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Source: *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (Aug., 1998), pp. 387-410

Published by: Cambridge University Press

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/164267>

Accessed: 22/06/2009 08:33

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**Glenn E. Robinson**

## DEFENSIVE DEMOCRATIZATION IN JORDAN

Jordan's political-liberalization program, initiated in 1989, represents the longest sustained such opening in the Arab world today. During this time, Jordan has held three national parliamentary elections, enacted a number of liberalizing laws, removed many restrictions on the press, and minimized the role that the security services, or *mukhābarāt*, play in repressing opposition. Moreover, the liberalization program has survived a number of severe challenges, including the second Gulf War and the subsequent loss of Jordan's major regional trading partner, Iraq; the implementation of a difficult domestic austerity program; and the conclusion of a controversial peace treaty with Israel.

Democratization in Jordan has not followed the same path as the recent democratic transitions in East Asia, Latin America, and Eastern Europe. By closely examining Jordan's program of political liberalization<sup>1</sup> since 1989, I will argue that the process is best understood as a series of pre-emptive measures designed to maintain elite privilege in Jordan while limiting the appeal of more fundamental political change. The regime has skillfully managed and directed a process that has throughout protected the four pillars of power in Jordan: the monarchy and its coterie, the army and security services, wealthy business elites, and East Bank tribal leaders. It has simultaneously sought to undermine the only social force legally able to disrupt key regime policies, the Islamist Muslim Brotherhood, and its political party, the Islamic Action Front (IAF).

In other words, uncertain about its ability to survive a deepening crisis, the regime undertook sufficient reform to assure its political longevity, but without altering the core structures of power in Jordan. I term this "defensive democratization." The concept of defensive democratization provides an additional nuance to our understanding of democratic transitions more generally by focusing attention on pre-emptive liberalizing strategies available to rentier states.

This essay concludes by arguing that the strategy of defensive democratization in Jordan may not be able to withstand the likely political volatility in, and Islamization of, Palestinian politics in Jordan. Ironically, what may pose the greatest threat to the democratic transition in Jordan is peace, with the sorts of demographic and political challenges the 1994 agreement with Israel has unleashed. Indeed, contrary to the optimistic forecasts found in many of the recent works on civil society, the

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end of the Arab–Israeli conflict may well usher in a new era of authoritarianism in Jordan—and elsewhere in the Arab world.

#### DEFENSIVE DEMOCRATIZATION IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

By now it is axiomatic that democracy has multiple independent variables: no single causal variable explains all or even most democratic transitions. Broadly stated, there are two schools of explanation for democratic transition, each with multiple variants: economic and socio-cultural. Although this is not the place for a comprehensive review of what is among the largest bodies of literature in social science, it is helpful to understand what unites the diverse explanations of democracy and thus what is different about the concept of defensive democratization. What both economic and socio-cultural schools hold in common is that democracy is fundamentally a bottom-up process: societal changes lead to changes in state behavior—that is, to democracy.

The first school holds that economic transformation of one sort or another is the greatest predictor of democratic rule. Within this school, there are two major variants. The most famous of these arguments holds that democracy is inextricably linked to the formation of certain economic classes, principally the bourgeoisie. The classic and bluntest formulation of the relationship between economic class and democracy was made by Barrington Moore in his magisterial *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*: “No bourgeoisie, no democracy.”<sup>2</sup> More recent work has pointed to the decisive role the working class has played in modern democratic transitions and to the democratic agnosticism of the bourgeoisie.<sup>3</sup>

A major variant of this economic argument points not to class formation but to general economic modernization as the principal determinant of democratization. Over time, capitalist development and a growing GNP will necessarily lead to greater demands for political inclusion.<sup>4</sup> A recent prize-winning book suggests that per capita income of between \$1,000 and \$3,000 has been the threshold of democratization to begin.<sup>5</sup> Democratization pressures among the East Asian “tigers” are the usual examples cited for the argument that economic growth inevitably leads to political opening and even democracy. In a variation on this theme, democratization occurs in periods of economic bust that follow sustained economic growth. South American democratic transition in the 1980s—during a period of economic decline—are used as examples of this model.<sup>6</sup>

Socio-cultural explanations of the roots of democracy are also frequently employed in the literature. Here again, there are a multitude of different arguments, three of which will be mentioned here. First, there is the argument linking the creation of (usually Protestant) individualism with democracy (as well as with modern capitalism).<sup>7</sup> Although such an argument may help explain early European and North American democracies, it tells us little about contemporary democratic transitions. A more recent argument used extensively in the case of Eastern European countries incorporates the communications revolution and suggests that an “international demonstration effect”—or a “contagion of democratic ideas,” as Lisa Anderson puts it—by democratic core countries profoundly affects social thought and behavior in non-democratic countries toward democracy.<sup>8</sup>

Finally, academic debate on democratization in recent years has centered on the question of “civil society.” What constitutes civil society? Where does it come from? And what impact does it have on democratic transitions? These are the major questions that have been raised in this debate. A vibrant civil society is thought by many scholars to be the single greatest determinant not only of democratic transition, but of sustainable democracy, as well.<sup>9</sup>

The purpose of this necessarily brief overview of the democracy debate is to suggest that virtually all scholars agree that some form of transition in society—economic or socio-cultural—is a necessary (if not always sufficient) condition for democratic transition. There is a consensus that states themselves are not the progenitors of democracy but, rather, that they respond to changes in society. Both empirically and logically, this makes a good deal of sense. It is true that some recent works have concentrated on the art of making a democratic pact between state actors and societal actors (and the sorts of combinations of “hard-liner” and “soft-liner” actors that spur or inhibit democratization).<sup>10</sup> Even in these works on democratic “crafting,” however, some societal crisis or transformation has pushed the state into accepting the need for democratic transition in order to “spread the blame.”

The small handful of scholarly works that take seriously state crisis as the primary mover behind democratization invariably invoke the loss of cohesion among state elites as the point of departure. In these works, factions of the state elite lose confidence in the prevailing order and seek to re-legitimate their positions through democratization. The origins of such elite conflict—or “fissures in the power bloc,” as Adam Przeworski puts it<sup>11</sup>—are often left unexplained. Defensive democratization, conversely, need not involve elite conflict, and in the case of Jordan, it did not. In this case, there were no fissures in the power bloc, as state elites remained cohesive throughout.

The concept of defensive democratization departs from the themes noted earlier in that it posits that a state seeks to pre-empt anticipated pressure for political reform in the face of a crisis in the *state*, not society. That crisis is normally fiscal in content, as is the case in Jordan. Defensive democratization can take place in the absence of class restructuring, economic growth (or growth and decline), a vibrant civil society, or any other *societal* phenomena. Defensive democratization, even in the absence of democratizing social pressure, is a state strategy to maintain the dominant political order in the face of severe state fiscal crisis. Such fiscal crises, particularly in rentier states, are only loosely related to general economic problems in a country.

