

The position of the Islamic Action Front of the political process in the period (1993-2013) in Jordan

Dr. Qasem Althbutat - Assistant Professor Petra University, email: Q_jamel@yahoo.com

Dr. Nermin Ghawanmeh - Assistant Professor Petra University.

Abstract

This paper aim at understanding if the IAF in Jordan could be plausibly described as a vehicle of democratization of the country starting from its historic role of collaboration with the Hashemite monarchy, we have showed its strong willingness to be part of the political process since its first establishment and its gross-rooted support among the Jordanian population. Moreover, we have seen that its high level of educated people among its ranks and leadership is highly likely to guide through a conscious use of the democratic rules of the game. Additionally, the IAF has experience of democratic practice because its inner structure is governed in a democratic way. Furthermore its political platform promotes key democratic principles such as the rule of law, accountability and freedom of expression. What is more is that it has demonstrated its credibility throughout its history of participation in the Jordanian political life, without promoting the overthrow of the regime by any means. To conclude, even if there are some criticalities, these are the one any Islamic party could be charged with and there are successful examples of Islamic party being governing democratic secular country, Turkey is the example above all. For all these reasons, I would argue that the IAF could positively be thought as an active agent of the process of democratization in Jordan.

1.1 Introduction

The Islamic Action Front is the political arm of the Muslim Brotherhood, which have been established under the law of parties, No. 32 of 1992, considering that the Muslim Brotherhood are licensed according to the law of charities and not to the law of political parties, the political arena of Jordan has seen since that date important developments at the domestic level; conducting the parliamentary elections every four years frequently, this process has seen faced with multiple attitudes from the Islamic Action Front Party, ranged between participating and not participating in the elections considering it as a real loss for the democratic process in Jordan, and most of the attitudes of the party towards the political process in Jordan were built on the basis of in-depth study of the political environment in Jordan, which phased the push and pull processes between the Jordanian government and the party.

1.2 Problem of the study

Determined by the problem of the study to detect the Islamic Action Front position towards the parliamentary elections in Jordan, which took place in the years 1993, 1997, 2003, 2007, 2010 and 2013, and which did not gain a sufficient degree of research and analysis, and highlighting the need to conduct further studies upon their importance in the political life of Jordan.

1.3 Objectives of the study

The study aims at identifying the origins and the evolution of the Islamic Action Front in Jordan, and the disclosure of its dimensions of the Jordanian parliamentary elections since 1993 and up to 2013, then aimed at analyzing the motives of those attitudes and explain the vision statement of the party and their perceptions of participating in the elections in general, the vision of forming the government, especially in recent times which has seen unprecedented demands for the party leaders to amend articles 34, 35, and 36, of the Constitution.

1.4 Questions of the study

This study attempts to answer the following two questions:

1. What are the reasons of the diversity of attitudes of the Islamic Action Front towards the Jordanian parliamentary elections?

2. What are the expected attitudes of the Islamic Action Front Party in the upcoming parliamentary elections?

1.5 Study Methodology

This study is an analytical descriptive study, through the descriptive analysis of the dimensions of the problem and drawing an objective results and outcomes about it.

1.6 Previous Studies

Smadiy study (2002), entitled "The role of women in the Islamic parties: A Comparative Study of the Islamic Action Front Party of Jordan and Lebanon's Hezbollah , which views the political participation of women in the political activates in the two parties, and then highlighted the differences between them.

Al -Ghraibeh study (1997) entitled "Brotherhood in Jordan" which argued the relationship of the Islamic movements with the political system and their attitudes about the internal and external political issues.

Al-Shakran study (1997) entitled "The political role of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan" which focused on the case of co-existence between the party and the political system through their political role played in Jordan, by discussing the ability of the Muslim Brotherhood of making balance between their thoughts and the participating in the electoral process, especially in 1989 and dealing with the political parties law in 1992 and the establishment of the Islamic Action Front to be the political arm in line with the law of parties, and then run for political elections 1993.

