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Investigative Analysis of Global and Local Factors That Affected Sustainable Reforms in Jordan

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Abstract

This article studies some of the major factors that affected the sustainability of reforms in Jordan for the period that spans from the establishment of the state of Jordan until the first decade of the rule of the new King after the death of the previous one. This period is important since it had very important and long ripple effects on the follow up years. In addition, and within this investigated period, Jordan's aspiration had focused on benefiting from the opportunities of economic openness and global integration to become an active contributor in the global economy and society. The challenges in realizing this vision occurred mainly in the effectiveness to adapt to a continuously changing set of global economic indicators. While implementing privatization and economic globalization, it is also noticed that, since the implementation of the World Bank-influenced Stabilization and Structural Adjustment Programs in Jordan, the poverty rates had been substantially increased within short to medium runs. This article shows in depth main milestones within external and internal factors that affected political and economic reforms in Jordan throughout this important period.

1. Introduction

The implementation of the political reforms in the Middle East started to grow, when nationalistic movements came into existence demanding and fighting for liberation and Arab Unity (i.e., for an Arab unified state) and many parties in

the area were formed. The emerging power of U.S.S.R. after World War I gave further impact for political reforms. The struggle between the two opposing camps, Western Camp and Eastern Camp, created a big impact on the area, where at a later date the Eastern Camp disintegrated and a new World Order came to existence. As a result, the United States of America became the most powerful country in the world, and it resorted to the ideology of implementing democracy to apply its various policies within all countries including non-obedient regimes to its policies.

On the other hand, at the local level, political reforms in the state of Jordan had been undergone through various and important stages. The Emirate of Trans-Jordan became in 1946 the Kingdom of Jordan with a constitutional monarchy, and as from 1921 till today the state of Jordan amended its electoral laws more than six times in order to accommodate new emerging situations in the area (Balawi, 2001).

This article will address to what extent was the Middle East in general and the state of Jordan in particular successful in implementing political and economic reforms through tackling the following two questions:

1) What are the factors that led to reforms in the Middle East in general and in Jordan in particular?

2) To what extent did these factors affect reforms in Jordan?

The rest of the article is organized as follows: External factors affecting political reforms are discussed in Section 2. Internal factors that affected reforms in Jordan are discussed in Section 3. Economic reforms and their corresponding social effects are discussed in Section 4. Conclusions and future work are presented in Section 5.

2. External Factors

This section consists of three main parts. The first is the rise of the Communist regime in Russia, the second is it's disintegration in 1989 and the rise of the American dominance, and the third part is the rise of nationalistic movements.

2.1. The Rise and Establishment of the Communist Regime

For hundreds of years, Russia was ruled by Cyzars (Emperors), who had a complete power over the Russian system and life. In the year 1917, a massive revolution drove the Czar from power. The Bolsheviks, later called Communists, seized the government (i.e., Communist dictatorship), and Russia became the first Communist nation. Under this policy, the Soviet Union expected to spread Communism through economic, political and technological means (Backtash, 1980).

The rise of Communism had shaped much of the history since the early 1900s, where many considered Communism at that time as the greatest threat to world peace, others looked on it as the world's greatest hope (Backtash, 1980). The Communists called for government ownership instead of private ownership of

factories, machines and other basic means of production. They also called for government planning of economic activity and for strict rule by the Communist party (Backtash, 1980).

The Communist methods of gaining and holding power ranged from violent revolution to propaganda and education. In a Communist country, the power was always in the hands of the "Communist Executive Party"; no other party was allowed. The communist party was highly centralized, and the top leadership was the only decision maker. However, the "Communist doctrine seemed to be losing its importance, especially for young people. There was an increasing interest in safe and comfortable living, and less revolutionary activity" (Backtash, 1980).

The Communist party lost many members due especially to the Soviet policy and Cold War, where "The Cold War was a struggle between the communists and non-communist powers. The main weapons of this war included propaganda, economics, political and technological power" (Backtash, 1980).

The Soviet Union was able to win some of the Third World powers to its side. The strategy of domination which was adopted by the Communists was through economic, military and other means at a time the West countries had ended their support (Backtash, 1980; Chomsky, 2002). Egypt was one of the examples out of many; when the Word Bank turned down to fund the construction of the High Dam. Consequently, the Russians stepped in and started granting loans to Third World powers for around five billion Roubles, where 70% of these granted loans were used for economic and technical fields in accordance to the agreements concluded between the U.S.S.R. and the corresponding Third World powers (Backtash, 1980). This policy had a significant effect specially in the process of developing the industry, which would help those countries to improve their economies and it would decrease their reliance on the imperialist countries.

The United States, as the World most powerful democratic country took the role of defending non-communist nations that were threatened by the Communist takeover. Containment of Communism became the major goal of the United States post war policy (Backtash, 1980).

2.2. The American Dominance and Disintegration of the Soviet Union

With regards to Communism, it had failed, N. Chomsky argues "...Yes, it's true, socialism has lost because Russia has failed... Okay, then in what sense did socialism fail? meaning, it's true that the Soviet Union and its satellites in Eastern Europe called themselves "socialist"—but they also called themselves "democratic." The question here, were they socialist? Well, you can argue about what socialism is, but there are some ideas that are so related to it, like workers control over production, elimination of wage labour, things like that. Did those countries have any of those things? They weren't even a thought there. In fact, just as the moves towards democracy in Russia were instantly destroyed, the Bolshevik takeover was a coup and that was perfectly well understood at the time" (Chom-

sky, 2002).

