal rights. The regime also tinkered, once again, with the electoral system.

⁸ Their number two priority for reform is to bring legislation and official policy in harmony with the Constitutional statement that Islam is the source of legislation. Islamic Movement Jordan 2005, p. 12

⁹ The Committee proposed 41 amendments to the constitution in mid-August, none of which addressed Articles 34-36, which relate to the powers the Brotherhood challenged.

¹⁰ Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein, “Discussion Papers”, *KingAbdullah.jo*, http://www.kingabdullah.jo/index.php/en_US/pages/view/id/244.html

¹¹ Jillian Schwedler and Ryan King, “Political Geography,” in *The Arab Uprisings Explained: New Contentious Politics in the Middle East*, ed. Marc Lynch (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).

In mid-April 2012, the regime unveiled a new draft electoral law that met some long-standing demands of the Islamic Movement (e.g., abandoning the controversial SNTV “one-person, one-vote system”) but also introducing a mixed system where seats would be allocated to both districts and a national list PR system.¹² Almost immediately after the election of Morsi in Egypt, the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood announced it would boycott the upcoming Jordanian elections if the draft electoral law was not amended. In particular, they demanded that a greater percentage of seats be allocated for party candidates, and, although the increase they demanded was greater than what they had asked for in the past, it (30-50%) remained in line with their gradualist approach. The rise to power of Morsi appears to have influenced the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood to demand further reforms, but not maximalist ones. It did not lead them to demand changes that would open a path for them to win a majority of seats in parliament. The regime largely ignored the Movement’s most important demands and implemented other reforms, such as an Independent Election Commission that would blunt international observers’ criticisms.¹³ The election was held in January 2013, without the participation of the Jordanian Islamic Movement.

Although the Arab Uprisings did not alter the *nature* of the interaction, it appears to have increased the minimum set of concessions that the Brotherhood would have accepted to participate. However, the precise mechanism of impact is unclear; most accounts simply say that the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood was “inspired” or “encouraged” by events elsewhere. Maybe they expected future diplomatic, organizational, or financial support from the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, which would decrease the “cost” of rejecting the king’s proposal. Maybe Islamist victories elsewhere led them to believe that they had more support among the Jordanian public than they had previously, or maybe they were trying to use the illusion of widespread latent support to get a better deal.

Two final and interesting conjectures have to do with inter-Muslim Brotherhood “competition.” Maybe they feared participating and not getting as much electoral support as Muslim Brotherhood groups had received in Tunisia and Egypt and were expected to receive in Morocco. Second, the Jordanian interaction described above paralleled but (perhaps not unintentionally) trailed by a few months a not-dissimilar process in Morocco. The Moroccan king announced in March 2011 a plan for comprehensive constitutional reform, pledged to reduce his powers significantly, and appointed an ad hoc committee. The Jordanian king appointed his committee in April 2011. The Moroccan king announced the details of the new draft constitution in mid-June, and voters overwhelmingly approved it in a referendum on July 1 (98.5% approved, 73% turnout). Henceforth, Moroccan kings would be obligated to appoint the prime minister from the party that won the most seats in parliament, the prime minister would be the head of government with power to dissolve parliament, and an independent judicial system would be established. The Jordanian committee issued its much less far-reaching reform plan in August;

¹² Curtis Ryan, “The implications of Jordan’s new electoral law,” *Foreign Policy*, April 13, 2014, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2012/04/13/the-implications-of-jordans-new-electoral-law/>.

¹³ “Jordanian Elections Show Marked Improvement From Past Polls But Shortcomings Remain, Ndi Delegation Finds,” *National Democratic Institute*, January 24, 2013, <https://www.ndi.org/2013-jordan-elections>.

“The Carter Center Releases Study Mission Report on Jordan’s 2013 Parliamentary Elections,” *The Carter Center*, February 14th, 2013, <http://www.cartercenter.org/news/pr/jordan-021413.html>.

