



**EUROPEAN UNION APPROACH TOWARDS ISLAMIC POLITICAL
PARTIES IN THE CONTEXT OF THE ARAB SPRING,
THE CASE OF JORDAN**

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ABSTRACT

In deze thesis wordt onderzocht hoe de EU-relaties met de islamitische politieke partijen veranderd zijn als gevolg van de Arabische lente en meer specifiek na de electorale winst en het in de regering komen van deze partijen in Tunesië, Marokko en Egypte.

Zowel het algemeen conceptueel Europees beleid ten opzichte van de politieke Islam als het concrete engagement met de politiek-islamitische bewegingen in de praktijk worden geanalyseerd. Dit laatste gebeurt via een case studie, namelijk van Jordanië. Deze keuze is relevant precies omdat de Arabische lente daar nog geen verandering gebracht heeft in het regime, noch in de positie van de partij IAF (*Islamic Action Front*).

Deze thesis toont aan hoe - zelfs zonder een uitgesproken algemeen concept - de EU omgang met de politieke Islam duidelijk veranderd is, en wel van een politiek van onder controle houden (*containment*) naar één van voorzichtig engagement. Tegelijkertijd maak ik duidelijk dat, precies omdat deze verschuiving niet normatief maar wel pragmatisch is, de Europese relaties met de islamitische politici afhankelijk zijn van de specifieke context en strategische interesses die de EU hanteert in elk respectievelijk land van Noord-Afrika en het Midden-Oosten.

Daarom is het dat in Jordanië, niet tegenstaande een groeiende openheid van zowel de EU als het IAF ten opzichte van mekaar en een boom van hun onderlinge contacten, deze laatste toch op een laag niveau blijven: terwijl het IAF uitkijkt naar het ontwikkelen van relaties in wederzijds respect, verzamelen de Europeanen vooral informatie en beogen ze geen bindend engagement.

Deze thesis gebruikt een diachronische vergelijkende analyse, met het jaar 2011 als keerpunt. Het veldonderzoek is in grote mate gebaseerd op interviews uitgevoerd tussen maart en november 2012.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to make a personal comment before proceeding with the academic text, because I regard it honest to the reader to acknowledge my background and interlinked normative convictions. As a citizen of a country that had its ‘Spring’ twice in recent history whereas it once failed and once succeeded largely due to external forces – respectively in 1968 and 1989 – I could not erase these parallels from my mind when working on this project. That is why I felt touched by the hopes of the Jordanians I talked to, who were working for democracy, the rule of law and a better living in their country. Added to that, as a European and somebody who has worked for the EU project from a national context, I felt to a large extent personally addressed by the question whether the EU was delivering on its aims to support democracy in Jordan. What I found through my research was at times disappointing. I will, however, do my best to keep personal concerns and comments confined to these sentences and in what follows strive to apply a non-personal scientific method of inquiry.

I would like to thank my family for making possible my studies, of which this thesis is a culmination. I think especially of my husband and parents who took care of my daughter.

Where this document refers to or reports statements made by interviewees every effort has been made to provide a fair representation of their views and opinions, but the ultimate responsibility for accuracy lies with this document’s author.

TERMINOLOGY

I use the term Arab Spring for the sake of convenience because it is most commonly used to designate the wave of anti-authoritarian protests in the MENA, which began in Tunisia in December 2010. I am aware of the critique of this term especially on the grounds of its Orientalist connotations (El-Mahdi, 2011). In my comparative perspective I take the year 2011 as a turning point to what was before and after the Arab Spring. This is not to suggest that I consider the processes as complete but rather to stress that this period was one of rupture in many concepts about the MENA: I therefore identify 2011 as a point of reference and take this year as synonymous with ‘Arab Spring’. At the same time I also employ the term ‘Arab uprisings’, which captures the on-going nature of the anti-authoritarian protests. In the chapter on Jordan I opt for the term *hirak* (mobilization) that is used in that context.

Islamists are for the purpose of this text defined as those who believe that systems of governance should be rooted in Islamic beliefs and practices.

I use the term ‘European diplomats’ to refer to diplomats directly in the services of the individual EU member states. I use the term ‘EU diplomats’ to describe those that work for the supranational EU institutions i.e. for the European Union as a community.

For other, standardised acronyms and abbreviations see Glossary.

For the transcript of Arabic names of my interviewees I used the style that they themselves prefer (e.g. what stands on their visit cards).

GLOSSARY

EEAS: European External Action Service

ENP: European Neighbourhood Policy

HR/VP: High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice-President of the European Commission

IAF: Islamic Action Front

MB: Muslim Brotherhood

MENA: Middle East and North Africa, also termed as Mashrek and Maghreb

INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER

CONTEXT

The mass protests in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) which came to be known as the Arab Spring brought powerful dynamics of political change toppling incumbent autocracies but also unleashing armed conflicts. “The people want a change of the regime” has become the call of 2011 and carried further than the region itself. In its effect it changed the way the MENA countries relate to the outside world and vice versa. In this context a reassessment of the relationship between the European Union and the MENA region and individual countries was formulated¹. Part of this ongoing re-evaluation is establishing relations with new partners in governments and parliaments. In reality the term new partners has almost become a euphemism for Islamist politicians and Islamic political parties.

Even though the Arab Spring revolts were not initiated by the Islamists, they were able to establish themselves as the strongest alternative and in most MENA countries where elections took place in the course of 2011/2012 they received undeniable popular legitimacy through the ballot boxes. The success of the Islamists is a cause for worries for their ideological opponents. Both in the region and in the West there is some angst of an ‘Islamic Winter’ following the Arab Spring translated in its softer form into calls for vigilance on the policies that Islamist-led governments will pursue. In countries like Tunisia and Egypt the recent political transition process has been marked by heated debates relating to the role of religion in society and state. For the EU, its engagement with the Islamists has been formulated as part of an acute need to get to know each other better, build trust and framed within the priority of fostering democracy and prosperity in the region. Democratisation and political Islam has, therefore, been put on the same side of the equation in countries where Islamist parties are in power. In the past, fears of Islam and reluctance to accept Islamic political forces characterised EU approach to the MENA together with an emphasis on security, stability, combating terrorism and illegal migration. Today, even for the critics and sceptics, the rapprochement with the Islamists is dictated by reality.

In Jordan the victories of Islamist parties in the vicinity and the concomitant shift in EU approach have an undeniable effect on perspectives as well as self-perceptions of all political actors, domestic or foreign. In 2011 the king Abdullah II re-started a pre-emptive reform process which entailed alterations of laws governing elections and political parties and also some changes to the constitution without substantially diminishing the monarch’s large powers. At the time of my field research the participation of the strongest opposition party - the Islamic Action Front (IAF) - in the upcoming parliamentary elections was not guaranteed, but the regional and national context had clearly galvanized the contacts between the EU, its member states’ embassies and IAF. However, amidst the

worsening crisis in Syria and an unstable neighbourhood altogether, the status quo in Jordan was a priority for the EU. I will discuss these issues more in depth in the introduction to the Jordan case study (chapter 2).

This thesis takes a close look at the recent shifts and adjustments in general EU policies towards political Islam and how these are translated into practice; in particular regarding IAF's relations with the Europeans and vice versa. The IAF as a major opposition force would benefit from a meaningful political liberalisation in Jordan. According to the revised European Neighbourhood Policy, the EU is poised to support "deep and sustainable democracy" in Jordan and in the MENA at large (European Commission & HR/VP, 2011a, p. 3). Do this context and the 'uncramping' of relations with moderate Islamists bring the two parties closer together? What does the Jordanian case tell us about the dynamics and factors currently at play in the engagement between the EU and the Islamist political parties in the MENA?

RESEARCH QUESTIONS & THEIR RELEVANCE

Research questions:

How did the rise of Islamic political parties to government power or prominence in opposition in the context of the Arab Spring affect the way the European Union deals with political Islam in its foreign policy? Case study Jordan.

1. How did the EU deal with political Islam prior to Arab Spring both conceptually and practically?
2. How does the EU deal with political Islam today both conceptually and practically?
3. How does the Jordanian Islamic Action Front react to these developments vis-à-vis the EU?

Delimitation:

Geographically this thesis concerns the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and more specifically in its case study the Hashemite kingdom of Jordan. Temporally it focuses on the latest developments in the years 2011 & 2012. Conceptually my concern is with the EU foreign policy vis-à-vis the moderate Islamist parties i.e. those that are committed to non-violence and constitutional and legal means in the pursuit of their goals/ regard the democratic system of governance (institutions and processes) as compatible with the principles of Islam.

This thesis does not aspire to be a study about EU policymaking as such but rather a study of one component of the evolution of the European vision of the Arab world namely Islamic politics.

Relevance

Why is this important? Because the EU is reformulating her policies to the MENA, which is a neighbouring region of primary strategic importance when we think of economic interests, migration, regional conflicts etc. A part of the ongoing reassessment is how to relate to the Islamists. Furthermore, the way the EU and the Islamists work together will be important for the individual MENA countries and a factor shaping the outcome of the current transitions. Ultimately this new relationship will also influence how political Islam is perceived in Europe and in that way could link to an internal European issue, that of its Muslim minorities. In short, these are issues that receive popular attention in our societies and are therefore worth to study scientifically.

CONCEPTUAL CONTEXT – STATUS QUAESTIONIS

I will now undertake to summarise the academic debates about the Islamists, their democratic credentials and the arguments for EU engagement with Islamic political forces in the MENA. The reason this is useful is first of all because academics were formulating proposals for the EU policymakers, secondly because the debates of the time allow me to contextualize the current developments and formulate indicators of change and thirdly because the Status Quaestionis provides a theory that is a necessary element to sustain my case study. Next to the issue of political Islam I will also touch upon the evaluations of the recently renewed EU policy frameworks towards the MENA.

Debates on political Islam

Studies about political Islam² as such and the Western relationship with this ideology were in vogue since the 1979 Iranian revolution but mushroomed particularly since the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001. The ‘Global War on Terror’ declared after 9/11 fed into a long tradition of picturing the Arab - Islamic as the contrary of the European - Christian. The popular feeling of a threat to the West coming from the Muslim world found expression and influential arguments in the works of Bernard Lewis and Samuel Huntington³. The clash of civilizations paradigm became well known in the Arab world as well.

As a reaction numerous academics undertook to challenge the fears of irrational, West-hating, Muslim fanatics as the generalized picture of all Muslims. They argued against the culturalist models according to which the whole Muslim world shared a common set of values through which it could be understood. By extension they challenged the view that political Islam was a somewhat unique ‘thing’ that had to be studied in specific terms – with a specific epistemology – as a discrete historical phenomenon of the Muslim world. This intellectual debate contributed to the understanding that political Islam was a diverse phenomenon and that there was no one single theory to account for it. What remained were the vexed question of secularism and the Western concept of a modern

democratic state, which is founded on the decoupling of religion and politics, of church and state. Even though it was academically widely accepted that the understanding of secularism was a legacy of particular historical experiences that played out in Europe over several centuries – namely the Enlightenment, the wars of religion, the curbing of the influence of Catholic Church by sovereigns and the liberal political thought (Mandaville, 2007, pp. 7-11; Tibi, 2008, pp. 6-14) - and as such could not be posited as universal, for EU policymakers, as I will show further, this normative lens was hard to discard. Even for many academics, the vague notion of ‘Islamic political culture’ formed an important part of the answer to why the MENA had not changed in the ‘third wave’ of democratisation in the early 1990’s (Volpi, 2009).

Next to the traditional Orientalist views on ‘Islam’ that informed European perceptions of and responses to the growth of political Islam in the MENA were also realist notions of regional security that posited Islamists as a threat (Volpi, 2009). Although in 2007 Emerson and Youngs wrote that “it has become almost universally accepted that Islam’s more radical forms... should be understood as reflective of a prevailing context, and not unchanging Islamic textual tenet or principle.” (Emerson & Youngs, 2007, p. 2) the old prejudices against and fears of Islam were quite stubborn and prevailing. The perceived need to keep on engaging these arguments was dictating the analytical categories and points of departure still one decade after 9/11 (Schwedler, 2011).

Europe and Islamists in the MENA: why and how to engage

The academic literature advocating EU engagement with the Islamists was part and parcel of the argumentation in favour of the view that Islam could be “a positive mobilising force for democracy, social justice and stability in the Middle East” (Emerson & Youngs, 2007, p. 3). As far as analyses advocating the contrary, i.e. non-engagement, the argument was a mirror image of the former: mainly built around a scepticism as to the constructive and relevant force that political Islam was or because Islamists were suspected of using democratic procedures to arrive at power but then change the rules of the game according to the infamous principle ‘one man, one vote, one time’. Other critique addressed the fact that an Islamist political party exploits faith to arrive at power. I will, however, not discuss these points of view in detail here for one main reason: the current realities in the MENA propelled the Islamists to a position that non-engagement is out of question. To do justice to the debates suffice it to say that advocates of engagement were also pointing to ‘grey zones’ of Islamists policies, where ambiguities and illiberal views prevailed (e.g. Islamic law, civil and political rights, gender equality, and religious freedoms) (Brown, Hamzawy & Ottaway, 2006). On the other hand, as Volpi (2009) analysed, the problem of these concepts was that by measuring the Islamists’ convergence with the Western liberal democratic model, the latter was posited as the ultimate goal of democracy promotion in the region turning a blind eye to alternatives that the Islamists were formulating. This, in turn, made adequate policy engagement extremely difficult.

By first decade of the twenty first century the attention turned to case studies of Islamists' attitudes towards 'democracy' as there were concrete examples of non-violent, pragmatic, internally democratic Islamic political parties in the MENA (e.g. Morocco, Egypt, Jordan) that accepted pluralism, advocated gradual change and competed for political power within existing institutions (Hamzawy, 2005). In other words, no Islamic revolution or imposition of a theocracy had to be feared from those Islamists. European scholars argued as early as 1998 that political Islam would be an unavoidable reality of the transition processes (Vasconcelos, 2012, p. 12). In this vein, if the EU's stated goal was to foster democracy, prosperity and stability in its southern neighbourhood, then this would best have to be done, academics argued, by engaging the moderate Islamists.

The democratisation argument was used not only on the country or regional level but also regarding the internal dynamics of the Islamist parties in question or the power balance on the Islamist spectrum. It was held that a positive stance from Europe could potentially empower the reformist and moderates and on the contrary if the EU would not act upon its words and support democratisation, the disaffection with the status quo could play into the cards of violent and extremist Islamists, which were poised to radically challenge the political order. This argument was based on the premise that exposure to the political process would have a moderating effect; or, put negatively, that if moderate Islamists remained excluded, the chances for radical strands of Islam to take their place were growing. (Brown et al., 2006, p. 19; Hamzawy, 2005; Shahin, 2005, p. 3; Springborg, 2009, pp. 2-3). It needs to be added that according to other accounts this idea was more of an hypothesis than a proved rule (Echagüe, 2009) and it could not be warranted that inclusion linearly creates moderation (Schwedler, 2006). Some authors saw the threat not so much in the radicalisation of moderate Islamists but in their alliance with incumbent autocrats: "Authoritarianism is bad enough but Islamist authoritarianism would be even worse." (Springborg, 2009, p. 14)

With deteriorating political and economic conditions and popular discontent in the MENA, the calls on the EU to engage with those that were formulating alternatives was growing further. The need for dialogue with political Islam was in this vein substantiated by studies showing that the Islamic movements were socially and culturally embedded in the grass-roots. According to these authors, the Islamists represented a real alternative to existing parties and state-sponsored organisations in the MENA not only thanks to coherent political strategies but also because they were formulating and above all practicing a social and economic programme. This was in stark contrast to the other political parties described as self-interested clubs built around individuals and disconnected from the daily realities of most citizens (Berger, 2004; Brown et al., 2006; Hamzawy, 2005; Kausch, 2012; Shahin, 2005). Islamic parties and organisations were often the most popular and best organised and EU's lack of engagement was conspicuous especially while it was advocating the strengthening of civil society in the MENA. Furthermore, authors were pointing to the weakness and irrelevance (sometimes even popular resentment) that characterised the western-bred, secularist, non-governmental organisations

(Khakee, 2009; Mikhelidze & Tocci, 2009). Against this backdrop it was argued that neglecting popular Islamist parties came down to disregarding the will of a majority of the population (Echagüe, 2009).

As already mentioned, a plethora of works emerged explaining the heterogeneity in political Islam and therefore the need for a fine-grained approach from the EU. In this vein, a study by CEPS & FRIDE⁴ in 2007 (Emerson & Youngs, 2007) gave detailed and comparable information on the Islamists in seven MENA countries and on their perspectives on European foreign policy. It is this volume that will serve as backdrop for my assessment of a shift in IAF approach to the EU. The conclusion of the case studies was by and large that the Islamists in question were altogether open towards engagement because they tactically sought European support for democratic openings in their countries and had positive views of European democracy in general. At the same time they criticized EU's perceived unwillingness to support democratic reform in the MENA and were very critical of its position towards Hamas. If on economic policy they were supportive of the European model, they strongly criticised the European concept of liberal and permissive civil rights. Even though they had little specific knowledge of EU policies in the region they did not feel addressed by them but rather regarded them as initiatives to contain Islam (Emerson & Youngs, 2007, pp. 9-11). Consequently the authors called upon the EU to review "its current policies of virtual neglect" of the Muslim democrat parties and reach out to them while they were open for it (Emerson & Youngs, 2007, p. 11).

Moving on to academic proposals on how to engage with political Islam in the MENA, let me review the principle objectives, as spelled out by Mikhelidze & Tocci (2009, pp. 153-155) proceeding from least ambitious to most ambitious: (i) engage with political Islam in order to understand the movements and through them better understand political and societal trends in the MENA. (ii) Engage political Islam in order to enhance its role as a force of political change and for the purpose of promoting democracy. (iii) Engage to ensure the success of peace processes such as in Palestine and Lebanon.

Clearly the practical engagement responded to the way in which Islamists were perceived. In other words, what importance they were given as a political force vis-à-vis other policy considerations the EU had.

Probably of greatest importance is the need to clarify what the EU is seeking from engagement with Muslim democrats. While information exchange and general dialogue serve the purposes of increasing mutual familiarity and probably reducing misunderstanding and associated tensions, these are not truly strategic objectives. (Springborg, 2009, p. 182)

Besides proposals on how to engage political Islam there were also a few studies on the actual EU or US engagement (Hamid & Kadlec, 2010; Kausch, 2009; Yacoubian, 2007). Most detailed from a

European perspective was Kausch's research in 2008 on the ways in which the EU engaged (or did not) with the Islamists in the different national settings in the MENA. She summarised the factors that determined if and how contacts developed as follows (pp.132-133):

(a) The degree of European interest in establishing dialogue with a specific group (for example a rising political force likely to win elections); (b) the diplomatic risk entailed (the group's legal status and overall relation with the regime); (c) the interest of engaging as opposed to other strategic interests that require good relations with the domestic regime (such as regional conflict, anti-terror cooperation, trade, migration, energy); (d) the possible repercussions engagement may have in the European domestic context (for example, in large Muslim immigrant communities).