In addition to what N. Chomsky has said, several Arab communist thinkers and writers like I. Mahfouz, B. Yasin, B. Galoumi, S. Abu Shakra, I. kafaji, and N. Nimer agreed and attributed the fall down of the Soviet Union to various factors. For example, I. Mahfouz attributed the failure of socialism in the U.S.S.R. to a number of factors among these (Backtash, 1980):

- The rise of communism in an underdeveloped agricultural community.
- The negative position of the West towards socialistic ideology in the U.S.S.R.
- Failure of the communist labour union in Europe to achieve its objectives.
- The early struggle between Linen and Trotsky.
- The absence of qualified leadership to promote socialistic ideas in the U.S.S.R.
- The establishment of an autocratic regime in U.S.S.R. that deprived their citizens from freedom.

In addition, B. Yasin who is another Arab communist thinker agreed with I. Mahfouz that the Communist party leadership created a new upper class possessing the power and riches (Backtash, 1980). Also, B. Galoumi, another Arab communist intellectual, attributed the U.S.S.R. disintegration to the failer of the communist leadership to create a psychological, cultural and moral rule that are necessary to implement and create the technical and scientific atmosphere needed for human initiative. The communist leadership was unable to understand the occurring changes in the world, and the inability to continue the project of the "Soviet Model", which contained within itself the seeds of bankruptcy, even their visualization to socialism was not clear (Backtash, 1980).

Another Arab communist scholar, S. Abu Shakra, contributed the causes of the disintegration of the Soviet Model to the existence of struggle between the top members of the party (Backtash, 1980). In addition, I. Khafaj said that the external forces represented by the capitalistic powers played an important role in the disintegration (Backtash, 1980), while N. Nimer said that the absence of materialistic incentives decreased the productivity; the U.S.S.R. depended on moral incentives which had short effects (Backtash, 1980).

The United States of America adopted the implementation of the rule of democracy as a tool among other tools and factors to jeopardize the existence of the U.S.S.R. The United States supported nationalistic movements existed in the Communist countries within the Soviet Union influence. The two outstanding forces that defied the U.S.S.R. in Eastern Europe were the Czechoslovakian reforms under Alexander Dubcek, and the Poland's uprising against the new laws enacted by the Communist party that were rejected by the labour Union uprising that was led by L. Walesa who played a key role in Polish politics and its independence from Russia. The Establishment of an independent state in Poland was one of initial steps to the disintegration of the U.S.S.R. Communist doctrine seemed to be losing its importance, especially for young people; there was an increasing interest in safe and comfortable living and less revolutionary activity (Backtash, 1980).

The United States policy to fight regimes was as N. Chomsky said, "one of the

interesting features of the 1980s is that to a large extent the United States had to carry its foreign interventions through the medium of mercenary states. There is a whole net of US mercenary states, Israel is the major one, but it also includes Taiwan, South Africa, South Korea, the states that are involved in the world of Anti-Communists league, and the various military groups that united the Western Hemisphere and Saudi Arabia to fund it" (Chomsky, 2002).

In the next sub-section, we will discuss and elaborate how the foreign intervention affected the rise of nationalistic movements in the Middle East.

2.3. The Rise of the Nationalistic Movements

Between and after the two World Wars, several nationalistic movements in Europe and in the Middle East were born. In Eastern Europe, nationalistic groups sought to create smaller states out of the huge Austro-Hungarian state, the Ottoman and Russian empires. The origin of nationalistic movements in Europe goes back to the 1800s. During the late 1800s, Otto Bismarck, who was the Prime Minister of Prussia, united Germany through brief wars where the corresponding Germany's efforts to increase its power helped to cause World War I (Hitti, 1993). Indeed, later on during the 1930s, the Nazi's revived the sentiments of the Germans on nationalistic grounds (Hitti, 1993). On the other hand, Italy also began a long period as a divided country governed by foreign rulers, and the unification was based on nationalistic grounds, where the architect for this unification was Garibaldi (Hitti, 1993).

Middle East was not an exception; the outcome of the First World War and the defeat and collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1918 was that Arab Crescent was divided into states on ethnic and nationalistic grounds among France and Britain on mandatory status according to the League of Nations' resolution. The Arab Crescent fell under occupation by the foreign powers of France and Britain replacing the previous rule. As a result of this occupation, nationalistic movements emerged. In this regards, Antonius says "Arab nationalism started from a wide-base thesis that all Arab speaking peoples were one nation," and continued to say "it began as a purely intellectual movement with pioneers mostly Syrian intellectuals, more specifically Christian Lebanese, educated at the American University of Beirut, and were operating in Egypt" (Madi, 1959, Antonius, 1938).

As nationalism struggled against foreign powers, political democracy contended with the native feudalism. The system centred on chiefs who held power by virtue of decent and the accumulation of the existing property. As these chiefs acquired wealth, their office became hereditary too (Antonius, 1938), and as P. Hitti says, "if the First World War served the Arab components of the Ottoman Empire and set them on the way to full or semi nationhood, the Second World War combined with the threat of political Zionism, which was viewed by Arabs everywhere as an intrusive movement, contributed to bringing those parts closer together" (Hitti, 1993).

