

The (Lack of a) Jordanian Spring

*A Case Study Analysis of the Electoral Reform and Regime
Stability in Jordan*

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Master thesis in Political Science
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Fall 2013

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<http://www.duo.uio.no>

Print: Reprosentralen, Universitetet i Oslo

Abstract

The Arab Spring caused the downfall of authoritarian leaders around the Middle East, but the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan seemed largely unaffected by the uprisings. Why did it not unfold itself to the same degree here? This thesis examines Jordan in a case study of the Arab Spring and explores the extent to which the electoral reform has played a part in affecting regime stability. I do so by conducting a small number of qualitative interviews with informants in Amman and use the interview material to supply my findings based on an extensive use of previous research and secondary sources. The data is assessed within a democratization perspective by four different approaches to democratization: modernization theory, transition theory, sequencing theory and gradualism theory. The link between public control over democratic practices is related to that of *representation*, hence any discussion of democracy should revolve around practices of representation.

The findings in this study suggest that the new electoral law fails to redistribute power within the system and still carries inherent problems that block people from using these institutions as vehicles for popular control of public affairs based on equality. The regime has by various regime survival strategies contained the opposition and fostered a continuation of its previous system based on political incorporation through elitism and clientelism. Overall, the 2013 parliamentary elections and the electoral reform can be seen as affecting regime stability on two levels. First, they served to distract the public and ease immediate unrest. Second, they indicate a continuation of politics of exclusion that ensure pro-regime individuals are kept close, whilst “disruptive elements” are excluded directly and indirectly. These are factors that make regime stability more feasible. However, opposition forces have mobilized and established crosscutting alliances from which the regime has had to adjust to a new pattern of protests from below –a pattern that signals a fundamental shift in the battle of political contention which threatens the basis of Hashemite rule.

Acknowledgments

My interest for Jordanian politics was brought to life during my six-month internship at the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Amman, early 2011. I was able to witness close up the dynamics that unfolded in the very beginning of the “Jordanian Spring.” The result has been this thesis and I therefore find it appropriate to thank my former colleagues at the embassy for giving me inspiration.

My biggest gratitude goes to my supervisor, Olle Törnquist. Thank you for your guidance and support throughout the writing process. Moreover, I am thankful to my informants in Amman for giving of their time and for sharing their knowledge and opinions with me.

I appreciate the talks and coffee breaks with fellow students that made this process a little bit easier. A very special thanks to all my friends and family for cheering for me.

I would especially like to thank my mom, for believing in me and always being my biggest supporter. Finally, dear Ghait –thank you for your encouragement and patience.

I take full responsibility should there be any mistakes or inaccuracies in this thesis.

Oslo, October 2013.

Ina Huynh Mathisen.

Map of Jordan¹



¹Source: http://www.maps.com/ref_map.aspx?pid=12109

List of abbreviations

ANND	Arab NGO Network for Development
GID	General Intelligence Department
IAF	Islamic Action Front
ICG	International Crisis Group
IDEA	Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
IEC	Independent Election Commission
IFES	International Foundation for Electoral Systems
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IRI	International Republican Institute
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MP	Member of Parliament
NDC	National Dialogue Committee
NGO	Non-governmental organization
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
PR	Proportional representation
SNTV	Single Non-Transferable Vote

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1 Introduction

December 2010 witnessed the beginning of what would become a persistent, violent and historical event in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. Persistent, because the protests and demonstrations had a spillover effect in the entire region, whereby the implications are still evolving in many Arab countries; violent, because the incumbent dictators would not step down without a fight; and historical, because for the first time people in these countries took to the streets demanding democratic regime change and a new system which would respect citizen's human-, political- and economic rights. The Arab Spring led to the fall of longstanding authoritarian leaders in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen. Yet again, the MENA region was the center of attention in the eye of the international community, but this time for completely different dynamics than what had usually been the focus over the last few decades. Western observers had a tendency to support the demands of the people and interpreted these developments as a step closer to democracy. An intriguing puzzle appears; why were some states largely unaffected by the revolution?

1.1 The Jordanian puzzle

The sudden changes in the region beg the question why the revolution did not reach certain states, at least, why did it not unfold or manifest itself to the same degree? A distinguishing feature of the uprising has been the apparent stability of the Arab monarchies. So far, only the leaders of Arab republics have been overthrown, whilst monarchs have proved themselves rather resilient. The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is an interesting case of point as it is geopolitically a weak state in a region characterized by political instability, surrounded by regional powers such as Israel, Syria, Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Despite this, Jordan is repeatedly referred to as a country of stability and "an island of harmony." After witnessing the recent uprising and closely felt Syria's ongoing civil war, Jordan has not been engulfed by the Arab Spring, which would now be more correctly termed, the Arab Awakening. However, an important observation was made; shortly before the Egyptian president stepped down following weeks of intense protest, King Abdullah II dismissed his government and appointed a new prime minister, which he ordered to make 'genuine political reform.' His quick response to the political context has later been followed by continuous political concessions and the appointment of a National Dialogue Committee (NDC) to reform the Kingdom's party and electoral system. This included calling for early parliamentary elections

that were finally held in January 2013 (Telegraph 2012). A new electoral law was introduced in 2012 and carried promises of wider representation and free and fair elections. However, opposition groups accused the electoral reform of being mere cosmetic, and decided to boycott the elections.

The Arab Spring has not passed Jordan completely unheeded. Since early 2011, Jordanians have more frequently taken to the streets and uttered their discontent with the government, calling for an end to political and economic corruption. Small, peaceful protest became more common as the situation in neighboring countries escalated, but in autumn 2012 several Middle Eastern analysts questioned whether the Arab Spring had also reached Jordan. Price hikes had further triggered the frustration among the population and there were weekly demonstrations calling for effective anti-corruption efforts, an independent judiciary, a democratic electoral law, as well as constitutional changes that would allow the government to be elected by the people. So far, the regime has not faced severe threats of being overthrown. Yet, the monarch has made political efforts to calm the situation. Despite what can be described as regime stability, people in Jordan have undeniably been inspired by the Arab Uprising. They have broken many of the boundaries that would previously have been unheard of, such as publicly criticizing the regime. This implies a new sort of political dynamic in Jordan, one that involves the people to a larger degree. I further believe these dynamics are reflecting a new pattern that may have severe consequences for the monarchy in Jordan, and is somehow shaking the ground that has been quite steady for a while. By looking into the recent political reforms in Jordan, I will examine opportunities and constraints of the new structures and whether and how these measures contribute towards the aim of democracy. The overarching question remains to be: Why has Jordan not “been taken” by the Arab Spring, and to what extent is the electoral reform part of the explanation?

1.2 Why is this worth investigating?

Today, as for the last decade, the interest in representative democracy has never been wider or stronger. The so-called Arab Spring was an event that took both scholars and policymakers by surprise. This demands a new focus on the region as a whole regarding the dynamics and forces that have ignited such popular calls for the strengthening of political and democratic rights in these countries. For years, democratic studies on Jordan– and the Arab world generally, have been dominated by the paradigm of authoritarian resilience. This approach

was almost completely replaced by the democratization paradigm that was prominent during the 1980s and 1990s (Pace & Cavatorta 2012: 125). As Jordan is currently going through dramatic political transformations, I consider a study of Jordan's liberalization process as timely and highly relevant. Free and fair elections are valued as one of the main pillars of a functioning democracy; hence the electoral reform stands out as a key element in Jordan's democratization process.

Witnessing the resilience of the Arab monarchies during the Arab Spring could imply that these regimes obtain certain characteristics that strengthen their rule. Generally, monarchies are a disappearing institution. More interestingly, as opposed to monarchies in the Western world, Jordan represents an extreme case: instead of a constitutional monarchy where the king has more symbolic than formal political power, Jordan bears traits of an absolute monarchy where the king possesses supreme power. There are mainly two reasons for why I choose to focus on Jordan. First, because of the strategic responses the monarch has taken to stave off an Arab uprising in his own country. Instead of facing popular protests with hard repression, like other regimes did, King Abdullah II has attempted to pre-empt and co-opt protests by announcing he will seek changes to the balance of power, making reforms the centerpiece of his campaign. Second, because of Jordan's geopolitical position and unique role in the MENA, the region and the international community depend to a large extent on Jordan's political (and possibly democratic) stability. Considering the central role it has in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict –and now for the Syrian civil war, Jordan faces huge international pressure as well. For these reasons, I believe Jordan's role is fragile, but for the very same reasons I believe its role is likely to grow even more prominent in the future, both regionally and to some degree internationally.

1.3 A path to democratization or a transition to nowhere?

Scholars of the Middle East have produced a vast literature on the relationship between authoritarianism and democracy and the troublesome transition process towards democracy (see e.g. Cavatorta 2010; Saikal and Schnabel 2003; Jung 2006; and Brumberg 2002). Most of them are not too optimistic about the prospects for real democratization. Resilient authoritarianism, liberalized autocracy, semi-authoritarianism and upgraded authoritarianism are just a few of the many terms used to describe Arab regimes. Although Jordan has

practiced general elections for more than two decades, it is still categorized as an authoritarian state.

The recent reforms in Jordan yield promises of a greater democratic opening, but the opposition has expressed discontent with the new electoral law claiming it has done little to alter the main problem; namely the unfair districting. Whereas open elections are undeniable a positive feature in any political system, there is always room to discuss how *democratic* they are. As Brumberg (2003) argues, a strong feature of many Arab liberalized autocracies is the tendency of their leaders to hang onto power without developing representative institutions that enjoy popular support or legitimacy. Digging deeper into Jordan's historical liberalization process and its electoral tradition may help to comprehend how the current electoral law came into being, as well as what the possible constraints and opportunities behind it might be.

The popular calls for political and democratic rights in Jordan indicate a new force pushing for democratization – a force that in this part of the world has previously remained in silence. Such a bottom-up perspective stands in sharp contrast to conventional democratization theories that normally have a top-down approach, i.e. by emphasizing to reform state institutions rather than supporting civil society (Sottilotta 2013: 7). Foreign donors and international democracy promoters have predominantly been the ones who have pushed for liberalization and democratization, even if their role in the MENA until now have been marginal and largely driven by Western interests in the region. Now that these countries are also feeling the pressure from within, authoritarian rulers are under a tighter pressure than ever before, not necessarily a pressure to democratize, but to legitimize itself– among its own population, as well as internationally. Although authoritarian rulers are inclined to hold onto power, ruling with a hard fist also demands legitimacy. Trying to balance these clashing interests and forces put authoritarian leaders in a position that brings Lampedusa's saying back to life: "if we want things to stay as they are, things will have to change." As King Abdullah proclaimed in August 2011:

[The] Arab Spring actually gave me, in a way, the opportunity that I've been looking for the past eleven years. (...) Once you open the floodgates, that's it. Now the challenge, I'll be quite honest with you, is that the political reform is done in the right way (Washington Post 2011a).

1.4 Structure

Along with this introduction, the thesis consists of six main chapters and a conclusion. Chapter two discusses the appropriate research design for this study. I argue that for this type of qualitative analysis, a case study is most suitable to provide in-depth data on a single case. I further specify the aim of this research and that it will be approached with an emphasis on processes. Chapter three accounts for how ‘democracy’ and ‘popular representation’ are understood in this thesis, and further presents the theoretical democratization perspectives used as a framework for this analysis: modernization theory, transition theory, sequencing theory and gradualism. The theories are followed by a presentation of the analytical tools for which to assess this analysis. Chapter four addresses the methodological aspects of the study, including relevant sources and the data collection process. Chapter five consists of contextual literature on democratization and liberalization in Jordan and the Arab world, in addition to the role of elections for democracy. Chapter six builds further on important factors identified in the theoretical framework and the literature review, and examines Jordan’s historical legacy of state-building, people and previous experiences with liberal forms of governance. Chapter seven mainly deals with the course of events of the Arab Spring in Jordan, focusing on a few critical “moments of transparency.” These events are then assessed accordingly to the analytical tools; identifying key actors and their capacities and how these actors adhere to intrinsic institutions of democracy. Finally, chapter eight presents the main findings and my conclusions based on these.

2 Research design

As stated, my big puzzle is why Jordan has largely “escaped” the Arab Spring, and to what extent the electoral reform is part of the explanation. In chapter one I briefly presented what has inspired me to investigate this puzzle and argued why I consider it worthy of investigation. In this chapter I wish to elaborate on the research design of this study.

2.1 A case study

It is obvious that my puzzle implies a causal explanation. First, it assumes that the electoral reform in one way or another affects regime stability in Jordan. Second, that despite this apparent stability, the Arab Spring has brought with it new dynamics that might pose a challenge to the regime. To produce causal inferences about such a complex social phenomenon requires so-called “thick” or qualitative data. A case study is a method of inquiry to produce in-depth data and causal inferences with. The case study is, according to George and Bennett (2005: 5) “(...) the detailed examination of an aspect of a historical episode to develop or test historical explanations that may be generalizable to other events (...).”

2.1.1 Choice of case

Lijphart (1971) operates with six different categories of case studies. The first category is called ‘atheoretical’ case studies, and is mainly reserved for descriptive purposes and is situated in a theoretical vacuum. The second category, ‘interpretative’ case studies, is described as following:

Interpretative case studies resemble atheoretical case studies in one respect: they, too, are selected for analysis because of an interest in the case, rather than an interest in the formulation of a general theory. They differ, however, in that they make explicit use of established theoretical propositions. In these studies, a generalization is applied with the aim of throwing light on the case rather than of improving the generalizations in any way (Lijphart 1971: 692).

Lijphart’s four remaining categories are all related to that of *theory building*, either hypothesis testing or hypothesis generating. This study can primarily be seen as an interpretative case study, where the main concern is to identify events and dynamics that can explain the electoral reform and its possible effect on regime stability. In line with Lijphart’s

interpretative case study, I will make use of established theoretical propositions that will guide me in determining what kind of data that will be relevant, but I do not aim to formulate any general theory. Neither is my main focus on *testing* the outlined theories. However, my case study may provide findings that might be used in subsequent studies for theory building.

2.1.2 Within-case analysis

Within-case analysis involves the internal examination of single cases. A case can be defined as an instance of a class of events, i.e. a phenomenon of specific interest, such as revolutions, types of governmental regimes, kinds of economic systems, etcetera (George and Bennett 2005:17). George and Bennett illustrate this:

The Cuban Missile Crisis, for example, is a historical instance of many different classes of events: deterrence, coercive diplomacy, crisis management, and so on. A researcher's decision about which class of events to study and which theories to use determines what data from the Cuban Missile Crisis are relevant to her or his case study of it (ibid.: 18).

My case is multiplex and there is a need to elaborate on how it will be studied. The thesis will examine Jordan in a case study of the Arab Spring and explore the extent to which the electoral reform has played a part in affecting regime stability. I have identified the electoral reform as a point of interest, mainly to make this study researchable. Free and fair elections are a fundamental democratic right, and the Arab Spring represents a new wave of democratic demands. Who has pushed for this? Contrary, who would benefit from constrained liberal and democratic freedoms? How does the regime gain political legitimacy and what is a potential threat to the survival of the regime? These are some of the questions that will be addressed and elaborated on later in the following chapters.

2.2 Emphasis on process

To evaluate Jordan's political reforms and possible path to democratization, analyzing the dynamics that has evolved since early 2011 will prove insufficient. The recent events raise interesting questions about the Jordanian political system as a whole. One cannot simply understand the current dynamics isolated from its past. I argue there are several reasons for this. First, as Carey and Reynolds (2011: 37) stress; evaluating electoral systems must be sensitive to demographic and historical particularities in the respective country. Looking at

Jordan's previous experiences with elections will give a better understanding of the new electoral reform. Second, since Jordan is a pluralistic society with various religious, ethnical and tribal groups, it becomes necessary to take a closer look at the premises of which the demos rest upon. Third, critical events during times of state formation may have created sociopolitical schisms that can explain the present power relations, and in turn how they are sustained. Also, it will provide insight into the state's previous experiments with liberalization, perhaps even deliberalization. Overall, such an approach will help explain what is happening politically today. Taking history and context into account, I avoid the trap of trying to fit this case into a blueprint approach of how democratization should occur. History may give an explanation to the current dynamics and mechanism that otherwise would go unchecked, and further help to comprehend the rules of the game.

The events that I choose to focus on (social, political and economic), will be based on my analytical framework and guided by previous studies and theories, as well as "common sense" assumptions about causal mechanisms. The task that lies ahead will be as simple, and as difficult, as "(...) figuring out *which* aspects of the initial conditions observed, in conjunction with *which simple principles* of the many that may be at work, would have *combined* to generate the observed sequence of events" (George and Bennett 2005: 206). Chapter four will elaborate on the research methods for this study.

3 Theoretical framework

Part of the objective of this thesis is to explain whether the recent reforms in Jordan are foremost a response from a pressured regime, or the outcome for stability and democratic development. What is happening politically? As the reforms are my point of departure, my aim is not to provide an overall assessment of Jordan's democratization process or a detailed technocratic analysis of the electoral system. Rather, I find it more analytically satisfying to explore the different mechanisms, interests and economic and political forces that have driven these processes in Jordan. I will attempt to reveal the internal power relations in Jordanian society and political life, and especially highlight new actors that have played a major role for the last two years. By looking into the various processes surrounding the emergence of the electoral reform and its consequences for political representation, general theories on democratization can help explain the role and democratic nature of key actors in this process.

In this chapter I define how democracy and popular representation are understood in this analysis. I further present mainstream democratization theories to draw on before I finally outline the approach that will be used according to the theoretical framework.

3.1 How can democracy be understood?

To dig deeper into the "Jordanian mystery," the central concept of democracy needs to be clarified. A generally accepted definition of democracy is provided by David Beetham (1999). He proposes two core principles of democracy, namely *popular control of public affairs based on political equality*. According to Beetham, democracy is a rule of the people where civil and political rights are inherent parts of democracy, and particular institutions are only democratic in as far as they contribute to the realization of these two basic principles of democracy (Beetham 1999: 5).

Democrats in all times have struggled to make public control over public decision making more efficient and inclusive; to remove an elite monopoly over decision making; and to exercise equal citizenship rights despite the obstacles of ethnicity, religion, gender, etc. (International IDEA 2002: 13). Olle Törnquist (2009) suggests democracy is best understood through an analysis of public control over democratic public affairs, or the lack thereof. The

scope and reach of how democracy is defined will have consequences for how democracy is being evaluated. Substantial democracy is significant for its inclusiveness of issues, the people subject to governance of these issues, as well as of the institutions most scholars consider to be crucial. It is common to distinguish between a *procedural* and a *substantive* definition of democracy. The first is identified by institutions that are deemed to be intrinsic, for example rule of law and free and fair elections. The latter focuses on the aims, values and principles needed for democracy to become a reality, and the means by which to achieve this (Törnquist 2013).

In this analysis I will rest on Beetham's definition of democracy, thus moving beyond the minimalist definition. I will focus on whether and how the political reforms in Jordan can be considered a valuable *mean* in the contribution of reaching the aims of substantive democratization, namely public control of public affairs based on political equality. The link between public control over democratic practices is related to that of *representation*, and hence any discussion of democracy should revolve around practices of representation (Chandhoke 2009: 25). This would require me to examine the existing relationship between the demos, institutions and incumbent elites in Jordan.

3.2 Democratic deficits by flawed representation

A democratic deficit of many transitions is the failure to include popular capacities and policies to promote structural conditions and relations of power that is considered crucial for democratic development (Törnquist 2009: 2). The instruments and popular capacities to exercise control over public matters have made it hard to use the new freedoms and institutions that can address the existing power relations and further improve law, policies and governance. Hence, there is a need for more popular influence to alter the power structures and allow alternative processes and agents of change, which in turn requires an analysis of the politics of representation (ibid.: 5). Two universally valid approaches to democratic representation are *the chain of popular sovereignty* and *direct participation of the immediately concerned people*. The former is related to that of formally regulated politics, government and public administration, whereby the people express collective interests and ideas through various intermediaries to elected political parties and politicians. However, it does not take contextual considerations and neglects attempts at democratization related to practices outside the formally acknowledged policy. The latter stresses direct participation

not only by means of formal but also informal arrangements, popular movements, lobby groups and civil society action. However, its major weakness is that it ignores the links to formalized politics as well as the core issues of power and democratic representation (Törnquist 2009: 6).

By using the chain of popular sovereignty as a point of departure, Törnquist suggests an integrated approach that also incorporates efforts at representation beyond the formal public institutions (ibid.: 9). There are three basic pillars in the study of representation: first, the people (*demos*); second, the public concerns; and third, the various forms of mediation between the *demos* and public affairs must be considered and further consist of an evaluation of both the input and output side of democracy. Representation can be realized through three types of mediators: 1) *civil society*, through associational life, self-management and public discourse based on citizens' rights and/or struggle for them; 2) *political society* which consists of political parties, organizations and movements based on interests in governance of public affairs; and 3) *informal leaders* or groups based on patronage, 'good contacts', kinship, religion or ethnicity, but which also relates to democratic institutions such as elections and parliaments (ibid.: 10-14).

