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## برنامج دبي

### What Accounts for the Success of Islamist Parties in the Arab World?

Michael D. H. Robbins



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# **What Accounts for the Success of Islamist Parties in the Arab World?**

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**Michael D. H. Robbins**

Kennedy School of Government

Harvard University

[Michael\\_Robbins@ksg.harvard.edu](mailto:Michael_Robbins@ksg.harvard.edu)

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## Introduction

Islamist organizations are generally considered to be the strongest and most credible opposition to incumbent regimes throughout the Arab world. Fear of Islamic takeovers has led regimes and other outside powers to justify not holding free elections, citing examples that include the Algerian election of 1991, the Iranian Revolution, the AKP victory in Turkey and the perceived popularity of Islamist opposition groups throughout much of the Arab world (Brumberg 2002). Yet, other analysts have questioned the actual strength of Islamist movements within the Arab world, noting that although Islamists may be the main challenger, few have actually been successful in taking power (Roy 1994).

### *Defining Islamist Parties*

Since the Iranian revolution, the concept of political Islam has gained much currency in the region. However, the exact definitions of this concept have varied. At its most basic, political Islam has been defined as “Islam used to a political end” (Knudsen 2003). While more nuanced definitions exist (see Fuller 2003, Denoeux 2002), ultimately political Islam represents an instrumental use of the Islamic faith within the political sphere.

Given the broad nature of this definition, many types of organizations can be considered Islamist including groups as diverse as the Taliban in Afghanistan and the Gama’*a* Islamiyya in Egypt to the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in Turkey and the Islamic Action Front (IAF) in Jordan. Yet, a closer examination of these groups reveals critical differences in their nature and organization which limits the comparability of their relative success.

Islamist organizations can be divided into three basic categories: Islamist groups, Islamist movements and Islamist parties. Islamist groups represent a diverse set of organizations that tend to have a less formal structure than the other two (Roy 1994). Often, Islamist groups tend to be relatively small in size, rely on military or violent tactics, and seek to win power outside of formal channels. Organizations including the Taliban, al-Qaeda, and the Gama’*a* Islamiyya are typical of Islamist groups.

Second, Islamist movements are broad-based organizations seeking to influence society primarily through grassroots efforts (Wiktorowicz 2004). These organizations tend to focus less on politics directly, but more on societal change. Rather than enter politics directly, Islamist movements seek to influence political outcomes through contact with ordinary citizens. As such, movements tend to focus on the provision of schools, medical clinics, poverty alleviation, and other social services. Most prominently, movements are represented by the Muslim Brotherhood organization but in most Islamic countries much smaller, community-level organizations also exist which are typical of the Islamist movement.

Third, Islamist parties are organizations that compete within the existing political system with the goal of winning votes. Thus, these parties seek to win power or influence within the political system with the goal of shaping political outcomes. By winning power, Islamist parties can affect laws leading to reforms in line with their ideology. Islamist parties include organizations such as the AKP in Turkey, the Islamic Action Front (IAF) in Jordan, and the Justice and Development Party (PJD) in Morocco.

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While these three types of organizations offer an ideal type, many do not fit entirely in one category or another. For example, Hizbullah (see Harik 2004) in Lebanon participates in the political process, provides numerous services to the local population, and continues to maintain a military apparatus. Likewise, Hamas in the West Bank and Gaza operates in a similar fashion (see Tamimi 2007). However, while the IAF in Jordan is intimately connected with the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood, which offers numerous services, it does not have a military wing (see Hourani 1997).

### ***Defining Party Success***

Party success is ultimately defined as the ability for party leaders to influence policy outcomes within the political sphere. While the nature of the political system and personal attributes can affect this ability, in all systems it is necessary for parties to win votes to remain relevant. If a party is unable to command significant support from voters, then it is unlikely to be a long-term factor in the political system.

Accordingly, party support is used to operationalize party success. Party support can be evaluated in two manners. First, stated public support in opinion polls can be used to approximate party support. Second, vote shares in elections can approximate overall support.<sup>1</sup> Importantly, if these two measures are similar<sup>2</sup>, the confidence in these measures is greater.

### **Taking Stock of Support for Islamist Parties in the Arab World**

Islamist parties, alliances, or blocs are present in most, if not all, Arab countries where regular elections are contested. However, in many cases, either all parties or religious parties specifically are illegal, placing limits on the ability of these parties to officially compete and to determine their overall level of support. Nevertheless, throughout the Arab world, Islamists offer the most significant opposition to the ruling regime (Brumberg 2002).

### ***Advantages and Disadvantages for Islamist Parties***

In most Arab countries, individuals are allowed to cast only a single vote, meaning that Islamist parties must present themselves as the best (or least bad) option relative to other parties within the system to win support. As such, Islamist parties must find a way to use Islamic principles to win the political support of individuals throughout society. For Islamist parties, the association with Islam presents them with certain advantages and disadvantages. The first significant advantage is the nature of an Islamist party's platform. While opposition parties may face a challenge unifying against the regime (see Magaloni 2006), most citizens

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that no political system in the Arab world is considered to be democratic (Freedom House 2006). While this fact could negatively bias reported support for opposition parties and understate vote shares for these groups, the success of an opposition party in these environments is dependent on its ability to overcome these biases. Moreover, while there is clear bias in the election process, evidence from election observers across the Arab world generally suggests that there is relatively little fraud on election day itself, implying that vote totals are likely to accurately reflect the actual vote.

<sup>2</sup> Vote share will tend to be greater than stated support in surveys due to two factors. First, vote share represents support among voters, not the population as a whole. Those who do not vote are also not likely to support a party. Second, strategic voting is a factor, meaning that while some individuals may not consider themselves to be supporters of the party, they will vote for the party when faced with alternatives.

in the Arab world tend to view the Islamist ideology positively (Arab Barometer 2006-7).<sup>3</sup> Thus, it may be possible to use Islamist ideology to unite opposition groups that might be divided on other issues.

Second, Islamist parties may be able to exploit the existence of a greater political “free space” due to the networks they have established through mosques and other religious institutions (see Evans and Boyte 1986; Layachi 2004). While the regime may be able to crack down on other political parties that oppose the regime without recriminations from public opinion, an Islamist party has the tacit if not official support of many religious leaders. These leaders may also serve as public opinion leaders, making it more difficult for the government to intervene against these parties. Moreover, the ability of party leaders and others who support the party to blur the line between religion and politics offers the potential to win support through weekly sermons or other religious gatherings (Wald et al. 2005). Because a government crackdown on such activities could be seen as an attack on religious institutions and popular religious figures, this association between the party and existing religious institutions may be able to provide the necessary space for Islamist parties to challenge the existing regime.

While Islamist parties have some advantages over other parties, their very nature implies they suffer certain disadvantages as well. First, Islamist parties are constrained by their ideology. For example, the development of the *sharia*’ from the Qur’an and the *hadith* does not directly provide specifics for how to manage a modern economy or prescriptions for lowering unemployment. In fact, outside of defining social relations, a legal code, and religious obligations, the *sharia*’ does not provide many specifics that are necessary for a complete political platform. As a result, Islamist parties are more likely to struggle in incorporating economic positions into their policy positions, and ordinary citizens are less likely to perceive them as being competent on economic issues.

Second, the ability of an Islamist party to distinguish itself within the political arena may be limited. Within predominantly Muslim countries, few candidates or parties claim not to follow Islamic principles and norms in their campaigns. As a result, if all contenders are supportive of these principles generally, it is not clear how a party can attempt to distinguish itself based on a platform of this nature.

Third, while, in the general sense, Islamist parties’ ideology may be unobjectionable to most voters, on specific issues there can be great debate, especially if the ideology is actually put into practice. There are numerous traditions and interpretations within Islam, making it a challenge to define an exact “Islamic” platform for the party that proves unobjectionable to all Muslims. For instance, Sahliyah (2005) finds that when Islamist members of Jordan’s parliament passed a bill that prevented all men—including fathers and brothers of the participants—from watching girls’ sporting events, there was a significant backlash from voters. Nevertheless, if the Islamist deputies had not sought such a regulation, then they may have faced a backlash from some of their more conservative supporters. As such, it is possible that on specific items the Islamist ideology may be no more uniting than other political ideologies.

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3 Opinion polls such as the Arab Barometer (2006-7) have demonstrated that the vast majority of citizens is supportive of Islamist principles having a greater role in politics. For instance, when asked if the shari’a should be an important source of law, the majority responded in the affirmative.

### ***Empirical Support for Islamist Parties***

A closer examination reveals some distinct differences in stated support for Islamist parties throughout the Arab world in the societies for which survey data are available (see Table 1).

**Table 1: Stated support for Islamist parties<sup>4</sup>**

	<b>Jordan</b>	<b>Algeria</b>	<b>Yemen</b>	<b>Morocco</b>	<b>WBG</b>
<b>Population</b>	1.4%	5.4%	9.1%	9.5%	41.0%
<b>Voters</b>	1.5%	8.1%	12.8%	9.3%	42.1%

Source: Arab Barometer 2006, 2007 (www.arabbarometer.org)

The results demonstrate that there is at present a vast difference in support for Islamist parties in different societies. While support for the IAF in Jordan is extremely low, support for Hamas and Islamic Jihad in the West Bank and Gaza is relatively high. The cases of Algeria, Yemen, and Morocco exhibit a middle range where there is some support, but not extremely high. However, considering the relatively low rates of partisanship in these societies, these parties demonstrate a moderate level of support, especially among the voting population.