Even though there was a large number of scholars arguing in favour of EU and US assistance for more political liberalization and the inclusion of Islamists, there was consensus among academics that neither the EU nor the US for that matter had in practice developed a clear policy how to respond to moderate Islamist political forces in the MENA (Hamid & Kadlec, 2010; Hammerstein, 2010, p. 18). Worse still, there were flagrant instances where the EU was reluctant to accept a vote that favoured the Islamists (Egypt 2005, Palestinian territories 2006). In this context the infamous 'democratisation / Islamists dilemma' was often evoked. The EU was nominally supporting democratisation (and thereby opening up of the political arena for the opposition embodied by Islamic political parties) but in practice propping up authoritarian regimes and harbouring suspicions about Islam.

Conceiving EU policies towards the MENA after the Arab Spring

The Arab uprisings in 2011 put both policymakers and analysts in front of numerous challenges because they contradicted the paradigms of academic theories as well as practical policies (Pace & Cavatorta, 2012; Balfour, 2012). Certain points of analyses were, nevertheless, confirmed by events. One such was the critique of EU role in the MENA because it preached democracy but supported authoritarian regimes driven by considerations of security & stability, interests in economic liberalisation and free trade policies while restricting migration and imposing border controls. The strength and momentum of the popular uprisings was indeed such that the proverbial Kaiser could himself no longer pretend to be clothed: The 'mea culpa' for cooperating with authoritarians sounded from the highest ranks of EU representatives (Fülle, 2011). Notwithstanding this rhetoric, analyses of the renewed European Neighbourhood Policy⁵ and of the EU reformulated approach to the MENA⁶ point out that EU policies in these fields are not more than a re-branding of already existing initiatives and policy guidelines (Echagüe, Michou & Mikail, 2011; Teti, 2012; Teti & Gervasio, 2011; Tocci, 2011). While on paper some emphasis shifted (e.g. highlighting *deep* democracy or refining conditionality of EU support) there are no new tools how to insure that practice will not lag behind the proclamations and the incentives for the new conditionality remain limited.

Further still, in light of the important socio-economic demands behind the Arab uprisings, some academics and practitioners point to the flagrant lack of reflection on the EU economic policies in the MENA. According to these accounts the EU is reproducing the ‘transition to democracy paradigm’ as the belief that neoliberal economic reforms are the right path and a condition for democracy to take root (Pace & Cavatorta, 2012) whereas the trade and investment agenda that the EU is pushing is unsupportive of development needs of its partner countries in the MENA (The Arab NGO Network for Development, 2012). It is fair to say, at the same time, that part of the formal re-evaluation of the ENP was a recognition of the need for a sustainable socio-economic development. In a deeper analysis, however, the new *Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity* is not a qualitative break with past EU policies because civil-political rights are constructed as prime and distinct to socio-economic rights (Teti, 2012).

At this point it is interesting to note that the MENA Islamists share the economic concepts of the EU, are eager to attract foreign direct investment and pragmatically respect the main premises of EU policy in the MENA (Al-Anani, 2012a; Gerges, 2012, Kausch, 2012). Islamists economic policies are favouring free-market capitalism even though they accept the model of active state intervention in the economy and will be pressed to focus on distributive policies to address the socio-economic problems (Gerges, 2012; Ülgen, Brown, Ottaway & Salem, 2012; Vasconcelos, 2012). Besides economic and trade policies, other more immediate concerns of the EU facing Islamist-led MENA countries are security of the region (energy security, counter-terrorism, migration) including peace treaties with Israel. In all these aspects, Islamist parties are identified as pragmatic and careful to maintain good relations with the West. The fact that the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood party (Freedom and Justice Party) declared respect for all existing international treaties and their practical stance in the last Gaza war in November 2012 confirmed their intention not to upend Israel and to reassure the West (International Crisis Group, 2012b). Yet Vasconcelos (2012, p. 20) argued that in 2011 Europe received what he termed the Arab democratic wave with hesitation and ambiguity because Europeans still had a principle difficulty with Islam. Therefore the need to gain a better understanding of each other was seen as even more pressing than it was prior to the Arab Spring (Ottaway & Muasher, 2012; Vasconcelos, 2012).

The academic arguments regarding EU approach to political Islam did not change in essence with the Arab Spring. Rather, some emphases shifted. The need to refute cultural and religious determinism - i.e. the conviction that Islam is by nature incompatible with progress, pluralism and democracy - resurged as well as the necessity to recognize that a strict separation between the state and religion was not an absolute prerequisite for a democratic political system. These arguments regained importance especially regarding countries where a wholly new concept of the state and citizenship plus the role religion should play in politics are a hot domestic issue like in Tunisia and Egypt (Mikaïl, 2012; Ottaway & Muasher, 2012; Vasconcelos, 2012). It is argued that the West should abstain from taking

sides between Islamists and secularists focusing instead on practical policies such as helping to create jobs and facilitate consensus that is essential for the success of democratic transitions (Ülgen et al., 2012; Vasconcelos, 2012, pp. 93-94). Numerous authors appeal to the need to judge the Islamists on their results while at the same time being sympathetic to the ambiguity that will continue to characterise them as after years of isolation they have to define their position on a whole variety of political issues (Hesová, 2012; Ottaway & Muasher, 2012; Vasconcelos, 2012). As the case was made prior to the Arab Spring, it is not about singling out some actors but about defining a coherent support to the democratic processes and a new EU strategic approach to the MENA at large (Youngs, 2011). In this regard analysts speak of a post-Western Middle East (Vasconcelos, 2012, p. 101) because of a growing emancipation from the patron-client relationship that has characterised EU relations with the MENA in the past (Kausch, 2012).

EU-IAF engagement

Numerous studies have been written on the Jordanian Islamists (Abu Rumman, 2007; Clark, 2006; Schwedler, 2006), their relation with the Hashemite monarchy (Brown, 2006; Choucair, 2006, Mandaville, 2007, pp. 130-141), and the influence of the international context and politics (Brand, 1999; Hammerstein, 2010; Valbjørn & Bank, 2007; Yacoubian, 2007) but there is no study on the EU-IAF engagement as such. In the previously mentioned volume on ENP and Islamists' perspectives of EU foreign policy (Emerson & Youngs, 2007), seven MENA countries were in the focus. Unfortunately, a case study of Jordan was not included. However, I use the conclusions of this book, as discussed above, as a point of reference on Islamists' attitudes towards Europe for the period prior to the Arab Spring, and consider it applicable to Jordan as well. In my own work I also amply refer to Kausch (2009), who gave an overview of Europe's engagement with moderate Islamists based on fieldwork in 2008. Her study does not concern Jordan in particular but is an excellent source of information on the practice of EU engagement with Islamic political actors prior to the Arab Spring. It later became part of a publication that further expands the general assessment of EU policy towards political Islam especially in the contributions by Asseburg, Mikhelidze & Tocci (Emerson et al., 2009). Finally, in 2010, Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung and the Project on Middle East Democracy (POMED) organised a conference dedicated to practical strategies for engaging political Islam with as its focus Egypt and Jordan (Hamid & Kadlec, 2010). This research and literature related to the period prior to 2011 constitute the backbone of my own hypotheses and evaluations. I will report their findings in more detail in chapter 1 in the section discussing EU policy prior to the Arab Spring.

As already advanced, my own research connects to the discussed literature while attempting to fill a certain gap. At the time of my writing there was no specific research available on the precise evolution of EU policies towards political Islam after 2011 or conceptualizing what was actually happening in reality. Researchers previously engaged in these topics confirmed to me that it was a very interesting

and pertinent question but they were of the opinion that it was still too early to make judgments⁷. The short timeframe probably partly explains why academics don't pronounce themselves on this subject as yet. Another difficulty may lie in the challenge posed by the questioning of long held paradigms: Scholars were for a long time arguing for EU engagement with the Islamists on the grounds that they were THE alternative to incumbent regimes in the MENA. The Arab uprisings, however, challenged this assumption in their early stages because the Islamists were not initially involved in the popular protests. Despite the fact that Islamists did assert themselves through ballot boxes in subsequent phases of transitions in Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, there is an open question as to who will be the actors and protagonists that will bear the most significant print on the unfolding political processes in the MENA (Pace & Cavatorta, 2012). The important internal developments that the Islamic parties are themselves undergoing in the new context make judgements precarious (Ülgen et al., 2012). Pronouncing ultimate verdicts is also not the aim of my thesis let alone the fact that I don't aspire at making positivist assertions about 'the truth' of EU-Islamists relations. Aware of the described limitations I want to look at how is the dynamic of EU-Islamists relations unfolding and make a modest contribution to answering the question how do EU politicians and MENA Islamists conceive of each other, cooperate with each other and what can this teach us about the character of Euro-Mediterranean relations or the West dealing with Islamic politics.

METHODOLOGY, METHODS AND SOURCES

This thesis is based on an empirical study of EU approach to political Islam and Islamists views of European foreign policy. The core of this qualitative analysis is a case study of Jordan which is developed in a comparative perspective: looking at EU-IAF mutual relations before and after 2011 i.e. when the Arab Spring ushered a significant change of context. In parallel, the Jordan case will be brought into a larger perspective: looking at general concepts of EU approach to political Islam as they evolved in the last two years. Finally, bearing in mind the examples of EU engagement with Islamists in other MENA countries, the findings from the Jordan case study will be brought to a larger framework in an attempt to interpret the nature of the shifts in the EU-Islamists relations.

In order to answer the research question I build up my argumentation on three main kinds of sources: (1) academic literature and studies of the topic, (2) own field research consisting mainly of interviews, (3) analysis of primary sources related to the topic.

Let me discuss more specifically the reasons why and ways how these sources are chosen and processed.

Ad 1: I use academic studies of the problematique of EU-Islamists relations to establish what these relations were prior to the Arab Spring. In other words, I will use these secondary sources as a backdrop for comparison with the current situation.

Ad 2: In order to analyse the current situation I will rely on my own fieldwork. As I had very restricted access to primary sources (see next point), I base my findings to a large extent on interviews. Since these are not directly verifiable I find it necessary to describe in more detail how I conducted and processed them. My fieldwork consisted primarily of interviews both in Brussels (to gauge the EEAS and Council debates on political Islam) and in Jordan (to learn about the European approach to IAF and IAF views of the EU). I chose my interviewees to make sure that I received balanced and knowledgeable information. To be more specific, for interviews in Jordan I paid attention to talk not only to the actors (IAF and EU/European diplomats) but also to third parties: political activists of different affiliation than IAF, analysts, academics, journalists, representatives of the current Jordanian establishment, US diplomat etc. For interviews tapping into the EEAS and Council debates on political Islam I addressed obviously those that are directly involved with the issue or its aspects, clue member states and also academics and observers from NGOs, advocacy organisations or other institutions. Interviews were semi-structured allowing room to ask according to the particular knowledge, background, position, etc. of my informants. I took care to ask questions and research background information that helped me understand the normative and/or a-priori stances and life experiences of my informants in order to better place their points of view. Half of the interviews were recorded depending on the consent of informants. All conducted interviews most likely merit the description 'in-depth' as they covered a dozen topics in detail and took on average one hour. Altogether I carried out 52 interviews in the period between March and November 2012 'live' in Brussels, Amman, Prague, and from Gent via telephone. A list with detailed information can be found in the addendum. When processing the interviews I used full transcript for the clue informants where recording was possible (such as IAF politicians) and notes on main messages for other conversations. Subsequently I processed this compilation of transcripts tracing a number of previously identified topics (e.g. what changed with the Arab Spring).

Ad 3: Primary written sources relating to my research are mostly classified as sensitive (diplomatic briefings, internal discussions) and therefore inaccessible or would be in Arabic (thinking of IAF internal documents) and therefore doubly inaccessible as I don't command this language. I could, nevertheless, get access to the two clue discussion papers and reports of discussions on political Islam in the EEAS and the Council. Furthermore I used newspaper articles, press releases, transcripts of conferences and other recorded public statements by the representatives of the IAF, the EU, the king Abdullah II and the Jordanian minister of foreign affairs.

Having described in detail my practical research strategy let me make some formal clarifications on my analytical research strategy. As is obvious from the fact that I construct my research around a certain historical turning point (the Arab Spring), my approach is comparative over time. I am tracing the development of the relation between the EU and the Islamists by comparing the situation (a) prior to the year 2011 and (b) as of that year until the end of 2012 (i.e. finalisation of my field research.) I

am aware that picking the year 2011 as coterminous with Arab Spring is somewhat artificial because the changes in the EU-Islamists relations are not confined to that year only nor is the Arab Spring or better Arab uprisings a finalized process. With those limitations in mind I still find it substantiated to construct my comparison around the turning point of 2011 - a year that started by toppling seemingly unshakeable authoritarian regimes like the ones in Tunisia and Egypt and ended by Islamists winning elections and acceding to executive power in Tunisia and Morocco⁸. Despite citing those three countries as the cases in point to learn about EU-Islamists relations, I chose to research the Jordanian case. The main reason was that I believed that it offered an important nuance in the analysis: I was on the one hand going to study shifts in EU approach to political Islam as it was happening in its 'capital' Brussels. The Jordanian example was, on the other hand, interesting in so far as "it is important to analyse countries that did not seem to have moved much during the Arab uprisings" (Pace & Cavatorta, 2012, p. 126). This brings me to the Jordanian case study and to clarifying my analytical approach there. Applying Gerring's definition of case study (Gerring, 2004) I can summarise my strategy as an in-depth diachronic comparative study of the Jordanian case (EU-IAF relations) in order to generalise across a larger unit (EU relations to MENA Islamists). The major limitation in my approach (besides the fact alone that one case cannot be taken to fully represent all other cases in the unit) is that I couldn't follow the phenomenon under scrutiny in situ and directly and that I am largely dependent on taking my interviewees' assessments of what changed as points of reference. To balance this shortcoming I interviewed many and diverse interlocutors, checked my findings against available analyses and as much as possible against primary sources as explained above.

Hypothesis

Based on the previously discussed literature I was departing from a sequence of hypotheses to set up my research design: Prior to the Arab Spring the EU approach to political Islam was guided by 'containment', after the Arab Spring the reality pushes for 'engagement'. This brings about shifts in perceptions of the Europeans towards the Islamists and on the other hand leads to changed approaches from the Islamists towards the EU. The case of Jordan is particularly interesting as it is a 'soft try' i.e. IAF is not in government so the EU-Islamists relations are not framed by the fact that the two must work together. Finally I assumed that if the EU was frank about its stakes for "deep and sustainable democracy" in Jordan (European Commission & HR/VP, 2012, p. 4), then the relations with the Jordanian Islamists would be aiming at some sort of strategic partnership in the sense advocated by academics: If democratisation would bring about an open and plural political landscape, the IAF would play a prime role as the strongest political party in the country. In this sense, the logic of supporting democratisation in Jordan required building relations with the IAF.

The more fundamental questions driving my research were therefore (i) the character of the EU-MENA relations beyond the discourse of the official policy documents, (ii) the way in which Western and MENA Islamic politicians conceive of each other and (iii) how the two interplay.

Indicators

Against the case study of Jordan, I will be looking for an answer to the question how the advent of Islamic political parties in the context of the Arab Spring affects the way the European Union deals with political Islam in its foreign policy. To render this research question measurable and based on the analyses discussed above (in particular the works of Asseburg, Emerson, Kausch, Tocci, Youngs, Vasconcelos) I have defined six indicators of change. In other words, based on what were described and analysed as the shortcomings of the EU approach prior to the Arab Spring, I formulated the 'ideal scenario' of EU – Islamists relations:

1. Moderate Islamic political parties⁹ are recognised as important actors in the political transitions going on in their respective countries and this in a positive constructive sense: i.e. not as a threat but as a potential legitimate alternative.
2. Regular contacts are developed and channels of dialogue are institutionalised between Europeans and Islamists on administrative as well as political level. These contacts are mutually relevant and beneficial; agendas are not unilaterally imposed.
3. Relations are based on factual cooperation rather than perceptions. Relations are framed as political rather than religious & cultural / culturalist¹⁰.
4. There is mutual learning and trust is building up which allows for an honest relationship including room for criticism and discussions of issues where points of view diverge.
5. For the above described engagement to be meaningful it takes place within a framework where the EU is using her financial and political tools to put credible pressure on incumbent regimes to democratise. This creates a liberal political system where Islamist political parties can participate as any other without the need for the EU to single them out.
6. In judging the shift I will also pay attention to the question whether there is consensus on which Islamists to engage with and what are the objectives of engagement. In other words if one can talk about a coherent strategy from the EU side.

OUTLINE OF THE DISSERTATION

To answer the research questions I will proceed as follows: In the first chapter I will describe what the EU policy towards moderate Islamic political parties was before and after the Arab Spring. I will analyse how it changed and why. In the first section of this chapter I will look at the period prior to the Arab Spring comparing the conceptual debates in the EU on this subject and the practical engagement with the Islamists in MENA countries. In the second section of the first chapter I will describe the conceptual debate as it has recently evolved in Brussels. The analysis of the current practice in EU-Islamists relations will be the subject of the second chapter, where I will use the case of Jordan to study both sides of the issue: the EU approach and also the Islamists approach. In the final conclusion I will attempt to pronounce a general evaluation of the dynamics in and character of the changes in EU-Islamists relations in the Middle East and North Africa bringing into the picture the EU engagement with the Islamic parties in Tunisia, Morocco and Egypt, where they are in legislative and executive power.

1. GENERAL EU POLICY TOWARDS THE ISLAMISTS IN MENA

The purpose of this chapter is first to summarise the analyses of how the EU engaged with the Islamists before 2011. This introduction is useful so as to create a backdrop against which to assess the quality of current EU engagement with the Islamists. The later will be done based on my own fieldwork (interviews with clue actors and analysts) and analysis of primary documents. The analysis in the principal two sections of this chapter is developed at a slightly different level. Let me address this dissonance and explain why it is useful. The first section, temporarily located in the period prior to the outbreak of the Arab uprisings, juxtaposes what the EU was preaching and what it was practicing as there was quite a discrepancy in the two fronts as I will show. I will be looking at the EU generically as a whole, not making detailed distinctions between member states' foreign policy and diplomacy and the European structures and institutions. The second section, temporarily located post 2011, looks more in detail at the concepts and guidelines of policy as they are developed in Brussels and also makes a more detailed distinction between the different agents of EU foreign policy. This regards in particular the European External Action Service (EEAS) on the one hand and the EU member states on the other. A more detailed focus is substantiated by the fact that as opposed to prior to the Arab Spring and in temporal coincidence prior to the adoption of the Treaty of Lisbon, the EU acquired a new institution responsible for continuity and coherence of external action of the Union – the EEAS. The idea that structures the first section of this chapter- of comparing proclamations and practice of the EU policy towards Islamists - is nevertheless not dropt. On the contrary, it is developed in more detail for the period post-2011 because the focus on practice will be the content of the ensuing chapter, which is a case study of Jordan.

1.1. PRIOR TO THE ARAB SPRING

In 2009, Asseburg summarised the European policy approach towards the Islamists in the MENA in this way:

Against the backdrop of Islamist terrorism on the one hand and election victories by moderate Islamists on the other, Europeans have become increasingly aware of the phenomenon of political Islam and of its diverse facets as well as the need to develop policies for addressing the issue(Asseburg, 2009, p. 174).