3.3 Prevailing theories on democratization

The "third wave" (Huntington 1991) of democratization that swept through large parts of the developing world in the 1980s and the 1990s, broke with mainstream assumptions about what the necessary prerequisites for democratization should be. Because the pace, form and cause of democratic transformations have varied widely, there is a lack of theoretical consensus on democratization.

In the following I will elaborate on four prevailing perspectives, including the criticism they have received: the structural arguments of the *modernization approach*; the liberal democracy approach represented by *transition theory*; the conservative approach presented by Mansfield and Snyder's *sequencing theory*; and the substantive democracy approach fronted by Carothers' *gradualism theory*. Such theories mainly seek to explain the preconditions, process and causation of democratization, and have increasingly tended to focus on the consolidation process. My intention is not to use any of these theories as 'blueprints' for my case, but rather to use their explanatory power to see how they can help explain the

relationships in my findings. Such a broad framework will help me to achieve objectivity in my conclusions.

3.3.1 Modernization theory

Mainstream democratization literature in the 1960s and 1970s advocated a *modernization approach* (see Lipset 1959, and Moore 1966), emphasizing that democracy was more probable to appear in countries with higher levels of socioeconomic development. According to this theory, underlying transformations in society and the economy could explain why countries started the path to democratization. It sets out to identify the variables which led to social progress of society, and further seeks to explain the progress of social evolution. The core assumption was that if a country implemented the right economic structures and developed economically, the ultimate prerequisites for democracy would be fostered and produce stable, democratic, political societies.

Some studies emphasized the importance of cultural and religious factors, and historical legacies (e.g. previous experiences with democratization). Such structuralist approaches understood the emergence of democracy as a cause of the strengthening of the ‘moderate’ middle class, the overall transformation of class structure, the rise of a bourgeoisie economic development, increased urbanization, and previous experience and development of democratic values. Although the modernization argument could rightly explain the transitions in South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand and Chile, most “third wave” democracies in the 1980s and 1990s challenged these mainstream assumptions since formal democracy developed in places with low levels of economic development. Moreover, they defied cultural arguments claiming that democracy is incompatible with certain religious values. Alfred Stepan and Graeme Robertson (2003) have more recently studied this particular relationship and concluded that the democracy gap among states in the world is much more an “Arab gap” than a “Muslim gap.” Diamond (2010) has further elaborated on this and seeks an explanation to why there are no Arab democracies. He concludes that the underlying reasons for this are not related to that of culture or religion, neither to the lack of sufficient economic development and social structure. Instead, oil wealth can explain the *absence* of democracy, Diamond argues, as it is normally heavily centralized as well as politicized. Oil distorts the state, the market, the class structure and fosters apathetic citizens that are in no need to demand representation, as long as there is no taxation. For countries that cannot rely on oil as

a source of income, like Jordan, foreign aid is a source of rents with the same effect as oil revenues– it provides the regime with means to both co-opt and repress. In average, the U.S. economic and military aid to Jordan between 2001 and 2010 has been \$650 million per year. This sustains the regime’s political strategy to spend massively on public jobs without having to impose steep taxes (Diamond 2010: 101).

3.3.2 Transition theory

A new literature on democratic transitions emerged in the 1980s, the so-called *transition theory* – an agency or process-oriented approach. This approach is exemplified in the work of O’Donnell and Shmitter (1986), Linz and Stepan (1996), Przeworski and Limongi (1997), among others, and focuses on the agency of political elites, e.g. party officials and prominent politicians, bureaucrats and public officeholders. It emphasizes the importance of decisions, ideas and the interaction among strategic political actors causing transitions. Here, democracy is thought of as a set of government institutions and procedures that are negotiated between reformers and moderate dissidents within the authoritarian regime, and the dependence of a minimalist definition of democracy makes it possible to build democracy from above through elite negotiations. However, the focus on elites excludes the masses into political decision-making.

The theory believes democracy can be crafted through structural adjustments to an international liberal market economy, combined with a domestic coalition committed to change. However, this coalition needs to receive sufficient support from international policy interveners in developing liberal democracy and ‘good governance’ (Harriss, Stokke and Törnquist 2004: 5). Once liberal democratic institutions such as elections, rule-of-law, basic rights, freedom of media and civil society participation are in place, actors will adjust themselves to these institutions and democracy will flourish. This approach encourages democratization through technocratic governments and by giving a greater role to market actors and civil society through privatization. Such “depoliticization” of democratization makes it hard to ensure political and social equality or combat corruption. Thus, the theory suffers from fundamental weaknesses because of its failure to take actors’ political, economic, social and/or historical context into account. Ignoring structural contexts and existing power relations will create a major deficit when it comes to explaining individual preferences, relative bargaining power and how interests may change over time. Moreover, as

many third wave democracies stagnated or returned to authoritarian rule, the liberal democratization theory also fails to explain the different experiences with democratic consolidation.

Thomas Carothers has heavily criticized a number of core assumptions that define the “transition paradigm,” which he means create a misguided approach to democratization (Carothers 2002: 6-8). According to Carothers, these five key assumptions are: (i) if a country is moving away from authoritarianism, it is considered to be moving toward democracy; (ii) that democratization is a process which consists of an opening, followed by a breakthrough, and last a consolidation of democracy; (iii) the belief in elections as a determinant factor for democratization; (iv) that structural features such as economic level, political history, institutional legacies, ethnic composition and sociocultural traditions play a small role both for the onset or the outcome of the transition process; and (v) the assumption that third wave democracies are coherent and functioning states. Carothers bases his critique on the empirical fact that many cases do not conform to the model of the transition approach and that there is a need for a new outlook to democratization. I will return to his alternative approach later.

3.3.3 Sequencing theory

In his book *Political Order in Changing Societies* (1968), Samuel P. Huntington is early to criticize the modernization theory’s arguments. Although Huntington himself pays attention to socioeconomic factors, he points out that these processes are not significantly related to that of political development itself. He believes modernity contributes to stability, but that the *process* of modernization is a cause to instability. Therefore, instead of connecting processes of modernization to political development, Huntington argued that the latter should rather be identified with that of institutionalization of political organizations and procedures. This is the core of his argument on ‘political decay’ (Huntington 1965: 386): “Rapid increases in mobilization and participation – the principal political aspects of modernization – undermine political institutions. Rapid modernization, in brief, produces not political development, but political decay.”

Building further on Huntington’s argument of political decay, Edward D. Mansfield and Jack Snyder (2005) make an important contribution to the democratic literature in their book

Electing to Fight: Why Emerging Democracies Go to War. The authors' main argument is that emerging democracies are more likely to instigate war than either consolidated democracies or autocracies. They argue that the growth of mass politics in democratizing states creates incentives for new and old elites to appeal to nationalism. Without strong political institutions in place, this would make it easy for nationalist ideologies to go unchecked. Newly democratizing states would then risk pursuing an imprudent foreign policy and encourage wars. Although, they do stress the fact that not all countries experience significant violence during democratic transitions and mention examples like Brazil, Hungary, Chile, Poland, South Korea and Taiwan.

Based on their research, they conclude that it is risky to push states to democratize before certain necessary prerequisites are in place, and that the task of democracy-promoters should be that of fostering such preconditions (Mansfield and Snyder 2007: 5). The instability that follows a democratic transition can actually make a state more prone to conflicts than what a stable autocracy is. Hence, their *sequencing theory* stresses the importance of building effective state institutions and rule-of-law *before* starting the path of democratization and holding open national elections. They consider this crucial to avoid bad outcomes such as illiberal leaders or extremists in power, virulent nationalism, civil conflict and intrastate wars. Starting off premature before such institutions are in place would delay the transition process and decrease the chances for democracy to succeed. This favorable sequence will be rare among future transitions, Mansfield and Snyder argue, which will cause many transition states to go awry, as witnessed in previous elections in the Middle East (ibid.: 6).

3.3.4 Gradualism theory

Thomas Carothers is a well-known critic of both transition theory and sequencing theory. His alternative *gradualism theory* claims that instability and war is not related to democratization, but rather to state-building. What he refers to as the second phase of state-building – going beyond establishing a monopoly of force and creating effective state bureaucracy, is something emergent democracies are more compatible with than autocracies (Carothers 2007a: 19). At the core of his critique of the democratic sequencing theory is what he identifies as a mistaken two-part premise; “that a significant number of autocrats can and will act as generators of rule-of-law development and state-building, and that democratizing

countries are inherently ill-suited for these tasks” (ibid.: 14). Rule-of-law is recognized as impartial adjudication, fair and equal treatment of all before the law, respect for civil and political rights – all of which stand in contrast to an independent judiciary beyond the executive’s reach, which in turn would threaten authoritarian rule. He illustrates this by using Mubarak’s position as an example. It was precisely because of his power grip that Egypt was hindered in developing rule-of-law. Only with a serious political opening, including free and fair competition for the presidency, will there be any chances for extensive reforms to develop the rule of law (ibid.: 17).

According to Carothers, neither economic development can be considered as a mechanism that will naturally lead to rule-of-law reform. As many authoritarian leaders care less about the welfare of their citizens than about holding onto power, they are more likely to enrich themselves and protect only certain privileged groups or sectors of society, undercutting potential political rivals (ibid.: 15). A key feature of what Carothers defines as *dominant-power politics* – the most common state of liberal authoritarian countries – is a political system with:

(...) real political space, some contestation by opposition groups, and at least most of the basic institutional forms of democracy. Yet one political grouping – whether it is a movement, a party, an extended family, or a single leader – dominates the system in such a way that there appears to be little prospect of alternation of power in the foreseeable future” (Carothers 2002: 11-12).

In these types of systems there is no clear division between the state and the ruling group, and elections are often dubious without being outright fraudulent. The result is that political opposition parties and general citizens tend to be disaffected from politics and cut off from any meaningful political participation beyond voting. Carothers claims Jordan is one of the Middle Eastern countries that due to its liberalization trend, has moved to the category of dominant-power politics (Carothers 2002: 13).

Carothers believes that a large number of newly democratized countries have most strongly felt an internal pressure for democratization, more so than a pressure from outsiders such as Western powers, like sequentialist often claim. Rapid progress towards democratization, like popular elections, has usually been initiated by citizens demanding more political empowerment (Carothers 2007a: 20). However, despite the fragile role elections have had in

many newly democratized states, they are still a crucial step in the process of achieving political legitimacy. The debate that has evolved on the dangers of holding “premature elections” amongst sequentialist, has lost some of its legitimacy based on studies showing that African countries which moved early toward elections in the beginning of the 1990s, and persisted with elections thereafter, have come further in consolidating all aspects of democracy than those countries that deferred holding elections (Carothers 2007b: 19).

Acknowledging that there *are* underlying conditions and structures for democratic success, Carothers claims these should not be looked upon as preconditions. Rather, such structures should be seen as core facilitators that would make democratization harder or easier, and not either certain or impossible (Carothers 2007a: 24). Overall, the primary difference between democratic gradualism and sequencing theory is that the former does not postpone implementing the core element of democracy; the development of fair and free political competition and choice. Instead, it involves reaching for these elements now, in a prudent and cumulative way, rather than all at once (ibid.: 25). It also stresses a mutually reinforcing interplay between democratic institutions and democratic politics that alters power relations and builds substantive democracy. Sequencing theory, on the other hand, focuses on elitist crafting of democratic institutions of rule-of-law, without necessarily addressing the existing power relations. Carothers warns though: semi-authoritarian countries often have power holders who abuse the idea of gradualism and defend their partial political liberalization as being a gradual start on the way to democracy. Examples of this occur in parts of the Middle East, where democracy promoters increasingly have to seek a middle path between drastic calls for political openings and exaggerated praise for minor reforms (ibid.: 26). From this point of view, both sequencing theory and gradualism theory can be misused by authoritarian leaders as camouflages for hidden agendas, although in slightly different ways: the sequencing argument is an excuse to not allow political openings before strong institutions and rule-of-law are in place, whilst gradualism can defend why only limited openings are being given.

3.4 Operational aspects

So how can I apply these theories on my material? The criteria I use to assess these should be independent from the democratization theories discussed, to avoid a biased analysis. Instead, I should use factors most agree are important for democracy. Törnquist (2013) argues that an

assessment of the substance of democracy must go beyond that of institutions only. Such an assessment considers whether the rules and regulations of a democracy cover vital aspects, and whether democratically made decisions are actually implemented. Do the content of the decisions *undermine* or *foster* the aim of democracy? Törnquist argues four dimensions should be included in an analysis; i) intrinsic democratic institutions, ii) key actors' relation to the institutions of democracy, iii) actors' political capacity to use and promote these institutions, and iv) how these factors interact and change in the process of democratization. I will present these dimensions in more detail below.

3.4.1 Institutions that promote democracy

What institutions are deemed important for democracy, in particularly for popular representation of Jordanian citizens? Are elections the only way to gain access and representation? My objective in this analysis is not to assess Jordan's democratization process, but to focus on the processes that pushed for the electoral reform in particular. Also, does the electoral reform produce certain outcomes that perpetuate regime stability and state survival? Thus, as will become clear through my research questions (chapter 5.6), I will examine both the input and output aspect of the electoral reform, as these are closely intertwined.

Based on Beetham's list of 80 democratic institutional arrangements, Törnquist (2013) sees the need to reduce this list and include dimensions that go beyond key liberal-democratic ones. He lands on a list of 13 clusters of rules and regulations that remain to be detailed in each context:

- **Equal and inclusive citizenship in relation to well-defined public affairs**
- Rule of law (according to International law and UN conventions)
- Equal justice
- Full universal human rights
- **Democratic political representation through parties and elections**
- Legal guarantee of citizen's rights to participation
- Institutionalized channels for interest- and issue-based representation
- Realization of local democracy through viable linkages to central level
- **Democratic control of instruments of coercion**

- Transparent, impartial and accountable governance
- Government's capacity to implement its own decisions effectively and impartially
- **Freedom of public discourse, culture and academia**
- Citizens' right to democratic self-organizing

Due to the limited scope of this research, I will narrow down this framework by identifying critical priorities related to the specific topic of interest. I have selected four of these intrinsic institutions (in bold) based on existing literature and logic reasoning. Let me elaborate on why I particularly find these institutions relevant and what they include.

'Equal and inclusive citizenship related to well-defined public affairs' requires a clear definition of the demos regarding who has the right to control public affairs. Here, it becomes important to not only assess the character of citizenship and the right to hold a passport, but to also include ethnic or political-residential roots, and then evaluate who are full citizens with various rights. The essence is more about the definition of who shall be regarded as equals concerning politics. Gender, identity politics, and social and economic entitlements also become crucial. It is obvious that in the case of Jordan, people are segmented along lines of ethnicity, family and religion. Who constitutes the demos and hence makes decisions about public affairs?

The set of rules that ensure 'democratic political representation through parties and elections' rests on the definition of democracy itself; popular control of public affairs based on political equality. This entails authorization of representatives with a mandate and the obligation to be accountable, transparent and responsive. Who has the right to participate in politics? Do members of parliament hold significant legislative power and do they work in the interest of those they are representing? More important, does the electoral system ensure free and fair elections that create democratic representation? These are some of the issues that will be examined in more detail as for the electoral reform in Jordan.

The importance of 'democratic control of instruments of coercion' is self-evident for achieving democracy in a country like Jordan, especially during times of reforms that might provoke instability. What are the diverse purposes for which these forces are engaged and deployed? The security apparatus in authoritarian states are often claimed to have an important role in times of crisis and is often active when it comes to evaluating and

diminishing potential threats from opposition groups. As Jaber (2003: 129) argues: “The crisis atmosphere in the region, however, has been a major factor in turning the state’s attention inwards, with the result that stability has overtaken democracy as a supreme value.” The result of this often leads to a strengthening of the security apparatus and an expansion of its functions, which may have been of importance during the last years in Jordan.

Finally, ‘freedom of public discourse, culture and academia’ refers to equal opportunities to access independent media and academia, and to which degree the media is free from state control. Freedom of speech is a democratic value that should be in line with human rights. Regarding this cluster, I will take a closer look at under which conditions local media has functioned in Jordan during the past two years, and whether freedom of speech has been respected during the many protests and public discourses.

3.4.2 Key actors

Here, the framework suggests a critical assessment of the most important actors’ relation to the above mentioned institutions; what political capacity and power they hold; and in turn how the institutions influence the actors. Who are the key actors here and how can we understand their aims and means? The democratization theories I have used to explain the liberal reforms in Jordan, all focus on different actors that are deemed most important for democratization. Modernization theory emphasizes growing economic structures and a moderate middle class. Transition theory highlights strategic actors within the political elite. Since this theory believes democracy can be crafted, softliners are vital for negotiated reforms. Sequencing theory has a top-down approach where the state itself is central. However, according to this theory, foreign democracy promoters may play a crucial role in support of democratization. Last, gradualism theory is more cautious about introducing the “right” institutions from above. Rather, it opts to include the masses in the democratization process and is skeptical about authoritarian-led construction of democratic institutions. These theories’ perspectives are a useful tool for my further analysis, but as explained earlier, I will not use the theories as templates of any kind.

Chapter five provides a review of previous research on liberalization in Arab monarchies, and the role of elections for democratization in authoritarian regimes. This literature will identify various aspects that will help explain my puzzle and it includes actors such as the

authoritarian state under the monarch, softliners and hardliners within the regime, opposition figures and the security apparatus. Further attention will be given to how these actors relate to the four clusters of rules and regulations previously pointed out.

3.4.3 Actors' capacity

After having identified key actors, it is necessary to look at the actors' political capacity and how they can alter the opportunity structure. Törnquist mentions two separate arguments for why considering actors' capacity is important. The first argues that equal powers are not necessary for democracy, but people have to obtain sufficient power to be part of the demos, to benefit from and make use of other citizens' rights, and for non-citizens to benefit from democratic institutions by way of human rights. The second argument holds that there is also a need to analyze the dynamics and problems of democratization (which I will turn to shortly). To realize this, it is not enough to know that certain capabilities are available while others are not; "(...) one must also know the background and the relations of power that shape people's capacity to take part in politics and make a difference" (Törnquist 2013). Törnquist presents five arguments about necessary capacities for people to be able to promote and use democratic institutions:

- 1) **Political inclusion and/or exclusion:** People should not be excluded from politics, or parts of society that affects politics. How are dominant actors and actors of change present or excluded from the political terrain? Are some groups marginalized, and are they powerful enough to fight exclusion?
- 2) **Authority and legitimacy:** This builds on Pierre Bourdieu's analysis of accumulated social-, economic-, coercive- and/or cultural capital into authority and legitimacy. What are the main actors' sources of power? When and how do actors succeed in transforming their accumulated capital into symbolic capital and political power?
- 3) **Politicization and agenda-setting:** To what extent are less powerful citizens able to put their concerns, interests and ideologies on the political agenda? What do the actors deem to be public matters?
- 4) **Mobilization and organization:** All actors must be able to mobilize and organize support for their demands and policies. By which way do actors strive to be incorporated into politics? Is it by way of populism, charismatic leaders, patronage, and/or 'good contacts',

or is it rather through networks between independent actors and/or building organizations from below, fostering coordination units?

5) **Participation and representation:** For people to approach and influence governance institutions, they must be able to use the existing means of participation and representation, including reforming them and developing new ones. A major problem is often linked to the dominance of powerful elites and the poor standard of popular representation. Where and how do major actors go with the matters that they consider being of common concern? Where do common people turn to with their issues?

Of the five capacities I have outlined here, some will be given more attention depending on the relevance for the topic of interest. Examining all the capacities fully may prove to be an impossible task regarding the scope for this analysis, maybe even needless. However, all capacities are interrelated and influence each other.

3.4.4 Dynamics

Last, the framework proposes that we look into how the above mentioned factors interact and change in the process of democratization, in other words; the dynamics of democratization. Törnquist (2013) suggests this should be done by way of identifying the critical priorities, as analyzing the interaction between all the variables discussed above would be almost impossible. This should be done by focusing on the major dominant and reform oriented actors' applied strategies, and ask when and how vital aspects of democratization make sense according to those strategies. Thus the empirical question is: how do the actors' strategies and related government policies affect democratization, and vice versa?