Examining support by vote share, there is, as expected, a greater support for Islamist parties as seen in Table 2. In this case, support for parties in Algeria, Jordan, Morocco, and Yemen all increase substantially, while support remains relatively constant in the West Bank and Gaza. Overall, the pattern is largely consistent with the measure using stated support for Islamist parties: Jordan remains well below all other cases, support in Algeria is slightly less than in Morocco (among voters), and support in Yemen is slightly higher than these two cases. Support in the West Bank and Gaza remains much higher than the others.

**Table 2: Vote share for Islamist parties in parliamentary elections**

	<b>Jordan</b>	<b>Algeria</b>	<b>Yemen</b>	<b>Morocco</b>	<b>WBG</b>
<b>Vote Share</b>	6.9%	15.6%	22.6%	16.4%	44.5%
<b>Year</b>	2007	2007	2003	2007	2006

### **Changes in Support for Islamist Parties over Time**

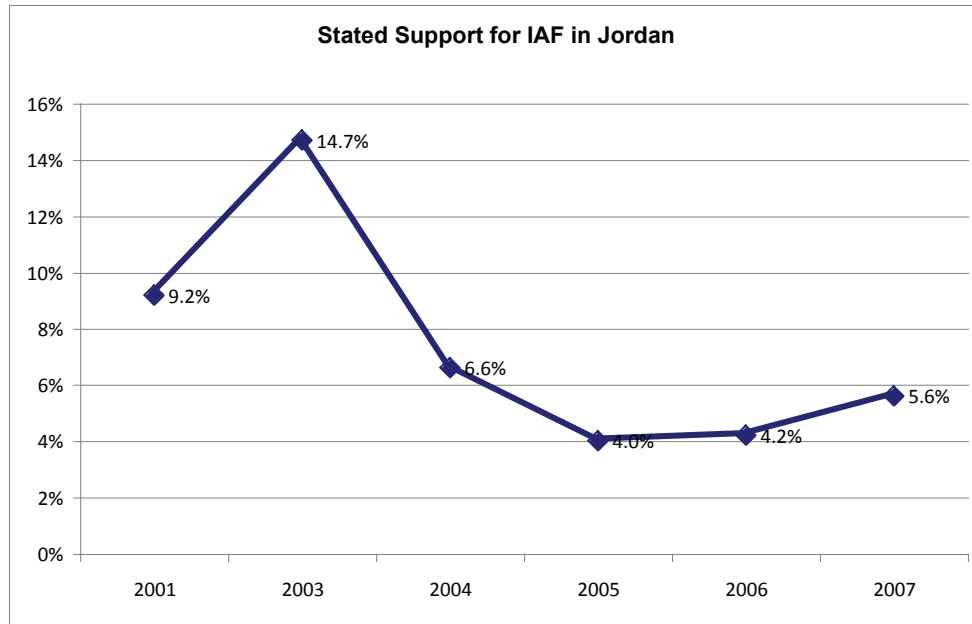
While it is possible to gain a cross-sectional view of support for Islamist parties in numerous countries, examining support for these parties over time is more challenging. For example, the PJD contested its first election in 2002 and no opinion polls are available to track its progress over time. Similarly, the civil war in Algeria following the FIS victory in the 1991 elections meant that religious parties were officially banned. Only after the end of this decade-long war were mildly Islamist parties allowed to enter the political system once again.

<sup>4</sup> Item asks respondents which party if any “best represents you politically, socially and economically?”



In Jordan, some evidence is available over time. While it is possible to examine the number of seats won by the IAF over time, changes in electoral rules and districts limit the comparability of this approach. However, some evidence based on vote share and public opinion surveys does exist. Vote totals reveal that the IAF won 16.9 percent of the vote in the 1993 election (Hourani 1995) compared to only 6.9 percent in 2007.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, public opinion polls conducted since 2001 also confirm this decline over time as seen in Figure 1.

**Figure 1**



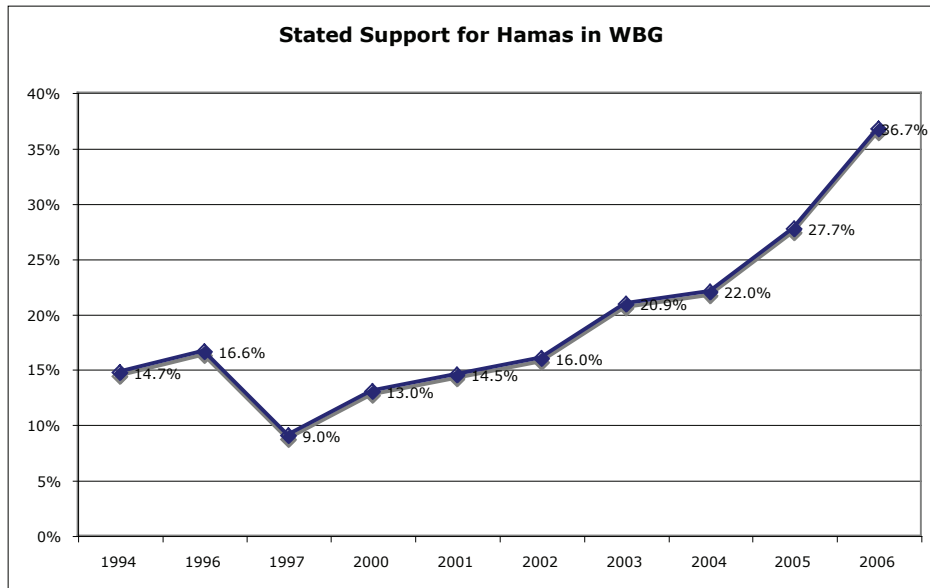
Source: Center for Strategic Studies, University of Jordan ([www.css-jordan.org](http://www.css-jordan.org))

Since 2001, there appears to be a general decline over time in stated support for the IAF with two exceptions: 2003 and 2007. Both of these years, however, represent election years and the surveys were conducted shortly after the election in both cases. Thus, a comparison of stated support in non-election years represents a decline from around 9 percent to approximately 4 percent over a five-year period while stated support in election years declined even more dramatically from nearly 15 percent to just over 5 percent over a four-year period.

While support for the IAF in Jordan has decreased over time, support for Hamas in the West Bank and Gaza has witnessed the reverse trajectory. While data from elections is limited in this case, there is a long record of public opinion surveys. Support for Hamas from 1994-2006 is shown in Figure 2. Overall, the findings show that in the first ten years support for Hamas generally hovered around 15 percent before undergoing a consistent rise from 2003-2006.

<sup>5</sup> The IAF boycotted the 1997 election and totals are not available for the 2003 election.

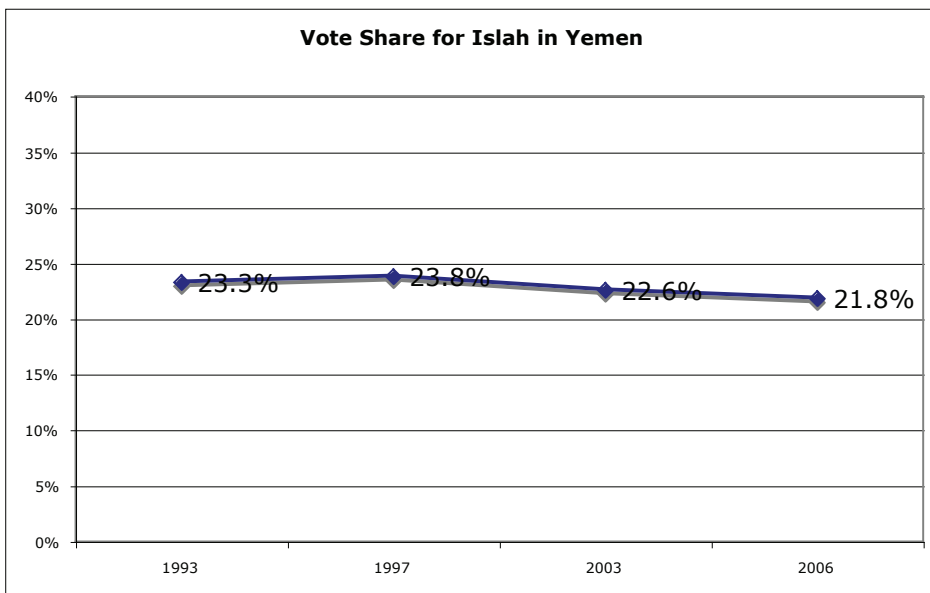
**Figure 2**



Source: Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research ([www.pcpsr.org](http://www.pcpsr.org))

In Yemen, a third trajectory is apparent as seen in Figure 3. In this case, Islah first emerged in the 1993 election winning 23.3 percent of seats in parliament.<sup>6</sup> Subsequently, its vote share remained more or less constant, taking slightly over 20 percent in the three subsequent elections it contested.