However, drawing on field research, Kristina Kausch observed in the same time period that “much talk about Western engagement with moderate Islamists stands in contrast to thin evidence” (Kausch, 2009, p. 131) and actually Asseburg concluded her above-cited analysis in a much more sceptical tone than she started: “To date, there is no consensus among European policy-makers about which Islamist groups to engage with, the purpose of such engagement or how.” (Asseburg, 2009, p. 177)

Engagement with Islamists must be seen within the context of general EU policy frameworks towards the MENA. These were in practice geared to keep stability in the region and therefore contain security risks such as terrorism, emigration or socio-economic upheavals. Such logic also entailed containing the Islamist political forces precisely because they were seen as the only power capable of undermining the “stable” incumbent regimes (Balfour, 2012; Vasconcelos, 2012).

1.1.1. TALKING ABOUT THE ISLAMISTS

A first acknowledgement by European politicians of the need to include moderate Islamists in measures aimed at democracy promotion - if only on paper and only implicit - appeared in June 2004 in a position paper agreed by the European heads of states and governments¹¹ (Asseburg, 2009, p. 174). An explicit call to engage with Muslim communities and organisations in order to develop appropriate understanding of the problems in focus and to empower moderate voices as well as to “correct unfair or inaccurate perceptions of Islam and Muslims” such as “linking Islam to terrorism” appeared a year later in the EU Strategy for Combating Radicalisation and Recruitment to Terrorism (Council of the European Union, 2005, pp. 3-4).

One could read these policy statements as indirect assertions that Islam should not be conceived as an attack against Western values but rather as a key political and social force in the MENA. For those who did read them in this way, the logical next step was to defend that Western diplomats and policy makers need to engage with moderate Islamist parties and organisations. This was the case for most of the academics working on the issue as I have discussed in ‘Status Quaestionis’. Their argumentation did find its way in some extent to the ‘hearts and minds’ of the advisors on European foreign policy: With the green light given in 2005 by EU ministers to engage with Islamists, albeit negatively motivated to combat terrorism and prevent radicalisation, and galvanized by the elections in Palestine in 2006, the Directorate General for External Relations in the European Commission established a Task Force whose aim was to “overcome the EU’s lack of information on Islamism worldwide” (Kausch, 2009, p. 138). The Council secretariat, for its part, was working to implement the point of the anti-terrorism strategy referring to the need to “develop a non-emotive lexicon... in order to avoid linking Islam to terrorism” (Council of the European Union, 2005, p. 4) and also mapping Islamist movements (Kausch, 2009, p. 138). Still, Kausch’s fieldwork seems to indicate that there were a few pioneers and advocates of rapprochement and many sceptics and opponents when she reports on “an

emotionally charged debate, a huge amount of ignorance and prejudices and no differentiated views on Islamism” both within the Commission and among Member states’ representatives (Kausch, 2009, p. 138). It should be also noted that in May 2007 the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the EU’s strategy for reform in the Arab world which stated, among other things, that “the notions of democracy, human rights and the rule of law are...compatible with Islam”¹². However, in the context of the EU internal controversy about the right approach to Hamas after their electoral victory in 2006, any opening to the Islamists in the MENA was inhibited also because of the latter’s deception with the EU following the boycott of the results of free and fair Palestinian elections.

Added to the above described divisions was the fact that conceiving of European engagement with the Islamists was prevalently framed as a religious matter rather than a political issue (Kausch, 2009; Mikhelidze & Tocci, 2009; Vasconcelos, 2012). This presented several problems. First of all, such perpetual attempts to test the democratic credentials of Islamist movements perpetrated the suspicion that Islamists somehow inherently cannot be democratic (Mikhelidze & Tocci, 2009, p. 151) whereby the conceptual debate remained stuck (Emerson & Youngs, 2007, p. 1). Secondly, it went against specialists’ advice to the contrary i.e. against engaging on ‘philosophical issues’ or red lines for which Islamists believe Islamic law offers no ambiguity such as participation of women or treatment of homosexuality (Clark cited in Schwedler, 2007; Emerson & Youngs, 2007, pp. 177-183). Thirdly and as a consequence, such European efforts did not succeed in institutionalizing channels of dialogue, because they missed the point of interest for the Islamist counterparts, who were interested in discussing concrete societal problems rather than the Koran (Asseburg, 2009; Kausch, 2009).

All in all, describing the situation prior to the Arab Spring, observers told me that the EU was disinterested, disconnected and little informed on the Islamists. The European instinct that Islamists were not democrats was purposefully strengthened by MENA authoritarian rulers putting themselves in the position of guardians of stability and painting the Islamist threat in gloomy colours¹³.

1.1.2. TALKING TO THE ISLAMISTS?

While the will and necessity- as I have discussed above- to engage with the Islamists was declaratorily emerging albeit feebly, the practical outreach to these groups was very weak. Analysts judged the situation on a scale ranging from ‘virtual neglect’ (Emerson & Youngs, 2007, p. 11) and ‘no-go zone’ (Emerson et al., 2009, p. 11) to the more optimists describing a ‘timid inclination to engage’ (Kausch, 2009, p. 131) motivated by the fact that Islamists were increasingly recognised as potential reform actors with broad societal backings (Asseburg, 2009). In the MENA countries, where domestic context allowed for it (i.e. where moderate Islamist groups were legal and even partly represented in parliament such as in Morocco, Jordan, Kuwait, Bahrain and Egypt) ad-hoc contacts would take place here and there. In Tunisia and Syria, where Islamist parties were illegal, the only possible venue for

contacts was with exiled members of the parties in question on European soil. In Lebanon open engagement with Hizbullah was practiced by most European embassies despite the party not fulfilling the criterion of non-violence. In contrast to that, EU formal political contacts with Hamas in Palestine were banned when the party was put on EU terrorist list in 2006. Despite this fact, however, certain EU member states' embassies found ways how to circumvent the prohibition and maintain some contacts (Kausch, 2009, pp. 133-134). All in all, where there was not an outright ban on EU-Islamists relations, they were in practice informal, bilateral, low-key and ad-hoc (Kausch, 2009).

What emerges very clearly from the cited studies is that at the level of EU foreign policy there was no coherent strategy of how and why to engage with the MENA Islamists nor any associated actions to do so. The reasons were manifold. I will discuss them in a brief overview because they might enlighten us on the dynamics of EU-Islamist engagement post Arab Spring. These explanations can be divided into two broad categories: the lack of political will and the lack of practical tools.

As regards the lack of political will, the reasons behind it had several motifs:

- (a) The absence of agreement among EU member states on which groups to engage with and which to exclude. This goes down to a question on criteria, i.e. what conditions qualify the 'contact-worthy' actors. It is typically demonstrated by the disagreement over the right approach to Hamas and Hizbollah. From my fieldwork I can resume the analysts' and diplomat's observations that if there is a divisive issue, the Council prefers to avoid it (head-in-the-sand approach).
- (b) Prevailing interest in maintaining stability and status quo in the MENA region i.e. supporting the true and tried regimes, which seemingly had their countries under control.
- (c) Fear of negative implications from engagement with Islamists for bilateral relations with the incumbent regimes and reluctance to accept political Islam as an alternative.
- (d) Suspicions of Islam and political Islam: "a persistent, often ill-defined uneasiness towards Islamist interlocutors" (Kausch, 2009, p. 132) which Seeberg (2012) and Vasconcelos (2012) explain by the securitization of Islamism within Europe itself.

As regards the lack of practical tools to establish contacts with Islamists, the reasons can be broken down to:

- (e) EU way of diplomatic work as primarily state to state.
- (f) EU reluctance to push for sustained political liberalization that would open the political field to opposition parties (Asseburg, 2009, p. 176). The practiced approach to promoting democracy was supposedly via economic measures and improved governance (technically defined as more accountable and transparent government) rather than in an overtly political way¹⁴ (Springborg, 2009, pp. 16-17). "The policies have been characterised by pragmatism and depoliticization of European-Middle Eastern relations." (Seeberg, 2012)

(g) Beyond the state actors EU reaching at best to secular NGOs or apolitical cultural organisations. Islamist civil society organisations were not involved with EU programmes and were not receiving financial or other assistance through them (Kausch, 2009, pp. 143-144).

(h) There were no fora for a systematic engagement and exchanges (Kausch, 2009).

When one looked behind the scenes, then there was a rift between the EU institutions (Commission and Council secretariat) and the member states. Even though none of them was a unitary actor, the Commission was generally speaking defending a more open line of approach to Islamists whereas the member states preferred the incumbent regimes that collaborated in containing immigration, terrorism and political Islam (Vasconcelos, 2012, pp. 71-73). Even though the Commission Task Force, referred to earlier, was working to ‘uncramp relations’ with non-violent, non-revolutionary Islamist groups, their initiatives ended up on a backburner due to Council opposition (Kausch, 2009, p. 139). As one of the most prominent advisors on political Islam put it already in an interview for the EUobserver in 2008, “The question of how to best approach political Islam very much depends on the member states. Reaching a common position on the matter would be very difficult.” (Vucheva, 2008)

Both EU diplomats and analysts recognize that prior to 2011 the policy in the EU was behind the mainstream of academic research on the Islamist political actors¹⁵. When the Arab Spring came it was carried neither by the EU nor by the Islamists although both could actually benefit from it. The Islamists in elections and the EU by grasping the opportunity to re-establish herself in the MENA as honest partners.

1.2. POST ARAB SPRING

Just before people in the MENA took to the streets and redrew the political constellations of their countries and the region, the EU was at best talking about the need to engage more with Islamists to learn about them, to support the moderates and to contain the radicals. It wasn’t, however, by any account, strategically engaging with Islamist political parties as with actors of political change in the broader agenda of political liberalisation and democratisation. On the contrary, the Arab Spring unveiled in all nakedness how closely the Europeans were working together with MENA autocratic regimes. How did the Arab call for democracy and dignity match with the EU proclaimed goals towards the same? And how did this context affect EU’s policies and practices towards the Islamists?

It has almost become popular wisdom that the main gains of the Arab Spring were free and fair elections which in several Arab states brought moderate Islamist parties landslide victories. It is,

however, difficult to underestimate the novelty – or challenge if you like - that this poses to the EU and her policies in the region. How did the EU come to terms with this challenge so far?

In the previous section I discussed that there was a certain rift between the member states practice and the advisors advice. Also, a defining characteristic of the EU foreign policy is still its dualistic nature and rationale (Monar, 1998): the communitarian represented by the Commission, the EEAS and their tools (the ENP, the trade and development cooperation etc.) combined with the intergovernmental represented by the Council / the member states (Helwig, Ivan & Kostanyan, 2013). That is why in the subsections bellow I will follow the External Action Service and the Council apart.

1.2.1. THE EUROPEAN EXTERNAL ACTION SERVICE

On 6 December 2011 a “brainstorming on political Islam” was convened by the Executive Secretary General of the External Action Service¹⁶. As this is not a public document I will abstain from publishing it in its entirety. What follows is a summary of the two notes with best attempt to be faithful to the original. To avoid confusion between the original text and my own findings, I will put the section that is based on the brainstorming on political Islam in a box and italicise the parts that are my own comments and observations, which I draw on conducted interviews¹⁷.

EEAS brainstorming on political Islam

The meeting, which was scheduled in a period when parliamentary elections in Tunisia and Morocco had just taken place and the ones in Egypt where about to, had three main objectives: (1) Better understand the historical upheaval in the MENA including the electoral victories of Islamist political actors in Tunisia, Egypt and Morocco. (2) Better assess the impact of those changes in the region especially as far as Israel, Iran and Turkey are concerned. (3) Discuss how the EU diplomacy should factor in these changes in adapting its tools and policies.

The main ideas that emerged from the meeting are divided under four headings:

(1.) “Terminology”: here the main appeal is to be aware of the differences among the Islamist parties in the MENA and therefore careful in using wholesale labels. The term ‘Islamism’ is identified as inappropriate in public messaging. *It is a fact confirmed by several EEAS diplomats that in the service one does not speak about ‘Islamists’ anymore but about ‘new actors’.* Even though mostly these new actors are Islamist, other political actors have come to the fore as well with the political openings of the Arab spring. *Therefore this label does two things: avoid using a loaded term such as Islamists and avoid zooming on them as the main novelty of the post-Arab-Spring context.*

(2.) “Getting the full picture”: the case is made that the EEAS needs to understand better all the breadth of the phenomenon of political Islam including Salafism, the developments in the Gulf and

Iran and also reflect on the lessons from its engagement with Islamists such as in Turkey, Lebanon and Iraq. *According to my EEAS informants the argument in between the lines was also for a re-thinking of EU approach to Hamas. It is nevertheless significant that nowhere in the note is this explicitly mentioned.*

(3.) “The case for engaging with political Islam – post Arab Spring”: The distinction is made between engagement with Islamist-led governments and Islamist political parties and movements. As the former is concerned, the point is made that such engagement is part of normal government-to-government relations and is framed within the EU’s aim to help post-Arab-Spring transitions succeed as well as keep the new governments within the realms of democracy and rule of law. In the case of Egypt the objective of keeping the peace treaty with Israel is specifically mentioned. As to relations with Islamist political parties and movements that are not part of government, let me quote the document literally because this is a particularly pertinent part for the ensuing Jordan case study:

“We need to engage in a vigilant and critical manner. Our red lines (such as rejection of violence) must be clear and communicated openly. At the same time, we need to acknowledge these actors as part of the normal political landscape in their countries. Previous times’ under-focus (or avoidance) should not now lead to over-focus. If we were to do so, we would fail to see the important role played by the young people in bringing about these changes and that they are only partly represented by the current political party system.”

Another point made under the heading of engaging with political Islam treats the need to learn more what these new actors stand for, learn to trust them and create venues for mutual exchange. This is supposed to serve not only for mutual learning but also for shaping and influencing these new actors. *A reference is made in the document to European public opinion and judging from interviews with EEAS diplomats the general negative picture of Islam in parts of EU public opinion worries them. They identify it as one of the major obstacles in building ‘normal’ relations with Islamic political actors in the MENA. That’s why a lot of attention goes to ‘developing a public argumentation’ on why it is quite normal and beneficial to engage with the Islamists*¹⁸. Finally under point 3, it is stressed that the EU needs to communicate better towards the MENA public about its initiatives as well and stress that its role is to accompany not to direct the on-going transitions. *Indeed, as of beginning 2011, relevant press articles by the HR/VP Ashton are produced in English, French and Arabic in order to reach the broadest possible MENA public.*

(4.) “What to do next”: This heading addresses various concrete means how to learn about the Islamists, how to mainstream this learning in the different services dealing with various aspects of EU policy and how to create opportunities for engagement and encounter. It addresses itself to delegations in MENA countries as well as colleagues in Brussels with a number of specific proposals. The

formulated aim is to make sure that the European diplomacy has got a full picture of internal political developments in the MENA countries, not limited but with a specific focus on the Islamists. The goal that all EU officials (from those working on horizontal issues such as ENP, human rights, democracy promotion up to the press officers) should follow the same line of approach is expanded also to other frameworks namely the Maghreb-Mashreq working group in the Council¹⁹. The note refers to encouraging discussions of selected topics and further expanding on the German non-paper (see next section). *According to my EEAS informants, the task of coordinating in-house and educating on the Islamists is quite enormous. As one highly-positioned diplomat put it, “we are amateurs, we don’t have the contacts with the Islamists and lack a profound understanding of the internal politics in the countries of the region. There’s a lot of ignorance among the colleagues and a lot of mistrust. Often we don’t know our own tools very well because there are so many overlaps.” This observation relates to a not-always-smooth division of labour and competences in EU foreign policy between the Commission and the EEAS (Helwig et al., 2013). To respond to this situation, the EEAS has substantially scaled up the creation of fora for Islamists, ‘eurocrats’ and ‘Eurodiplomats’ to meet.*

It is furthermore worth noting that the instructions to delegations that were sent out in follow-up to the brainstorming on political Islam of 6 December 2011 mention the fact that “there has at time been hesitation as to whether engagement with certain Islamist political forces is permitted or expected.” That only confirms the fact how new a task it was for the EU diplomats to engage with Islamists in the MENA. Against this backdrop, there was very much of an evolution as witnessed both by EU diplomats and by academic observers interviewed. “When the Arab Spring came, things went very quickly. The idea of not talking to the Islamists did not even occur to us... the engagement was simply happening.²⁰”

Nevertheless, the EEAS reflections on the Islamists don’t assign them any particular role to play in advancing democratisation and the EU engagement with those actors is in consequence not framed in this manner. The focus of EU diplomacy is on learning, informing and influencing. There is also no mention of the word Islam or Muslim in the *Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean*. The quest for better understanding of the Islamic political forces seems to be primarily an internal exercise in the EEAS. In this vein, in a brainstorming with the representatives of MENA embassies that the EEAS initiated in March 2012, the issue of political Islam was prudently avoided²¹.

Likewise, the approach in EU policies is preferably a-political and ‘technical’ (especially in the areas of trade, development cooperation and humanitarian aid). It should be the EEAS that provides the more political priority-setting but after two years of existence this body still has to face many challenges be it internal as well as external from its various partners (Helwig et al., 2013). While

stressing the importance of supporting the transitions in the MENA, diplomats as well as observers acknowledge that the EU response is hindered by a number of structural difficulties like being tied in the framework of its tools such as Task Forces, Association Councils etc. As an EEAS diplomat put it, “Our response is instrument-led rather than demand-led.”

As already noted, the EEAS puts great emphasis on the need to send positive messages about the developments in the MENA along the lines ‘they are like us, they strive for law, justice, freedom’. One can also find the proof of a policy to ‘uncramp’ / ‘décrisper’ the issue of Islamists in HR/VP press releases on election results in the MENA. The emphasis is on the fact that elections took place in a transparent and democratic way and that the EU acknowledges the result. The fact that it is mainly Islamist political parties who are the winners is not being pointed out. My research interviews confirm that the point for the EU diplomats is to normalise relations with the Islamists, not to zoom on it and highlight the cleavage Islamists/secularists. In this sense making political Islam a matter of a specific policy is judged as counterproductive and also impossible given the heterogeneity of the situation in MENA. Another example of this are the instructions to EU delegations ensuing the brainstorming on political Islam. They appeal for a balanced approach (not over-focussing on the Islamists) and for a country-specific approach.

Despite the call to acknowledge Islamists as normal part of the various political landscapes, dealing with political Islam is still tricky in the EU diplomatic service. This was confirmed by my informants and is also reflected in the paragraph on Islamist political parties that are not in government where the EEAS note starts by reminding to “engage in a vigilant and critical manner”.

Despite the noted limitations, it seems reasonable to conclude, that there is a notable move in the EU diplomacy approach to political Islam. My own observation is that the shift had a number of vectors that worked in the same direction: First and foremost the situation on the ground with Islamist forces winning parliamentary elections in Tunisia, Morocco and Egypt. Consequently, when it became clear that the EU had to work with who was out there, this situation played in favour of a non-formalised group of pioneers and advocates of rapprochement. One could only speculate how much of a role has had the fact that these advisors came under one roof in the EEAS and that the heads of this service, thinking of Catherine Ashton and Pierre Vimont, were a-priori open to cooperation with Islamists²². In the end, as an insider told me, “One thing that researchers don’t like to admit is that sometimes shifts in policy happen not as a great master plan but as a result of a series of coincidences and the right people being on the right place at the right time.²³” It seems nonetheless quite obvious that the building up of the diplomatic know-how on and contacts with the MENA Islamists was part and parcel of the EEAS struggle to establish its own distinctive added value and role. In other words, one of the mentioned vectors of occurring shifts was also a quest for influence in the altered institutional landscape of the EU after the Treaty of Lisbon.