4 Research methods

Chapter two presents the research design for this study, but what are the best methods for collecting data? To evaluate my democratization theories' explanatory power, I need data material to analyze. How can I gather and analyze the right data to find answers to my puzzle? There already exists extensive literature on liberalization and democratization in Jordan and the Middle East, and more recently, studies on the causes and effects of the Arab Spring are growing in number. However, partly due to the recent developments, few empirical studies have been conducted on the latest electoral reform in Jordan, neither on how this might have affected the country's stability. Thus, I will build on scholarly literature and selected reports and articles from the media discourse on the specific topic, guided by my research question. An extensive part of my data stems from these types of evidence, but I have chosen to supplement empirical data by conducting a few interviews. The collected data will be compared and analyzed in the context of theoretical perspectives and existing literature, from which I can draw inferences.

4.1 Secondary sources and qualitative interviewing

Previous literature available to me consists of a large number of books and articles focusing on democratization and liberalization in Jordan and the Middle East, and a smaller number on Jordan's history and political system. There are also several studies that focus in particular on the relationship between democracy and the role of elections; regime type and stability; and liberal reforms in authoritarian Arab regimes. In chapter five, I present the most relevant studies for my topic and suggest how they can serve to inform my analysis.

My puzzle requires me to qualitatively investigate the complex relationship between individual factors such as the regime's responses in a tense situation, as well as economic, social and political structures that together have played a part in preventing the people from wanting to overthrow the regime. Qualitative methods allow me to trace causal mechanisms and to gather considerable descriptive details to highlight the importance of a contextual understanding of social behavior. In other words, factors such as behavior and values must be understood in its context and the specific environment in which the actors operate (Bryman 2004: 281). Thus, based on both interview material and secondary literature, I am able to generate hypothetical explanations to my research questions. Tracing the mechanisms that led

up to the electoral reform – including the processes of how Jordanians appear to have become loyal to the monarchy – will enable me to better grasp the logic and motivations behind the new dynamics in Jordan. Along with a contextual analysis of how the Jordanian regime interacts with other key actors, how it influences democratic institutions and in turn is shaped by them, can possibly provide some answers to my puzzle regarding Jordan’s “lack” of an Arab Spring, moreover, in which direction these changes may go regarding democratic development.

However, I need to stress that the information I was given through the interviews does not make up the majority of the empirical data that my research rests upon. Rather, the interviews are meant to be supplementary and represent firsthand opinions that might either confirm or be contrary to my assumptions based on previous research and empirical findings from secondary sources. Thus, the secondary literature has functioned as a tool for which I can trace arguments that are supported in my interviews, but I have also looked for support in the literature based on my own inferences drawn from my interview material, as part of the analysis. Such triangulation– the use of more than one method or source of data– is a kind of cross-checking of my material that will ultimately enable me greater confidence in my findings. The data material will be further discussed and analyzed in chapter seven.

4.1.1 Data collection

For empirical data on the current situation for economy, political climate, the electoral reform and the 2013 parliamentary elections in Jordan, I have relied heavily on international online media sources. These include reports and data from international news Web sites and independent organizations and ‘think tanks’ such as CNN, BBC, Al Jazeera, International Crisis Watch, Freedom House, International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, amongst others. Jordanian governmental Web sites that are also published in English have been good sources for transcripts of the king’s official speeches, statements and letters. A drawback has been that most relevant legal documents have not been available to me in English.

Because I wanted to add more “thick” data to my research, I decided to carry out qualitative interviews during a visit in Amman in April 2013. Such qualitative data can make a difference for the research, especially when there are few recent studies on Jordan’s electoral

reform during the Arab Uprising. Due to limited time and resources, my stay in Amman only lasted for one week, where I met and interviewed five informants. Unfortunately, elite-level interviews are difficult to obtain, but I had a great advantage of my network from my six-month stay in Amman, back in 2011. Through friends and acquaintances that ‘knew someone that knew someone else,’ I was given advice of whom I could contact.

The interviewees had various occupations and presented different perspectives on the electoral reform and on the current political situation in Jordan. Two of these were mainly associated with social media and journalism. A third person was associated with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). The latter two were, or had previously been, involved with high level politics. Therefore, my sample was mainly drawn from criteria based on availability and personal qualities, rather than a random selection from a larger universe. Considering my resources and the circumstances, it was unavoidable to get a somewhat biased selection. However, for this type of intensive case study, it is not always preferable to draw a random sample from a larger universe; mainly because the universe is unknown, and second because you risk missing out on informants that hold valuable information. For these reasons, it was better to select strategically.

I decided to use semi-structured interviews, which allow the informant to elaborate on issues of special interest. Every informant was asked the same questions, but because of the flexibility of semi-structured interviews, none of the interviews came out similar. The interview material gives a description of the interviewees own perception and experiences on what is happening on ‘ground-level.’ Using informants’ personal and professional perspectives allow me to include detailed information about the specific context, structural factors and different actors’ capacities in a more comprehensive way than what would have been possible through secondary sources alone. Sometimes they were able to explain how events and people were linked; information that otherwise would have passed by me unnoticed. Finally, this data will provide a more nuanced perspective.

4.1.2 Other implications

All my data material, both secondary sources and interview material, have been evaluated independently and critically. Regarding the many secondary sources I relied on, such as online newspapers and Web sites, I have had to think critically about who this news site

“represents” or what kind of “message” that particular organization wants to convey. For example, the fact that Jordanian newspapers go through strict self-censoring before being published also matters in how they present reality. Jordanian governmental Web pages for instance, are likely to present a biased and uncritical perspective on Jordanian history and politics.

4.2 Validity

Validity refers to whether you are observing, identifying and measuring what you say are. *Internal validity* is considered to be the strength of qualitative method; in particular, case studies have high potential for ensuring congruence between concepts and observations (Bryman 2004: 275). A factor that has considerably strengthened the internal validity of my research is the combination of a qualitative in-depth study of a case with the use of supplementary qualitative interviewing. Through this data material, people’s opinions and experiences are explored firsthand, which in turn allows me to more confidently draw conclusions and interpret the meaning behind the data produced. The participants give an in-depth description of the topics discussed and can further elaborate on issues of special concern to them. By using the method of triangulation between secondary sources and interview material, the uncertainty of my causal inferences are reduced and I am able to draw inferences of higher quality.

External validity, meaning the representativeness of the population of interest, is a challenge for case study research because it often includes only a small number of cases (Gerring: 2007: 43). However, the primary goal of this study is not to generalize over a population of similar cases; rather, my aim is to create a deep, contextualized understanding of the particular topic my research question is based on.

4.3 Reliability

Another factor that determines the quality of a study for scholarly literature is that it should be possible to replicate a study and produce the same results as when it was conducted the first time. This is a difficult criterion to meet for qualitative researchers, as it is impossible to “freeze” a social setting (Bryman 2004: 273). Nevertheless, an important principle is that the researcher should go far in trying to achieve transparency regarding the methodological choices offered in the analysis, so that readers are able to evaluate the data material based on

the analysis. As already mentioned, single case studies like this one is seldom highly representative over a larger population of similar cases. However, given that my research methods are clear and transparent, the inferences observed can be compared to other case studies alike.

There is an obvious limitation to reliability when a study has employed qualitative interviewing as a research method. It is very unlikely that the participants would provide the exact same answers the second time, even if the same questions were asked. Since my interviews were semi-structured, the chances to replicate the natural-flowing conversation that occurred during these interviews, would be a challenge. Instead, the best I can do to strengthen the reliability of this thesis is to be explicit about the logic of my research design and be transparent about my sources and data collection process. In turn, this would make it possible to follow and challenge my data collection process and analysis.

5 Contextual introduction and previous research

What has previously been written about the phenomenon I aim to study? More specific, how can liberal forms of governance in authoritarian, Arab regimes – in particular monarchies – be interpreted and understood? In this chapter I present the most relevant literature written on my specific topic. Previous studies provide valuable insight and can identify important indicators I can build my further analysis on. Together with the theoretical framework, this literature review will help me to create more specific research questions and point out what will be central aspects of my empirical evidence.

5.1 Patterns of liberalization

Some people suggest that due to societal and historical circumstances in the Arab world, democratization does not necessarily bear the same meaning as it does in the Western world. Kamel S. Abu Jaber (2003) argues that whatever forms of liberality that exist must essentially be seen as a gift by the state, as opposed to a sacred right stemming from the people. The amount of liberality is dispensed by the regime as it sees fit, and is therefore not a constant process. Rather, freedoms are restricted and expanded at the will of the state and rulers from above (ibid.: 128). As Daniel Brumberg (2002: 56) states:

Liberalized autocracy has proven far more durable than once imagined. The trademark mixture of guided pluralism, controlled elections, and selective repression in Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Algeria, and Kuwait is not just a survival strategy adopted by the authoritarian regimes, but rather a type of political system whose institutions, rule, and logic defy any linear model of democratization.

This means that liberalization in these states are rather cyclical and adaptive, according to the pressure it faces from within and from outside. When the pressure reaches a peak, the regime tends to loosen its grip and allow for more civic activity and a more open electoral arena. When the political opposition grows too strong and effective, the regime is likely to tighten its grip and shrink the political space.

Reforms carried out in Arab regimes have mainly been focused on modernizing the economy and addressing social issues, more so than redistributing power in the political system. Marina Ottaway and Michele Dunne (2007) discuss three different models of managed reform common in the Middle East. The first involves reforming institutions. This pattern of reform gives an illusion of change, but fails to address significant power distribution. A second model revolves around reform related to social issues, like personal status and individual rights, but does not entail meaningful reform of political institutions. The third pattern of managed reform accepts to a certain degree an opposition, combined with attempts to restrict and control this opposition (ibid.: 5). They further argue that no country fits perfectly into just one of these models, but all forms of managed reform in the Arab world share one characteristic: they are all a process of efforts to stimulate and limit a process of change simultaneously, which often bring along tensions and conflicts.

5.1.1 Influential actors

It is obvious that the regime under the monarch is the key actor in implementing and introducing liberal reforms for various reasons. However, the regime also needs to include the opposition in negotiations, mainly to serve its own interests and legitimacy. As Ottaway and Dunne (2007) point out, there are reformers within the ruling establishment of every regime. They argue that following a generational power transition, in particular, the contrasts between so-called softliners and hardliners in the regime become very clear. One example is the conflicts between regime reformers and elites from the old guard. After power transitions, reformists have often been appointed to important positions in cabinets, royal courts, and parliament, but they struggle to attain control of the real levers of power: military, internal security, and intelligence apparatuses (ibid.: 16). Also Jaber makes a link between liberality and the security apparatus. He claims that liberality depends on the extent to which “(...) the state and its security apparatus determine the power of the local opposition, and the danger they pose” (Jaber 2003: 128). This is an interesting observation, as military apparatuses in the West are generally associated with hard powers and considered a depoliticized institution. Larry Diamond (2010: 99) explains:

Although the typical Arab state may not be efficient in everyday ways, its *mukhabarat* (secret police and intelligence apparatus) is normally amply funded, technically sophisticated, highly penetrating, legally unrestrained, and splendidly poised to benefit from extensive cooperation with peer institutions in the region as well as Western intelligence agencies.

The *mukhabarat* in Jordan is known to be highly funded and wide reaching. It is said that the Americans export their least tolerable acts of violence to the General Intelligence Department (GID) in Jordan, known as the “fingernail factory.” Rumors also have it that the CIA has recently begun funding the GID directly, as to bypass the king himself (Open Democracy 2013a). For this study, it becomes important to examine the role of the intelligence apparatus and see to which degree it influences political decisions and facilitates regime stability.

5.2 The king’s dilemma

As noted, the Arab monarchies have shown the greatest resilience during the Arab Uprising. The eight monarchies, including Jordan, have stood firm. Is this a coincidence? Nearly half a century ago, Samuel Huntington (1968) introduced what he called the “king’s dilemma.” This refers to the dilemma authoritarian monarchs face during turbulent times; when they have to make a choice between implementing liberal reforms to sustain stability and status-quo, or rather risk violent revolution. Traditional explanations to the correlation between regime type and regime persistence provided by analysts, often point to culture and institution. The explanation based on culture holds that Arab monarchies enjoy traditional, religious and tribal legitimacy with loyal support from its citizens. Meanwhile, the institutional approach contends that since kings organizationally stand above everyday politics, they can intervene in the system and lead controlled reforms that defuse public discontent (Yom and Gause III 2012: 75). In their article, *Resilient Royals: How Arab Monarchies Hang on*, Sean L. Yom and F. Gregory Gause III (2012) argue that these two explanations are inadequate. Instead, they offer a strategic explanation for monarchical exceptionalism which links the historical legacy of domestic choices with a permissive international environment. Three main arguments in support of this are mentioned: first, monarchies have throughout history mobilized crosscutting coalitions that have helped to prevent mass opposition, whilst bolstering the ruling family against opposition. Second, many Arab countries rely on rents from oil or foreign aid, which have allowed them to cover welfare and development programs meant to alleviate public discord. Last, when the two previous mechanisms fail, monarchs have enjoyed the backing of foreign patrons, assisting them through diplomacy, grants, and military interventions (ibid.: 75-76).

5.2.1 Regime stability

Tariq Moraiwed Tell (2013a) has written an insightful book that provides a set of viable explanations to the durability of the Hashemite monarchy in Jordan. Tell emphasizes economic and social processes during state-formation and the consolidation of the modern state in Jordan as crucial for the monarchy's resilience. He points out the underlying economic sources of its social power since Ottoman period, and explores how these sources of Hashemite power were first forged and later sustained. In contrast to much of the existing literature, Tell does not seek answer in the statecraft of Hashemite monarchs, nor in the dynamics of their policies on the Palestinian issue. Instead, he locates his answers in the historical economy of Transjordan and the emergence of a monarchical social pact that ties East Bank loyalty to the throne, in exchange for economic security.

One of the few extensive works that has been written specifically about the Arab Spring, is Lin Noueihed and Alex Warren's (2012) *"The Battle for the Arab Spring: Revolution, Counter-revolution and the Making of a New Era."* They examine the events of the Arab Spring in a comparative and coherent manner and identify the challenges Arab countries face in forging their own democracies. The authors explain the economic and political roots for the Arab Uprising, as well as the unique set of obstacles that endanger stability in each country. As opposed to the Arab republics, the monarchies' grip on power rely on their reserves of legitimacy and goodwill, the strength of domestic demands for change, their wealth, as well as external pressure. Despite the short-term unlikelihood of a revolution in the Arab monarchies, the Arab Spring sparked grievances that might otherwise have remained subdued (ibid.: 247). According to Noueihed and Warren, the monarch's respond to the "king's dilemma" is simply buying stability. For a financially pinched country like Jordan, King Abdullah must allow greater political participation to alleviate pressure, but in the process risk to create fury among his traditional supporters. They also acknowledge that any meaningful electoral reform is closely linked to the fate of the Palestinians (ibid.: 255). If the monarchy in Jordan fails to meet their economic expectations, the only way of easing protests is to prepare for more far-reaching political reforms.

5.2.2 Monarch's preferences in electoral law formation

Examining how elections are exercised and negotiated, provide important insight into the struggle over state power. According to Ellen Lust-Okar and Amaney Ahmad Jamal (2002),

regime type plays an important role for electoral law formation in Arab authoritarian states, which in turn affects the institutional choices made during political liberalization. Specifically, incumbents in these types of regimes have divergent preferences over the distribution of domestic political power, which often is reflected in the creation of different electoral laws.

Such negotiations are naturally influenced by the relative power of the actors involved. Since individual opposition parties in these regimes tend to be weak and poorly organized, they are aware that they do not stand a real chance in a contest with the incumbents. As a result, opposition elites favor electoral rules that promote representation of small parties; that is, multimember districts and proportional representation. This was exemplified when the Jordanian opposition consisting of communists, socialists and Islamist came out uniformly against the one-man one-vote law because it decreased the proportionality (Lust-Okar and Jamal 2002: 352). Monarchs' main interests on the other hand, is to retain power and foster electoral rules that enhance their stability. Thus, they prefer representation of competing political parties, but fear the proliferation of new parties that might unbalance the management of competing centers of power. To prevent the creation of one single contender who could challenge their power, political division and competition in popular politics creates the perfect climate for the monarch's stability (ibid.: 253). Therefore, monarchs play on divisions among people: differing interests, religions, parties and tribes – whose competition for public patronage they can arbitrate, but does not allow any of them to become too powerful. As Schwedler and Chomiak (2006: 17) explain:

(...) authoritarian regimes sometimes hold elections in which the outcome is so manipulated and over-determined that it seems unlikely that the regime expects anyone to be fooled by the charade. No real competition is possible and the victory of the incumbent regime is a forgone conclusion. The regime uses not only electoral engineering and gerrymandering, but finds various ways of eliminating all viable opposition before winning a landslide.

This calls for a closer look at the power distribution and relative bargaining power among the key actors in the elite and opposition. How was the electoral reform negotiated, and in the end, who gained the most from the outcome?

5.3 Democracy and the role of elections

The importance of elections for the character and viability of democracy and popular representation cannot be ignored. Building democratic political culture, a pluralistic civil society, and the administrative framework of an effective state may take years, even decades. Yet, constitutional or legislative amendments of a country's political system can be changed rather quickly, including the electoral system. The design of the electoral system can affect the relationship of party control and government, the stability of elected officials, the breadth and legitimacy of representation, the capacity of the system to manage conflict, the extent of public participation, and the responsiveness of the system (Diamond and Plattner 2006.).

Drawing on extensive data from national elections in Africa, Staffan I. Lindberg (2006) makes a significant contribution to the study of elections as a core institution in newly democratized countries. While mainstream literature on democratization has a tendency to treat elections as indicators of democracy, Lindberg argues that elections play a causal role in consolidating democracies. In his book *Democracy and Elections in Africa*, he argues that democratizing states adapt and become democratic through repeated democratic behavior, no matter how free and fair they are in practice. His findings prove that holding multiparty elections usually initiates a process of liberalization, and repeated electoral activities creates incentives for political actors which foster an expansion and deepening of democratic values.

However, democratization as an outcome is not given, Lindberg argues. Indeed, under certain conditions elections become means by which an authoritarian regime sustains itself (Lindberg 2009a: 86). In a joint effort to develop a coherent theory of democratization by elections, *Democratization by Elections: a New Mode of Transition?* (Lindberg 2009b) provides a broad range of regional, global and comparative case studies. The book is theoretically inspired by Robert Dahl's original formulation that the more the cost of suppression exceeds the costs of toleration, the greater the chance for a competitive regime. Building further on this assumption, they place the role of electoral activities as a possible factor that can change the costs that rulers face by either using oppression or alternatively allowing more opposition and competition. In this regard, Lindberg mentions two basic questions (Lindberg 2009a: 88): First, at what point do the potential costs of allowing opposition become more than the ruling elite can tolerate? Second, what price is the elite willing to keep paying (in terms of economic

setbacks, lost legitimacy and foreign aid, splits in its own ranks, etc.) to sustain a policy of repression? From this perspective, elections can make *democratization* more likely if:

...they serve to make repression “expensive” and counterproductive, and spur the opposition to unify and mobilize; and if they make a policy of tolerating the opposition seem to the rulers as if it will make their rule more legitimate, but in fact trigger defections of state actors to the opposition and create self-fulfilling expectations about the continuation of competitive politics (ibid.: 87).

On the contrary, elections can make *autocratization* more likely if:

...they serve to make repression “cheap,” easy to target at opposition leaders, or even unnecessary; and if they make it possible for the regime to control toleration of the opposition, to split the opposition, and to use elections as vehicles for patronage; or if elections simply make toleration too costly for the incumbents (ibid.).

Thus, elections can have dual and absolute opposite effects, depending on context and the rules of the game. In Lust-Okar’s (2009) contribution to this book, she argues that elections in the Middle East often strengthen rather than weaken authoritarian regimes. The main reason for this is access to state resources and the consequent opportunity to hand out patronage – a process she identifies as “competitive clientelism.” This system will make opposition candidates more motivated by personal gains than by ideological principles, which also the voters are aware of. However, if the incumbents fail to redistribute state resources to their supporters, both voters and candidates may abandon the ruling party which can provide for a democratic opening.

5.4 In which direction does liberalization in Jordan seem to go?

What can Jordan’s previous experiences with liberalization tell us about the recent reforms since the spring of 2011? Sometimes one of the best ways to understand current events is by looking into previous practices. Most studies on Jordan’s liberalization process highlight the onset of political liberalization as the year of 1989, when reforms were introduced to stave off economic riots and the country saw the first free election in more than twenty years.

In his essay, *Jordan: Ten More Years of Autocracy* (2009), Yom examines the liberalization process after King Abdullah II came to power. Despite the promises of reforms following the generational power shift, he is relatively pessimistic about the progress that has been done ten years after King Abdullah stepped to the throne. Although he modernized the regime in many ways, Yom describes the political liberalization that has occurred in Jordan as nothing more than an “(...) occasionally useful tactic in the endless struggle to hang onto power” (ibid.: 151). Yom explains that the king has employed three strategies: first, the adoption of selective economic reforms; second, the use of legal regulations to constrain civil society; finally, the co-optation from above of all democratic initiatives (ibid.).