The major aim of the Arab nationalistic movement was to liberate all Arab

countries from the foreign rule and to unite all Arab countries in one state. With this regard, P. Hiti says,

> "These two objectives namely Liberation and Unification of the Arab countries into one state was the objective of Arab Nationalistic movement. Secret national societies, associations such as Al-Montada, Young Arabs, Al-Ahd and Decentralization Party were formed, and most of those who participated in these societies joint the revolution of the Sharif Al-Husein Ben Ali on June 9, 1916 that started from Saudi Arabia against the Ottoman rule. The aim was to liberate Greater Syria, and establishing our Arab states" (Hitti, 1993).

At earlier dates, Iraq had even begun to pursue a hostile course against the British mandate. The rebellion of 1920, which started among the tribes on the lower Euphrates and in the holy cities of Al-Najaf and Karbala, led the British to substitute indirect rule for direct rule. Around 1920, it became apparent to the nationalists that these uprisings which took place in most of the Arab countries under the French and British rules were crushed.

> "The establishment of an Arab Unified state received a hard blow by two stated imperialistic countries. As a result, the nationalistic movements were liquidated as in the Arab Crescent of Iraq, Syria and Lebanon in (1925-1927), and in North Africa in (1920-1930). In view, in these depressing circumstances a new generation of young Arab well educated nationalists revived the idea of the "Arab Nationalism" and called for independence and Arab Unity." (Hindi, 1963)

For the new pioneers of Nationalism, nationalization became a "universal idea that should fulfil the demands of life to its people and aims to liberate their people from their external and internal grievances, and elevate their conditions from being underdeveloped states… to development and sovereignty" (Rustum, 1970). This new frontier was led by many parties in the Arab countries. To name a few out of many such Arab Nationalistic movements, Al-Ba'th Party, Socialist Party, Social National Syrian Party, and many others.

Considering the Democratization thesis, this was not new to the American foreign policy; Democratization was a "justification" to battle political enemies across the globe who typically involved that same right to freedom and self-determination in favour of their cause (Neep, 2003). Democratization was an adopted American policy, and was used in an instrumental fashion; a tactic in a wider strategy to achieve specific set of political objectives rather than for the sake of democracy itself. This approach "stocked the fires of public frustration and fed the overwhelming anti-American sentiment that has been sweeping over the Middle East region since the mid 1990s" (Neep, 2003). For example, we had noticed that the American influence in the Middle East had reached its peak by utilizing the policy of democratization by force through the use of wars that were based on false pretences. Democracy cannot be imposed or installed top-down but rather bottom-up; the push and intervention for a political reform system, within which genuine participation through real parties is possible, must begin

at the level of grass roots.

However, the policy of the US in the Middle East, especially in the Gulf area where democratic governments did not exist, was that the US was willing to sacrifice it's promotion of democracy in exchange for security promised for regimes that would maintain the production of Petroleum and provided a buffer against the expansion of the Soviet influence before it was disintegrated. The way of War does not solve the problem of implementing democracy in nations by force, and economic incentives could be offered to countries that are successful in implementing political reforms and sanctions would be imposed to punish those countries that refuse to open up the avenues of political partnership (Neep, 2003).

Yet, the War on Terror was launched by the United States in response to the attacks on New York and Washington D.C. by Al-Qaeda terrorist organization in September eleven 2001. The campaign which was led by the United States and its allies had the goal of ending international terrorism by stopping terrorist groups and ending alleged states sponsorship of terrorism. Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia, states that "War on Terrorism has largely been dominated by the use of special forces, intelligence, police work, diplomacy and propaganda" (Wikipedia, 2006). The Wikipedia continued to say that the American administration "considers the Iraq War as part of the war on terrorism, even though several reasons that the US originally was presenting for invading Iraq have since been discredited" (Wikipedia, 2006). As a result of that, launching war on terror by the US and its allies created political instability in the Middle East due to the fact that Al-Qaeda was originally an Arab Islamic fundamentalist organization.

The thesis of democratization and "War on Terror" led by the US had created negative sentiments among great number of peoples in the Islamic and Arab Worlds. For example, free election to the Palestinian parliament resulted in Hamas coming to power; a group which is considered by America as terrorist. Again, great numbers of Arabs felt in particular that the launched war on Iraq was not justified and especially that Weapons of Mass Destruction were not found at all in that country. In view of these two situations, the sentiments and feelings of the majority of Arabs in the Middle East grew negative towards the American foreign policy.

To conclude, the impact of external factors was reflected within the creation of new Arab states which were under the Ottoman rule for at least four centuries. The divided states came under foreign rule again namely under the French and British mandates. During that mandate rule, nationalistic movements took place. The objective of the nationalistic movements was the liberation from foreign rule and the unification of all Arab countries. The struggle to achieve these two objectives failed. A Palestinian scholar, S. Al-Qasim, who lives in Israel said on a televised Al-Jazeera interview on 20th February 2006 that "Arab Nationalistic and Communistic movements did not achieve their objectives because both ideas were imported from the West". He added that "such ideologies should have been rooted from the Arab culture, especially that the Arab World embo-

dies many ethnic, religious groups and sects". Also, M. Madi states that "Communism failed because its ideology is far from the Arab way of life and culture. They advocated freedom, calls for freedom, standing against imperialistic movements and spreading of justice" (Madi, 1959). After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the United States became the only world super power. Its policy was to suppress any movement in the world that does not comply with its policy; to do that the US used all means available, from extending loans, to the use of force either direct or indirect.

3. Internal Factors

In this Section, the internal factors that affected the political reforms in Jordan will be presented and discussed. The analyzed factors include the constitutional reforms that were implemented, political events that took place, and the important role of the media.

