

**JORDANIAN AND MOROCCAN OPPOSITION IN THE POST
ARAB SPRING ERA**

by
KAMİL AĞRALI

Submitted to the Graduate School of Social Sciences
in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

Sabanci University
July 2025

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ARAB SPRING ERA**

Approved by:

Assoc. Prof. BERK ESEN
(Thesis Supervisor)

Prof. ÖZGE KEMAHLIOĞLU

Assoc. Prof. MUHAMMET TAHİR KILAVUZ

Date of Approval: July 22, 2025

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ABSTRACT

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KAMİL AĞRALI

Political Science, M.A. Thesis, July 2025

Thesis Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. BERK ESEN

Keywords: strategic moderation, electoral authoritarian regimes, jordan, morocco,
the arab spring

This thesis examines the divergent trajectories of Islamist main opposition parties in Jordan and Morocco, mainly the Islamic Action Front Party (IAF) and Justice and Development Party (PJD), in the post-Arab Spring period. By incorporating Islamist moderation and opposition strategies under electoral authoritarian regimes literature, this thesis argues that, after their inclusion into the political system, Islamists utilize a multi-dimensional grand strategy called "strategic moderation" and adapt their rhetoric, behavior, and organizational choices in line with the institutional logic and redlines of the electoral authoritarian regime (EA) and focus on incremental gains over outright-combative opposition, which would bring repression and disqualification of the party by the EA regime elites easily. Accordingly, by employing a most similar-system design and a comparative process-tracing approach, this thesis shows that differences in the approaches on utilizing strategic moderation, mainly PJD's successful implementation and IAF's failure in doing so by endorsing a combative and confrontational approach due to a rising hawkish Palestinian faction, shaped the distinct trajectories of the PJD and the IAF in the aftermath of the Arab Spring. It is also argued in this thesis that, when an Islamist party is dominated by actors affiliated with a politically minority group of the country such as the Palestinians in Jordanian case, its utilization of strategic moderation may be significantly constrained.

ÖZET

ARAP BAHARI SONRASI DÖNEMDE ÜRDÜN VE FAS MUHALEFETİ

KAMİL AĞRALI

Siyaset Bilimi, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Temmuz 2025

Tez Danışmanı: Doç. Dr. BERK ESEN

Anahtar Kelimeler: stratejik moderasyon, seçimsel otoriter rejimler, ürdün, fas, arap baharı

Bu tez, İslamcı ana muhalefet partileri olan Ürdün'deki İslami Eylem Cephesi Partisi ve Fas'taki Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi'nin Arap Baharı sonrasında birbirinden ayrılan seyrini incelemektedir. İslamcı moderasyon ve seçimsel otoriter rejimlerde muhalefet stratejileri literatürlerini bir araya getiren bu tez, siyasal sisteme dahil olmalarının akabinde İslamcıların "stratejik moderasyon" adını taşıyan çok boyutlu bir ana strateji benimsediklerini ve partinin seçimsel otoriter rejim elitleri tarafından kolayca baskılanmasına ve diskalifiye edilmesine yol açabilecek çatışmacı-eleştirel bir muhalefet yerine, söylemlerini, davranışlarını ve örgütsel tercihlerini seçimsel otoriter rejimin kurumsal mantığı ve kırmızı çizgileri ile uyumlu hale getirdiklerini ve kademeli kazanımlara odaklandıklarını ileri sürmektedir. Bu minvalde, en benzer sistemler tasarımı ve karşılaştırmalı süreç izleme yaklaşımını uygulayan bu tez, Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi'nin stratejik moderasyonu başarılı bir şekilde uygulaması ile İslami Eylem Cephesi Partisi'nin bunu başaramayıp, yükselen şahin Filistinli fraksiyonun etkisiyle daha çatışmacı ve kavgacı bir çizgi benimsemesinin, bu iki partinin Arap Baharı sonrasındaki ayrılan seyrini şekillendirdiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Bu tezde ayrıca bir İslamcı partinin, tıpkı Ürdün örneğinde Filistinlilerin durumunda olduğu gibi, ülkenin siyaseten azınlık konumundaki bir grubuna mensup aktörler tarafından domine edilmesi halinde stratejik moderasyonu uygulamasının önemli ölçüde sınırlı kalabileceği savunulmaktadır.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The last two years were perhaps the most challenging years in my short life. Yet may be the most instructive ones. Pursuing a master's degree in the political science program at Sabancı University has taught me how to formulate meaningful questions and seek scholarly answers. I am really grateful to Sabancı University for facilitating such a training process. On the other hand, the sleepless nights that I spent managing the coursework are still fresh in my memory. This research stands out as the main output of this relatively short but loaded journey.

I would like to express my gratitude to my thesis advisor Prof. Berk Esen. The interest that he has shown in my research, his guidance and encouraging reflections played a precious role in shaping the direction and content of this study. I am sincerely thankful to him for all the knowledge and insights he shared with me during this process.

I also want to thank Prof. Özge Kemahlioğlu and Prof. Tahir Kılavuz for kindly accepting to take part in my thesis committee. Their constructive feedback and recommendations as well as their willingness to engage with my ideas opened new perspectives for me in perfecting my study, which I would also carry in my future studies.

I also want to thank my parents Hatice and Kadir and my brother Cemil for their efforts and care throughout my life. Their encouragement and trust were there whenever I needed. Lastly, I want to thank my cohort and friends at Sabancı, whose collaboration and solidarity made this process much smoother.

To curiosity and perseverance

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iv
ÖZET	v
LIST OF FIGURES	x
LIST OF ABBREVIATONS	xi
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1. Case Selection and Methodology	3
2. THEORETICAL CHAPTER.....	7
2.1. Literature on Inclusion-Moderation Thesis and Islamist Moderation ..	7
2.2. Literature on Opposition Strategies in Electoral Authoritarian Regimes and Islamist Parties	14
2.3. Conceptual Basis	18
2.3.1. Theoretical Framework.....	21
3. JORDANIAN CASE.....	26
3.1. State Formation in Jordan.....	27
3.2. Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood: From Cooperation to Escalation with the Hashemite Monarchy	28
3.2.1. 1989 Limited Liberalization and Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood	29
3.2.2. Internal Debates within the JMB/IAF.....	32
3.3. Choosing Confrontation: The IAF/JMB's Arab Spring Strategy.....	38
3.4. Doves Leaving the Brotherhood: ZamZam Party, the Muslim Broth- erhood Society and, Partnership and Rescue Party.....	41
3.5. Post Arab Spring Elections: 2016, 2020	44
3.6. 2024 Parliamentary Elections: A Strong Come Back	46
4. MOROCCAN CASE.....	49

4.1. The Moroccan State and Islamist Transformation	50
4.2. Winning Without Marching: PJD's Strategic Retreat to the Arab Spring.....	57
4.3. Islamists in Office: PJD Between Reform and Constraint (2011-2016)	61
4.4. The End of the Reformist Promise: PJD's Second Term in Govern- ment (2016-2021)	66
4.5. Strategic Moderation Backfires: The Co-optation and Defeat of the PJD (2021-).....	71
5. CONCLUSION	73
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	78

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1. Casual mechanism of moderation in literature	18
Figure 2.2. Dimensions of behavioral, ideological, and strategic moderation	20
Figure 2.3. Electoral democracy index for Jordan and Morocco	21
Figure 2.4. Process tracing scheme for Jordan (IAF) and Morocco (PJD) .	25
Figure 3.1. Electoral results of JMB/IAF	30
Figure 3.2. Characteristics of hawks and doves in Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood and Islamic Action Front Party	33
Figure 3.3. Party cohesion of JMB/IAF over years	36
Figure 4.1. Party cohesion of PJD over years	60
Figure 4.2. Electoral results of PJD over years	61

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Al-Islah	National Alliance for Reform
EA	Electoral Authoritarian Regime
EAM	Electoral Authoritarian Monarchy
EAR	Electoral Authoritarian Republic
F20	February 20 Movement
FIS	Islamic Salvation Front (Front Islamique du Salut)
HCCNOP	Higher Committee for the Coordination of National Opposition Parties
IAF	Islamic Action Front Party
IMF	International Monetary Fund
JCM	Justice and Charity Movement (Al-Adl wa'l-Ihsan)
JMB	Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood
MB	Muslim Brotherhood
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MP	Popular Movement (Mouvement Populaire)
MUR	Unity and Reform Movement (Mouvement unité et réforme)
PAM	Authenticity and Modernity Party (Parti Authenticité et Modernité)
PJD	Justice and Development Party (Parti de la Justice et du Développement) ..
PPS	Party of Progress and Socialism (Parti du Progrès et du Socialisme)
RNI	National Rally of Independents (Rassemblement National des Indépendants)
SCDM	Special Commission on the Development Model
SNTV	Single Non-Transferable Vote system

UC Constitutional Union (Union Constitutionnelle).....

UNFP National Union of Popular Forces (Union Nationale des Forces Populaires)

USFP Socialist Union of Popular Forces (Union Socialiste des Forces Populaires)

1. INTRODUCTION

Why Islamist main opposition's trajectories in Jordan and Morocco diverged significantly from each other in the post-Arab Spring period? Why Morocco's Islamist opposition Justice and Development Party (PJD) was able to utilize the opportunity that the street protest brought for the oppositional forces and could establish two consecutive governments until its sharp defeat in 2021, while its counterpart in Jordan the Islamic Action Front Party (IAF) could not utilize the same opportunity, was marginalized by the electoral authoritarian regime, and showed low performance in elections until 2024 where it achieved its best parliamentary results ever?

The central puzzle of this thesis not merely interrogates why one Islamist party initially succeeded but failed eventually while the other one initially failed but succeeded in the long-run, but how two opposition parties operating under structurally comparable electoral authoritarian regimes arrived at completely different outcomes in the aftermath of the same regional shock. A careful glance at the Arab Spring reveals that, the countries that experienced significant political transformations in the protests were predominantly the non-rentier republics whose political regimes relied primarily on the domestic taxation extracted from people such as Egypt, Syria, Tunisia and Yemen. In contrast, the monarchies that withstood against the upheavels such as Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Oman, and United Arab Emirates were generally rentier states that derives its revenues from the hydrocarbon resources they export to other countries rather than taxation (Shawki 2024). In this regard, in the Arab Spring, it was possible to see a picture where there was an overlap in the sense of both regime type and surplus production. At one side authoritarian republics with non-rentier economic structures that experienced severe disruptions, on the other side authoritarian monarchies with rentier economic structures that successfully navigated the process. However, two countries in the region stood out as exceptions to this dichotomy: the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the Kingdom of Morocco (Schwarz 2011).

Jordan and Morocco constituted a third category in the Arab World beside the

rentier monarchies and non-rentier republics, with regards the Arab Spring. These two countries are often considered as non-rentier or semi-rentier countries due to their limited natural resources and due to their reliance on taxation extracted from the citizens. Although the regimes derive their legitimacy from traditional sources in these two countries in the Weberian sense, Jordan and Morocco also resemble republics in the sense they are the only monarchies in the MENA region that possess party systems. Moreover, in the Arab Spring, authoritarian regimes in these two countries could preserve their existence and integrity as their rentier monarchical counterparts despite their such non-rentier characteristic. However what is baffling is that despite having such similar conditions, main opposition parties in these two countries followed strikingly different paths in the aftermath of the protests? In this sense rather than structural factors, I argue that these two Islamist parties self-adopted strategies/policies decided their destiny, mainly the PJD's success in the short-term and failure in the long-term, and the IAF's failure in the short-term and success in the long-term in the post-Arab Spring era. Henceforth, I see understanding the behaviors of Islamist parties as essential for truly comprehending this divergence.

Islamists' political behaviors have been discussed under the literature of Islamist moderation that focuses on these movements transformation in the aftermath of their inclusion to the political systems, a framework largely inspired by the historical experiences of socialist and catholic parties of Europe. Particularly, the Islamist moderation literature interrogates two things, whether these movements undergo a behavioral moderation and operate under the legal framework of the system and whether they experience an ideological moderation and embrace liberal values, re-defining their political objectives as consequence of their inclusion to the electoral processes.

On the other hand, much of this literature tends to treat inclusion as a uniform process and assumes moderation as either a linear or inevitable outcome of inclusion. However, in my opinion the existing literature misses a critical point, Islamist parties are mostly a phenomenon of MENA's electoral authoritarian regimes where elections are held regularly, often involving multiple parties but also where core democratic standards such as freeness and fairness of the elections are systematically violated and where it's very hard to achieve a political success for opposition since the regime elites possess various mechanisms to marginalize and disqualify the oppositional actors (Schedler 2006). Accordingly, unlike the socialist and catholic parties of Europe, the moderation of Islamist parties takes place in such a non-democratic context. Henceforth, the focus of their moderation should not be assumed as an inevitable liberalization over time, as political contestation might require in open

systems, but rather it is based on survival and pursuit of political relevance within an authoritarian environment. In this sense I contend that rather than a linear or inevitable outcome, moderation should be defined as a grand strategy/policy that the Islamist parties pursue to increase their political success, influence and appeal under the highly constrained nature of the EA regimes. Therefore, I argue that Islamist parties adopt what I call "strategic moderation" meaning, rather than outright opposition they accommodate EA regimes' rules and priorities through adapting their political behavior, rhetoric and policies in pursuit of incremental gains and space for political maneuvering, while avoiding repression and direct confrontation with regime elites that may result in the party's marginalization by the regime. As part of this long-term broad strategy, they also engage in a degree of ideological transformation, to the extent that they are able to stretch the boundaries of justifiable action in response to shifting political necessities and in pursuit of broadening the party appeal.

In this thesis I claim that what caused to the divergence in the post-Arab Spring political trajectories of IAF and PJD was their differing approaches on utilizing strategic moderation. Accordingly, to substantiate the thesis argument, the next part of the thesis will justify the case selection in detail and articulate the methodology and outline of the thesis.

1.1 Case Selection and Methodology

Jordan and Morocco, post-colonial countries that achieved their independence from the British and French empires in the 1940s and 1950s, have been considered as members of the greater Middle East and North Africa region and the Arab World where the political sphere is dominated by so-called "republics" and monarchies. Since these two countries are both monarchies, what distinguishes Jordan and Morocco from other monarchies of the region and the Arab World is the existence of parliaments with party politics. Moreover, they both have upper houses in addition to national assemblies and therefore both appear as bicameral parliamentary states. Therefore, both Jordan and Morocco are "constitutional monarchies", but this does not mean that these countries are democratic ones. Jordan and Morocco are electoral authoritarian regimes as many of the other MENA countries (Yom 2014). These two countries resemble each other not just in terms of their political regimes, but their economic development level also shows a very similar pattern. Both countries have diverging economic dynamics from their other counterparts in the MENA region.

Monarchies of the MENA have been characterized by their rentier state structures where they have hydrocarbon resources utilized for the maintenance of the political regimes. However, traditionally speaking these two states almost lacked this feature and were classified as taxation states (Schwarz 2011). In addition, both countries are classified as lower-middle-income developing countries with similar levels of GDP per capita—\$4,455.5 for Jordan and \$3,771.4 for Morocco as of 2023—(World Bank 2023).

Cultural and demographic commonalities also approximate these two monarchies. In both, there is a dominance of historical Arab Culture, and to the greatest extent, both societies are composed of Muslim majorities. However, in terms of ethnic composition, this homogeneity gives its place to heterogeneous social structures. Especially, with the several exodus of Palestinian immigrants with the Arab-Israeli wars, Jordan became a new homeland for the Palestinians who sought their social and political rights. Similarly, Morocco also holds a significant amount of antique Amazigh minority especially those living in the Rif region who advocate for its social and political rights and whose voice becomes more and more apparent day by day. Above all, in both of these monarchies of the MENA region, the main opposition roles were held by Islamist groups when the times showed the Arab Spring. Islamic Action Front Party (IAF) of Jordan and Justice and Development Party (PJD) of Morocco were the main opposition parties where in both countries also moderate levels of street protests occurred and where also both of the EA regimes' elites initiated constitutional amendment processes and early elections to placate the demands of the streets.

Jordan's main opposition party, Islamic Action Front (IAF) was founded in 1993 as the political wing of the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood (JMB) and positioned itself as the main opposition force in Jordanian politics. While the IAF is an institutionally distinct organization, it remains closely tied to the JMB and both IAF and JMB often used by literature interchangeably denoting the same organization. The party has pursued political reform within a democratic framework, but its influence has fluctuated due to electoral engineering, political repression, and periodic election boycotts. Nevertheless, when the times showed the Arab Spring, IAF was the most organized major opposition group in the country that can challenge the regime and also can benefit from the opportunity that the protest created. On the other hand, IAF could not benefit from these protests, the party boycotted the 2013 early elections indicating its discomfort with political amendments taken by the regime during the Arab Spring. Followingly, it has been marginalized by the EA regime and even though it entered the 2016 elections, it could only reserve 10 out of 130 seats in the parliament and even got the worst results in its history in

2020 parliamentary elections by only securing 5/130 seats. However, 2024 elections became a great comeback for IAF, the party could achieve the best results in its history and broke the negative trend it had been pursuing, by securing 31/138 seats in the parliament ¹.

The history of IAF's counterpart, Morocco's Justice and Development Party traces back to 1998 when Islamists took over the "Mouvement populaire démocratique et constitutionnel" party and changed its name to Justice and Development Party. Similar to IAF, PJD advocates for seeking Islamic values but emphasizes a moderate approach and focuses on political reforms in the political system. Prior to the Arab Spring, it increased its share in the House of Representatives in every election it entered but could not achieve parliamentary plurality. But this sequence changed for PJD when the dates showed the Arab Spring. In the early elections made in 2011, for the first time in its history PJD became the biggest party in the country and achieved parliamentary plurality by securing 107/395 MPs. Moreover, PJD consolidated its power by achieving 125/395 MPs in 2016 parliamentary elections and governed the country for 5 more years. However, this positive trend did not last more than 10 years, and the party lost 90% of its parliamentary presence in 2021 elections achieving the worst results in its history ².

I argue that PJD of Morocco was successful on utilizing strategic moderation and adopted an accommodative and pragmatic stance against the electoral authoritarian regime elites that enabled it to achieve its limited goals during the Arab Spring period, ensuring the constitutional amendments it wanted and allowing it to gain short-term political success in the post-Arab Spring period. However, this approach also made it lose its reformist character and became co-opted by the regime in the long run and ultimately caused a sharp decline in its public credibility and electoral support. In contrast, the IAF in Jordan, because of party takeover by a Palestinian faction who were intolerant and combative towards the Jordanian monarchy, maintained a more critical and confrontational stance towards EA regime elites and challenged the regime's red lines and priorities. While this prevented the IAF from capitalizing on the opportunities presented by the Arab Spring and initially led to its marginalization and poor electoral performance, it also allowed the party to preserve its oppositional and reformist character and helped it to regain its public support in the long run.

To explore the abovementioned divergence in Islamist opposition strategies, this thesis employs a comparative case study design based on the most-similar systems

1. Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), Jordan: House of Representatives, accessed July 05, 2025

2. Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), Morocco: House of Representatives, accessed July 05, 2025

logic and paired comparison. Process-tracing will be used as primary methodological approach to uncover how and why each party adopted or failed to successfully adopt strategic moderation (independent variable), and how those choices shaped their short and long-term political outcomes (dependent variable) by showing casual mechanisms.

To address this puzzle, the thesis is organized as follows: In the second chapter, I will theoretically synthesize the literature on the inclusion-moderation thesis and Islamist moderation, as well as the literature on opposition strategies under electoral authoritarian regimes and Islamist parties and establish the conceptual basis for the Strategic Moderation concept that I have generated. Followingly, empirical chapters on Jordan and Morocco will show up to discuss the effect of strategic moderation on the political trajectories of IAF and PJD. Last but not least, a conclusion chapter will discuss the implications of strategic moderation and these two parties' current situations accordingly.

2. THEORETICAL CHAPTER

2.1 Literature on Inclusion-Moderation Thesis and Islamist Moderation

Inclusion-moderation thesis had occurred in light of the challenges stemming from anti-status quo oppositional movements such as the socialist and catholic movements against the liberal democracies of the Europe since the 19.th century, as well as the broader question of how democracies should engage with such actors.

This thesis posits that the inclusion of such anti-system groups into political systems can serve as an effective strategy for promoting their moderation over time (Schwedler 2006). More specifically, the argument suggests that the inclusion of those movements critical of liberal democracy would make them remove their principles that are not aligned with liberal democracy and facilitate their gradual alignment with liberal norms through structural incentives. Then how does the mechanism that causes this moderation work? Downs argues that, since a political party's main goal is maximizing its vote share, once it is included in electoral competition, it would move towards center to win more votes (Downs 1957). Hence moderates its political position. Przeworski and Sprague (1986) define this situation as "electoral trade-off". Przeworski and Sprague (1986) argue that, to improve their electoral competitiveness, socialist parties in Belgium, France and Germany found it necessary to deemphasize their class constitutions' and broadened their appeal beyond the working class, during the first half of the 20.th century. Likewise, Huntington (1991) argues that socialist parties in Spain, Greece and Portugal paid the costs of their victories by moderation in late 20.th century. Accordingly, political inclusion provided a democratic bargain where these parties saw the advantage that if they abandon their commitment to revolution, they can achieve the political power. A similar pattern can be seen in the transformation of Europe's Christian-Democratic parties in the post WWII era. Christian-Democratic parties were originally formed as a reaction to state-church conflicts and as a catholic defense starting with late 19.th century (Kalyvas and Van Kersbergen 2010). Liberal and socialist challenges

against Church power regarding issues such as education and social policies were the main impetus for the formation of these parties (Kalyvas and Van Kersbergen 2010). However, these ideologically focused parties started to transform by time. Especially in the post-war era, Christian-democratic parties in countries such as Germany, Italy, Austria, Belgium and in the Netherlands distanced themselves from the direct influence of the church (Kalyvas 1996). The structural incentives such as electoral competition made them understand that a pure religiously motivated base is insufficient for long-term electoral success. Hence, they moderated themselves and embraced liberal values contributing the Western democracies (Kalyvas 1996).