Defensive democratization played out in Jordan, briefly, as follows. Jordan, as is common in the Arab world, was a “rentier” or “distributive” state in that it relied on international rents instead of direct taxation for a disproportionate share of its government revenues.<sup>12</sup> Most of Jordan’s rents came from direct state-to-state transfers, particularly from Arab oil countries. These rents dried up in the 1980s, leading to a severe budgetary crisis in the Jordanian state.<sup>13</sup> Jordan then secretly turned to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to ease its fiscal crisis, but had to cut public expenditures—subsidies—as part of the deal. The resulting unrest in 1989 prompted King Hussein to adopt a policy of defensive democratization: to return Jordan to limited parliamentary life in order to pre-empt potentially more severe threats to the

ruling order. State-driven defensive democratization preserved the basic (although somewhat reshuffled) structure of power in Jordan, which might otherwise be threatened by society-driven substantive reform.<sup>14</sup>

Defensive democratization is not without risk for the ruling elite. It is quite possible that sustained top-down and limited democratization may gather a life of its own, leading to a snowballing of democratic demands. It is a process that may not be controllable forever by the elite. However, rentier states are better situated to resist demands for significant democratic expansion if the fiscal crisis is limited in scope and time. Societal depolitization is a hallmark of rentier states. Conversely, if a rentier state is compelled by budgetary realities to permanently extract greater resources from its own society (i.e., through taxation), then demands for greater inclusion and substantive political restructuring would be difficult to resist.

The most important reason that snowballing has not occurred thus far in Jordan is that the business community has benefited from the limited nature of the democratization campaign. The reticence of business to embrace a more extensive democratic transition is easily understood: the private sector—dominated by the Palestinian community—has benefited the most from IMF structural adjustment in Jordan. The private sector needs the protection of the state to prevent East Bank retaliation in the form of re-distributing resources toward the East Bank-dominated public sector. In this case, ethnic and public/private sector cleavages reinforce each other, leading the business community to champion economic, but not political, liberalization. The “exit option” for business to split with the state and embrace substantive democratization is structurally limited as a result.<sup>15</sup> While the particular circumstances in Jordan are unique, this mutually beneficial relationship between rentier states and their respective business communities appears to be quite common, explaining in part the lack of significant democratization in most such cases.

#### THE ORIGINS OF JORDAN'S DEMOCRATIZATION PROGRAM

By almost any measure, Jordan's economic fortunes were in decline well before the beginning of the Gulf War in 1990.<sup>16</sup> Its per capita GNP, hovering around \$2,000 since 1985, plummeted to less than \$1,500 in 1989. Similarly, remittances from Jordanians working abroad, primarily in the Gulf, dropped sharply, from more than \$1 billion annually before 1987 to \$623 million in 1989. The Gulf War forced remittances lower: to \$500 million in 1990 and \$450 million in 1991.<sup>17</sup> During this same period, Jordan was running constant deficits in trade and current accounts, and had declining real earnings.

More important (at least to the argument contained here), government transfers, primarily from Gulf Arab countries, declined markedly, leading to constant budget deficits during this period.<sup>18</sup> From 1980 to 1989, Jordan received annually from \$550 million to \$1.3 billion in official transfers. In 1990, that figure dropped to \$393 million. By 1991, it was down to \$164 million. In fact, in 1990 Jordan had to reschedule its large external debt because pledges of Gulf financial support had not been kept.<sup>19</sup> In short, in the late 1980s, Jordan was faced with a severe and destabilizing debt crisis, which would only get worse in the years that followed.

In response to this ongoing and severe fiscal crisis, the government entered into an initially secret structural-adjustment agreement with the IMF at the end of 1988. In return for IMF loans, Jordan had to undertake a series of economic reforms, including cuts in government spending (primarily subsidies) and increases in government revenues—that is, tax hikes. Subsidies and other types of welfare payments had long been staples of Hashemite patronage to important constituencies, primarily in the southern (non-Palestinian) half of the country. By cutting these subsidies, and thereby indirectly attacking key bases of its support, the monarchy put its very survival in jeopardy. The public announcement of the IMF agreement, which included sharp increases in the prices of a number of basic commodities, led to bloody riots in the south, initially centered on Maʿan, in April 1989. The riots and ensuing clashes between two cornerstones of Hashemite rule—the East Bank-dominated military and southern East Bank and Bedouin citizens—shook the regime. Unlike in 1970, Palestinians were not central players in the unrest. Responding to the most serious challenge to his rule in nearly twenty years, King Hussein called for parliamentary elections to be held before the end of the year. General parliamentary elections had not been held in Jordan since before the 1967 war.

At one level, Jordan's decision to liberalize fits into arguments found in the civil-society literature dealing with rentier states.<sup>20</sup> That is, government revenues in Jordan had come disproportionately from external rents, primarily government aid. In turn, the regime distributed these rents to key constituencies as patronage, often in the form of subsidies and employment. When the fiscal crisis hit—increasing debt and decreasing revenues—the regime had to rid itself of some of its rentier attributes by decreasing patronage distribution and increasing domestic extraction (i.e., taxes). By relying more on its citizenry than on external rents for its government revenues, Jordan was simultaneously compelled to incorporate a greater public voice in decision-making. That voice, in turn, came in the form of a democratic opening.

Such an accounting is true as far as it goes. However, such an explanation needs to be tempered by the insights provided by the concept of defensive democratization. For example, the political liberalization that was initiated in 1989 has been a top-down process designed to maintain basic power relations in Jordan, not to significantly change them. Both the rentier (or, in this case, “post-rentier”) and civil-society literatures suggest that regimes in crisis are compelled to liberalize in the face of domestic pressure, and that the liberalization process cannot be easily managed by such weakened regimes. In the case of Jordan, however, the democratization program has been directed from the beginning by the regime, and should be seen as a means of strengthening the regime's position in society, not as an example of the regime yielding to domestic forces.

Moreover, while there were clearly pressures from below for change, there was no significant grass-roots movement for democracy, *per se*. The riots were primarily about higher prices for basic commodities, not the right to vote. To the degree that there were political messages included in this bottom-up pressure, those messages were about ending corruption and about renewing the special relationship between the Hashemite monarchy and the East Bank/Bedouin communities, a relationship that was perceived to be weakening. Structural adjustment has been seen by East Bankers

as primarily benefiting Palestinians, who dominate the private sector, at the expense of East Bankers, who are found disproportionately in the public sector.

#### THE FIRST STEPS, 1989–93

##### *The 1989 Parliamentary Elections*

In the aftermath of the riots, King Hussein called for new parliamentary elections. The 1989 campaign was filled with a number of oddities. First, political parties were not yet legal, so candidates ran on individual platforms. Of course, the ideological tendencies of candidates were widely known and often publicized by the candidates themselves. In addition, the structure of the voting districts for the more important lower house was unusual. There were twenty electoral districts, each electing anywhere from two to nine representatives, for a total of eighty seats.<sup>21</sup> Sixty-eight seats were reserved for Arab Muslim candidates, nine for Christians, two for Circassians, and one to be contested by Circassian and Chechen candidates. Moreover, the official campaign period was extremely brief—just twenty-five days. While enthusiasm for the election was high, the turnout was disappointing. Only 54 percent of registered voters (41 percent of potential voters) cast ballots.<sup>22</sup> The entire election was conducted while martial law was still in effect.

The suddenness of the decision to hold elections after such a long interregnum, the brief duration of the permitted campaign period, and the prohibition of political parties greatly benefited previously organized groups. As a result, candidates associated with the long-standing Muslim Brotherhood and those representing tribal groups were particularly successful. Twenty of the twenty-six candidates that the Muslim Brotherhood (unofficially) ran won office. In addition, twelve independent Islamist candidates likewise won seats.<sup>23</sup> Thus, of sixty-eight realistically potential seats, Islamist candidates won thirty-two, or nearly half. Various tribal representatives and centrists won thirty-five seats, and leftists took the remaining thirteen seats.