3.1. The Constitution and Election Laws

The state of Jordan is a constitutional monarchy in which the King selects a prime minister to govern for him. The King also chooses the corresponding members of the Cabinet. The current constitution has no restrictions on the powers of the King. The National Assembly—Jordan's legislative branch—consists of two Houses, the Senate and the House of Representatives. The Senate was composed of one hundred and ten members who were elected through secret ballot. The number of members was always subject to change depending on internal and external effecting factors, and usually the most important factor was to ensure that the outcome political decisions were always onto the government's side. All men and women over 18 years of age have the right to vote and run for election. The information that will be presented here was adopted from the Jordanian National Assembly's library archives.

Since the year of its establishment in 1921, the state of Jordan knew six election laws and twenty eight amendments till the year 2010. The last one was the election law No. (22/1986) which was amended five times in the years 1988, 1989, 1993, 1997 and 2001. Important milestones of these amendments were as follows:

1) The election law No. (22/1986) included in its regulations the West bank as part of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan whereas this law allocated nine seats for the Palestinian camps on the condition that the candidate does not belong to any illegitimate political organization.

2) On 30-07-1987 the administrative engagement with the West Bank was disengaged. Therefore, the election law was amended in terms of constituencies and the number of the members. By virtue of amendments in 1988 and 1989, the number of seats in the House of Representatives became 80 distributed over 20 constituencies, while the corresponding seats of the Palestinian camps were abolished.

3) In 1989, the decision not to engage illegitimate parties and political organizations was frozen which expanded the margin of democracy and pluralism and the contribution in the political life. On the basis of a mixed election system, the election of the years 1989-1993 took place.

4) In 1993, and after dissolving of the House of Representatives, the government of Abdulsalam Al-Majali issued the provisional law No. (15/1993) based on the article No. (94/1) of the constitution where the election was amended from the system of Open List to the system of One-Man One-Vote which gave the constituent one vote regardless of the number of seats allocated for his constituency.

5) In 1997, the second government of Abdulsalam Al-Majali issued the provisional law No. (24/1997). The reason for the amendment was to limit the number of seats for the new governorates of Madaba, Jerash and Aqaba.

6) In 2001, the government of Ali Abu Al-Ragheb issued the provisional election law No. (34/2001) which was approved by the new King at that time.

7) The age of the constituent: the election law approved the age of the constituent at 18 instead of 19 that was in an old law.

8) The body supervising the election: the judicial authority had become a participant in supervising the elections process, where in the past supervising the election was done by a committee formed from government employees and assigned by the administrative governor.

9) Places of voting and sorting: sorting is performed in the same voting centres, while in the past it used to be transferred to the centre of constituency.

10) The constituent is allowed to vote at any of the voting centres in the constituency, while in the past it was only allowed in the place and centre where his name is listed.

11) Voting crimes: Punishments were amended in the law based on two main issues of alleged illiteracy and buying votes due to their great effects on the integrity of the elections.

12) The constituencies: the council of ministers agreed on the system of dividing the constituencies and seats allocated for each one of them according to law No. (43/2001). The system stipulated on increasing the number of seats at the House of Representatives from 80 to 104 and from 20 constituencies to 45.

13) The law of One-Man One-Vote raised a vast debate, as it lead to a state of negative refusal of this law which was shown by the boycott of most of the political forces in the Jordanian society, in addition to the professional unions and some of the political symbols that demanded the necessity to renovate the route of the institutional democratic method which is based on pluralism and allowing for a greater margin of political participation and more contribution in the decision making. This needed for the creation of a modern and democratic election law that seeks the national needs aiming at activating the roles of national, social and political forces and achieving more (1) freedom, (2) justice and (3) equality.

Therefore, not adopting a stable election law was always one of the aspects of political retardation and democratic regression. Also, there was always the need

for creating a democratic law that aims at spelling out a real representation of the Jordanian people in order for the House of Representatives to be competent and practices its role in auditing, questioning and controlling. Any deviation from these principles is considered as a deviation from democracy and a weakening of the role of constitutional institutions, which is an offensive for political participation on the base of pluralism, circulation of power, and anti-corruption process, which has been always of high interest to the nation.

In a related and closely connected issue, and in order to shed much more light on the Jordanian constitution, some related outstanding articles are presented as follows (House of Representatives, 1952):

Article 6

1) All Jordanians are equal in front of the law and there shall be no discrimination between them in rights and duties even if they differ in race, language or religion.

2) The state shall secure work and education within its capabilities and secure the assurance and equal opportunities for all Jordanians.

Article 15

1) The state shall safeguard the freedom of promoting religious and doctrines' rituals according to the customs practiced in the Kingdom unless it is in breach of general order or against manners.

2) Journalism and press are free within the limits of the law.

3) It is not allowed to suspend new papers nor to void their privileges unless according to the law.

4) In the case of announcing marshal laws or emergency, the law is allowed to impose limited control upon newspapers, publishing, writings, and media in matters that are linked to public security and issues of national defence.

5) The law shall organize the method of control over newspapers' resources.

Article 16

1) Jordanians have the right to gather within the limits of the law.

2) Jordanians have the right to establish societies and political parties provided that it has a legitimate purpose and peaceful means and has rules that do not violate the regulations of the constitution.

3) The law shall organize the method of establishing societies and political parties and controlling its resources.

Article 25

The Legislative Authority shall be entrusted to the Parliament and the King, whereas the Parliament shall be composed of the Houses of Senate and Deputies.

Article 26

The Executive Authority shall be entrusted with the King who shall assume it by means of his ministers according to the regulations of the law.