A strand of literature had been arguing that inclusion of Islamist movements into formal representative institutions would also lead such a transformation in their goals and reshape their agenda (Wickham 2004). On the other hand, even though Islamist movements started to appear by early 20.th century, their electoral participation as political parties had not been common until the end of the century except some outlier cases like Malaysia, Pakistan and Turkey (Kilavuz 2020).

Islamism is very much a modern ideology that aspires a political change rather than a theological one and emerged as a reaction to modern social and economic conditions (Black 2011, Rubin, 2010). At the core of Islamism, there lays the belief on construction of an "Islamic state" based on the grounds drawn by divine Islamic law (Rubin 2010). However, the methods of Islamist movements on achieving this core goal varies. For example, the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt utilized Islamic upbringing (tarbiya) and religious outreach (da'wa) to wider public as two strategies for its religious commitment of Islamic Order (Wickham 2013). On the other hand, there are Islamist groups such as Al-Qaida and Alghammatal Islamiye who made use of armed struggle in pursuit of an Islamic rule (Esposito 2015; Springer 2009).

However, rise of the Islamist parties has become a phenomenon mostly with several countries' liberalization in 1990s in the MENA region, even though the presence of Islamist movements goes much earlier (Kilavuz 2020). From that time on, Islamist movements started to invest in political parties in light of incentives provided by the political openings (Kilavuz 2020). Schwedler (2011) says, Islamist are ready to take advantage of political openings when they are offered. Also, it has been argued that, to an extent, Islamists carry a political advantage as an opposition actor vis a vis their rivals (Cammatt and Luong 2014). Hence these political openings that enabled Islamist movements to participate in party politics raised an important question: Would the integration of Islamist movements into formal representative institutions lead to a process of moderation similar to that in the historical experiences of socialist and catholic parties (Brocker and Künkler 2013; Wickham 2004)?

It has been argued that, even though the contexts in which Islamist groups operate are far from being democratic, limited institutional openings in those authoritarian settings can create incentives for Islamist actors to moderate their goals and tactics (Karakaya and Yildirim 2013; Tomsa 2012; Wickham 2004).

However, as distinct from the previous literature that assumed moderation as a natural consequence of inclusion, Islamist moderation literature has highlighted two key debates. First, it questioned how moderation should be defined. Do Islamist parties undergo only behavioral moderation or do they also experience an ideological transformation? Meaning, does their moderation only remains in behavior such as contesting in elections and refusing non-electoral ways or, do they also embrace liberal values and redefine their political objectives away from Islamic state to civic liberal democratic order and engage in extensive collaboration with non-Islamist parties? Second, it asks whether structural factors such as electoral incentives are sufficient to explain moderation or do organizational and intra-party factors also play a critical role?

Many of the scholars argue that both behavioral and ideological moderation of an Islamist party is possible (Karakaya and Yildirim 2013; Wickham 2004). For instance, Wickham (2004) views the Egyptian Wasat party as an example of ideological moderation and argues that ideological moderation –embracing liberal values and civic-state based on popular sovereignty and secular legalism– occurs when Islamist actors adopt pluralistic rhetoric and engage in sustained interaction with non-Islamist opposition groups. Similarly, based on their study that focuses on Morocco’s Justice and Development party, Karakaya and Yildirim (2013) argue that Islamist parties may undergo ideological moderation but say, ideological shift does not have to occur in an abrupt transformation but rather it may take a long duration as a gradual and cumulative learning process and necessitates time (Karakaya and Yildirim 2013).

On the other hand, not all scholars share this deterministic view about the ideological moderation of Islamist parties as the direct consequence of the inclusion. For instance, Schwedler (2006) argues that moderation (ideological moderation) does not occur in every contexts where Islamist participate to the party politics and defines “moderation as a move from relatively closed and rigid worldview to one more open and tolerant of alternative perspectives”. So, she does not differentiate ideological and behavioral moderation but rather embrace the ideological moderation as the genuine one. Drawing from her comparative analysis of Jordan’s Islamic Action Front and Yemen’s Islah Party, Schwedler (2006) demonstrates that similar liberalizing conditions may lead to varied outcomes regarding ideological moderation. Schwedler’s (2006) findings indicate that, despite participating elections and accepting electoral competition, Jordan’s and Yemen’s Islamists had significantly differed

in issues such as their perspectives on embracing liberal values, their relations with non-Islamist political parties and women's political participation. Therefore she argues that, inclusion does not always result in ideological moderation but rather, there may be some other factors affecting the Islamist parties' moderation.

Expanding upon this line of argument, Tezcür (2010) offers a complementary but a distinct perspective. He argues that ideological moderation is an independent process which can precede, accompany, or facilitate behavioral moderation, rather than being guaranteed outcome of the inclusion. Drawing on the Islamist experiences in Iran and Turkey, Tezcür (2010) claims that participation in elections or engagement with democratic procedures do not necessarily bring directly an ideological transformation. He argues that in these cases, the Islamist parties, Reformist Front and Justice and Development Party successfully competed in elections and adopted reform-oriented strategies and navigated the political environment behaviorally moderating themselves. However, he contends that this behavioral moderation did not necessarily bring a comprehensive shift in their ideological orientation. Pahwa (2017) further develops this line of argument by highlighting how Islamist movements exhibit a high degree of responsiveness to electoral incentives by adapting their behavior when political opportunities are offered. For instance, he notes that in the pre-Arab Spring era, Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt was on the path of ideological moderation engaging in alliances with other parties including non-Muslims, liberals and seculars. However, while the Muslim Brotherhood exhibited remarkable moderation through participation in elections and cross-ideological alliances, this shift did not appear to be accompanied by a broader ideological transformation. Pahwa (2017) argues that during its governmental period, MB's governance style placed greater emphasis on its Islamic tenets based on its electoral legitimacy, over redefining political objectives towards a liberal order.

On the other hand, an important strand of the literature argues that the Islamist parties' ideological moderation should be evaluated on an issue-by-issue basis rather than through a generalized perspective. For instance, Clark (2006) notes that ideological moderate cases may show an issue based-partial moderation rather than full ideological shift and the moderation capacity of an Islamist party is linked to its ability to stretch the boundaries of justifiable action. She says, an Islamist party do not cross certain red lines despite all structural incentives and this can be seen in the case of IAF of Jordan. IAF had always been in collaboration with different opposition groups such as liberals, leftists and nationalist on many occasions such as in the establishment of The Higher committee for the Coordination of National Opposition Parties (HCCCNOP), which was founded against the new electoral law and Jordan-Israel normalization efforts by 13 opposition parties including the Communist and

Ba'athist parties in the leadership of IAF which denotes definitely an ideological moderation. IAF offered this mechanism as an example of "democratic model for the Arab World" in which opposition parties can unilaterally behave against the authoritarian regime. On the other hand, the IAF cooperates only on issues it does not perceive as conflicting with Islamic principles. The party commonly cooperates with other opposition parties on the issues related with the region or "practices of monarchy".

Even though Schwedler (2006) does not elaborate a lot, she does acknowledge that despite IAF's moderation in some issues, it preserves its commitment to its core values in some other issues. Moderation is a multifaceted, issue-dependent process of ideational and behavioral adjustments rather than being linear one (Tomsa 2012). Morocco's Justice and Development Party (PJD) displays a similarity in terms of selective ideological moderation. PJD of Morocco is largely accepted as a moderate case both in behavioral and ideological terms, on the other hand its moderation does not indicate a full endorsement of liberal values. The family law debates of the early 2000s clearly show this nuanced stance. These provisions included revisions on, alimony, custody and financial responsibility in marriage. The PJD voiced reservations for three years claiming the law is against the Islamic norms and when it eventually accepted the law, it had ensured that several amendments were introduced to the laws compatibility with Islamic principles (Wegner 2011). Hence, IAF and PJD cases show that Islamist parties do not give full endorsement to liberal changes unless they can legitimize the challenge and internalize the dealing.

Beside its extent, literature puts different approaches on ideological moderation, while some of the scholars argue that by being included in the system Islamist moderate both ideologically and behaviorally, some argue that their ideological moderation is not the necessary conclusion. Even some scholars argue that exclusion of Islamists from the electoral process can also lead to Islamists' moderation (Cavatorta and Merone 2013). Here it is important to note that many of the major studies located in Islamist moderation literature are descriptive studies. Such as Schwedler's (2006) famous *Faith in Moderation* book does not really make an argumentative discussion on the reasons why Jordan and Yemen cases diverged. But rather makes speculations in the conclusion part on potential factors that may affect the divergence. A similar point can be made about Tezcür's (2010) study. Although he argues that both Turkey's Justice and Development Party and the Iran's Reformist Front engaged in behavioral moderation but not experienced ideological transformation, he does not clearly give underlying reasons and his analysis remains largely descriptive. In line with this, both of the scholars do not employ methods such as process tracing showing casual mechanisms.

Given this complexity, in my opinion it would be more insightful to focus on how the existing research underpins its arguments and what facilitates or hinders different types of moderation, rather than making definitive judgments about the nature of the Islamist parties' transformation.

Despite the fact that most of the studies in the Islamist Moderation literature are descriptive, it is possible to find various explanations for organizational factors that are supposed to be effective on an Islamist party's moderation. A major strand of the literature claims that the internal cohesion of an Islamist party is effective on its ideological moderation. If we go back to Schwedler's (2006) study, even though she does not thoroughly argue it, she says that IAF's internal unity may enabled it to take more decisive and radical actions in terms of ideological moderation while Yemen's Islah Party's internal fragmentation between several groups such as the Muslim brotherhood, Houthis and Salafis amputated its moderation capacity. Similarly, Wuthrich and Ciftci (2022) argue that an Islamist party must have a flexible strategic capacity rooted in a centralized decision-making structure for a successful moderation. They claim that administratively less organized parties such as the Yemen's Islah party are more inclined to fail due to internal fragmentation where it is hard do take such a structural decision. On the other hand, parties with more unified and centralized authority such as the Indonesia's Prosperous Justice Party are more likely to succeed in pursuing moderation. However, Wuthrich and Ciftci (2022) condition this to an Islamist party's ability to distance itself from the Islamist social movements with well-established ideology and principles. If an Islamist party is relying on a strong ideologically committed Islamist movement, it would not be possible for it to moderate itself (Wuthrich and Ciftci 2022). Post-Arab Spring Islamist parties in Egypt reproves this. Zollner (2018) argues that Freedom and Justice Party could not ideologically moderate itself because of its direct relation with the Muslim Brotherhood controlled by conservatives and hold strict views on the implementation of Islamic principles. On the other hand, the Strong Egypt and Wasat Parties could moderate because they could distance themselves from the Muslim Brotherhood (Zollner 2018). However, Gümüſcü (2023) challenges these perspectives by arguing that the moderation of Islamist parties is not primarily determined by internal cohesion, fragmentation, or proximity but rather who controls the party whether the liberals or electoralists. Gümüſcü (2023) argues that, compared to Islamist movements in Egypt and Turkey, Ennahda stands out for its ideological moderation and she attributes Ennahda's ideological moderation to the leadership of the party's liberal wing who managed to marginalize electoralist factions within the party and promote pluralism, and cooperation with non-Islamist actors embracing liberal values.

Nonetheless, focusing solely on national-level politics may overlook other important dynamics that may influence the moderation of Islamist parties. The case of Indonesia's Prosperous and Justice Party illustrates that the party tends to adopt moderate policies not where it has long held power or built a strong political machine, but rather where it is relatively new in office (Djafar and Tsauro 2023). This suggests that factors such as a party's organizational entrenchment and its access to political power also shape the Islamist parties' moderation.

On the other hand, in my opinion the previous Islamist moderation literature carries some deficiencies that should be further scrutinized. First, concerning the organizational factors, party-cohesion argument as a facilitator of moderation is not persuasive since there is the example of Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt who did not ideologically moderate, while it was not domestically that much fractioned but rather cohesive according to the literature. On the other hand, closeness to an ideologically rigid Islamist movement argument is not valid for some cases. Such as IAF of Jordan, which is accepted as an ideologically moderate case in literature (Schwedler 2006), is the direct political branch of Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood and it is not possible to think of IAF as a separate actor from JMB. On the other hand, political power and political experience as an impediment for Islamist moderation appears valid as Djafar and Tsauro (2023) shows however, Tunisian En-Nahda party offers a counter-argument since the party preserved its liberal democratic commitments while remaining in government.

I think the reason that creates controversy in the literature is that many of the studies are case studies (Djafar and Tsauro 2023; Pahwa 2017; Wickham 2004; Zollner 2018) and need a comparative perspective for external validity. Even the major comparative studies in the literature such as Schwedler's *Faith in Moderation* (2006) and Tezcür's *Paradox of Democracy* (2010) are utilizing neither the most similar nor the most different cases and offer causal mechanisms. Therefore, regime characteristics create confounding variable problems that may affect an Islamist party's moderation. Moreover, in my opinion previous research on Islamist moderation has a strong missing. Since the Islamist moderation literature is based on inclusion-moderation thesis that was generated for explaining the moderation of socialist and catholic parties situated in western electoral and liberal democratic regimes, it does not take the electoral authoritarian regimes dynamics into consideration. However, Islamist parties are mostly a phenomenon of electoral authoritarian regimes, and they are not different from any other opposition parties operating under EA regimes. In this sense, I think understanding the dynamics of electoral authoritarian regimes and the strategies of opposition parties in EA regimes is necessary for truly comprehending Islamist parties' moderation and I argue that moderation is a sort of a

grand strategy that the Islamist parties pursue under the institutional logic of the electoral authoritarian regime, not very different from the electoral coordination, boycott and protest-mobilization that opposition parties utilize for their survival and political success under EA regimes' conditions.

So, drawing on the literature on the opposition strategies under EA regimes, in the following part I will demonstrate that how Islamist parties have employed the electoral coordination, boycott and mobilization in respond to authoritarian constraints, similar to the other opposition parties operating under EA regimes. By doing this, I will show that Islamists' choices are not exceptional but rather comparable to those of other opposition actors facing similar environments and buttress my claim that, why moderation should be considered as a deliberate opposition strategy shaped by EA regime conditions and organizational dynamics, rather than a passive byproduct of political inclusion.

2.2 Literature on Opposition Strategies in Electoral Authoritarian Regimes and Islamist Parties

There is no doubt that the regimes where Islamist parties play are mostly electoral authoritarian regimes. In my opinion, the Islamist moderation literature is not sufficiently emphasizing the regime characteristics that may confound an Islamist party's behavior. In this sense, for thoroughly comprehending an Islamist party's behavior, I think it is very crucial to understand dynamics of EA regimes and how opposition parties behave under these regimes' constraints and what are the strategies that the Islamist parties have been using for their political success under these regimes.

Electoral authoritarian regimes are the most common way of non-democratic rules since the cold war (Schedler 2013). They carry institutional façades of democracy, and multiparty elections are being held for the chief of executive in regular sense as in democratic countries. However, what distinguishes EA regimes from the democratic regimes is that, even minimum criteria of democracy are not fulfilled in these regimes (Schedler 2006). More specifically, freeness and fairness of elections are violated severely, and electoral contestation is subject to widespread and systematic manipulation (Schedler 2006). Therefore, even though in EA regimes the legal route for achieving state power is established through competitive elections, the electoral contestation is not "the only game in the town" (Lust-Okar 2013). On the other hand, from the opposition perspective, being an opposition party in an EA regime

means that you have a very skewed playing field compared to your counterparts in electoral and liberal democratic regimes. However, this does not mean electoral contestation is completely meaningless in EA regimes but rather, transitional outcomes are possible such as happened in the countries: Malaysia (2018), Senegal (2000), Gambia (2016), Ukraine (2004), Serbia (2000) and Mexico (2000) became a scene where power transition from incumbents to opposition forces occurred. These cases show that the presence of opposition groups and parties is a strong driver for political change and transition, but what is crucial more is understanding how opposition groups in electoral authoritarian regimes stand alive, how they react to challenges, and how they engage with the authoritarian regime. In this sense literature puts three strategies utilized by opposition parties operating under EA regimes, mainly: electoral coordination, boycotting elections, protest and mobilization.

Electoral coordination and coalition-building often emerge as an effective method in navigating constrained political environments for opposition parties. Oppositions in EA regimes are often confined to ghettos in terms of political and social activity which are strictly limited by the regime, complicating the opposition endeavors in terms of breaking the regime blockade by themselves. Therefore, these endeavors remain futile. In this sense, the disunity of the opposition actors can be exploited by the regime to further marginalize and suppress the opposition activities (Bedford and Vinatier 2019). On the other hand, election coordination can have a tremendous effect on the electoral process and results (Howard and Roessler 2006). Such as in 2000 Serbian opposition could topple the Milosevic regime with an electoral coalition of 18 diverse political parties as similar to Kenya (2002), Senegal (2000), and Malaysia (2018) where the democratic transition started thanks to the opposition coalition's victory. Many of the Islamist parties under EA regimes also did not hesitate to engage in coalitions with other political groups. Such as Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt had participated elections with joint lists set up with Liberals (Wafd Party) in 1984 and with Socialist Labor Party and Liberal Party in 1987 elections (Shehata 2009). The alliance between Tunisian Ennahda Party and Ettakatol Parties (Buehler 2018) and Jordanian IAF's alliance with Christian minority groups in 2016 and 2020 under the name of "National Coalition for Reform" gives examples of some other pre-electoral coalitions that Islamist parties participated and coordinated in the MENA context. Furthermore, despite its distance from MENA, a similar phenomenon can be seen in Malaysian Amanah party's electoral alliance with other oppositional forces under "Pakatan Harapan" which brought the breakdown of long lived Umnoh regime after 60 years of rule.

When repressed civil life and domination of the state in the media sector are considered, the electoral battlefield appears one of the best opportunities for the opposition

parties where they can enlarge their grassroots and challenge the electoral authoritarian regime. Nevertheless, this expectancy is not fulfilled in every authoritarian election and opposition parties occasionally boycott the electoral play. Authoritarian elections are legitimacy-producing mechanisms (Smith 2009) for the EA regimes and election boycotts aim to delegitimize this process by not accepting the rules of the game by abstaining from the game. In this sense, opposition parties use boycott cards when they think that they have great popularity in society and the regime is in a weak position (Hatungimana and Wuthrich 2025). As Kurzman and Naqvi (2009) show, when the opportunity of entering elections is offered for Islamist parties, they do not hesitate to take advantage of this. Hence it may be argued that non-participation is not as common as participation for Islamists but on the other hand, even tough Islamist parties attend elections overwhelmingly, they sometimes play the card of boycott such as, Jordan’s IAF’s major boycotts in 2010 and 2013 and Bahrain’s Shiite groups 2010 boycott constitutes the major examples of Islamist boycott (Schmidmayr 2013).

Due to the restricted nature of the political dynamics, going against the regime publicly may be costly and carries many unpredictable dangers for the dissidents. However, despite all these, protest is also a critical strategy used under EA regimes by opposition parties. Mobilization under EA regimes occurs mostly under two categories: first pre-election protests and second, post-election protests. A pre-electoral protest is a form of public demonstration that occurs before the election and aims to affect election results. These protests show some signals to both voters and the regime members about the viability of the alternative to the existing regime (Kurzman, quoted in Kadivar 2017). Also, these protests can lead the regime to take some precautions in the elections such as giving a chance to the opposition if it sees the opposition as a viable challenge, to appease the opposition voters (Schedler, quoted in Kadivar 2017). In EA regimes governments engage in excessive and blatant manipulation in order to persuade other actors such as the bureaucracy and military and show that they still pull the strings. Hence if there is electoral fraud such as ballot stuffing to inflate the vote count in favor of an incumbent-supported candidate, altering the results during counting and reporting stages, or manipulating voter registration lists, dissidents are more likely to organize post-electoral protests (Harvey and Mukherjee 2020).

Although the literature does not address the pre-electoral and post-electoral protest made by Islamist parties, several examples can be found. Such as Iranian 2009 post-election protests showed Islamist Reformists reaction against the authoritarian establishment with allegations of massive electoral fraud (Taheri 2013). Algerian Islamist protests after stolen elections of 1991 also can be classified under post-

election protests. However, even though the literature does not have much say on protests gathered around elections, this does not mean that Islamist parties does not use mobilization as a strategy. As Zhang (2019) says, Islamist movements both utilize institutional (such as elections) and non-institutional (demonstrations and strikes) means for their goal of Islamizing the societies. As Butt (2016) shows, Islamist parties such as Jamaat-e-Islami, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam, Jamaat-ud-Dawa, and Ahl-e-Sunnat Wal Jamaat of Pakistan regularly use protest as an expression of opposition.

The Arab Spring also showed many of the Islamist parties' willingness for participating protests. Even though they did not initiate the protests, Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt, Islah Party of Yemen, Ennahda Party of Nahda was in streets during the Arab Spring. Even in cases such as Libya they spearheaded the conflicts with the regime during the revolution (Al-Arian 2018). Islamists holds variety of physical infrastructures ranging from mosques, charities, schools and welfare agencies whose beneficiaries constitute the social networks of supporters that resembles a cell-like organizational structure (Cammatt and Luong 2014). Hence Islamists can maintain efficient operation of their programs and discipline in specific activities. Similarly, Wiktorowicz (2004) says, the reason that lies at the back of the rise of Islamist movements as dominant oppositions in Muslim World is due to their command of societal institutions and resources. Such as FIS of Algeria used mosques and community organizations in Algeria to be organized for elections. A similar phenomenon can be seen in Egypt, Jordan and Yemen where Islamists successfully utilized grass-roots networks through non-governmental organizations, provided basic goods and services to communities for recruiting support (Wiktorowicz 2004).