Even though an Islamic bloc won a plurality of the seats, it spent most of its four-year term outside of government. Over the objections of the Islamists, the first session of parliament elected the centrist Sulayman ʿArar as speaker. A coalition of centrists, traditional conservatives, and leftists banded together to shut out the Muslim Brotherhood candidate. Again over the objections of the Muslim Brotherhood, the king appointed Mudar Badran, former head of general intelligence, as prime minister. While Badran negotiated with the Muslim Brotherhood over possible appointments, no deal was struck, although three independent Islamists were included in the cabinet.

The second session was only slightly more successful for the Islamists, who had by then organized more formally in Parliament as the National Islamic Bloc. Parliament opened in November 1990 in the shadow of the Gulf War, and the Islamists were able to elect a speaker from the Muslim Brotherhood, the American-educated ʿAbd al-Latif ʿArabiyat. In a cabinet shuffle, Badran included four Muslim Brotherhood deputies, splitting the Islamists. The great appeal for the Islamists in joining Badran's cabinet was the promise of the Ministry of Education portfolio. Not long after joining the government, the Brotherhood declared that it would segregate the sexes in all schools. In response, the king dissolved the government.

In June 1991, King Hussein appointed a prominent Palestinian, Tahir al-Masri, as prime minister over the objections of the Muslim Brotherhood. In the face of growing Brotherhood opposition—centered in part on Jordan's (and Masri's) willingness to attend, with Israel, what became known as the Madrid Conference held in October 1991—the king threatened to delay opening the third session of Parliament. The Brotherhood then backed down. In any case, Masri could not long function with a minority government and had to step aside when he could not carry a vote of confidence. The king's cousin, Zayd ibn Shakir was then appointed prime minister.

While the Islamist plurality came to Parliament confident in its ability to steer society toward its world view, its agenda was routinely stifled. In a number of cases the Islamists were simply out-maneuvered in Parliament by other parties, as when they were unable to get their candidate elected as first speaker. The pattern of the Muslim Brotherhood raising issues or objections, only to be beaten back in some manner, continued both under Prime Minister Zayd ibn Shakir and his successor, ʿAbd al-Salam al-Majali. On a number of issues, including the segregation of sexes in schools, the prohibition of alcohol, and opposition to the peace talks with Israel, the position of the Muslim Brotherhood was simply defeated outright. This was true even though the Islamists retained the speaker's position after 1990.

In fact, while there were numerous and significant political and legal developments during the 1989–93 period, the monarchy and the government were largely responsible for them, not the Parliament. Perhaps Parliament's most important early job was to give its blessing to the IMF structural-adjustment program—an ironic task, given that the austerity measures had caused the 1989 riots that had brought Parliament into being. The other legislative achievements during this period—the Political Parties Law, the Press and Publications Law, and the successful push for the lifting of martial law—could not have occurred without the support of the monarchy. In other words, the Parliament could act only within the political parameters set by the king and enforced by his chosen prime minister. Any moves beyond those parameters, especially those which could threaten elite privilege, were quickly quashed. Parliament had little real power to substantially change policies or course. In the end, Parliament's primary task was to legitimate King Hussein's political agenda.

#### *The National Charter (al-Mithāq al-Waṭānī al-Urdunnī)*

In the wake of the events of 1989—the riots and the subsequent sudden resumption of parliamentary life—King Hussein appointed a sixty-member commission to draft a charter outlining the goals and parameters of Jordan's democratization efforts. It is ironic that the governing document for Jordan's democratization was drafted a year after the first post-riots Parliament (and eleventh overall) had been elected and seated. The National Charter was submitted in December 1990 and was subsequently endorsed by the king in June 1991.

The charter itself is interesting on several grounds. First, it is a remarkably progressive document, repeatedly emphasizing democratic rights, intellectual pluralism, tolerance, and equality. In several places, in fact, it stresses equal rights and equality before the law of men and women. Second, it explicitly affirms private-property

rights, a major pillar of elite power. Third, it shows a healthy schizophrenia, seeking legitimacy for its principles at various levels: particularist nationalism (i.e., Jordanian nationalism, or *waṭaniyya*), Arab nationalism (*qawmiyya*), Islam (as both religion and civilization), and international or universal standards. Fourth, while the short history it gives of Jordan is understandably self-serving, it is remarkably frank in its admission that the public had lost confidence in state institutions. The charter also accurately notes the non-fulfillment of Gulf states' financial pledges to Jordan, which worsened the fiscal crisis.

What is most important about the National Charter is not the progressive sentiments expressed in its pages. The world is full of liberal but unimplemented constitutions, declarations, and laws, and the Middle East is certainly no exception to this pattern. Rather, what gave the National Charter status was its collection of signatories. The sixty-member committee that drafted the charter consisted not only of well-known government and business figures close to the king but also of a number of prominent figures from leftist parties and the Muslim Brotherhood. Those signatories with close ties to the king included Ahmad ʿUbaydat (a former prime minister), ʿAdnan Abu ʿAwda (the king's political adviser), ʿAbd al-Salam al-Majali (a former prime minister), Tahir al-Masri (a Palestinian and former prime minister and foreign minister), Ibrahim Badran (a former minister from an important family), and ʿIsam Muhammad ʿAli Budayr (an industrialist). The participation of such individuals in this endeavor is not surprising.

Leading members of the Muslim Brotherhood also participated in drafting and signing the charter. They included Ishaq al-Farhan (the current head of the Brotherhood's political party, the Islamic Action Front), Yusuf al-ʿAzim, ʿAbdallah al-ʿUqayli, ʿAbd al-Latif ʿArabiyyat (speaker of Parliament, 1990–93), Majid Khalifa, and Ahmad Qutaysh al-ʿAzayida. In addition, several independent Islamists were members, including Muhammad al-ʿAlawina and Mahmud al-Sharif (chief editor of the newspaper *al-Dustur*).

Finally, a number of leftists and Pan-Arabists, often of Palestinian origin with strong pro-Palestinian views, also participated in the writing of the charter. These included Sulayman al-Hadidi (Baʿthist, former Lawyers Association president), Amin Shuqayr (Baʿthist), Muna Amin Shuqayr (journalist, Baʿthist), Dhib Marji (PFLP), ʿIsa Madanat (Jordanian Communist Party), Labib Qamhawi, Asma Khadir, Taysir al-Zibri (PFLP), and Hammada Faraʿina (DFLP). Interestingly, ʿAli Abu Nuwwar also was a signatory. Abu Nuwwar was a leading member of the Free Officers group, which staged an abortive coup against the king in 1958. He spent much of his life in exile in Egypt after the coup attempt, only to be pardoned by the king and made an ambassador. Abu Nuwwar died not long after the elections.

#### *Codifying the National Charter: The Political Parties Law and the Press and Publications Law*

While the National Charter laid the foundation for Jordan's political liberalization and had significant political status, it remained a document without formal legal standing. Although the charter called for the establishment of political parties—then outlawed—it remained for the prime minister and Parliament to pass this principle into

law. This was done in September 1992. Moreover, while the press was permitted substantially more practical freedom after 1989, it remained officially controlled and censored by the government, a state of affairs in contradiction to any democratization. In response, the government and Parliament eased a number of restrictions on the media—while simultaneously adding new constraints—with the enactment in April 1993 of the Press and Publications Law.