Article 27

The Legal Authority is undertaken by the courts in its different kinds and degrees and all rulings shall be issued according to the law in the name of the King.

For the twenty eight amendments on the script of the constitution, M. Horani (Horani, 2006) stated that the power of the executive government was increased and weakened the role of both the legislative and judicial authorities. This gave the executive government more power and overruled the authority of the legislative and legal branches. Thus, it became obvious that the executive branch of the government possessed the upper hand and power, due to the introduced amendments to the constitution, that helped avoiding the checks and balances within the government's performance.

In addition, M. Horani recommended that five of the amended text of the constitution should be re-instated as follows (International Crises Group):

1) The Upper House should not be dissolved in order to safeguard its independence and to maintain continuity of legislation.

2) Any executive government that dissolves the parliament should resign, and a new one will conduct the new elections.

3) Restriction on government's issuing temporary laws.

The election of Para of Article No. (23), which was added because of the occupation of the West Bank by Israel, gave 50% of the parliament representatives to choose the other 50% of the representatives. The constitution and its corresponding amendments had conveyed a message that Jordan reforms played a role in developing its political policies through the democratic process. For example, after reviewing Jordan constitution, it can be shown that Jordan has a centralized form of government. However, the new King Abdullah II, in his speech to the National Assembly on 1st October 2004, proposed to decentralize the form of government in Jordan by creating three regions in the North, Middle and South. Each region should have its local elected parliament, but so far nothing has been materialized.

3.2. Political Events in the Region

Navigating the treacherous shoals of the Iraq conflict with a steady hand, the state of Jordan appears to have emerged unscathed from the turbulent events that had resulted. The Kingdom of Jordan adjusted its rhetoric to fit the public mood while backing the US policy in Iraq.

With a small economy that is particularly vulnerable to regional crises, its precarious demographic realities and limited public participation in government, there could have been otherwise continuing economic hardships despite a steady growth in GNP. The suspension of the parliament for two years that lasted until July 2003, restrictions on a handful of basic freedoms and anger from the ongoing regional developments have caused discontent, along with prevention of public sentiments from being expressed through the established political and media channels. For example, angry public demonstrations against the US-led war on Iraq in March and April 2003 had to be monitored closely. To deal with this situation, King Abdullah II announced parliamentary elections which were previously suspended, where this step was a strong pledge to institute do-

mestic reforms.

In addition to what was previously stated, events in the southern town of Ma'an in November 2002 underscored the danger of failing to address the absence of trust between local authorities and the state in general, because most of the circumstances in Ma'an were not unique, where such an event stood a fair chance of being replicated elsewhere in the Kingdom. Another one was the unsettling situation eastward in Iraq. Both crises, shown graphically on television screens and media, together with mounting economic difficulties that had in the past triggered outbursts of fury, were likely to do so again. The absence of institutionalized channels to express and address these situations could shake the government at any point of time.

There was no indication that Jordanian policies were about to become unstuck. The Jordanian political elite was asking itself of how to manage the next crises peacefully because of the fact that the bond between the State and individuals remained fragile, and discontent continued to bubble directly beneath the surface. Some expected that democratic reforms would threaten stability as long as regional crises remain unresolved, sparking unrest among population that nurtures a close affinity with its Arab brethren in surrounding nations. Others argued that opening up the political system is the only way to ensure Jordan's security in the long run and that the regime must improve trust between citizens and the authority before frustrations rise to undermine the state. Arguing that any reform with regards to democratization process has to be a tightly managed process, lest passions and interest could be unleashed that could spin out of control and take the Kingdom on an unpredictable and dangerous path.

Jordanians have begun to chart a careful middle course that was reflected in the recommendations of the Jordan's first reform committee in December 2002, the June 2003 establishment of the National Centre for Human Rights, and the report on Ma'an issued by the centre for Strategic Studies at The University of Jordan in September 2003. These recommendations should have been expanded, received unequivocal regime encouragement, and themselves would have given rise to new measures. The previously mentioned committee (International Crises Group) concluded that:

> "Bolstering the reform process, reform is most widely called for several areas. Many of those interviewed by ICG emphasized the importance of making the electoral process more reflective of the country's demographic makeup and/or improving the representation of national political parties. Independent international election observers would go a long way toward enhancing the credibility of future elections. An equally important measure would be expanding media freedoms by revising the 1999 press and publications law; especially as it concerns government licensing and censorship practices, restrictions on who may practice journalism, prohibitive minimum capital requirements for newspapers and limitations on funding for research centres. Jordanians also suggested the establishment of a constitu-

tional court as a practical step to lend greater credibility to the legislative process."

Furthermore, the committee added:

"Strengthening civic institutions and popular participation in political life must extend to civic institutions, including political parties. As a critical first step, the government should loosen controls over its internal functioning and financing. Ultimately, it should strengthen civil society, promote independent voices and allow for genuine and constructive opposition. In addition to that, addressing the issue raised by the violence in Ma'an. The government took some modest steps towards improving relations between authorities and the population and delivering economic services. It should go further by modernizing and standardizing law enforcement nation-wide including adopting a fresh approach to citizen—police relation, and developing essential infrastructure in Ma'an and towns suffering from similar economic conditions by expanding technical training for young people and embarking on serious efforts to increase private sector investment."