So far, the EA regime literature put several strategies utilized by the opposition groups under EA regimes such as electoral coordination, electoral boycott and protest and mobilization, many of which are extensively utilized by the Islamist parties since they are also operating under electoral authoritarian regimes. However, in my opinion this literature also misses an important discussion point. The traditional power holders of the EA regimes can decisively marginalize or disqualify opposition parties, since there is no separation of powers and predictable judiciary processes, as far as the regime power allows. Therefore, I think both opposition parties in EA regimes and the Islamist parties since they are also operating under these regimes face a dilemma which is not discussed in the literature scrutinized above. If these parties combat the regime, use hazardous rhetoric and confront the regime elites' they would not be able to enhance their political maneuvering space in the legal political system even though they participate the formal institutions such as the elections. So, beside the opposition strategies mentioned above

many of which also utilized by Islamist parties, opposition parties in EA regimes and the Islamist parties must decide a grand strategy/policy, whether to be accommodative or confrontational towards the EA regime elite's and whether to endorse redlines and priorities of the EA regime and act accordingly or challenge them by pursuing a demanding agenda, while still operating under legal political framework such as contesting in elections and refusing extra-systemic activities. In this regard I argue that, how opposition parties approach regime elite, whether through a confrontational, demanding and quarrelsome stance or a more accommodative and cooperative approach plays a critical role in shaping their broader political behavior and trajectory. So, in my opinion Islamist parties' moderation is a deliberate, long-term grand strategy rather than just a passive adaptation to inclusion as indicated in Islamist moderation literature. In this sense, I argue that Islamist's moderation is not only restricted with moderating behavior or ideology but at its core, includes the Islamist party's interaction with the EA regime elites and in the following part I will conceptually base my claim.

2.3 Conceptual Basis

There are mainly two types of moderation in the literature:

1. Behavioral Moderation (First step)
2. Ideological Moderation (Second Step)

Concerning the Islamist parties' moderation there is a casual mechanism generally assumed as follows according to the literature:

Figure 2.1 Casual mechanism of moderation in literature



Behavioral Moderation (Tezcür 2010, 11): Behavioral moderation concerns the adaptation of electoral, conciliatory, and non-confrontational strategies that seek compromise and peaceful settlement of disputes at the expense of nonelectoral, provocative, and confrontational strategies that are not necessarily violent but may entail contentious action.

Basically, if an Islamist movement participates in elections and refuses extra systemic actions, it is considered as behaviorally moderate according to the literature. The

parties that are just behaviorally moderate do not get in extensive cooperation with non-Islamist parties and do not extensively embrace liberal values.

Ideological Moderation (Schwedler 2006, 3): As a move from relatively closed and rigid worldview to one more open and tolerant of alternative perspectives.

Primarily, in addition to behaviorally moderating itself such as contesting in elections and refusing extra systemic activities, if an Islamist party abandon the application of Islamic principles as the sole basis for legislation, redefine political objectives away from establishing an Islamic state towards a civil liberal democratic order and engage in extensive collaboration with non-Islamist parties, it is considered as ideologically moderate.

Here according to the literature behavioral moderation excludes ideological moderation. There can be behavioral moderation without ideological moderation, however literature does not say anything about the possibility of existence of ideological moderation without behavioral moderation. On the other hand, a strand of literature also says this ideological moderation is to the extent that the Islamist parties are able to enlarge the boundaries of justifiable action. So, the ideologically moderate cases may remain conservative on specific issues despite their ideological moderation therefore, what is experienced is selective-partial ideological moderation (Clark 2006; Tomsa 2012).

Nevertheless, in general sense, what is understood from the literature on Islamist parties' moderation is their eventual-inevitable liberalization and endorsement of liberal democratic values and recalibration of the Islamist agenda based on liberal pluralism and secular legalism. However, in my opinion, the prevailing conceptualizations of moderation carry some deficiencies because they miss the dynamics of the electoral authoritarian regimes. This causal assumption treats Islamist parties as if they operate within the liberal democratic systems, like the socialist and catholic parties of Europe. However, Islamist parties are operating under the conditions of the electoral authoritarian regimes which are far from resembling liberal democracies in terms of institutional constraints, checks on executive order, freeness and fairness of the political competition, media freedom and autonomy of the opposition actors. In this sense, since the political system is not liberal, expecting moderation as happened in Western liberal democracies is misguided, since the moderation in question occurs within a non-democratic context. Rather than merely focusing on liberalizing themselves as the electoral competition necessitates, first and foremost, these parties are obliged to accept the EA regime's terms by acting accordingly for their survival and for increasing their political relevance, where the regime elites can marginalize and disqualify opposition actors easily.

Figure 2.2 Dimensions of behavioral, ideological, and strategic moderation

Action/Behavior	Behavioral Moderation	Ideological Moderation	Strategic Moderation
Contesting in elections	✓	✓	✓
Refusing violence and extra-systemic actions	✓	✓	✓
Engaging in extensive cooperation with non-Islamist parties	X	✓	✓
Ideological liberalization in response to political necessities	X	✓ (full endorsement of liberal values)	✓ (selective-partial liberalization)
Avoiding direct confrontation with authoritarian regime elites and accepting their legitimacy	Not necessarily (literature does not say anything about this)	Not necessarily (literature does not say anything about this)	✓ (core component)
Adapting to EA regime's rules, priorities and red lines	X	X	✓ (core component)
Organizational discipline enabling survival against authoritarian manipulation	Not necessarily	Not necessarily	✓
Pragmatic adaptation to regime openings	Not necessarily	Not necessarily	✓

Note: Here it is important to note that strategic moderation involves behavioral moderation and partially contains ideological moderation, but goes beyond these two types of moderation and crucially-centrally brings the EA regime's dynamics into discussion.

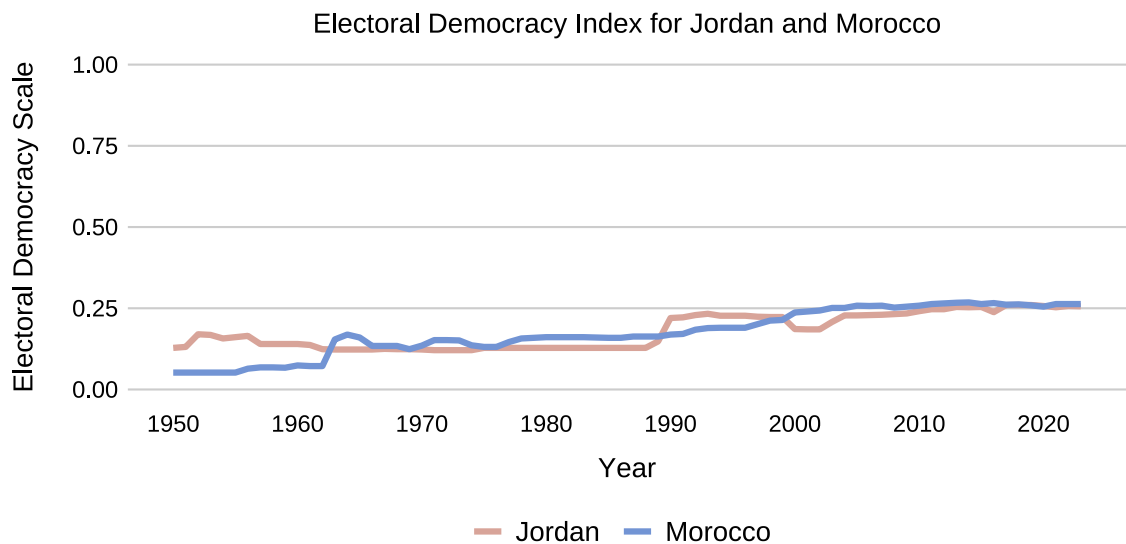
In this regard, unlike the moderation theories rooted in the experience of the Western liberal democracies, Islamist parties' moderation does not presuppose an inevitable liberalization or a normative shift at its core as the electoral competition necessitates; instead, it is rooted in survivalist considerations shaped by the institutional logic of the authoritarian rule and rather than prescribed liberalization, these parties moderation should be defined as a grand strategy to avoid EA regime's repression and to maintain the party relevance in public by focusing on limited political gains within the political system. So, I argue that, after their inclusion to the legal political systems, Islamist parties implement strategic moderation referring to a multi-dimensional political strategy that entails the accommodation of electoral authoritarian (EA) regimes' rules and priorities through the adaptation of political behavior, rhetoric, and policies in pursuit of incremental gains and maneuvering space while avoiding repression and direct confrontation with regime elites, rather than engaging in an outright opposition. Strategic moderation involves a combination of behavioral compliance (such as participation in elections, rejection of extra-systemic activities, entering intra party alliances), rhetorical softening (employing de-escalatory messaging towards regime elites and avoiding clashes with them), or-

ganizational discipline (ensuring party unity to avoid from palace gambits)¹, and pragmatic adaptation (seizing limited political openings offered by the regime). Additionally, it includes a partial long-term ideological transformation to the extent the Islamist parties stretch the boundaries of justifiable action in responding to shifting political-systemic necessities.

2.3.1 Theoretical Framework

IAF and PJD serve as compelling comparative cases for analyzing the dynamics of Islamist parties' moderation especially given the comparable levels of authoritarianism in Jordan and Morocco concerning the dimensions such as civil liberties, rule of law, separation of powers, freeness and fairness of the elections and availability of alternative information sources as shown in figure 2.3.

Figure 2.3 Electoral democracy index for Jordan and Morocco



Note: The figure represents the Electoral Democracy Index for Jordan and Morocco based on the V Dem dataset.

Jordan and Morocco are considered as electoral authoritarian regimes (Wegner 2011) where elections are held regularly and political parties are formally allowed to compete but also where the electoral processes are also constrained by ultimate author-

1. Here, internal cohesion is not treated as a cause that inherently results in an Islamist party's moderation as indicated in the literature. Instead, it constitutes a dimension of strategic moderation that secures party from palace gambits, protecting it from fragmentation by increasing its resilience. So rather than precursor to moderation, cohesion functions as a safeguard within the framework of strategic moderation that enables the consistent implementation of the strategically moderate stance under the constraints of the EA rule.

itarian institutions that extremely prevent oppositional actors from achieving the real political power.

In both of the countries, despite the procedural existence of democratic features, real political power remains concentrated in the monarchy that holds power over the executive, judiciary, and security apparatus. In this regard, unlike the electoral authoritarian republics (EARs) where authoritarian control is exercised through dominant party systems or military-backed presidencies, Jordan and Morocco represent the monarchical variants of the electoral authoritarianism and they have their own characteristics. In electoral authoritarian monarchies (EAMs) such as in this thesis' cases, the monarchy enjoys religious, dynastic, or traditional legitimacies and rather than contesting directly in the elections with the opposition, the monarch positions itself above partisan politics pretending as the supreme arbiter and guardian of the national unity, diverging from the electoral authoritarian republics where the legitimacy of the authoritarian elites often built on their electoral success in addition to revolutionary, nationalist, or developmentalist narratives. In this sense, Williamson (2024) argues that the monarchs in such electoral monarchies can perform blame shifting functionally since the dynasties are not subject to electoral contestation and public's responsibility expectations are lower towards them meaning, they can effectively delegate policy-making to politicians such as the cabinets and prime ministers to shift the policy blames from themselves to the elected politicians and when these elites become politically damaged in the public eye, they can easily remove them and defuse the public anger perpetuating the cycle.

Accordingly, it may be argued that the presence of monarch as an unelected and superior political actor makes political success more difficult for the opposition parties. Despite not contesting elections the monarch still enjoys a legitimacy and can manipulate the achievements of the opposition via blame-shifting and mobilizing authoritarian tools such as by dissolving the parliament before its term ends, restricting the legislative agenda through royal decrees, boosting pro-palace parties in governmental coalitions and applying administrative pressures on the government officials. However, in my opinion, though the monarch enjoys a constitutionally superior position in EAMs, the actual ability of monarch to neutralize or defeat the opposition with palace gambits is not absolute and opposition's strength in the parliament plays a critical role. Similar to EARs, in EAMs monarch's ability to authoritatively govern the country depends on his parliamentary strength (the strength of the pro-palace actors) before anything else. So, it is very critical for the monarch who is dominant in the parliament whether the pro-regime parties and pro-regime independents or the opposition forces since these countries are constitutional monarchies. Therefore, when opposition parties gain significant parliamentary rep-

resentation such as parliamentary majority, the monarchy's gambit and co-optation capacity may decrease significantly.

A careful glance would also reveal that EARs may not necessarily offer more favorable conditions for the opposition parties. Like EAMs in EARs, though the opposition parties form the government, their governance capacity may still be severely constrained. This has been evident in several cases. Such as in the case of Pakistan (2013-2017) where the leader of the opposition party Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N) Nawaz Sharif, after his electoral success was ultimately dismissed from prime-ministership by the Supreme Court in 2017 under the pressure coming from the military establishment. A similar but slightly different situation can be followed in the record of previous Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko (2004–2010), who was elected after the Orange revolution and who subsequently faced institutional resistance from entrenched elites including the old guard, oligarchs, judiciary, and security forces and lost its credibility under the light of infightings and coalition crisis despite holding the highest position in the executive branch. More extreme examples can be followed in Egyptian (2011-2013) and Algerian (1991) cases where the Muslim Brotherhood was removed from the power by a military coup despite controlling the executive branch after the 2011 elections in the first one and where the military intervened and canceled the electoral process leading to a prolonged conflict when the Islamist opposition party Islamic Salvation Front won the elections in the second one.

While acknowledging the specific characteristics of electoral authoritarian monarchies that shapes opposition's behaviors distinctly from the electoral authoritarian republics, these examples demonstrate that, in both types of the electoral authoritarian regimes opposition actors may encounter with impediments. However, in both contexts, the popular support of the opposition parties and their parliamentary strength remain as the key determinants of their political leverage that restricts authoritarian leader's capacity by increasing the political cost of the repression, alongside the other country-specific dynamics.

In this sense a comparison of Jordan and Morocco and main Islamist opposition parties Islamic Action Front Party (IAF) and Justice and Development Party (PJD), by ensuring internal validity since both countries shared similar types of electoral authoritarian contexts-rules where the political playing field is heavily skewed and institutionally constrained for opposition parties and where there is strong monarch who holds the real executive power, facilitates us to track the effect of strategic moderation in an analytically precise sense. Moreover, the Arab Spring further enhances the comparability of these cases by providing a shared moment of political contingency highlighting the agency of the Islamist opposition.

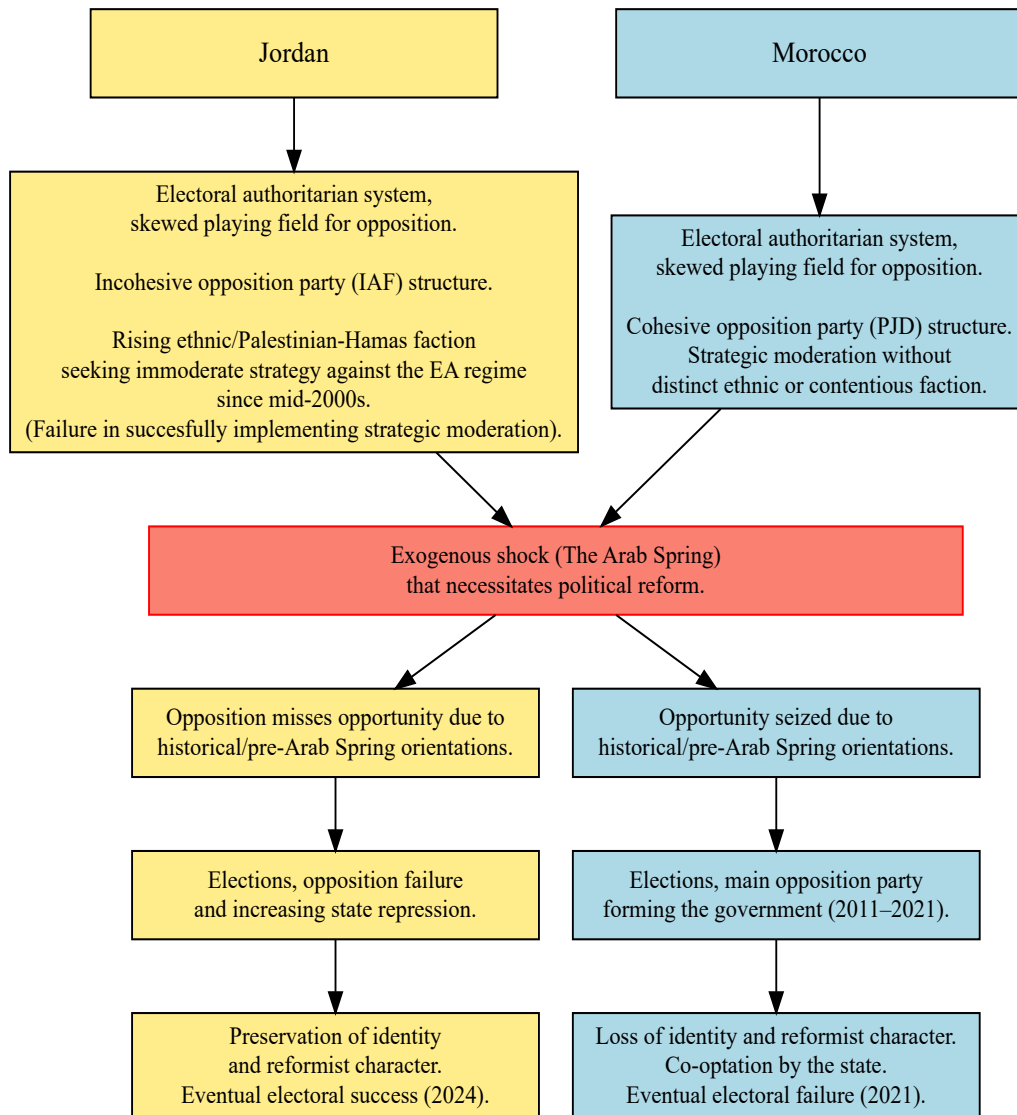
The Arab Spring, that ousted long lasted authoritarian leaders such as the Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak, Tunisian Leader Zeynel Abidin bin Ali, Saleh of Yemen and Gaddafi of Libya ahead of December 2011, initially changed the political landscape for many of the Middle Eastern societies. Though the monarchies were not severely affected from the uprising, it functioned as a moment of heightened contingency that significantly revealed the strategic responses of key political oppositional actors also in Jordan and Morocco. The uprisings temporarily loosened existing balance of power between the regime elites and opposition and triggered short-to-medium-term strategic recalibrations. This moment had created an uncertainty about the long-term consequences of the alternatives that the IAF and PJD had and diverged the political trajectories of these two parties where they chose differing responses to the similar conditions, as forecasted by their pre-Arab Spring orientations. Henceforth, the divergence between the IAF's and PJD's post-2011 political trajectories, while not strictly path-dependent originated in their distinct reactions to the Arab Spring as a critical moment of choice under uncertainty.

The PJD was able to benefit from the high contingency during the Arab Spring that loosened balance of power between the regime elites and opposition thanks to its successful utilization of the strategic moderation, by accommodatively approaching the EA regime's offers and pushing for its limited agenda. In stark contrast, IAF could not utilize the same opportunity since it sought for a combative politics style and refused any regime call offered to the party by confronting the EA regime elites and challenging their legitimacy. Hence, in the aftermath of the protests, unlike their similar tract in the pre-Arab Spring period, as the result of their different responses, these parties' trajectories substantially diverged where the PJD formed two consecutive governments but eventually experienced a drastic failure and where the IAF initially marginalized and underperformed but eventually achieved success in the last parliamentary elections. Crucially, the ascendance of Palestinian faction that prioritized confrontation constraining the IAF's ability to pursue moderation illustrates that, Islamist parties are not monolithic actors as often considered in the literature but they may be internally divided and factions may adopt sharply distinct positions regarding party strategies and policy positions.

Accordingly, this thesis argues that the divergent trajectories of the Islamist opposition in Jordan and Morocco, the PJD and the IAF, in the Post-Arab Spring era were shaped by their differing approaches to utilize strategic moderation. While the PJD was successful on utilizing strategic moderation coherently, IAF failed to effectively implement strategic moderation due to a rising Palestinian faction that sought confrontational and combative approach against the regime elites, ultimately leading the two parties to adopt sharply different responses to the Arab Spring and

resulting in markedly divergent political trajectories thereafter. Building on this comparison, this thesis further argues that when an Islamist party is dominated by actors affiliated with a politically minority group of the country such as the Palestinians in Jordan case, its capacity to pursue strategic moderation may be significantly constrained as shown in the process tracing scheme (figure 2.4).

Figure 2.4 Process tracing scheme for Jordan (IAF) and Morocco (PJD)



3. JORDANIAN CASE

The IAF, Jordan's Islamist party, has been operating for the last 32 years as the main opposition party of the country though its mother organization Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood's presence goes back to much earlier. The party had entered the Arab Spring period as the most-organized opposition group of the country. However, IAF could not utilize the opportunity that the Arab Spring brought to the opposition actors and boycotted the 2013 parliamentary elections, and despite being the largest party in the country, it has experienced a great marginalization by the Jordanian authorities and showed low performance in the post-Arab Spring parliamentary elections (2016-2021) until its great comeback in 2024.

In my opinion, both IAF's initial political failure after the Arab Spring but also its ultimate success in the 2024 parliamentary elections is because of the party's lack in successfully utilizing strategic moderation and its embrace of a confrontational stance against the EA regime elites, refusing their legitimacy and combating their red lines. IAF was established as the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood's response to the political liberalization process that started in 1989. Initially, who governed the party were the East-Bankers/Jordanians who had strong ties with Jordan as a country and also with Jordanian authorities. However, starting with the electoral contestation in the country and rise of a Hamas-related Palestinian faction in the party-organization, balances within the party-organization changed gradually and when the times showed the Arab Spring, this faction was controlling the party leadership. Under the leadership of this group called as the hawks due to their confrontational and uncompromising stance towards the Jordanian regime, the IAF adopted a largely an uncooperative approach. The party rejected overtures from regime elites during the Arab Spring and directly challenged the monarchy's role in the political system. This combative position against the EA regime pushed it to boycott the first elections after the Arab Spring and led to its marginalization by the confiscation of its mother Islamist organization's assets, detention of hawks leader Zaki Bani Irshid (IAF's general secretary 2006-2008, JMB's deputy general observer 2011-2016) and its low performance in 2016 and 2020 parliamentary elections. On

the other hand, this combative approach against the regime made it preserve its transformative character and genuinity in the eyes of the electorate in the long run and facilitated its strong comeback in the 2024 parliamentary elections.