1.2.2. THE COUNCIL AND EU MEMBER STATES

Generally speaking, what the EEAS was undergoing regarding political Islam was running in parallel with developments in national foreign ministries across the EU. As my fieldwork revealed, diplomatic brainstormings on the “new partners” in MENA were taking place in many European capitals and embassies. At the same time direct contacts with Islamists have, in the words of Michael Emerson, turned from a no-zone to a go-zone after the Arab Spring²⁴. Does this sum of national policies add up to a European policy of strategic engagement with the Islamists? Or are we, as Kausch demonstrated in 2009, still at a lowest-common-denominator policy?

The reasons of the described changes were similar again in Brussels, Berlin or Prague: European policymakers realised that they could not ignore the results of free and fair elections, which followed after the uprisings. In this sense, the negative lessons of Algeria 1991 and Palestine 2006 had been learnt to some extent. “But some EU governments still view Islamic parties with suspicion and question their democratic legitimacy.” (Vasconcelos, 2012, p. 111) Indeed, as of 2012 some EU member states accept even the engagement with the ‘unavoidable’ Islamists in Egypt and Tunisia with considerable reluctance. Tellingly, one diplomat characterised the speed with which the EU and the US let Hosni Mubarak fall over the board as “chutzpah”²⁵ using this Yiddish term in a deliberate Freudian slip revealing what starting point this view of events takes²⁶. All interviewees corroborated the importance of the stance towards Hamas in the overall question of the Council approach to the Islamists. Reportedly, some member states were opposed to recognising the Muslim brotherhood as a legitimate political player precisely because of their link with Hamas. Still other member states’ position on Islamists is politically determined by their home constituencies and problems related to Muslim communities.

A concrete result of the shifts and at the same time an indication of their limits was a German initiative of a ‘Non-paper on political Islam’ in the Council Maghreb Mashrek Working group²⁷ in November 2011. The non-paper (see Addendum) succinctly summarises the situation in the MENA and formulates possible guidelines for action. The document was briefly discussed on 16 November 2011 at the level of heads of MENA sections from the capitals. Judging from internal minutes of that meeting, the initiative was generally welcome and a few comments were raised: (i) there shouldn’t be too many criteria and conditions for engagement; the decisive one being non-violence, (ii) Europeans should avoid antagonising value discussions, (iii) the EU should not put demands too high. However, after that general exchange of views the document was shelved. Still, as no delegation expressed openly any substantial reservations, it can be understood to capture the average European position on the issue of political Islam.

I have already advanced the reasons for the limited reception that the issue of political Islam got in the Council. Nevertheless, the fact that the topic was explicitly brought up is in itself a mark of quite some change. Let me therefore discuss the noteworthy details behind the German non-paper:

First of all, it is telling that in 2008 a German diplomat reportedly commented when referring to the position in the Council that “the idea of adopting common principles on how to approach Islamists was ‘completely beside the point’, as dealing with these issues on a bilateral level was both diplomatically safer and more efficient.” (Kausch, 2009, p. 139) The reason I was given by my interviewees to explain this German diplomatic move were various²⁸: they did it primarily for domestic reasons – it was part of a message towards their own Muslim minority; Germany seeks to establish her role in the ‘new Middle East’ more firmly next to the UK, France and Italy; they did it to signal to other EU member states how their lines of policy were shifting; they did it to secure opportunities for economic expansion in the MENA countries where Islamists are getting to government; they did it as a subtle invitation to other member states to work on their domestic public opinion and negative perceptions of Islam²⁹.

Another ‘curiosity’ to be noted about the Council debate on political Islam is that it preceded the EEAS brainstorming on the same topic. This is in contrast to a situation in 2007 when it was the Commission (DG RELEX) that initiated a position paper addressing the issue of political Islam. Back then it ended up on the backburner due to a boycott by the Council (Kauch, 2009, p.138; Vasconcelos, 2012, pp. 71-72) Without wanting to overestimate the importance of this reversed timing, it is nevertheless a testimony as to how much the Arab Spring changed the context whereby the election victories of Islamists in Morocco and Tunisia made it inevitable to discuss the approach to these actors.

As already advanced, the shift in the Council approach to the Islamists had its opponents and limits. Both observers from the academia and diplomats themselves acknowledged in my interviews that the member states would avoid formulating a commonly defined policy towards political Islam. The noble reason was that it would be counterproductive to have one approach towards such a diverse phenomenon as political Islam. The less gracious reason was that it would open up a Pandora box (position to Hamas and Hizballah) and would unveil the lack of unity among member states. With the general reluctance to discuss divisive issues of EU foreign policy or complex overarching policies and as long as there is no “operative need” or urgency of a specific problem (such as radicals coming to power), the issue of an overall approach to Islamist political actors in the MENA is left unspoken. At the same time, both the reluctant and the pro-active member states seem to apply the same core criteria when dealing with Islamist politicians: adhering to democratic principles and non-violence³⁰.

An insider of the MaMa Working group summed the developments, “There will never be a declared policy on political Islam in the Council but that’s OK. The difference is that we are past the stage of

asking if it's OK to engage - it's just happening and that is what causes Israeli uneasiness and therefore worries some member states.”

Finally and before concluding let me report on the views the EEAS has of the Council on the approach to Islamists and vice versa. The national diplomats from the Council view the EEAS initiatives as an internal. As long as it stays within the confines of internal brainstorming and know-how building it is judged as harmless. Generally speaking the EEAS diplomats (continue to) identify the Council as an obstacle in advancing on the conceptual debate about political Islam. While the diplomats representing the member states basically agree with this view, there is discrepancy as to why. EEAS cites European public opinion, which conditions member states on this issue while national diplomats don't ascribe too much importance to domestic public opinion in foreign policy. On the other hand my interviews with advisors working for pan-European political parties confirmed that for individual politicians the meetings with Islamist counterparts are unattractive at best and avoided at worst because the costs (i.e. possible negative points with public at home) outweigh the benefits (i.e. mutual learning.) As I was told, it is in some cases already difficult to convince the party base that “Islamists are not terrorists” let alone talk about any kind of peer alliance. Even the advocates of the benefit of contacts with the Islamists advocate them on the basis of the fact that as the latter assert themselves via elections so there is no choice but to work with them. Still, as the foreign secretary of European Peoples Party confirmed to me, things are changing: “One year ago, inviting the founder of Ennahda to our annual party congress, as we did in October 2012, would have been unthinkable.”³¹

1.3. ANALYSING AND INTERPRETING

I will conclude the chapter dealing with EU policy towards Islamist political actors in the MENA in three different steps: First I will sum up the current situation against the indicators, which I developed in the ‘Status Quaestionis’. Second, I will point out what changed and what did not change in the EU approach taking 2011/Arab Spring as the turning point. Finally I will comment on my main findings referring again to the questions which introduced each section of this chapter and to the broader issues related to the EU-Islamists relations. In the conclusion I don’t make a distinction among the different actors of EU foreign policy but rather focus on the common traits of their approach.

1.3.1. THE CURRENT EU APPROACH

1. Moderate Islamist parties are recognised as important political players in the MENA because of the results of elections in Tunisia, Morocco and Egypt. Where they did not assert themselves to executive power in the course of the Arab uprisings, a cautious and vigilant view prevails. Even though Islamist parties are recognized as a normal phenomenon rather than per se dangerous extremists, there is no particular role assigned to them in the democratisation process. If they are in opposition to incumbent regimes, the level of their recognition by the EU is a matter of controversy.

2. There is a plethora of get-to-know-each-other initiatives from the EU towards the Islamists. While not forgetting the other ‘new actors’ brought up by the Arab uprisings, the need to gather expertise and build relations with the Islamists stands out. Whether this EU-Islamists dialogue is mutually relevant and beneficial remains to be seen and is conditioned by the effect of EU’s democracy and transitions assistance.

3. Where Islamists are in executive power, the EU stresses the focus on factual practical cooperation. Moving away from a religious and culturalist framing of political Islam, the focus is on judging these actors on their own merits and giving them a chance.

4. Even though there are many efforts of learning, the EU is still cautious, vigilant and at times distrustful of Islamic political actors. The acceptance of political Islam is still a controversial issue for European foreign policy makers and advisors alike.

5. Rhetorically the EU puts more emphasis on ‘deep democracy’ and pressure on genuine political liberalisation. Beyond the preambles of the studied documents the tools to carry out such aims are lacking and there is a risk that normative commitments of EU democratisation agenda will be again trumped by strategic interests. Where the Islamists are in executive power another contextual aspect to evaluate EU-Islamists relations is important: the capacity of the EU to accompany the transitions not only in their civil-political aspect but also in the socio-economic reforms. This capacity is questionable for many reasons beyond the scope of this conclusion.

6. There is no EU policy towards Islamic political actors as such. The lack of consensus on which groups to engage with and which to boycott prevails except for the cases where Islamists asserted themselves through post-Arab-Spring parliamentary elections. The consensus on conditions of engagement with Islamic political actors is also lacking with the minimum common denominators being (1) rejection of violence and (2) abidance to democratic principles of doing politics.

1.3.2. WHAT CHANGED WITH THE ARAB SPRING

As reiterated many times in previous sections, the main change comes from the MENA and the people that rose up against authoritarian regimes. This set the inevitability for the EU to recognise its past errors in policies towards the Mediterranean. After impressive Islamists' victories in parliamentary elections in Tunisia, Morocco and Egypt, one mistake that was not to be repeated was for the EU to boycott such results. Former neglect and avoidance of Islamists changed into the need to get to know them better, to forge relations and to accept them as partners. This context spilled over also to countries where Islamists are still in opposition: Even though the question whether they should be unequivocally accepted as the alternative to incumbents remains controversial, the contacts are sought actively and requested from the relevant diplomatic services.

Another visible shift is that the need and benefits to engage with MENA Islamists started to be publicly defended as of 2011. Safeguarding political influence and economic interests of the EU prescribes the need to normalise relations with Islamists in power. The question remains how this changed mainstream discourse about political Islam in the MENA will relate to the securitisation of Islam within Europe itself and vice versa.

1.3.3. WHAT DID NOT CHANGE WITH THE ARAB SPRING

Despite the changes in perceptions and approaches there is still a strong apprehension about the political programmes and intentions of the Islamists. An important constant feature of EU policy is the divisions on the appropriate EU approach to Hamas. Even though the main reason for the contention may not be directly linked to the religious Islamic character of the movement, it remains a symbolic dossier in the EU-Islamists relations on all fronts.

The overall concept, tools and policies of the EU towards the MENA, which are the determining larger context of EU-Islamists relations, did not change contrary to much rhetoric about revised policy frameworks as a reaction to the Arab Spring.

1.3.4. CONCLUDING CONSIDERATIONS

As such, the lack of any EU policy towards political Islam can be seen positively: (a) it would be inaccurate to lump all the various Islamic political parties in the MENA into one category and design a wholesale policy towards them. (b) Shifting the focus away from the 'Islamic' allows for a normalisation of relations with these actors. Nevertheless, such a lack of policy also means that (i) revisiting of counterproductive policies to Islamists is not foreseeable and typically the Hamas issue remains closed in a Pandora box and (ii) that Islamic political parties in MENA countries where they have not asserted themselves to government positions are not partners for the EU in any strategic sense as co-agents of democratisation.

There is another reason why the EU does not want to single out the Islamists among other opposition groups: the EU refrains from micro-managing the transitions. This argument wouldn't hold true, however, in the light of European engagement with opposition forces in other authoritarian contexts such as Spain before the fall of Franco or Belarus at the time of writing. At the same time looking at the past examples of assisting transition in Spain, Ukraine and Georgia, Mikhelidze and Tocci (2009, pp. 156-158) pointed out the crucial role of non-state forms of external engagement (be it trade unions, NGO's or foundations etc.) and an engagement carried out between peers (e.g. like-minded political parties). This is particularly relevant for the MENA context because Islamists have no ready-standing peers in the West and the most obvious one, European Muslim communities, are politically too marginalized to carry out this role (Emerson et al., 2009, p.158). It is in this regard that religion – Islam in this case - still plays an inhibiting role in European politics and policies (Mikhelidze & Tocci, 2009, p. 169).

Finally it seems that the changes in the EU stance towards Islamists in the MENA do not stem from a fundamental review of concepts about political Islam but mainly from other considerations. The decisiveness with which the Islamists are gaining at ballot boxes in major countries of the region requires shifts in approach. In this context, Europeans cannot afford to ask the question whether Islam is compatible with democracy and therefore both national as well as European diplomacy are trying to catch up with reality and working hard to understand the Islamists, build contacts and secure strategic interests. Internal considerations may also be playing a role: for example, the EEAS needs to assert itself in EU foreign policy and the Islamists are one field of its legitimate assertion.

To answer the question of the quality of the changes in EU approach to the Islamists let me turn now to the case of Jordan. As long as the local Muslim brotherhood party is only an opposition force, there is still something of a pre-Arab Spring context in the sense that the EU is not compelled by circumstances to engage with the Jordanian Islamists. What changes occurred in this context?

2. CASE STUDY JORDAN

The field research presented in this chapter serves to test the reality of EU engagement with political Islam. Aware of the fact that one instance (in this case that of EU relations with the Jordanian Islamic Action Front party) cannot speak for the whole problematique, I still consider the case study as telling: As long as in Jordan the same regime is still in place as before the start of the Arab uprisings and as long as the Muslim-Brotherhood politicians have not accessed to any branch of state power, there is still a kind of pre-Arab Spring context. The changes or lack thereof in the EU-IAF relations may therefore be telling for the ‘essential quality’ of the shift in EU policies towards political Islam.

In the introduction I will describe the political aspects of the Jordanian Arab uprising and make an overview of the EU-Jordan relations. My choice is motivated by the fact that those are the defining conditions for the relations between the two actors that are central to my Jordan case study - The EU and the IAF. I will also make a brief note about the IAF concentrating on issues such as their democratic credentials, political agenda and strength i.e. those that were in focus for the European diplomats interviewed. In this way the introduction will serve as a backdrop to the findings from my own fieldwork (parts 2.2 and 2.3).

The point of reporting the views of the EU and the IAF as they were presented to me by the interviewees is not to discuss whether they are factually correct but to take them at face value and based on that qualify the mutual relationship between the two actors. My findings are based on personal interviews conducted between 11 and 26 April 2012 in Amman.

In order to establish the EU position, I talked to the ambassadors and/or Deputy Heads of Missions and/or Political Counsellors of the following embassies: Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Netherlands, Sweden, United Kingdom, USA and the EU delegation to Jordan. Interviewed diplomats did not want to be quoted on a personally attributable basis. I talked to representatives of 6 out of the 17 EU member states present in Jordan. In quantity this is not fully representative but I tried to balance this limitation by a careful selection: concentrating on the member states whose policy is historically very important and defining for the region (UK, FR) and on those who are on opposing sides of the spectrum when it comes to the policy towards Hamas, which has crucial effect on their stance towards the IAF (CZ, NL / SE). In the light of the German non-paper discussed in chapter 1, I would have liked to include the German views, but it was not possible to arrange an interview even at several repeated attempts.

As for the IAF views of the EU, the section is based primarily on interviews with 7 prominent IAF/MB figures chosen according to their status in the party and also to represent both the radical as

well as moderate currents in the party plus women and youth. Thanks to the fact that all IAF interviewees agreed to be quoted, I publish a full list with names, positions and other relevant details in the annex.

In addition and to get a broad and balanced view of the EU, the IAF and their relations, I interviewed a dozen other Jordanians: opposition activists of old generation and the youth involved in the current *hirak*, journalists, analysts, academics, NGO activists, non-IAF Jordanian politicians, people from the current establishment, a Christian reverend etc. Due to space restrictions I am not able to report their views fully but they inform my conclusion-making and observations. A full list of these ‘third-party interviewees’ is in the annex.

I was for the most part not able to access primary sources such as internal documents of the actors under scrutiny either because they are strictly confidential and/or because I don’t speak Arabic.

The analytical strategy applied to interpret the results from my fieldwork is a within-case comparison method to explore the evolution between prior to the Arab Spring and today. This approach will help me in finding answers to the research questions brought into the Jordanian reality: How and why did the Arab Spring change the relations EU – IAF (in both directions)? How are the EU general guidelines put into practice on the ground?

2.1. INTRODUCING THE CONTEXT

Judging on the self-presentation of the three actors under scrutiny in this chapter, the situation regarding the EU, the Jordanian state and the IAF could be summed up as follows: The EU applies a more conditional approach to its MENA partners highlighting especially the benchmark of ‘deep democracy’. At the same time the Europeans seek more intensive contacts with the Islamists and recognize them as legitimate political players. The Jordanian king is spearheading a project of democratic reforms and political liberalisation focussing, among other things, on the fostering of a ‘political parties culture’. The IAF is striving for political liberalisation and as the country’s largest political party is ready to contribute to gradual democratic reforms. This would set up the three actors to be the almost ideal partners in the common project of Jordanian democratic transition. However, a look behind the scenes reveals a different scenario:

The incumbent regime is engaged in an exercise of ‘managed transition’ as it became to be known lately³², earlier labelled ‘defensive democratisation’ (Robinson, 1998) or ‘illusive reform’ (Choucair, 2006) and many other terms. Whatever the label, since 1989 the essence has not changed (Abu-Rish, 2013; International Crisis Group, 2012a): The controlled openings were crafted to manage challenges

to the ruling regime and some were actually closed again as of 1993. These pre-emptive measures were designed to maintain the privileges of the elites loyal to the current political order³³ while weakening the institutionalised opposition and particularly the Islamic Action Front party (Choucair, 2006; Robinson, 1998; Schwedler, 2010).

The set of political demands that most opposition forces consistently agree on are: (1) a parliamentary monarchy with appropriate constitutional guarantees. I.e. in practice a parliament that has actual legislative power and a government that is drawn from the elected parliament, (2) fair and free elections and an end to the “one-person, one-vote” electoral system, (3) media, press and publications freedom, (4) an end to the security services (*mukhabarat*) interference in public life, (5) end to corruption and an independent judiciary including a Constitutional Court. It is fair to say that next to political agendas, the opposition to privatisation and what is generally perceived as corrupt ‘neo-liberal’ policies benefiting a minority at the expense of the majority of Jordanians are also broadly rejected.