Neither Russell E. Lucas is too optimistic about the prospects for Jordan’s liberalization process in his article, *Deliberalization in Jordan* (2003). Lucas states: “Currently, though, Jordan’s liberalized autocracy seems perilously close to veering sharply enough in the direction of deliberalization to become autocracy plain and simple” (ibid.: 144). In 2005, he published an insightful book called, *Institutions and the Politics of Survival in Jordan: Domestic Responses to External Challenges, 1988-2001*. By using an approach based on culturalist, structuralist, and rationalist accounts, combined with an institutional focus, he investigates the features of authoritarian regimes that facilitate the stability of autocracy. He looks specifically at external crisis Jordan has faced throughout history and how the regime has used various forms of manipulations of domestic political institutions as a coping mechanism. Lucas identifies two main threats for Jordan: its debt crisis due to a poor resource base and exploding demographics; and second, regional war and instability. These factors are not new to Jordan, but he argues that they pose a different challenge than what they have done in the past. Both factors threaten to disturb the balance between the monarchy and the constituent members of the regime coalition, leading to an empowerment of the opposition to ignite popular resentment against the government, and potentially, the monarchy. Lucas concludes:

In the face of such existential threats, the regime has been forced to undertake domestic institutional manipulations in order to limit popular discontent, to contain the opposition, and to maintain the unity of the regime coalition—maneuvers that can be labeled “regime survival strategies” (Lucas 2005: 2).

He identifies three main arenas where the regime's survival strategies generally have been aimed at: political parties, the Parliament, and the press. The regime has chosen them because they are likely centers for the opposition to voice the public's discontent and to mobilize against unpopular policies. Lucas conclude that the period of political liberalization in 1989 have been followed by a gradual increase in restrictions in all three arenas. For the most part, the regime has successfully manipulated institutions through constitutional rules that have divided the opposition and reinforced regime coalition unity. In which way can the 2012 electoral reform be considered a regime survival strategy?

5.5 Specifying the research questions

The purpose of this chapter was to present previous research that provides useful information and that addresses my overarching research question directly or indirectly. Now, what could explain why Jordan has not "been taken" by the Arab Spring, and what is the role of the electoral reform in all of this? What have been the driving forces for reform, and does the regime face more deep-rooted challenges that have appeared in the pattern of protests over the last two years? Moreover, what is facilitating the regime's stability and survival? I argue that there is no simple answer to these questions. Rather, the issues these questions deal with are multifaceted and intricate. To understand the diverging interests and groups involved in these processes, I find it fruitful to approach this from a threefold perspective. A red line in the material discussed in this chapter and the theoretical perspectives presented earlier, can be narrowed down to three main groups influencing the input side; pushing for or trying to limit democracy and/or liberal reforms:

- External actors with a liberalistic, elitist approach that seek to promote liberal democratic institutions, or other types of foreign patrons whose geopolitical interests lie elsewhere.
- Actors who want to restrict popular representation and limit democracy, such as incumbent elites who benefit from status-quo.
- Domestic forces who want to expand democracy and ensure broader political representation.

Regarding the output of the electoral reform for strengthened democratic values and substantive popular representation, I will adopt Törnquist's (2009) assessment framework, as discussed in chapter 3.3. This will allow me to analyze how politics in Jordan are

communicated, negotiated and practiced, without leaving important mechanisms and conditions unaccounted. Törnquist mentioned three important pillars of popular control of public affairs based on political equality (ibid.: 10):

- 1) The *demos*.
- 2) The public matters.
- 3) The mediation between the *demos* and public affairs through: civil society, political society, and informal leaders.

Here, I find it particularly worth elaborating on the *demos*. In her PhD dissertation, Rania Maktabi (2012) describes membership policies of the *demos* as a constant process through different consolidation phases which are closely intervened with participatory projects in the state (ibid.: 22). Along with identifying political arenas where inclusionary and exclusionary forms of citizenship are established, sustained and redefined, she also pays considerable attention to how the politics of citizenship reflect the organization and distribution of power in the polity in ways that impinge on the survival of the regime (ibid.: 27). Maktabi (1998) finds that processes of liberal or democratic forms of governance in Jordan are linked to state-building, and that both inclusive and exclusive forms of political pluralism have been practiced at different historical points in its modern history. Nils A. Butenschøn (2000) also emphasizes the process of state-building as a period where struggles for territorial control and institutional power determines who will constitute the political center, as opposed to those who will have relatively weak influence in the emerging political system (ibid.: 4).

Based on literature presented in this chapter, several indicators point to the importance of the state-building process to grasp current socioeconomic and political structures. Mapping the power structures in the Jordanian political system is needed to understand what its foundation consists of and depends on, and in turn what might challenge its stability. Who constitutes the *demos* is connected to which public affairs are deemed important, as well as people's ability to communicate their demands by various kinds of mediators. It is hard to understand actors' intentions without knowing where their loyalty lies, nor does it make sense to explain how they act, without realizing their political capacity. The electoral reform may turn out to be a result that reflects upon these existing structures. A brief historical perspective of Jordan's state-building process and practices of inclusion and exclusion could thus help explain the outcome of the electoral reform and why it was brought forth in the first place. The electoral

law's potential of promoting and enhancing democratic values will indirectly be linked to its ability to alter existing power structures, which again might affect regime stability.

5.6 Summary

A review of critical literature on liberalization in the Arab world suggests that Jordan's electoral reform may have had the purpose of serving as a buffer against internal and external pressure caused by the Arab Spring. However, liberal reforms come in different shapes and do not always entail profound changes in the political institutions or power relations. Some studies lend support to the idea that elections in certain cases may even strengthen authoritarian regimes. This depends to a large degree on the relative power of the opposition and to which degree the monarch can manipulate and play groups against each other. It is claimed that the real levers of powers often remain in the military, internal security, and intelligence apparatuses. If opposition grows too strong, countries like Jordan has an extensive security apparatus that constantly evaluate the threat of the opposition.

Studies show that Jordan's state-building process has been critical for the Hashemites to consolidate their power by mobilizing crosscutting coalitions they can rely on for their stability. Yet, foreign patrons and external rents are decisive for the regime to rely on in times of turbulence and financial crises. The Hashemite family has proved itself resilient and has survived several crises during the years through institutional manipulations. These ideas will be further explored in finding an answer to this puzzle. In the following chapter, Jordan's state-building process and previous experiences with liberalization will be discussed, including a comprehensive understanding of the sociopolitical structures which the regime relies on. A clear definition of the demos will provide a fuller understanding of the relationship between rulers and ruled and how the existing power relations were created, and in turn, are being sustained.

6 Jordan: state, people and politics

I have so far identified several critical aspects that need to be examined more closely in order to understand what is happening politically in Jordan today. Who constitutes the political center and who are excluded? What kind of alliances does the regime rely on, and how are these sustained? Through which means has the regime applied so-called survival strategies? What can Jordan's previous experiences with liberalization and elections tell us about its democratic prosperity? In this chapter, I focus on the processes that surround these questions, more precisely: the historical events that shape today's political playing field and define actors' political capacity and authority. This will provide a better definition of the demos and explain the position of various contemporary sociopolitical forces towards the regime, including the overall regime-society dynamics in Jordan. I will discuss the implications of these propositions according to intrinsic democratic institutions and how key actors relate to these.

6.1 Establishing the foundation of Hashemite rule

The political history of Jordan, as for the rest of the Middle East, is a result of the struggle for imperial control from a collapsing Ottoman Empire. Transjordan became an autonomous entity under British colonial rule in 1921, and later gained independence under the Hashemites in 1946. It can be claimed that contemporary Jordan has grown out of unintended consequences from colonial policies, in particular due to land reform and taxations. In the 1930s, the British imposed taxation on landholders which shifted the burden away from small and medium landowners, over to large landowners and sheiks. The aim was to maintain stability rather than to extract revenues, something which convinced the tribe-members that the British were looking after their greater interest. Widespread support from East Bankers was further harvested when the state entered into villages by a radical land reform which transformed communal land tenures into individual holdings; allocating peasants and Bedouins state lands (Tell 2013b). This move gave the state great leverage over them and pushed the way they identified themselves in a direction of linkage with an approaching Hashemite state. The result was a relative compact and cohesive monarchy compared to surrounding states.

The core of the state rested heavily on support from the East Bank, with its state institutions descending from Transjordan. However, Jordan was clearly transformed in 1948 with the proclamation of Israel and the following Arab-Israeli war. At the end of the war, Transjordan's Arab Legion controlled the West Bank and annexed it in 1950. Jordan's population of around 500.000 was suddenly doubled, with the addition of the West Bank and Palestinian refugees. Palestinians were quickly given full Jordanian citizenship and the Palestinian private sector took its place alongside the institutions of the state with their East Bank focus. The inclusion of Palestinians into Jordanian politics expanded the membership in both the regime coalition and the opposition (Lucas 2005: 16).

The 1950s until early 1970s were characterized by wars and political instability caused by the creation of Israel, radical pan-Arab ideologies, the PLO and Palestinian guerrilla groups (*fedayeen*). The monarchy survived these turbulent decades with the help of its loyal Bedouin soldiers. However, King Hussein responded to the political instability by banning political parties in 1957 and imposing martial law in 1967. This allowed the institutions of political society to freeze until martial law was lifted in 1992.

6.1.1 Consolidating regime power through alliances

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the Hashemite regime enforced an alliance with the military and the rural middle class, which allowed the construction of a cohesive military base among the East Bank's peasant majority; the rural Transjordanians. Much because of the martial law, a "royal military dictatorship" developed and the power of the monarchy rested upon the control of the military –increasingly exercised through the *mukhabarat*, which functioned as the Palace's executive arm (Jadaliyya 2012). The intelligence services had started out as a fairly small organization. However, at this stage it had grown into an all-encompassing organization that intervened in virtually all aspects of state policies; from appointments in the bureaucracy, through permissions to travel, to appointments in the university and elsewhere (Tell 2013b). Also, the Jordanian Parliament had turned into an instrument of the monarchy: it could dissolve it, the Senate was largely appointed, and the power shifted from the Parliament into the Palace. The Hashemite regime had achieved a constitutional façade to its military dictatorship, where the constitution had been robbed of almost all its basis of checking the king's power (ibid.)

This tight social alliance between the rural East Bankers and the monarch, was ensured by the expansion of the Jordanian army which brought with it welfare in form of education and medical services in the villages. As a result, villages were transformed by the army's presence and its role as one of the key employers. As much as one-third of Jordanian men of working age were in the army. Along with the support from the army, the monarchy effectively brought in a second prop for the regime; the Islamists. The Muslim Brotherhood's presence since the late 1940s had been a steady support for the regime against the Jordanian National Movement in 1957. During the 1970s, they were brought in as fully fledged allies, used to contain the threat from the Left – mostly supporters of the PLO (ibid.). This allowed the monarchy to suppress its enemies and survive the pan-Arab and Palestinian challenges to its rule, whilst at the same time consolidating an authoritarian pact based on the exchange of political loyalty for public sector jobs and patronage.

6.2 Democratic implications of regime alliances

6.2.1 Equal and inclusive citizenship?

Through the regime-led state building, the Hashemites had gained the acceptance from the once rural Transjordanian tribes – now largely transplanted to the bureaucracy and the military – during the 1920s and 1930s. It is indisputable that the social alliance between the monarchy and its rural East Bankers was a mutual one, one which had led to a political center dominated by Transjordanians. As Butenschøn emphasizes, broad alliances from which the regime can secure a broad power base, is often a reflection of hegemonic traits of the regime. However, the regime is not consistently hegemonic to the different groups in society. It only seeks to maintain hegemony on behalf of the titular group, hence discriminatory practices will be modified to produce loyalty and support (Butenschøn 2000: 25) This is true for the tight alliance between the monarchy and the East Bankers. However, one may question why Jordan was so quick to grant citizenship to the Palestinians from the West Bank in 1949? Maktabi makes the distinction between first-order issues (membership) and second-order issues (political participation) regarding the politics of citizenship. She argues that defining the citizenry of the state is often interconnected with challenges revolved around the distribution of political power. The result is that practices of inclusion and exclusion often change over time depending on the dominant strategy of the regime (Maktabi 1998). Thus, the annexation of the West Bank in 1950 was presented as a political agreement – a pact – between the Palestinian nobles and the Jordanian regime (ibid.). The decision was beneficial

in more than one aspect: due to Jordan's geopolitical centrality and its pivotal role in various peace processes and negotiations in the decades after 1948, it was able to extract the necessary resources from donors and outside rents (Jadaliyya 2012), which gave it the means to fund its militarized welfare system that guaranteed East Bank livelihoods and the cohesion of the regime. Although Jordan had become a plural regime based on power-sharing, this is not tantamount with a neutral state. The preservation of an East Bank dominated political center reflects the features of the hegemonic state.

6.2.2 Political representation through parties and elections

Despite the expansion of membership policies, the turbulence of the 1950s consequently brought along a limitation of domestic political pluralism. Political life halted when political parties were banned and all electoral activities were forbidden during the decades when martial law was enforced. Nonetheless, for the regime to be able to benefit from the support of the Muslim Brotherhood, it skillfully sought around the provisions pertaining to the banning of political parties. The regime categorized the Brotherhood as a "social organization," accordingly, it was allowed to thrive and develop over the years. Considering the backing the Muslim Brotherhood provided for the regime during these years, the decision can be recognized as a "regime survival strategy." Nonetheless, this has made the Islamic Action Front (IAF) –the political arm of the Muslim Brotherhood, the most efficient and strongest opposition party in Jordan today. Other political parties play a small role because they did not have the same chance to develop over the years, which have resulted in a very weak party system. For this reason, most of the representatives elected into the House of Deputies today are not affiliated to a political party, which is also a result of the clan history of the country. During the ban, unions and associations were allowed to grow and thus gained political power to some extent. However, in 2002 and 2003, according to one of my interviewees, the regime saw the need to "vent out," and consequently unions and associations were depoliticized and marginalized. Ironically, the political power was not transferred to parties. Instead, the regime ended up to a large degree neutralizing everyone: unions, associations, and Islamists.

6.2.3 Democratic control of instruments of coercion

When the army and the GID became an extension of the monarchy's power – combined with a largely impotent political life – these institutions became politicized and undemocratic. The

purposes for which they were deployed exceeded their political mandate. It created a political vacuum sustained by the regime's strategic alliances. Since the East Bankers' dependency was largely of economic nature, more so than political, it allowed the growth of a military dominance that left little space for political contestation. Citizens became politically 'numbed' and the inclusion of the Palestinians from the West Bank did not pose a threat to the balance between the regime coalition and the monarchy. Among Jordanians today, there are many rumors swirling around the *mukhabarat*. Due to its secretive and intimidating façade, no one seems to know how they really operate. One mainstream assumption is that the organization still has a wide-reaching mandate that penetrates most aspects of political life, and is thus accused of being politicized. However, most people have a sense of both fear and respect for their work in keeping the country stable and secure. The fact that the security apparatus largely consists of Jordanians of East Bank origin, supports the idea that the GID to a large degree is an extension of the monarch's power.

6.3 Economic and sociopolitical fault lines

With huge flows of aid streaming in, Jordan's economy was similar to a rentier state. Rentier states are usually oil producing countries able to offer nearly unlimited economic benefits for its citizens. In return, the people are expected to remain politically passive. However, the reign of the Hashemites was accompanied by widespread corruption and cronyism – and with a growing accumulation of military debts from the 1970s, Jordan suffered from repeated fiscal and budgetary crises (Tell 2013b). The problems were further complicated by the nature of the policy-making coalition that had emerged; one in which East Bankers had a subaltern role compared to the bureaucratic and mercantile *aghrab* (strangers) settled in Amman (Jadaliyya 2012). The result of a lasting and entrenched policy bias that favored urban centers while largely neglecting the East Bank rural areas was a cumulative bias that produced a pattern of uneven development. By the late 1980s, poverty and its severity were greatest in the Transjordanian hinterlands, which lagged behind the capital on almost every indicator (ibid.). As a result, the older national-regional divide between East Bankers and the urban *aghrab* were amplified.

Reluctantly, the regime had to reschedule its external debt through the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and was forced to lift subsidies on a number of basic products (Brand 1999: 52). In lack of any other institutional vehicles; tribal and community leaders and heads of

professional associations protested in form of austerity riots against neoliberal economic retrenchment. The 1989 riots, and later the 1996 bread riots in al-Karak, demonstrated a shifting pattern of political contention that continued throughout the 1990s. The pattern since 1989 has been one of localized revolts in small towns in the south and northeast. These protests have often been highly apolitical, focusing on austerity measures and the poverty and uneven development of the peripheries compared to Amman and the northwest. Because these people have historically been a bastion of loyalty to the monarchy, they feel a connection to the regime, but also an entitlement to make demands on this basis. The reversed historical polarities made itself noticeable, but were easily contained by the regime, also by means of a pact with the Muslim Brotherhood in 1989 (Tell 2013b).

6.4 Political liberalization

The economic crisis in 1989 was anticipated and it can be claimed that it was linked to the decision to disengage with the West Bank the year before (Lucas 2005). Despite the loss of the West Bank to Israel in 1967, it is still constitutionally part of Jordan. The consequence of this political dilemma is still the center of a current debate between Palestinians in Jordan and the West Bank, and Transjordanian nationalists. Nonetheless, the king ended West Bank representation in 1988 and instructed the withdrawal of Jordanian nationality from residents of the West Bank: “Every person residing in the West Bank before the date of 31 July 1988 will be considered as Palestinian citizen and not as Jordanian” (Disengagement Instructions 1988, Article 2). King Hussein further announced the severance of all administrative and legal ties with the West Bank (Kinghussein.gov.jo, n.d.). This allowed for Jordan’s electoral law to be changed by redrawing the map to include only East Bank districts.

With the change of political contention and growing discontent, the monarch chose political liberalization as a new formula; a gradual phasing out of the oppressing practices associated with the regime and an opening of the system and of parliamentary life. November 8, 1989, witnessed the first free elections since 1967 (Lust and Hourani 2011: 120). However, the constituencies were based on the old administrative and geographical boundaries from the 1920s, rather than on the current population. People could cast multiple votes under an open-list plurality system. This meant that voters were free to choose among all the candidates in their district and make their own combination up to the number of seats in the district for each quota category (Lucas 2005: 30).

As political parties were still banned at the time, the 562 candidates ran as independents. The regime decided to allow candidates with affiliations to “illegal political organizations,” which gave way for a number of opposition candidates to participate, including the Muslim Brotherhood. Yet, individual candidates tended to team together and make lists, which were often recognized by voters in the myriad of individual candidates. The 1989 elections led to the success of the Muslim Brotherhood, which became the largest single bloc with 23 out of a total of 80 seats. Thirteen seats went to leftists and Arab nationalists, whilst the remaining seats went to centrists, conservatives and tribal figures – all strong supporters of the regime (Lucas 2005: 30).

In 1990, King Hussein also introduced the National Charter. The Charter would allow some political pluralism for the opposition to participate in political society, in return for the opposition’s acknowledgment of the monarchy’s supremacy (Lucas 2005: 31). It formalized democratic rights and identified “political-, party-, and intellectual pluralism” as “the way to consolidate democracy and [...] a balanced civil society” (Mufti 1999: 115). Although political parties had been legalized, structural changes in the electoral law were made before the 1993 election that caused severe restraints on the representation of the IAF. Elections became based on the Single Non-Transferable Vote system (SNTV), or the “one man, one vote” system. This system promotes voting for individual candidates instead of political parties. SNTV combines multimember districts with the rule that a single vote is cast for a particular candidate, which often leads to candidates winning seats with the support of only a small minority of the voting population. Candidates were elected on a simple plurality rule in multimember districts, where some districts could range up to seven seats (Carey & Reynolds 2011: 41). The main problem with the system has been the malapportionment of the districts, which has ranged from as little as 16,000 to as much as 80,000 voters per MP (members of parliament) (ibid: 42). The unfair districting has tended to favor rural tribal areas, and consequently, urban areas mainly populated by Palestinians have been underrepresented. It also gave incentives of voting along narrow lines of kin or clan, and gerrymandering has been a method of creating alternative patronage. The regime had for the last 20 years not been responding to the needs of the people in the peripheries, and their hope was that by over-representing them in Parliament, they would end up shifting more resources to these areas. Instead, the accumulated powers at the center of the state were able to co-opt these groups. Many of these people made money from the state and had over time turned into a state-based

bourgeoisie. Their interests were now more similar to the interests of the elite in Amman, more so than with those who had voted for them in the peripheries (Tell 2013b). In the end, resources did not really shift from Amman to the rural areas, and their problems remained. In particular, many people felt that the welfare regime which used to serve them had now become largely focused on the military solely.