In this chapter, why IAF could not utilize the strategic moderation successfully, under the conditions of the electoral authoritarian regime will be scrutinized. First, the state formation in Jordan and main cleavages in the country will be examined. Second, the main reason that hindered IAF from successfully utilizing strategic moderation, party takeover by hawks, and its relation with the state formation in Jordan and country's main social cleavage will be explained. Jordan during the Arab Spring and why IAF could not make use of the opportunity that the Arab Spring brought will be explained third. Followingly, IAF's marginalization process, splits from the party and its low performances in 2016 and 2020 elections will be elucidated. Last but not least, an overall assessment of IAF's strategic moderation and its repercussions in 2024 elections will be discussed.

3.1 State Formation in Jordan

Jordan as a modern state came into existence as the Emirate of Transjordan in 1921 under the protectorate of British Empire. The term "Jordan" did not historically denote a specific land, or a distinct national identity and the area was largely populated by Bedouin indians who kept loose contacts with the Ottoman Administration. King Abdullah I (Jordan's first king), even though he was originally from Hijaz not Jordan, established his authority on Hashemite's historical family legacy and his position in the Arab Revolt and the state as a supra-tribal institution where local tribal leaders occupied the high governmental and administrative positions in exchange of their loyalty and submission (Kádár 2019). From that time on this supra-tribal structure constituted the basis of the authoritarian regime in Jordan. On the other hand, this rule of tribal elites has constantly been challenged by a societal cleavage, the cleavage between the West-Bankers/Palestinians and East-Bankers/Jordanians starting with 1948.

The main political cleavage of the country between Palestinians and Jordanians occurred in the aftermath of the 1948 Arab Israeli war. During the first Arab Israeli War, the West Bank came under the annexation of the Jordanian State, almost quadrupling the Kingdom's population (Kádár 2019). In the face of this challenge that almost made Jordanians minority, the state aimed to create a hybrid Jordanian identity, granting Palestinians the same citizenship rights in terms of

ownership, investment, and employment. However, this effort failed since it was a superficial integration attempt that did not have societal roots and turned into coercive Jordanization of the Palestinian people. On the other hand the birth of PLO in 1964 and the blossoming of Palestinian nationalism provided an alternative identity attachment for Palestinians living in Jordan which resulted in an internal war called "Black September" between PLO and Jordanian monarchy in 1971. The success of Hashemite monarchy in this war extirpated Palestinian institutions in the country and caused a massive purge within the bureaucracy, particularly targeting those perceived as sympathetic to the Palestinian fedayeen and caused a polarization within the society that still continues today, either perceived as Hashemite brutality in suppressing PLO and the refugee camps or as Palestinian disloyalty and subversion (Ryan 2011). So, for the East-Bankers, West-Bankers/Palestinians started to be seen as potential suspects who were ungrateful to the refuge that Jordan provided them and from that time on, "East-Banker First" trend dominated the state sector where the governmental positions and bureaucracy recruitment is reserved for East-Bankers and, Palestinian activity was restricted to private sector and trade (Brand 1995). Since that time on, Jordanian state sees Palestinians that constitute the 60% of the population as a source for a potential disorder and as a threat for the ruling elite of the country that is composed of minority East Bank tribes (The Washington Institute for Near East Policy 2006).

3.2 Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood: From Cooperation to Escalation with the Hashemite Monarchy

Even though the Islamic Action Front Party was formed in 1992 as the political party of the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood, its mother Islamist organization JMB's political activities traces back to the 1950s. From the 50s till the 1990s, JMB operated legally when political parties were prohibited during 30 years of martial law and established a symbiotic relationship with the Jordanian Monarchy (Wiktorowicz 1999). Though JMB had many disagreements with the regime over serious regional problems, it utilized an accommodative position towards the Jordanian regime (Kirdis 2016). Moreover, King Hussein involved JMB's prominent figures such as Ishaq Farhan in several governments as minister of education proclaiming that Jordan needs JMB's endeavors (Wagemakers 2022). Throughout the 50s, 60s and 70s JMB sided with regime and supported its annexation of the West Bank and respected king's religious legitimacy (the king claims that he is the descendent of the Prophet Muhammed). Even JMB showed its allegiance to the Jordanian Monarchy

in 1950s Pan-Arabist coup attempts, against their common enemy Nasser, and in Black September event (so-called civil war) in 1970 against the Palestine Liberation Organization (Wagemakers 2022). For a long period of time what distinguished JMB from its counterparts in other countries was its legal existence, as one leading members of the JMB says, there was as if a gentlemen's agreement between the regime and the JMB, where both benefitted reciprocally (Kirdis 2016). While the King Hussein utilized JMB to undergird its religious legitimacy and authority, JMB pursued its charitable acts further developing its grassroots and institutions throughout the country, to the extent that they rival the monarchy's charities (Ryan 2008).

3.2.1 1989 Limited Liberalization and Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood

Late 1980s brought the defensive democratization to Jordan as a result of series of incidents. Jordan's economy was cracking down in 1980s, losing 25% of its GDP per capita from 1985 to 1989 (Robinson 1998). Jordan's eventual structural adjustment agreement with IMF showed economy's fragility cutting government expenditures and welfare payments, increasing prices of basic commodities and hiking taxes in response to fiscal crisis. Consequently, bloody riots occurred in southern provinces such as Maan and Karak where regime's staunch allies, East-Banker Bedouin citizens initiated the outbreaks. King Hussein, whose very existence being challenged, called for the implementation of parliamentary elections within one year and the first elections held on 8 November 1989, starting the democratic transition in the country (Robinson 1998). The objective was to provide politically dissent people with a platform to express their voice legally and to prevent further violent organized opposition against the regime (Schwedler 2006). Palpably the particularities of elections and location of districts were aimed to prevent Palestinians to be majority in the assembly by disproportionally distributing the seats to East-Bankers populated areas where also official political parties did not exist (Schwedler 2006).

As Schwedler (2006) argues, when there is an opportunity for Islamists to participate in elections, Islamists take this opportunity. So, the very first elections in 1989 after limited liberalization brought an unexpected Islamist bloc to the parliament where JMB-affiliated candidates gained 22/80 seats, in addition to 12 other independent Islamists. Consequently, JMB took 5 ministries in the government following the elections, namely: Education, Health, Justice, Social Development, and Religious Endowments (awqāf), and made Abd al-Latif Arabiyyat speaker of the parliament (Wagemakers 2022). However, during this period, even though 60% of the parlia-

ment was controlled by opposition parties, they could not cooperate extensively in advancing democratic reforms (Schwedler 2006).

Though governmental positions were given to the JMB, the electoral authoritarian regime was not satisfied with the electoral results since it created an alternative source of power in politics. Hence the regime put forward an innovation, a new "political party and electoral law". This law allowed the creation of political parties and started party politics in Jordan in 1992. Islamic Action Front Party was born as JMB's response to this law in the same year, the law which can be seen as a step towards further democratization. However, the new electoral law brought two challenges for the JMB: It could no longer mobilize mosques and professional organizations as in the past and more importantly, the previously used PR system was replaced with single vote transferable system (SNTV), pushing people to vote for tribal representatives rather than political parties.

Figure 3.1 Electoral results of JMB/IAF

Year	Seats Won	Percent of Seats	Vote Share	Notes
1989	22/80	27.50%	NA	Before the political party law; JMB-backed independents.
1993	17/80	21.25%	NA	First election after party legalization and new one man one vote electoral law.
1997	Boycott	0.00%	0.00%	Boycotted due to Wadi Araba Peace Treaty, a major boycott with other parties.
2003	17/110	15.45%	NA	Returned after 1997 major boycott.
2007	6/110	5.45%	NA	Low performance due to friction in IAF between hawks and doves on entering elections.
2010	Boycott	0.00%	0.00%	Boycotted with other opposition parties.
2013	Boycott	0.00%	0.00%	First elections after the Arab Spring, boycotted in pursuit of reform demands.
2016	10/130	7.69%	NA	Returned via coalition to prevent further marginalization
2020	5/130	4.62%	NA	Significant losses; low turnout.
2024	31/138	22.46%	NA	Comeback amid Gaza war tensions.

Note: The table represents the electoral performances of the Islamic Action Front Party. Vote shares are not available since they are not publicly announced because of the "Single Non-Transferable Vote (SNTV) System".

The gambit of the EA regime had worked in the following parliamentary elections held in 1993. The new electoral law had trimmed the parliamentary presence of JMB/IAF where IAF could only secure 16/80 seats. This situation marked an important point for the IAF, the party realized that in the face of the challenges both coming from the electoral authoritarian regime and IAF's need to increase its vote share in society vis a vis the electorate, it had to cooperate and coordinate with the other opposition parties. In response the IAF adopted strategic moderation as its overarching political strategy; seeking an accommodative approach that would

bring incremental political gains, avoiding direct confrontation with regime elites, and softening its ideological stance to adapt to changing political conditions as soon as it can enlarge the boundaries of justifiable actions.

IAF started to justify-legitimate its participation in pluralist organizations (liberalization in ideologic agenda) where the leftists and nationalists were equal players, which was not the case when JMB had a good presence in the 1989 parliament (Schwedler 2006). Furthermore IAF established The Higher Committee for the Coordination of National Opposition Parties (HCCNOP) in Jordan. Bringing together eight opposition parties, this umbrella coalition aimed to present a unified front against the regime's policies. The committee operated with a rotating chairmanship and functioned as a coordination body for the opposition parties both in election times such as in the 1997 electoral boycott and for other policy issues. The body unified opposition against the regime's policies on its relationship with the opposition, practices of monarchy, democratization, and regional policies (Clark 2006). On the other hand, it was also evident that IAF did not open topics into discussion which have a bearing on Islamic Principles. For example, the adultery and crime honor laws promoted by the regime in 1998, were supported by many of the opposition parties within the HCCNOP but IAF even did not open these into discussion by arguing that the amendments are against the Islamic principles (Clark 2006). So, it was not full liberalization but a partial ideological transformation. Nevertheless, it would be fair to say, IAF was undergoing an ideological liberalization and pursuing ways that will not get it in trouble with the EA regime but also will make it to enhance its politics capacity and appeal. So, IAF was utilizing strategic moderation.

IAF's strategic moderation had been tested on several occasions such as in 1994, which was an important year for Jordanian society. In 1994, two historical foes, Israel and Jordan sat at the table and signed the Wadi Araba Treaty that made Jordan recognize Israel, which contradicted the Brotherhood's ideal of Muslim Palestine. On the other hand, this treaty was not just unacceptable to the IAF but also to all opposition parties. The treaty was followed by massive protests that led to a major boycott in 1997 elections where Islamists, leftists, independent opposition actors, business organizations, and two of ex-prime ministers, one of whom also was the previous head of the intelligence service participated (Schwedler 2006).

One may argue that boycotting elections would contradict strategic moderation in terms of not clashing with the regime's red lines and not confronting the regime elites. However, the 1997 parliamentary election boycott was a major boycott where also two old prime ministers from the regime camp, one of whom was the previous director of the Jordanian Intelligence Service went against (Schwedler 2006). The whole public was against the treaty and IAF would lose its credibility as the main

opposition party if it did not boycott the elections. Even some of the prominent figures within the party such as party's secretary general Ishaq Farhan and JMB's prominent figure Abd al-Latif Al-Arabiyyat objected to the decision but the party's legislative body (shura council), which had been extensively getting filled by the new younger generations, accepted the decision. Moreover, in line with strategic moderation, not to antagonize the regime, IAF MPs did not attend the parliamentary session on the day of the vote for the treaty rather than rejecting it (Schwedler 2006). However, in the 1997 post-election period JMB and IAF entered a new phase where they could not sustain their strategic moderation policy successfully because of an inner party-organization contestation getting in serious shape year by year.

3.2.2 Internal Debates within the JMB/IAF

I argue that both the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood's and Islamic Action Front Party's trajectory was shaped by an internal debate whose seeds were planted in the 1990s, and which became prominent by the mid-2000s, that prevented the IAF from fully implementing or successfully continuing strategic moderation. Until the 1997 electoral boycott, IAF was on the track of using strategic moderation as a grand policy in politics, where it generated new instruments such as establishing a supra-oppositional coordination body and, where it broadened its ideological stance by treating its political opponents as equal actors and cooperating with them on a range of policy issues, although not on all matters.

However, IAF's successful utilization of strategic moderation did not last long because of an internal friction within the party. The root of internal friction in JMB/IAF was not because of ideological differences or the necessities that democratization brought in terms of ideological moderation. Rather it was the cleavage that divided Jordanian society, mainly the cleavage between West-Bankers and East-Bankers that manifested as the contestation between hawks and doves both within the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood and Islamic Action Front Party. What really distinguished the hawks from the doves laid in their stance towards the Jordanian Monarchy/regime. While the hawks were confrontational and politically more demanding towards the Jordanian regime, prioritizing regional Arab issues, most notably the Palestinian cause, the doves were more conciliatory and reformist, being less politically demanding and focusing primarily on Jordan's internal affairs (Abu Rumman 2007). I argue that, because of the hawkish takeover of IAF, the party could not pursue the strategic moderation as its counterpart PJD of Morocco and enhance its political maneuvering space in the short term, especially during the

Arab Spring that brought a window of political opportunity. On the other hand, I also argue that the hawkish takeover of the party enabled IAF to preserve its credibility as the main opposition party and its political weight in the long term.

Figure 3.2 Characteristics of hawks and doves in Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood and Islamic Action Front Party

HAWKS	DOVES
Mostly Palestine originated, West-Bankers	Mostly Jordan originated, East-Bankers
Intolerant towards the Jordanian regime, constantly interrogating its legitimacy	Tolerant towards the Jordanian regime, does not openly interrogate its legitimacy and collaborates occasionally
More politically demanding approach. Challenging the regime through high-level demands and confrontational rhetoric	More accommodationist and reformist approach. Seeking intra-systemic change through gradual steps
Open for ideologic moderation in a partial/selective sense	Open for ideologic moderation in a partial/selective sense
Extensive cooperation with non-Islamist groups	Extensive cooperation with non-Islamist groups
More international, outlooking approach prioritizing Palestinian and Arab affairs	Domestic in orientation and prioritizing Jordanian affairs
Welcoming Hamas and its influence on Jordanian Palestinians	Neutral on Hamas and against its influence on Jordanian affairs

Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood had historically been governed by East-Bankers who had pursued plausible relations with Jordanian Monarchy, some of whom even served as ministers in various governments. However, the start of electoral contestation made Palestinian presence more prominent both within JMB and IAF in time. As the main opposition party, the Islamic Action Front drew much of its support from residents of major cities where West Bankers-Palestinians constitute the majority (Wagemakers 2022). In addition to this, in the post-1993 period, IAF started to struggle to find prominent candidates among the pro-regime East-Bank tribes both because of IAF's 1997 election boycott and its opposition against the Wadi Araba Peace Agreement (the agreement that made Jordan recognize Israel) and also because of the new one man one vote/single non-transferable vote electoral system that prompted independent candidates over the candidates of political parties.

On the other hand, a second driver, the rise of Hamas as one of the main Palestinian resistance movements in the 1990s and 2000s increased the influence of West Bank-originated members within JMB and IAF. Because Jordan controlled Palestinian cities between 1948 and 1967, the remaining centers of the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood were organizationally linked to the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood even

though Hamas was set up in the Gaza Strip. In addition to this, Hamas' opening of its first political bureau in Amman in 1991 brought a natural environment where Hamas and Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood even shared the same offices, commonly using the same human force, bringing Hamas leaders such as the Hamas spokesman Ibrahim Ghosheh (he was also one of the first founders of the IAF); Musa Abu Marzouk; and Khaled Meshaal (previous head of Hamas' political bureau) to Jordan for 10 years of period (Abu Hilala 2013; Abu Rumman 2009). This Hamas presence enabled Palestine-originated JMB members to boost in the ranks of IAF and JMB by the mid-90s and changed IAF's strategic moderation policy.

Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood had established by East-Bankers who sought plausible relations with the authoritarian regime of the country. However, both with the rising weight of Palestinians in the party because of the initiation of the electoral contestation and presence of the Hamas in Jordan, the JMB and IAF's ethnically/nationally homogeneous nature started to change in 1990s. The early 1990s were relatively calm years in terms of internal contestation between the organization's members even though some instances revealed the initial disputes. However, things really started to change with the ascendance of the new King Abdullah II in late 1990s. One of the first decision that the new king made was the expulsion of Hamas from Jordan, under pressure from the US, Israel, and the Palestinian Authority (Hirst 1999). Especially the figures who are close the Hamas within the JMB criticized the current JMB leadership on not taking decisive action against this decision of the regime. Specifically, they targeted Imad Abu Diyyah (dove), the Deputy Secretary General of the Islamic Action Front alleging that he had close ties with the security apparatus and was 'lying in wait' to act against the Hamas Movement (Abu Rumman 2007). Also, it has been argued that, general observer (the highest executive position) of the JMB Abd al-Majid Thunaybat (dove) conducted a purge against the elements close to Hamas during this process which consequently led to the expulsion of the Hamas' political bureau from Jordan to Qatar (The Washington Institute for Near East Policy 1999). So, first problem had occurred when Hamas was expelled from Jordan, while the party leadership had respected and supported the decision, this was an unacceptable situation for the hawks. Following the expulsion of Hamas from Jordan, the hawks camps within the party began to consolidate more and the wind began to blow in their favor (Abu Arshid 2025).

On the other hand, even at this early stage, a group of IAF leaders (mostly composed of East-Bankers) left the party and established a brand-new one called "Islamic Center Party" in 2001, criticizing IAF's electoral boycott by accusing the IAF of becoming increasingly confrontational towards the Jordanian regime in time (Abu Rumman 2009; Abu Rumman and Hanieh 2013). This pro-regime stance of

the ICP was the result of the party's intention to be a national Jordanian movement with its national roots without external ties (Bozkurt and Ünalımsı 2022). So, even at this initial stage there were party members who were uncomfortable with rising influence of the Hamas and Palestinians within the IAF accusing the party of having external ties which would get them in mess with the Jordanian regime.

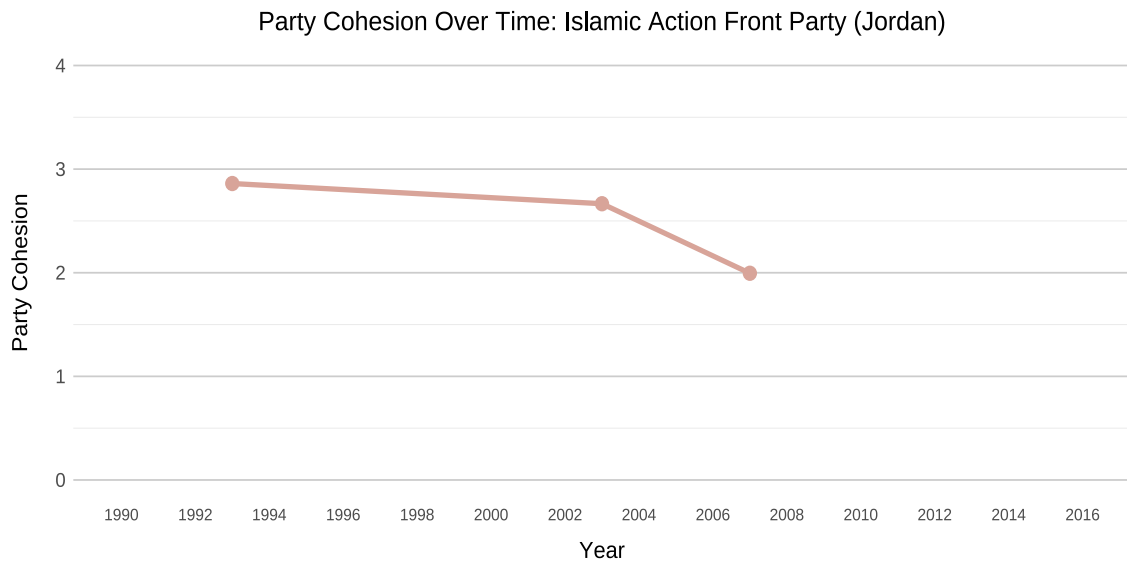
After the expulsion of Hamas from Jordan, Palestinians-Hamas affiliated members started to gain senior positions within the party's and organization's ranks, under the conditions of the second intifada where Palestinian sentiments were at its peak (Abu Rumman 2009). In the 2002 IAF internal elections, hawks gained significant weight, balancing the doves in the executive bureau of the IAF, even though they could not elect the general secretary of the party (Stemmann 2010). But this could be possible in the following years. In 2006, Zaki Bani Irshid, previous chief accountant of Hamas in Jordan and a prominent hawk that shaped party's traction significantly in the upcoming years, became the general secretary of the IAF even though the JMB councils and some other senior positions of the party such as deputy general secretariat and executive positions of the party were controlled by the doves. The following years until the Arab Spring became scene for further internal disputes.

2007 Jordanian parliamentary elections marked one of the top points of the internal contestation within the party. IAF's notables, mainly the hawks and the doves, could not agree on whether to enter the elections or boycott. The hawks argued that the doves, who held significant influence in the senior positions and councils of the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood and the Islamic Action Front, overstepped their boundaries by excluding individuals aligned with the hawks from candidate lists by monopolizing the decision-making process (Stemmann 2010). Even the secretary general of IAF, and leader of the hawks, Zaki Bani Irshid publicly protested the lists by boycotting the preparatory meetings for the elections (Stemmann 2010). Moreover, hawks accused the doves of making a deal with the state for liquidating the hawks from the party. The lists that did not take full endorsements of the all-party members could not perform well in the elections. IAF took one of the lowest results in its history in the elections by only securing 6/110 seats in the parliament. So, the defeat was a foregone conclusion.

The 2007 electoral defeat gave a moral superiority to the hawkish faction in the party, since the doves underperformed. In the meantime, Hamas' victory in the 2006 Palestinian elections also brought a dynamism for the Hamas linked hawks within the IAF and JMB (Bani Salameh 2021). Not much later, Brotherhood's dove general observer Salem Falahat was dismissed from his position by the Shura Council in accusation of underperformance in the parliamentary elections (Al-Najjar

2007). The doves paid the price of electoral loss with their positions in the JMB and IAF, leaving the majority to the hawks in the leadership. A hawkish leader, Hammam Saeed, who was also said to be a member of Hamas' shura council became the general observer of the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood in 2008, as the first West-Banker/Palestinian general observer in the history of the organization (Al-Khalidi 2024; Al-Najjar 2008).