**Figure 3**



<sup>6</sup> Vote share is unavailable for this year.

Overall, it is clear that support for Islamist parties varies over time, at least in some cases. Yet, while support is not constant over time in Jordan and the West Bank and Gaza, the findings reveal an interesting similarity with the other cases. In Jordan, the vote share for the IAF in the 1993 election was 16.3 percent, and in a post-election poll, support was shown to be 14.2 percent in 2003. Moreover, stated support for Hamas throughout the 1990s was around 15 percent, suggesting that its vote share would have likely been somewhat higher, somewhere around 20 percent. Thus, throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, it appears that the overall support in Jordan as well as the West Bank and Gaza approximates the levels of support observed in Algeria, Morocco, and Yemen in recent years.

## Theories about the Success of Islamist Parties

### *Islamists Win Free Elections*

Following the Iranian Revolution, much of the so-called Islamist threat came from the success of Islamist candidates in the 1989 election in Jordan, followed by the presumed Islamist victory in the 1991 Algerian elections (Esposito 1999). Combined with the Hamas victory in the 2006 parliamentary elections in the West Bank and Gaza, some have suggested that Islamists will generally succeed in free and fair elections in the Arab world. For example, the Egyptian regime consistently uses the Islamist threat to justify its decision not to hold free and fair elections (Kepel 2003).

While Islamist parties and candidates have performed well in these three largely free and fair elections, a closer examination is warranted. In the cases of Algeria and Jordan, these elections were held following a period of rapid liberalization. As with much of the Arab world, Algeria and Jordan faced difficult economic times during the late 1980s (see World Bank 2004). As a result, both countries sought external assistance from international institutions. In return for loans, these institutions required economic restructuring that included cut subsidies and a decreased role of the public sector in the economy.

In the case of Algeria, poor economic outcomes resulted in the regime's pursuit of rapid political liberalization. Given that opposition parties and activities had been banned for decades, the elections took place within a political vacuum (Layachi 2004). The short time frame between the announcement and the date set for the election meant that it became difficult for the opposition to organize against the regime. As a result, the regime likely assumed that it would maintain power because of the disorganization and divisions within the opposition.

The regime, however, underestimated the linkages which had been created through the mosques. Given the often ambiguous line between politics and religion and the relative free space which existed in this area of civil society, Islamist parties had a much greater potential to organize. As a result, the strongest opposition to the regime proved to be religious in nature (Bouandel 1993).

In light of the low support for the regime, many voters sought oppositional candidates to punish the regime in this first election (Tessler 1997). The divided opposition limited the choice set for these voters, likely leading many to support the Islamist opposition as it seemed most likely to have a strong showing. Second, the lack of unity among secular oppositional parties limited their potential, meaning that in a divided vote in a winner-take-all system, the Islamist parties are most likely to win elections (Entelis and Arone 1992).

In the case of Jordan, cutting subsidies was met with strong domestic opposition. Bread riots broke out in the Ma'an governate, one of the traditional strongholds of the regime (Hamarneh 2003). As a result, King Hussein agreed to limited political liberalization to release pressure on the system. The major development was the agreement to hold elections for the first time in over two decades under a revised electoral law (Mufti 1999). Political parties remained illegal, however, and the campaign leading up to the election was relatively short, limiting the capacity for candidates to organize.

Despite this, some groups were able to organize and, given the lack of political parties and weakness of civil society organizations, the campaign was conducted largely through tribal structures. One organization, however, the Muslim Brotherhood (MB), was able to overcome these limitations, due to its strong network and historically strong relationship with the regime (Boulby 1999). As such, it had the ability to organize within a short period of time and promoted candidates in many districts. Moreover, they formed alliances with many other candidates, including many Christian candidates to help secure victory (Arabiyat).

The election results surprised many observers as MB candidates and independent Islamist candidates won 40 percent of the seats (Lust-Okar 2006). This resulted in the lower house electing an MB speaker, as well as the inclusion of four members of the MB in the new cabinet (Lucas 2005). Yet, a closer examination reveals that while Islamists won a large percentage of seats in parliament, their vote share was substantially lower. Although the exact vote share for Islamists is unknown, it is known that among winning candidates, Islamist candidates only received approximately 20 percent of the vote (Jonasson 2004). Combined with the vote totals from losing candidates, it is clear that the Islamist vote share was well less than 40 percent of the seats they won in parliament.

By comparison, in the 1993 election, members of the newly formed IAF<sup>7</sup> also won approximately 20 percent of the vote among successful candidates, despite only winning 20 percent of the seats in parliament (al-Urdun al-Jadid 1995).<sup>8</sup> Among all candidates, however, the IAF received only 16 percent of the overall vote. This implies that, due to Jordan's electoral system, the Islamist party was overrepresented in parliament compared to its share of the vote. Despite changes in the election law, it is clear that the MB candidates were supported by a relatively small minority in 1989 as well as in 1993.

In comparing these two cases, it is clear that Islamist parties and candidates had a significant advantage due to the disorganization of the political system. In this vacuum, the Islamist opposition is likely to perform quite well. Since both countries employed a form of a winner-take-all electoral system, candidates with relatively small vote shares can win elections, especially due to the chaotic nature of the political system that resulted from rapid liberalization. As a result, rather than a resounding victory for Islamists, both of these cases are more likely the result of Islamists being carried to victory based on their superior organization and the ability to win a plurality of the votes.

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<sup>7</sup> Parties were legalized in 1992.

<sup>8</sup> It should be noted that the electoral law changed between these two elections. In the 1989 election, voters were permitted to cast as many votes as there were seats in their district. In 1993, voters were only allowed to cast a single vote regardless of district magnitude.

In Yemen, by comparison, the Islah party did not achieve the same level of electoral success in the country's first relatively open election in 1993 (Carapico 1993). In this case, the General People's Congress, a party based around long-standing tribal alliances in the north, and the Yemeni Socialist Party, the former party of the state in the south, competed in the election (Schwedler 2005). While Islah did better than expected, it was only able to win a fifth of the seats in parliament.

Importantly, in more established systems where multiple parties exist and the rules and nature of political competition are more commonly understood by different players, these advantages are lessened. If other oppositional forces are allowed to organize and if the number of candidates running decreases, it is less likely that the factors that led to electoral success in Algeria and Jordan in their first free elections will be present.

### ***Islamist Parties Differ Across Societies***

A second claim about the variation in the success of Islamist parties argues that differences in Islamist parties themselves account for this variation. For example, some Islamist parties (such as the IAF or Islah) have formally rejected violence, while others (such as Hamas and Hizbullah) have often undertaken violent acts. Moreover, while these parties all seek to use Islam, the exact nature of their ideology may vary. Some parties trace their roots to the Muslim Brotherhood, but the PJD in Morocco and Hizbullah in Lebanon do not.

Within the literature, many factors have been cited as possible reasons to support an Islamist party. Among the ideological reasons, a variety of permutations have been suggested. First, it has long been suggested that individuals who are more religious are more likely to support an Islamist party (Gellner 1981). If someone were not religious, then it seems that there would be little reason to support a party that self-identifies with Islamist thought.

Yet, given that most Islamist parties call for the implementation of the *shari'a*, others have argued that religiosity is insufficient to support such a party. Rather, direct support of the call for the implementation of *shari'a* is the factor that would lead an individual to support an Islamist party.

Representing a sort of middle ground between these two is the idea that individuals who desire a greater role for religion in the public sphere—but not necessarily the full implementation of Islamic law—would be more likely to support an Islamist party. According to this hypothesis, some individuals in society might believe that an increased role for religion would have a positive effect on political outcomes, but these individuals do not seek the full implementation of Islamic law.

A fourth hypothesis maintains that, given the militant nature of some Islamist parties or wings within parties, it is possible that individuals who are more supportive of militancy support Islamist parties. In cases where the parties are more militant, then support by these individuals should be higher.

Fifth, it is possible that Islamist parties are supported less for ideology than for the sense of promoting Islam. Individuals are not so concerned about doctrine in this case, but the call to Islam taps individuals who place a greater importance on their identity as Muslims than other identities. Thus, the appeal of the party is not direct, but simply taps an underlying identity among some individuals.

While these ideological reasons could lead to support for political Islam, other factors could also explain support for these parties. In the first case, it is possible that individuals who are more concerned about corruption are more likely to support Islamist parties (Esposito 1991). Given the perception that Islamist parties are less likely to be corrupt due to their adherence to Islam, it is possible that these parties win support based on this association.

Second, it is possible that individuals who oppose the government would be more likely to support Islamist parties due to their opposition to many policies of the regime. While perhaps not fully supportive of the Islamist's ideology, many of these individuals would perceive Islamist parties as the most likely to be able to challenge the regime (Tessler 1997).

Third, individuals who are more anti-Western in orientation might be led to support Islamist parties (Tibi 2002). Islamist parties often articulate a vision that rejects many elements of Western culture, suggesting that a return to Islam is the solution to the many challenges facing Arab societies which some claim have been brought on by Western influences.