6.5 Democratic implications of institutional manipulations

6.5.1 Equal and inclusive citizenship?

The opening up of political life was a regime response to strategically deal with the political and economic challenges. Troubles in the East Bank hinterlands indicated an eroding alliance, which the monarchy could not afford to lose. The withdrawal of Jordanian citizenships from Palestinians on the West Bank resulted in approximately 750,000 stateless people (Maktabi 1998). Despite being generous with the distribution of legal citizenship in 1949, the denaturalization of West Bank Jordanians followed by wider forms of political participation was the regime's way of addressing problems related to the distribution of power. As Maktabi explains, citizenship embodies two elements: the expansion or contraction of membership status which is a *structural* element, whilst a *procedural* element revolves around the participatory project between rulers and ruled (ibid.). Thus, the former Jordanians on the West Bank were no longer included as members, something which addresses the structural element of citizenship.

6.5.2 Democratic political representation through parties and elections

The reopening of political life gave more political space and can be seen as a move towards democratization. However, the exclusion marks a higher degree of authoritarian rule (Maktabi 1998), and the "liberal bargain" resulted in an electoral law that sought to use parliamentary (over)representation to redirect state patronage towards the hinterlands (Jadaliyya 2012). The monarchy used institutional manipulation to design a system that favored tribal areas in order to enhance and sustain the hegemonic power of citizens of East Bank origin. Two-thirds of Jordan's population live in cities, but they are allocated less than a third of the seats in Parliament (BBC 2013). Instead, elections have largely become competition over the distribution over patronage, and not policymaking. The strong

characteristics of competitive clientelism affect those who choose to run for office. Tendencies in elite-led authoritarian regimes would typically be that of trying to exclude the opposition. In contrast, those in opposition in Jordan know how the system work and often refuse to run in elections they believe are undemocratic, as they do not want to lend legitimacy to it. The result is a self-selection of candidates who are pro-regime or moderately opposed to the regime. Elections over patronage tend to weaken already weak political parties and fragment them even further. The overall result of little coordination over entrance, weak parties, and patronage-based voting is that there will be high turnover in Parliament (as candidates can easily promise, less easily deliver). State elites will continue to control resources to distribute, and pro-regime legislatures will be promoted (Lust-Okar 2008: 87-88).

Since 1989, Jordanian elections have not been characterized by widespread corruption, as many may think. This clearly demonstrates the incumbents' ability to 'manipulate' or manage competition, which is greatly illustrated with the 1993 election law. As the 1989 election resulted in IAF making up the single largest bloc in Parliament, the Palace faced problems as a Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty became a possible reality. IAF was against peace with Israel and the Palace needed to limit IAF's presence in the upcoming election. The change was simply that instead of allowing voters to cast multiple votes in multimember districts, they could now cast only one vote. Consequently, the changes worked in favor of the conservative forces. With multiple votes, individuals tend to cast a few votes for candidates they believe are able to provide them with resources, and other votes for those who represent their ideologies. However, when elections are a competition over patronage distribution and not policymaking, people will usually cast their ballot for personal gain when restricted to only one vote (Lust-Okar 2008: 92). Today, the regime has quite successfully marginalized the Muslim Brotherhood. The monarchy's institutional manipulation restrains broad representation of Palestinians and political parties such as the IAF. Indirectly, members are robbed the right to participate in the formation of rules and norms in the polity – what Maktabi refers to as the procedural element of political participation.

6.6 Conclusion

The relation between pluralism and democracy in Jordan is complex because the regime has practiced both inclusive and exclusive forms of political pluralism. With the expansion and

contractions of membership, along with institutional manipulations of the electoral system, politics of citizenship in Jordan is marked not only by exclusionary traits, but also by its exclusiveness. The influx of Palestinians has created a counterweight among Transjordanians, but also a fear of a potential Palestinian takeover. For this reason, the East Bankers are so important for the stability of the regime and has made it crucial for the monarchy to make sure they remain loyal. The socioeconomic fault line between the Amman-based elite and the rural East Bankers, combined with a political economy infused by rents, have created a communitarian pattern of political associations and prevented the emergence of a proper national opposition. These communal divisions have given the Hashemites an opportunity to create a resilient, cohesive power and have enabled it to create crosscutting coalitions that have helped it overcome internal and external challenges. Instead of social forces organized horizontally along lines of income or class, the result is entrenched vertical schisms amongst the elite and at mass levels. Because the regime has refused to move away from the SNTV system, Jordanian politics remain fragmented after more than two decades of gradual liberalization. However, an important lesson to draw from this is that Jordan's historical past above all has created an "economic dependence" of the state, which I believe has contributed to push forth the pattern of protests witnessed today.

7 The Jordanian Spring

In this chapter I will give a brief introduction to the course of events since the outbreak of the Arab Spring in Jordan. Then, I choose to focus on a few critical turning points; that is, specific situations or processes, so-called “moments of transparency.” However, I place my analysis alongside mainstream topics that most analysts of Jordanian politics agree upon as major. These are events that reveal underlying and obvious issues of dispute, which in turn have had a great impact on steering the course and outcome of the Arab Spring in Jordan. I have chosen to highlight three events I deem critical: 1) the veteran movement’s public manifesto; 2) the 2012 fuel price protests; and 3) the electoral law debate. First, I focus on the veterans’ movement and the retired army generals’ highly controversial manifesto to King Abdullah. Fury from this group indicates that their social pact with the monarchy might rupture, and thus the regime is in risk of losing one of its most important pillars of support. This group was early to mobilize, even before the outbreak of the Arab Spring, and has opted for a harsh line of criticism against the monarchy. They have further been able to mobilize other groups, including Islamists and the diffuse movement called the *hirak* (movement). The dynamics and mobilization of these forces of reform reveal valuable insight into the balance between the monarchy and the opposition, and how the former has attempted to contain these. Second, I wish to highlight how the economic crisis in Jordan has been an underlying cause to the grievances pre- and post-Arab Spring. Jordan’s financial dilemma reached a peak in November 2012 when the government was forced to lift subsidies on a number of basic products to avert an economic collapse. The decision caused massive fury and resentment against the regime reached a peak. People took to the streets in a much larger scale, and for the first time people whispered about an Arab Spring in Jordan. Last, but not least, the electoral law battle deserves attention. Not only has it been a victim of contention, it has also been *the* most central issue among political and liberal efforts. The outcome of the electoral law and the election was a determinant factor and the struggles around this reveal important components for the country’s stability.

In chapter 7.5 and 7.6, I will turn more systematically to a discussion of the designated events in accordance with my assessment framework (chapter 3.4) and the chosen democratic institutions. Are the actors that influence the formation and implementation of the electoral law in Jordan adhering to democratic rules and regulations? Do they promote the principle of equal representation between citizens, or are they rather blocking the institutions that allow

more democratic popular representation? Furthermore, what are the actors' political capacities? The approach the regime has taken in these processes – and how people have responded to this, become a decisive part of the answer to my puzzle. It also captures how the critical aspects of democratization interact and change. How do the strategies and government policies of vital actors affect democratization, and vice versa? Finally the democratization theories presented in chapter 3.3 will be used to shed light on these findings and will further be compared to see which perspective explains the development better. The chapter will be informed by extensive use of secondary sources, supported by interview material.

7.1 The roots of rage

Signs of disquiet in Jordan were already in motion before 2011, as economic growth faltered, inflation had risen considerably, and unemployment and poverty were estimated at 12 and 25 percent (Al Jazeera 2011a). Among the upper-middle income countries in the region, Jordan has one of the youngest populations with 38 percent of its approximately 6.3 million citizens being under the age of 14 (World Bank 2013). The country's economy had been struggling for a while, and reached a record high budget deficit of \$3 billion in 2012 (Reuters 2012). Strikes had occurred more frequently in the past years, accompanied by small-scale demonstrations against elite corruption. Now, the Arab Spring stepped this up a gear.

7.1.1 Course of events

The protests were mostly peaceful and mild in intensity. People did not want wholesale revolution, but political reforms and economic concessions. Some claimed protests were the only venue they could express their demands, since the Parliament only served as a “rubber stamp” to the executive branch (Al Jazeera 2011a).

The Arab Spring was a continuation of the moral economy of protests that had been sparked by the previous economic liberalization and structural adjustments, mainly led by East Bankers. Into the Arab Spring, the Muslim Brotherhood started to piggyback on protests to push for an agenda of constitutional and political reforms. Eventually, protesters consisted of Islamists, secular opposition groups, labor associations, and retired army generals, amongst others – all of them calling for substantial political and economic reforms. For the first time, tribal Bedouins were seen demonstrating with other groups in demand for change

(Washington Post 2011b). While lacking the money to ease unrest, the regime felt the need to respond. On 1 February 2011, King Abdullah II dismissed the government and replaced Prime Minister Rifai with Marouf Al Bakhit, instructing him to form a new government that would implement genuine political reform based on a clear action plan (CNN 2011).

In the following months, demonstrations continued and King Abdullah made the electoral reform the center of his reform vision. He established the National Dialogue Committee (NDC) to draft a new electoral law and amend the law on political parties, and he set up a royal commission to draft a constitutional reform proposal. The latter was deliberated behind closed doors with constitutional changes that did little to alter the balance of power between Parliament, government, the Royal Palace and security agencies (ICG 2012: 3-4). On 19 June 2012, Jordan's Parliament passed a new electoral law with hopes for an upcoming election by the end of the same year. However, the new electoral law caused massive protests, leading opposition groups like the Brotherhood to threaten boycotting the upcoming election unless the lawmakers revised it.

The monarch initiated a series of efforts to meet people's demands, but for many, the reform process hauled out. The well-known tactic of replacing the prime minister and the government when pressure amounts, was no longer feasible. The changes of governments revealed an absence of political will to reform, and with every shift, reform was the victim (New York Times 2012b). By October 2012, Jordan had its fifth government in two years (CNN 2012). The changes in the constitution and the electoral law were considered by many as sheer cosmetic, and the Muslim Brotherhood's IAF ended up boycotting the 23 January 2013 elections. Despite positive attempts, the regime has for the past two years also revealed its authoritarian side. It has skillfully attempted to create divisions, as to hinder a strong, united opposition. Harsh restrictions on freedom of press and expression have also been set. However, the regime has benefitted from the chaos in Syria which has curbed protests in fear of a spillover or a similar scenario in Jordan. In the end, one can question whether the liberal reforms and the election have been a solution to the "king's dilemma."

7.2 The veteran movement: forces of change

When King Abdullah II took over after his father in 1999, he started on a new path that pushed more vigorously for liberal reforms. He reorganized a two-tier military, where the

special forces command were being given extra privileges at the expense of the mainstream army (Tell 2013b) This created a shift that focused more on the military elite than the East Bank population. Larger personnel in armor and artillery were put to pension, something which fueled a growing movement of army veterans. What followed the generational power shift was also a shift in the regime elite. Under King Hussein, the elite was formed by the *mukhabarat* and its supporters, consisting mainly of East Bankers. Now, a new counter-elite appeared, consisting of liberals wanting to modernize and push for more market based reforms. The veterans' reaction to the increasing misery among themselves and in the hinterlands, were sparked in 2009 when dock workers in Aqaba struck against an attempt to privatize the port which would have lost them their social housing. Because of the elite struggle, the local army commander sided with the dock workers. However, King Abdullah reacted by using full-scale repression through the *darak* forces (Tell 2013). This set the tone for the *hirak* after 2009 and during the Arab Spring.

7.2.1 A Jordanian Spring before an Arab Spring?

The elite struggle and the 2009 protest encouraged a series of workers' strikes in the spring of 2010. Along came the emergence of mass movements among teachers, and the demands for a Teacher's Union. Although it all started out as social demands, it became part of a larger Transjordanian movement. With the continuation of a 'moral economy' of protests against economic liberalization, the real re-intervention of the elite occurred in May 2010: the National Committee of Military Veterans issued a manifesto to King Abdullah that called for genuine transformation of Jordanian politics; the abandonment of neoliberalism; demands to constitutionalize the disengagement from the West Bank of July 1988; to disenfranchise the Palestinian population of the kingdom; and a strengthening of the military to deal with the Zionist threat by adopting guerrilla warfare methods (Foreign Policy 2010). The letter reacted to the Jordanian government's seemingly adherence to American-Israeli policies that would potentially allow Israel to expel West Bank Palestinians into Jordan (The Independent 2010). This petition was a *big* deal considering it was coming from "the king's men." Additional controversy was created due to the sensitive nature of the issues that were addressed, in particular the question of Palestinian refugees which touches the very heart of the regime's relationship with its Transjordanian backbone.

Although the “veterans’ uprising” eventually faded, it marked a new era in national and regional politics. Their direct criticism, including implications of Queen Rania’s involvement in appointments of Palestinians into key posts in the government, signaled a statement of clash (Foreign Policy 2010). Most of their statements can be aligned with the claims of the Transjordanian national movement, but it was also a sign of the gradual process in recent years, whereby senior army veterans interfered in political matters. The pressure on the regime was further complicated by a public letter to the king in early 2011, signed by 36 tribe members who demanded an end to corruption and the king’s wide-reaching political power (Los Angeles Times 2011). Later, Ahmad Obeidat – a former prime minister and head of the *mukhabarat* – issued a petition containing an even sharper edge regarding the issue of Israel and the peace process than the army veterans’ manifesto had. However, it was more moderate concerning the Palestinian population in Jordan. The petition was signed by thousands of people, both Jordanians and Palestinians, including leading figures within the political, economic and social elite and counter-elite. While signatories may have joined the petition to safeguard national unity, or rather for pure anti-Israeli sentiments, it represents the only politically defensible vision uniting the Transjordanians and the Palestinian elite: the cancellation of the peace agreement with Israel and the struggle against it (ibid.).

7.2.2 A divided polity

The letters signaled the erosion of the regime’s old time power base. More importantly, they showed the growing concern of the refugee issue and Israel’s expansion, both among the Transjordanian and the Palestinian elite. The various opposition groups have been mixed, but there are mainly three groups that have stood out during the last two years in Jordan: the Muslim Brotherhood; the National Front for Reform (NFR); and the *hirak*. Together, these groups represent both East Bank Jordanians and Jordanians of Palestinian origin, secular and Islamists, and affiliated youth. Despite being a divided polity with specific grievances and demands, the protest movements’ overall focus has been converging: the calls to end political and economic corruption.

Not long after onset of the Arab Spring, the army veterans spearheaded the most impressive single demonstration in Jordan. The demonstration was spread throughout Jordan and up to 35,000 people took to the streets. Islamists had kept themselves in the background, but now they started to join the demonstrations, focusing more on political than economic reform.

Nine weeks of continuous protests raised the idea of a Jordanian Spring. This led King Abdullah to pursue a new strategy with measures aimed at containing the *hirak*.

Many of the demonstrators have been affiliated with the *hirak*, an amorphous collection of protest groups composed mainly of disaffected East Bankers (The Globe and Mail 2012a). However, the term has been loosely applied by Western observers and political analysts to describe the opposition in general. To get a better sense of *whom* exactly the *hirak* is I asked one of my interviewees. He explained that the *hirak* was the result of the lack of one, or several, political parties that could represent their vision. Because of the long period political parties were banned, the real players had become the regime and the Muslim Brotherhood. When the Arab Spring broke out, neither of them could be major players. Thus, the *hirak* was largely young, frustrated people who did not belong to any particular party. They often had university degrees, but were left with few opportunities of having a job and were struggling financially. These movements started in the southern parts of the country and grew out of grievances that neither the Brotherhood, nor secular parties, could represent as a popular vision. That the movement is unorganized has been both its strength and its weakness, my informant claimed: strength because they cannot be controlled by the regime. A weakness because it was giving the regime consent that they would not pose a real threat. Their claims are based on a feeling of entitlement. Another informant of mine elaborated on the 'social contract' that has traditionally been between the Hashemites and the tribes: the state will provide certain benefits, and the tribes will in turn be loyal to the regime:

You see it daily. You can read between the lines in articles: 'The king goes out to meet with certain tribes. Then the next day they get jobs, or a new government project is announced in their area and they will employ 300 people.' You have to read between the lines that this is something that obviously was negotiated.

The problem today is the huge generational gap. Tribes are not unified anymore, not even within the same tribe. The elders seem to respect the social contract and the unity with the government, but the younger ones do not see that being relevant for the life they are trying to live. He continued:

Back in the days, loyalty included giving land to a certain tribe and they would employ their youth and family. Now, agriculture has died. A new generation tribal youth are trying to be

‘Ammanis’ (term for people living in Amman). They are Jordanians with a university degree who do not work with agriculture, but want a job. How can you buy people that can’t be bought the traditional way?

The disconnection between young and old show the contrast between the tribal elders – who mainly demand the same privileges they have been given in the past – and the younger generation who has been marginalized and are tired of not benefiting from anything. Job creation generally favors older people or expatriates. Of the 55,000 jobs that were created between 2001 and 2007, foreign workers took around 63 percent of these (Noueihed and Warren 2012: 36). Huge public institutions and government departments have been the main priority in tribal areas. The result is large hospitals with bad service, universities where the degrees are worthless, etc. The purpose has been to create as many jobs as possible, but this is unsustainable in the long run.

Since powerful tribal leaders for decades have received monthly grants from the royal court to ensure their loyalty during times of crisis, they can still be seen as part of an anti-reform force. Obviously, they do not enjoy widespread public support, neither within their own tribe (Al Jazeera 2012). Thus, the East Bankers not only diverge when it comes to demands, but they also make up both sides in the battle: the forces for change, as well as the anti-reform forces.

7.2.3 A united opposition: The National Front for Reform

On 7 October 2011, after a rather calm September, protests resumed. This time a 2000-people march in central Amman was led by Ahmad Obeidat. There were also marches in several other cities. Being a former prime minister with numerous periods as a member of the Senate and a former director of the GID – Obeidat had gone from being a regime supporter, at most a moderate reformer, to leading an opposition coalition demanding substantial democratic reforms. This broad coalition, the National Front for Reform (NFR), consisted of people from the Democratic People’s Party, the Communist Party, the Popular Unity Party, the IAF, the Baathist Progressive Party, the Socialist Party, the Nation, the Movement of the Social Left, as well as trade unions and youth bodies (Middle East Monitor 2011). In the party’s reform document, they state their visions for comprehensive democratic reform, including a reform of the security establishment that will abolish the exceptional power granted to security officers which leads to their interference without legal basis in the management of elections.

Consistent with Obeidat's petition earlier that year, they also called to defend Jordan from instability and the Zionist threat, which means maintaining Palestinians the right to return to their homeland Palestine and "strongly condemn and reject the concept of the 'alternative homeland' (ibid.).

My informant – a member of the NFR – explained that the party was a response to the lack of political alternatives and an attempt to unite a broad coalition. For these reasons, the party was now collaborating with both the Muslim Brotherhood and the *hirak* – trying to unite different components, which was not an easy job, he claimed. He believed there were many misconceptions about the Brotherhood. The secular elite in Jordan see them the 'old' way; as created by Islamic fundamentalists that do not seek democracy or equality among citizens based on religion and belief. "Originally, I am considered to be against them, but we collaborate now on certain fields," he said. "If they had not agreed [on democracy and equality among citizens], we would not have collaborated with them."

7.2.4 Regime strategy: splitting the opposition

The crosscutting demands from the divided opposition pose a great challenge to the monarch. Being the biggest and most well-organized political party in Jordan, chances are that the Muslim Brotherhood with its strong support among the disenfranchised Palestinian population, would fare quite well should there be an election that allowed fair competition between political parties. On the other hand there are East Bank tribes who seek to reinforce the long-established status quo and who are allied to elements from the security apparatus. So, with the NFR trying to unite several of these forces, how has the monarch responded in order to contain the opposition? The most obvious answer is by seeking reform, the second is by using the well-known divide-and-conquer tactic.

Among the military retirees, the king disorganized the group by separating the radical group who issued the manifesto, from those army veterans that still benefit from pensions and who have various services delivered to them (Tell 2013b). The latter group is largely beneficiaries who occupy important positions in the state through favoritism, nepotism and tribal pressures (Al Jazeera 2012). Thus, the monarchy accomplished to maintain supporters both within the tribes and among the military veterans. However, any move that would empower the IAF and allow for a fairer representation of the Palestinian population would directly challenge the

position of the East Bankers. Contrary, a consolidation of East Bank domination will decrease the chances of political reform and result in greater fury from the Muslim Brotherhood (European Council on Foreign Relations 2012). While there are common demands from both sides, it becomes inevitable to overlook the identity issue between East Bank Jordanians and Palestinians. The regime is well aware of this social and socioeconomic division and has used it to its advantage.