Indeed, one could criticize what was called the "improvements" as a superficial one and the aim was just to show in front of the international community that authorities are doing reforms at the political, economic or social levels. As a matter of fact, life quality was continuously deteriorating such as deteriorations within education and health insurance, and there was no serious supervision of many continuous private sector's chaotic overpricing activities. Another example, there had been no real major improvements with regards to women's rights and equality and what was done only resembled shy policies just to show in front of the corresponding international community (Al-Rabadi & Al-Rabadi, 2016, 2017, 2018). With regards to reforms in Jordan, and in the wider MENA region in general, one can state that the aimed reforms became just a theoretical concept without practical evidences of real implementations (Bani Salameh, 2018, Zakharov & Issaev, 2022, Farag et al., 2022, Alakash et al., 2022, Vollmann et al., 2022).

3.3. The Role of the Media

The objective behind media and freedom of journalism as defined by Hamilton is "to establish a noble fundament in order to guarantee to ourselves, our descendents and our neighbours what nature had given us as a right, which is the right to expose the oppressing authority and oppose it by means of spoken and written words which is the right and truth". In contrast to that, we were witnessing in Jordan several laws for media and publishing that were presented before the House of Representatives, and had put high constraints on the publishing of facts before the public and kept what was really published in the dark. This shows that no real reforms have been done as mentioned above. These cor-

responding laws came at a time Jordan was launching a new era of controlling freedoms and more limitations of democracy; what we were seeing had proven that there were numerous attempts that aimed at maintaining and protecting the old mechanisms.

The most suitable description of freedoms in Jordan is favouritism, not for a reason but because the rights that are given to the public today, under the ruling that is enjoying full authority, could be withdrawn from them tomorrow. For example, the swinging freedom of press (up and down) was always depending on the political scene—locally and regionally—accompanied by a steady control over the media depending on the local and international circumstances.

Since the lifting of the Marshal law in Jordan in 1989, the regime maintained a relatively good reputation in the field of human rights in dealing with the national circumstances although the Marshal law style of dealing with some issues were still considered such as "arrest without defined accusations". Furthermore, the press managed to exceed the traditional red lines from time to time and during the last years, created a mechanism to criticize the government, and sometimes approached the levels of high ranking officials that in the past were never approached. This had become true especially with the emerging of the independent publishers and press enjoying the independence from government ownership. The privately owned newspapers started with a full scale by alienating the historic red lines as far as possible from press.

In attempts to seek close assistance from the constitution, the independent daily and weekly newspapers tried to build a firm base during the last few years that is based on excluding the royal family from any criticism, while any other individual or group remained subject to numerous investigations and criticisms. Aside the previously mentioned facts, there was an intellectual liberal school that demanded the lifting of constraints imposed on the press and other freedoms based on the fact that such measures will not only give people their rights, but will also contribute in the economic development process and will accelerate the political reform process.

In a related direction, and as previously mentioned, the duties of the Upper House were to check decisions taken by the Parliament. The following specific Articles of the Jordanian constitution will shed light on these duties and how it affects press reforms:

Article 91

The prime Minister submits drafts of laws to the Parliament. The Parliament has the right to approve these laws, reject them or amend them. Then they will be sent to the Upper House. In order for any law to become valid, it should have the approval of both Houses.

Article 92

If one of the Houses rejects any proposed law twice, then the two Houses will meet under the chairmanship of the Upper House. Two third majority votes by the members of the two Houses are needed for the law to be passed.

Therefore, many of the proposed laws for press reforms where rejected based on the above mentioned Articles 91 and 92 where several members of the Houses, who are fully controlled by the government's political tools, managed to stop legislative laws that could have been very useful to support press freedoms.

4. Economic and Social Factors

Jordan, as several other countries, was at the threshold of realizing the dynamic opportunities that were presented by economic openness and global integration (i.e., globalization). Currently, the population of Jordan is around eleven million with unrealized and untapped numerous potential. At its core, the society of Jordan is built on openness, dialogue and respect for life; a society where education, equality and sense of purpose were not only attainable but essential elements of what is meant to be a citizen.

4.1. Economy before World Bank—Influenced Transformation

Jordan's aspiration had been always focused on benefiting from the opportunities of economic openness and global integration (i.e., globalization) to become an active contributor to the global economy. The challenges in realizing this vision always existed effectively from being able to adapt to a continuously changing set of global economic indicators. Jordan had positioned itself to thrive, not just survive, in this dynamically changing era of globalization.

Traditional economics models for developing nations, that focused on regional economy which depended on foreign aids, allowed Jordan to reach unprecedented growth levels in the early and mid 1980s, but they were no longer relevant in the new economical model. This harsh reality became apparent during the severe economic crises that gripped the country in the late 1980 where it's fallout is still influential until today. The rapid decline in oil prices and the eight-year Iraq-Iran war triggered several crises that harshly gripped the region; while the dependence of Jordan on foreign aids had served Jordan very well in the early booming years, this had a direct devastating effect during the follow up recession.

The corresponding related World Bank report stated that "before the crises, the Jordanian economy relied heavily on the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member nations, as well as the Iraqi market, to satisfy its production capacity. This arrangement negated the need to search for new markets and hindered industrial competitiveness and creativity in the process. At the time, capital investment in the Jordanian economy was driven by the public sector, fuelled by foreign aids. For example, the United States had provided Jordan with economic assistance totalling more than 2 billion dollar since 1952, yet significantly marginalized the private sector's role in the development process. The labour found readily available jobs in GCC markets, removing any added burden on the local economy to create sufficient employment opportunities" (Rashwani, 2003).