Jordanian kings would retain the ability to appoint the prime minister, although would do so in consultation with parliament, and dismiss parliament. The Moroccan PJD participated in the parliamentary election on November 25th, won 107 of 395 seats, and their leader was appointed prime minister four days later, as called for by the new constitution. In contrast, the Jordanian Brotherhood rejected their country's amendments immediately as not going far enough. Maybe the Jordanian Brotherhood rejected the proposed reforms because not doing so and participating in such a system would have damaged their standing within the wider community of Brotherhood organizations. Perhaps they felt obliged to "get" as much as their counterparts in Morocco had gotten because, unlike Tunisia and Egypt, the Moroccan context offered two similarities for Jordanians: the reform process was gradualist, not revolutionary; and the regime was monarchical. Yet, it must be asked why the Jordanian government would put the Brotherhood in such a situation if they knew that they would reject the proposed demands.

Intra-Islamist cleavages

This section is divided into two parts. The first briefly discuss relations between the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafis in Jordan; the second discusses cleavages within the Muslim Brotherhood. A large body of literature argues that authoritarian governments often seek to divide opposition, often along ideological lines.¹⁴ I suggest that communal differences better capture divisions among Jordanian Islamists than ideological disagreements.

Salafis

The vast majority of "Salafis" in Jordan are political quietists, and many have effectively been co-opted by the regime.¹⁵ Many prominent Jordanian Salafi scholars studied under Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani in Syria or Jordan, such as Ali bin Hasan al-Halabi and Salim al-Hilali, and al-Albani's anti-jihadist and relatively pro-monarchical influence remains important.¹⁶ Many non-jihadi Salafis have been incorporated into state institutions (especially The Ministry of Religious Endowments) or are allowed to preach independently and conduct outreach. There have been few significant moves by Salafis in Jordan to organize to participate in elections, although some scholars who run as independents are Salafis and some members of the Muslim Brotherhood have clear Salafi-leanings (e.g., Muhammad Abu Faris). Several prominent Salafi scholars have published books or given sermons criticizing the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood, but their impact on the Brotherhood has not received serious attention by scholars. Jordanian Salafis spend much of their intellectual energy and time defending al-Albani's ideas from criticism by other Salafi scholars. There are several currents of jihadi-Salafism in Jordan. One quietist jihadi-Salafi current looks to Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, who is critical of any Muslims who take government jobs. A number of small jihadi Salafi organizations exist or have existed in Jordan,

¹⁴ On the Jordanian regime deliberately dividing opposition, see Quintan Wiktorowicz, *The Management of Islamic Activism: Salafis, the Muslim Brotherhood, and State Power in Jordan*, (Albany: SUNY Press, 2000); and Ellen Lust-Okar, *Structuring Conflict in the Arab World: Incumbents, Opponents, and Institutions*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

¹⁵ Many Islamists in Jordan are sensitive to the label "salafi"; I have been told by several interviewees that "I am salafiyya in aqida, but not in movement." It is not clear if salafi participation in electoral politics in Egypt has changed how Jordanian Islamists use the term.

¹⁶ Wiktorowicz, *The Management of Islamic Activism*, 2000; Jacob Olidort, "The Politics of 'Quietist' Salafism." *Analysis Paper*, no. 18 (2015).

but many were discredited or dismantled by security services after the 2005 bomb attack on Hotels in Amman.¹⁷

So far, the rise of ISIS appears to have had little effect on the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood. Analysts' estimates vary widely, but between several hundred to a few thousand Jordanians have gone to fight in Syria since the beginning of the uprising there, mostly to fight with Jabhat al-Nusra.¹⁸ Information is limited, but these jihadists seem to be disproportionately Transjordanians (as opposed to Palestinian-Jordanians) and from Salafi circles, not those of the Brotherhood. Many fewer Jordanians – perhaps dozens to hundreds – have joined ISIS as either fighters or to work in their court system and bureaucracy, but ISIS appears to have made few inroads into Jordan. In May 2014, a group in Ma'an offered an oath of loyalty to ISIS in a YouTube video as the "Ma'an Martyrs' Brigade," but nothing was heard from them since. The February 2015 release of the video showing the gruesome killing of Jordanian Air Force pilot Muath al-Kasasbeh quieted criticisms of the Jordanian role in the anti-ISIS coalition and, at least temporarily, turned public opinion dramatically against ISIS.