The first sign of an attempt to sow discord occurred in January 2011, when a fake pamphlet portrayed to be represented by East Bankers circulated on the internet, blaming Palestinians for the current situation. However, it failed to trigger tensions between the groups as those named in the document quickly disregarded it as a bluff (ICG 2012: 23). Another known event is the 24 March 2011 sit-in organized by nonpartisan and trans-communal youth of both East Bank and Palestinian origin, including left-leaning and Muslim Brotherhood affiliated individuals. Their objective was to confront the authorities with nonviolent political action to test their commitment to civil liberties. As a response, the security forces allowed counter-demonstrators to use violence before they attempted to stop it. The protesters suffered a joint attack from plain-clothed individuals and uniformed security forces which resulted in one fatality and over 100 injured (ibid.: 16). Later, the assailants and ‘royalist’ youth labeled the demonstrators as “Palestinians” and “Islamist traitors,” trying to justify the attack. Even the prime minister had appeared on television stating that the sit-in was orchestrated by Islamists, when in fact it was not. Similar incidents have been registered and what raises the suspicion even more has been the security forces’ slow response when pro-reform demonstrators have been attacked –despite knowledge of the protests beforehand. Moreover, independent investigations of the clashes have not been carried out. This automatically puts people at odds with each other and leaves little doubt that some of these incidents were planned by the security agencies and protected by the authorities (ibid.: 24-25).

7.2.5 Unequal citizenship

Playing on the division between secularist and Islamists and Palestinians and East Bankers is nothing new. It helps the regime to keep the balance and people in check. As the army veterans’ manifesto and Obeidat’s petition show, the “Palestinian issue” regarding the West Bank is very much alive. The veterans’ manifesto was clearly against the uncontrolled flow

of Palestinians from the East Bank into Jordan. Since Palestinians make up more than half of the Jordanian population, many fear that the unresolved issue of a Palestinian state will lead to an alternative homeland and a Palestinian takeover in Jordan. Palestinians on the other hand, want greater political power that reflects their demographic share in the country, especially since they have been more or less excluded from the public sector and security apparatus since ‘Black September’ –the civil war in 1970 (ICG 2012: 1). However, if Palestinians gain more access through a proportional electoral law, many government supporters fear this could pull Jordan into the Palestinian-Israeli conflict due to the absence of a Palestinian state (Al Jazeera 2011b). With the added socioeconomic tension between the two groups, people are clearly pulling in different directions.

Another element that further complicates Jordan’s social composition is the large number of Palestinian refugees that do not hold Jordanian citizenship. As noncitizen residents, roughly 600,000 refugees – overwhelmingly Palestinian, cannot vote (Freedom House 2012c). If granted citizenship, they would represent a huge bloc of voters whose interests would align neither with the East Bank population, nor with Jordan’s Palestinian elite, thereby creating a new social cleavage (Europe’s World 2012). Being partly excluded from politics, the Palestinians’ situation worsened in 2008 when the government started withdrawing Jordanian citizenships from Palestinian nationals. Denaturalization of these individuals are claimed to have been carried out by instructions by a secret committee within the security apparatus (Open Democracy 2013b).

7.2.6 Summary

The veterans’ manifesto and Obeidat’s petition signaled a new era which poses a threat to the stability of the monarchy and indicate disintegration among the elite in its support base. The Arab Spring sparked the mobilization of unaffiliated youth, and opposition groups developed skills to develop broader coalitions that defied ethnic, ideological, and religious boundaries, like the NFR. Despite a divided polity, people wanted economic and political reforms. However, King Abdullah still holds support from tribal leaders, which is critical when he faces challenges from East Bank loyalists as well as Palestinians. The regime strategy to contain the opposition has been to play on divisions and sow discord, framing Islamists and Palestinians. The monarch’s dilemma is to continue on the path that protects East Bankers as

the privileged group, or to give into substantial democratic reforms that will empower the Palestinian population and the Muslim Brotherhood.

7.3 The 2012 fuel price protest

Along with trying to balance various domestic forces, the regime also had to deal with external and domestic realities that affected the political climate in Jordan. In particular a halting economy, cuts in foreign aid, and Syria's ongoing civil war played a big role.

If Jordan's economic prospects were poor at the onset of the Arab Spring, it seemed to decline further the next two years. Due to the instability in the region, Jordan lost valuable income in form of tourism and foreign investment. In the absence of donations from Arab states, grants from abroad had plunged by 98 percent in the first nine months of 2012 (Bloomberg 2012). Furthermore, a series of attacks on the gas pipeline running through the Sinai Peninsula interrupted the cheap supply of Egyptian gas to Jordan, forcing the government to buy costlier fuel on the open market. In July 2012, the IMF agreed to provide Jordan with \$2 billion over the next three years. Analysts interpreted the generous loan as a sign of support because of Jordan's strategic importance (The Globe and Mail 2012b). However, some disagreed that the loans would remedy Jordan's budgetary problems. A Jordanian economist claimed the loan would not be able to fix the fundamental problems, which are embedded in the bloated public sector and security apparatus (ibid.). A similar dynamic has created a generous system of grants and subsidies for staples such as food, power and fuel. Nonetheless, the financial restraints forced the government in May 2012 to curb public spending by raising the prices of these products.

To secure the IMF loan, the government in November 2012 was forced to lift fuel subsidies to avert an economic collapse. Having in mind the public fury that exploded in the southern parts of Jordan after price hikes in 1989 and 1996, the government had so far been reluctant to raise fuel prices. With a budget deficit reaching \$3 billion, 11 percent of GDP, Prime Minister Ensour stated that the decision was inevitable (Reuters 2012). Jordan had been spending nearly a quarter of its yearly budget on subsidies, and this was the first major price rise for petrol since early 2011. Until now, the Arab Spring had pushed the government to expand social spending and to keep gas prices low, in fear of creating more fury (ibid.). In fact, previous attempts at increasing the price on fuel earlier in September had resulted in one

of the largest demonstrations since the beginning of the Arab Spring. The then-10 percent price increase caused thousands of Jordanians to protest. A series of evening protests led by the Muslim Brotherhood, rallied for the resignation of then-Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh for making the decision. Even the Royal Palace was targeted. It was blamed for condoning the continued corruption –the real reason for the country’s economic crisis (Trend 2012a). However, the monarch rapidly responded to the nationwide antigovernment protest and the following day King Abdullah suspended the government decision (Trend 2012b). Although the king has the constitutional power to appoint and dismiss the government, such direct involvement indicates the severity of the issue.

Now, with a price rise of 53 percent for cooking gas, 33 percent for diesel, and 14 percent for lower grade petrol – the price hikes intensified resentment against the regime. People took to the streets in a much larger scale and dimension of anger than had expressed itself earlier, leading to more than a hundred demonstrations across the kingdom. Riots broke out, followed by violence towards authorities and property, as well as sharp criticism directed at the king. While demonstrations since the beginning of 2011 had largely been peaceful and with a restrained police force, these protests featured blocked roads with burning tires, violence and the occasional use of tear gas to disperse demonstrators. Several police officers and civilians were injured during the riots, whilst one person was killed. The use of language was also harsh; in the small city of Dhiban, protesters burnt pictures of King Abdullah, whilst in Amman, people chanted they wanted the fall of the regime (New York Times 2012c).

Despite protests now seemed to have been taken to a whole new level, the government felt they could handle the situation and did not see any reason to impose martial law. They made it clear that if demonstrations were not in line with the constitution, they would use force to halt it. The intensified protests and criticism against the monarchy led to the arrest of more than 150 people across the country (Bloomberg 2012). This time around, protesters failed to make the government take any action to change its decision. The social and political divisions in the kingdom had for a long time shielded it from developing a unified opposition like those seen in Egypt and Tunisia, but now frustration became a common denominator for different opposition groups. As the vice chairman of the Muslim Brotherhood pointed out, the organization had throughout the Arab Uprisings sought to expand its alliance with unions, Islamist extremists known as Salafists, as well as the *hirak*.

7.3.1 Stabilizing factors

Apart from the protests related to the increasing fuel prices, demonstrations in most of 2012 and 2013 were clearly affected by the worsening situation in Syria. With the potential threat of a spillover, Jordanians became more apprehensive to protest and they decided to embrace Jordan's stability and not rock the boat too much. Syrian refugees poured into Jordan on a daily basis, something which put further restraints on economic and natural resources. Some allege that the influx of Syrian refugees is a strategic move. "Refugees come with money. It's the same they did with the Iraqi refugees," one informant told me. Because of Jordan's financial situation, it is more sensitive towards external pressure, as the main pressure comes from money. The international interests lie in stability, but the real pressure can come from Americans and the Gulf. Aid depends to a large extent on Jordan's stand towards Syria, in particular for Qatar. Also, the Islamist regimes in Egypt and Tunisia have affected Jordanians that fear an Islamist takeover, which have further contributed to contain the situation.

7.3.2 Regime responses: use of force and limited freedom of speech

Shortly after the price hikes, the director of the Public Security Department said that Jordan would "strike with an iron fist" protester who use illegal means to express their frustration. He further stressed that freedom of expression was guaranteed, but that demonstrations should be peaceful (Bloomberg 2012). However, the meaning of 'illegal means' and 'freedom of expression' can obviously be discussed. Just two months earlier, Jordanian anti-riot forces had stormed a protest in the southern city of Tafileh (Hindu 2012). Eyewitnesses reported that the authorities fired tear gas to disperse the crowd after the protesters had begun to shout slogans insulting the king. Activists themselves claimed that the rally had been peaceful until words like 'royal palace' and 'regime' were used, and the forces had answered by storming them. Fifteen participants were arrested for attempting to "undermine the regime" and "incite a riot" (ibid.). In fact, those who are jailed on charges of incitement to change the constitution and to overthrow the government, risk the death penalty (New York Times 2012c).

Also before the Arab Spring, there were strict rules and regulations on freedom of press and media. Conversations I had with a journalist from the newspaper *Al Rai* – a pro-government newspaper – confirmed the self-censoring process journalists go through before anything is published. Arabic newspapers would also be more cautious to publish articles on sensitive

issues, more so than the English newspaper *The Jordan Times*. Since 2011, however, freedom of expression has posed a greater challenge to the regime than ever before. People have dared to express their opinions more directly, and they have definitely stretched the boundaries. In May 2012, protesters observed in central Amman were chanting “Ali Baba the Second and his 40 thieves,” whilst dancing the traditional *dabka*. It was unmistakably a direct reference to King Abdullah (Washington Post 2012). In September 2012, protesters –closely watched by police forces, gathered in Amman demanding the release of dozens of activists who had been arrested a few days earlier charged with opposing the regime, criticizing the royal family and violating security.

The regime clearly felt a growing pressure which drove it to make amendments to Jordan’s Press and Publication Law. The House of Representatives, the Senate and the king approved legislation that imposed tough restrictions faced by domestic print media on online news Web sites and would give the government new powers to block domestic and international Web pages (New York Times 2012a). Under the new legislation, Web sites dealing with “press materials” are forced to register and obtain licenses from the Department of Press and Publication and pay a registration fee of more than \$1,400. They are further forced to appoint a chief editor that will be held accountable for all comments posted on their Web site (Freedom House 2012a).

The authorities have not only shown a low tolerance for criticism against the monarchy and the government, but likewise for the security services and sensitive topics such as allegations of corruption. In July, a prominent writer and political commentator appeared on a talk show in Jordan where he discussed the pledges to enact reforms and called for attention to the problems related to corruption and a powerful intelligence agency. The following day the satellite channel closed the company and suspended their Web site due to “financial problems.” Then-prime minister Tarawneh later confessed to ordering the closure (Freedom House 2012b).

The security apparatus is claimed to be heavily politicized and to exercise great influence over political life by limiting freedom of speech and assembly (Freedom House 2012c). Security agencies have the legal right to access IP addresses and the police have considerable discretion in monitoring and sanctioning online content. To provide an example, one of my acquaintances from Amman – an American who had lived in Jordan for three and a half years

at the time – was detained and refused reentry into Jordan after a trip abroad. After having been heavily questioned by security officers at the airport, he was told “the *mukhabarat* says that you are not allowed into Jordan” (Fox 2013). Obviously, the intelligence services had picked up on his coverage of the opposition movement, which had been published in the Carnegie Endowment’s *Sada* and at CNN iReport. The content described the escalating frustration in Jordan and translated some of the statements from the opposition that had been critical towards the king, including blaming the royal family for corruption. Although he was allowed into Jordan after a 26-hours detention, it is beyond doubt that the *mukhabarat* uses fear tactics to stem people’s mounting criticism of its policies.

7.3.3 Summary

Jordan resembles a rentier state as a result of massive foreign aid. However, with growing debt due to a costly subsidy system and a large bureaucracy, it has now become untenable with decreased foreign aid. The November 2012 subsidy cut was an attempt to show commitment and fiscal consolidation to gain support and international aid. The sudden and steep price increase affected the population hard and further strengthened the underlying grievances to people’s demand for reforms. With increased public fury, violence escalated, but the regime stood firm in its decision. The situation was contained indirectly by the instability in Syria, and directly by regime measures; moderate use of force, a low tolerance of public criticism against authorities and severe restrictions on online and media through amendments in the Press and Publication Law.

7.4 The electoral law battle

The battle revolving around the electoral law had already existed for a decade prior to the Arab Spring. Forces of reform, fronted by the Muslim Brotherhood in particular, demanded an electoral law with more proportional districts, as well as the removal of the SNTV system. With continued demonstrations, King Abdullah on 15 March established the NDC to draft a new electoral law and amend a law on political parties within three months. The 53-member committee consisted of former prime ministers, opposition figures, three Islamists, and civil society actors. However, the IAF, refused to take part. They stated they would only participate if constitutional amendments were included on the agenda. As a result, the NDC soon lost momentum and the committee’s recommendations were in effect shelved soon after they were delivered in June 2011.

As part of the reform package, a new Independent Election Commission (IEC) would ensure free and fair elections, instead of being overseen by the Ministry of Interior. In May 2012, King Abdullah appointed the chairperson and four members to the Board of Commissioners. Overall, the commission was considered as a positive step (IFES 2013). It committed itself to electoral transparency and invited civil society organizations, political parties and observer groups to deliberate a new draft by the board. It further committed itself to be under both national and international observation during the electoral preparations (ibid.). In the same month as the IEC was created, the Parliament also adopted a new political party's law that would make it easier to create new parties, but discouraged parties founded on religious or tribal affiliations (Freedom House 2013a).

The June 2012 electoral law came with the promises of a more proportional electoral system that would create freer and fairer elections. The vote however, was not without contention. Twenty MPs threatened to resign over the proposed law after a monarchist lawmaker insulted and attacked a MP who, in vain, proposed amendments to raise the number of seats reserved for candidates who run on party lists. The proposal would be a move designed to boost opposition parties (European Forum 2012). The new electoral law approved a mixed electoral system that featured a majority vote at the governorate level and a closed proportional list at the national level. This gave each voter two votes: one for a candidate at district level under the old SNTV-system, and another for candidates competing under a proportional electoral system at the national level (Jordan Times 2012a). Proportional representation (PR) should in theory provide nationwide ideological alliances like the Islamists a better chance to compete with the region or family based politicians. The seats in Parliament were raised from 120 to 140. Of these, only 17 seats would be designated from the closed proportional list at the national level. The remaining seats would be elected at the governorate level, which would be contested in 45 constituencies in the country's 12 governorates (European Forum 2012).

The electoral law caused massive ire among the opposition. The disagreement revolved around the 17 seats (12 percent) of the 140-seat Parliament. Such a low number would fail to yield much power. Moreover, lawmakers had failed to address the unfair districting or to remove the SNTV-system. In response to the objections, King Abdullah instructed the Parliament to convene an extraordinary session to reconsider the election law (Carnegie Endowment 2012). A few days later the government announced the result; they proposed to

increase the number of seats allocated at the national level through PR from 17 to 27. With the additional ten seats, the total number of seats in the chamber of deputies increased to 150 (Jordan Times 2012b). In other words, the change made little difference when the total number was increased as well.

The electoral reform also introduced another significant change. For the first time, members of the security forces were now allowed to vote. These individuals – mostly with tribal background, rely on the regime for their livelihoods. Consequently, they are unlikely to vote for the opposition (Carnegie Endowment 2012).

7.4.1 The 2013 Parliamentary elections

The Muslim Brotherhood's IAF has chosen to boycott a majority of the elections run under the SNTV system. The organization chose the same strategy during the reform process, including the 2013 elections. The NFR also stayed away from the ballot boxes. The boycott led Jordan's seventeenth parliamentary election to be a contest between tribal leaders, establishment figures and business elites, including a very small minority of candidates running for recognized parties (Al Jazeera 2013). Although the election was considered one of the freest in Jordan's history, only 56 percent of the 70 percent that registered for election voted (Tell 2013b). More than 7,000 local observers and almost 500 international observers were monitoring the polls. However, violations were reported. A group of civilian observers had been denied entry into some polling stations. There were also evidence that vote-buying had occurred, with votes being sold for up to \$140 (Al Jazeera 2013).

For the first time, elections were based on a framework where parliamentarians would choose the prime minister, not the king. However, one month after the elections the Brotherhood resumed protests against what they considered a sham election. They called for a more substantial electoral reform and more comprehensive constitutional changes that would devolve more of the king's prerogatives to the Parliament (Reuters 2013). On 9 March 2013 –preceded by consultations between the Palace and the new Parliament, Abdullah Ensour was appointed as the “new” prime minister. Ensour had been the fifth prime minister since the start of the regional Arab Spring, when he was appointed by King Abdullah in October 2012. The replacement of the prime minister does not exactly call for radical change and there were similar signs of continuity. The new Parliament elected Saad Hayel Srouf as the speaker of

parliament, although he had served the same post several times. Former Prime Minister Tarawneh was appointed Chief of the Royal Hashemite Court. Both men are known to be conservative officials (ibid.).

Since the elections, the protest movement has become smaller, but the initial grievances still persist. As IAF's secretary general expressed: "The issue goes beyond elections: with the continuing influence of the intelligence and the royal court, and with the king's continued powers, even a good Parliament would yield limited results" (ICG 2012: 22). The protest movement has more or less died down and people have lost faith in its ability to make substantial changes. Syria and the crisis in the region have played the biggest role in this. Jordanians are grateful for their stability and have seemed to come to terms with settling with stability, rather than democracy. As one Jordanian said: "I think Syria has been a gift in disguise for King Abdullah" (National Public Radio 2013).

7.4.2 Summary

King Abdullah responded to popular demands by establishing the NDC to draft the electoral law and the political party's law. However, the committee turned out to be poorly represented with a weak mandate. Yet, a positive step for freer and fairer elections was the IEC. The new electoral law proposed a mixed system that gave people a second vote for a closed proportional list at national level, but it failed to change inherent problems causing disproportional representation and limited access for political parties. King Abdullah intervened when massive anger increased and the electoral law was reconsidered – with almost insignificant changes. Several opposition groups boycotted the election, yet it still gave the image of being legitimate. Although protests persisted, they were softened in fear of creating instability.

7.5 Actors capacity and adherence to the democratic institutions

As detailed earlier, there are particularly four clusters of democratic rules and regulations that I deem essential for the processes that have occurred in Jordan. These institutions are important for realizing popular democratic representation through elections, but they also address the main issues of conflict between rulers and ruled. The respective critical processes

outlined above relate to each of these clusters. I will now discuss these institutions' strength, substance and scope accordingly. How do key actors adhere to the chosen democratic institutions and what are their capacities to fight exclusion; gain authority and legitimacy; put their concerns on the political agenda; mobilize and organize support; and use the means of participation and representation?

7.5.1 “Equal and inclusive citizenship with well-defined public affairs”

Jordan's politics of citizenship has a long history of inclusive and exclusive practices regarding its Palestinian population. There is much uncertainty surrounding the exact numbers of Palestinians in Jordan, most likely due to political reasons of avoiding to become the 'Alternative Homeland' of a two-state solution with Israel. The result has been a large number of stateless Palestinians that consequently has no political rights, and are thus excluded from the *demos*. The withdrawal of citizenships has no solid ground in either international or Jordanian law. In fact, article six in the Jordanian constitution states: “Jordanians shall be equal before the law with no discrimination between them in rights and duties even if they differ in race, language or religion.” Nevertheless, Palestinians that *do* have Jordanian citizenship are experiencing limited sociopolitical inclusion and have further been politically numbed by witnessing fellow citizens having their citizenships revoked. Denaturalization of Palestinians can clearly be seen as a move to intimidate Palestinians to fight for their civil and electoral rights in Jordan (Open Democracy 2013b).