Figure 3.3 Party cohesion of JMB/IAF over years



Note: The figure represents party cohesion of IAF based on the V Party dataset. The figure offers a scale where the lowermost 0 means party elites display almost complete disagreements on the party strategies and many of the party elites have left the party. On the other hand, the uppermost 4 denotes that the party elites display virtually no visible disagreement over the party strategies. Here the figure indicates that, even though the data for Arab Spring era is not available for IAF, even by mid-2000s and even before the 2007 elections, IAF's internal cohesion has been eroded, and party elites showed visible disagreements over party strategies.

This process leading up to the Arab Spring became a scene for further clashes and reciprocal salvos between doves and the hawks of the organization. The doves were unhappy with the ascendance of the Hamas-affiliated hawks within the party ranks and Hamas influence on the party and were seeking solutions to this crisis. A group of doves, such as Ruhayil Garaibeh, Ahmad al-Kafawin, and Abd al-Hamid al-Qudat wrote a letter to Egyptian MB stating that the dismissal process of dove general observer Salem Falahat was unlawful and lacked the required two-thirds majority in the Consultation (shura) Council. They also criticized the conduct of the newly elected General Observer, Hammam Saed, citing irregularities during the electoral campaign he made (Wagemakers 2021). So the doves were trying to pull the Egyptian MB to fix party balance in favor of them. On the other hand, hawks were not tolerant towards these accusations and they dissolved the media department

of the IAF which Ruhayel Garaibeh (dove) (who made such a compliant to the Egyptian MB) was leading without informing him.

Moreover, the clashes gained a further speed when the new hawkish leadership started an internal trial process against the former general observer Abd al-Majid Thunaybat (dove) (Al-Najjar 2010), the person who had been accused of purging Hamas members from Jordan. After the 2007 elections, Thunaybat had accepted the king's offer of becoming a member of the Jordanian Senate, without consulting the JMB and IAF. The new leadership found this action unacceptable. However, Thunaybat insisted on his decision and remained a member of the senate until 2012. Then he was appointed by the king as a member of the Integrity and Anti-Corruption Commission (Bozkurt and Ünalmış 2022).

This internal contestation between the hawks and doves became particularly critical when prominent dove leaders threatened to resign from the party, warning that the continuation of the hawkish leadership would jeopardize party unity. This led the hawkish front to select a new compromise general secretary for IAF, Hamzah Mansour. Although Mansour was of Palestinian origin, he maintained good relations with both factions. Meanwhile, the hawks retained control over the party's legislative and executive bodies. However, this change in the highest position did prevent doves from leaving the party, even though it became the reality in the Post-Arab Spring period rather than earlier (Shadeed 2010).

IAF boycotted the 2010 parliamentary elections under the domination of hawks stating that, "elections should be conducted in accordance with a new election law that enjoys national consensus, otherwise the party cannot take part in the polling process" (Mustafa 2010). IAF's decision was reinforced with an inner party poll that asked party members whether to participate in the elections where 73% of the members favored boycotting (Abu Rumman 2010). Because as Hamzah Mansour, IAF's secretary-general, said: They did not trust the government, its procedures, or the backward election law it issued (BBC Arabic 2010). This inner party poll was also showing the change in the party, from being "loyal opposition" to zealously confront the regime.

The period before the Arab Spring, especially the post-2007 elections period showed that the old guards of the party, mainly the Jordanian elders started to lose their positions even though they did not leave the party totally. The new hawkish leadership had started to externalize them by internal trials or excluding them from senior positions. However, this situation also meant that the party was losing the mediators that could potentially establish the connection between them and the state authorities. Moreover, as Abu Rumman (2010) says, the electoral boycott was

a troublesome situation for the regime since IAF was the main opposition party that could down the voter turnout in the elections, which may threaten the regime's legitimacy and make it more anxious towards the party. In addition, the control of IAF's and JMB's leadership positions by the hawks, who had natural bounds with Hamas and Palestinians was an alarming situation for the regime remembering the Palestinian opposition that tried to overthrow the regime in the 1970s.

On the other hand, the hawkish leadership's demands and even the boycotts were democratic claims in pursuit of freer and fairer elections and representation, rather than being ideological orientations that order non-participation. Henceforth IAF's ideological moderation was continuing but the hawkish leadership's confrontational position against the EA regime elites hindered it to fully utilize strategic moderation. This situation became more crystallized during the Arab Spring.

3.3 Choosing Confrontation: The IAF/JMB's Arab Spring Strategy

The Arab Spring demonstrated the peak moment of confrontation between the Jordanian Monarchy and the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood-Islamic Action Front Party. I argue that the party's confrontational stance during this period led the movement to miss a critical opportunity for political success in the Post-Arab Spring context. In this period IAF staunchly went against the Jordanian regime, did not leave the streets, ontologically challenged the existence of the monarch and refused any invitation from regime elites that would lead a limited liberalization, in pursuit of "real" changes. While this initially resulted in its marginalization, it also allowed the organization to retain its reformist-transformative identity and regain its popularity within society over time.

The Arab Spring that swept across the whole Arab World pushed folks into demonstrations and, Jordan had been influenced by these demonstrations in a moderate way. The protests that started in January against corruption, unemployment, and inflation demanding social and political reform swept across the country such as happened in the cities of Amman, Karak, Irbid, Salt, and Maan, calling diverse groups into the streets (Schwedler 2022). Even though the Islamists were not the initiators, JMB/IAF participated in the protests from the very early days as the main opposition of the country.

King's initial response to the protests was demanding the resignation of the government of Samir Rifai and instead appointing a new prime minister Marouf Bakhit (an ex-prime minister and ex-general), who was tasked with pursuing "political and

economic reforms" (BBC News 2011). The new prime minister Bakhit called opposition forces such as the Islamists and leftists to participate in the new government. However, IAF immediately rejected this reform call stating that they are seeking a real reform rather than just to be buttered up with superficial changes (Al Arabiya 2011).

One month later, in March 2011 an initiative called the National Dialogue Committee (NDC) was formed, inviting different oppositional figures including JMB to discuss possible political reforms in the kingdom. However, JMB refrained from joining the committee and declined to participate, stating that: "We would not join a government-appointed panel to discuss political reform since its remit did not include constitutional change to curb the monarch's powers" (Al-Khalidi 2011). JMB/IAF made it clear that they would not engage in any national dialogue unless the reform committee first gained their approval and address core constitutional issues. More importantly, they were not satisfied with the extent of the reform that the king offered. So rather than strategic moderation that will make them talk with the monarch and achieve limited openings, the IAF was demanding more structural reforms that would change the power balance in the country, which would not be expected from an electoral authoritarian regime to compromise on easily.

During this period, the prominent hawkish leader Zaki Bani Irshid (IAF's general secretary 2006-2008, JMB's deputy general observer 2011-2016) became the party's/organization's voice in public and managed the process. As embodied in his public statements, IAF constantly refused the regime's offers. Upon the creation of National Dialogue Committee Irshid stated: "We don't just demand arrangements for the electoral law but we demand constitutional reforms, and we will not engage with pseudo dialogue invitations" (Al-Khalidi 2011). This self-confident situation was clearly expressed by an IAF Shura Council member: "I think what happened in the Arab countries has given us great power in our demands. This is very important. If nothing happened in Egypt and Yemen and so on, I think we would be talking about the election law—a very low level of demand. Now, we are talking about very high-level demands ... this is coming from what is happening around us, especially in Egypt" (Amis 2013, 5). So, IAF was perceiving itself as the true political force that represents the public and as it was evident in other MENA countries, the actor who should have concessions was the EA regime elites rather than the opposition that was holding the upper hand in the streets. Consequently, protests in Jordan escalated, driven by continuous demands for genuine constitutional reform and a truly free and fair democratic system, resulting in deadly clashes occasionally.

Following the National Dialogue Committee's efforts, in April 2011 the Royal Committee to Review the Constitution (RCRC) was formed as the consequence of the

negotiations held within the NDC, aiming to appease the opposition's growing demands for political reform. The regime for the first time offered IAF countless ministries unrestrictedly and called the party to participate Royal Committee for Constitutional Reform (Amis, 2013). However, IAF was demanding existential changes within the political system and refused to take part in the Constitutional Reform Committee by criticizing its limited remit. So, IAF was continuing its combative position against the EA regime in a self-confident way.

The Royal Committee to Review the Constitution (RCRC) made recommendations for changing 42 articles of the constitution. In September 2011 almost all amendments were approved by the parliament and the senate. Innovation included the creation of a constitutional court and an independent commission that will monitor the parliamentary electoral processes. Also, it restricted the government's right to issue temporary laws and the king's right to postpone elections for an indefinite time (Muasher 2011).

However, while not participating in the amendments process the JMB did not appear to be satisfied with the amendments claiming that, these changes did not make people be the source of power (Amis 2013). Hence protests continued periodically until 2013. In these protests even, the slogans of "The people want to bring down the regime", and "Freedom from God, down with Abdullah", "No reform, no reform... Leave" were chanted by the members of the Islamic movement, directly targeting the king's and monarchy's very existence (Al-Najjar 2012a). This stance, ontologically threatening the regime's existence was evident in the statements of hawkish party leader Irshid, as he said "The longer the king delays his intervention to reverse the decision that sparked the uprising, the more complications will arise, and the public and the government may reach a point of no return" (Al-Najjar 2012b).

After 5 governmental changes between 2011-2012, the king decided to hold early parliamentary elections in late 2012. Elections were held in January 2013 and IAF chose to boycott the elections. Abu Rumman says the IAF thought that if they boycotted the elections the regime would be in a crisis since it needed JMB, the main opposition to participate in the elections to ensure legitimacy (Abu Rumman, quoted in Amis 2013). However, IAF refused to be a "tool in the regime's games". King Abdullah sent several messages and brokerages that tried to pull JMB and IAF into the electoral game which remained futile. Relations had become strained between the parts. In his message to the JMB after the elections, King Abdullah threatened JMB by saying that the JMB ruined the country and that if they continued their position they would face the consequences including dissolution, which became reality in subsequent years (Al-Najjar 2013a).

IAF's response was obvious, it was not afraid of pulling regime arrows on party and organization. Irshid responded to the king stating: "If the regime wants to engage in an adventure game, as other regimes have done, it bears responsibility for its choice. We believe that the Jordanian people are the source of all official and popular legitimacy, and they are capable of controlling the future of all this legitimacy" (Al-Najjar 2013a). Even after the elections, Irshid gave a statement stating that the elections were rigged by political money, bribery, and fraud indicating their rightness on not to attend the elections where the elections were neither free nor fair. Moreover, he directly blamed the Director of National Intelligence Faisal al-Shoubaki as if he was mocking: "After 2007 elections the Intelligence Mohammed al-Dhahabi was replaced by Director Mohammed al-Raqad and after 2010 elections Faisal al-Shoubaki replaced by the Dhahabi and he asked, when Shoubaki (the intelligence director of the time) will be replaced and who will be the next director to rig the elections" (Al-Najjar 2013b). The IAF had gone too far, crossing lines that the regime could not tolerate.

During the Arab Spring, under the hawks leadership, as the party's pre-Arab Spring orientation was indicating IAF and JMB adopted a confrontational stance against the Jordanian Regime and challenged the very existence of it by refusing the all calls that the regime made to the party. This was a serious threat for the regime since the party had become Palestinianized cultivating the most delicate cleavage in the society threatening the ruling coalition by all means. Though this uncompromising stance had increased the stress level between the opposition and the regime, IAF's demands were not pragmatic but rather party had voiced democratic demands that would steer up the democratization level in the country rather than a new regime-controlled "liberalization" and boycotted the 2013 early elections since its democratic demands were not fulfilled. On the other hand doves remained passive and unable to effect party policy in this process and it became evident for them that, they had lost the party to the hawks and had to sail new ports.

3.4 Doves Leaving the Brotherhood: ZamZam Party, the Muslim Brotherhood Society and, Partnership and Rescue Party

The IAF's inability to successfully implement strategic moderation stemmed from the influence of the hawkish faction who challenged Jordanian regime's red lines and priorities, which became very explicit during the Arab Spring. Also, this confrontational and demanding stance prevented IAF from capitalizing on the political

opportunities presented at this period such as the regime callings that would ensure limited liberalizations and make IAF push its agenda and ride the winds of the Arab Spring in its favor. However, IAF had declined to respond any call that the regime offered for the party.

The post-Arab Spring era became a scene for doves' splits from the JMB and IAF who were dissatisfied with hawks' confrontational stance and their way of doing politics, proving that the party was lacking the organizational discipline that would protect party from the EA regime's manipulations. Henceforth three new organizations (two of which are arguably boosted by the EA regime itself) were established by dove leaders respectively: ZamZam Party (also known as the Congress Party), Muslim Brotherhood Society and, Partnership and Rescue Party.

With its correct name "The Initiative for Building" was formed by a group of doves within the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood as an internal reform movement within the organization, during the Arab Spring in Amman's ZamZam Hotel. Ruhayel Garaibeh, along with Ahmad Kefaveen and Mamduh Al Muhaisen had resigned from the shura council of the IAF in 2009, after the disagreements started in post 2007 elections, even though they did not resign from the JMB categorically. This group of doves started the ZamZam Initiative as an inner offer for the JMB's political trajectory in front of the public and initially emphasized that they would be loyal to the movement. They opposed the duality between the Brotherhood and the Jordanian regime and said they demand a gradual reform stressing unity and tolerance concerned with Jordan's economic and social problems. They emphasized that JMB needed to respect the sovereignty of the Jordanian state and warned JMB leadership against rash actions in transitional times which according to them necessitates "wisdom" (Abu Rumman and Bondokji 2018). So, the ZamZam initiative was calling the Jordanian Brotherhood to Jordanize its policy, lessen its confrontational stance against the regime and, distance itself from Hamas (Alami 2015). The formation of the ZamZam initiative was also welcomed by the Jordanian authorities, former prime ministers Marouf al-Bakhit and Abdul Raouf al-Rawabdeh attended the opening ceremony and even Garaibeh (ZamZam party leader) himself became appointed as the head of the state institution National Human Rights Center in the following years (Ammon News, quoted in Bozkurt and Ünalımsı 2022). On the other hand, JMB conceived this initiative as a state operation against the JMB's integrity and expelled these three leaders from the movement. This resulted in ZamZam's transformation into a political party in the following years, whose almost all the founders were East-Banker/Jordanian (Hamid and McCants 2017). As a party they determined their task to end the JMB's monopoly on Islamic discourse and promote a more indigenous Islam that would not alienate public. However, the party could

not be successful in the elections. ZamZam could only secure one seat in the 2016 parliament and lost even that one seat in the parliament elected in 2020.

The ZamZam initiative was showing that, IAF had failed to successfully implement strategic moderation that prescribes accommodative position towards the EA regime and also proved that, if the doves were in the leadership they would not confront the regime and challenge its existence as it was evident in the statements of ZamZam members where they emphasized the importance of Jordanian State's sovereignty and accused the hawks on taking risky actions.

In 2015, one of the prominent leaders of the doves, the previous general observer of the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood Abd al-Majid Thunaybat who was accused of expelling Hamas from Jordan in 1999 and against whom the hawks started an internal trial process after his acceptance of king's offer on becoming senate member, criticized JMB's expulsion of the ZamZam initiators from the movement and requested from king to appoint a trustee to JMB, which also led to his expulsion from the JMB (Al Jazeera 2015*b*). Then he established a new "Brotherhood" called "The Muslim Brotherhood Society" with the people who were expelled from the organization because of being part of the ZamZam initiative and demanded from government to transfer all the assets and the bank accounts of the JMB to this new organization as if it was the real JMB. The reason was obvious; the doves were unhappy with the hawks' control of JMB, accusing them of stealing the Brotherhood and changing its historical position in Jordan which was historically governed by East-Bankers who sought plausible relations with the Jordanian monarchy.

In the same period, the Jordanian Regime canceled the old Brotherhood's license and made it "illegal" complaining that JMB did not comply with the new NGO law's requirements and dissolved the organization. Subsequently, Jordanian authorities recognized the new Muslim Brotherhood Society (founded by doves) as the genuine Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood, quickly giving permission and transferring old Brotherhood's assets to the new one (Bozkurt and Ünalmış 2022). So, after the formation of the ZamZam party as an alternative to the Islamic Action Front, the movement/organization called Muslim Brotherhood Society was established as an alternative to the old Brotherhood. JMB perceived this new organization as a coup attempt directed by state security services. So, no longer any institution could use the name "Muslim Brotherhood" except the new Muslim Brotherhood Society established by the dove former general controller Abd al-Majid Thunaybat. Therefore, the story of nearly 70 years of the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood had ended in Jordan in "legal terms".

The remaining doves within the Jordanian Brotherhood who did not attend both

the formation process of the ZamZam party and the new Muslim Brotherhood Society such as one of the previous general observers of JMB Salem Falahat and JMB's old parliamentary speaker Abd-al Latif Arabiyyat tried to make mediation between the ZamZam group-Muslim Brotherhood Society and the hawks-JMB and started an initiative called Partnership and Rescue to solve the rifts within the JMB and stop the external state operations. These remaining doves within the party followed a balanced approach. JMB/IAF also did not give the same fierce reaction that it had given to the ZamZam and MBS initiators. Partnership and Rescue initiators claimed that the problems within the JMB should be solved through internal methods and proposed that the IAF should have more national emphasis. However, their mediation endeavors remained futile. Both of the camps, either the ZamZam group-The Muslim Brotherhood Society or the hawks did not satisfy the expectations of the elder "wise" doves. Hence in the following year, the remaining doves also split off from the mother organization and turned into a political party called Partnership and Rescue Party in 2017. The party acts as if it is a post-Islamist party not giving reference to Islam, underlying separation of powers, civic rights, and freedoms in the constitution (Bozkurt and Ünalımsı 2022).

In this initial period after the Arab Spring, the electoral authoritarian regime was trying to marginalize and delegitimize the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood and was punishing the organization because of its confrontational stance during the Arab Spring and because of its election boycott in 2013. On the other hand, IAF and JMB's response to these developments concretized in 2016 parliamentary elections.

3.5 Post Arab Spring Elections: 2016, 2020

As distinct from the 2013 elections, the hawkish leadership decided to enter the elections in 2016 parliamentary elections, under a coalition called "National Alliance for Reform (Al-Islah)" where different candidates across the political spectrum competed alongside IAF members, including 8 Christian candidates. The reason for participation was obvious, the hawkish leadership observed that the JMB was constantly being marginalized by the state, and if they did not pursue a legal presence in the parliament, they would lose their relevance in the public. In the brothers' belief both the ZamZam Initiative and the Muslim Brotherhood Society were boosted by state security services that aimed to thwart people from the JMB, eventually leading to the marginalization of the organization. Moreover, JMB's deputy general controller Zaki Beni Irshid's detention after publicly criticizing UAE in 2014 (he

was detained for 2 years because of criticizing a sister country) and cancellation of JMB's license and confiscation of its assets in 2016 indicated that, if they do not participate in elections, authoritarian regime's repression will steer up and like JMB, IAF would lose its legal public existence.

IAF had failed to successfully implement strategic moderation by adopting a combative approach towards the EA regime, however this does not mean that its ideological transformation also halted. But rather IAF's ideological transformation was ongoing that would make it to appeal wider segments of society. In addition to making a coalition with Christians, for the first time, IAF did not use major Islamist symbolism and Islamist slogans in these elections, underlying peaceful coexistence. IAF made a shift in its rhetoric towards a civil state and political pluralism and changed its slogan from "Islam is the solution" to "National Renaissance and Citizens' Dignity" in elections. Party organized its electoral programs on domestic issues, allowing Christian membership, and allowing youth to play a more active role (Al Jazeera 2015a).

This partial ideological liberalization also could be followed in the statements of the JMB/IAF leaders. Hawk leaders Zaki Bani Irshid and Murad Adaileh in the interviews conducted with them claimed that they did not have any problem with the idea of the civic-democratic state. Irshied said he had no problem with a Christian becoming prime minister. Adaileh claimed an Islamic state is not a theoretical phenomenon but it can live in a democratic, participatory, electoral, and representative framework (Abu Rumman and Bondokji 2018). This may not be considered as a full ideological liberalization because Adaileh also said a law that is contradictory to Islamic principles cannot be issued in a civil state because the society is composed of a conservative Islamic Culture in Jordan (Abu Rumman and Bondokji 2018). On the other hand, in line with this partial transformation, Dima Tahboub, a woman became the IAF's spokesman and public face of the party in the electoral process (which may not be imaginable for JMB in the past). She emphasized the need for a social contract between people and underlined that making women wear hijabs or preventing people from drinking alcohol would not be their priority since the country had serious human rights issues and she said, they were not interested in those issues but also adding that, such issues would only be implemented if there was a clear demand from the public (Siegel 2015). So, IAF leaders' statements suggesting that, there was a gradual shift in IAF's priorities and rhetoric and an ideological transformation, but it was to the extent the party internalize the dealings on the Islamic principles and stretch the boundaries of justifiable action under the institutional logic of the EA regime and did not mean abandoning their commitment to Islamic principles.

On the other hand, the results of the elections, in which this new rhetoric was boosted, showed the poor performance of the IAF. The party could only secure 10/138 seats in addition to 5 seats secured by its coalition partners, which is by fairly worse results when it is compared to JMB/IAF's 1989, 1993, and 2003 electoral gains even though the pre-election surveys were estimating at least 20 seats for the party (Younes 2016).

Furthermore, despite IAF's decision to participate in elections in 2016, state repression did not end and in July 2020, legality of the Teachers' Union which is closed to JMB was suspended for 2 years and 13 of its members were arrested for financial wrongdoing allegations (Human Rights Watch 2020).