In Spring 2011 in a reaction to growing protests in Jordan, the King Abdullah II set up the National Dialogue Committee charged to put forward drafts for the electoral and political parties’ laws and the Royal Committee on Constitutional Review, whose task is evident from its name. The changes to the constitution entered into force on 1 October 2011. Whereas the king and his ministers were proudly announcing that two thirds of the constitution got changed, this is a relative (only quantitative) qualification. For a discussion of the constitutional review see Muasher (2011) or Jadaliyya analyses (Kifah & Jennifer, 2012). The establishment of a Constitutional Court and of an independent electoral commission to oversee and manage elections are some of the major reform steps. However, the demands for political reform³⁴ that have not been addressed touch on the core set-up of political power in Jordan and accountability of the regime. The king retains all of his large prerogatives except for the ability to indefinitely postpone elections. The government and prime minister will continue to be appointed by the king rather than drawing their composition from the majority in parliament. Despite the King’s self-presentation as constitutional monarch reverberated in Western media: (Kifah & Jennifer, 2012) and by EU politicians (see below), decision-making and policy-implementation remain beyond the influence of elected institutions. Next to that, the parliament in 2013 is elected based on a system that foresees only 27 seats out of 150 in total for a national proportional system. Three quarters of the lower house of parliament are still filled by the infamous single non-transferable vote system known popularly as “one-person, one-vote” system, which encourages voting along family, clan, or tribal lines. It thereby handicaps political parties with a national political agenda and prefers more narrow interests easily facilitated by the regime (Abu-Rish, 2013). The voting system is complemented with a careful crafting of voting districts that blatantly over-represent the traditional social base of the regime against the primarily urban centres of opposition. Such and other methods of ‘managed transition’ are well analysed but the criticism has little effect on the regime’s relations with

foreign powers because they generally accept the king's argument that such balancing between the traditional and the progressive forces is necessary to secure stability in the kingdom (Turkish Policy Quarterly, 2012).

This brings me to the question of political parties. As this point is particularly relevant to the position of IAF let me dwell on it in more detail: The general line put forward by the incumbent regime and largely endorsed by his external partners is that until a 'political parties culture' emerges and takes over the parliament, the only person who can lead the transition process is the king (Kifah & Jennifer, 2012). Despite the proclaimed will of the King to foster this 'political parties culture' in Jordan (Abdullah II, 2012a; Abdullah II, 2012b; Turkish Policy Quarterly, 2012) the new electoral law does not prepare the ground for political-party based parliaments (Muasher, 2011). It is also quite dubious to qualify Jordan as roundly lacking a political parties culture when one looks at the dynamics of building opposition coalitions (Ryan, 2011; Schwedler, 2006, pp. 109-112) Conspicuously, despite the efforts to produce 'powerful political parties' high on the kings' and government's agenda since more than a decade, there are no tangible results. The real cause of the weakness of political parties is the electoral system (Abu-Rish, 2013; Choucair, 2006). Not to mention that not only political parties are vital to a functioning democracy but also civic groups, trade unions, professional associations etc. and that these are also facing restrictions.

2.1.1. ISLAMIC ACTION FRONT

IAF is a 'moderate' democratically functioning party established in 1992 practically as a political wing of the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood. It advocates political, economic and social reform through the application of Islamic teachings (Schwedler, 2007). It is moderate by the measure that it accepts the current system of governance and proceeds through gradual reform. Also, as Schwedler (2006) studied in detail, the participation in the controlled political openings in the early 90's led IAF to adapting a more open, pluralist and tolerant worldview (i.e. ideological moderation.) When it comes to social or gender issues, however, the party holds conservative views (Ryan, 2011). In terms of internal operations IAF is a fully democratic party (Abu Rumman, 2007; Brown, 2006; Schwedler, 2006). As such it is also subject to at times ferocious intra-party discussions and dissensions that are frequently labelled along the line dove – hawk³⁵.

Nobody knows exactly how many seats the Jordanian Islamist would win in a fair electoral system³⁶ but it is unequivocally appreciated as the strongest political party in Jordan. It is an opposition force but one that has a longstanding reformist posture i.e. is loyal to the king³⁷. IAF decided to boycott the general parliamentary elections of January 2013 on the grounds that the electoral law was unbalanced and not providing a fair proportional representation plus aiming to diminish political parties' gains.

Attempting to downplay the boycott, the king presented this decision as irresponsible, immature, self-interested, proxy of Palestinian interests and hijacking the Arab Spring (Kifah & Jennifer, 2012).

IAF abides by the condition of renouncing violence for political means. It has, however, historically strong ties with Hamas (an administrative and organizational split between the two organisations took effect in 2007) generally seen to adhere to the armed struggle against Israel (for an evaluation of renunciation of violence and acceptance of the ‘Quartet conditions’³⁸ see (International Crisis Group, 2012c). The IAF focus is on national Jordanian politics with the Palestinian cause rhetorically high on the agenda.

In this vein IAF has been an important actor in broad ‘reform coalitions’ in Jordan since the mid-90s (Ryan, 2011), the latest being The National Front for Reform established in 2011. The party has first been building coalitions around foreign-policy issues (starting with ‘anti-normalisation’ opposition alliance i.e. against the Jordan-Israel peace treaty in 1994.) With the de-liberalizing of the political system IAF has been focusing on coalition-building around demands for democratisation while moving away from a traditional rhetoric centred on the concept of the Islamic state and the application of Shari’a (Abu Rumman, 2010). Recently IAF has been emboldened by the Arab Spring and the electoral victories of its fellow Muslim Brothers especially in Egypt even though it does not always participate in the protests since 2011 and just like in other MENA countries cannot be credited with starting the Jordanian Arab uprising (International Crisis Group, 2012a). At the same time, through its disciplined membership, organisational experience and also important presence in the professional, student and labour unions, the IAF is a leading agent in the current *hirak* (mobilization). As a result of its symbolic empowerment by the Arab Spring the IAF has stepped up calls for constitutional and electoral reforms including demands to limit the powers of the king, a previously ‘untouchable’ topic (Amis, 2012; Ülgen et al., 2012, p. 4). The IAF has also resisted to be co-opted into the king-managed reforms as of 2011 cf. refusal to participate in the National Dialogue Committee, to accept seats in reshuffled governments and eventually to participate in the 2013 general elections.

2.1.2. EU-JORDAN RELATIONS

The first cooperation agreement between Jordan and the European Community was signed in 1977. Had the EU been ready to sign agreements as a community already before³⁹, that would have probably been the case because the Hashemite foreign policy was oriented towards close cooperation with the US and with Europe since its juridical independence in 1946. This orientation was accentuated by the signing of the peace treaty with Israel in 1994, which was rewarded by the US and the EU through increasing their aid and assistance to the kingdom (Brand, 1999). It was then only natural that already two years after the Europeans launched the Barcelona process as a framework of relations with the MENA, Jordan signed in 1997 an Association agreement within the new Euro-Mediterranean

Partnership (EMP) and was an important supporter of this policy in general (Monar, 1998). This last stance was also linked to the belief that the EMP would contribute to the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict (Senyücel, Faath, Güner & Mattes, 2006, p. 20), which was and is of vital interest to the kingdom. As the EMP failed to deliver, the Hashemite monarchy supported the next EU initiative: the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) launched in 2004. It also continued to play its role of the 'primus' when it adopted an Action plan under the ENP framework as early as January 2005 underlining the willingness of Jordan's King and government to intensify its cooperation with the EU. As a frontrunner among MENA countries, Jordan reached the so-called "advanced status" in its partnership with the EU in 2010. A concrete result of this new stage of cooperation is the new EU-Jordan Action Plan formally endorsed by the EU-Jordan Association Council on 19 December 2012. The novelty of the Action Plan should be in the fact that it takes a smaller number but of more specific and measurable aims ('SMART' approach) and focuses more on the political reforms. This is in line with the revision of the European Neighbourhood policy and with the accents put on political reforms and 'deep democracy' as explained in a previous chapter. However, just as the discussed analyses of the renewed ENP and of the *Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity* mostly conclude by saying that these frameworks are a repetition of previous EU policies; the new Action Plan could be to a large extent qualified in these terms. It is still a case that the economic dimension of the plan is by far the largest. That reflects both the reality of the EU foreign policy, which is developed particularly in the economic cooperation and trade liberalisation, but also the reality of the interests of the counterpart: The Action Plan can go only as far as Jordan is ready to go because it is a 'joint ownership' (Senyücel et al., 2006, p. 21). Due to the general weakness of the benchmarking of progress still inherent in EU policies towards the MENA (Teti, 2012) the EU-Jordan Action Plan bears the risk that the EU will have to contend with partial improvements without being able to support a genuine democratic transition. Next to that comes the question whether supporting democratic transition is indeed the priority of EU policies. Despite the rhetoric, since the inception of political liberalisation more than twenty years ago, it is not the delivery on democratic reforms but other strategic interests – namely regional stability and peaceful relations with Israel – that determine Jordan's relations with the EU and the US (Brand, 1999; Choucair, 2006).

Having said that, a look at the most recent developments and EU reactions to the Jordanian reform process of 2011 and 2012 reveals that the EU stands behind the Jordanian model of transition and particularly behind the King, understood as the pioneer of reforms. The high moment to mark this EU commitment was on 22 February 2012 at the Dead Sea where an EU-Jordan Task force took place:

February 2012: The EU High Representative for foreign affairs and security policy Catherine Ashton said ahead of the EU-Jordan Task Force Meeting: "Jordan is committed to pursuing a sustained pace of reforms which are vital for the consolidation of the institutions, deepening democracy and the rule of law" (First meeting of EU-Jordan Task Force, 2012). She reiterated this in her opening remarks at

the Task Force reminding everybody that “Jordan is a special partner with a leading role in what we describe as a challenging environment.”

September 2012: EU ambassador to Jordan wrote in a major English-written Jordanian daily that “Jordan, unhurt by the instability experienced by its neighbours, can play a stabilising role in the Arab Mediterranean region by fostering moderation and partnership. And even if there is still some way to go, Jordan’s model of gradual and inclusive reform may well seem an attractive example for other countries to follow.” (Wronecka, 2012)

October 2012: His Majesty King Abdullah II is for the European Commission president “a trusted partner and friend” and “The European Union is fully behind Jordan’s political, economic and social reforms and our financial assistance to the country is a clear expression of that.” “I know how dedicated His Majesty is to the political reform process” (Barroso, 2012).

These quotes by “EU executive” emphasising Jordan’s longstanding good relationship with the EU, its willingness to cooperate in EU initiatives and its appreciated mediating role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are fully reverberated by the European Parliament (EP): When the Jordanian King addressed himself to the EP plenary in April 2012, he also dedicated two thirds of his speech to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and received standing ovations from the members of parliament as a sign of appreciation of his efforts. The president of the European Parliament declared to be “happy that you [*i.e. the king*] have come out so clearly for parliamentary democracy and the rule of law” (Abdullah II, 2012a). Several weeks earlier, Jordanian foreign minister was met with similarly warm welcome in the Foreign Affairs Committee of the European Parliament⁴⁰.

Behind the scenes, reportedly according to my interviewees, other talk takes place with the kingdoms’ decisionmakers. In unofficial conversations EU representatives would be more forcefully demanding clear progress for the money the EU invests and stating their critique with internal Jordanian affairs. An issue that most probably gets raised is the freedom of press. This is a point of critique in the Progress report on Jordan for the year 2011, and it also appeared as a very indirect hint in an article by the EU ambassador to Jordan in December 2011 (Wronecka, 2011). Freedom of expression is indeed being breeched in Jordan (Appeals to Defend Freedoms of Expression and the Press in Jordan, 2012) and is one of the characteristics of a democratic political system that can be easily pointed out. As regards, however, the more politically complex and sensitive issues such as a fairly representative electoral system, a government accountable to parliament and therefore linked to the will of the people, a parliament independent of forceful suspension by the monarch and with real powers, then very little indicates that the EU would be pushing in this direction. On the contrary, the official communiqués all qualify the reforms such as “an important quality leap” and “key requirements for meeting the aspirations of the Jordanian people” (European Commission & HR/VP, 2012), and so that Jordan is moving in the right direction (European Commission & HR/VP 2012; Hazaimh, 2012).

Therefore if the EU called for building “an inclusive, participatory, and open political system where all Jordanians feel represented” (Barroso, 2012) that may be a hint to the limits of the current system but in practice as far as the 2013 elections are concerned the EU was concentrating on their impartial and correct organisation (which, to be fair, is an important step against the backdrop of previous manipulations) but did not pronounce itself on the fairness of the electoral system or the actual role of parliament as such.

Returning to the question whether the EU is effectively demanding more substantial reforms for the substantially increased funds⁴¹ it is making available to Jordan, I can only relate to what EU diplomats told me off the record:

“We know the king could do much more as far as political reforms but we are not pushing him.”

“Jordan remains a textbook example of cooperation and when you look at other stories in the neighbourhood then Jordan is a fairy-tale.”

“The king is an excellent communicator and he knows how to say things we want to hear. The Jordanians know very well how to emphasise their regional stabilising role.”

“We cannot judge it as a binary reforms/no reforms. There is a shift recently in our approach: if before the Arab Spring our focus was on ‘stability’ then now it is ‘stability and reforms’.”

2.2. EU TOWARDS IAF

As of April 2012 all EU member states embassies present in Amman (17) but one (the Netherlands) had contacts with the Islamic Action Front. Bilaterally these contacts happen mostly on the level of political counsellors; meetings on the level of ambassadors are a rare political statement. For the Brits, however, full-fledged contacts with the IAF were of a recent date (spring 2012) because the IAF had declared an embargo on contacts with US and UK representatives in 2003 in reaction to the invasion in Iraq. For the Dutch, on the other hand, the present embargo was on their initiative and reflected a reserved stance from the government in The Hague. Contacts with IAF, as reported by all diplomats, would happen on the European request whereas the IAF was judged as not proactive in seeking those contacts. This was explained by the fact that IAF concentrates on domestic issues such as the socio-economic problems of the country and the new electoral law rather than on foreign policy.

2.2.1. ASSESSMENT OF IAF: STRENGTH, IMPORTANCE, DEMOCRATIC CREDENTIALS

All interviewed diplomats unanimously recognized that the IAF was the best organised among political parties in Jordan, was democratic in its internal procedures and structures and was capable of rallying mass support. Everybody also agreed that IAF politicians were pragmatic (as illustrated for example by the fact that in the context of the Arab Spring they relaxed the embargo on contacts with the UK or by their electoral strategy of stressing issues that are not linked to a religious ideology) and that they were able to react to events and formulate new policies albeit slowly and bureaucratically. “They are no theologians.” The IAF political programme was judged as being the most comprehensive in comparison to its rivals even though by European standards still quite poor. At this point, however, all informants would mention that the government’s policies were also very poorly defined and that especially on the economic agenda the IAF was no worse than the government. IAF was likened to a socialist/labour party in the sense that it pleads for “big government” but was qualified as conservative on social issues. Again, regarding this point many informants would add that the social conservatism reflects rather the broadly shared views in Jordanian society than being specifically linked to the Islam-based character of IAF.

As far as the democratic credentials and the perennial question whether a faith-based political party like IAF can function in a democratic system, this is a question the diplomatic missions are to some extent still grappling with. Overall their answer was: Internally, IAF is democratic. There is no reason for IAF to flout democratic principles any more or less than other actors and parties on the Jordanian political scene. In the past, when they participated in parliament, they did respect the rules of the game so there is no factual reason to mistrust them on this point. Added to that, in the spirit of the Arab Spring, people would not allow IAF to become the new autocrats. In sum, European diplomats don’t fear that IAF would apply the strategy “one man, one vote, one time” i.e. that once Islamists win elections through democratic means they don’t give up power anymore.

When asked about the actual strength and importance of IAF a number of considerations emerged as shared: (a) That the strength of IAF is a product of the failure of other political forces to organise and of the long-dated symbiosis between the Muslim Brotherhood and the monarchy. (b) That IAF would never get an absolute majority in parliament (noting as well that “it is not through parliament that you run this country.”) (c) Even if IAF had a role in the next government, informants converge in saying that they would not expect the party getting the portfolios of foreign policy and therefore IAF couldn’t directly affect the EU-Jordan relations. (d) Most important of all, “There is no chance that with next elections the IAF would come to power.”; “They are neither an alternative nor a threat as there are enough checks and balances for them effectively taking power.” All in all, these considerations come down to the assessment: “For us, IAF is an internal Jordanian issue.”

2.2.2. CONTENT AND CONDITIONS OF CONTACTS

When EU diplomats initiated meetings they claimed to discuss (i.) current internal issues (e.g. the elections law) with the view of learning more about the IAF programme and intentions. The issues that were further regularly brought up were (ii.) the relation to religious minorities, (iii.) women equality issues (or, as one diplomat put it, “their policy on miniskirts”). Two informants explicitly mentioned that the Israeli-Palestinian issue is not being raised. “It is a smelly Pandora box that you better keep closed and the IAF respect it.”

An interesting question is the criteria for (non) engagement as in principle they were very similar but in their application European foreign policy agents in Amman differed. (Note also how this links to the afore-described disagreement in the Council on the criteria that should be applied to selecting ‘contact-worthy’ Islamists). The two criteria that all but one mentioned were (1.) uphold democratic principles (2.) reject violence. Some diplomats would stress (3.) respect human rights whereas others would subsume this under the condition number 1. Some still would specifically point out (4.) respect women’s rights and two informants would mention (5.) the position towards Israel. The question of the given country’s stance on Hamas clearly influenced the criteria applied to IAF. To illustrate the discrepancies, if for the Brits the criteria of rejection of violence was a reason for not dealing with Hamas but yes with IAF - which rejects violence and in the British understanding Hamas and IAF didn’t have any formal links anymore - the Dutch, on the other hand, cited the link to Hamas as a reason for putting their relations with IAF on hold. In other words, practically the same situation gives rise to differing interpretations and distinct policies, which can only be explained by third factors independent of IAF as such (i.e. the foreign policy stance in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and also domestic politics in the given member state.)

2.2.3. OBJECTIVES FOR ENGAGEMENT

My fieldwork revealed that from spring 2011 onwards there was a substantial increase in contacts at the initiative of the different EU embassies. Even though from a formal point of view contacts could have taken place since twenty years (from the time when IAF was legally established as a political party in 1992), in practice this did not occur very frequently. Judging from my interviews, the obstacles can primarily be summarised as lack of interest from the European side combined with a hostile stance from the ruling regime to contacts between embassies and the IAF and for that matter opposition forces at large. In other words, it was not worth taking the risk of annoying the monarchy (with whom, in the end, the diplomats posted in Jordan are supposed to keep good relations) for frequent contacts with IAF, which, on top of that, were not solicited by the relevant capitals.

The reasons for (intensified) engagement as of April 2012 were primarily as follows: (a) the IAF was very well grass-root connected and therefore understanding the IAF opened the door to understanding the important dynamics in Jordanian society. (b) IAF was capable of rallying mass support and it was estimated that in free elections based on a fair system it would be the Islamist party who would emerge as strongest from the poll. Therefore they were a potentially important partner. As one diplomat put it “If you’re not talking to the Islamists in this region, then you are talking to the wrong people.” (c) Connected to the last point was the reason that with general elections in Jordan approaching⁴², diplomats wanted to send the signal that IAF should participate in them. (d) Last but not least was the objective of “public diplomacy” i.e. giving a good picture of the member state in question and sometimes also the EU as a whole.

2.2.4. A COMMON EU APPROACH?

Based on the views heard there was no commonly forged approach to IAF among the EU diplomats. The IAF would never be a point on its own in the consultations among the Heads of Missions and the political counsellors. It would be discussed as part of broader questions related to internal political developments in Jordan. In any case the bilateral contacts, their content and objectives were discretion of each embassy. It was noted that the EU delegation started implementing their coordinating role only as of September 2011 and that it was too early to talk about any EU policy.