So, to which degree has this strategy succeeded? As many may think, the Palestinian versus East Bank issue has not been a central concern during the Arab Spring. Because the streets in Jordan are much more fragmented (tribally, regionally, communally) than for example in Egypt where people have more sense of unity as a nation, the underlying issue of the *demos* cannot be ignored. Palestinians do want greater political influence, but they are simply not regarded as equals when it comes to politics. However, the puzzling question that appears is why Jordanians have not been calling for wholesale revolution, but rather just regime reform? Despite some insinuations for regime change when pressure reached a peak, these sentiments were not representative for the majority, including Jordanians of Palestinian origin. In fact, they are quite loyal to the monarchy, something which may stem from a sense of 'gratitude' since Jordan is the only country that has included Palestinian citizens to such a large extent compared to other states. It can also be questioned why poor Palestinians in east Amman

have not taken to the streets in large numbers. It is difficult to find any definitive answers to this, but possible explanations may lie both in a history of repression as well as having little hope of actually getting anything out of it.

East Bankers in the hinterlands have suffered much more from an economic deprivation than from political exclusion. Although economic and political marginalization are two different things, they are closely connected. The strength of the various opposition groups have been their ability to find unity and common concerns, despite differences among them. The common concerns have been growing corruption, a lack of parliamentary power, and an illegitimate electoral reform, which they have all deemed as important public matters that need to be dealt with. By uniting and expanding their coalitions, they have together become more powerful and have to a much larger degree succeeded in mobilizing. In lack of institutional vehicles, protests have been a way of getting incorporated into politics. Especially for Transjordanians in the hinterlands, the elitist interests of representatives have become more similar to those that live in the cities. Thus, their previous incorporation into politics through elitist populism and patronage is a link that has become defunct, and is now largely failing to reach the periphery. The trend of protests from 2009 and onwards have laid the foundation for today's *hirak*, and the NFR shows how the opposition – including unions and associations – have largely been a process of building organizations from below and fostering coordination units. A strong feature of the opposition movement is that it is composed of both common citizens as well as influential political figures.

Based on the social pact with the Hashemite family, Transjordanians possess social capital from which they can draw on to produce symbolic capital and political power. Their demands are built on a sense of economic entitlement. The value of their support to the monarchy is one that weighs heavily enough to force the regime to make the necessary concessions to ensure regime stability. However, the harsh critique expressed by the East Bank army veterans was a taboo and can in many ways be seen as the beginning of the end of the historical pact with the monarchy. King Abdullah is facing a critical dilemma, but he is also in a very good spot considering the circumstances. For the majority, the king is seen as a guarantor of stability that is able to balance the interest between powerful tribes and Jordanian-Palestinians. No other alternative can fill the role of the Hashemite monarchy as a safety valve in these difficult circumstances. The king also has a population that is overwhelmingly against revolution, they want him to stay in power, and they want stability to

be a primary focus. People only want fundamental changes in the way the regime is run. That being said, the political capacity of the state has diminished significantly due to the economic hardship that has left it unable to fulfill the needs for its citizens. This has caused an underdevelopment of popular integration into the state, which instead has led to the continuation of a system based on clientelism and corruption. Furthermore, meeting people's demands for democratic reforms would mean taking power away from the monarch's support base and possibly strengthen the Islamists dominated by Palestinians. Although, the opposition has accomplished to extract concessions, it has not been powerful enough to pose a real threat. The regime has strategically contained them by playing on sociopolitical fault lines, and has continuously monitored the oppositions' strength, never allowing it to become too powerful.

7.5.2 Conclusion

The regime has abused the regulations that would establish equal and inclusive citizenship between Jordanians and Jordanian-Palestinians by unlawfully withdrawing citizenships. Such action has further disaffected political integration and participation of Palestinians in fear of repercussions, thus indirectly marginalizing the majority of Palestinians to be part of the *demos*. This is also done by means of denying Palestinians positions in key state institutions and in the security apparatus. The opposition groups' ability to build crosscutting alliances has served to overcome some of these hinders and have positively affected their skills to mobilize and organize support for their demands. Although these forces for reform have consisted of elite individuals, it has largely been a process of building organizations from below. This has opened up for mass politics, but the forces have not been strong enough to make the reforms measure up to their demands.

7.5.3 “Freedom of public discourse, culture and academia”

Compared to other Arab countries, Jordan is considered a relatively free country. King Abdullah deserves some credit for how the opposition has been handled by the regime, which has occurred in a much more 'democratic' manner compared to neighboring countries. However, according to reports by the Freedom House (2013a), Jordan is considered “not free,” including its press. Freedom of expression is restricted and there are clear unwritten rules about what is accepted regarding criticism towards the royal family and authorities. The authorities receive tips about potentially offensive articles by informers at printing presses

and editors are urged to remove such material. Those who break these rules, face arrest. According to Freedom House, imprisonment was abolished as a penalty for press offenses in 2007, but journalists and individuals can still be jailed under the penal code, something which has occurred several times during the past two years (Freedom House 2012c).

Clearly, the regime has tightened its grip on media and freedom of speech since the outbreak of the Arab Spring, leading to restrictions in the press and publications law. This development is closely connected to the crisis atmosphere in the region and has been crucial for the regime to maintain control and stability. Nevertheless, stability and control do not equal democracy, and the process of these restrictions in close cooperation with the security agencies demonstrate how the regime uses its coercive power to restrict political freedom. In July 2011, the police assaulted 16 local and international journalists who were covering protests in Amman. Editors of news Web sites have also been threatened after having reported on investigation of corruption of high-ranking officers (Freedom House 2012c). Although the government has tolerated some level of criticism and allowed some space for Islamist movements and other opposition groups, editorial content is continuously monitored and influenced by top officials and security operatives. In 2012, dozens of media professionals were accused of accepting payments from the former director of the GID (Freedom House 2013b).

In a political environment where people fear arrest if they criticize the authorities, and where media and broadcast news outlets remain under strict state control, there is little room for democratic citizen engagement. It thus becomes contradictory when King Abdullah in his public discussion papers encourages citizens to engage in a political dialogue. His papers list four principles of democracy necessary to ensure a smooth transformation into a genuine democratic system: respect of fellow citizens' opinions; good citizenship; the need to turn disagreement into compromise; and accountability (Jordan Times 2012c). In reality, the political dialogue that can be expected under such restricted environment is not one based on democratic and political freedom. Rather, the regime's strong grip puts a clamp on citizens' ability to put their interests and concerns on the political agenda through collective debate and an independent media.

7.5.4 Conclusion

Political participation requires an environment where public discourse and freedom of speech can flourish. This is vital for democratic popular representation and participation as it enables citizens to express their grievances and interact with the state in forming policies that address their needs. The security apparatus has played a major role in exercising coercive power with the aim of limiting arenas where debates towards a public consensus around a national vision may have had potential to grow. Under strict state control and by means of terrorizing and bribing media actors, the public has not had access to a free and independent media that could have promoted democratic citizen engagement on a more substantive level.

7.5.5 “Democratic control of instruments of coercion”

As witnessed, the security forces have not hesitated to take action against individuals who have “violated security.” The official instruments of coercion do not only comprise of the intelligence, but also the Public Security Force, police forces and the armed forces. The strong loyalty of these forces to the king has not diminished or shown any signs of weakness in the post-Arab Spring, which has been confirmed through their commitment in suppressing the opposition. Despite protesters attempts to demonstrate peacefully and avoid clashes with the police, these authorities have intimidated and terrorized them by assaulting them with the help of other groups loyal to the regime. Their role is primarily to keep the country safe, but their mandate has in many cases turned inwards on the country’s own citizens, limiting their basic democratic rights. The security forces’ respond to violence between pro-regime and opposition groups have been slow and dubious and in some cases have left people believing the attacks were orchestrated by the intelligence services themselves. Since violence against the opposition has only been exercised in small doses, the situation has not escalated and led to counterproductive results. However, the tolerance level of freedom of speech and criticism against the regime; the royal family; and the *mukhabarat* have shrunk considerably. The imprisonment of people for publicly criticizing the authorities –along with fear-tactics to keep media and protesters under check, indicate a severe lack of democratic control of the police and security forces. As one Jordanian described them; “they are untouchable and beyond criticism in the same manner as the royal family.” An institution beyond criticism is subsequently beyond accountability, which allows its power to grow unchecked and out of reach of democratic control. This type of coercive capital has been an important factor for the security apparatus in containing the opposition.

What is the agenda of the security forces and have their functions contributed to maintain stability? The main critique against the GID is that security agents are unlawfully interfering in political life. If they do, it is in the name of “creating stability.” Many people believe that GID officials have penetrated Jordanian politics to achieve personal gain and advance the agenda of East Bank Jordanians on behalf of Islamists and Palestinians. There are allegations that this authority promote and support the election of particular MPs by fraudulent means, as well as give recommendations for the appointment of members of the Senate. These individuals benefit from the state of despotism and corruption, but in lack of broad public support they rely on electoral fraud and assistance from the GID in winning their way into power (Al Jazeera 2012). Hence, the institutions of coercion are able to transform their coercive capital into political power, giving way for pro-regime candidates to be incorporated into politics through elitist populism and corruption. King Abdullah indirectly confirmed the agency’s involvement in politics when he stated that the current head of the agency was making efforts to depoliticize it (Atlantic 2013). This process led to the arrest of two recent GID chiefs for corruption, including massive electoral fraud, which gives a clear indication that this institution over time has been able to operate without much democratic control (Atlantic 2013; Tarawnah 2013b). Moreover, the *mukhabarat* is known for its presence on campuses upon university council elections, aiming to shape youth’s political views by fear tactics. Such presence not only keeps youth from practicing their political freedom, but also puts severe constraints on freedom of expression. Overall, the coercive anti-reform forces’ efforts to contain the opposition may have hindered a revolution in Jordan; however, it seems that stability has been their supreme value, *not* democracy. This may explain why the popular perception of the elections still is considered as a *mukhabarat* invitation to a party that is going to keep things as they are, rather than transform them.

King Abdullah expressed in The Atlantic article that he had been struggling with ‘internal forces.’ By inside forces, the king was referring to political institutions typically considered as supporters of the regime and named institutions like the *mukhabarat* and the “old guard.” He described these as conservative forces that opposed and hindered his efforts to implement democratic reforms and make changes in the electoral law that would give Palestinians greater representation (Atlantic 2013). Based on these statements, it seems as if the security apparatus operates beyond the king’s reach as well. Although most people are unaware of the true relationship between the king and the GID –and the extent to which they operate within

the larger framework of the country, there are several reasons to question this. First, a majority of the people the king has appointed for leading political positions are “old guard conservatives.” If the monarch really sees these forces as a hinder to reform and he claims that the Arab Spring was a long awaited opportunity to implement much needed democratic reforms, it is hard to see the logic reasoning behind the royal appointment of a prime minister straight out of the security apparatus in the very beginning of that spring. Also the NDC was led by an ‘old guard’ politician (Tarawnah 2013b). The monarch portrays the ‘internal forces’ as some kind of uncontrollable entity, but who is running the country, who appoints them? Perhaps the king is given a list of individuals to choose from, but it is not a system beyond his control. The real question becomes to what extent the king’s *ability* measures up to his *will* to make substantive democratic reforms. It implies that these forces’ political agenda in fact may not be that contradictory to that of the monarch. Indeed, many of the changes he has tried to make since the beginning of the Arab Spring were already on the agenda several years ago. The comprehensive reform program the National Agenda, initiated in 2005, was an ambitious plan to reform various sectors in national life. Unfortunately, conservative forces rose up and went to the king, insisting it was “a leap into the unknown.” As a result, the National Agenda was shelved (Atlantic 2013). Such “failed efforts” lead me to suppose that King Abdullah either lacks the commitment or will to make democratic reforms, or rather that maintaining balance and stability among these conservative forces make up a far more important priority. Although it seems unlikely at the moment, the only institution that could make the regime fall would be the structures of dissidents within the military and security forces –a movement it would be hard to control. These institutions are regarded as opponents of reform and against fighting corruption because they are loyal to the monarch. However, this loyalty does not run deeper than self-serving interests as these actors are themselves involved with corruption and thus cannot really protect the king. Instead, they are the root of the problem that people now demand an end to, and therefore they are the biggest threat to the monarchy (Al Jazeera 2012). This is why it becomes crucial for the regime to keep this group content by means of economic grants and benefits.

7.5.6 Conclusion

There has been a clear lack of democratic control of the instruments of coercion, which has functioned as an extension of the Royal Palace. Their coercive capital has been abused to promote political stability on the cost of democratic development. Corruption, unlawful

political interference and repression have been some of the means to contain the opposition and boost the incorporation of pro-regime candidates on behalf of the popular masses. Strong anti-reform forces within the establishment have aided the regime in muting public criticism –a vital democratic right. King Abdullah claims that some of these forces are hampering his efforts to open up for political representation and participation. However, his contradicting efforts combined with his authority and legitimacy; indicate that the monarch rather lacks political will than political power to make substantive reforms.

7.5.7 “Democratic political representation through parties and elections”

The long-lasting ban on political parties show the regime’s repressive control of the institutions by which parties may be legalized. During this period, the regime moved around the provision by letting the Muslim Brotherhood thrive as a “social organization” and used them as an ally during turbulent times. Today, the organization has become alienated due to its political stand towards peace with Israel, as well as by default after having boycotted most of the elections since 1993. It has thus moved from being a pillar of support for the regime, to the point where they do not believe the regime will deliver anything regarding an electoral law which will allow them to possess the political weight they believe their worth is due. Nonetheless, they have skillfully mobilized and collected support by developing a huge social service network including hospitals, schools, and similar charitable organizations. Their budget for various activities has exceeded that of money allocated by the government for similar activities, and it is not surprising that the IAF has received exceptional support (Lust-Okar 2008: 85). In addition, Islamists hold a crucial value for the regime. They are not simply a counterweight to Transjordanians; they also control political Islam by monitoring and marginalizing more radical jihadist trends. These trends are found among Palestinians in Zarqa, but also among Transjordanians in the hinterlands and are potential areas of instability (Tell 2013b). If Jordan’s financial situation worsens and the conflict in Syria leads to the emergence of an Islamist regime, this would recreate an Islamist analogue of the 1950s and pose a much more important challenge to the regime. With a potential Islamist challenge in Egypt, Gaza and Syria, the monarchy would have to rely heavily on its cohesive Transjordanian base to survive. As for now, they use the Brotherhood to keep such forces under check.

There are good reasons to believe that the Brotherhood saw the Arab Spring as an excellent opportunity to mobilize and make themselves more visible in the political arena. It was emboldened by the successes of its ideological kin in Tunisia and Egypt which may have led them to overreach any negotiations with the regime. If the IAF was expecting a similar revolution, they concluded they had already won. That would explain why they refused to be part of the NDC and shut themselves out from most of the reform processes, including the elections. Election boycott is a powerful tool. It sends a strong message not only to the larger electorate, but also to the international community that the elections are not free and fair, hence delegitimizing the election outcome. However, the IAF did not gain much from the whole reform process and, if possibly, their strategy has caused them to become even more marginalized.

Although opposition groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood have the right to participate in politics, the regime has used its political authority to undermine their role by making the case that they are more interested in imposing fundamentalist sharia law than they are in democracy. Through in-depth interviews with King Abdullah published in *The Atlantic*, the monarch clearly considers the Muslim Brotherhood as a threat to the political system he envisions. He seeks a broad ideological system based on representative democracy, with a developed left, center and right. Although he added he would like to see more Palestinians in Parliament, he wanted Jordan to achieve this without allowing the Muslim Brotherhood to hijack the cause of democratic reform in the name of Islam (*Atlantic* 2013). In other words, the monarch is willing to cede some of his powers, but only to the right people. The regional trend was according to him a new, emerging, radical alliance, and he was sure they wanted to see him gone: “behind closed doors, the Muslim Brotherhood here wants to overthrow” the government (*ibid.*). Such rhetoric plays well, especially to a Western audience. If the Brotherhood came to power in Jordan, it would reshape the politics in a country where there are obvious social divisions between people and where you have a peace treaty that the Muslim Brotherhood bases its entire politics on. Since they consist mostly of Palestinians, half of the population would be at odds with them.

The 2012 electoral law reflects this social division, but it also hinders the full development of a broad political party system that the monarch claims to desire. It is a lot to expect that citizens should be able to develop a full party system when the SNTV system encourages people to vote for their cousin or their tribe. The way of voting needs to be changed so that

political parties can flourish and have a real chance to compete for seats. If the monarch had been sincere about empowering political parties, then 27 seats out of a 150-seat legislative does not show any commitment to that. Moreover, the system leads to the election of 27 *individuals* – almost all from different lists and without a common political agenda. The 2013 elections had a total of 61 lists competing for these seats on the national level. Only one of these lists won three seats, three lists won two seats each, the remaining seats were taken from different lists. This creates a dispersed and divided Parliament rather than party candidates based on a political platform. Also, since there is no party list restriction on candidates running in the national list system, large tribes that cross district boundaries still have a good chance of picking up these new seats (Carnegie Endowment 2012). For a political party like the IAF, which lacks access to particular governmental benefits enjoyed by tribal candidates, it is difficult to compete against this dynamic. Although the national proportional list solved some of the problems of both the SNTV and bloc vote systems in Jordan, a serious concern is the lack of well-organized parties in the country *besides* the Brotherhood. Overall, the electoral system may have become freer, but with the failure of changing the disproportionate districts that indirectly excludes Palestinians, combined with the SNTV system that encourages voting for ‘personalities’ and individuals, the electoral law cannot be considered fair.

To what extent does the electoral law produce representatives that are accountable, transparent and responsive? In authoritarian regimes like Jordan, many policy arenas are off-limits to parliamentarians. An October 2011 poll by the International Republican Institute (IRI) on Jordanians’ satisfaction with government authorities showed that the majority were dissatisfied with the performance of the government and the Parliament (Jordan Times 2011). Although many considered the reforms as a step in the right direction, 58 percent stated that the government had not achieved anything worthy of recognition, and as many as 77 percent said the same about the Parliament. Furthermore, the research indicated that people had little faith in the government’s ability to implement what the citizens consider as the country’s main priorities; economic reform, fighting corruption, and political reform (*ibid.*). This would lead to the conclusion that people have largely lost faith in the system and believe they are unable to put their public issues on the political agenda. As the new electoral law still carries many of the same weaknesses as the old system did, the 2013 election produced a similar Parliament to those that have previously been criticized. Especially, the lack of an opposition made this outcome predictable. The candidates the regime wanted to run were running, and it

was exactly as predicted and in the regime's favor. However, the biggest flaw of an electoral law that is destined to yield "more of the same," is that this very Parliament is expected to amend the 2012 election law that got them elected in the first place. Of course, this Parliament is no different from the one in 2010 that changed the 2010 electoral law (Tarawnah 2013a).

The representatives' power is also limited in its ability to initiate legislation and it cannot enact laws without the assent of the Senate. The representatives are outnumbered by appointed senators, who again are outnumbered by an appointed government, and finally outnumbered by the royal court which is also appointed. The message the regime is sending is that they have given Jordanians the choice, and if the outcome is negative, then they have chosen it. They are putting the ball in the people's court, but not really. A major shared demand from the opposition was also to put an end to corruption, but there has not been taken any significant measures to deal with this problem. The country's economic situation has worsened and people started questioning where the money had gone. A member of the Irbid Popular Movement said:

Over the last years, state assets have been privatized. Where did the money go? Debt has increased, not declined. Jordan has phosphate, potash, uranium, gas – in the Risha area – oil shale, tourism and human resources. It's a rich country, contrary to what people think. That's why we want a special tribunal on unlawful privatizations. (ICG 2012: 10).

Along with the chronic lack of transparency and accountability, impartiality becomes impossible when the major political powers are recruited in a non-democratic manner. The closest thing Jordanians get in holding politicians accountable is the monarch's decision to sack the prime minister and dismiss his government –only to appoint new ones in the same way. Despite the monarch's formal political power, parliamentarians will be blamed for any legislative or political missteps, even if this specific body of government has very little influence on policymaking to begin with (Tarawneh 2013a).

7.5.8 Conclusion

The consequence of the regime's history of suppression of political life and parties is a severely underdeveloped political party system. This causes grave implications for democratic representation as these institutional vehicles through which people can participate

in politics are practically absent, besides from the IAF. In turn, the Muslim Brotherhood has been a target of slander and the regime has actively sought to constrict their political influence. However, the capacities of the Brotherhood to fight this exclusion lie in their ability to mobilize support through social networks, thus turning social and economic capital into popular support and legitimacy. Throughout the Arab Spring the Muslim Brotherhood has been a supporter of democratic institutions, at least by actions. Despite their mobilization efforts, their strategy of abstaining from partaking in certain deliberation processes have left them even more marginalized.

Strong anti-reform forces have used and abused its political power in efforts to limit the extent of political reforms, and reformers in the Parliament have been overruled by ‘monarchists’. The electoral system indirectly excludes political parties and a majority of Palestinians. Thus, the system only reflects a minority of the population and cannot be considered to promote popular representation and participation based on equality. Sided with large-scale corruption, the chances to form a Parliament that is willing *and* able to put public issues on the political agenda are slim.