The legalization of political parties in 1992 corrected the anomaly of the partyless 1989 elections. For the first time in decades, Jordan allowed public formation of explicit political parties. Prior to this time, only the Muslim Brotherhood was tolerated as a semi-legal party, although it remained technically a charitable and social organization. In any case, the limited public political life prior to 1989 would have made political parties superfluous.

The 1992 law had two interesting features. First, it expressly forbade any party from having financial or organizational ties to any outside body (Article 21). This provision hinders not only Pan-Arabist parties such as the two Ba<sup>c</sup>thist parties, but could be used to shut down virtually any party with Palestinian ties.<sup>24</sup> In particular, the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan is—at least, arguably, until recently—the same organization as the Muslim Brotherhood in the West Bank (but not Gaza). They had merged following Jordan's annexation of the West Bank, and remained so tied even after the 1967 war and the loss of the West Bank. If the king ever needed legal justification for “legally” closing down the Islamic Action Front, the political party of the Muslim Brotherhood, Article 21 would provide it. The same goes for other Palestinian-oriented parties—those with ties to the PFLP or DFLP, for example.

Second, the law laid the groundwork for the potential future “choice” by Palestinians in Jordan of Jordanian or Palestinian citizenship. If the West Bank/Gaza polity is ever able to offer formal citizenship to Palestinians, it is likely that Jordan will compel Palestinians living in the kingdom to choose explicitly between maintaining Jordanian citizenship or claiming legal Palestinian citizenship with resident privileges in Jordan. Those who opt for Palestinian citizenship with Jordanian residency likely will be excluded from participating in political life in Jordan by Article 5, which forbids party members from claiming a non-Jordanian nationality or seeking foreign protection (*himāya*). There have already been calls by East Bankers in Jordan to “repatriate” Palestinians or otherwise remove them from public life.

In a sign of things to come, the first party legalized under the new law was the Jordan National Alliance, which, in the words of the prominent journalist Lamis Andoni, was little more than “a coalition of central and southern Bedouin tribes with no economic, political, or ideological program.”<sup>25</sup> By the time of the 1993 elections, twenty political parties had registered.

The Press and Publications Law has also been central to the liberalization process, although not always for the right reasons. Jordan's press had become significantly more open after the adoption of the National Charter, which had called for freedom of the press. Early drafts of the law embodied those freedoms and reflected the growing reality of a free press in Jordan. However, against the recommendation of its own legal committee, the conservative Parliament—dominated by the Muslim Brotherhood and tribal elements—adopted Article 40 of the Press and Publications Law, in effect gutting the very press freedoms the law was supposed to guarantee. It made

illegal any news items that offends the king or the royal family; insults Arab, Islamic or “friendly” heads of state, or accredited diplomats in Jordan; is contrary to public morals; may offend the dignity of any individual or damage his reputation, or offends the armed forces or security organs. Moreover, any foreign publication that violated any of these (and other) provisions would similarly be banned from entering Jordan. More recently, the government has sought to restrict the press by requiring significant financial resources for any paper to operate, effectively eliminating all small newspapers.

Among the remaining large newspapers, there remained a second, more subtle form of censorship in Jordan. Through shares owned by the Social Security Fund and Jordanian Investment Company, the government owned 60 percent of *al-Rāʿi*, 35 percent of *al-Dustūr*, and 75 percent of *Sawt al-Shaʿb*, by far the largest newspapers in Jordan.<sup>26</sup> Thus, the government still had the controlling interest on the boards of directors, which can dismiss and appoint new editors. The subsequent pressure on editors to practice self-censorship in order to stay within defined parameters in their reporting was obvious, and was not particularly conducive to a genuinely free press. As one editor said, he had “to know how to play the balancing game.”<sup>27</sup> Government influence could clearly be seen in the plethora of positive news stories surrounding the peace negotiations with Israel in 1994 (an event not enthusiastically welcomed by most Jordanians) and the virtual absence of negative stories.<sup>28</sup>

Perhaps the most notable case in which Article 40 provisions were used to intimidate the press was the trial of George Hawatmeh, the editor of the English-language *Jordan Times*, and one of his reporters. Reporting on the Muṭa trials of military cadets charged with conspiracy to overthrow the government and assassinate the king, the *Jordan Times* quoted a defendant who claimed he had been tortured in prison. The *Jordan Times* had carried quotes from the prosecutor for months, without incident. However, quoting a defendant who claimed—accurately, according to a number of other sources—to have been tortured propelled the government to take Hawatmeh and his writer to court, with a six-month prison term awaiting them if found guilty of “offending the security services.”<sup>29</sup> While this type of activity chills press freedom, it was a clear improvement on the earlier situation. In the past, the government could have shut down the *Times* without explanation; now, it had to prove its case in court.

What was perhaps more interesting than the continued restrictions on the press was the easy accommodation many editors made with those restrictions. Where one would perhaps expect such editors to be pushing the limits of the press freedoms, some in fact were quick to defend the restrictions. For example, the editor of *al-Dustūr*, Musa Kilani, described the press as going through a “teething stage” where the press was getting used to its new role and the government was getting used to the press. He rejected the notion that the monarchy was a legitimate target of criticism, saying only “the government and some of its policies” were fair targets.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, Usama al-Sharif, editor of the weekly *Star*, accepted that Jordan could not afford “Western press standards” because of its social divisions. Such reporting might “create a civil war the next day.” Continuing the life-cycle metaphor used by Kilani, Sharif suggested that the Jordanian press was not “developed enough to handle” real freedom.<sup>31</sup>

One could interpret the press's timidity as many Jordanians did: that press freedom was new and needed to be nurtured, and that over time the press would grow into the role it must play in any democracy. One can also accept the political fragility of the Jordanian polity. This is, after all, a country which had a violent civil war in 1970–71, and those divisions—always present—may well politicize again with the settlement of the Arab–Israeli conflict. The skirmishes over the press, however, seemed to be located entirely among Jordan's elite. Indeed, there has been no obvious grass-roots movement for a free press. Within this elite there have been clear differences of opinion as to what role the press should play during the liberalization period. However, there has been elite consensus both inside and outside the press that the media should not play an antagonistic role vis-à-vis the monarchy and the dominant power relations in Jordan.

### *The 1993 Elections*

Although the Parliament elected in 1989 had little power to effect change in Jordan, its large contingent of opposition figures, primarily from the Muslim Brotherhood, acted as a relatively vocal watchdog of government policy. Given the rapid developments in 1993 in the Arab–Israeli talks and the remaining features of the IMF austerity package still to be implemented, even this level of opposition was viewed as detrimental by the government. As a result, the monarchy and the government initiated a process through which a more friendly 12th Parliament would be elected in the November 1993 elections. Their actions were largely successful, as the results of the elections demonstrated.

The single most important step in the attempt to engineer a more docile Parliament was the adoption of the “one-person, one-vote” system. In the prior election, each citizen could vote for as many candidates as there were seats in the electoral district. Since districts ranged in size from two to nine seats, each voter in Jordan had between two and nine votes to distribute among candidates in that district. It was widely believed that the impact of this system in the 1989 elections was the election of more “ideological” candidates—Islamists and leftists—as people could cast their “first” vote for a clan member and then cast their “second” vote on ideological grounds. Thus, each voter could satisfy both familial and ideological impulses. Making voters choose between these was rightly seen by the government to favor tribal gatherings at the expense of political parties.