1.7 Political Parties in Jordan

The Jordanian political environment has witnessed active partisan, tracing its roots back to the early twenties of the last century, because of political awareness which was widespread among intellectuals, employees and students, so that the country's leadership, as the system of government was based on freedom, democracy, respect, and committed to protect human rights. Because any political party does not work without these premises within the intellectual community, there have been several parties with multiple intellectual perspectives within Jordan, which contributed to the achievement of political pluralism (Kayali, 1981).

It is known that the party's goal is to reach a verdict with a view to providing the best forms of service to citizens, and to achieve a better standard for the benefit of the citizen, thus if they could not achieve this goal, by providing advice and guidance, this means frailer to the party in achieving common goals.

1.7.1 The emergence of the Muslim Brotherhood movement

The emergence of the Muslim Brotherhood movement in Jordan was in 1946, as an extension of the mother group in Egypt, founded by Hassan al-Banna in 1928 in Alismailiah city, and then moved to Cairo as a comprehensive movement interested in social and political reform, in the thirties of the twentieth century social interaction and political development of the Muslim Brotherhood are increased, and have been gone currents influential politically and socially. In 1942, during World War II, the brothers work to spread their ideology in all of Transjordan and Palestine, as the Syrian branch moved to the capital Damascus in 1944 (Al-Obeidi, 1992). Musa al-Kilani mentioned in his book (Islamic movements in Jordan and Palestine) that the Islamic movement in Jordan has taken a revolutionary character against the Islamic movements in other countries. King Abdullah the first also congratulated the Islamic brotherhood and allowed them to spread their call in mosques and in public places, and to open branches in different parts of the Kingdom, without any intervention of the security authorities, except in the event of what is causing the violation of the law. This welcoming from King Abdullah the first of establishing the Islamic brotherhood in Jordan related to his believes that the ability of the Muslim brotherhood in Egypt is a power against the king Farouk, who was allied with Saudi Arabia against Jordan. In addition to that he was the dean of (Al Abayet), so he wanted to embrace the Islamic Action in order to contain the Muslim people of Jordan (Omoush, 2008).

1.7.2 Political action of the Muslim Brotherhood

The political action of the Muslim Brotherhood started in 1955, when they opposed the government and stood against it , also they asked the government not to sign the Baghdad treaty; which was regarded as a new colonial agreement , the Muslim Brotherhood was at the forefront of this anti-treaty. Then the evolution of their political work and participation in public affairs emerged as they declared in 1956 their participation in the parliamentary elections, six candidates were nominated, five from the East Bank and one from the West Bank and four of them were successful:

1. Mohammed Abdel-Rahman Khalifa (Al-Balqa)
2. Abdul Baqi Jammu (Circassian seat)
3. Abdul Qader Al Omari (Irbid)
4. Hafez Abu Eid (Hebron)

Confidence was given to the Government of Suleiman Al Nabulsi, and noted that the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan has joined the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine to form one group, and issued a magazine (the Islamic Fight).

The Muslim Brotherhood wasn't welcomed from any system, only in Jordan, however, the martial law did not allow the Brotherhood's prime minister, not to receive any position of important government positions, and their participation was limited in number and duration (Althbytat, 2008).

However, the brothers participated in all elections, and have succeeded in some of them, and they were not in sync with the governments where they were under the dome of the parliament then they blocked confidence. Thereby, they participated in the Ministry of Mudar Badran and they had five ministers in the year 1991 and gave confidence to the government. It was not for this review on the impact of government policies or to adopt needed reforms, therefore subjected to criticism, adding to that they did not want to have the program implemented in the government through the ministries that were depended . Since that the relationship between the party and the government has went uncomfortable, and this opposition were not for the system, but for the governments and their policies only (Hourani, 1997).

1.7.3 The establishment of the Islamic Action Front

The Islamic Action Front (IAF) is Jordan's main Islamist political party, founded in 1992 as the political arm of the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood. After the Hashemite Monarchy initiated elections for the lower house of parliament in 1989, the IAF achieved significant electoral success. Like other Islamist groups in Jordan, it has emphasized reform, moderation, and participation in democratic processes. However, its electoral success spurred the Jordanian Kingdom to alter electoral laws, and legislative initiatives now spring from the monarchy, while parliament often acts as a rubber stamp debating forum. The IAF's primary goals are to implement Islamic law, conceived as compatible with democracy, and to abrogate the peace treaty with Israel. It draws support mainly from the urban poor and the large Palestinian population within Jordan, who benefit from the Brotherhood's charitable programs. In 2010 after internal ideological struggles the IAF pledged to boycott the November elections (Farhan 0.1994).

