

## Article Review of “Jordan: A Case Study Of The Relationship Between Islamic Finance And Islamist Politics” by Mohammed Malley<sup>1</sup>

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Islamist politics in Jordan are very much influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood (Schanzer, 2011). The Muslim Brotherhood or also known as *Ikhwan al-Muslimin* is the world’s oldest, largest and most influential Islamist organization (Leiken & Brooke, 2007) which was founded by Hassan al-Banna in 1928. Initially, this Islamic reform organization began as a movement for the reform of the individual and social morality; however its broader political significance grew to challenge secular leadership in Muslim societies. Its strategy of change was to facilitate a more Muslim society through grassroots programs in education, charity, and social activities. Over time, branches of the Muslim Brotherhood were founded in other Arab countries, including Jordan in 1945 (Wiktorowicz, 1999). Since then, the Muslim Brotherhood has played a significant role in the socio-politics of Jordan until it brought to the formation of Islamic Action Front Party in 1993 as a new name to the Jordan Muslim Brotherhood’s political wing (Schanzer, 2011). Simultaneously, Muslim Brotherhood also has penetrated many Jordanian Islamist leaders’ and intellectuals’ mind regarding the concept of Islamic economics and the establishment of Islamic financial institutions in Jordan.

However, there is something unique but complicated about the relationship between Islamic finance and Islamist politics in Jordan that need to be explored. Hence, this study aims to examine the role played by Islamic movements in the early history of Jordan Islamic Bank (JIB) and the ongoing relationship between Islamists and both JIB and the Arab Islamic Bank (AIB). Other than that, the economic agenda of the Islamic Action Front Party is also discussed representing Islamist politics in Jordan. These objectives of study are clearly mentioned in the introduction part.

Since this study wants to examine and discuss something related to history of socio-politics, the selection of qualitative method is more than appropriate. This study has chosen a combination of case study and historiography as qualitative research designs. Historical research or what some call *historical event research* (Bachman & Schutt, 2007) or *historiography* is a method for discovering, from records and accounts, what happened during some past period, but it is not simply fact-centred; rather, historiography seeks to offer theoretical explanations for various historical events (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). This is what the author tried to explore in this study.

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<sup>1</sup> Malley, M. (2004). Jordan: A case study of the relationship between Islamic finance and Islamist politics. In C. M. Henry & R. Wilson (Eds.), *The politics of Islamic finance*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

In terms of data collection methods, oral history, documentary research and literature reviews were employed in the research. Oral history is an active process in which interviewers seek out, record, and preserve such historical memories (Ritchie, 2003). Oral history interviews explore past events ranging from broad topics to narrow concerns by piecing together the stories of conversational partners who experienced specific events and based on the stories the researcher reconstructs past history (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Almost all the data used for this research are taken from the primary data which are from the interviews. The amazing thing is the author able to obtain the data from prominent individuals from various backgrounds who possessed the firsthand information on the subject area that he desired to investigate which is very important in doing oral history (Berg, 2007) and not an easy task to do. Another remarkable effort done for this research is the author was also able to get permission from all the interviewees to reveal their profiles which enhance the reliability and validity of the data obtained. Annual report and a journal article together with a few books were also used in the documentary research and literature reviews respectively.

In terms of finding, this study successfully achieved what have been outlined in the objectives earlier. The research has lucidly demonstrated the multifaceted relationship between Islamic banks and the Islamic movements in Jordan. It is found that, Islamic banks in Jordan are organizationally different and have very few direct connections with the Islamist movements; however the two institutions have many interests in common and acknowledge that a stronger relationship could serve the needs of both. What is so unique about the relationship is even both Jordan Islamic Banks and Arab Islamic Bank are adamant in denying that they have no ties to Islamist politics, but at the same time they admit that they really need Islamist politics backing for their survival. The main obstacle to stronger bonds is fears on the part of the banks that are being too closely linked with a political opposition group might lead to governmental harassment. This obstacle however can be overcome if the Islamic movement can better organize itself and tries not to be seen as too dangerous political threat to the government and royal family.

In conclusion, this case study has remarkably enlightened the readers with very interesting findings regarding the relationship between Islamic finance and Islamist politics in Jordan. The author's ability in completing all the interviews by getting prominent interviewees with firsthand information within one and half month is really admirable.

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