2020 was also the year when the new parliamentary elections were scheduled. IAF decided to enter the elections again under the same coalition that it entered in 2016, "National Alliance for Reform (Al-Islah)". The results of the 2020 parliamentary elections were the worst results in the party's history in terms of parliamentary representation where IAF's seats decreased from 10 to 6 and its' alliances' are 15 to 10. As the party general secretary Murad Adaileh said, IAF was unable to convince the people and even its supporters, to go to the polls because of the apathy among its base towards the political process. IAF's regime confrontation, its 2013 electoral boycott and the marginalization process it faced including dissolution of the JMB had disillusioned its voter base from the legal political process and as a natural consequence, from the party itself (Nasrallah 2020).

3.6 2024 Parliamentary Elections: A Strong Come Back

IAF's political life, considering strategic moderation, can be evaluated under three dimensions: instruments, ideological agenda, and political outcome. Under the EA regime conditions especially since the 1993 elections onwards, IAF started to utilize strategic moderation as an overarching strategy and in accordance with this, the party pursued different types of means that were expected to create political success, such as establishing coordination bodies with other political parties, getting in electoral alliances with different segments of society and electoral boycotts in pursuit of freer and fairer political environment. In the meantime, this strategy also brought a partial ideological transformation for the party where it endorsed other political groups as equal players, the "civic state" concept, and participatory politics though this ideological moderation remained partial, as the party continued to avoid engagement on issues that it cannot extend the boundaries of justifiable

actions. While it adopted more inclusive rhetoric, engaged in pluralist mechanisms with other political actors such as the Marxists, nationalists and liberals, since the political system was not democratic that forces actors for a full endorsement of liberal democratic values, the translation of this discourse into practice has been gradual and the party's political outlook continues to be shaped by a normative framework rooted in Islamic principles. Most importantly, during its early years IAF was able to pursue accommodative relations with the Jordanian monarchy under the command of its East-Banker founders strategically avoiding from a confrontation with the EA regime elite's while trying to establish an oppositional position, endorsing the EA regime's terms. However, this successful utilization of the strategic moderation did not last long for the party. With the rise of a Palestinian faction that had ontological problems with the Jordanian monarchy, the party started to endorse a confrontational and combative approach against the EA regime elites denying their legitimacy and refusing the redlines and the priorities they decided for the country. Henceforth, though as a secondary aspect IAF's partial ideological transformation continued, the party's capacity of pursuing strategic moderation had been largely limited in the years before the Arab Spring when the Palestinian Faction took over the party.

The Arab Spring, that loosened the authoritarian configuration in the country for a while as a result of massive protests, brought two alternatives for the IAF/JMB as the main opposition actor. Whether to accept the regime calls and push for a new limited political opening or refuse the regime overtures and challenge its existence in pursuit of more far-reaching demands that would structurally change political vista in the country. As its pre-Arab Spring orientation indicated, IAF opted the second in a highly uncertain context regarding its decision's future implications. The post-Arab Spring era showed a new phase in the regime-party relations. Since the party also lacked the organizational discipline that would make protect party against fragmentation and regime manipulations, it had been severely marginalized and for the first time in Jordanian history, JMB became illegal in the country. Both the divisions from the party, some of which were boosted by the EA regime's elites and also party's self-disillusionment from the public by boycotting the first elections after the Arab Spring caused to the party's disappearance from the public and led to a period of underperformance of the in the 2016 and 2020 elections, alongside alienation of the party's electorate from legal political institutions.

The 2024 Jordanian parliamentary elections changed this sequence of poor performance for the IAF. The confrontational approach that the Palestinian faction followed during these tumultuous years preserved party's oppositional core and transformative capacity and showed that, the electorate still perceived the party as a

credible alternative despite an initial apathy towards the electoral processes. Islamic Action Front Party (IAF) topped the elections by increasing its seats from 6 to 31 and became the largest group in the parliament in the 2024 elections. It has been argued that Islamists successfully capitalized on the growing anger over the Gaza War (France 24 2024). The party could show itself as a true political force and voice of the anti-Israel movement and pro-Palestinian stance thanks to its hawkish position against the regime's policies. IAF established a campaign in opposition to the Gaza War, used electoral symbols that resemble Hamas' red triangle, and called for ending the cooperation between Jordan and Israel in various security areas. Seemingly, these strategies worked amid the high sentiments against the Gaza war where the Palestinians constitute the majority of the society. The party could again become an alternative to the people who were not satisfied with the Jordanian regime's position on the Gaza war by offering alternative policy proposals against the EA regime drawn political lines and could channel the popular discontent into political action thanks to its image of a principled and regime-independent actor.

4. MOROCCAN CASE

The PJD, Morocco's Islamist party, had served as the main opposition party of the country, increasing its parliamentary weight election by election from the late 90s until the Arab Spring. However, this trajectory changed when the early elections were held in November 2011, where the PJD emerged as the leading party of the country, capitalizing on the opportunity the uprisings brought for oppositional actors, and ruled the country for two consecutive terms until its drastic defeat in the 2021 parliamentary elections.

In this chapter, I argue that both PJD's electoral success in the Post-Arab Spring era and its ultimate failure in the 2021 parliamentary elections are because of the strategic moderation policy that the party pursued. Accordingly, the PJD enhanced its political success and political maneuvering space step by step by accommodatively endorsing the legitimacy, red lines, and the rules of the electoral authoritarian regime. By doing this, the party also experienced a partial ideological transformation that made it appeal to larger segments of society, as far as it could enlarge the extent of the justifiable action. Hence, the strategic moderation made the PJD appear as the only actor in politics that does not ontologically threaten the security of the EA regime while simultaneously appearing as a credible and untested alternative in the eyes of the electorate when the dates showed the Arab Spring. On the other hand, this very accommodative approach of the PJD towards the electoral authoritarian regime gradually crippled the transformative capacity of the party and made it lose its genuinity in the eyes of the people, finally leading to its co-optation and pacification by the EA regime in the Post-Arab Spring era.

Based on this premise, in this chapter, the process of Islamist transformation under the conditions of the electoral authoritarian regime and the PJD's adoption of strategic moderation prior to the Arab Spring will first be examined. Then, the developments during the Arab Spring in Morocco and the opportunities that it brought for the PJD and the party's response to these developments will be discussed. Subsequent chapter will scrutinize the PJD's experience in government and illustrate

how strategic moderation was employed during its two terms in power (2011–2016 and 2016–2021) through concrete examples. Finally, the chapter will end by analyzing the party’s electoral results in the 2021 elections and how strategic moderation led to the party’s electoral decline in these elections.

4.1 The Moroccan State and Islamist Transformation

Morocco as a modern state is a post-colonial kingdom whose roots go back to its independence from the French Empire in 1956. Although this country gained its independence relatively recently in modern terms, it has been ruled by the same family, the Arab-rooted Alowite Dynasty for the past 300 years with a population mixed between Arabs and Amazighs/Berbers. The political and administrative system that has developed around this dynasty is referred to as the Makhzen, which serves as the core apparatus sustaining the regime’s authority and this monarchy continues to reign the country in an authoritarian manner where there is a very skewed sphere for the opposition though the electoral dimension of the political regime has been there since the modern Morocco’s independence, despite several interruptions between 1963 and 1977.

The modern Moroccan state was established by the King Mohammed V, who secured the independence of the country after 44 years of French colonization (1912–1956). However he was not the sole actor in shaping the post-independence political landscape but had strong competitors. Especially the nationalist “Istiqlal Party”, a well-organized major force that made the independence war against the French Empire and the rising Socialists and the Communist parties such as the National Union of Popular Forces Party (UNFP) challenged the Moroccan Monarchy demanding more equitable distribution and representation of political power in the post-independence period. Then the electoral dimension of the regime was cracked down by the king after the 1963 elections when the nationalists and the leftists had a balance against the pro-regime mps in the parliament (Storm 2007). The period between 1963 and 1977 was marked by political turbulences where the parliament was closed and the nationalists and the leftists disputed the roles and the prerogatives of the monarch and where also two coup d’états in 1971–1972 had occurred. However, the king could secure its hand superiority by 1975. In 1975 king initiated a march called the Green March where 350k people walked through the Western Shara which was under Spanish occupation, leading spanish to relinquish from the region consequently. This made king the symbol of national sovereignty and defender of

country's integrity (Allison 2021). So, by securing the balance of power in his favor, the king could normalize the parliamentary life and the parliament was reopened in 1977 (Allison 2021). As Malka (2018) states, by allowing Istiqlal and UNFP (Later USFP) to enter in governments under constrained powers, the authoritarian regime naturalized and co-opted these two parties, in the following years after the reopening.

Islamists came onto the political scene much later compared to the nationalists and socialists. The first Islamist movement in Morocco occurred in 1972, led by an ex-socialist and former UNFP member Abdel Karim Muti under the banner of "Association of Islamic Youth". This organization was a reaction to leftist and Arab nationalist ideologies of the time and aiming the formation of an Islamic Republic (Qurunful, quoted in Daadaoui 2011). With its armed branch, the organization had the assumption that the use of violence was legitimate in the pursuit of an "Islamic State" since Moroccan Society was in a pre-Islamic ignorance (Wegner 2011). However, this organization was closed and its leader Muti left Morocco, when it was accused of assassinating a prominent Moroccan Marxist intellectual Omar Benjelloun. In late 70s, the Islamic Youth Organization disappeared due to the state repression and internal disputes within the organisation (Daadaoui 2011; Pruzan-Jørgensen 2010).

A group of ex-members of this organization, such as Mohamed Yatim, Abdallah Baha, and Abdelilah Benkirane were unsatisfied with the leadership style of the Muti prompting them to reconsider their positions and strategies, that finally resulted in the formation of the PJD. They recognized that Muti's methods were futile and resulted only in Islamist's marginalization (Buehler 2013; Wegner 2011). So, it became clear that with their current strategy they would not be able to harbour in Morocco. Moreover there was a new opportunity to garner political power, since the party politics restarted.

At the same time, under the conditions of the electoral authoritarian regime, achieving political objectives was necessitating the acceptance of the regime's boundaries and avoiding direct confrontation with the monarchy as it was evident in the cases of the Istiqlal Party and leftist UNFP Parties. Also this dynamic was evident in the experience of another marginalized Islamist movement of the Morocco, the Justice and Charity Movement (Al-Adl wa'l-Ihsan). As a marginalized Islamist movement, JCM has been pursuing non-violent strategies but on the other hand, severely rejecting the legitimacy of the Monarchy and the religious authority of the monarch. Its leader Abdesselam Yasin was detained multiple times, following the publication of a 120-page open letter accusing the regime of being un-Islamic and rejecting the king's claim to the title itself as the Commander of the Faithful (Kirdiş 2015).

Reopening of the parliament and the impossibility of creating a political maneuvering space by targeting the EA regime's redlines had showed that, the Islamists who left the Islamic Youth Organization had little choice but to moderate their strategies and abandon their confrontational stance against the monarchy's symbols and red lines if they wanted to gain political power in Morocco (Daadaoui 2011). With the new opportunity to participate in party politics, Islamists' utilization of strategic moderation started.

First of all, Islamists started to steer their focus towards social issues. They formed a new organization called the Association of the Islamic Community, leaving violent activities and expressing that there was a necessity of changing people by *dawa* and preaching. If they could change the people by *dawa*, the political regime will also change consequently as the people change (Buehler 2013). This was followed by Islamist's adaptation of the redlines of the EA regime and king's religious legitimacy in return for being allowed to participate the formal politics (Pruzan-Jørgensen 2010).

Even though the Association of the Islamic Community was not legalized, their activities were tolerated to an extent (Wegner 2011). However, the new group was decisive in pulling itself to the boundaries of legality. The organization changed its name firstly to Reform and Renewal Movement and followingly to Movement of Unity and Reform (MUR), to signal that they are willing to distinguish themselves from their counterparts in Algeria (Islamic Salvation Front), who are clashing with the state and finally could get an allowance from the Moroccan regime (Kirdiş 2015; Pruzan-Jørgensen 2010). So, they abandoned their Islamic connotations and distanced themselves from explicit Islamic symbolism. MUR positioned itself as a distinctly Moroccan movement operating within the domestic legal framework of the EA regime and specified its duty as having the elites of the country accountable to Islam by advice. For this aim, it established youth associations, women's organizations, work cooperatives, charities, schools and mosques in following years (Pruzan-Jørgensen 2010). So, even before the establishment of the PJD, the Islamist movement had transformed itself from a revolutionary one to an evolutionary one.

On the other hand, MUR's demand for entering electoral contestation through establishing a new political party was rejected by the Moroccan authorities and they had to find a new way which will enable them to achieve their goal without disturbing the Moroccan regime. The solution was taking over an already existing political party called "Popular Democratic and Constitutional Movement" in 1992. The regime did not hinder Islamists at this time due to the concerns on Islamist insurgency in the region, such as the one happening in the Algerian Civil War. After taking control of the party, the Islamists renamed it the Justice and Development

Party (Pruzan-Jørgensen 2010).

The new party was a conservative Islamist one aiming a truly Muslim society and an Islamic state; however, this was a hard task for an opposition party in Morocco (Daadaoui 2017). One defining characteristic of the electoral authoritarian monarchies is that, although the monarch holds the strings of the power over all branches of the state administration authoritatively, governments are formed and dismissed through elections. This arrangement allows the monarch to distance himself from policy failures by blaming the government officials as if he do not have any stake in the policy processes. Thereby, he can eschew from accountability while reserving certain domains exclusively under royal prerogative. This creates both advantages and disadvantages for the political parties, while they are in opposition they can blame and criticize the parties in the government while not directly criticizing the monarch. However, once they are in power they find themselves in a vulnerable position since the monarch holds the real governmental power but also has the upper hand to criticize the government for its underperformance, if they do not have significant parliamentary-governmental presence and popular support.

Accordingly, the religious legitimacy/capital constituted a firmly guarded red line for the electoral authoritarian regime in Morocco. The monarch has been traditionally holding the religious monopoly in the country by denoting that he is the “Commander of the Faithful” and also grandson of the Prophet Muhammed. He controls a significant amount of religious bureaucracy in the country through the Ministry of Religious Affairs that oversees anything religious from mosques to religious education. Additionally, sufi mystic orders, along with the ulama, muftis, and religious city councils, bolster this cultural and traditional hegemony by organizing ceremonies such as the bay’a (allegiance ceremony), religious gatherings, and through state-sponsored television and radio programs (Daadaoui 2011).

Therefore, as an Islamist party, the PJD had to follow a very delicate track without stepping down the red lines of the regime/monarch while simultaneously attempting to expand its political space. This situation boosted the PJD to further strategic moderation. The party was careful not to contest the religious capital of the Moroccan monarchy. Hence PJD positioned itself as the defender of the public morality focusing on government’s inability to provide social services and its mismanagement of the resources while criticizing its allowance of alcohol and interest (Daadaoui 2011). So, the party started to pretend that it supports the monarchy but serves as a watchdog for the implementation of the Islamic principles and calling on the monarchy to honor the title it has and preserve the Morocco’s unique Islamic civilizational heritage (Daadaoui 2011).

Moreover, this also pushed PJD to introduce some innovations to achieve political success. In this highly skewed playing ground where the king possessed a religious/traditional legitimacy, to create more political appeal, PJD started to boldly emphasize the problems in social areas such as poverty, corruption, education and democratization. In doing so, the PJD directed its criticism primarily at government officials and their administrative failures and carefully avoided from direct challenges with the regime elites and the monarchy. This approach further deemphasized the party's explicit Islamist orientation and allowed the party to present itself as a pragmatic actor concerned with everyday socio-economic grievances.

Over the years, the PJD deliberately maintained an accommodative stance toward the electoral authoritarian regime and carefully avoided the actions that might provoke direct confrontation with it, or at least from the actions that would draw the regime arrows towards the party. Hence the PJD tried not to disturb the elites in every action it takes, and this was so evident in 2002 elections. In the second parliamentary elections it entered in its history, PJD was expected to exert its political influence, but the party used a tactic which may be considered as baffling for an opposition party. As Willis (2004) indicates in his article called "The Strange Case of the Party That Did Not Want to Win", PJD was reluctant to show its power and intentionally limited its campaign in the elections. The party deliberately entered elections just in 56 out of 91 electoral districts. The reason for this self-restriction in the elections was not to perform so well and therefore not to call an adverse reaction from the regime. So, the party was pursuing a strategic moderation that focuses on incremental gains rather than rapid showoffs that will create trouble with the electoral authoritarian regime.

It was not just the self-imposed restraints that reinforced the strategic moderation of the party. PJD's accommodative position towards the electoral authoritarian regime was also repeatedly tested through various political incidents it encountered, either coming from the regime sides or arising from the natural sequence of politics. A particularly significant test of the PJD's commitment to strategic moderation occurred on 16 May 2003 with the Casablanca bombings. Casablanca Bombings were a series of suicide incidents that took place in multiple locations such as in the Jewish Community Center, The Belgian Hotel, and in well-known "Hotel Farah". These attacks were among the deadliest in Morocco's history causing 45 deaths and dozens of injuries, where the initiators were some militant Islamist groups. This caused an external shock for the party which resulted in an opposition campaign against PJD for its closure, with an allegation of paving the way to terrorism (Wegner 2011). The situation was alarming for the party as it was increasing its political strength and had already raised concerns among the regime elite. However, PJD endorsed

the terrorism law proposed by the king which it opposed before the Casablanca bombings. PJD's endorsement of the terrorism law that it previously went against was showing that, PJD was willing to accept the things that the monarchy imposed on it if its survival is on the table (Wegner 2011).

Furthermore, PJD was aware that the mere road that goes to political success was going through not disturbing the regime and show itself as a credible actor that does not have any potential of threat against the monarchy. In this sense, in the aftermath of the bombings, the party increased its political autonomy and distanced itself from its mother Islamist organization the MUR, deemphasizing its Islamist ties (Wegner 2011). Even the leaders of the PJD relinquished from their positions in MUR by 2007, including high-level politicians such as Abdelilah Benkirane and Muhammad Yatim. The MUR preachers were banned to attend elections with PJD, they were no longer nominated or allowed to back any candidates by PJD (El Sherif 2012). So, PJD was ready to recalibrate itself to not encounter with an incident that will make it be seen as a threat for the system as it was in the case of Casablanca Bombings.

Then on, PJD gradually positioned itself as a national party that dedicated itself to improving the quality of life of the people and became more technical, bureaucratic, and professional-looking, pushing for transparency and anti-corruption policies rather than prioritizing the Islamist agenda (Mekouar 2010). PJD's organizational machine was marked by its disciplined and professional structure compared to other parties (Buehler 2013). PJD also prioritized enhancing the work ethic of its legislators by introducing both direct communication channels with people but also by internal accountability mechanisms. The party established regular meetings where people could visit the local branches of the PJD to share their requests and problems with the party's MPs where also the deputies were obliged to respond the needs of the people. Furthermore, the party leadership required MPs to ask one oral question each week, one written question each month, and to propose one bill every year. By doing this, the party was able to establish the image that they were staunch workers for the moralization of parliamentary life vis-à-vis the corrupted elite (Wegner 2011). Beyond these, the party also focused heavily on socio-economic issues presenting itself as a committed defender of citizens' interests (Wegner 2011). PJD particularly highlighted the long-standing problems of the mountainous Rif region and raised the grievances of the region's people, such as insufficient infrastructure and unemployment (Yilmaz and Saber 2024).

This technocratic turn was further reflected in the PJD's 2007 electoral campaign which was explicitly far from ideological contestations such as issues concerning Islam and constitutional changes but rather stressing issues such as health, education, and investments where the party established 36 commissions that spent four months

to learn Moroccan's main concerns (Hamzawy 2007).

PJD's strategic moderation, not challenging the red lines of the authoritarian regime, endorsing pragmatically the rules of the game and necessity to create a maneuvering space for themselves also reflected an important ideological transformation. MUR's change of its name and PJD's leaving the Islamic connotations by time and its prioritization of social problems of the Moroccan people are indicating that Islamists had revised their ideological priorities under the institutional logic of the EA regime. Furthermore, this process showed that Islamists started to see others, such as the socialists (previous foes) as political partners that can be collaborated with. For instance, after the 1997 elections, though it did not participate in the government, PJD externally supported the government of the leftist party USFP that was called as the "alternance government" for 2 years. When PJD pulled its support, it was not due to ideological differences between the parties but rather because of the alternance government's failure to address the social and economic problems of the people and to combat corruption (Willis 2004).

These signs of ideological transformation may be followed in party leaders' statements. Such as Sadhettine Othmani (PJD's general secretary 2016-2021) emphasized in an interview that they do not have a priority on implementing the Sharia law and Islamic punishments, but they are interested in the economic and social development of the country (Willis 2004). On the other hand, this stance did not extend to all policy areas as the party occasionally continued to show that it still preserves elements of its earlier Islamist stance as it can be seen in its support for the Family Code (Moudawana) Reforms (2003-2004). These reforms were offered to govern family affairs, such as provisions prescribing long term alimony after divorce and changes in custody and common financial responsibility in marriage. Although these reforms were made in 2003, the initiation for Moudawana reforms had started much earlier in 2000 by the Leftist USFP and at the time PJD had strongly opposed it mobilizing two major demonstrations against the law. This reform initiation was brought to the table by the king with minor changes that PJD could accept, again in 2003. This time PJD welcomed the reform project, and the law was passed unanimously by the parliament. This reversal indicates that while the PJD was unwilling to endorse reforms it could not ideologically justify on its own, it also refrained from openly challenging the king's authority when the initiative was framed as a royal project. Instead, the party negotiated a version of the reform that it could both accept and defend ideologically (Wegner 2011). Therefore, although the PJD underwent a degree of ideological transformation, this transformation capacity relied on the party's ability to justify the dealings, shaped by both strategic calculations under the institutional logic of the EA regime and its continued attachment to its

core Islamist principles.