Compounding the change in the electoral law was the retention of the twenty electoral districts. The districts system already was widely seen to favor southern and central tribal areas at the expense of far more densely populated (and Palestinian) areas, particularly the Amman-Zarqa region. As the secretary-general of the Islamic Action Front, Ishaq al-Farhan, argued, the new hybrid system meant voters would have unequal votes: in districts electing nine representatives, a voter effectively had one-ninth of a vote, while in districts electing two members of parliament, each voter had half of a vote; the “weight” of the vote given the second voter would be four and a half times that of the first voter.<sup>32</sup> Even those in government widely acknowledge that the change was principally aimed at undercutting the Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>33</sup>

As talk of the impending electoral change mounted in the summer of 1993, the Islamic Action Front began voicing its strong opposition, as did other parties. Of the twenty newly registered political parties, sixteen came out against a one-person, one-vote system if implemented without concomitant changes in the electoral districts. On 4 August, however, the king dissolved Parliament while scheduling the next election on 8 November. Thirteen days later, the government announced its decision to adopt the one-person electoral change without any changes in districting. The immediate and vocal opposition to this change, including calls for boycotting the election, was quickly stunted by the king's forceful acceptance of the electoral changes. No party, not least the Muslim Brotherhood, wanted to take on the monarchy. By 28 August, the IAF announced it would participate in the election. All other parties followed suit.

The election itself was put in jeopardy by the Israeli–PLO accords signed on 13 September 1993, followed the next day by the signing of the Jordan–Israel Agenda (which set the stage for the formal peace treaty signed between Jordan and Israel in October 1994). Even the king publicly raised concerns as to whether it was the appropriate time to hold elections. However, the decision to go forward was made at the end of September, giving the parties little more than a month to prepare for the elections.

The government's election-engineering provided the anticipated results—that is, electing what came to be known as the “tribal parliament.”<sup>34</sup> Islamists lost the most seats, going from thirty-two to twenty-two representatives.<sup>35</sup> Of those twenty-two, sixteen were IAF candidates and six were independent Islamists (and two of those were members of the Muslim Brotherhood). No other party won more than five seats. In fact, official party candidates won only thirty-four of the eighty seats, with the rest won by independents. Indeed, party lists constituted only 10 percent of all candidates (55 of the 534). Thirty-six of the fifty-five party candidates came from the IAF. An additional forty-five candidates were party members who ran as independents. Even when these are added to the total, less than 19 percent of the candidates running for Parliament were from political parties. Most of the independents were clan candidates running clearly on familial bases. In all, fifty-six of the eighty parliamentarians were solidly pro-Hashemite, falling under categories of “conservatives” (34), “centrists” (13), and East Bank nationalists (9).<sup>36</sup> The left, virtually extinct in Jordan, won only two seats.<sup>37</sup>

The election itself was not without problems. First, the turnout was once again disappointing, considering this was the first multi-party national election in Jordan in decades: 56 percent of registered voters and 45 percent of eligible voters participated. However, 68 percent of registered voters had collected “voting cards” ahead of time (which are presented at the voting precinct on election day in order to verify voting eligibility). Since voting cards do not have to be collected by the individual voter, they were often picked up by clan members or even candidates themselves as a “service” to their constituents. Presumably only the people whose votes were assured were provided this service. Finally, there were numerous reports of the abuse of the voting mechanism for illiterates. Illiterates orally dictate their votes to a precinct worker, who then marks the ballot. Those people who had sold their votes had

to pretend to be illiterate at the voting booth so that they could loudly call out the name of the candidate for whom they were voting.

None of this should suggest that the election was a sham. It was, in fact, relatively free and fair, with abuses not noticeably different from those in many democratic elections elsewhere. What was true was that the voting system was successfully engineered to elect a certain type of Parliament. The one-person, one-vote electoral change; the maintenance of electoral districts which favor central and southern tribal areas; and the voting card system all worked to elect a heavily tribal, pro-Hashemite Parliament.<sup>38</sup> No party was immune to playing the tribal card. Even the IAF—the only real party in Jordan—often selected candidates based on clan membership. In Karak, for example, the powerful Majali clan had nominated its chosen representative—the brother of the prime minister—to run for Parliament. The IAF then tried to split the clan vote by nominating two candidates to run from that district, both from the Majali clan.

The election results were often characterized in the West as a sign of the declining relevance of the Islamist movement. This is a misreading of what happened. In fact, what needs to be explained is not the decline of the Islamists, but how they did so well in an electoral system clearly designed to work against their interests. After all, the Islamic bloc won more than a quarter of all parliamentary seats and a third of all non-quota seats (the twelve set-aside seats for Christians, Circassians, and Chechens were retained). Three factors help explain the Islamists' success. First, the Muslim Brotherhood—and by extension, the IAF—remained the best-organized non-governmental grass-roots institution in Jordan. Much of the Brotherhood's appeal rested on its provision of social services in places where the government had little such presence. The Muslim Brotherhood ran a number of clinics, schools, and other social services throughout the country, but primarily in Zarqa and eastern Amman—poor, heavily populated, and largely Palestinian areas. Such organization allowed the Muslim Brotherhood to mobilize support in ways other parties could not match.

Second, in comparison with the pervasive image of Jordanian politicians (as elsewhere) as corrupt, self-serving individuals, Islamist candidates often were seen as pious, selfless, and incorruptible. The candidates themselves helped this image along by wrapping themselves in the banner of Islam. Voters in both the 1989 and 1993 elections implicitly were asked to choose between the religious and the irreligious, even though all the candidates contesting these seats were by law Muslim (excluding the minority quota seats).

Third, and most interesting, the success of the Muslim Brotherhood was intimately linked—and in complex ways—to the Palestinian issue. The IAF did best in heavily Palestinian areas. In Zarqa, a densely populated, poor, and overwhelmingly Palestinian city, the top three vote-getters, by a substantial margin, were IAF candidates. Of all the votes cast for the winning candidates, 85 percent were for IAF candidates. Similarly, in Amman's second electoral district, which included the sprawling Wihdat refugee camp, the IAF received 43 percent of all votes and 78 percent of ballots cast for winning candidates. None of this should suggest a heavy Palestinian turnout for the elections. In fact, the best estimate was that only 30 percent of all actual

voters were Palestinian, in a country where Palestinian demographic weight is probably double that number.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, in both Zarqa and Amman's second district, turnout was very low—only 18.6 percent of eligible voters in the latter case. Rather, the IAF's success in Palestinian areas suggests strong Palestinian support in the midst of general Palestinian electoral apathy.

Palestinians' electoral timidity is easily understood. They have never been fully embraced by the Jordanian polity. Further, the surge of East Bank chauvinism following the disclosure of the secret Oslo negotiations and subsequent signing of the Declaration of Principles—after decades of PLO insistence on no separate deals with Israel—further alienated Palestinians from the 1993 elections. In fact, the elections came at a time of a profound existential crisis in the Palestinian community. Not only were they generally alienated from Jordanian politics, but most felt betrayed by the PLO for signing an agreement with Israel that ignored the rights of the Palestinian diaspora community in Jordan and elsewhere. As a result, the Palestinians who did vote tended to vote for the IAF—which had condemned the Oslo Accords—or, in the case of Baq<sup>ç</sup>a, for independent candidates running on local issues and needs.