Intra-Brotherhood divisions

Journalists and academics studying the Jordanian Islamic Movement focus on ideological coalitions within the Movement and track the successes and failures in intra-Movement elections of purported 'hawks', 'doves', 'centrists', and 'Hamasists'.¹⁹ Shura council and executive positions are often analyzed to assess which of these "current" or coalitions within the Movement is ascendant at any moment.

In contrast, my research suggests that electoral contestation transformed Islamic politics in Jordan into a form of ethnic politics.²⁰ Over time, the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood came to rely more and more upon the votes of Palestinian-Jordanian Islamists and lost the support of Transjordanian Islamists. In 1989, the Brotherhood found electoral support among both native Transjordanians and Jordanians of Palestinian origin. Sixteen of their 22 deputies (73%) elected in 1989 were from districts with a Transjordanian majority, which was proportional to those districts' share of seats designated for Muslims (79%). In subsequent elections, however, the Movement's candidates won fewer seats in Transjordanian majority districts but continued to win at the same rate in Palestinian-Jordanian majority districts. Consequently, the Islamic Movement's political wing increasingly came to represent electorally one "ethnic" group – Palestinian-Jordanians. In the 2003 elections, only five of its 17 deputies (29%) came from Transjordanian majority districts, which was far less than those districts' share of seats designated for Muslims (71%). Brotherhood support has vanished from the Southern

¹⁷ Mohammad Abu Rumman and Hassan Abu Hanieh, *The Jihadi Salafist Movement in Jordan After Zarqawi: Identity, Leadership Crisis and Obscured Vision*, (Amman, Jordan: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2009).

¹⁸ Mona Alami, "The New Generation of Jordanian Jihadi Fighters," February 18, 2014,

<http://carnegieendowment.org/sada/2014/02/18/new-generation-of-jordanian-jihadi-fighters/h17c>

¹⁹ Ibrahim Gharaibeh, *Jama'at al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin fi al-Urdun, 1946-1996* [The Society of the Muslim Brothers in Jordan, 1946-1996], (Amman: Sindabad Publishing House, 1997); Nathan Brown, "Jordan and Its Islamic Movement: The Limits of Inclusion?" *Carnegie Papers*, no. 74 (2006); Mohammad Abu Rumman, *The Muslim Brotherhood in the 2007 Jordanian Parliamentary Elections: A Passing 'Political Setback' or Diminished Popularity*, (Amman, Jordan: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2007); Shadi Hamid, *Temptations of Power: Islamists and Illiberal Democracy in a New Middle East*, (New York: Oxford University Press 2014).

²⁰ Patel, David Siddhartha. 2011. "From Islamic to Ethnic Politics in Jordan." Unpublished manuscript.

Transjordanian heartland, where the Movement won only a single seat in the 2003 and 2007 elections.

Why did this occur? I argue that the ethnic transformation of the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood was an unintended by-product of electoral rule changes in 1993 and gerrymandering in 2001. Changes in voting rules had different effects in different districts; they interacted with differences across communal groups to dramatically reduce the electoral prospects of Brotherhood candidates in Transjordanian districts but not significantly affect candidates in Palestinian-Jordanian majority districts. Redistricting in 2001 deepened Islamists' disadvantages in Transjordanian areas by effectively creating two electoral systems in Jordan: mostly single member districts in Transjordanian majority areas (equivalent to a first-past-the-post system) and multi-member districts in Palestinian-Jordanian majority areas (equivalent to an SNTV system). Since Transjordanians rely more on government jobs and services than Palestinian-Jordanians do, survey data show that they are more likely to want an elected representative who has *wasta*. The Brotherhood's willingness to boycott elections and its confrontational interactions with the regime make its MPs poor interlocutors with government bureaucracies.