Fourth, some Islamist parties may gain support by taking a harder line on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. As has been noted, this conflict has great importance to individuals throughout the Arab world (Telhami 2008). While some governments have official relations with Israel or are allied with the United States which is Israel's staunchest ally, Islamist parties tend to reject these positions. As such, some individuals may support Islamist parties based on their strong support for the Palestinian cause.

Fifth, some individuals may support Islamist parties based on private benefits which they receive from Islamist organizations. Throughout the Arab world, the Islamist movement has created numerous charities that provide schooling, medical care, and other social services (see Clark 2004). Often aimed at poorer individuals or those without access to government services, these charities could help explain support for Islamist parties, given that they are a part of the general Islamist movement.

Additionally, it is possible that individuals who are more marginalized may be supportive of Islamist parties (Roy 1996). Individuals who are poorer, less educated, younger, and male may be more likely to support the message presented by these parties.

To examine how the nature of support varies over space, it is necessary to construct a statistical model to determine which of these explanations accounts for support in each society. In order to test these competing hypotheses, a logit model is constructed with support for Islamist parties as the dependent variable.

The data used to test this model come from the first wave of the Arab Barometer that was conducted in seven countries in 2006 and 2007, five of which are used in the analysis that follows.<sup>9</sup> This survey employed face-to-face interviews with approximately 1,200 individuals in Algeria, Jordan, Morocco, the West Bank and Gaza, and Yemen. The sampling frame employed clusters of 100 blocs of 12 in each society, and this is controlled for in the model. The items used to operationalize each item are described in appendix 1 and the results are presented in Table 3.

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<sup>9</sup> While blocs that function similarly to parties are present in Kuwait, the Arab Barometer did not ask about support for these groups. Lebanon was also excluded due its unique nature. Given the sectarian divisions that are built into the electoral system, party competition in Lebanon differs greatly from other Arab countries.

**Table 3: Logistic regression with support Islamist party as dependent variable**

	Algeria	Jordan	Morocco	WBG	Yemen
More Religion in Public Life	1.628 (0.873)*	0.422 (0.220)*	0.139 (0.071)*	0.316 (.073)***	0.887 (0.421)*
Personal Piety	1.847 (1.108)*	-0.151 (0.240)	0.065 (0.040)	0.027 (0.034)	0.621 (0.438)
Support for Shari'a	-0.087 (0.383)	0.110 (0.245)	0.276 (0.197)	0.028 (0.073)	-0.095 (0.407)
Militancy	0.874 (0.973)	-0.052 (0.195)	0.309 (0.129)**	-0.031 (0.065)	-1.593 (0.620)***
Islamic Pride	-1.737 (1.243)	0.361 (.0311)	0.048 (0.128)	-0.096 (0.113)	
Corruption			-0.034 (0.265)	0.731 (0.377)*	3.299 (1.603)**
Government Performance	-0.590 (0.272)**	-.0336 (0.123)***	-0.012 0.046	0.313 (0.048)***	-1.536 (0.496)***
Anti-Western	1.249 (0.556)**	0.486 (0.352)	0.026 (0.141)	-0.145 (0.144)	1.213 (1.541)
Israeli-Palestinian Conflict	-0.848 (1.429)	0.569 (0.864)	-0.206 (0.264)	0.808 (0.393)**	2.200 (1.899)
Wasta	-5.129 (4.037)	-0.803 (1.207)	0.493 (0.250)**	-0.486 (0.410)	-1.127 (1.102)
More Educated	1.367 (0.876)	1.002 (0.398)***	0.128 (0.079)	0.050 (0.122)	-1.286 (.583)**
Wealthier	-0.000 (0.000)	-1.704 (2.577)	0.065 (0.082)	0.000 (0.000)	0.053 (0.019)***
Older	0.075 (0.052)	0.023 (0.033)	-0.201 (0.082)*	-0.000 (0.010)	-0.127 (0.066)*
Female	-2.984 (3.376)	0.982 (0.929)	-0.575 (0.268)**	0.397 (0.291)	-3.692 (0.785)***
Constant	-47.223 (29.013)	-10.746 (6.634)	-4.291 (1.279)***	-5.993 (1.277)***	5.715 (13.322)***

**Note:** Table presents coefficient estimates with standard errors in parentheses.

\*Statistically significant at .1 level. \*\*Statistically significant at .05 level. \*\*\* Statistically significant at .01 level.

The results reveal some important similarities. In the first case, it is clear that there is a strong correlation between individuals who desire a greater role for religion in the public sphere and support for Islamist parties. In all five cases, there is a statistically significant relationship between these two variables. Meanwhile, in none of the cases is support for the implementation of the *shari'a* statistically significant, although the relationship is positive. As such, it appears that in all of these cases, support for Islamist parties is better explained as seeking a greater role for religion in politics than a demand for strict Islamic law. Thus, while leaders of these parties may call for *shari'a*, this is not the demand of ordinary citizens who support these parties.

Among the other possible reasons that individuals might support Islamist parties based on their instrumental use of Islam, there is limited support. In Algeria, individuals with higher levels of personal piety tend to be more supportive of Islamist parties, although this relationship is not significant at standard levels in the remaining cases. Perhaps, the long history of French colonial rule

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in Algeria and the stronger secular trend in Algeria than in other societies accounts for this variation.

Islamic pride is not a significant factor in any of the cases. As such, it appears that appeals to Islamic identity do not lead to support for Islamist parties.

In the last case, militancy, the findings are somewhat surprising. Despite the fact that Hamas is often associated with militant acts, support for this group is not correlated with support for militant acts at standard levels of significance. The same holds true for Algeria and Jordan. In Yemen as well, where al-Qaeda has been active, support for militancy is actually negatively correlated with support for Islamist parties at statistically significant levels. In the case of Morocco, support for militancy is positively correlated with support for Islamist parties. Possibly, this is due to the previously militant nature of the movement that would later become the PJD, the main Islamist party in Morocco. However, due to missing data, a different measure was used in Morocco, which could also account for this difference (see Appendix 1).

Among the remaining indicators, opposition to the regime is shown to be statistically significant in the cases of Algeria, Jordan, the West Bank and Gaza and Yemen.<sup>10</sup> As such, this supports the hypothesis that individuals who are frustrated with government policy are more likely to support Islamist parties. Yet, in Morocco, although there is a negative sign on the coefficient, the relationship does not reach standard levels of significance.

However, in Morocco, there is a significant relationship between having used *wasta*,<sup>11</sup> or personal connections, and support for an Islamist party. While not the ideal measure of whether someone has received benefits from the Islamic movement, *wasta* does imply that these individuals did receive some form of benefit. While this relationship is significant in Morocco, it is not in the four remaining cases. This finding suggests that while supporters of Islamist parties in Morocco may not be opposed to the government to a greater degree than their fellow citizens, they do receive some form of benefits from Islamist parties, which helps explain their support.

Corruption—often cited as a major reason for the success of Islamist parties—is significant in two cases: the West Bank and Gaza and Yemen, and the item was not included in Algeria and Jordan due to its extremely high correlation with support for Islamist parties in these two societies. As such, it is clear that in four of the five cases, frustration over the corruption of the regime is a major factor leading to support for Islamist parties.

The last remaining issue that has a significant relationship is taking a harder line on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. But this proves to be significant only in the West Bank and Gaza. While unsurprising in this case, it is interesting that Islamists are not able to use this issue to win support in the remaining cases. Likely, the issue is either not politically salient in determining party support, or Islamist parties do not emphasize it. Given that the IAF in Jordan continually makes statements about this issue (see Abu Rumman 2007), it appears that the former is more likely despite the claims of Telhami (2008).

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10 The sign for the West Bank and Gaza is positive due to the fact that the survey was taken shortly after Hamas' election victory in 2006. As a result, there is strong support for the government among Hamas supporters and weak support among Fatah supporters in addition to other factions. This represents a reversal of previous surveys taken before the election which are available at [pcpsr.org](http://pcpsr.org).

11 For a detailed discussion of *wasta*, see Kilani and Sakijha (2002).



The last issue—anti-Westernization—is significant only in Algeria. Likely, this is in part due to the strong influence of French culture in Algerian society. Nevertheless, in all other cases, despite a rhetoric that often speaks against Western influences, supporters of Islamist parties are no more or less likely than other members of their society to hold anti-Western beliefs. As such, it appears that Islamists win relatively little support based on their anti-Western positions.

In terms of marginalization, there is limited support for this hypothesis in the cases of Morocco and Yemen. In both cases, younger males were more likely to support an Islamist party. Additionally, these individuals were shown to be less educated but wealthier in Yemen, which offers mixed support for this hypothesis. However, none of the demographic variables are significant in the remaining cases, suggesting only partial support for this claim.

Overall, while Islamist parties' call to Islam varies somewhat between cases, there is a striking similarity. In all cases, individuals who choose to support these parties are those seeking a greater role for religion in the public sphere. While party leaders may use stronger rhetoric about implementing Islamic law, the ordinary citizens supporting these parties tend to be less radical in their demands. Surprisingly, in no case is actually calling for the *shari'a* a better predictor of support for an Islamist party than supporting a greater role for religion in politics.