1.7.4 Membership

The party's membership accepts any Jordanian citizen, male or female, required to have completed eighteen years of age, and is characterized by good morals.

Accordingly, when association any one must submit a written request to the party, and must have a recommendation of two members of the Shura Council or the administrative bodies (branches), and pay the prescribed fee for enrollment and any other financial obligations planned (Statute of the party).

1.7.5 Organizational and administrative structure of the party

The organizational structure of the Islamic Action Front Party consists of bodies, offices, departments and branches of the following:

1. The constituent authority: is composed of people who signed the party system and the names have been presented to the Interior Ministry as the founders, and elect an interim council of the Party and administrative bodies for temporary branches.
2. Authority is composed of members of the Constituent plus each member belongs to the Party
3. General Conference: is an alternative to the general assembly of the party if the number of members increased more than a thousand members.
4. The Shura Council: is composed of 120 members elected by the members of the branches by proportional representation for each branch, and the Council elects secretary general of the party and members of the Executive Office, and the Council is for four years.

5. Executive Office: consists of the Secretary-General and the sixteen-member Shura Council, which is elected by the membership, supports and manages the affairs of the party, and the general budget.
6. General Secretary: He is elected by the Shura Council, which represents the party in official circles.
7. Deputy of General Secretary: shall be elected by the members of the Executive Office, including deputy of general secretary.
8. Assistant Secretary-General for Management.
9. Assistant Secretary-General for Financial Affairs.
10. The governing authorities of the branches: It consists of seven members elected from members of the public authorities in the branches.

1.7.6 Ideology of the Party

Islamic Action Front, (IAF) grew out of Jordan's Muslim Brotherhood. The two overlap in membership and outlook but are not synonymous. The IAF has maintained a strategy of loyal opposition, emphasizing reformist rather than militant tactics, and is by far the largest and best-organized political party in the kingdom.

The Muslim Brotherhood operated with tacit state approval for decades but was technically registered as a charity. After Jordan's political liberalization process began in 1989, the Brotherhood was the best-organized movement in the country. Its candidates won twenty-two out of a total of eighty seats in the new parliament, with twelve more going to independent Islamists. The IAF was founded in 1992, immediately following the legalization of political parties in Jordan for the first time since the 1950s.

The IAF is known for its regressive social views regarding the rights of women but is also active in charitable work for the poor. The party has been a vocal opponent of U.S. policy in the region, especially regarding Palestine and Iraq, and opposed the Jordanian peace treaty with Israel in 1994. Following the treaty, the IAF organized an ongoing campaign to prevent normalization of relations with Israel at any level.

The IAF has developed increasing levels of support among the lower classes and especially among urban Palestinians of various classes. Hence the IAF sees its electoral strengths in urban, Palestinian-majority communities such as Irbid, al-Zarqa, and most districts of Amman. Yet Jordan's electoral laws favour rural areas and traditional sources of support for Jordan's ruling Hashemite family. To the surprise of the regime, however, Islamists dominated the 1989 elections and Islamist leader Abd al-Latif Arabiyyat even served as the elected speaker of the parliament from 1990 to 1993.

Before the 1993 elections, changes in the elections laws and the unpopular performances of Islamist leaders as cabinet ministers led to a decrease in IAF electoral success. The IAF took sixteen seats and six more went to independent Islamists. IAF secretary general Ishaq Farhan did manage to keep his parliamentary seat, but Arabiyyat lost his re-election bid. In recognition of his importance and influence in the Islamist movement, however, the king appointed Arabiyyat to the upper house of parliament.