The difference between so-called “doves” and “hawks” has more to do with disagreements about how accommodationist the Islamic movement should be with the Jordanian government than it does with ideological differences. Jordan’s Peace Treaty with Israel and controversy over individual members’ connections with Hamas contribute to ethnic tensions within the Jordanian Islamic Movement. But electoral boycotts and poor relations with the regime affect members from Transjordanian-majority areas more than those from Palestinian-majority areas because of differential demand for state services and jobs across those two communities. This relates to *hizb-haraka* relations to the extent that the Muslim Brotherhood’s relationship with the regime affects the IAF. What is almost always described as an ideological divide is better understood as an “ethnic” or communal one. Islamism is not declining among Transjordanians; they are simply not looking towards the Muslim Brotherhood to represent them any longer. Defectors from the leadership of the Muslim Brotherhood since 1989 have been disproportionately Transjordanians. Of the 33 Islamic Movement deputies from 1989 or 1993 or both, I identified ten who subsequently resigned or were expelled from the Islamic Movement for going against nomination decisions, boycotts, or the bloc’s position on votes of confidence. Eight of these ten are Transjordanian, and most represented Transjordanian majority areas such as Karak, Tafileh, and Madaba. At least five were prominent leaders within the Islamic Movement and held executive positions in internal organs. Similarly, members of the Shura Councils and Executive Bureaus of the Muslim Brothers and IAF who have left since 1989 are overwhelmingly and disproportionately Transjordanians. Transjordanian defectors from the Muslim Brotherhood formed The Islamic Center Party in July 2001 with other aspiring politicians from outside the Islamic Movement. The core of the ICP is overwhelmingly Transjordanian, and its leaders are mostly from al-Salt; several are from the same family.

Developments in the past few years have exacerbated this ethnic cleavage within the Movement. The decision to boycott the 2013 parliamentary elections – the second boycott in as many elections – triggered what some observers are describing as the most important challenge the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood has ever faced as an organization. As during previous

boycotts, several members left the organization and ran as independents. But a larger split took shape when a group of mostly Transjordanian “doves” met in Amman’s Zamzam Hotel in October 2013. With government officials in attendance, they called for a greater focus on domestic (i.e., “Jordanian”) issues and for developing a reform program based on the broad principles of Islamic civilization.²¹ This is not a new “post-Arab Spring” divide; rumors of such a split have surfaced regularly since the “doves” lost internal movement elections in 2008. In February 2014, the Shura Council of the Muslim Brotherhood expelled 10 members associated with this Zamzam Initiative, including a former leader of the organization, ostensibly for violating the organization’s bylaws. These members are mostly Transjordanian,²² and Zamzam leaders say that only 15% of the 600 politicians involved in the group are Brotherhood members.²³ In its origins and composition, the Zamzam Initiative resembles, in many ways, the earlier ICP “split.”

In March 2015, the Jordanian government approved an application from defectors from the Islamic Movement, including some of those affiliated with the Zamzam Initiative, to form a licensed *Jordanian* charity under the banner of the Muslim Brotherhood. The original Muslim Brotherhood was licensed in Jordan in 1945/46 as a “charity” and as an “Islamic society” in 1953, but specifically as a branch of the mother Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. For now, it is unclear if the Jordanian government sees the bureaucratic decision in March as the licensing of a new charity or the adjustment of the status of the old organization. In effect, there currently are two Muslim Brotherhoods in Jordan: the older, established, and larger faction which remains nominally connected to movements elsewhere, and the new “Jordanian” Muslim Brotherhood which appears committed to greater collaboration with regime initiatives. The government has not yet ruled whether the old group is illegal or unlicensed or both.

It is far too early to say what long-term impact this “split” in the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood will have, but it is important to note that it is not a new divide. The Muslim Brotherhood survived the breaking away of the Islamic Center Party a decade earlier and the occasional defection of leaders; it likely will similarly survive this most recent loss of several dozen activists and prominent members. The regime might use the court system and bureaucratic licensing to aid the breakaway faction, but it is unclear if the mostly Transjordanian Islamists leaving or being expelled from the Muslim Brotherhood will be able to take any of the organization’s networks and charities with them. The parallel Islamic sector will mostly likely remain loyal to the older Muslim Brotherhood organization. But, this split further divides Jordanian Islamists along “ethnic” lines; it makes the Muslim Brotherhood ever more dependent on Palestinian-Jordanians and could make them even more likely to boycott elections in the future.