Second, in all but one case, opposition to the regime is also significant. However, in the remaining case, the use of *wasta* is also significant, suggesting a possible private benefit for these supporters. Thus, while support for a greater role for religion is necessary, these findings suggest that it is also necessary that an individual be opposed to the existing regime or to receive some form of service or other benefit from the Islamic movement more generally.

Supporters of Islamist parties are no more or less likely than other members of their society to hold anti-Western beliefs.

## Support over Time

While there are some striking similarities in the nature of support across societies, there are limitations to this approach. Namely, this comparison only examines support at a single point in time within each society. Yet, as shown above, support for Islamist parties is dynamic and likely to change as conditions change in each society. As such, much can be learned by comparing changes in support over time both within and between societies.

However, due to official bans, Islamist parties are relatively recent phenomena in numerous countries such as Algeria and Morocco. In the first case, the FIS was banned resulting in a civil war that lasted throughout the 1990s (Martinez 2000). Religious parties remain banned from participation, although some parties with religious leanings have managed to circumvent this ban in the past decade. In Morocco, the PJD—in its current form—is also a relatively recent development, meaning there is relatively little known about changes in support over time.

Of the remaining cases, support for Islah in Yemen has been shown to be largely constant over the past two decades, averaging somewhere around 20 percent. Given the lack of variation, this case has limited use in understanding changes in support over time.

Of the two remaining cases—Jordan and the West Bank and Gaza—there

are significant changes in public opinion over time. In Jordan, the IAF originally had significant electoral success while winning support of slightly more than 16 percent of the population in the 1993 election. Meanwhile, support has decreased to around 5 percent in the 2007 election. In the West Bank and Gaza, opinion polls show that support for Hamas was similar to that of the IAF in the early 1990s. Yet, during the same period support for Hamas rose to 44.5 percent in the 2006 election.

Moreover, there are numerous similarities between these two parties. First, both of them have roots in the Muslim Brotherhood movement (Abu-Amr 1993 and Wicktorowicz 2001). While the organization and ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood vary somewhat by society, its fundamental ideology is relatively similar. In Jordan and the West Bank, this is especially true given that the two were part of the same country until 1967 and had the same branch of the Muslim Brotherhood operating throughout their territory. While Hamas was founded out of the Gaza branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, its expansion to the West Bank necessitated working with the pre-existing Islamic movement in this area.

Second, the ability of the parties to compete in politics is relatively similar. In both cases the parties have been able to compete in elections and have not been subject to official bans as some parties have in other Arab countries. Although neither is considered fully democratic, Freedom House has rated both as “partly free”, while most countries in the region are “not free” (Freedom House 2006). As such, these parties have had greater opportunity to compete than elsewhere. Moreover, in both cases all parties including Islamist parties are allowed to participate in elections. In light of Lust-Okar’s (2004) findings regarding the Structures of Contestation (SoC), this similarity has important implications for the nature of the political system and the possibilities for opposition parties. Thus, this comparison also controls for this variable.

Importantly, numerous other variables can also be held essentially constant. In Jordan, well over half of the population is of Palestinian origin. While the experience of the Palestinians on the East Bank of the Jordan River is not identical to those on the West Bank, many of their concerns are similar. Thus, claims that the Palestinian case is unique based on the Israeli occupation can be moderated given the large presence of Palestinians in Jordan. If this issue alone accounted for the success of Hamas, then one would expect that the IAF in Jordan, which vehemently opposed the 1994 peace treaty with Israel (see Lynch 1999), would be more successful overall.

Moreover, Hamas’ external wing was based in Jordan until 1999. During this time, strong links between the two parties were forged (Mishal and Sela 2000). In fact, officially the two claimed to be the same party until shortly after the 2007 elections in Jordan (Gharaibeh). Nevertheless, contact continues between the two parties and within Palestinian areas, much of the IAF’s appeal in Palestinian areas is based on the perceived linkages with and support for Hamas.

### ***Electoral Systems***

Electoral institutions have an effect not only on voter behavior, but also on structuring voter preference. As such, understanding the differences between these systems and the advantages and disadvantages they create for parties operating within these rules has important implications.

In the 1989 election, Jordan used a bloc voting system, under which citizens were allowed to cast votes for as many candidates as there were seats in their

district. This system fostered cooperation among some candidates seeking to win elections by forming a coalition with other candidates to win the support of their constituents. In fact, in some cases such as Madaba-1, candidates from the Muslim Brotherhood formed alliances with Christian candidates due to the high number of Christian voters in the district (Kofahi).

In light of the success of Islamist candidates in that election, the regime sought to change the electoral law to limit future success (Lucas 2005). As such, since the 1993 election Jordan has operated under an unusual electoral system known as a single non-transferable vote (SNTV) system. This system, also used in Japan and Taiwan, means that there are multimember districts, but individuals are allowed to cast only a single vote. The candidates with the most votes in each district win the election. District magnitude in Jordan ranges from one to nine, meaning that in a district with one seat, such as Madaba-2, an individual must win over 50 percent of the vote to guarantee election. However, in a district with nine seats such as Irbid-1, a candidate need not win more than 11.1 percent of the vote to guarantee a seat.

For the 2006 parliamentary elections, the West Bank and Gaza both employed a list and bloc system, with each element electing 50 percent of parliamentarians. The first is a proportional system, whereby each party is allocated seats based on its vote share. The second element of the system is akin to the bloc vote used by Jordan in the 1989 election. In the West Bank and Gaza, district magnitude also varies between one and nine.

### ***Political Parties in Jordan***

Parties do not have strong support on the whole in Jordan. At present, only six of the 110 parliamentarians are members of a party and all are members of the IAF. In previous elections, other parties won seats in parliament. But party membership has never been strong.

One reason for this weak party support is the nature of the electoral system. Because most districts are multimember, the SNTV system means that only rather narrow coalitions can win without taking a particularly large percentage of the overall vote. Moreover, running multiple candidates in the same district could potentially split the vote, limiting the chances for success. As a result, one of the primary demands of the IAF and other parties is reform of the election law (Gharaibeh).

Nevertheless, as seen from the results of the 1993 election, the IAF and other parties are able to perform reasonably well in this electoral system and to use the system to their advantage, as well. In fact, because of the way the SNTV system allocates seats, the IAF was actually overrepresented in parliament following the 1993 election based on its overall vote share. In a simple majoritarian system, such a result would be an unlikely outcome. As such, it is possible that the electoral system could actually benefit the IAF by overrepresenting it in parliament.

### **The Challenge of Competing Identities and Electoral Institutions**

Within Jordanian politics, both analysts and the public at large tend to believe that voting occurs primarily along tribal lines. In fact, this type of voting is so highly predictable that during an interview one local businessman in Ramtha

near the Syrian border claimed he could forecast not only who would win the local election, but their actual vote totals. He indicated that since he knew the local tribal alliances so well that a prediction was just simple addition based on the size of each tribe in previous elections.

Yet, a closer examination reveals a more complex reality. According to a 2007 post-election poll (CSS 2007), only 48.3 percent of voters claim they considered family/tribal affiliation when voting. However, there is an important difference between Transjordanians<sup>12</sup> and those of Palestinian origin in the importance of tribal affiliation as seen in Table 4.

**Table 4: Tribal affiliation affected vote choice**

	<b>Transjordanian</b>	<b>Palestinian</b>
<b>Yes</b>	56.8%	19.3%
<b>No</b>	43.2%	80.7%
<b>Total</b>	100.0%	100.0%

Source: CSS 2007

While tribal affiliation plays a very limited role in vote choice for Palestinians, it is quite important for Transjordanians. Given that more than half of Transjordanians take tribal affiliation into consideration when voting, the IAF is facing a significant challenge. In order to win support, the IAF must either be able to mitigate this effect or work through tribal alliances to win election. While the sample size is small, among Transjordanians who did vote for the IAF, only a quarter indicated that they took tribal affiliation into account. By comparison, 79.5 percent of Transjordanians who voted for tribal candidates took tribal affiliation into account and 42.5 percent of those who voted for independent loyalists took tribal affiliation into account (CSS 2007).

The electoral districts pose a challenge for the IAF, because districts were drawn approximately along major tribal lines (Patel 2006). Thus, the IAF must either overcome the importance of tribal affiliation to create a winning coalition of supporters from multiple tribes, or else work with an individual tribe to secure support. Evidence suggests that the IAF has attempted to consider tribal identity when selecting candidates in the past. During the 1993 elections in Kerak, for example, the IAF chose two members of the powerful al-Majali tribe to stand for election in competition with the winner of the tribal primary (Al-Urdun Al-Jadid 1995). However, without the support of the tribal sheikh, the two IAF candidates finished far behind the tribal candidate Abdul Hadi Majali.

Yet, the nature of these districts has had an additional effect on voting. While powerful tribes tended to perform very well, smaller tribes have begun to coordinate in order to compete. It is now common for smaller tribes to reach among each other to support a common candidate. In an interview with a local elite in Wadi Musa during the 2007 election campaign, the individual indicated that his tribe had formed an alliance with three other tribes in order to guarantee success in the election. While none of the smaller tribes could win an election on their own, the four tribes agreed on a rotation of power. Each tribe would be allowed to put forth a

<sup>12</sup> Transjordanian denotes individuals who are from the East Bank of the Jordan, meaning within the boundaries of modern Jordan.

candidate in every fourth election which would be supported by all four tribes. As a result, smaller tribes have adopted this system to achieve electoral success.