There was a differing sensitivity among EU ambassadors about the importance contacts with IAF should be given as compared with other opposition interlocutors. Whereas the French ambassador would not meet bilaterally with the IAF figures because that was deemed inappropriate of her position, the British ambassador did not hesitate to visit IAF at their offices in Amman in February 2012 and two months later invite IAF representatives for a lunch at his residence (Ammonnews, 2012). One could simply attribute these high level contacts to the novelty of the official relations between the UK and the IAF but it seems equally plausible to interpret them as a strategically different approach to the Islamists. Similarly, disagreements about the appropriateness of inviting the IAF Secretary General for a meeting of the EU ambassadors revolved around the contention whether this would legitimise IAF more than they deserved.

The same dissension as to engagement with the IAF was true for positions from Brussels. Advocates of more direct engagement with IAF stood against the defenders of the proposition that direct communication with the IAF was inappropriate for the EU as it should keep its relations to three partners: the royal court, the government and the parliament. These two positions also correlated with a generally positive or negative assessment of political Islam as a phenomenon. If national diplomats in Jordan were mostly quite outspoken in their meaning about the IAF and the

state of affairs in Jordan in general, this was not the case with the diplomats from the EEAS. The EU delegation, more than the member states, was committed to the status quo with the king-led reforms.

Despite the described differences in EU approach and the lack of any common strategic policy towards IAF, the overall picture was identical in one characteristic: Reporting on the Islamists and engaging with them had since the Arab Spring become a normal part of diplomatic work. The extent of the engagement was varying though.

2.3. IAF TOWARDS THE EU

The subsections of this section are purposefully ordered and conceived in a way to offer a mirror image of what the EU thinks about IAF.

2.3.1. ASSESSMENT OF THE EU: STRENGTH, IMPORTANCE, DEMOCRATIC CREDENTIALS

The IAF interviewees were quite well aware of the nuances in policy of individual EU member states and of the lack of unity on foreign policy issues in the Union. Nevertheless there was an understanding that dealing with the Union as a whole presents a number of advantages: First of all, the EU taken together was seen as capable of exerting more pressure on the monarchy due to the fact that it disburses money in aid and other support programmes. Another advantage of dealing with the EU rather than the individual member states was that as a Union it could present a counterweight to the US policy in the region. To be sure, the assessment of the importance of the EU did not lead my informants to the conclusion that dealing with individual member states would be ineffective. These two tracks are seen as complementary especially because as the IAF Secretary General phrased it, there are certain member states that have “more understanding for the IAF”⁴³.

The cornerstone for evaluating EU policy to IAF, Jordan and the MENA at large is the EU position in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict /relations with Israel and with Hamas. This one is seen as unchanging and from IAF perspective as wrong. In fact all IAF interlocutors expressed their critique of what they identified as a lack of independence of the EU claiming that it was under heavy influence of the US and half of my IAF informants mentioned explicitly ‘the Zionist lobby’.

All informants converged in saying that Europeans had a stereotypical image about Arabs and especially about the Islamists. In view of IAF politicians this image was not of the Islamists own doing, because when judged on deeds and policies IAF was an honest democratic party.

Linked to the argument of the stereotypical image was a strong view that the EU was trying to push her own standards rather than respecting the IAF view (which seemed especially sensitive for the “culturalist Islamists⁴⁴”).

EU’s past policies were evaluated with a degree of criticism alluding to EU support of authoritarian regimes in the region. This was judged particularly disappointing against the EU rhetoric of support for democracy and human rights. When linked to the current situation, most interlocutors were still quite sceptical citing typically the stance of the international community in the Syrian crisis. Related to that was also the disappointment with the EU applying double standards and/or not standing behind international conventions in the context of the Palestinian question.

As far as assessing EU policy in Jordan and EU-Jordan relations, doves and hawks alike recognized the excellent relations Jordan had with the EU and the strategic importance of building them up. When asked how IAF would shape the Jordan-EU relations should it come to power, all interlocutors started by saying that in essence they would not alter the way things were.

2.3.2. CONTENT AND CONDITIONS OF CONTACTS

The way the IAF politicians engaged with Europeans was reportedly in Jordan via the embassies or with EU politicians and/or diplomats. Another channel was through academic forums and meetings with academics or journalist: “We have good hope from serious researchers and also from professional media to transmit our ideas to the world.”⁴⁵ There were, however, no peer level contacts with European political parties. According to IAF interviewees, some European states (UK, Spain, Sweden, Norway and Germany through Stiftungen) had offered exchange opportunities, which were judged as tangible and therefore helpful. Neither IAF nor the Muslim Brotherhood was receiving any money from the EU in the form of EU-funded programmes etc. Both IAF and MB claimed to be financially self-sufficient and independent of any foreign donor⁴⁶.

The issues that IAF representatives found relevant to discuss with the EU were: First of all, the current political situation in Jordan with the aim of giving IAF opinion of what the needed reforms were. Second, the position to Israel and the Palestinian question. Third, the situation of Muslim minorities in Europe and islamophobia.

To compare, what IAF reported as issues that the EU interlocutors wanted to discuss were: (i) position to the Christian minority, (ii) IAF policy on women’s equality, (iii) IAF vision of reform and its participation in the elections. The Palestinian issue was either being avoided or raised with utmost care⁴⁷.

For most IAF informants it was perceived as unfounded and patronizing from the EU to be raising concerns on religious minorities and gender equality. Altogether IAF interviewees perceived a

frustrating mismatch in their interests and EU concerns. As the IAF Secretary General put it “Real communication about sensitive issues that need a solution didn’t occur until now.” This situation was ascribed primarily to the EU not taking IAF seriously and not treating them as an equal partner, who “would be capable of contributing to the peace and prosperity in Jordan and in the neighbourhood⁴⁸”. As Dina Tahboub put it “We have a lot of people coming and going but these are mostly just honorary protocol visits.”⁴⁹ In the second place the mismatch was also seen as a result of a stubborn focus on certain stereotypical issues while ignoring the real problems that Jordanians were facing. To use again the words of Dina Tahboub:

People in Jordan are imprisoned for speaking their mind openly; many are struggling to put bread on the table... Then when I meet with UK parliamentarians for example, almost the first question they ask me is how IAF is going to treat gays and lesbians. I was flabbergasted when I got that question. Why don’t you (*i.e. Europeans*) concentrate on the major issues of our concern? Why don’t you support us in what we really need?!

If for most IAF interlocutors the disparity between the quantity of recent contacts from the EU and their quality and substance lead “simply” to frustration, others were suspecting that the current negotiations and dialogue were a cover up for other goals. In this view the aim would be to mould the Muslim movements and change their position towards Israel. “What they did not achieve through the so-called war on terrorism they want to achieve now through a pretended dialogue.”⁵⁰ The issue of the West trying to reshape the Muslim movement was corroborated by Dina Tahboub even though in a different context. According to her, the West was approaching the Islamists as a big brother, who knew better and who also knew what was best for the Islamists themselves and what views they should adopt.

This last point links with a strongly shared view, which could be phrased as a condition for IAF to continue building up relations with the EU. Compared with the multiple conditions the EU diplomats put forward, IAF politicians worded only one but very strongly: a dialogue of equals. As they said, not a master-slave relationship where the West had an upper hand in setting the standards but a relationship based on respect and mutual interests. As emerged from my interviews, for the IAF the issue of Palestine also has to do with being treated fairly as informants would invoke the UN resolutions and their (non)application.

Concerning the mentioned mutual interests, these were identified in the economic realm and in the EU sharing technological know-how with Jordan. As to the frequently raised gender policy issues, some IAF interviewees advocated leaving them aside while accepting that the two sides differed while others would claim that in essence EU and IAF views on gender equality were easily reconcilable. To both sides alike the constant raising of this issue by the Europeans was seen as unsubstantiated and denigrating.

2.3.3. OBJECTIVES FOR ENGAGEMENT

The objectives for IAF to engage with the EU were understandably linked to their political programme and to what they considered as relevant content of contacts (see above). Therefore first and foremost: Gain EU support for IAF demands of political reform in Jordan. IAF politicians were all very well aware of the finances pledged for Jordan by the EU and they were invoking this support as leverage for EU to demand meaningful reforms. In their words, “we need the EU to put pressure on the king to make him understand what people’s needs are.”⁵¹ In this context interviewed IAF politicians viewed themselves as representing undoubtedly the strongest opposition force, one that was very well connected to social movements and therefore a prominent speaker for ‘the people’ and their needs. Subsequently they saw themselves as offering a more realistic picture of common Jordanian’s needs than what the ruling regime was presenting. Following on this assumption was the argument that it was in the EU’s own interest to engage with IAF. Such an engagement could, according to IAF’s ambitions, be formalised by what the Vice Secretary General called “a declaration of understandings” and the youth leader a “certificate” from the EU. This, however, should not be understood as IAF putting itself in a subservient position; on the contrary, as already amply reported, IAF wanted to be recognized as a political party that had mass popular support and was part of broader platforms demanding reform. The reality, again, was not matching the objective, when most interviewees would lament “We are at the stage of just listening.”

Due to the importance of the Palestinian issue for the IAF, the second most important objective of engagement was to “work together towards international peace”⁵², which came down to influencing the EU’s policy on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This objective was specified in various ways: “trying to convince the EU that Israel is not taking care of European interest when it comes to peace”⁵³ or as making sure that the EU sustained the relevant UN resolutions including the Palestinian’s right of return. This objective also entailed the goal of inducing the EU to disengage itself from the US influence.

For all informants the aforementioned objective of working together towards international peace also included advocating the rights of Muslim minorities in Europe.

Mirroring the EU objective of public diplomacy, an objective of engagement for the IAF was to inform the EU, educate against the prejudices against Muslims but also, on the other hand, learn about the EU, its experiences with transitions and to “melt the ice between us”⁵⁴. A negative expression of the same would be, as Zaki Bani Rshaid put it, not to fuel the argumentation of the followers of Samuel Huntington and not to let down those in Europe who advocated giving the Islamists a chance⁵⁵.

Linked to the fact that the dialogue with the EU was still in its first stages, the objective was to see what were the possibilities and the restrictions i.e. to “feel the water and see if we can swim in it”⁵⁶.

In case IAF was in government than an objective of engagement with the EU would be economic relationships, which IAF interlocutors generally perceived as worth of deepening.

2.3.4. A COMMON IAF APPROACH?

Be it hawks or doves, politicians focussing on women's issues or pioneers of contacts with the EU and US, there was one clear common trait of IAF approach and that was openness to dialogue and a recognition that it was important to forge relations of respect and understanding with the Europeans. All interviewed IAF politicians also unanimously aspired to a relationship of equals with the West at large.

Apart from these broad lines of consensus, my observation and interviews confirmed the analyses that classify IAF as a very diverse movement with various currents (Abu Rumman, *The Muslim Brotherhood in the 2007 Jordanian Parliamentary Elections*, 2007). Knowing that conservatives and progressist are not fixed categories, it is safe to conclude that those who are strong advocates of the Palestinian issue and the 'culturalist Islamists' are more critical of the EU. There are certain common lines of IAF foreign policy such as the cited embargos towards UK or US but even those are sometimes subject to contestation. A strong example of this is the participation by Nabil Alkofahi at a Carnegie conference in Washington D.C. in April 2012⁵⁷. On the other hand, while Kofahi would not hesitate to go to Washington to a high level conference, Zaki Bani Rsheid would refuse to meet with an American researcher on one-on-one in Amman⁵⁸. These anecdotes in my view illustrate the fact that IAF does not have a unified 'foreign policy'. Prominent IAF politicians differ in their interpretation of what Schwedler (2006) termed "boundaries of justifiable action" as to contacts with the West.

2.4. ANALYSING AND INTERPRETING

Against the summarised fieldwork findings let me now make an attempt at answering the research questions as applied to Jordan: How and why did the Arab Spring change the relations EU – IAF (in both directions)? How are the EU general guidelines put into practice on the ground?

Let me start by assessing the current situation against the indicators as defined in the introductory chapter:

1. IAF is recognised by European and EU diplomats as an important political actor with mass support and popular legitimacy and as the strongest political party in Jordan. However, IAF is not seen as an alternative to the current regime because it is believed that in the short term the chances of it coming to executive power are scarce. Therefore IAF is neither perceived as a threat to the status quo nor is it being dealt with as a strategic partner.

2. Regular contacts are developed between the EU and the IAF. There are numerous opportunities for the Islamists to meet with Europeans at all kinds of levels: be it in Amman or in Europe, with members of parliament, diplomats, academics etc. To cite a striking example, the fluent-in-English-leader of IAF youth section claimed “I am a member of IAF since 1994. Until before the Arab Spring I never officially met anyone from the EU. In the last two years I already met 300 officials or politicians at different occasions.”⁵⁹ Dialogue is apparently the catch word or, as one EU diplomat put it, “For some ambassadors contacts with the Islamists have become the new hype.” However, there are clear limitations to the relevance of the intensified contacts. From the European side the limiting factor is that IAF is not seen as a realistic alternative. Furthermore as long as it does not participate in the regime-crafted arenas of political participation the contacts are limited. Both the member states as well as the EU operate primarily state-to-state and are reluctant to meddle in internal Jordanian affairs by conspicuously engaging with the Islamist opposition. Added to that and very important is the constraining imbalance that according to the majority of IAF interlocutors’ opinions, the agendas and topics to be discussed are unilaterally imposed by the EU counterparts. More even, as interviews reported in this chapter show, the topics are often seen as irrelevant and at times as insulting to the Islamists. Linked to that is the mismatch in the objectives for engagement from the EU side and from the IAF side as the results of my fieldwork indicate.

3. Due to intensified contacts both parties have increasingly more accurate understanding of each other. There are a few concrete European attempts at creating practical projects such as exchanges that bring about factual cooperation. However there are limits to cooperation stemming from the fact that IAF is an opposition party (and not represented in parliament). EU-IAF relations are framed as political but at the same time the religious, cultural and ethical questions continue to play a very

important role. The Islamists perceive their European counterparts as being a-priori suspicious of Islam and of political Islam.

4. Given the above-described, one can at best qualify the mutual relations as ‘acquaintance’ but mistrust is still quite high on both sides. It seems impossible to talk of an honest relationship. This is caused on the EU side by reservations about the IAF political programme. On the IAF side it is caused especially by the deception from the EU stance in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict⁶⁰. As reported in this chapter, discussions of issues where points of view diverge are purposefully avoided (cf. the ‘Palestinian Pandora box’ for the EU) or when imposed they are causing a repulse (cf. the gender issues for IAF.)

5. In my assessment and as argued in the sections above, the EU is not putting credible pressure on the Jordanian regime to make substantial moves to democratise. This creates a major limitation to the meaningfulness of EU-IAF relations.

6. EU member states diverge in their criteria of cooperation put forth to the Islamists. That is why at the time of fieldwork one diplomatic delegation was avoiding engagement with the IAF. IAF links to Hamas are the bone of contention. One cannot talk about a coherent strategy from the EU side towards the Islamists although the individual European practices show many similarities.

2.4.1. WHAT CHANGED WITH THE ARAB SPRING

The change of the regional context – the Arab Spring - affected all actors and their strategies relevant for my study:

The Islamists are on the one hand emboldened by their brethren’s electoral victories in Egypt and Tunisia and became more self-conscious towards the regime and more demanding in their calls for reform. At the same time the Arab Spring has strengthened the moderates advocating an open worldview both on internal issues (readiness to cooperate with others in the *hirak*⁶¹) as well as on external relations: The Islamists realise with more intensity the need to work together with the outside world (Cf. their reopening of contacts with the UK). This is also due to the European advances and growing interest in the Islamists. To be sure, some IAF politicians claim that neither their position changed (i.e. they were always open for contacts) nor their political programme. What changed is the regional context which casts IAF in a different position in the eyes of the Europeans⁶². However, others admitted that seeing themselves in the position of authority pushed them to more pragmatism and openness to the outside⁶³. “Now we are more forced to be more flexible and focus on similarities when dealing with the West because when you are in opposition it’s different than when you are in power.”⁶⁴ A former IAF politician corroborated this by saying “They realise that they need international partners, they need to communicate with others and to explain their plans and strategy.”⁶⁵

The perceived need to focus on similarities is what in my interpretation explains the paradox between IAF politicians being disillusioned by EU stance in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict but at the same time fully open to contacts with the EU. In other words, they don't want to be caught up in the Palestinian issue and give preference to national politics⁶⁶. Because the EU rhetorically demands reforms in Jordan and backs this up by financial pledges, of which the IAF are well aware, they consider good relations with the EU as important for their own political aims in Jordan. The intensified contacts allowed IAF politicians to understand the EU and its member states better and they are now able to frame their demands in congruence with what the EU claims to be advancing. At the same time IAF politicians realise that in order to entice EU states to take them and their reform demands seriously, they have to be pragmatic and focus on points of convergence rather than divergence.

At the same time, however, one could argue that this development of IAF approach is in line with their pre-Arab Spring perspectives on European foreign policy. According to Emerson and Youngs (2007, pp. 9-11) Islamists were already in 2007 altogether open towards engagement because they tactically sought European support for democratic openings in their countries and because they wanted to overcome the misunderstandings of the past. At the same time they were very critical of EU position towards Hamas. The area that now as well as then stood out as room for cooperation with the EU was economy. What contrasts is that prior to the Arab Spring the Islamists had little specific knowledge of EU policies and programmes in the region and regarded them on the whole as initiatives to contain Islam. Even though, as reported in this chapter, as of 2012 Islamists were fruitlessly longing for a relationship of mutual respect, they did not perceive EU policies as outright hostile to political Islam. The exponential growth in contacts testified to a more open relationship although still short of Islamists expectations.

For the Europeans, the Arab Spring in the region and in Jordan ushered a number of new approaches as well. Even though IAF was a legal party prior to 2011, as of the Arab Spring contacts between the EU and the IAF noticeably expanded - both in sheer numbers as well as in the level of contacts and type of encounters. There were several reasons for this shift which again clarify in more detail what changed with the Arab Spring: (a) "There is no choice but to build relations." This formulation from my interviewees either bore a negative undertone of resignation to reality or a more positive acknowledgement of it in the sense: "If you're not talking to the Islamists, then you are talking to the wrong people" as one diplomat put it. (b) More information was solicited from EU capitals on the Islamists and there was political support from the foreign ministries to forge more contacts with Islamists. To illustrate this development with some quotes:

"Two or three years ago it was 'not done' to talk to the Islamists. Now the context changed and we simply do it even if it has little to do with general conceptual reflections on political Islam and its role."

“Prior to the Arab Spring, internal political processes were not a point of attention for us. Today we are paying more attention to them and in that respect try to enhance our understanding of the whole Islamist spectrum.”

(c) The Jordanian regime – being under internal and external pressure to liberalize politically – could not afford to hinder the encounters as in the past. Even though the General Intelligence Service still sought to limit and control the contacts between the West and opposition figures⁶⁷, this was limited. As one diplomat explained “The IAF became a political issue rather than a security issue for the regime.”

A fundamental question that I am now arriving at is whether more contacts bring more substance to mutual relations; whether intensified encounters lead to full-fledged cooperation. As detailed in the sections above, both sides indicate that so far there is perhaps more mutual understanding (which, to be sure, does not mean sharing the other side’s opinion) but that it does not translate into tangible results⁶⁸. As the IAF Secretary General put it “There is an abundance of meetings but no real effect on the ground. We are at the stage of just listening.”⁶⁹ This brings me to the discussion of what remained the same even with the Arab Spring.