The IAF and most opposition parties, from the secular left through the religious right, demanded a revision of the electoral law. When no changes were made, the IAF led a coalition of eleven opposition parties from across the political spectrum in an electoral boycott. As a result, no IAF members were seated in the 1997 - 2001 parliaments, but six independent Islamists did secure seats, including former IAF members Abdullah Akayla and Bassam Ammush. Since IAF figures had been successful within Jordan's professional associations, winning key leadership posts, these associations took the lead, in the absence of the IAF from the 1997 - 2001 parliaments, in maintaining IAF activism on such issues as the anti-normalization campaign.

The IAF returned to full electoral participation in 2003, despite a new electoral law that increased the number of deputies to 110 (including a minimum of six seats for women) and maintained uneven electoral districts. The party negotiated its participation with the palace, fielding only thirty candidates. Secretary General Hamza Mansur and Shura Council president Arabiyyat (president of the party's Shura or consultative council) decided not to run themselves, and also excluded controversial IAF figures such as Abd al-Mun'im Abu Zant. Abu Zant, who shortly thereafter won a seat as an independent, was expelled from the IAF for running anyway. The party gained eighteen seats in the election, including one for Haya al-Musaymi, the only woman candidate in the IAF, who won the largest vote of any woman candidate. An additional six seats went to independent Islamists, many of whom, like Abu Zant, were former IAF members. Having returned to parliament, and with a solid base in the professional associations, the IAF pursued its agenda: abrogating the 1994 peace treaty; preventing normalization of relations with Israel; supporting Palestinian aspirations; countering U.S. dominance in the region; and establishing *shari'a* and more traditional roles for men and women in Jordanian society.

1.7.7 Financing of the Party:

The resources of the party consists of enrollment members fees, contributions ,donations, grants ,endowments from the popular and official authorities, bequests, and proceeds of investment funds within the Kingdom, and any other financial resources approved by the executive office and consistent with the law of parties.

1.7.8 Islamic Action Front Party of Shura and democracy

Shura is basically a decision making process — consultative decision making — that is considered either obligatory or desirable by Islamic scholars. Those scholars who choose to emphasize the Quranic verse: “...and consult with them on the matter” (3:159) consider Shura as obligatory, but those scholars who emphasize the verse wherein “those who conduct their affairs by counsel” (43:38) are praised, consider Shura as desirable. Remember the first verse directly addressed a particular decision of the Prophet and spoke to him directly, but the second verse is more in the form of a general principle. Perhaps this is the reason why, traditional Islamic scholars have never considered consultation as a necessary and as a legitimizing element of decision making. The Islamic Action Front Party is considered one of the Islamic parties that adopt the trend of Islamic ideology by committing to Islamic law, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, and its authority is the Koran and the Sunnah, as they are the principles of constitutional rule that maintain personal freedom, and derive its powers from the nation. Therefore, the Islamic parties, including the Islamic Front Party believes that democracy is heresy stems from the legacy of Western civilization and Western philosophical and ideological nature that it seeks to impose the hegemony of Western culture based on secularism and the separation of religion and state. Barakat believes that the Islamic parties, including the Islamic Action Front Party Shura pose as a substitute for democracy, it's to consider it's based on the extraction and solicit the views of the nation and stirring views to choose the best. It was made in the Shura of the pillars of Islamic thought and rules of governance and it's a way for the reform of society and the state (Barkat, 2009).

As the party's objectives are unique in the larger issue of democratic, it emphasizes the importance of ensuring the freedom of opinion and expression for all citizens, as well as respect entity women and their legitimate rights and their role in the community development in the context of the Islamic virtues, and give them the opportunity to participate in public life, to highlight women leaders in political action.

1.8 Women in the Islamic Action Front Party

The interior system of the Action Front Party and even their political agendas in the parliamentary elections confirms the role of women and respect for their rights, and allow participating in public and political life. This was confirmed by previous General Secretary of the party (Al-Farhan) at the beginning of its establishment saying: " women are equal to men at the level of humanity and dignity, they are half of the society in which it is necessary for the participation of harmonious cooperating with the other half to ensure the right building of the society " (Al-Farhan, 1994).