However, this type of coalition-building is more difficult for the IAF. If the IAF does coordinate with a tribe, most likely the result will be a candidate with a dual loyalty to both his tribal constituency and the IAF. In such a circumstance, it is unclear if the candidate would be loyal to the IAF or to the tribe once elected. More importantly, given the IAF's opposition status, the nature of the Jordanian system means that tribes are less likely to support a coalition with a party candidate. Lust-Okar (2006) argues that most candidates in Jordan are non-ideological by nature and highly supportive of the regime. Winning a parliamentary seat is a way to distribute economic benefits to constituencies. As such, voters tend to support candidates who they believe can provide them with *wasta*, which roughly translates as patronage.

The IAF attempts to portray itself as opposing corruption, therefore limiting its parliamentarians from providing *wasta*<sup>13</sup> to constituents (Patel 2006). However, it should be noted that the IAF would, in fact, lack the ability to distribute *wasta* given its opposition to government policies. Rather, Patel demonstrates that IAF parliamentarians are more likely and able to distribute *wasta* by arranging for preferential treatment or discounted services at the Islamic Center Charity Society (ICCS) and other Islamic charities, given that many sit on the boards of these organizations. Thus, since most individuals support tribal candidates in the hope of receiving *wasta*, few tribal leaders would be willing to accept a coalition including an IAF candidate.

Overall, it is clear that the possibility for cooperation between the IAF and tribal candidates of Jordanian origin is limited at best. Hence, the IAF only ran three of its 22 candidates in the 2007 election in districts south of Amman, which tend to be very tribal districts. Of these three candidates, only one—Abdelhamid al-Dhinibaat from Kerak—proved victorious.

While the IAF confronts severe challenges in winning support from individuals of Jordanian origin, given the low importance of tribal affiliation amongst those of Palestinian origin, the claim that tribal affiliation lowers support for the IAF among this group is unlikely. This is especially true given that the party, despite official denials (Gharaibeh), appears to have focused its attention on Palestinian-Jordanians in recent years (Patel 2006). For instance, the party spends a great amount of time and effort in support of the Palestinian cause and has strongly opposed Jordan's peace treaty with Israel since it was signed in 1994. In fact, one analyst found that between 2006 and 2008, over a quarter of IAF's online declarations have dealt with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Abu Rumman 2007). Yet, despite these efforts, only 12 percent of Palestinians surveyed stated that they voted for the IAF in the 2007 election.

While tribal affiliation does not play a great role for individuals of Palestinian origin, there is evidence to suggest that regional affiliation does. Table 5 shows the importance of regional identity in vote choice for the 2007 parliamentary election by country of origin.

While tribal affiliation does not play a great role for individuals of Palestinian origin, there is evidence to suggest that regional affiliation does

<sup>13</sup> *Wasta*, literally meaning an intermediary or connection, is the use of connections to receive personal benefits. Jordanians often distinguish between "good" *wasta*, which would roughly be benefits deriving from networking and "bad" *wasta*, which is roughly benefits from patronage. The IAF acknowledges it participates in "good *wasta*" but forbids "bad *wasta*" by its members.

This table indicates that regional affiliation plays a significant role for Jordanians of Palestinian origin. This finding is corroborated by the existing literature that notes that Palestinians in Jordan feel a stronger connection to their historical city or village in Palestine rather than to their tribe (Brand 1995). Since families and tribes were often scattered throughout historic Palestine, individuals developed ties within settled communities, which were maintained after West Bankers fled to the East Bank. As a result, while the opportunities for *wasta* are less common for Palestinian-Jordanians, the *wasta* that they do seek tends to be based on regional affiliations as opposed to family or tribal affiliations.

**Table 5: Regional identity and vote choice<sup>14</sup>**

	Transjordanian	Palestinian
Yes	68.4%	69.7%
No	31.6%	30.3%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

Source: CSS 2007

Interviews with ordinary citizens help to confirm the importance of regional affiliation in voting. An individual of Palestinian origin who had voted in Amman-3 (central Amman) stated, that in order for a candidate of Palestinian origin to win an election in that district, he must have a historical link to the Nablus area. As an example, he cited Taher al-Masri, the former prime minister who was elected from Amman-3 and who is born in Nablus.

Overall, these realities constitute a particular challenge for the IAF in winning support from Palestinians. Despite the small sample size, there is evidence to suggest that the IAF is not able to find a way to overcome the importance of regional affiliation in Palestinian vote choice (Table 6).

**Table 6: Importance of regional affiliation by candidate choice for Palestinians in Jordan<sup>15</sup>**

	<b>IAF N=18</b>	<b>Tribal N=21</b>	<b>Independent Loyalist N=52</b>
<b>Yes</b>	72.2%	81.0%	68.6%
<b>No</b>	27.8%	19.0%	31.4%
<b>Total</b>	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

14 It should also be noted that a greater percentage of Jordanians indicated that regional affiliation affected their vote choice than did tribal affiliation. However, given the rural nature of Jordan historically, this finding does not entirely dismiss “tribal” voting in place of “regional” voting. Unlike in the more fertile areas west of the Jordan River, to the east tribes and geographic areas tended to overlap more consistently. Additionally, for Jordanians that do not vote in their historical homelands due to having moved to urban areas, it is less likely that tribal identity would affect their vote choice, which may also explain this difference.

15 In the CSS survey, voters were asked which of various parties or movements they voted for. This table presents the results for the IAF plus the two largest pro-regime movements.

These results show that regional affiliation has great importance even to voters who cast their vote for the IAF. In fact, perhaps surprisingly, a slightly greater percentage of IAF supporters indicated that they took regional affiliation into account compared to supporters of independent loyalist candidates. As such, the IAF's support among Palestinians appears to be as dependent upon regional identity as it is for other candidates.

However, some evidence does suggest that Palestinian regional identity is not equally strong among all members of the Palestinian Diaspora in the Middle East. Regional identity has, for instance, been shown to be less important in refugee camps than among Palestinians elsewhere. A detailed study by Sayigh (1977, 14) examining Palestinian identity in Lebanon, states, "In general, the most important kind of distinction that can be detected in the interviews is that between Palestinians in camps, and those outside them." Among those living in camps, she found a distinct feeling of unity. She states that despite numerous historical differences among Palestinians—including region and urban/rural differences—sub-national identities were not manifested throughout the interviews. Rather, the longing for return to Palestine and the misery of the camps led to unity in the name of Palestine. However, she notes that camp residents recognized the distinct differences between camp residents and those Palestinians living outside the camps. As one interviewee told her, "Maybe if my father had given me a house and a car I should not want Palestine. But camp people bring up their children to remember their country" (Sayigh 1977, 14).

Such sentiments still predominate inside Palestinian camps in Jordan. During the 2007 election in Baqa'a camp, few if any concerns of support for regional identity were manifested. The two leading candidates, Mohammad 'Aqel and Abdallah Jibrán, differed both in their regional identity and in their urban/rural heritage. 'Aqel is born in the 'Ain al-Sultan refugee camp near Jericho and descends from an urban family. Jibrán on the other hand is from a rural area near Bethlehem. In numerous interviews with ordinary residents of the camp during the campaign, the key dividing factor was party affiliation: 'Aqel, the incumbent parliamentarian who was a member of the IAF, was most commonly referred to as the Hamas candidate while Jibrán, a former president of the local sports club, was most commonly referred to as the Fatah candidate.

When asked about this difference, one local resident responded simply: "In the camps we are a very poor people. We have nothing except the dream of returning to Palestine. We know who comes from what region, but here it does not matter. What matters is Palestine and the parties there. If I support Hamas, then I vote for Mohammad 'Aqel. If I support Fatah, then I vote for Abdallah Jibrán."

If the hypothesis is true that competing identities limit IAF success, then support for the IAF should be higher in refugee camps. Estimating vote totals in the camps is difficult due to the fact that no electoral district encompasses only a refugee camp. However, Balqa-4, a single-member district, is made up almost entirely of the Baqa'a refugee camp. In the most recent election, Mohammad 'Aqel won with nearly a quarter of the vote in 2007, which is nearly twice the support for the IAF among Palestinians overall. In Amman-2, a four-member district which includes the Amman New Camp and the Jabal al-Hussein refugee camp in addition to southern Amman, two IAF candidates—Hamza Mansour and Musa al-Wahash—received 23.7 percent of the vote combined. In Amman-1, a four-member district which includes the Marka refugee camp in addition to most of eastern Am-

man, two IAF candidates—‘Azzam al-Huneidi and Musa Hantash—received 15.3 percent of the vote, which is a few points higher than the overall average. As such, there is clear evidence to suggest that in refugee camps, where regional identities are less important than in other areas, IAF candidates have greater success.