However, the relationship between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Palestinian community is more complex than is suggested by their shared opposition to the Oslo Accords. The Muslim Brotherhood has been the only organization in Jordan that Palestinian activists can join and work for a political agenda while at the same time avoiding the label "Palestinian." Unlike any other Jordanian organization, the Muslim Brotherhood and the IAF have had numerous Palestinians in the upper echelons of leadership, yet these individuals generally have not been known politically in Jordan as Palestinians. They are known primarily as members of the Brotherhood. Non-Islamist Palestinian politicians always carry the "Palestinian" ethnic tag no matter how many governments they serve in, as the case of Tahir al-Masri suggests.

A cursory glance at the leadership of the IAF shows how deeply Palestinians are involved in the movement. At the time of the 1993 elections (before a split developed within the IAF), the secretary-general of the IAF, Ishaq al-Farhan, was of Palestinian origin (born in <sup>ç</sup>Ayn Karim, near Jerusalem), as were about one-third of the members of both the Executive Bureau and the 120-person Shura Council of the IAF. Perhaps most telling of all, half of the 1993–97 IAF parliamentarians (8 of 16) were Palestinian. The entire eighty-member Parliament has only six other Palestinians, one of whom is an independent member from the Muslim Brotherhood. In spite of such strong Palestinian involvement, the IAF has not generally been viewed in Jordan as a vehicle for Palestinian interests, nor have Palestinian parliamentarians from the Islamic bloc been particularly known for their ethnic identity.

Thus, in addition to its obvious ideological characteristics, the Muslim Brotherhood is the only party in Jordan that effectively integrates Palestinian interests without the political baggage of Palestinian ethnicity. No other organization that overtly espouses a Palestinian nationalist agenda and that is seen to be a legitimate political player in Jordanian affairs by East Bankers exists (or has existed) in Jordan. The Muslim Brotherhood, then, has carried with it a legitimacy in the eyes of East Bankers—even those who oppose its agenda—that an overtly Palestinian party never could. The Brotherhood's discreet Palestinian agenda has been seen not only in its electoral and social bases, but also in its outspoken opposition to both the PLO's and Jordan's set-

tlement with Israel. Mirroring the alliance in Palestine between Hamas and PFLP, the Muslim Brotherhood has informally joined forces with leftist parties (which are seen to be openly Palestinian) to oppose normalization with Israel.

While the Palestinian element in the Muslim Brotherhood is strong, it is not yet the dominant force within the organization. East Bankers, sometimes from prominent families in Jordan, thus far retain decisive (if weakening) leadership within the Brotherhood. The combination of a powerful Palestinian presence in the Brotherhood and the maintenance of that organization's leadership by more traditional East Bank personalities carries with it the possibility of fissure. In fact, the beginnings of such a split may have already occurred with the departure from the IAF of a number of hard-liners, some of whom are Palestinian. In any case, it would be political suicide for Palestinian Islamists to set up political shop outside the confines of the Muslim Brotherhood, as their influence in Jordan would surely ebb.

For its part, the Muslim Brotherhood rejects what it views as an unimportant distinction between Jordanian and Palestinian ethnicity. Rather, the organization accepts the unity of the Islamic *umma*, or community, as its organizing principle. In fact, when asked about the disproportionate Palestinian involvement in the Islamic movement in Jordan, Ishaq al-Farhan—himself a Palestinian—replied, perhaps disingenuously, that “we have never asked this question amongst ourselves; there has never been any discussion of this.”<sup>40</sup> Farhan's comments aside, the question is now beginning to be raised.

#### CONTAINING THE ISLAMIST MOVEMENT

As was noted earlier, the Islamist movement in Jordan historically has been perhaps the most integrated, establishment-oriented Islamist movement in the Middle East. First legalized by King ʿAbdallah, the Muslim Brotherhood was the only tolerated public political grouping in Jordan for decades; even in the long interregnum of martial law, the Brotherhood remained politically active, often through its disproportionate representation in the Ministry of Education. The Brotherhood had long been the regime's counterweight to more feared leftist and Nasserist groups, in addition to more radical fundamentalist groups, such as the Islamic Liberation Party (*Ḥizb al-Tahrir al-Islāmi*). Moreover, the leadership of the Muslim Brotherhood has tended to come from well-established political families in Jordan, hardly revolutionary elements. For example, the three-term speaker of Parliament from the Brotherhood, ʿAbd al-Litif ʿArabiyat, comes from a prominent Salti clan.<sup>41</sup>

In spite of the relatively compliant nature of Jordan's Islamist movement, the regime has taken significant steps—legal and illegal—to contain and even undermine the Islamist movement during the democratization process. Indeed, one of the consequences of political liberalization has been the significant weakening of the traditionally strong relations between the monarch and the Brotherhood.

Weakening the Brotherhood was not done because the Islamist movement represents a threat to the survival of the regime. Rather, the Islamist movement has been the only significant power in Jordan that has strongly opposed the two most significant policies driving the democratization campaign: the IMF-mandated austerity measures (including the initiation of a sales tax) and the normalization of relations

with Israel. Although it has supported political liberalization, the Muslim Brotherhood has not supported its defining features; only the Islamist movement could have conceivably defeated or seriously weakened these policies. Thus, while the inclusion of the Islamist movement in the liberalization process has been politically necessary, the monarchy and government have consistently acted to contain the movement's power.

The legal steps taken to weaken the Islamist movements during the democratization period have been described. The most important measure was the change in voting rules, which favored clan instead of party candidates. In addition, the pre-liberalization electoral districts favored the central and southern rural areas at the expense of the cities (especially the Amman–Zarqa metropolis) where the Muslim Brotherhood is strongest.

The regime, or parts of it, also engaged in dirty tricks against Islamists who were threatening—entirely legally—one of the foundations of elite privilege: institutionalized corruption. The case of Layth al-Shubaylat is suggestive of the limits to actual change during the democratization process. Shubaylat, an independent Islamist and leading engineer in Jordan, was elected to Parliament in 1989 with the largest percentage of votes of any candidate running. Moreover, he won in Amman's third district, the most affluent district in the country, by merging Islamist and younger secular constituencies in his anti-corruption campaign. Once in Parliament, Shubaylat led investigations into corruption, particularly under the prior prime minister, Zayd al-Rifa'i. While Shubaylat's work led to only one actual indictment, he came within a single vote of obtaining the super-majority necessary to indict Rifa'i himself on corruption charges. More important, the hearings exposed routine corrupt practices at the highest levels of government by officials eager to translate their political power into financial gain. Kickbacks to politicians for various business deals were shown to be commonplace.

Shubaylat's work did not win him many friends within the overlapping political and economic establishments. Nor did his vocal criticism of the Muslim Brotherhood's "appeasement" of the regime go over well in a number of Islamist circles.<sup>42</sup> However, he remained popular at the grass-roots level and also hails from a prominent East Bank family, so could not be easily dismissed by the regime.