The downturn experienced by the regional economy adversely affected the demand for Jordanian product and labour, and significantly reduced the inflow

of GCC foreign aid to the country. A severe macroeconomic imbalance resulted and trickled down to citizens as inflation rate rose, unemployment hit record high, foreign debt mounted and fiscal deficit widened, and the trade deficit worsened, where all in turn depleting Jordan's foreign reserves. The drastic impact of the crises prompted the country to evaluate its economic approach in order to seek an economic solution that would highlight the benefits of adopting the liberal economic model (rather than political reforms) and would help Jordan to steer its way out of economic crises by establishing a free market. With the support of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB), the country executed a series of Stabilization and Structural Adjustment Programs in 1989. These programs were aimed at enhancing the corresponding economic growth and reducing macroeconomic imbalance, and therefore "the strategy focused on the integration of the private sector into industrial policymaking framework, expert expansion through increased competitiveness, and facilitation of private sector driven growth, which insured the Jordan legal and regulatory policies matched requirements for global economic participation" (Rashwani, 2003). Thus, the state of Jordan began programs to minimize government intervention in the economy in order to make its way for influential positively-intervening market forces.

4.2. Central Bank—Related Reforms

Starting with fiscal monetary reforms, the Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ), which is the monetary authority of Jordan, shifted from a hard line policy towards a more indirect softer approach. Banking laws were amended and tightened the fiscal with a more transparent tax system and more efficient collection methods. In addition to national privatization program, creating additional private sector investment opportunities such as the Aqaba Railway and Jordan Telecommunications Company was initiated to prepare the Jordanian economy for the upcoming demands of the 21st century.

Major policy changes in the areas of trade and investment were made to ensure the creation of a lucrative and friendly environment for both local and foreign investors. New laws were introduced to provide Jordanians and non-Jordanians alike with increased investment incentives. In addition, labour codes were amended to favour workers while industrial protection and requirements for imports license-based considerations were completely abolished. An investment promotion law was enacted, which included incentives such as income and social service tax exemptions, and the exemption of imported capital goods from customs' duties and fees. The main objectives for the ongoing reform program was to increase private investment in infrastructure, raising enterprise efficiency and competitiveness, developing local capital market, consolidating public finances, and attracting foreign investment, technology and expertise.

4.3. Society Transformation

The positive impact and achievement of Stabilization and Structural Adjustment

Programs were clearly reflected on the economy of Jordan. The WB Jordan development policy review in 2002 concluded that "The figures show that real economic growth was 4.2% in November 2001 as compared with a 13.4% drop in 1989, inflation fell from a 25.6% annual rate in 1989 to 1.8% in 2001, the fiscal deficit as a percentage of GDP narrowed to 6.9% in 2001 from a staggering 20.6% in 1989, and external debt also witnessed a sharp decline falling to 75.2% of GDP at the end of 2001 in comparison with high 190% in 1990" (World Bank Report, 2003).

The negative impact of the Stabilization and Structural Adjustment Programs participated in increasing the poverty in a direct way. During the application of the program, if we take poverty per individual, the figure shows that "individuals who are on poverty line were 3% and zero under poverty line in 1986 and 1988[1], then in 1992 the individuals who are under poverty line were 24% and zero on poverty line[2], and in 1994 and 1993 individuals who are on poverty line were 19.8% while the individuals under poverty line were 8.7%[3]."

Given the above, one can argue that while liberalizing and improving market conditions were leading to macroeconomic successes, they were contributing little to social development as it was shown before, which was ultimately critical for sustainable growth and political stability. The government launched a second reform program in late 1990s that focused on areas that directly affected social development, namely public sector reform, improvements in educational system, an open market policy, legislative and judicial overhauls, and a modern legal infrastructure.

The monetary and fiscal policies that have been adopted had helped to create a dynamic and responsive society equipped with the requisite tools for competing in the expanding global economy. Fuelling this reform program was from the sector of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), which have become "a source of wealth, that knowledge and information can now be used as tools to drive significant economic and social reforms.

The country established the REACH initiative (Regulatory framework, Enabling environment (infrastructure), Advancement programs, Capital and finance, and Human resources development). Launched in 1999, REACH became a plan of action to bolster Jordan Information technology sector and maximize ability to compete in local, regional and global markets. The ICT became a tool to enable Jordan to move ahead in developing its business, government and citizens" (King Abdullah II, 2004).

4.4. The ICT-Based Government Modernization

For public sector reforms, the country introduced an e-government program in January 2001. For Jordan, e-government meant a new definition of government that of a first rate service provider for its citizens. The program had hired world-

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[1]Jordan: *Strategy Adjustment and Growth*, W.B. report 1994.
[2]M. Baker, Measure Poverty, U.N. report 1996.
[3]Jordan: *Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, poverty Assessment Report*, W.B. report 1994.

class systems' integrators to assist in the transition and in training e-government project managers who will lead change in the heart of public institutions.

With almost one-third of Jordanian citizens in learning institutions, the educational reform was aimed at "leverage knowledge and allowing the mind to reach its full potential" (King Abdullah II, 2004). The society needed "a complete revolution in the educational system to ensure that what takes place in the classroom, on campus, and in society is a process of learning and creative thinking and not simply one of rote instruction" (King Abdullah II, 2004). Education in all its forms and at all levels, must promote the importance of entrepreneurship and competition, and it must also be dynamic enough to adapt to a rapidly changing world to facilitate these requirements.