Nevertheless, prior to the Arab Spring the PJD was a party that utilized strategic moderation. The Islamist experience between 1970s to 2010s demonstrated that over the course of the years, Islamists have deliberately pushed themselves under the terms of legality and the regime norms and rather than a revolutionary path, they endorsed an evolutionary path. They were aware of the conditions of the electoral authoritarian regime, how hard it's to make politics when there is a very skewed field for opposition therefore they constantly avoided on challenging the red lines and the priorities of the regime elites. By doing so PJD had to not contest the religious capital of the monarch, therefore it generated a discourse that focuses on the daily problems of the people and generated a professional party mechanism that distinguished it from the other parties that gave it to an image of a hardworking party. Moreover, the party put self-constraints on itself such as happened in 2002 elections where the party just entered in the half of the constituents to not pull regime arrows to itself and whenever the regime tested the PJD such as in Moudawana laws case, Casablanca Bombings and 2007 elections, the party always stepped back to not antagonize the EA regime and focused on long-term incremental gains.

4.2 Winning Without Marching: PJD's Strategic Retreat to the Arab Spring

The shockwaves of the Arab Spring, which had been shaking the "stable" autocracies of the MENA region, reached Morocco on 20 February 2011 and lasted nearly for a year. Although the protests were generally perceived as moderate compared to uprisings in other countries such as Tunisia or Egypt, they nevertheless represented the largest mass demonstrations since Morocco's independence (Hill 2019). Tough the protests were organized and initiated by the young leftist activists, they turned into a movement called "February 20 Movement", uniting different segments of the country, in a very short time. Such as Amazigh Democracy Movement, the representative of the largest minority in the country, participated with the aim of expanding their cultural and linguistic rights, along with the liberals and feminists (Badran 2020). Moreover, the staunch critical of the monarchy, Al-Adl wal Ihsan (Justice and Spirituality, discussed in the previous part) organization also collaborated with the other stakeholders in the movement and bore an important logistical burden, to express its displeasure with the current regime, as the others (Radi 2017). The demands of the February 20 movement were clear; they were calling for a democratic

constitution, judicial independence, the prosecution of those involved in corruption and embezzlement, and the recognition of Tamazight as a national language (Radi 2017). However, the main opposition party of the country, the PJD rejected the calls of F20 Movement and declined to attend street protests the King Mohammed VI's regime, diverging from its counterparts in the other MENA countries.

As Buehler (2013) says, the PJD responded to the protests in an atypical and exceptional manner. Rather than participating in the demonstrations, the PJD sought to capitalize on the political opportunities that the protests generated. PJD's political traction until the Arab Spring was based on persuading the regime that the party was a credible alternative that does not threaten the regime's legitimacy and authority, especially by using extra-systemic ways. On the other hand, thanks to its hardworking and professional looking nature concerned with the daily problems of the people, the party could increase its electoral strength election by election and was aware that if this sequence continues, the party would come the first among the political parties. PJD was also aware that by challenging the monarchy, it was very hard to achieve political success for an oppositional actor since it can easily be marginalized by the regime. So, during the Arab Spring PJD acted in line with strategic moderation and did not directly confront the regime while trying to utilize the street protests on its favor as completely distinct from the IAF that staunchly confronted the regime and refused any regime call. Abdelilah Benkirane, PJD's general secretary was the central figure who controlled the party's direction and public statements during the Arab Spring and endeavored to persuade the regime that PJD is not an ontological threat for the electoral authoritarian regime, but also the mere credible actor that the regime can speak with. Firstly, the PJD leader banned PJD members from taking part in the activities of F20 movement and the party's general secretariat warned that any member who joined the protests would face internal disciplinary action (Buehler 2013). The position of the party was obvious in the public statement that the Benkriane gave: PJD was not in the position of proving its patriotism instead, their patriotism was under attack from forces that don't love God, the nation, or the king." (Buehler 2013, 16).

PJD was playing a delicate double game, the party was conscious of that in such an electoral authoritarian regime it was a very hard task to do politics against the regime elites. On the other hand, to implement its agenda and benefit from the process, it had to gain leverage. So having banned the PJD members from participating the protests, in the meantime, Benkirane was giving statements to the press carefully warning the regime emphasizing that, in marginalized poor districts protests can get out of hand and the regime should be rapid in responding the demands (Buehler 2013, 16). The PJD's strategy was to maintain loyalty to the

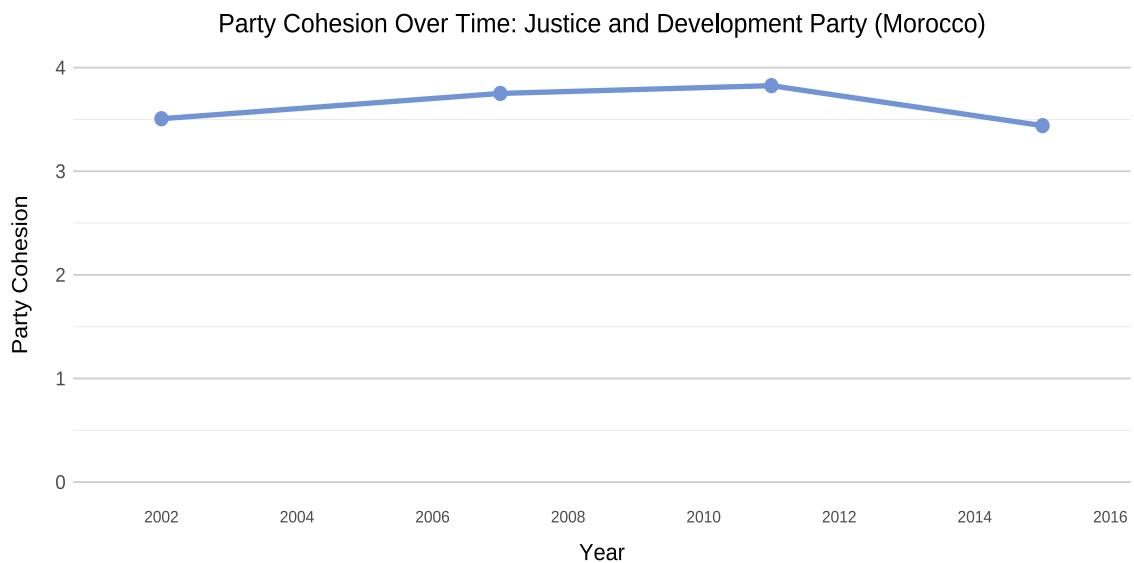
monarchy, while expecting certain political concessions in return.

Despite PJD's prohibition on participating in the February 20 Movement, PJD's youth segment called for participation in street protests. Several prominent party leaders such as Mostafa Ramid, Habib Choubani, and Abdelaziz Aftati, publicly resigned in protest, criticizing the party's leadership for making the wrong decision. Even Saadeddine Othmani, who would later serve as prime minister (2016–2021), attended February 20 Movement demonstrations going against the party's decision. However, the things after the Arab Spring showed that these were apparently planned disputes to pull regime to the table that the PJD wanted and the fictitiousness of the resignations were proved with the immediate return of the resigned PJD leaders to the party who also became ministers in the first government the PJD established in 2011. So, PJD was successful in playing the roles of good and bad cops and pushing the monarchy on the table while also preserving its credibility in the eyes of the people as an opposition actor.

In March 2011, King Mohammed VI announced the need for comprehensive constitutional reforms, which would consequently be voted on a national referendum. The PJD continued its good cop, bad cop strategy during this process testing the regime's willingness to broaden the scope of reform. As the good cop, party leader Benkirane tried to reassure that the PJD wanted a monarch who both reigns and rules, not challenging the king's very existence in the system. As Nadler (2014) quoted in her interview with the PJD leader Benkirane said: PJD sees the institution of monarchy as fundamental for the stability of the country (Nadler 2014, 50). On the other hand, prominent figures of the party Othmani and Ramid emphasized the need for a true parliamentary democracy and a broad reform that would also placate the youth in the street (Buehler 2013). Hence PJD acted like a pressure group and by this strategy, the party leveraged the street protests to its advantage, both showed itself as a genuine actor that seeks reform to the public and on the other hand, assured EA regime that it would not try to cross its red lines. Henceforth, PJD gained a "strong" say during the constitutional negotiations process.

Despite the February 20 Movement's rejection of the constitutional reform process due to dissatisfaction with how it was handled since it was headed by one of the previous interior ministers and the other stakeholders were the representatives of the pro-regime parties and syndicates, the constitutional discussions had started following the king's announcement. On the other hand, despite both the F20 members self-exclusion and regime's unwillingness to negotiate with them, PJD was called, and the party was willing to negotiate with the Moroccan regime (Buehler 2013). The PJD, arguably the only genuine oppositional actor in the constitution making process, started the negotiations with the pro-regime elements.

Figure 4.1 Party cohesion of PJD over years



Note: The figure represents PJD based on V Party dataset. The figure offers a scale where the lowermost 0 means party elites display almost complete disagreements on the party strategies and many of the party elites have left the party. On the other hand, the uppermost 4 denotes that the party elites display virtually no visible disagreement over the party strategies. Here the figure indicates that, PJD secured its internal cohesion over the course of the years and nothing was really changed for PJD within the time limits of the data including the Arab Spring.

Both camps, the regime, pro-regime elements and PJD could achieve their purposes to an extent during the negotiations. Most importantly, for the regime, nothing was changed in the position of the King on being the head of the state and he could preserve his authority on the armed forces, judiciary and the religious establishment in the new constitution. He was still the supreme arbiter between the institutions and commander of the faithful but was no longer accepted as “sacred” in the constitution (Madani, Maghraoui, and Zerhouni 2012). On the other hand, the PJD was aware that its electoral performance suggested it was likely to emerge as the leading party in the upcoming elections and secured a provision in the new constitution requiring the king to appoint the prime minister from the party that received the most votes in parliamentary elections (Ottaway 2011). Additionally, the king’s ability to preside over the Council of Ministers was limited to the issues concerning security and strategic policy decisions, rather than routine government affairs (Ottaway 2011). Furthermore, the PJD was able to block certain secularist amendments proposed during the drafting process, most notably the proposed freedom of conscience clause. Benkirane personally intervened and negotiated with the regime to prevent such provisions from being included in the final text (Buehler 2013).

So, thanks to its accommodative approach towards the authoritarian regime, the PJD could find itself a chair in the constitutional amendments table as distinct

from the other opposition actors and push for its limited agenda. The constitutional amendment draft, prepared in three months, was submitted to a referendum on July 1, 2011, and was approved by 98% of voters, with a turnout of 73%. Following the referendum King Mohammed VI called for the early elections by dissolving the parliament, in order to implement the new constitution.

4.3 Islamists in Office: PJD Between Reform and Constraint (2011-2016)

During its election campaign in 2011, the PJD promised ambitious reforms to address the structural social and economic problems of the country. The main theme of the campaign was bread and butter issues such as fighting against corruption, unemployment, job creation, minimum wage increases, improving service deliveries, restoring the macroeconomic balances and restoring the trust of citizens in their administration (Fakir 2017; Spiegel 2017).

The parliamentary elections held on 25 November 2011 put a clear governmental alternative for the Moroccan politics. PJD, as it could use the advantage that the street protests created, emerged as the first party from the elections increasing its vote share by 13.63 percent, doubling its closest rival, the Istiqlal Party. The constitutional amendments made during the Arab Spring, specifically the provision that forces king to appoint a prime minister from the largest party of the parliament, started PJD's government by coalition with other parties.

Figure 4.2 Electoral results of PJD over years

Year	Seats Won	Percent of Seats	Vote Share	Notes
1997	9/325	2.77%	4.1%	First entry into the parliament.
2002	42/325	12.92%	12.92%	Emerged as the major opposition party.
2007	46/325	14.15%	10.9%	Staged rise; mass fraud allegations.
2011	107/395	27.09%	22.8%	Led government in the post-Arab Spring.
2016	125/395	31.65%	27.88%	Strengthened position as the ruling party.
2021	13/395	3.29%	4.30%	Historical failure against a pro-palace party.

It has been argued that several points facilitated PJD victory in these elections. First, the party's non-involvement in any government or coalition since 1998 made it the mere actor that does not have any infamy in terms of political governance where the other parties were being blamed on failures in economy, politics and human

rights (El Sherif 2012). Moreover, PJD was articulated as the third way that chase a genuine partnership with the regime but also promise deeper reforms without risking the stability of the country (Daadaoui, 2017). This also made PJD attract protest votes of the other parties' electorate. In addition, PJD's long preparatory experience in the parliament until 2011 made it engage in dialogues with the business and economic elites that would bring mutual trust between the sides (El Sherif 2012). The business elite who believed that the PJD's economic liberalization plans would positively contribute to the Moroccan market started to finance the party's policies (Masbah 2012). On the other hand, another reason why wealthier segments of society began to support the PJD was the increasing fear of instability triggered by the turmoil in other MENA countries such as Syria and Egypt (Kirdiş 2015).

Though being the biggest party in the parliament, PJD was unable to secure the majority (at least 198 of 395 seats) in the parliament and had to form a coalition. Therefore, a four-party coalition was eventually established by the PJD, that primarily included pro-regime parties: the Istiqlal Party (60 seats, 11.86%), the Popular Movement (MP; 32 seats, 7.47%), and the Party of Progress and Socialism (PPS; 18 seats, 5.68%). PJD was successful in securing some major ministries such as the ministry of justice, foreign-affairs, higher education, energy and, telecommunication and transport while could not take ministry of endowments and Islamic Affairs, economy and finance, housing and construction, health and national education.

On the other hand, despite the minor changes made in constitution regarding the position of the king and the PJD's position in the government, the king was pulling the strings of the political power in the bureaucracy and the coalition partners that keeps the government up were the pro-regime parties.

Here the challenge started for PJD which the party would face in its all-governmental term. PJD had come to the office with strong promises to its voters that, it would fight against corruption, clientelism and political patronage networks. The party had also pledged to the electorate that it would implement major socio-political reforms to improve the well-being of Moroccan citizens that would increase employment, enhance the quality of government services, ensure a more transparent judiciary, and guarantee fair trials if it is being elected. However, PJD had to do this by not antagonizing the monarchy and the regime elites, which may be an impossible task. During its oppositional experience, PJD had pursued strategic moderation and eschewed to clash with the regime elites and tactically enhanced its political weight by criticizing the governments on their failure to meet people's grievances, rather than criticizing the monarch and his entourage who holds the real power authoritatively. However, it was very hard task in an electoral authoritarian regime to implement structural reforms by not touching the interests of the ruling elite in

favor of the people since the major political roles, economic institutions and social channels are controlled by the regime holders. Therefore, if the PJD genuinely intended to fulfill its reform agenda, it would have eventually needed to move beyond strategic moderation and challenge the entrenched power structure while holding the governmental power.

So, the PJD faced a critical choice: whether to continue strategic moderation and try evolutionary institutionalism or take a confrontational stance that would increase the tension between itself and the elites of the EA regime. It is also worth noting that the king maintained his primacy in assigning responsibility for failed and unpopular policy outcomes to the government as if he was the arbiter between the governmental organs and head of the state. Therefore, the party had to act carefully to avoid creating additional opportunities for the monarchy to place blame on it. PJD tried to pursue a very delicate stance and initiated some policy processes that would make the party meet the expectations that the electorate was asking for. The party intended to establish a new body under the name of the National Body for Integrity, Prevention, and the Fight Against Corruption that would investigate clientelism and misuse of the state money (Yildirim and Zhang 2021). PJD assisted the vulnerable strata in society through cash transfers such as making new funds available for widows and divorced people and poor families. Facilitated new scholarships for university students and created a new health insurance program for the needy people (Masbah 2014). Also, to increase the judicial transparency PJD government obligated the audio and visual recordings of the people in custody, increased judge salaries and signed the conventions that would make international observations possible for the detention centers and prisons such as International Convention on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and the Optional Protocol of the Convention Against Torture (Drhimeur 2018; Wazif 2018). The party also endorsed the United Nations resolution on religious freedom and included freedom of belief to its party program (Drhimeur 2018).

PJD also initiated a set of Islamist policy proposals during its time in government, which normally fell under the king's reserved domain. While in opposition, the party had the privilege of criticizing the government while not extensively targeting the monarch and not entering his monopolies. Since religion was a reserved domain of the monarch, PJD had to adopt a delicate stance by also not antagonizing the regime and exceeding the lines drawn by it while also placating its electorate and ideological commitments. Given the constrained space, the party initially proposed regulations that included a ban on advertising gambling games, such as the lottery, and restrictions on the amount of French-language programming on television, as well as programs during the month of Ramadan, including prayer calls on public

television (Graiouid and Belghazi 2013). In line with this, the party proposed a new type of cultural production called *al-fān anādhīf* ('clean art') focusing on Islamic ethics, an alternative to the "art of decadence" pioneered by the West and imported by some state institutions such as Film Fund Commission through sponsorships to festivals and events. Rather than directly criticizing the monarch, PJD was forwarding its criticisms to the institutions and cultural agencies in line with strategic moderation. On the other hand, since this was the king's reserved domain, PJD's Islamist policies largely remained at the level of the proposal except for the formation of the Islamic banks and Islamic insurance companies founded in 2017, which were not allowed to be formed in the previous terms (Associated Press 2017).

On the other hand, beside these Islamist proposals, social and economic novelties that the party initiated such as creating new limited funds for the needy or improving the appearance of courtrooms were far from being substantial reforms and meeting the expectations of the people. The possibility of the PJD creating a real economic success story was one of the major risks the monarchy was afraid to face and to meet the expectations of the people, PJD had to make more groundbreaking reforms.

The gambits of the monarchy became obvious when the PJD tried to make a credit agreement with the IMF worth 6.2 billion dollars. To decrease fiscal pressure and reduce the growing budget deficit, the government committed to a series of structural reforms with IMF. As part of this agreement, cuts in subsidies were planned. Government officials stated that more than half of the subsidy spending was going to the richest 20 percent of Morocco's 33 million citizens emphasizing that the system was failing to reach the people who needed it most and had to be reformed (Perekli 2012). However, during these negotiations the Istiqlal Party, the second party in parliament with its closeness to the monarchy withdrew from the government coalition which the PJD was leading. It was argued that this decision was made under the instruction of the king and gave the king the opportunity to inject more technocrats into the cabinet further increasing its leverage in the remaining remit until the next elections (Fakir 2017; Hissouf 2016). So, PJD's major reform attempt was crippled by the monarch and the PJD was punished. In the new government formed, the PJD lost control of some important ministries, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Following the crisis the party leader-general secretary Abdelilah Benkirane pursued a delicate strategy that will not substantially target the authoritarian regime, but also that would show contradictions of the Moroccan political system. Benkirane was able to show the monarchy as both an obstacle to reform and a source of political legitimacy. While he never directly challenged the king, he also didn't hesitate to speak about how the palace was limiting the government's power in

using its constitutional prerogatives. He regularly emphasized that his hands were tied and though he was trying to make substantial reform, he is not allowed to do. Benkirane coined a term “tahakum” to refer a sort of deep state that tries to undermine the PJD and democratization process and spoils the freeness and fairness of the system (Tomé Alonso 2018). Furthermore, he used metaphors such as crocodiles and ghosts to describe the real power holders in the regime (Spiegel 2017). So, while not directly targeting the regime elites, he was developing a tacit regime critique and was forcing the boundaries of the strategic moderation. Though he was not running a very open style opposition against the EA regime elites, he was very combative against the opposition parties stating: “we do not have a crisis of government now, we have a crisis of opposition” emphasizing their reluctance to further democratization process and critiquing their closeness to the palace (Fakir 2017). Moreover, Benkirane used tactics that will present himself as a humble person like any other Moroccans. Such as he refused to use the house allocated for the prime minister’s and kept speaking the local dialect with the people. He became a TV personality constantly sharing his views on policy issues that also made many Moroccans became interested with politics (Masbah 2014). So, he endorsed an open style of politics with direct communication with the people that made him to gain a popularity and charisma among the Moroccans, which became also evident in the results of 2016 parliamentary elections(Spiegel 2017).

When the 2016 elections appeared in the horizon, PJD’s situation was showing that the party could not implement structural reforms that would meet the expectations of the electorate. On the other hand, despite the all impediments and the failures, PJD-led government could reduce the budget deficit from 7.2 percent of GDP in 2012 to 3.5 percent in 2016 and could reach an economic growth rate of 3.7 percent between 2012 and 2015 (Fakir 2017). In addition, PJD could implement governmental funds that would placate the needs of the low segments of the society and could made judiciary more transparent as could as possible by taking specific measures though their limited extent. Moreover, PJD leader Benkirane was forcing the boundaries of the strategic moderation. Though he never directly target the regime elites, he could present that his hands were tied and tough he struggles he is constantly being hindered from doing structural reforms with a open style of politics that substantially increased his popularity.

4.4 The End of the Reformist Promise: PJD's Second Term in Government (2016-2021)

The 2016 parliamentary elections marked a demonstration of strength for PJD, where the party increased its vote shares by 5% percent and expanded its parliamentary seats from 107 to 125 and reproved that it was still Morocco's leading party (Monjib 2017). Even after 5 years in government, the PJD was still seen as transparent and incorruptible, whereas its rival parties struggled to differentiate themselves from the popular complaints against the regime (Daadaoui 2016). The PJD was very successful in using the internet and social media channels. Through these channels, the PJD was able to explain the challenges that it faced during the five years and what it had accomplished despite these challenges. In doing so the party used the term coined by Benkirane, "tahakum" meaning the deep state apparatus that seeks to undermine the PJD and obstruct the party's reform attempts. PJD also buttressed its folkish image with creating a program called "al-misbah caravan" where the party MPs traveled the country and met with local communities and told them the obstacles they faced while trying to implement their reformist policies (Drhimeur 2018). These communication strategies also enhanced the accessibility of PJD members for the electorate and generated strong grassroots enthusiasm. Moreover, party leader Benkirane developed a rhetoric in which he framed his party as the "party of the people", while portraying its closest rival, PAM, as the party of the Makhzen, attempting to utilize societal polarization (Daadaoui 2016). These strategies enabled PJD to achieve the highest electoral results achieved by a political party in the country's history.

However, the aftermath of the 2016 parliamentary elections marked the beginning of the party's decline. The EA regime became increasingly unhappy with both the PJD's electoral performance and the party leader Benkirane's growing popularity. Henceforth this growing strength had alarmed the palace and other regime elites who held the ultimate political power. At this point, the palace gambit against the PJD, as the literature refers it the blockage process, started.