By pushing the limits of democratization, Shubaylat was attacking the power structure in Jordan. As long as elections could be suitably manipulated, the press contained within recognized limits, and Parliament held ineffectual by its lack of real power, democratization would not be seen as threatening to elite interests. By exposing and challenging the ways in which business was done by representatives of the political class in Jordan, Shubaylat—and others—threatened to make the democratization process a harbinger of structural change.

As a result, Shubaylat and his fellow deputy Ya'qub Qarrash were arrested in August 1992 on trumped-up charges, the most serious of which was attempting to overthrow the government. Various weapons and explosives were said to be found in Shubaylat's possession, and he was accused of being paid by Iran to foment instability in Jordan. The evidence against Shubaylat was almost certainly fabricated, and the charges politically motivated. The trial was held in a military court, a system which does not share the reputation for relative independence that Jordan's civilian

judiciary does. The trial engendered a great deal of skepticism over Shubaylat's guilt in Jordan: no real evidence was produced; most witnesses were inmates suspected of making deals for reduced sentences; and the prosecution's star witness immediately renounced his own testimony, saying it had been coerced by Jordan's security personnel.<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless, Shubaylat and Qarrash were sentenced to death, which was then immediately commuted to twenty years in prison. Within forty eight hours, the king pardoned the two parliamentarians as part of a general amnesty, provoking further speculation that the trial's outcome had been "planned in advance."<sup>44</sup> The show trial of Shubaylat and Qarrash was a clear warning to Jordanians—and to the Islamist movement in particular—that democratization has its limits.

Such episodes spurred debate within the Islamist movement over the nature of its relationship to the government; these debates, in turn, highlighted a larger division within the Islamist movement between *social Islamists* and *political Islamists*. As I have argued elsewhere, the profiles and agendas of these two trends are relatively distinct.<sup>45</sup> Social Islamists are often East Bankers, are more likely to have had formal religious training, tend to push for changes centering primarily on social issues (such as banning alcohol from the kingdom and segregating the sexes at schools), generally support Hashemite rule, and urge close relations with the crown. The opposition by social Islamists to the Jordan-Israel peace treaty is based more on fears of Israeli cultural and economic penetration of Jordan, and subsequent "assaults on Islam," than on issues of political and social justice in Palestine. Social Islamists have dominated decision-making in the Muslim Brotherhood for years.

Conversely, political Islamists in Jordan tend to be more interested in larger political issues—not the separation of the sexes—and use a discourse often associated with the left: Western and Zionist imperialism, social justice, regime corruption, unequal distribution of wealth, and the like. Political Islamists are disproportionately Palestinian in origin and are often independent in political affiliation. Virtually none are members of the *ulama*; rather, they tend to be college-educated in technical fields, often, like Shubaylat, in engineering. Political Islamists are much more likely to be critical of the regime, and are often critical of the Muslim Brotherhood's close relationship with it.

The split between social and political Islamists over the proper relationship with the government has been the basis for several recent watershed developments within the Islamist movement. During the early 1980s ʿAbdallah ʿAzzam and Shaykh Khalifa—both members of the executive council of the Muslim Brotherhood at the time—fought for the leadership of the Brotherhood over precisely this issue. ʿAzzam, perhaps influenced by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's arguments about the illegitimacy of monarchy in Islam, was openly critical of the regime in Jordan, while Khalifa accepted Hashemite authority. Khalifa ultimately prevailed with help, it is widely believed, from the government, and ʿAzzam left to fight in Afghanistan. ʿAzzam became a very popular member of the Mujaheddin, but was ultimately killed by a car bomb in Peshawar, Pakistan.<sup>46</sup> Among more radical Islamists in Jordan, ʿAzzam has become a martyr-hero figure.

The Islamic Action Front has also experienced factionalism in its ranks based, at root, on the same issue. Following its licensing, the IAF held elections in December 1992 for its governing Shura Council. These interim one-year positions were won

decisively by IAF hawks, or political Islamists, prompting the departure from the IAF of a number of dissenting social Islamists. A year later, in December 1993, Shura Council elections were held again, this time for four-year positions. Pro-Hashemite IAF officials won decisively. Many observers believe that the government played a role in this election similar to that in the ʿAzzam–Khalifa dispute a decade earlier. In response, many of the hawks denounced the elections, and a number left the party, including Ziyad Abu Ghanima, a well-known political Islamist in the IAF.

More recently, splits in the IAF are beginning to appear along the Palestinian–East Bank cleavage. This was most evident in the lead-up to the November 1997 parliamentary elections. The IAF (at the behest of the Muslim Brotherhood), as well as a number of smaller nationalist and leftist parties, boycotted the 1997 elections primarily to protest the continuing application of the electoral law, which they viewed as discriminatory against urban parties, to the benefit of bedouin tribes. The boycott polarized political life in Jordan between those who felt that participation in the election was necessary and those who supported the boycott. Within the IAF, a similar division emerged, and it was primarily along Palestinian–East Bank lines. Palestinian leaders generally supported the boycott, while East Bankers as a whole wanted to participate in the elections. In the end, six Islamists who broke ranks with IAF were elected to Parliament, including two prominent members of the Muslim Brotherhood. The most important defector was the IAF parliamentarian ʿAbdallah al-ʿUqayli. Moreover, ʿUqayli appears to be on the verge of creating a new Islamist party that would more readily participate in government and would likely try to reverse what is seen as waning East Bank control over the Islamist movement.<sup>47</sup> He complains that Palestinians are taking over the leadership of the Islamist movement and distancing the movement from the “Jordanian agenda.”<sup>48</sup> As expected, the boycott resulted both in lower voter turnout (especially in heavily Palestinian districts<sup>49</sup>) and in a more heavily tribalized—and unrepresentative—Parliament.

The earlier co-optation of the Muslim Brotherhood by the regime for the benefit of both gave way during liberalization to a more strained relationship. However, as the earlier examples suggest, the government has been relatively successful in containing the Islamist movement in Jordan through coercion and, more importantly, by shaping both the structure of political participation and the internal dynamics of the movement itself. However, it is less clear that such containment can continue to be effective in the coming years because of the movement’s persistent strength and its large Palestinian presence in a period of volatile identity politics. What such potential *domestic* volatility as a result of the settlement with Israel does suggest, however, is that the limited democratization cannot be deepened without threatening established elite interests.

#### CAN DEMOCRACY AND PEACE CO-EXIST?

As has been made clear, Jordan’s modest steps toward political liberalization were taken in order to limit the possibility of uncontrollable change, and were designed to protect established interests during an uncertain period. The process was undertaken initially by the monarchy as a pre-emptive strike to insure its political survival. In subsequent years, liberalization was expanded only in ways that did not threaten

(and often helped along) major economic and political objectives of the regime, especially the IMF-mandated austerity plan due to run to 1999 and the settlement with Israel. Democratization, in effect, has been a continuation of state policies by other means. When democratization has threatened elite privileges, even in a legal manner (e.g., the Shubaylat corruption hearings), non-democratic means have been used to quash those challenges. Perhaps the best measure of the limited nature of Jordan's democratization is that the most powerful groups in Jordan prior to 1989 remain so today: the monarchy and its coterie, the army and security services,<sup>50</sup> wealthy business elites, and East Bank tribal leaders.