To support reform, Jordan's networking strategy had set a target of connecting all of the public learning institutions to the important Broad Band network system, bringing global resources into classrooms and allowing the student to interact with the world (King Abdullah II, 2004). Furthermore, adopting a policy to build global partnerships, active institutional relationships and to allow for free trade and international engagements, important steps were taken such as securing an association agreement with the European Union, gaining membership in the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1999, and establishing free trade areas with the European, Middle Eastern and US markets. The trade agreement, which was signed on 24th October 2000, in addition to other treaties were "intended to shift Jordan's economy from one of dependence on foreign aid to one of self reliance" (King Abdullah II, 2004).

At the same time, legislative, regulatory, judicial and other reform efforts have been undertaken to create the necessary environment to allow Jordan's businesses and citizens to utilize such international agreements and effectively compete in the new knowledge-based global economy; Jordan was not able to tackle all of the reform areas that needed to be addressed while remaining within the government's budget. As a result, the country adopted a creative and ambitious program named the Social and Economic Transformation Program (SETP) in November 2001, where "the SETP is funded by external donor grants and by partial utilization of privatization proceeds. It calls for the adoption of performance-based growth budget and further strengthening the role of the private sector" (Fact Sheet, 2004).

4.5. The Economy after World Bank—Influenced Transformation

According to the cultural transformation, the country was performing to enable Jordanians to explore all of the opportunities that the world presented. The majority of people were driven by greater awareness equipped with knowledge and trying not to allow for traditional limitations. Jordan had created an environment conductive to competition in a free market by offering international investors a unique strategic position, stable political environment, and a qualified and modernized world-class infrastructure and communications means. On the

other hand, as previously stated, and despite the implementation of the objectives of economic privatization and globalization, it has been noticed that poverty rates in Jordan had been substantially increased within short to medium runs, especially since the implementation of the IMF and WB—influenced Stabilization and Structural Adjustment Programs (Rashwani, 2003). In addition, one can say that economic globalization had negative impact on reforms in Jordan at the political level similar to other MENA countries; since globalization meant going into the open market economy, where at that time Jordan was not ready for this new economic model, and thus Jordan relied on WB Stabilization and Structural Adjustment Programs that lead to heavy financial aids and loans (Rashwani, 2003) which resulted in the situation that the political decisions were not independent and did not necessarily take the interest of the country into its first priority, but rather the dependency of decision making on the IMF and WB and other closely related foreign recommendations and policies.

5. Conclusion and Future Work

The purpose of this article was to address the factors, internally and externally, that affected reforms in Jordan for the period spanning from its establishment till the first decade of the ruling of the new King. Political reforms in the countries of the Middle East were affected by various external factors which were correspondingly presented. As to Jordan, important internal factors that affected political reforms were also presented, where the question was how and to what extent did these factors (externally and internally) had an impact on the ongoing Jordan's political reforms. The investigated period mentioned above (spanning from Jordan's establishment till the first decade of the ruling of the new King) is important since it had important long ripple effects on the follow up years.

Side by side with the spreading of Communist ideas, at the end of the World War I and its outcome with the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in 1918, the Arab Fertile Crescent was divided into many small states based on French and British interests. Because of this new situation on the ground, nationalist movements emerged demanding liberation and unity. New Nationalist parties were formed and were able to transfer some of the states in the area to become independent. This trend did not survive due to the collapse of the U.S.S.R. That situation resulted in leaving the United States as the strongest world power. The cold war ended in 1989, and a New World Order came into existence, where the United States played the important role (directly or indirectly) within the causes for the disintegration of the U.S.S.R.

The US has always interests in the Middle East especially for its oil. The main objective of the American policy was always to maintain stability in this area (their support to the family regimes in the Arabian peninsula) where this policy was honoured by the United States that found in these states as N. Chomsky says "regional police force, and they perform their duties with accuracy and at the same time they deprive others and their people from their rights."

The occurrence of several double standards that were used by the United States resulted in Islamic fundamentalist ideas to had come into existence, where the war on Iraq was another excuse for these fundamentals fractions to fight back. They started to resist the American policy which led to the catastrophic September Eleven attacks on the United States. War on terror came into existence in order to fight this trend, which is still going on.

With regards to the internal factors that affected political reforms in Jordan, and its constitutional amendments, the comments on these amendments indicates that Jordan was able to introduce many constitutional amendments in order to adapt to the emerging political, economic, educational, social reforms, role of the press, and finally to the political events that frequently occurred in Jordan. These were dealt with constitutional amendments in order to overcome such events and problems facing the government at the time. It is imperative to mention that the parliamentary process in Jordan acts in according with the constitution with no restrictions on the powers granted by the constitution to the King. However, the various mentioned reforms were not highly effective towards achieving the intended objectives; even in some cases legislative obstacles have been applied to restrict freedoms of speech such as within press reforms.

The aspiration of Jordan's system had focused on benefiting from the opportunities of economic openness and global integration to become an active contributor in the global economy and society. The challenges in realizing this vision existed in effectively being able to adapt to a continuously changing set of global economic indicators. Accordingly, one had noticed that reforms' amendments took place in banking, laws, fiscal laws tightening, and higher levels of cooperation with the IMF and World Bank's recommendations. Yet, while implementing the objectives of economic privatization and globalization, it has been noticed that poverty rates had been substantially increased within short to medium runs, especially since the implementation of the World Bank-influenced Stabilization and Structural Adjustment Programs in Jordan.

Future work will include items such as further analytical investigations of the presented external and internal factors for their long ripple effects on the follow up years within the reform process that took place in Jordan since 2010 for the various political, economic and social aspects.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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