13 Ladies have participated in the party's establishment. Also, the Shura Council, can only accept one lady to enter, who is Nawal Faouri. While none of ladies reach to the Executive Office of the party, which includes seventeen members, including the -General Secretary (Alfakeer, 2001).

1.9 The Political Action of the Islamic Action Front

The main objective of the establishment of the Islamic Action Front is the political action, but from an Islamic perspective, and this was expressed by the General Secretary of the Party Al-Farhan saying: "The party is not a religious party sectarian nor regional, but it is an Islamic party, brings together citizens for political action from the perspective of Islam " (Dabbas, 1995). The party exercised his political actions of Islamic thoughts with data associated with contemporary reality and seeking to future directions; it clings to the Shura Council and democracy in his post, and seeks the active participation of its members in the formulation of his political approach. The political dimension of the party is the application of Islamic law and the adoption of a number of practical projects for the application of the slogan (Islam is the solution), and the development of Islamic political theory (Ma'ayteh, 1994).

The party has attended in the parliamentary elections in the twelve of October 1993, after the issuance of the law of parties to the 1992 (Act One Voice), which strongly opposed by the Muslim Brotherhood, calling it governs the presence of Islamists in parliament and threatened to boycott the elections.

1.10 Elections in 1997

In 1994 Abdul Majeed Thunaibat was elected as the third observer of Brotherhood, the party held in 1996 an internally conference to assess the progress of fifty years, and as a result of the continued decline in the practice of democracy and restrictions on the Islamic movement after the signing of the treaty (Wadi Araba), which opposed by the party strongly, as they saw necessity to review the formal political participation, including the Chamber of Deputies. The Muslim Brotherhood and the Islamic Action Front Party elections, Boycotted after

the government refused to meet their demands to participate in the elections, particularly the repeal of the one-vote (Alrashwana, 2004).

1.11 Elections in 2003

The Islamic Action Front Party election fought in 2003 with a list of (30) candidates only. But some observers believe that the Islamic Action Front fought the elections with two separate lists declared and undeclared, the second list includes about a dozen candidates. Perhaps the biggest surprise in the election is for the Islamists (17) seats only, one for women; she won by the women's quota. This constitutes a significant decline for the representation of the Islamic Action Front in parliament, which represents 15% of the total 110 seats in parliament (Hourani, 1998) General Comptroller Deputy; the spokesman of the Muslim Brotherhood Jamil Abu Bakr Has justified in a news conference, saying: "There are violations and many abuses occurred, media professionals and journalists watched it, and they are witnesses to acts of fraud", he also added that it has been buying votes openly in many areas, especially in regions of Amman , as the elections are held by the cards did not prove the constituency.

1.12 Elections 2007 and the significant decline of the party

The fifteen parliamentary elections of the House of Representatives (2007) in order to supplement the lives of democracy parliamentary, which returned to Jordan since 1989, did not register any province of Jordanian political parties for this election.... Parties that presented candidates to represent them on the elections which were limited to six parties, compared with nine parties participated in the previous election. The Islamic Front Party has opposed the elections, and then work against candidates (Hourani and others, 2007).

1.13 Elections 2010 and insisting on the boycott

After the loss which suffered by the Islamic movement in elections (2007), in addition to the political circumstances in the Arab region of the harbingers of the democratic Arab Spring, and that led to the fall of Arabic regimes in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen and Libya, and the new populism spirit, which weighed on the political scene of Jordan . Brotherhood participated in appearing a popular and political movement, stopping of this movement demands for reform and anti-corruption, and constitutional amendments and parliamentary governments. The political circumstances came with the decision of boycott the elections in 2010 (Abu Rumman and Abu Haniyeh, 2012).

1.14 Conclusion

The Islamic Action Front seeks to strengthen its political influence even it lacks any real program to change society politically, religiously, and develop the economy and raise the level of industry, agriculture and trade. Could the Islamic Action Front be considered as a vehicle of democratization of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan? The Kingdom experienced regular protests since the early months of 2011. The so called "Arab Spring" is not overthrowing the regime in Jordan, even though people have been taking to the streets almost every Friday for more than two years, and the most active promoter of the protests have been the IAF.

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