Conclusion

King Abdullah was remarkably candid during conversations in early 2013 with a reporter for *The*

²¹ In several respects, the Zamzam platform echoes the goals and language of both the Egyptian Wasat Party and the Jordanian government’s “Islamic outreach” efforts.

Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood: Evolution of an Islamist Movement*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013); Lawrence Rubin and Michael Robbins, “The Rise of Official Islam in Jordan,” *Politics, Religion, and Ideology* 14, no. 1 (2014).

²² I do not have the full list of 10, but all the names I know are Transjordanian

²³ Khaled Neimat, “Brotherhood moving against members involved in Zamzam,” *The Jordan Times*, Nov. 28, 2013, <http://jordantimes.com/news/local/brotherhood-moving-against-members-involved-zamzam%E2%80%99>

Atlantic and expressed his dislike and mistrust of the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood, whom he referred to as a “Masonic cult” and “wolves in sheep’s clothing.”²⁴ Leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood met with the King two months after the Arab Uprisings began, but the two sides present vastly different accounts of what transpired during the meeting. Muslim Brotherhood officials claim that they were invited to join the government and implicitly offered their choice of ministries. The King’s account is worth quoting at length:

“They were the first people I saw in the Arab Spring. They were the loudest voice, so I brought them in, and they said, ‘Our loyalty is to the Hashemites, and we stood with you in the ’40s and ’50s and ’70s,’ and I said, ‘That is the biggest load of crap I have ever heard.’ And they were like, ‘Aaaargh’ – they were shocked. ... My father told me that you guys watched the way things were going, and when you saw that my father was winning, you went with him.’ I said, ‘This is complete and utter bullshit, and if we’re going to sit here and bullshit each other, then we might as well have a cup of tea and then say goodbye. ... If you want to have a serious conversation’ here’s where we start.”

The king continued by outlining areas of common interest and then said, “I think you’re part of the Jordanian system, and I think you should be part of the process. ... I think we all leave this meeting feeling really good, but – I’ll be honest with you – there’s 10 percent distrust from me, and 10 percent distrust from you, I’m sure. But we have good vibes here.”

King Abdullah continues by saying that after the meeting Brotherhood leaders went to Cairo to meet with the Supreme Guide and, after seeing what the Brotherhood had achieved there, decided not to participate in the national-dialogue committee.²⁵

My analysis suggests that both the king and the (old) Muslim Brotherhood understand precisely the game they are playing, and that both sides prefer continuing to play it rather than interact in a different, presumably more confrontational, way. The regime has resisted pressure from its allies—Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and the UAE—to crack down significantly on the Muslim Brotherhood.²⁶ The one thing everyone in Jordan seems to agree on is that no one knows what will happen in the absence of the Hashemites, and with instability in Syria and the Muslim Brotherhood on the run in Egypt, both the king and the Brotherhood share an interest in keeping their established game going. The regime’s bureaucratic support for the Zamzam Initiative will be limited. As much as the king and regime would prefer a more conciliatory and participatory Muslim Brotherhood, they recognize that further dividing the Islamic Movement between mostly Palestinian-Jordanian “hawks” and mostly Transjordanian “doves” risks politicizing the country’s most salient cleavage and could give rise to new social movements and political actors claiming an Islamic identity, including radical ones.

²⁴ Jeffrey Goldberg, “The Modern King in the Arab Spring,” *The Atlantic*, April 2013: 45-55.

²⁵ Ibid p. 54.

²⁶ The most notable exception is when a prominent Muslim Brother leader, Zaki Bani Ersheid, was sentenced to 18 months in prison for criticizing the UAE in a Facebook post. Months after being arrested, however, the post was still publicly available; Bani Ersheid courted arrest and punishment.