2.4.2. WHAT DID NOT CHANGE WITH THE ARAB SPRING

As already said, most interviewed IAF politicians perceive a lack of substance of the intensified contacts. From the objectives of contacts cited by the European diplomats, on the other hand, the same picture emerges: Intensified contacts with IAF have primarily ‘intelligence reasons’. The contacts were kept at low level and limited basically to informing about IAF and at best trying to exert pressure on them to participate in elections. This virtual European non-engagement (if we understand engagement as a commitment to a serious relationship) in 2012 was all the more striking as the assessment of IAF that European diplomats were giving was one of a moderate, serious, pragmatic party. That suggests that there are important external factors determining the EU-IAF relationship.

These factors could also be labelled as the limits of EU-IAF engagement and are a way of describing what did not change with the Arab Spring:

Limit number one: regional stability i.e. status quo is priority or in other words regime change is seen as a potential source of volatility. It is most plausible that a government accountable to voters would be more critical towards Israel. The possible advent of Islamists to executive power is not a preferred scenario for the western neighbour of Jordan as anti-Zionism has been a strong feature of the Muslim Brotherhood (not only) in Jordan since the organisation’s founding. It is in this context that Jordan has been hailed by the EU (and the US) as the beacon of stability. According to a diplomat “You have on the one hand on paper more conditionality (more money linked to more reforms) but on the other hand

there is the stability argument. In the end the EU wouldn't want to be pushing the king too hard." An ambassador explained "If neither the US nor Saudi Arabia as the big donors are formulating any critical messages, why would EU be playing the righteous judge. If there is critique, it would not be in public."

Limit number two: national stability i.e. the relative success of the monarchy to keep the Jordanian Arab uprising under control allows the EU to continue framing the Jordanian reforms as a 'success story'. As one ambassador explained "We can't but treat Jordan as a case apart. Here there was no repression of the protests for example." This is a view widely held by Jordanians themselves.

Limit number three: Despite all the shifts, my interviews confirm a continued bias against political Islam and a European preference for a liberal-secularist project of democracy, whereas the IAF does not fully comply with all its conditions (on women's rights typically). This bias may sometimes be less conscious. According to an analyst of the International Crisis Group⁷⁰ the Islamists are not the usual suspects at receptions at embassies because they don't naturally belong to the Western circuit being excluded by language and cultural barriers. From, another perspective, according to a European ambassador "The IAF are not at ease in international contexts." Added to that is the fact that the ruling regime employs the true and tried tactic of scaremongering with the Islamists.

In sum, the intensified contacts between the EU and the IAF were not a sign of a fundamental reconsideration of European policies in the region or in Jordan and therefore there was no substantial shift in the EU approach to the IAF. This is also obvious from a comparison with the motives that Kausch (2009, p. 134) summarised as guiding EU engagement with Islamists in the MENA prior to the Arab Spring: obtaining reliable information about the group in question and its analysis of domestic and regional developments; improving Europe's image; positively influencing the development of Islamist movements through engagement. The IAF politicians were aware of this lack of substantial change in EU approach and that is why they continued harbouring a certain mistrusts of European intentions just as prior to the Arab Spring (cf. Emerson et al., 2009, p. ii).

2.4.3. REFORM WITHOUT CHANGE, CONTACTS WITHOUT ENGAGEMENT

This case study research started as an inquiry to the changed relationship between the EU and the IAF. Having analysed the results, the conclusion that is pressing on me is that this seems to be a question of secondary relevance. Remembering Emerson et al. and their inquiry into EU engagement with MENA Islamists prior to the Arab Spring, "Without pressure at the top, engagement with opposition actors alone is futile." (Emerson et al., 2009, p. 165) The primary question is therefore whether there is 'pressure at the top' and what are the achievements of EU democracy promotion in Jordan. This is a vast topic that is out of the scope of my present study but without giving an answer to it, one cannot

really appreciate the impact that the Arab Spring had on EU foreign policy and Islamist political actors within it.

To exemplify why I chose to title my conclusion of this chapter in the way I did, let me now turn to briefly describing the EU-Jordan Task Force meeting, which can serve as a condensed illustration of EU agenda in Jordan:

The Task Force⁷¹ meeting was held at the Dead Sea on 22 February 2012. In layman terms it was organised for the hosting country to line up its demands and to publicly commit to the engagements it took with the EU. For the European counterpart the Task Force is a token of support and a tool how to coordinate European financial support and aid programmes. However, the question whether it also lived up to the conditionality principle was not one answered in consensus. Most European diplomats converged in saying that the EU committed too much too early, that it jumped too eagerly on the promises of the Jordanian counterparts and that it was all too obvious how eagerly the Europeans wanted the Jordanian ‘home-grown reform’ to be a success story. Indeed, the timing for Jordan was quite conspicuous as the Task Force was held very early into the king-led transition.

To reinforce the message that EU support to Jordan was conditional on the delivery of ‘deep democracy’, there was a special session preceding the official Task Force meeting dedicated to an exchange of views with representatives of political parties, civil society and the business. The participants were screened by the ministry of political development. Those that were invited concur that the exchange was very formal and limited to the participants quickly reciting their contributions. For some analysts the lack of a priority topic was a way how to dilute any critical messages and reinforce the impression that among such complex societal and political problems, the EU could only be grateful that the wise monarch was leading the reforms⁷².

All in all, despite the Task Force being a new tool, I see it as framed in the true and tried concept of EU democracy promotion in the MENA, through three main tools (Pace, Seeberg, & Cavatorta, 2009): (1) a positive political engagement with the authoritarian regime; (2) promotion of economic reforms, (3) strengthening of civil society activism. Still, it was not EU democracy promotion that brought about the Arab Spring. This one was directed against the first two pillars and not carried by the civil society actors that the EU was breeding. Even though this has been partly recognised by the EU itself, in practice – and the Jordanian example is telling – the nuances are subtle or the approach continues unchanged (Pace & Cavatorta, 2012, p. 134; Teti, 2012).

Some EU member states seem to be moving towards what could be qualified as a strategic partnership with IAF: In other words a recognition that there is better chance at stability in the region if there is a democratic political system. The engagement with the Islamists comes within that. On the whole, however, because of other strategic interests (namely regional conflicts) the EU is extremely status-

quo oriented, which does not offer too much in the support for substantial reforms. As my fieldwork revealed, this is frustrating for Jordanians involved in formulating alternatives to the current state of affairs be it Islamists, seculars, young, old... Relying on their judgment, if change in Jordan happens it will not be thanks to EU support for it. At the same time if this change should bring the Islamists to the fore, there wouldn't be any deterioration of EU-Jordan relations. Partly thanks to the IAF pragmatic assessment that they need good relations with the West at large and partly thanks to the pre-emptive bridges that the EU has built towards the Islamists. This can be appreciated as a positive outcome of the changes in the relations between the EU and the IAF as they were affected by the Arab Spring.

3. GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

After two years of turmoil in the MENA region, the EU's priority as of 2012 is to stabilise the situation. In this logic, facilitating the success of the transition processes is of utmost importance. That translates into different national contexts: cooperating with the Islamist-led governments in Egypt and Tunisia or king-led reforms in Jordan. In other words, not being in a position or willing to intervene in the domestic political processes, the EU attempts to support the home-grown scenarios. One can criticise this way of formulating foreign policy as head-in-the sand, lacking vision and working on the least common denominator or praise it for being non-interventionist and 'soft power'. It is not my intention to pass judgement. What matters for the conclusion regarding EU policy towards Islamic political parties in the MENA is to bear this context in mind.

The findings of my research indicate that EU relations with Islamist political parties have undergone very much of an evolution as a result of the Arab Spring or more precisely as a result of Islamist political parties acceding to legislative and executive power after elections in Tunisia, Morocco and Egypt. A suspicious defensive European approach has given way to one of cautious engagement; previous times' neglect is replaced by a boost in contacts aimed at learning about each other. I argue that this shift is primarily realist rather than normative. It is the inevitability to accept the outcomes of democratic elections and to do business with the MENA states' new representatives that pushes EU politicians and diplomats to practice a new approach to political Islam. Concomitant with this development and supportive of it is a conceptual shift in perceptions i.e. accepting Islamists as politicians with diverse agendas but not essentially predetermined by their Islamic background. However, I have also shown that despite enormous European efforts to understand the complex Islamist political sector and to normalise relations, there are still reservations about the project of political Islam and that it remains a highly controversial and loaded topic.

Because the EU approach to political Islam changed under pragmatic considerations rather than as a result of an overall conceptual acceptance of the Islamist political project, the country contexts are decisive. That is why EU-Islamist relations are contingent. In the studied case of Jordan, regional security and national stability are the most important concerns. These factors are in turn used by the monarchy to strengthen its role both domestically and internationally. In other words, the spectre of an unsure alternative is used to bargain with the EU about its democracy promotion agenda i.e. Jordan continues staging very partial reforms with the appraisal of the EU (and the US). This setting is determining for EU-IAF relations, which are limited by the continued status-quo in Jordan and the restricted political liberalisation. Discussed academic arguments that Islamists could be clue players in democratisation given their popular support and legitimacy continue to have little impact on EU

policies in Jordan despite changed circumstances of the Arab Spring. In this sense, choosing the case of EU-IAF relations as one with value for the general question of the shifts in EU approach to the Islamists proved to be relevant. Especially to the extent that the Jordanian case shows the limits of the changes in EU attitudes and practices. EU-IAF relations continue to be caught up in issues such as testing the democratic credentials of the Islamists and putting them up against acceptance of European liberal social values (e.g. on gender issues). This European stance is perceived as condescending and patronizing especially in the absence of exchanges on issues that matter for the IAF (domestic reforms and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict).

To develop the above-summarised conclusion in more detail and nuance, let me proceed with juxtaposing the concepts in Brussels and the practice in Jordan. Chapter 1 and 2 offered detailed accounts how from those two perspectives the EU policy to political Islam fares up against the indicators I established in the introduction chapter. I will now return to them for the concluding overview:

Ad 1: Conceptually speaking, as I illustrated in chapter 1, both on EU level as well as in EU capitals there is a significant shift in conceiving of political Islam towards a more open and positive appreciation. The Islamists are generally recognised as important social and political actors with broad support. There is consensus to approach Islamists constructively once they are in government and judge them on their deeds and results. If Islamists are not in state power, however, the EU does not assign to them any particular role in the democratisation process; the approach is ad-hoc and in some cases a matter of major controversy. This is corroborated by the situation in Jordan where IAF is recognised as important but not dealt with as a strategic alternative because their participation in the transition process is not deemed indispensable. European engagement with IAF is limited to learning more about them and creating as much as possible positive communication channels preventively. That explains why the IAF politicians on their part do not perceive the EU advances towards them as genuine or strategic.

Ad 2: Both in Brussels as well as in Amman, regular contacts are developed between the EU and the Islamists leading some to say that Islamists are the new hype. For the EU the motives are to gather expertise and develop ties, for the Islamists their openness to contacts stems from pragmatic interests and the aim of building relationships of mutual respect. I have too limited evidence to make a general judgement as to what extent these contacts are mutually relevant and beneficial but the Jordanian case presents a rather bleak picture. Because of the inherent imbalance in the relationship between the EU and an opposition party, the agendas are being set unilaterally. There is quite a mismatch in objectives of engagement, its agendas and topics from the EU versus the IAF perspective. As far as contacts with MENA Islamists on political level, there is still reluctance. As shown in chapter 1 it is unattractive and

sometimes even judged problematic for European politicians to meet their Islamic counterparts especially on European soil.

Ad 3: There is a shift towards cooperating on practical projects rather than engaging in debates on religious issues especially where Islamists are in executive power. In such circumstances the mainstream tone is to advocate that the Islamists need to be judged by their deeds as I have shown in chapter 1. In Jordan, however, the IAF politicians perceive their European counterparts as suspicious of Islam and of political Islam.

Ad 4: As a result of the boom in EU-Islamists contacts, there is mutual learning on all fronts but still mistrust on both sides. On the European side because on certain sensitive topics the Islamists hold conservative views incongruent with European liberal norms (regarding typically women's rights, gender issues and religious minorities) or are perceived as a threat to the regional order (relations to Israel). On the Islamist side, extrapolating from the IAF case, the distrust relates to what is perceived as a condescending approach to the Islamists and from the awareness of the difficulties Muslim communities face in European countries. Islamists' doubts about the EU intentions are further based on the European stance in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict where the EU is seen as not putting its own words into deeds and not living up to international standards, which it otherwise preaches. Subsequently, as there is little mutual trust and an imbalanced relationship, difficult issues are either avoided or when discussed they cause a repulse.

Ad 5. In Jordan, there is little credible pressure from the EU on the incumbent regime to make meaningful advances towards democracy. On the contrary, the financial and political support to King Abdullah II is geared to keep the status quo. In this context the EU-IAF relations are stalled because the overall political context does not allow for further advance. The EU in Jordan is pushing for trade liberalization, good governance and supports civil society. However, good governance is approached as a rather un-political, technical concept and support to civil society includes only secular organisations whereby missing an important Islamist sector. IAF is not supported by cooperation initiatives or capacity-building programmes directly from the EU.

Ad 6: Last but not least, there is no EU agreement on which Islamists to engage with. Differing member states' position on Hamas and Hizbullah stand in the way of this consensus and make any common EU policy towards Islamists in the MENA unviable. In this sense, a pre-Arab Spring observation could still be applied: "The stigma of EU's response to the rise of Hamas in the Palestinian Territories still paralyses the debate how to adequately and coherently respond to the rise of Islamist political actors in the region." (Emerson, Kausch & Youngs, 2009, p. 150) To be fair it is necessary to add that political Islam is a very diverse phenomenon unfit for an overarching wholesale policy.

Linking my findings to the studies discussed in the introductory chapter, the IAF case fully confirms analyses of shifts in ‘foreign policy’ of Islamists in executive power (Al-Anani, 2012a; Kausch, 2012; Seeberg, 2012; Ülgen et al., 2012) where the Arab Spring renders them pragmatic and open to build bridges with the West as well as keen to develop practical (economic) cooperation projects. The EU engagement with Islamists in power also follows the academic arguments that engagement would strengthen the moderates but today as well as prior to the Arab Spring this hypothesis is actually not warranted. The ambiguity in EU approach to political Islam that emerges from my study is in line with discussed analyses as well.

Possible further research

I would like to reiterate that I am aware of the limitations of my findings primarily because they are based on my interviewees’ accounts and their interpretation of reality rather than first-hand observation or primary sources. If the line of research as I have started it in this thesis should be continued and expanded, then a more balanced approach would have to be found relying more on primary direct data for example by attending meetings between EU and Islamist representatives, gaining access to internal discussions and policy documents on each side etc.

The purpose of this thesis was not to advocate for special favours to the Islamist political parties. To use the case of Jordan and exaggerate the picture, I do not want to suggest that it is up to the EU delegation or the European embassies to be “plotting” with the Islamists behind the king’s back. I believe it is about supporting a meaningful, genuine democratisation process, which would, among other things, allow the IAF to play the role that Jordanians alone want to give them in designing a better future for their country. The primary question is therefore about the character of EU democracy promotion in Jordan. It is a vast topic that is out of the scope of this study but without giving an answer to it, one cannot really appreciate the importance that the Arab Spring has had on EU foreign policy and Islamist political actors within it.

It seems too early to pass judgement whether the EU recognised that an Islamic project of democracy is conceivable as such. This would mean moving away from promoting a Western-styled liberal democracy model in the Southern Mediterranean and opening up to new concepts (Volpi, 2009). So far, the reviewed approach to the MENA shows little essential reconsideration. However if Cavatorta & Pace (2010) are correct in arguing that the context in which the EU operates influences it back, then one can expect that experiences of Egyptian, Tunisian, Moroccan transitions will have major impacts on EU foreign policy towards the MENA including its democracy promotion efforts. Because Islamists formulate a project that challenges some of the EU liberal basics, if a shift in democracy promotion occurs, it would be particularly salient in the approach to the Islamists. This could be a particularly rich field of research if for example the Jordanian case would be compared to a very opposed one like EU relations with Islamists in Egypt or Tunisia.

On the other hand, EU policies, programmes, expectations etc. will affect the Islamists. They will respond to them, adapt to them and utilize them. This appropriation of the EU tools, money and rhetoric will to some extent be part of the power struggle in the MENA countries in transition where the old guard in the armies, the economic elites and the former political leaders cannot be expected to relinquish power all too easily. The EU could (involuntarily or purposefully) become an actor and factor in these reconfigurations and studying such processes could provide valuable insights into the dynamics of EU-MENA relations.

ADDENDA

German Non-Paper on Political Islam, submitted to the Council Maghreb Mashrek Working Group on 10 November 2011

NON-PAPER: POLITICAL ISLAM

Assumptions:

- The events in the MENA region and the ensuing process of democratisation will result in a more influential role for political Islam, even though Islamists were not the main driving force behind the democratic revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt.
- Some moderate Islamist parties - moderate in the sense that they adhere to nonviolence, rule of law and democracy – have already emerged or are likely to emerge as strongest parties in elections in Tunisia, Egypt and other countries and are likely to be in a strong position to influence the constitutional process in Tunisia and Egypt.
- There is no uniform Islamist sector. Theoretical and historical background, organisational set-up, funding sources and ideologies of movements and parties vary greatly. In addition, youth movements are in favour of a more modernist, pragmatic approach. Considerable rivalry exists among Islamists.
- Islam plays a central role in MENA societies. For a majority of their populations, the religious, social, private and political spheres are strongly intertwined. Consequently, religiously oriented parties are seen as a natural phenomenon, and not as signs of extremist tendencies in society.
- Moderate Islamist / Muslim Brotherhood (MB) affiliated movements and parties have a strong standing among large parts of the population because of longstanding social and charity efforts. They have gained considerable credibility as opposition groups under the old regimes. Others, such as Salafist movements, Wahhabi influenced groups etc. enjoy regional support in some countries and can count on outside funding.
- Moderate Islamist / MB affiliated groups have recognized that Arab revolutions are about democratic rights, freedom and dignity. Islamisation of society is not put forward as a central issue. At the same time, it is commonly accepted, that Islam will provide central references for the build-up of a post-revolutionary society.
- Generally, moderate Islamist groups stress adherence to principles of democracy, rule of law and human rights. However, it remains to be seen how these theoretical positions are translated into political actions under democratic conditions. In addition, important differences

in understanding (compared to Western interpretation) exist regarding the role of religion, minorities and women's rights.

- Even moderates express strong anti-Israeli rhetoric and positions and are likely to exploit public opinion in elections. At the same time, moderate Islamist and MB affiliated groups take a rather soft stance at the moment and have publicly subscribed to the importance of regional stability and the respect of international treaties.