While this pattern of support in Jordan offers support in favor of the theory that competing identities limits the possible success of the IAF, it also implies that competing identities must not have been a limiting factor for Hamas. Like for Palestinians in Jordan, regional identity within the West Bank and Gaza is an important aspect (Shaer; Daraghmeh). As a result, for the 2006 election Hamas took great care to balance the regional distribution of candidates on the list system and later in appointments to the cabinet (Abdel-Rezak).

Yet, the effect of regional identity has a very different nature in the West Bank and Gaza, based on the nature of prevailing electoral institutions. Unlike in Jordan where the Palestinian Diaspora has individuals from each region of the West Bank scattered throughout electoral districts, in the West Bank and Gaza the nature of the electoral system minimizes its importance in vote choice. In the list system, it is possible to balance regional identities to minimize any effect. In the majority system component of voting, districts are concentrated around a major city and the outlying areas surrounding it. Thus, most if not all candidates in a given district are also residents of that district.

Importantly, the nature of the system also limits the ability of narrow coalitions to win election within each district. Since individuals are allowed to cast as many votes as seats in multimember districts, this helps forge cooperation between candidates and led to the formation of party lists. Thus, regardless of the number of seats in a district, to be guaranteed election a candidate must win half the vote. Unlike many districts in Jordan, in the West Bank and Gaza supporters of a narrower coalition would have an incentive to seek broader support to try to win the election, whereas in Jordan tribal or regional candidates have less incentive to do so.

Despite these differences, local rivalries remain possible as different coalitions including urban/rural or powerful families within each district could influence the support for individual candidates. Hamas takes this possibility very seriously. Rather than try to win despite these differences, prior to the election Hamas officials sought out local leaders and powerful families to ensure they were not opposed to Hamas’ list of candidates, especially within the majority component of the election (Daraghmeh; al-Shaer).

With the importance of regional identity playing a lesser role in the Palestinian system, it becomes more likely for Hamas to win support as a political party. While this variable does not explain the reasons for the increase in its support over time, it does not limit the party in the same manner as it does the IAF.

In Jordan, local identities have proven more salient than an Islamist identity, thus limiting the ability of the IAF to win broad support throughout society. Accordingly, it appears that the broad appeal of Islam is also a fundamental weakness, insofar as more specific identities tend to be more salient to ordinary citizens in vote choice. While the IAF was able to win an election with a relatively small vote share in the 1989 and 1993 elections, as tribes and regional candidates began to understand the requirements to win elections, the IAF began to face mounting challenges. It appears that this is one significant factor leading to decreasing support for IAF candidates over time.



## Ideology and the Political Spectrum

For a party to win support, it must at least be the least bad choice for a voter. Moreover, while the regime may not be popular, many citizens choose to vote pro-regime in the hopes of winning patronage (Scott 1972). While opposition parties can also provide patronage, it is important to examine the role of ideology in attracting potential voters and in distinguishing the party from others in the political system.

As noted earlier, Islamist parties are likely to struggle to articulate clear and coherent policies on economic issues. Rather, it is preferable for these parties to speak about political or social issues. However, Jordan's politics are dominated by economic concerns. In fact, according to the Arab Barometer, two-thirds of Jordanians state that the biggest problem facing their society is the economy, including high levels of unemployment and inflation (Arab Barometer 2006). And yet, 95 percent of the IAF's declarations and statements on its website from 2004 to 2006 dealt with the Arab-Israeli conflict, political reform, regional Arab affairs, and its relationship with the state (Abu Rumman 2007). By comparison, only 4.3 percent of its material has dealt with economic issues.

Two-thirds of Jordanians state that the biggest problem facing their society is the economy, including high levels of unemployment and inflation

Not surprisingly, this has not led to any tangible benefits for the IAF for a variety of reasons. First, its focus on the Israeli-Palestinian issue is specifically targeted at Palestinian voters. Yet, given that most IAF candidates in Palestinian areas are competing against other Palestinian candidates, emphasizing the Palestinian issue has limited marginal value. Most, if not all, Palestinian candidates are generally supportive of the Palestinian cause. While the IAF may be one of the strongest voices in Jordan on the issue, any Palestinian elected is likely to advocate on behalf of the Palestinian cause. Thus, this does not provide voters with a significant incentive to vote for the IAF.

Moreover, for most Palestinian voters it appears that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has relatively little effect on vote choice. While no survey question was asked directly about the importance of the Palestinian cause on vote choice, one item does pose that question indirectly. In this case, the post-election survey reveals that only 22 percent of Palestinian respondents stated that the fact that a candidate opposed the peace process affected their vote choice (CSS 2007). And of those who said that it did, only 21.2 percent voted for an IAF candidate. This pales in comparison to the importance of regional affiliation on vote choice for the IAF, suggesting that for the majority of Palestinians in Jordan, the Palestinian issue is not a primary consideration in vote choice.

While the IAF also emphasizes issues such as ending the U.S. occupation of Iraq and promoting Arab unity, and promoting democratic reform, these issues are not likely to be major vote winners either, as seen in Table 7. In a list over the most important problems, these were all dwarfed by economic concerns. While the IAF could perhaps win support based on its uncorrupt image, as noted above, it would be significantly more likely to attract those of Jordanian origin rather than Palestinian origin on this issue. Given the struggles to win amongst this population of voters, it is clear that this issue has not been sufficient to overcome the challenge of competing identities.

An additional challenge facing the IAF in competing on economic issues has to do with the nature of the Jordanian political spectrum. During election, the debate about the economy does not revolve around a traditional left-right spectrum or any other real spectrum. Rather, virtually all candidates simply make a commitment to more services for the population. Promises are made to bring more jobs to the local region rather than to detail an economic policy for the country as a whole. In sum, there is very little to distinguish the platform of one candidate from another in ideological terms. Given the vague nature of the campaign promises on economic issues, the IAF would struggle to find a way to distinguish itself based on the nature of the Jordanian political spectrum.

**Table 7: Most important problem confronting Jordan**

Most important problem	Transjordanian	Palestinian	Total
Economic situation	69.6%	69.2%	69.5%
Corruption	20.3%	12.0%	18.4%
Authoritarianism	2.4%	2.0%	2.3%
Ending US occupation of Iraq	2.5%	2.4%	2.5%
Arab-Israeli Conflict	5.2%	14.4%	7.3%

Source: Arab Barometer 2006.

On the other hand, as would be expected, Hamas’ primary focus also tends to be on political issues, especially as it relates to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Yet, unlike in Jordan, within the West Bank and Gaza, political concerns are of a much greater concern as seen in Table 8.

**Table 8: Most important problem confronting Palestine**

Economic situation	38.7%
Corruption	11.3%
Authoritarianism	1.0%
Ending the occupation	27.0%
Ending the security chaos	22.0%
Can’t choose	0.8%

Source: Arab Barometer 2006.

In the West Bank and Gaza, nearly half the respondents indicate that some element of the Israeli occupation is the biggest challenge facing society. Interestingly, however, party preference has little if any effect on this understanding, as seen in Table 9:

**Table 9: Most important problem confronting Palestine by party preference**

	<b>Fatah</b>	<b>Hamas</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Economic situation</b>	43.1%	36.0%	37.9%	38.7%
<b>Corruption</b>	9.3%	12.7%	11.5%	11.3%
<b>Authoritarianism</b>	1.1%	1.1%	0.7%	0.9%
<b>Ending the occupation</b>	24.5%	27.9%	28.2%	27.1%
<b>Ending the security chaos</b>	22.1%	22.3%	21.7%	22.0%

Source: Arab Barometer 2006.

While there is no variation by party preference, the fact that the most important issue in the minds of Palestinian voters is by nature political, Hamas' positions are extremely relevant to the overall debate. Hamas can convincingly, using an Islamist framework, present arguments about the peace process and ending the occupation. Hence, it is not necessarily that the importance of political issues over economic issues leads to support for Hamas, but rather that Hamas has always been more relevant because of the nature of the political debate in the West Bank and Gaza.

Perhaps even more importantly, there is a clear political divide on the Israeli-Palestinian issue. Since 1993, Fatah has stood in favor of the peace process with Israel promising tangible benefits for the population based on this process. Over the same period, Hamas has been clearly against this process and forcefully criticized Fatah leaders for their involvement in it. While economic policy in Jordan can be vague, candidates in the West Bank and Gaza must reveal their position on the peace process. Either they accept or reject it.

In his analysis of the 2006 parliamentary election using public opinion data, Lahloh (2007) concludes that the most important issue in the election was the peace process followed by corruption. Given that both of these issues fit well into the Islamist ideology, this played to Hamas' advantage. Moreover, given the failure of the peace process in the eyes of most Palestinians, the public was more in line with Hamas than Fatah on this critical issue. Combined with the general image of Hamas as being relatively uncorrupt, it is in many ways surprising that Hamas won only 44.5 percent of the overall vote.

The results of elections soon after a period of rapid political liberalization are anomalies and are not necessarily indicative of overall support for Islamist parties.

## Conclusion

Overall, in terms of the success of Islamist parties, this paper leads to five primary conclusions. First, the results of elections soon after a period of rapid political liberalization are anomalies and are not necessarily indicative of overall support for Islamist parties. Because they take place in a political vacuum, candidates or parties with relatively little support are often able to win.