Though the PJD could secure 125 seats in the parliament, it still needed coalition partners to form a government since having 198/395 seats was necessary to achieve the majority in the parliament. As the leader of the biggest party in the parliament, PJD leader Benkirane was tasked with forming the government following the elections. However, the 5-month-long coalition-forming negotiations were unsuccessful. During these 5 months, none of the pro-regime parties, even PJD's previous stakeholders in the previous government, approached the PJD. Benkirane initially wanted

to establish a coalition with his previous coalition partners such as the RNI (37 seats, 9.32%), MP (27 seats, %6.84), and PPS (12 seats, %4.72) (Fakir 2017). However, things did not go as Benkirane expected. While the PJD was gaining popularity, parties like the RNI and MP were losing ground. Then they formed a bloc with the USFP (20 seats, 6.19%) and UC (19 seats, %4.52) to balance the PJD. These 4 parties, close to the palace, conditioned that they would only participate in a coalition as a bloc and otherwise, they would not participate individually (Fakir 2017). PJD's consecutive success and its leader Benkirane's growing popularity turned the PJD into a target, and the regime was trying to get rid of the persona non grata, Benkirane.

Benkirane rejected these terms, viewing this palace-backed imposition as a direct threat to the PJD's credibility after its successful election results. Including parties so close to the palace, like the USFP, in the coalition would hurt the PJD's image in the eyes of the people and make it harder for the PJD to govern, since the coalition would be too weak and made up of too many parties.

Under these tough conditions, Benkirane saw staying in the opposition as a better option. He believed that if the PJD remained in opposition, it could at least keep its popularity and strength (Fakir 2017). Because the party could argue that the pro-palace parties were responsible for blocking the coalition talks. However, things took an unexpected turn. Saad Eddine El Othmani, a less assertive figure within the party leadership and former foreign minister of the PJD (2012-2014), was tasked with forming the government after Benkirane gave up the task. Othmani managed to form a government in just one week by accepting a six-party coalition, which may have been the worst-case scenario for the party. Why Othmani had backtracked on the party's position remained unclear to those who were not part of the party leadership (Fakir 2017).

This made the PJD unable to capitalize on the success that it achieved in the elections and initially divided the party into two camps: first, the party members who favored Benkirane and supported shifting to opposition lines, and second, the pragmatists who favored Othmani and accepted the EA regime's imposition. PJD had a party discipline that prevented it from the feared divide, and Benkirane and his followers stepped back (Fakir 2017). Benkirane also made a statement saying, "This is our king and he came to a decision under the framework of the constitution, for which I've always expressed support . . . I'm going to perform ablution, pray, and continue working on the ground" and showed his allegiance to the regime (Daadaoui 2017). Furthermore, the new prime minister Othmani was elected as the new general secretary of the party in a congress organized within a year. The PJD stepped back and gave concessions, and the fragile autonomy that Benkirane was trying to bring

to the PJD had collapsed.

The palace gambit became successful. Sidelining Benkirane and designating Othmani as the prime minister aimed to cripple the popularity the PJD had and disgrace Benkirane in the eyes of the electorate. In the previous term, the PJD had pursued a delicate strategy that was pushing the boundaries of strategic moderation. The electorate had validated this increasingly populist approach that the party had started to endorse, which may have posed a very serious threat to the elites of the authoritarian regime in the upcoming years. However, the PJD's selection of Othmani as the general secretary after the king's gambit, and Benkirane's stepping back, showed that the PJD would not challenge the traditional power holders—the Makhzen—or implement the reforms the electorate had voted for. The period between 2017 and 2021 validated this repeatedly. In the new government formed, PJD had a very difficult task in managing a six-party coalition and more importantly, though being the biggest party in the country at that time, PJD was not in charge of any of the key ministries like Interior, Foreign Affairs, Justice, Health, Finance, Education, Industry, or Religious Affairs. Instead, it only held some less powerful ministries such as Labor, Culture, Parliamentary Affairs, Family, and Transport. Thus, the regime was able to cripple the governmental capacity of the PJD. Eventually, the strategic moderation that the party had pursued led to its downfall in 2021. Between 2017 and 2021, the authoritarian regime successfully turned the PJD and the PJD-led government into scapegoats for failed policies and the misdeeds of the state, and this became evident on several occasions.

The serious unrest (Hirak-el Rif protests) in the Rif region occurred in late 2016 and continued in 2017 was one of the first major tests that the new PJD government had encountered. The protests that started with the killing of a fish vendor with a garbage compressor when he was trying to rescue his fish ignited 10 months of insurrection that revealed and politicized the structural problems of the region, that had been unsolved for a long time and turned into a platform where the general problems of the Moroccan people also politicized, such as governance deficiencies, human rights violations, lack of development, and lack of transparency. The state response to the unrest was furious and followed by crackdowns on the protesters and the state forcibly dispersed the people in many instances. Mass arrests, violence, and censorship in the media and journalists that covered the events were implemented by the state (Freedom House 2018). The PJD-led government surrendered the process to the state security apparatus (Hamoudi 2019). Othmani was not challenging the issues that the regime was not putting a policy alternative on the issues the authoritarian regime itself handled.

Moreover, the king was very successful in blaming the PJD government for failing

to solve problems regarding social inequality and various governance issues, as the arbiter of politics and head of state, as was evident in the case of the Rif protests. During that time, the king dismissed three ministers of the government on the allegation of not successfully implementing Rif's regional development plan. The ministers included the minister of education and higher learning, the minister of housing, and the minister of health. But Othmani's response was more confusing; he responded to dismissing of his ministers by saying that there are many lessons that can be drawn from the king's decision (Al Tahiri 2017). So, the PJD was never questioning the king's will.

PJD officials had also been criticized for not intervening in court decisions that gave heavy sentences to the Hirak Rif activists. The PJD remained indifferent to these grievance that the people suffered from, and under Othmani's leadership, the party had turned into a tool of the regime, largely losing its politics capacity as a result of its accommodative position towards the regime that never objects the regime's decisions.

This became evident when the king reshuffled the PJD-led government in 2019. In his 20.th year throne speech, he expressed his dissatisfaction with the government's ineffectiveness on the issues of social and economic development, youth unemployment, quality of education, and health services in the country, and stated: there is a need for fresh blood with a different mentality; a need for people who are capable of raising the performance levels (Associated Press 2019). Othmani was quick to respond and announced 2019 as the reform year, rather than responding to the king that he cannot blame the government and that it is the electorate who will decide this. With the government reshuffle, more technocrats could find places for themselves. This was two years before the elections, and it was obvious that in those two years the new ministers would not be able to accomplish the tasks they undertook. So, the regime was successful in presenting the PJD-led government as unsuccessful further crippling its capacity, and was also successful in presenting king as the real authority who cared interests of the people. Furthermore, the authoritarian regime strengthened this image when the Special Commission on the Development Model (SCDM) was formed to assess the current state of development in Morocco and propose a new middle- and long-term development model to address the various challenges that Morocco faces in social, economic, and environmental areas (Tourabi 2022). So, facedly, the regime and king were doing what the government was not doing. PJD leader endorsed this government reshuffle as a success because PJD was favoring in being government rather than being out at all costs. King was disgracing the government in front of the electorate and the government was unable to respond because of its weak nature and because of PJD's accommodative position that does

not want to antagonize the authoritarian regime.

PJD's gradual co-optation had started when Benkirane was dismissed and by continuing strategic moderation, the party was losing its reformist character. On the other hand, while losing its reformist character, at the same time PJD's Islamist character was also diluted. During this second term of the PJD, the PJD-led government pushed for two reforms that would not be expected for an Islamist party to implement. First, despite tough internal criticisms, the PJD supported an educational reform that made French the language of instruction in scientific and technical subjects in Moroccan schools. The draft law passed by 241 out of 395 MPs, and only two MPs from the PJD voted against it (Kasraoui 2019). The previous leader of the party, Benkirane, considered it as a treason against the party's principles and contradictory to the Arabization that the Islamists favoring (Eljechimi 2019). Furthermore, the government under the prime-ministership of PJD leader Othmani signed the Abraham Accords that made Morocco recognize Israel. Othmani justified his position later by saying that, I was under pressure and though it was painful, this was a state decision, and I was the head of government (El Atti 2022). So, the PJD leader was expressing the party's co-optation through his own words. On the other hand, the signing of this treaty was considered as one of the most decisive factors why Moroccan people punished the PJD (Saaf 2021).

The pandemic period was the final piece of wood in PJD's coffin. Morocco underwent a relatively smooth pandemic process, with the state successfully keeping infection numbers low and carrying out a rapid vaccination campaign (New African Magazine 2021; World Bank 2020). Proving this, 86% of the people expressed their satisfaction with the pandemic management of the country according to Arab Barometer data (Arab Barometer 2021). However, the problem concerning the PJD was that the policy measures taken during the pandemic were decided by the king rather than the government, who holds responsibility for strategic policy orientations according to the Moroccan constitution. It was king Mohammed VI who managed the lockdowns and all the social measures taken during the pandemic, and therefore, the welfare state image was identified with the king (Drhimeur 2022). The PJD leader Othmani withdrew from the Covid-19 management and delegated the pandemic management to the ministries of sovereignty such as the minister of finance (RNI member) and to the ministry of interior (technocrat) who announced the measures of the pandemic (Chtatou 2021). Therefore, the PJD was not on the floor when people needed it most and left decision-making to the monarchy in such a strategic time, leading its voters to be alienated from the party.

4.5 Strategic Moderation Backfires: The Co-optation and Defeat of the PJD (2021-)

The 2021 parliamentary elections marked a huge devastation for the PJD and ended its 10 years of governance. Even though the PJD's low performance in the upcoming elections was expected, no one anticipated it to lose 90% of the seats it had in the national parliament, securing only 13 seats and 4% of the votes. As of the 2021 elections, the PJD became the 8th largest party in the parliament. The obvious winner of the elections was the loser of the 2016 elections, the National Rally of Independents (RNI) party, whose leader Aziz Akhannouch is the richest man in Morocco and the king's friend from the "Royal College" (Collège Royal de Rabat) and whose rise was backed by significant financial resources and a state friendly campaign, creating an image of technocratic and modernizing force (Elcano Royal Institute 2021; Institut Montaigne 2021).

The strategic moderation, rather than outright opposition, accommodating EA regimes' rules and priorities through adapting political behavior, rhetoric, and policies in pursuit of incremental gains and space for political maneuvering, had enabled PJD to increase its political weight in the Moroccan political system through each election it entered between 1997 and 2011. By doing so, PJD underwent an ideological transformation that made it also appeal to larger segments of society (though this remained partial since this moderation happened in an illiberal/non-democratic context) and gave it the opportunity to show itself as a credible actor who seeks to solve structural social and economic problems of the country. This middle-way approach, not combating the EA regime elites but also establishing a genuine relationship with the electorate, facilitated it to emerge as the leading party of the country after the Arab Spring protests by securing the provisions that it aimed for during the constitutional negotiations. However, to meet the promises that the party gave to the electorate, such as ending corruption and decreasing unemployment, the party had to challenge the traditional power holders in the political system, mainly the monarch and his entourage. In its first governmental period (2011-2016), PJD pursued strategic moderation but gradually decreased its tone over time. Though it pursued an accommodative position towards the monarchy, it intended to make substantial reforms such as the subsidy reform and IMF agreement where the party also encountered with the palace gambits. In the face of these gambits, PJD and especially its leader Benkirane developed a populist rhetoric and publicized the elites by using labels such as crocodiles and ghosts mockingly, that made Moroccan people understand the contradictions of the regime though he never directly criticized the

king. The 2016 elections had shown that PJD was at a junction: whether to take a more confrontational stance towards the EA regime elites, especially after receiving endorsement from the people in polls, or to continue the strategic moderation and lose credit in the eyes of the people. The organizational discipline the party developed, showing a unitary image against the EA regime not to give way to fragmentation and further state manipulation on party as an aspect of the moderation strategy, constrained party's ability to sufficiently respond the palace gambit, and PJD chose the second. The party consented to the palace imposition, and stepped back, by making Othmani the general secretary and by entering the six-party coalition. Entering a six-party coalition, which was clear from the start that it would not work, meant signing the death warrant for the PJD. The regime used PJD as an apparatus for its staff and PJD could not object to them. Othmani's ineffectiveness in solving the problems of the Rif protestors and his leaving the issue to the state security apparatus made him lose his persuasiveness. PJD's accommodative position even when the king reshuffled the government made the regime to throw the policy failures to the PJD-led government and made king the present himself as the true carer of the citizens interests. Moreover, PJD's support for the French language reform and its signing of the normalization agreement with Israel alienated the Islamist voters from the party. Even it is argued that PJD's mother Islamist organization MUR did not encourage its followers voting for PJD in 2021 elections because of PJD's signing of the normalization pact (Lakrini 2021). To gain the confidence of the regime, PJD lost the confidence of the people. Furthermore, PJD's and especially the government leader Otmani's low appearance during the pandemic, leaving the problem to the monarchy bureaucrats, discouraged people from voting for PJD. So, by the end of the term, there was an unsuccessful government and a party that could not accomplish the promises it had given and, disappointed its electorate. Long story short, PJD had fallen into the co-optation trap.

5. CONCLUSION

This thesis sought to explain the divergent political trajectories of the two main Islamist opposition parties in the post-Arab Spring era, namely the Islamic Action Front Party (IAF) of Jordan and the Justice and Development Party (PJD) of Morocco, following the mass protests that broke out during the Arab Spring. Despite striking political, economic and cultural similarities in both countries, Islamists have reacted to the loosening of authoritarian configurations amidst Arab Spring protests in a highly different manner.

In this thesis I argued that what caused this divergence in the IAF's and PJD's political trajectories in the post-Arab Spring era was their differing approaches towards strategic moderation. Islamist parties' behavior has been evaluated under "Islamist moderation" literature that focuses on behavioral or ideological moderation of Islamist movements in the aftermath of their involvement in the electoral systems. However in this thesis I claimed that since Islamist parties are phenomena of electoral authoritarian regimes, what is crucial in determining Islamist parties actions-strategies is the dynamics of the EA regimes where the political sphere is very skewed for opposition, freeness and fairness of the elections are not ensured, political and economic resources are controlled by a small elite, and certain areas such as the military and religious affairs are excluded from public discussion.

Therefore, unlike the existing Islamist moderation literature that primarily emphasizes the gradual liberalization of Islamist parties through electoral participation, rejection of violence, and eventual adoption of liberal democratic norms, largely inspired by the moderation-liberalization of the catholic and socialist parties of the Europe, Islamist parties face a fundamentally different vital dilemma under the non-democratic nature of the electoral authoritarian regime. The dilemma whether to embrace the regime redlines, priorities and adapt their behavior, rhetoric and actions accordingly and focus on incremental gains within the authoritarian framework or be combative and challenging against the redlines drawn by the EA regime and pursue actions that interrogate regime's legitimacy constantly.

I argued that Islamists, when there occurs opportunity to attend party politics, take this opportunity and deliberately adopt strategic moderation, embracing regime priorities and redlines and recalibrate their policies in accordance with the regime terms to increase their maneuvering space and gainings in the political system incrementally, by also undergoing a partial ideological liberalization to the extent they can enlarge boundaries of justifiable action that will make them appeal larger segments of the society and respond shifting political necessities. Islamic Action Front Party's pre-Arab Spring trajectory showed that party was successful on utilizing strategic moderation at the initial step after the political opening in Jordan that started in 1989 with parliament's intitation, under the leadership of its East-Banker founders who focused on incremental gains by not antagonizing the EA regime's elites. However, due to a Palestinian faction that had an ontological mess with the Jordanian monarchy and the authoritarian regime, the party's successful implementation of strategic moderation was halted. The party takeover by this Palestinian faction and its confrontational stance against the Jordanian regime's priorities and redlines embodied first in party's 2010 electoral boycott and second in the Arab Spring process where the party declined to accept any regime call on possible controlled liberalization in pursuit of more groundbreaking demands that will change the power balance in the country, which can be considered as a very high level demand for an EA regime's elites that threatens their existence directly.

On the other hand, as distinct from the IAF, PJD was able to strategically moderate itself in the pre-Arab Spring period by avoiding to talk and challenge the monarchy's reserved policy areas such as religious affairs and constantly eschewed from the issues that would create contention with the regime, accordingly generating a rhetoric that focuses on bread and butter issues that falls under the conduct of government (rather than monarchy) such as the high prices, corruption, clientelism, underdevelopment and unemployment. This approach also resonated in PJD's response in Arab Spring where the party presented itself as the only actor that does not threaten the EA regime by not going into street protests but also leveraging the voice of the protests in its favor.

In the post-Arab Spring era, IAF/JMB had been marginalized by the EA regime because of its confrontational approach, its mother Islamist organization JMB's was dissolved, its leader was detained and the party showed underperformance in the elections as a result of losing its public appearance and by self-antagonizing its base by boycotts and by making them lose their faith in legal politics. On the other hand, this confrontational approach made the party preserve its reformist and transformative character and made it appear as a genuine oppositional force in the long run, positively contributing its electoral success in 2024 parliamentary elections.

However, despite forming two consecutive governments in the post-Arab Spring era, PJD could not sustain its reformist character especially in its second term. The very accommodative approach that the party pursued also vanished the party's reformist capacity and made it vulnerable in the face of EA regime's gambits, causing party to lose its credibility in the eyes of the electorate.

The trajectories of both parties during the post-Arab Spring showed that the strategic moderation is a double-edged sword particularly under the specific conditions of Jordan and Morocco's electoral authoritarian monarchies. In both countries, assuming power did not necessarily denote ultimate executive authority, as the key powers remained constitutionally and politically concentrated in the monarchy. Therefore, when the opposition established government as in the case of Morocco, it found itself in a vulnerable position against gambits orchestrated by the palace that took various forms, and when the party bore these gambits, it lost its genuineness since the monarch both held the position of generating critique of the government while undermining the government's capacity. PJD's post-2021 traction also validates this. Following the 2021 elections, the PJD leadership under Othmani resigned immediately. Subsequently, the party delegates elected Benkirane as the general secretary of the party again. The reelection of Benkirane, who sought a populist approach in the last years of his term (2011-2016) that started to antagonize the traditional powerholders tacitly, proves that the party attributed its electoral failure to the strategic moderation that it pursued in its governmental term and the accommodative/inactive politics that Othmani implemented. To repair the party's image, Benkirane is now trying to reverberate the Islamist tenets of the party especially by criticizing Othmani's reign and his normalization of relations with Israel and by pursuing a pro-Palestinian stance outspokenly, amid the Gaza war. Maybe, the following years will show that PJD would choose more confrontational approach against the EA regime as the IAF, at least to regain a reformist-transformative character.

Here it is also important to note that what exacerbated the Islamist opposition parties vulnerability were their relatively constrained popular support and parliamentary representation. In this sense, though securing the highest results achieved by a political party in Moroccan history in 2016, PJD's electoral results were not close to a parliamentary majority and as the results necessitated, the party had to enter coalitions with at least several of the parties in the parliament many of which were also pro-palace parties. In this sense, the palace gambits, as the electoral authoritarian monarchy's characteristic, came especially as monarch-orchestrated government reshuffles or withdrawal of pro-palace parties from governmental coalitions that the party entered since the party's popular mandate was not that much

enough to increase its leverage in the government. Henceforth, this situation further illustrates how it is hard for an opposition party to challenge authoritarian elites under the electoral authoritarian monarchy regime conditions by itself, and this indicates that PJD still had to work on pursuing the larger segments of the society and become more representative by reaching these groups directly or by building strong alliances with other genuine opposition actors. Political experience of PJD also proves why in many of the EA regimes, regime transition has begun as a result of electoral coordination including various oppositional actors, as can be seen in cases such as Chile, Kenya, Malaysia, Senegal, and Serbia (Gandhi and Ong 2019; Howard and Roessler 2006).

On the other hand, though pursuing a confrontational stance had benefited IAF in the last elections, the regime is seemingly unsatisfied with the situation and tries to further marginalize the party and seek ways to close IAF as it did to JMB. Following the elections, in April 2025 regime had accused Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood on planning a plot in the country. According to the Jordanian authorities an atelier was found in the south of the Jordan allegedly producing drones and missiles, with the purpose of being used within Jordanian cities to incite chaos. Followingly 16 people were detained 8 of whom allegedly confessed that they are JMB members. Subsequently, IAF's local branches were raided by security forces, and party documents were confiscated. This is followed by IAF's statements expressing that they do not have any ties with any other organization or group, refusing their ties with the JMB. So, it is also an object of interest what happens and how the regime might react if electoral success of IAF continues in the next elections. We may see more accommodative approach from the party in the following years to avoid from party closure and further marginalization, in pursuit of preserving the current success. Further to that, though the IAF had achieved the best results ever in its history and broke the sequence of underperformance in the last elections, party's electoral results requires more public support for an inner systemic change and a further political achievement necessitates appealing broader segments of society including pro-regime actors, members of ruling tribes and East-Banker Jordanians, instead of largely relying on Palestine-originated urban electorate. It also necessitates more locally focused policies concerning the chronic social, economic and infrastructural problems rather than mainly focusing on regional Arab issues and the Palestinian cause.

As an overall implication, it can be inferred from the political trajectories of the IAF and PJD that, strategic moderation often benefits Islamist parties in gaining short term political success but usually results in co-optation and the loss of political authenticity of the party in the long term. By contrast, Islamist parties that refuse

to align itself with the EA regime's redlines and adopt more confrontational stance against it may be marginalized and show low performance in the short term but more likely to maintain their transformative potential and gain credibility in the long term. On the other hand, despite the insights offered by this thesis on IAF's and PJD's post-Arab Spring trajectories and the effect of strategic moderation, this thesis is not without limitations. This research has mostly relied on secondary sources such as academic articles, policy analyses, and media reports rather than field studies, interviews and archival reports. While these sources were sufficient to test the thesis argument, they are limited in providing a full understanding of the internal dynamics, perceptions and decision-making processes within the parties themselves. Therefore, further studies that incorporate primary data would offer more comprehensive and grounded understanding on these parties behaviors, further developing the discussion.

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