7.6 The dynamics of democratization

How do government policies and key actors’ strategies affect the development of democratic popular representation in Jordan, and how do the above mentioned factors interact and change? To which degree has the outcome of these strategies affected regime stability?

Addressing elections under authoritarian rule tends to divide scholars into those who dismiss elections as meaningless charades, and those who consider elections as a crucial tool in creating a space within which the opposition can push for liberalization. Lust-Okar (2008) examines elections in Jordan and identifies that a major problem with the dominant understanding of elections in the MENA region is that most scholars fail to understand the nature of authoritarian elections or what makes them “competitive.” To address this deficit, Lust-Okar argues (*ibid.*: 77):

Until we understand the politics of authoritarian elections and the institutions that govern them across the full range of authoritarian regimes (...), we cannot distinguish elections that create momentum toward democratization from those that reinforce the existing regime.

From this first point, it can be drawn a comparison to Lindberg's (2009a) theory that authoritarian elections do not always lead to democracy; sometimes they can strengthen the authoritarian regime. Since early 2011, the regime's strategies of splitting the opposition, demonizing the Muslim Brotherhood, limiting freedom of speech and press, coupled with a limited tolerance for opposition groups to ensure they are controllable – have all contributed in making the elections less likely to foster democracy, which in this context is synonymous with contributing to stability.

Another problem, Lust-Okar (2008) argues, is that it is impossible to predict how successful current democratization programs will be without studying the relationship between elections and prospects for democracy. Although holding elections is nothing new to Jordan, this point demonstrates the relevance of paying attention to the underlying social and political structures between the regime and the *demos*, as to determine which groups or factors help reinforcing the regime and its survival. As discussed, the Transjordanians are not only a vital support to regime, they are also the “winners” under the current electoral system that still carries the inherent problems that causes unfair and disproportionate representation, largely on behalf of those considered as ‘disruptive’ elements to the regime's power. These dynamics reinforce the power of the regime and elections largely become a battle over state resources. Such competitive clientelism promotes stability and a pro-regime legislature which functions as informal institutions vital to maneuvering in the public sphere. Although the electoral reform sends strong signals of change, not to mention to the Western world, it lacks the ability to redistribute power in the system. Opposition groups are indirectly excluded and the weak power of the legislative is further undermined by the government and other royal appointees – mostly pro-regime candidates. Hence, there are still weak links between the people and the incumbents which severely undermines democratic popular representation of the *demos*.

For Jordan, elections have traditionally been competition over patronage and state resources through elitist groups, rather than through popular integration and representation. Such dominant politics have maintained regime stability, but recent signs indicate that it is no longer sustainable to uphold a costly subsidy system and a bloated bureaucracy whose salaries consume most of the state expenditure (Globe and Mail 2012a). Although East Banker demands have largely been about economic concerns, it is closely related to the calls

for political reform since an empowered Parliament would have a greater role in shaping the economic policy in a way that would reflect citizens' needs. Thus, the electoral bias that has played out in their favor since 1989, have now lost much of its momentum since the institution itself has proved largely powerless (ICG 2012). If the incumbents continue to overlook the needs of their supporters and fail to redistribute patronage, the ruling elite may lose its supporters, which in turn can provide for a democratic opening. Over time, the lack of government policies that can guarantee employment or that will reduce the development gap between the urban center and the rural periphery; can cause deeper undercurrents of resistance from the regime's support base. Such policies would likely also strengthen democratization as such measures would be crucial for both the well-being and the capacities of these groups to take actions as citizens in a democracy.

However, it is important to acknowledge the reforms that *have* taken place, albeit not as extensive as many would like them to be. Despite the flaws of the electoral system and the persistence of constitutional rights that are inconsistent with democracy, the electoral law did improve representation by opening up for a second vote for national party lists. It might seem a small step in the right direction, but emphasis should be put on right. A 2005 report from the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) and the Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND), studied democracy building in Jordan through democratic elections. Based on the electoral law of 2003, it recommended amendments in the electoral law by adopting a mixed electoral system (International IDEA and ANND 2005: 127-128):

This method would (...) develop society politically by encouraging voters and accustoming them gradually to voting on political basis. This would in turn encourage the political parties to improve their performance and to put forward platforms that are more in tune with the concerns and hopes for the public.

Certainly, with the weak political parties that exist in Jordan today, this is something that must develop further over time. As for now, most parties have a weak political platform and their "party-list" resembles more a list of individuals – a characteristic that is reinforced by the constituents dispersed voting for these candidates. Further amendments in the electoral law must also be done to strengthen these representatives, e.g. by granting them a larger

proportion of seats in Parliament so that their motivation to develop political platforms that are in line with popular demands increases.

Also, the political space that has been given to opposition, although with restrictions, must be acknowledged. Interestingly, the dynamics that has unfolded among the opposition during the Arab Spring is in stark contrast to what have been observed previously. Promises of a greater democratic opening since the implementation of the National Charter in 1990, and when King Abdullah stepped to the throne in 1999, are still waiting. As the declining state resources and neoliberal reforms weakened the link between patronage and Parliament, the Arab Spring motivated opposition elites to develop skills and crosscutting ideological alliances that could embolden broader political challenge to the regime. Previously, the secularist-Islamist divide served to curb secularists' demands for immediate reform, but for the last two years there has been greater cooperation between opposition groups (Lust n.d.:12, 14), as illustrated by the NFR. In turn, opposition groups have been strengthened and found new ways of mobilizing to put more pressure on the regime to democratize.

The strength and advantage of the monarchy in Jordan is that elections do not pose the same challenge as in one-party states since legitimacy in monarchies are based on personalized, hereditary rule and less on popular support (ibid.:7). The 2013 elections created a fragmented Parliament that is unlikely to pose a challenge to the regime – one that resembles those preferable for monarchs trying to hold onto power. The 2012 electoral law has changed from the previous one, but it is not one that is proportional to the popular demands. It ended up being less than a compromise, one that was designed by the executive and rather enforced. Largely, the democratic efforts that have been taken to enhance popular representation have been gravely undermined by undemocratic procedures failing to include the masses and their demands. Yet, the Arab Spring allowed new forces for reform to mobilize and their efforts and the liberal reforms should not be taken for granted.

7.6.1 Conclusion

The various regime strategies of co-opting the opposition and most of their democratic initiatives have succeeded in sustaining regime stability, but on behalf of more substantive democratic reforms. Despite positive changes like an opposition that has started to learn how to collaborate; the mobilization of the masses; and a slight improvement in the electoral

system, the regime has managed to maintain the power distribution within the system. However, political realities have changed over the last two decades. With limited reforms, there still could be possibilities of greater demands for fundamental change unless the regime starts paying attention to the grievances of the people in the periphery. That would signal “King Abdullah’s dilemma” reaching a peak; a situation where he will have to give greater democratic opening or risk serious instability.

7.7 Comparing theoretical perspectives

Finally, I will draw on the democratic theoretical perspectives and discuss to what extent these can explain the factors that seem to influence the development of democratic popular representation in Jordan.

According to the modernization theory, democratic development would follow economic and societal growth and transformation. Looking at Jordan’s liberalization process, the two great openings that have occurred have been under periods of societal pressure due to a restrained economy. Back in 1989, when large riots caused people to protests, the regime responded by allowing greater political participation and holding free elections. The process since then, however, has stagnated, just to repeat itself again during the Arab Uprisings. Basically, the two events are comparable insofar as economic grievances caused a massive pressure on the regime, which forced the regime to allow more political freedom to alleviate some of the tension. Thus, in line with Diamond (2010), it seems more likely that the lack of substantive democracy in Jordan has been caused by the state’s ability to balance diverging groups and keeping their supporters content through public jobs and grants, not from the lack of sufficient economic development or social structure. Jordan is not wealthy compared to the monarchies in the Gulf states, but it has managed to uphold a similar system through foreign aid and rents. Now that the country is struck by financial crisis and growing debt, popular demands are *again* pushing forth more democratic reforms.

Nevertheless, modernization theory can contribute with valuable insight on how the emergence of democracy is a cause of the strengthening of the middle class and a growing class structure, including the rise of a bourgeoisie economic development. This process was spurred after the loss of the West Bank in 1967. The demographics were radically changed and many of the Palestinians who came to Jordan were highly educated business people.

With aid pouring in, Jordan became integrated by force into an industrial society with growing infrastructure. In this context, democracy can be understood as a process where the monarchy is defended by East Bank Bedouins, confronted by Palestinians and a new middle class belonging to the private sector. Jordanians are thus represented as the traditional East Bank elite in conflict with the Palestinian bourgeoisie, whereby the interests of the public and the private sector are in conflict, making the Palestinian bourgeoisie push for progress and liberalization (Tell 2013b). The tendency of the urban middle class however – mainly Palestinians – is to avoid radical politics in favor of NGO-based activism and the blogosphere, and has turned their focus more on pan-Arab, Islamist and Palestinian issues as well as other interest-based politics through professional associations and alike (Jadaliyya 2012). The weakness of this approach is that it tends to overlook the diverging interests and intra-communal divisions within these groups, presenting them as homogenous entities.

The transition theory highlights the explanatory power of the agency of political actors and could rightly explain much of the contests over institutional rules in Jordan. The political elite has played a major part in negotiating the political reforms, more so than the masses. The army veterans' movement was early to mobilize and their loyalty to the regime weighs heavily as this group has connections into the Hashemite rule. Their demands are based on a feeling of entitlement. Also the NFR represented a strong opposition force consisting of elite figures. Because this broad coalition of associations and parties was led by Obeidat, a former, prominent prime minister and chief of intelligence, made them stand stronger in any negotiation with the regime. In this case, the political reforms were brought to the table as a response to public pressure from below, however, the masses were unable to participate in any meaningful decision-making over institutional reforms and these were consequently contested between political elites. According to the agency theory, there is no contradiction between strictly elite negotiations without the inclusion of the public. As long as liberal democratic institutions are in place, actors will adjust. However, there is a major dilemma with the assumption that democracy can be crafted *only* if the forces pushing for change receive international support from democracy interveners. Such efforts cannot be taken for granted. The liberalization process in Jordan since the late 1980s has not seen much progress, which may stem from Western powers' prioritization of regime stability over substantive democracy. This can be demonstrated in the fact that US democracy assistance towards the MENA region has kept its top-down approach, focusing on reform of state institutions instead of support for civil society (Sottillotta 2013: 7). External support for 'good

governance' has not dominated the Arab Spring either, besides the IEC that sought to conduct freer elections. However, the disability of the public to participate in decision-making leads to elite negotiations based on, well, elite interests. None of the reforms were proportional to the public demands, which in turn illustrate the key actors' capability to make changes that are beneficial for them, not representable of the people. This is partly linked to the theory's failure of considering actors' political, economic, social and/or historical context, thus making it hard to explain individual preferences, relative bargaining power and how interests change. Despite strong forces of reform among the elite, as verified by the veterans' manifesto and Obeidat's petition, these actors' bargaining power were overruled by the existing power relations within the system. The elite can more accurately be described as the once-immigrant core with an attachment to the Hashemite dynastic state, which has always been divided between lines of confession, ethnicity, region or communal origin (Jadaliyya 2012). It is also essential to not ignore the divide between the East Bank elite that has focused on local "tribal politics," and the urban *aghrab*. The *aghrab* has close ties to the "external elite" who collaborated with British rule, as well as with the "Ammani" bourgeoisie stemming from waves of migration and refugees between 1851 and 1991 (Jadaliyya 2012). In fact, the divisions among the East Bank elite, as discussed earlier, are now strengthened by the neoliberal reforms of privatization that the agency theory encourages. Thus, the economic deprivation in the hinterlands is partly caused by such a "depoliticization" of democracy and has made it hard for these groups to control public affairs based on equality. Consequently, some of the implications of the transition theory would make it hard to develop democracy beyond minimalist democratic institutions in a country like Jordan.

The sequencing theory emphasizes political order, meaning strong institutions and rule-of-law should be in place before the opening of mass politics. Failing to do so could risk war and instability. This argument was rejected when mass frustration in 1989 led to the opening of political life and elections. On the other hand, the theory can rightly explain the situation in Jordan from the 1950s and the 1970s, when radical pan-Arab ideologies and the Palestinian militias caused destructive nationalist sentiments and wars. Consequently, political parties were banned and martial law was implemented in order to regain stability. Since Jordan opened up for free elections, it has not been dominated by extremists in power, civil conflict, or virulent nationalism. In contrast, it has been one of the most stable countries in the region, likewise during the Arab Spring. People called for reforms by peaceful means. Hence, according to the theory, opening up for elections and liberalization in 1989, was not

too soon. Although, sequencing theory warns that transitions can be delayed if starting off premature. Rightly, the pace of democratic development in Jordan has been slow. As the Jordanian blogger Tarawnah expressed: “A state that wants to take things so slowly that political reform in Jordan might be measured on a timeline of human evolution” (Tarawnah 2013a). It makes one question; if Jordan escaped the prediction of instability and wars due to “premature elections,” would it not still be worth having these democratic institutions, whatever imperfections they may have, rather than an authoritarian regime that denies any popular representation based on the premise that “it is not ready” to embark on that path?

This brings me further to the gradualism approach. King Abdullah has several times expressed that the Arab Spring was a wake-up call to reform, and that “Jordan wants reform that cannot be turned back—reform built on peaceful and gradual change, pluralism, and respect for others” (World Policy Institute 2013). The gradualism approach aims at reaching for free political competition and other elements of democracy in a prudent, cumulative way, not postponing it indefinitely like sequencing theory presupposes. I believe having many of these institutions in place already before 2011, affected the outcome and ensured that the process occurred in a peaceful manner, leading to reforms and not revolution. Although it can be discussed whether the reforms were taken far enough with respect to the ‘maturity’ of political actors and democratic institutions, chances are that the outcome had been more gloomy if there had been a lack of these in the first place. As Carothers points out; to strengthen rule-of-law, more democratization is needed.

Gradualism theory rightly identifies that pressure towards democratization most often stems from domestic calls for political empowerment, as it did in Jordan. The regime has had to adjust to a pattern of protests from below, which signals a fundamental shift in the battle of political contention. The opposition has been given space to mobilize, but the existing power relations within the system have made it hard to take part in any meaningful national dialogue. This has been further undermined by virtue of having a political system categorized as *dominant-power politics*, which has also been reflected in the electoral law: it fails to alternate power within the system. From this perspective, the forces for reform in Jordan agree with Carothers that elites do not deserve any special place in democratization, as they often seem to threaten its success more than support it. This is especially true regarding the security establishment and other anti-reform forces like tribal leaders and elite-officials that benefit from corruption and despotism. However, the elections should not be regarded as

meaningless and the reforms should be taken as a step in the right direction. The question that remains is to see whether the monarch is serious enough in his gradual process to substantive democracy from now on. The electoral law can be taken as an early warning sign that he defends the very limited changes as a gradual start, a move that is quite common when regimes must seek a middle path between radical calls for political openings and exaggerated praise for minor reforms.

8 Conclusion

In this thesis, I have sought to explain why Jordan has not been engulfed by the Arab Spring and to examine whether the electoral reform is essentially a response from a pressured regime in its battle to hold onto power, or rather the outcome for stability and democratic development. Within a democracy perspective, the question of how the electoral law and the elections are valuable means contributing towards the aims of substantive democratization is linked to practices of representation. By popular representation I refer to the right to vote as a basic value of democracy, namely equal moral status based on “popular control of public affairs based on political equality.” Representation thus embodies the general right of political participation by participating in or influencing institutions that make public decisions.

How would it be possible to address these questions? I have focused on investigating the sociopolitical and economic structures and processes that have caused the dynamics witnessed in Jordan. I started examining this puzzle by seeking answers in previous literature on processes of liberalization and democratization in authoritarian regimes in the Arab world, in particular monarchies. Much of this literature confirms that democratization processes often are linked to instability and/or stability and that these regimes possess characteristics that enable them to allow some political freedom and space, but at the same time hang onto power. In the case of Jordan, looking into its state-building process and the consolidation of Hashemite rule become crucial to grasp what is happening politically today and to obtain a clear definition of the *demos*. Informed by secondary sources, I explored critical moments of transparency during the Arab Spring in Jordan and combined this insight with qualitative interview material. I have chosen a selected number of democratic institutions and actors to focus on to assess these processes from a democratic perspective. Four theoretical perspectives on democratization are used as a framework: modernization theory, transition theory, sequencing theory and gradualism.

From a democratization perspective, the process in Jordan during the Arab Spring can best be explained through gradualism since the political-liberalization initiatives were mainly brought forth by domestic calls for political empowerment, more so than by elites backed by outside powers, as transition approach presupposes. Neither can the development rightly be

explained by the 'right' socioeconomic structures as modernization theory propose, and the predominant stability of the country defies the sequencing argument of 'political order.'

Although East Bankers make up the privileged group in Jordan, the economic grievances of this population have increased. This indicates that the links between the *demos* and the state have been tarnished, mostly as a result of neoliberal policies and privatization that disable state control of public affairs. The result is poor democratic control of public affairs. Consequently, the inability to meet citizens' demands has diminished the regime's political capacity, making space for popular calls for political reforms. For Jordan, the elections functioned as a tool to mitigate unrest, co-opt opposition groups and keep citizens distracted in wait for more democratic reforms to come. The regime's previous experiences with liberal initiatives in 1989 followed the same strategy to vent out public discontent. However, for the past two decades, social, political and economic changes have undermined the stabilizing effects of elections. Fiscal crises affected representatives capability to distribute state resources to their supporters, and the mobilization of the veterans' movement was an early sign of discontinuation among regime loyalists. Second, citizens had become increasingly impatient with the continuous promises of greater democratic openings –a path the regime embarked on in 1990, without seeing them manifest. Third, the secularist-Islamist divide that previously had functioned to silence secularists' demands for immediate reform, proved to be a less hinder during the Arab Spring. The pattern of protests among opposition groups in Jordan after 2011 has marked a new mobilization force. Not only were Transjordanians demonstrating side by side with Jordanian-Palestinians, but new coalitions that crossed Islamist-secularist and ideological boundaries emerged in hope of becoming more forceful in extracting concessions from the regime

However, there is an underlying tension among citizens' calls for political reforms despite the oppositions' efforts to unite: one between East Bankers and Jordanian-Palestinians. Any move that would empower the IAF and allow for a fairer representation of the Palestinian population would directly challenge the position of the East Bankers. Contrary, a consolidation of East Bank domination will decrease the chances of political reform and result in greater fury from the Muslim Brotherhood. Because of interests that are clearly pulling in different direction, the political capacity of the opposition forces have made it easier for the regime to contain them and maintain stability.

The electoral reform can be seen as affecting regime stability in Jordan on two levels. First, it served to distract the public and ease unrest. Second, it is a continuation of a politics of exclusion that ensures pro-regime individuals are kept close, whilst other “disruptive elements” are kept at distance. The Palestinian overweight poses a threat to the regime and the political elite, and this group has constantly been a victim of both inclusionary and exclusionary practices as the regime sees fit. This is still practiced through the ways in which the current electoral law sustains a policy of indirect exclusion of Jordanian-Palestinians. Economic and sociopolitical fault lines in Jordan thus affect policies and institutional design, as well as the logic behind the regime’s inconsistent hegemonic traits to different groups in society.

Most of the regime survival strategies that have been applied during the Arab Spring have been successful. The institutional design of the electoral law and the changes in the press and publications law illustrate the resourceful use of constitutional rules whereby the venue of contesting institutional changes are strategically chosen according to the arena that is most inclined to give positive results for the ruling elite. This has been further reinforced by the various purposes the security forces have been deployed, and demonstrate the success of the regime in reinforcing disunity of the opposition’s collective action against the regime’s policies. As a result of these strategies, the monarchy has diminished the cost (and need) for repression during the Arab Spring and has in turn contained divisions within the regime coalition, making stability more feasible.

The question now is whether Jordan’s stability is likely to remain stable in the future. Currently, there are reasons to doubt that the opposition forces and protests –which force has subsided, will destabilize Jordan. First, the public wants the monarch to remain in power. Second, the threat of a spillover caused by the instability and chaos in Syria makes stability an inclination that seems greater than the demands for wholesale democracy. Also, there are still strong sentiments among many secular protesters that the Muslim Brotherhood has a hidden agenda. Thus, the opposition will most likely keep up the pressure, but will aim for a slower process and more cautious demands for democracy. However, if the grievances of the monarch’s loyalist group worsens or remain unattended, this might enforce dynamics that can lead to a rupture of the existing power relations and that can threaten the basis of Hashemite rule, and in turn allow a greater democratic opening.

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