Second, baseline support for Islamist parties tends to average around 15 percent throughout the Arab world. Despite vast differences in political parties'

ability to compete in these countries, support tends to be around this level. Even in cases where support is low, such as Jordan, or high such as the West Bank and Gaza, both societies had a long period where support for the IAF and Hamas was around 15 percent in the 1990s. As such, the initial support for these groups because of their Islamist stance, opposition status, and services provided to the community tends to be around this level.

Third, despite some differences in the level of support for an Islamist party, the determinants of this support are relatively similar in all countries. In all of the cases, there is a desire for a greater role for religion in politics combined with either a low rating of government performance or access to *wasta*.

In cases where competing identities exist and are fostered by the electoral system, Islamist parties are unlikely to be successful.

Fourth, in cases where competing identities exist and are fostered by the electoral system, Islamist parties are unlikely to be successful. Their broad appeal to all Muslims does not seem to be able to overcome the specific appeal of limited identities such as tribal and regional affiliation, as is the case in Jordan. In the case of the West Bank and Gaza, the nature of the electoral districts limits the importance of regional identity. The relatively large size and multimember districts encourage voting for broad coalitions rather than specific candidates. Accordingly, Islamist's parties are more likely to succeed in such an environment.

Fifth, Islamist parties are more likely to succeed in environments where political and social issues are of greater importance to the average citizen. Generally, these issues are advantageous to Islamist parties, which are better able to incorporate them into their Islamic rhetoric than economic issues. Given the lack of detail in Islamist thought about economic issues, a political environment dominated by economic concerns presents a significant challenge for Islamist parties.

As a result, these parties attempt to influence the political debate to include issues such as public morality, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, or blaming poor prospects on foreign influence. These issues provide clear talking points, but are generally not issues that the vast majority of Arab citizens are most concerned about, such as the economy. As a result, these parties win the support of a small minority but often struggle to broaden their appeal to an extent that would win them a large enough portion of the electorate.

### **Policy Implications**

These findings have numerous implications for U.S. foreign policy. First, given that Islamist parties receive a baseline support of around 15 percent, under normal circumstances it is unlikely that these parties will win elections if allowed to participate in the political process. While 15 percent makes supporters of Islamist parties a sizeable—and often the largest—opposition minority within the political system, in most systems electoral success requires a much greater proportion. One important exception is in the chaos that normally surrounds an election following rapid political liberalization. If parties were illegal or the opposition severely repressed, it is possible for a 15 percent support to win a sizeable number of seats in free elections in a majoritarian system. Yet, evidence suggests that when parties or electoral coalitions are preexisting, as was the case in Yemen during the election in 1993, Islamist parties are unable to have the same success as in Algeria or Jordan.

Yet, while Islamist parties are unlikely to win elections given the size of their support, it is also unlikely they will become politically irrelevant anytime soon. When allowed to participate, Islamist parties will likely have a voice and even influence political outcomes in certain instances. This is especially true as some regimes may attempt to co-opt certain Islamist issues in order to limit their support. For example, recently in Yemen the regime turned a blind eye to the establishment of a vigilante group enforcing Islamic law in some cities in the hopes of weakening Islamist challengers.

Nevertheless, the claim by many regimes in the region that political liberalization would lead to an Islamist takeover is largely unfounded. Opening up states with established political parties is highly unlikely to result in an Islamist takeover.

Second, Hamas' success is the exception rather than the rule. While many analysts have feared Islamist takeovers based on Hamas' success at the ballot box, in reality the situation in the West Bank and Gaza presented the ideal situation for an Islamist party such as Hamas, namely, that the nature of competing identities is not a limiting factor in Palestinian politics. Even more importantly, politics in the West Bank and Gaza is dominated by the Israeli occupation and the corruption of the Palestinian Authority. Both of these issues strongly favor an Islamist party such as Hamas. Moreover, the clear cleavage that exists in terms of policy toward the peace process allowed Hamas to present a clear alternative to Fatah in the election.

While Hamas could capitalize on such conditions, these are absent in most Arab states. In most countries, the public is most concerned about economic rather than political issues (Arab Barometer 2006-7). This concern plays into a fundamental weakness for Islamist parties as they cannot deliver a clear and coherent economic program based on their underlying Islamist ideology. Rather, despite the knowledge that most citizens are concerned with economic issues, Islamist parties focus on political or social issues, which are unlikely to be major vote-winners in an election.

Third, Islamist parties are only likely to be successful when they can appeal to citizens for "un-Islamic" reasons. For example, Hamas was carried to prominence in the 1990s by a core group of Islamist supporters. Yet, despite a vast array of social service provision and militant activity against Israel, it did not win broad support in the rest of Palestinian society. In fact, Hamas' rise in popularity after 2000 largely coincided with the failure of the peace process in the eyes of most Palestinians. Yet, while Hamas frames this issue from an Islamist perspective, the party's appeal to ordinary citizens is primarily due to their frustration at the failure of the peace process. As such, Hamas' rise is the result of a policy position more than it is a religious one.

Fourth, bringing Islamist parties into the political system can actually decrease their support. While Islamist parties have certain strengths, they also possess critical weaknesses that serve to limit their success. In Jordan, the IAF has not been able to overcome the challenges of tribal and regional identity. Given the increased coordination between tribal and regional coalitions, overall support has continued to decrease. Moreover, their inability to address economic concerns has rendered them increasingly irrelevant in the political system. Given the strength of competing identities, especially family/tribal identity, in most Arab states, allowing Islamists to compete is likely to decrease their success over time.

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## Appendix 1

### DV: Support for Islamist Parties

Algeria:

- 1) Islamic Renaissance Movement
- 2) Movement of Society and Peace
- 3) National Reform Movement (Hammas)

Jordan:

- 1) Islamic Action Front

Lebanon:

- 1) Hizbullah
- 2) Amal Movement
- 3) Jamaa Islamiya
- 4) Free Shi'a Movement
- 5) Islamic Labor Front
- 6) Islamic Gathering Movement

Morocco:

- 1) Justice and Development Party

West Bank and Gaza:

- 1) Hamas
- 2) Islamic Jihad

Yemen:

- 1) Islah
- 2) Joint Meetings Party

### Items used to construct IVs:

#### Greater Role for Religion in Public Life

- 1) Men of religion should not influence how people vote in elections (strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree)
- 2) It would be better for [country] if more people with strong religious beliefs held public office (strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree)
- 3) Men of religion should have no influence over the decisions of government (strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree)

#### Personal Piety

- 1) How often do you read the Quran? (Everyday or almost everyday, several times a week, sometimes, rarely, don't read the Quran)
- 2) Do you pray? (yes, no)
- 3) Would you describe yourself as religious? (Religious, in between, not religious)

#### Support the Implementation of the Shari'a

- 1) The government should implement only the laws of the sharia (strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree)
- 2) I'm going to describe various types of political systems that exist in the Middle East and ask what you think about each as a way of governing [country]. For each one, would you say it is a very good, fairly good, fairly bad or very bad way of governing [country]? A system governed by Islamic law in which there are no political parties or elections. (Very suitable, suitable, somewhat suitable, not suitable at all)

### **Militancy**

- 1) Do you think the following operations are terrorist operations or not? (terrorist, not terrorist)
  - a. Amman hotel explosions
  - b. Egyptian explosions (Sharm al Sheikh/ Dahab)
  - c. London underground explosions
  - d. Madrid train explosions
  - e. Casablanca (Morocco) explosions
- 2) The latter was not asked in Morocco, so the following items were used instead
  - a. Do you agree with the following statement: “US involvement in the region justifies armed operations against the US everywhere” (strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree)
  - b. Do you agree that armed groups are justified in attacking civilians in Iraq in order to resist the American occupation? (strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree)

### **Islamic Pride**

- 1) Which of the following best describes you? (Above all I am a [country member], above all I am a Muslim, above all I am an Arab, above all I am a Christian, other)
- 2) Which of the following is the most important to you from the following social and geographical affiliations? (Family/tribe, the town in which you currently reside, the governate in which you live, [country], the Arab world, the Islamic world)

### **Corruption**

- 1) In your opinion which of the following is the most important problem facing [country] today? (Economic situation, corruption, authoritarianism, ending the US occupation of Iraq, the Arab-Israeli conflict, other)

### **Government Rating**

- 1) Using a 10-point scale, where 1 means very unsatisfied and 10 means very satisfied, indicate how satisfied you are with the performance of the current [country] government.

### **Anti-Western**

- 1) Do you agree with the following statement: “Exposure to the culture of the US and other Western countries has a harmful effect on Jordan” (Strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree)

### **Israel-Palestine**

- 1) Which of the following statements best expresses your opinion about the problem of Israel and Palestine?
  - a. The Arab world should accept the existence of Israel as a Jewish state in the Middle East only when the Palestinians accept Israel’s existence
  - b. The Arab world should not accept the existence of Israel as a Jewish state in the Middle East

### **Wasta**

- 1) During the past five years, have you ever used wasta to achieve something personal, family related, or relating to a neighborhood problem? (Yes, no)



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