Possible Guidelines:

- As moderate Islamist groups will be important political actors we should be ready for dialogue with those groups. While not disregarding ideological differences we need to be in a position to engage in discussions about concrete political, economic and social issues.
- We should ask our Embassies to intensify contacts with moderate Islamist parties. We could also consider including representatives of such parties in national visitors' programmes.
- It will be important to differentiate between moderate Islamists as pragmatic actors and extremist groups that we denounce.
- To identify groups that qualify for dialogue, we need to apply criteria, such as: adherence to the principles of democracy, rule of law, plurality and human rights, rejection of political violence, respect of international obligations and treaties, a constructive approach to regional issues in the Middle East. With regard to Israel, the two-state-solution and the Arab Peace Initiative we should articulate clear expectations.
- The above criteria or guidelines will be important in providing orientation. At the same time, we need to maintain a level of flexibility.
- In our public messages, we need to communicate clearly that we are willing to engage with all groups that respect democratic principles.
- Regarding the outcome of free and fair elections, our reactions ought to be measured. We should be able to congratulate the winner(s) and to express a willingness to cooperate (provided that winners don't represent extremist groups). HR Ashton's statement on the election results in Tunisia set a good example.
- We should express expectations that newly formed governments ensure respect for the basic principles set out above and that constitutional processes reflect these principles.
- At the same time, public statements may include reservations about certain positions held by moderate Islamists on which there are significant disagreement.
- Finally, there is a need to engage with parliaments and public opinion in our own countries on the issue of dialogue with moderate political Islam. In taking forward dialogue with moderate political Islam, Members of Parliament can play an important role.

LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

This is a complete list of persons I interviewed for the purpose of my research (56) arranged in chronological order. About half of my informants talked off the record. In the text I have not attributed the specific quotes to their authors unless I was authorised to do so. On the other hand, as my findings are to a large extent based on interviews, I do mention all interviewees albeit not always by name in this list in order to provide transparency. I hope this is a solution that my anonymous interviewees will find honest and fair. In any case, the ultimate responsibility for accuracy in reporting others' views lies with me alone.

| Name interviewee and/or position | Date interview | Place | Language |
|--|-------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------|
| EP Office for the promotion of parliamentary democracy, analyst | 16 March 2012 | Brussels | Spanish |
| EEAS, Desk Officer Syria/Lebanon | 16 March 2012 | Brussels | Czech |
| EP, advisor to the delegation for the relations with the Mashreq countries | 23 March 2012 | Brussels | English |
| EP, Policy Department analyst (external policies) | 23 March 2012 | Brussels | English |
| EEAS, Desk Officer Jordan | 23 March 2012 | Brussels | English |
| Martin Konečný, Crisis Action, Brussels, director | 24 March 2012 | Gent | Czech |
| EEAS, Advisor to the Managing Director for North Africa, Middle East, Arabian Peninsula, Iran and Iraq | 29 March 2013 | Brussels | English |
| Embassy of the Hashemite kingdom of Jordan, Brussels, 2 nd Secretary | 30 March 2012 | Brussels | English |
| Member of cabinet of EU Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy | 3 April 2012 | Brussels | Czech |
| Ambassador of Belgium to Jordan, 1 st Secretary, BE embassy to Jordan | 9 April 2012 15 April 2012 | Amman | Dutch |
| Zaki Bani Rsheid, Head of Political Bureau, IAF | 11 April 2012 | Amman | Arabic / English interpreted |
| International Crisis Group, MENA analyst | 11 April 2012 | Amman – Tunis (Skype) | English |
| Naseem Tarawnah, analyst & commentator, The Black Iris | 14 April 2012 | Amman | English |

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|---|--------------------------------|-------|------------------------------------|
| Muhammad Ben Hussein, journalist, Reuters | 15 April 2012 | Amman | English |
| Assam al Omari, lawyer and researcher at l'Institut Français du Proche-Orient | 15 April 2012 | Amman | French |
| Hani Hazaimah, journalist, Jordan Times | 15 April 2012 | Amman | English |
| Hamza Mansour, Secretary General, IAF, Nimer Al-Assaf, Deputy Secretary General, IAF | 16 April 2012 | Amman | Arabic / English interpreted |
| UK embassy to Jordan, 1 st Secretary | 17 April 2012 | Amman | English |
| Nermeen Murad, King Hussein Foundation, director Center for Information and Research | 17 April 2012 | Amman | English |
| Ghaith Al Qudah, Chairman of IAF youth section | 18 April 2012 | Amman | English |
| Ambassador of France to Jordan, 2 nd Secretary FR embassy to Jordan | 18 April 2012 | Amman | French |
| Abdelilah al-Khatib, former Jordanian minister of foreign affairs (1998 – 2001, 2005 - 2007) | 19 April 2012 | Amman | English |
| Jamil Abu Bakr, spokesperson, Muslim Brotherhood | 19 April 2012 | Amman | Arabic / English interpreted |
| Ibrahim Gharaibeh, researcher, Centre for Strategic Studies | 19 April 2012 | Amman | English |
| Jamal Tahat, political activist for constitutional monarchy, National Front for Reform | 19 April 2012 | Amman | English |
| Eman Jaradat, Projects development coordinator, Ammannet | 19 April 2012 | Amman | English |
| US embassy to Jordan, Deputy political counsellor | 23 April 2012 26 April 2012 | Amman | English |
| Dina Tahboub, member Shura Council, IAF | 23 April 2012 | Amman | English |
| Fr.Nabil Haddad (Melkite catholic church), founder and executive director of Jordanian Interfaith Coexistence Research Center | 23 April 2012 | Amman | English |
| Czech embassy to Jordan, Deputy Head of Mission and First Secretary | 24 April 2012 | Amman | Czech |
| Muin Khoury speaking in personal capacity (Director International media, research and opinion polling, the Royal Hashemite Court) | 25 April 2012 | Amman | English |

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|---|-------------------|-----------------------------|---------|
| Dutch embassy to Jordan, Deputy Head of Mission | 25 April 2012 | Amman | Dutch |
| Sara Ababneh, researcher, Center for Strategic Studies | 25 April 2012 | Amman | English |
| Nabil Alkofahi, chief for foreign relations, IAF | 25 April 2012 | Amman | English |
| Swedish embassy to Jordan, Deputy Head of Mission | 26 April 2012 | Amman | English |
| Nawal Fauri, senator, former IAF member, the first woman on Shura Council (1993), stepped out of IAF in disagreement with its patriarchal attitudes regarding women's participation | 26 April 2012 | Madaba | English |
| Jonathan Levack, programme officer foreign policy, TESEV (Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation) | 27 April 2012 | Istanbul | English |
| Marc Franco, advisor to EBRD, former EU ambassador to Egypt | 11 May 2012 | Gent | English |
| Czech Permanent Representation to the EU, Maghreb/Mashrek expert | 28 June 2012 | Brussels | Czech |
| German Permanent Representation to the EU, Maghreb/Mashrek expert | 28 June 2012 | Brussels | English |
| Embassy of the Hashemite kingdom of Jordan, Brussels, Deputy Head of Mission | 28 June 2012 | Brussels | English |
| UK Permanent Representation to the EU, Maghreb/Mashrek expert | 29 June 2012 | Gent –Antwerp (telephone) | English |
| Michael Emerson, director CEPS (Centre for European Policy Studies) | 2 July 2012 | Brussels | English |
| Chiara Biscaldi, International Crisis Group, EU Advocacy, senior analyst | 2 July 2012 | Brussels | English |
| Koert Debeuf, ALDE (Alliance of Liberals and Democrats) office Cairo | 4 July 2012 | Gent – Cairo (telephone) | English |
| Alvaro de Vasconcelos, former director of EU Institute for Security Studies | 13 July 2012 | Reillanne–Paris (telephone) | English |
| Merete Bilde, EEAS policy advisor | 27 July 2012 | Brussels | English |
| Czech Ministry of foreign affairs, MENA deputy director | 19 September 2012 | Prague | Czech |
| Zora Hesová, research fellow and Egypt project | 26 September | Prague | Czech |

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|---|------------------|------------------------|---------|
| coordinator, Association for International Affairs | 2012 | | |
| European People's Party, Secretary for external relations | 24 October 2012 | Brussels | English |
| Rosa Balfour, Senior policy analyst, European Policy Centre | 24 October 2012 | Brussels | English |
| EU ambassador to Jordan | 27 November 2012 | Gent-Amman (telephone) | English |

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NOTES

¹ Especially in two documents published respectively in March and May 2011: *A Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean* (European Commission & High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, 2011b), *A New Response to a Changing Neighbourhood: A Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy* (European Commission & High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, 2011a)

² Political Islam as Meijer (2009, pp. 5-6) qualifies it are the modern Islamic movements that seek to gain power and transform society by political means within the existing order. In other words they embrace party politics (*hizbiyya*) as a means rather than preaching (*da'wa*) or religious war (*jihād*). By accepting politics they accept the pluralism of opinions, interests, and interpretations of Islam.

³ See Lewis, B. (1990). The Roots of Muslim Rage, *Atlantic Monthly*, 266 (56), 59-60 and Huntington, S. (1993). The Clash of Civilizations?, *Foreign Affairs* 72(3), 22-49.

⁴ Center for European Policy Studies, Brussels & Fundacion para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Diálogo Exterior, Madrid

⁵ *A New Response to a Changing Neighbourhood: A Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy*, COM(2011) 303 (European Commission & High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, 2011a)

⁶ *A Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean*, COM(2011) 200 final (European Commission & High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, 2011b)

⁷ Michael Emerson, personal communication, 2 July 2012; Álvaro de Vasconcelos, personal communication, 13 July 2012; Zora Hesová, personal communication, 26 September 2012; Rosa Balfour, personal communication, 24 October 2012.

⁸ In Egypt this process was largely consolidated mid-way 2012 after the presidential elections.

⁹ Moderate here in the sense that they renounce violence and work within the given political system.

¹⁰ Culturalist explains “Muslim politics” in function of a posited “Islamic political culture”, which would mostly be seen as inherently illiberal and authoritarian.

¹¹ *Final Report on an EU Strategic Partnership with the Mediterranean and the Middle East*. The cited implicit reference relates to the stated general approaches under ‘Political dialogue’: “To engage with non-violent political organisations and civil society movements at all levels in society, with such engagement open to all organisations committed to non-violent and democratic means” (European Council, 2004, p. 8).

¹² European Parliament, Resolution of 10 May 2007 on reforms in the Arab world: what strategy should the European Union adopt?, P6_TA(2007)0179, Brussels

¹³ Michael Emerson, personal communication, 2 July 2012; Rosa Balfour, personal communication, 24 October 2012.

¹⁴ The interpretation of EU’s role in promoting democracy in the MENA is framed differently by those that were responsible for carrying it out: Former ambassador of the EU to Egypt suggested that it was perhaps not only a coincidence that 15 years after the Helsinki conference the authoritarian regimes in Central and Eastern Europe crumbled and 15 years after the start of the Barcelona process the Arab spring broke out. (Marc Franco, lecture at Ghent University, 11 May 2012.)

¹⁵ Personal communication with EEAS diplomats, March and July 2012, and Rosa Balfour, 24 October 2012.

¹⁶ This section is based on two internal notes related to the EEAS brainstorming on political Islam, which I was fortunate to acquire. One note describes the results of the brainstorming and is formally addressed to HR/VP Catherine Ashton; the other note specifies instructions for the EU delegations in MENA based on the results of the brainstorming.

¹⁷ Personal communication with EEAS diplomats, March & July 2012.

¹⁸ An illustration being for example an article written by the head of EU diplomacy C. Ashton for the International Herald Tribune (Ashton, 2012b). Diplomats and analysts stressed to me that in press releases on election results any focusing on the Islamists as the winners is being avoided in preference for neutral language highlighting the democratic and transparent electoral process etc.

¹⁹ The MaMa Council working group is chaired by the EEAS. The Commission is represented by DG DEVCO and the member states by their diplomats.

²⁰ Merete Bilde, personal communication, 27 July 2012.

²¹ Diplomat from Jordanian embassy to Belgium, personal communication, identity withheld by request.

²² See Preface by Pierre Vimont to a book published by the EU Institute for Security Studies where he argues for “a cool-headed, clear-sighted and responsible relationship with political Islam” (Vasconcelos, 2012, pp. 8-9).

²³ EEAS diplomat, personal communication, March 2012.

²⁴ Personal communication with author, 2 July 2012.

²⁵ Meaning insolent, shocking, cynical, daring, merciless.

²⁶ Personal communication with a national diplomat, identity withheld by request.

²⁷ I include this non-paper in the Addendum since it is already public on internet: <http://www.ag-friedensforschung.de/regionen/Nahost/aa-nonpaper.html>

²⁸ Compare also with analyses of shifts in German policy towards MENA after the Arab Spring (Behr, 2012; Ciechanowicz & Gotkowska, 2011).

²⁹ See also article by the head of German diplomacy (Westerwelle, 2012).

³⁰ Personal communication with national diplomats, June and September 2012: Also cf. articles by the heads of German and Dutch diplomacy from January and February 2012 respectively: (Rosenthal, 2012; Westerwelle, 2012) and The Economist issue on the Arab Spring and the Muslim Brotherhood (The Economist, 2012). The common line is: “Give the Islamists a chance”.

³¹ Personal communication with author, 24 October 2012.

³² It is significant that the term ‘managed transition’ employed by the Jordanian king himself bears a positive undertone especially in the context of regional instability of the Arab uprisings.

³³ The four traditional pillars of power according to Robinson (1998) are (i) the monarchy and its coterie, (ii) the army and security services, (iii) wealthy business elites, (iv) East Bank tribal leaders. Some of these pillars, however, began to crumble in the context of the Arab Spring (International Crisis Group, 2012a).

³⁴ In this discussion I focus only on some of the political aspects of reform although these demands have always been coupled with socio-economic grievances. Such was the case also in the latest hot point of revolts in Jordan in November 2012, where demonstrations against cuts in fuel subsidies caught attention because calls for the fall of the regime could be heard for the first time since the start of the ‘Jordanian Arab Spring’ (Abu-Rish, 2012).

³⁵ This lens would typically be applied to IAF/MB willingness to cooperate with the regime. Whereas doves prioritise participation in the national political process, hawks emphasize the Palestinian cause and relations with Hamas. In the recent context the position towards cooperation with ‘the West’ has also come under this rift. Divides between radicals and moderates run on all kinds of issues, however: Islamic state vs. liberal interpretation of the Quran; readiness or not to cooperate with other ideological groups in the opposition, social issues and the role of women etc.

³⁶ The king recently estimated 12% (Abdullah II, 2012b), the European diplomats put IAF on average to 30% or more, and the IAF politicians see themselves in the range of 50% and much more.

³⁷ The Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood had from its establishment in 1946 a symbiotic relationship with the royal house, which allowed them to develop a social welfare network, proselytise and function even under the martial law. This is one of the reasons for the popularity and strength of the political off-shoot of the Brotherhood; the IAF. The described modus vivendi began to crumble under Abdullah II but still the IAF clearly advocates reform as opposed to regime change.

³⁸ The Quartet Principles for the recognition of the Palestinian Authority: the recognition of Israel, the renunciation of violence and adherence to previous diplomatic agreements. The principles were formulated after the election victory of Hamas in January 2006 by the Middle East Quartet (comprising the United Nations, the United States, the European Union and Russia).

³⁹ The condition to this was the finalization of the internal customs union in 1972, which clarified European competencies in external trade relations.

⁴⁰ 29 February 2012, Exchange of views with Nasser Judeh, Foreign Affairs Minister of Jordan: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ep-live/en/committees/video?event=20120229-0900-COMMITTEE-AFET>

⁴¹ For the period 2011 – 2013 the EU allocated a budget of €223 million and an additional allocation of €70 million for the year 2012. To compare, for the period 2010 - 2014 the United States committed to provide a total of \$660 million in annual foreign assistance to Jordan. In 2012 The Gulf Cooperation Council earmarked €1 900 million over five years (figures drawn from EU press releases, US Congress Research Service and ICG (2012). On top of that Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Kuwait and Qatar in the fall of 2012 decided to extend \$5 billion over a five-year period to support different development projects in Jordan (Seeberg, 2013).

⁴² Announced for 23 January 2012 at the time of writing; a timeframe unknown at the time of fieldwork.

⁴³ Personal communication with author, 16 April 2012.

⁴⁴ Culturalist Islamists within the IAF are those that stress the importance of the Islamic political project in the realms of education, gender issues and public virtues (Mandaville, 2007, p. 140).

⁴⁵ Hamza Mansour, personal communication, 16 April 2012.

⁴⁶ To be sure, IAF receives an allocation from the Jordanian government as a political party according to current legal provisions.

⁴⁷ This fully corroborates what EU diplomats told me, see previous chapter.

⁴⁸ Hamza Mansour, personal communication, 16 April 2012.

⁴⁹ Dina Tahboub, personal communication, 23 April 2012.

⁵⁰ Zaki Bani Rsheid (considered to belong to the more radical current in the party), personal communication, 11 April 2012.

⁵¹ Ghaith Al Qudah, personal communication, 18 April 2012.

⁵² Hamza Mansour, Zaki Bani Rsheid, Jamil Abu Bakr, personal communication with authors, April 2012.

⁵³ Zaki Bani Rsheid, personal communication, 11 April 2012.

⁵⁴ Ghaith Al Qudah, personal communication, 18 April 2012.

⁵⁵ Ghaith Al Qudah, personal communication, 18 April 2012.

⁵⁶ Dina Tahboub, personal communication, 23 April 2012.

⁵⁷ “Islamists in power: views from within.”(Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2012) Allegations were made that Alkofahi met with US officials at the margins of this conference resulting in internal IAF frictions.

⁵⁸ Kristen E.Kao, Doctoral candidate at UCLA Political Science Department, personal communication, 8 April 2012.

⁵⁹ Ghaith Al Qudah, personal communication, 18 April 2012.

⁶⁰ The IAF interlocutors were decisively less pessimistic about the EU role in Jordanian democratisation process than all other opposition activists I interviewed. If the latter would roundly criticize the EU for heaping undeserved praise at the current regime in Jordan, the Islamists would never phrase this reproach openly. They would limit themselves to saying that the EU should listen to IAF views on the needed reforms because IAF represented ‘the people’.

⁶¹ Personal communication with Nawal Fauri, Assem al Omari, Eman Jaradat, Naseem Tarawnah, Jamal Tahat, April 2012.

⁶² Nabil Alkofahi, personal communication, 25 April 2012.

⁶³ Similar development towards a pragmatic relationship with the West focusing on economic cooperation and based on mutual respect and shared interests is described by Al-Annani (2012a) in his study of Tunisian, Egyptian and Moroccan Islamists.

⁶⁴ Dina Tahboub, personal communication, 23 April 2012.

⁶⁵ Personal communication with author, 26 April 2012

⁶⁶ This also responds to a general prioritisation of national politics, because it is in this realm that the Arab uprisings are taking place.

⁶⁷ Jamal Tahat, personal communication, 19 April 2012 and Nabil Alkofahi (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2012)

⁶⁸ Unless if one frames the issue as Nabil Alkofahi who is convinced that “more quantity brings better quality” in the sense that the more contacts you have, the better they are. Personal communication with author, 25 April 2012.

⁶⁹ Hamza Mansour, personal communication, 16 April 2012

⁷⁰ Personal communication with author, name withheld by request, 11 April 2012.

⁷¹ The Task Force is a new kind of tool of EU diplomacy and foreign policy developed by the HR/VP Ashton and the EU special representative for the Southern Mediterranean Region. It was put into practice for the first time in Tunisia in September 2011 and for the second time in Jordan in February 2012. A third Task Force as of the time of writing took place in Egypt in November 2012.

Symbolically the main aim is to express EU’s backing of the reform process underway in the country. Practically the symbols get translated into tangible financial support. The Task Force concept is part and parcel of the “more for more” approach of the reformulated European Neighbourhood Policy.

⁷² Assem al Omari, personal communication, 15 April 2012.