That is not to suggest that nothing has changed. Democratization has made the press freer and political association easier; most important, it has also diminished the role of the *mukhābarāt*. The confiscation of passports to silence opposition members has virtually stopped, and passports have been returned. Arbitrary arrest and torture in Jordan—which have always occurred at rates lower than those of its neighbors—are now rare. An indigenous Amnesty International office is even in place. Thus, political life in Jordan is the freest it has been since the 1950s. In addition, liberalization has produced greater public participation in the shaping of policy. For example, the revenue-generating aspects of the austerity package were altered through public debate.<sup>51</sup> Public resistance to a modest increase in public-school fees in 1994 forced that decision to be put off.<sup>52</sup>

Nor is the centrality of the protection of elite privilege during democratization *a priori* problematic. Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter note that the maintenance of elite privilege has been the cornerstone of “all previously known transitions to political democracy.” For them, measures that threaten elite property rights or military prerogative will likely doom the entire democratic transition.<sup>53</sup> Thus, it can be argued that for Jordan's democratization to have any chance of deepening, it must make clear that the interests of dominant elites—civilian and military—will be protected.

Jordan's peace treaty with Israel may well prove to be the undoing of the country's democratization program. The two years that followed the treaty-signing were tumultuous for Jordan, highlighting its increased political vulnerability. Surprised by the level of opposition that the peace treaty generated, the government began to placate key constituencies almost immediately. Custom duties on cars and luxury goods were slashed; salaries for schoolteachers (the largest single group of public employees) increased; and the army and security services were promised new weapons systems and a general modernization of forces (with American help).<sup>54</sup> In December 1994, Deputy Prime Minister Thuqan Hindawi resigned, citing “the cabinet's inability to cope with the aftermath of the peace treaty.”<sup>55</sup> A week later, Ahmad Ubaydat, a former prime minister and head of intelligence, was asked to resign from the upper house of Parliament because of his opposition to the terms of the treaty and his outspoken criticism of the Majali government's measures to limit dissent. Tahir al-Masri, another quintessential “establishment” politician, withdrew from his campaign to be re-elected speaker of Parliament due to the turmoil of post-peace Jordanian politics.

In the midst of this disarray, Prime Minister Majali and his government resigned, replaced by Zayd ibn Shakir and a new government in January 1995. That the king turned to Ibn Shakir was not surprising, as the new prime minister was considered

both experienced and personally loyal: experienced, because this was Ibn Shakir's third appointment as prime minister in six years; loyal, because Ibn Shakir, like the king, hails from the Hashemite clan. Still, in little more than two years following the treaty with Israel, Jordan went through four prime ministers.

The regime's tolerance of opposition, especially from the Islamist camp, declined significantly after the treaty. Reflecting the king's own hardening line against the Islamist (and other) opposition, Ibn Shakir denied the Islamists a seat on his thirty-one-member cabinet, the only significant political current in Jordan that he excluded. He also retained Salama Hammad as minister of the interior, a man known for his hard-line policies against opponents of the regime, especially Islamists. Signaling its impatience with the widespread criticism of the peace treaty and the pace of normalization, the regime—including more direct intervention by the king in day-to-day affairs—responded forcefully. Its measures included banning opposition rallies, arresting a number of Islamists, firing unsupportive Muslim preachers from their mosque positions, and stripping Islamists of state resources that they had previously enjoyed.<sup>56</sup> Shubaylat, a leading critic of normalization with Israel, once again landed in jail for seven months during 1996. The government's heavy-handed approach was noted by a number of human-rights organizations, which reported that violations of civil rights in Jordan increased significantly following the treaty.<sup>57</sup> The hard-liners on the cabinet had an even freer hand after a leading dove, Ibrahim Izz al-Din, resigned his cabinet position in the summer of 1995.

Nor did Jordan's peace partner make the task of selling normalization any easier. In May 1995—at the very moment that Jordan's government was sponsoring a personal tour of Petra for Yitzhak Rabin, then the Israeli prime minister—Israel announced another round of land confiscations in East Jerusalem. This move infuriated Jordan, where even the normally pliant Parliament and leaders of some of the most important—and loyal—East Bank tribes voiced dissent against continuing normalization under such circumstances.<sup>58</sup> The seemingly endless provocations by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu after his election in 1996 compelled King Hussein to write a stinging personal letter to Netanyahu in early 1997 accusing him of seeking to destroy the peace and everything that went with it.<sup>59</sup>

Even the rebounding Jordanian economy—among the fastest-growing in the Middle East since 1994—provided little political relief. In August 1996, a new round of riots in southern Jordan was precipitated by the (IMF-mandated) removal of subsidies for bread, more than doubling its price overnight. A few months later, Amman witnessed one of its largest protests ever as thousands of Jordanians tried to stop Israel's first trade fair in Jordan, only to be stopped by police water cannons.<sup>60</sup>

Far more important than the immediate dislocations and anti-democratic measures taken by the regime in the aftermath of the treaty are the larger political and demographic consequences that the treaty may unleash—repercussions that may well be too much for such a fragile democratic transition to survive. Those consequences revolve, in part, around the complex relationship between the Islamist movement and Jordan's large Palestinian population. While the Muslim Brotherhood and Islamic Action Front in Jordan have a number of social bases, they draw a disproportionate percentage (in comparison with other Jordanian political groupings) of their membership from Palestinians. Moreover, membership rosters aside, Islamists have garnered strong general support from Palestinian quarters, as the 1993 elections demonstrated.

As in the West Bank and Gaza, in Jordan Islamism has been the dominant vehicle of opposition to the post-Madrid Conference reconciliation between Israel and the Arab world, and it has continued to be so over the terms of the peace settlement with Israel. It seems likely, therefore, that the number of Palestinian Islamists in Jordan (and elsewhere) will increase in the coming few years—and that their politics will sharpen, particularly if the situation in Palestine continues to deteriorate.

This trend will be further strengthened by the greatly enhanced volatility of Palestinian identity in Jordan in the post-peace period. In the coming years, Palestinians in Jordan will be forced to choose in some significant ways between being “Jordanian” and “Palestinian.” Such a choice is fraught with political, not to mention psychological, peril for Palestinians in Jordan. To choose a fundamentally Palestinian identity will be to lose certain rights in Jordan; to choose a fundamentally Jordanian identity will be to relinquish both national claims to Palestine and concomitant political activity. *Only an Islamist political identity can overcome such a draconian choice*: a Palestinian Islamist can maintain an authentic concern for Palestine (although expressed in more Islamic and not national symbols) while maintaining a legitimate political standing in Jordan.

For these reasons, unless peace brings near-utopian benefits, a significant strengthening of the Islamist movement in Jordan in the next decade should be anticipated. Does the Jordanian state have the capacity to manage such an event through its defensive-democratization strategy? The answer is not at all clear. Does the Jordanian state have the capacity to contain a more powerful Islamist movement while *deepening* the democratic transition? The answer to this question is almost certainly no. Ironically, instead of heralding a brighter future, the end of the Arab–Israeli conflict could have profoundly negative repercussions for domestic Jordanian politics, ushering in a new era of authoritarianism and ending the prospects for a successful transition to democracy in an Arab country.

#### NOTES

*Author's note*: An earlier version of this essay was presented at the 28th annual conference of the Middle East Studies Association, Phoenix, Ariz., November 1994. Funding for this project was provided by the United States Institute of Peace. I wish to thank Laurie Brand, David Waldner, John Arquilla, Maria Moyano Rasmussen, and the anonymous *IJMES* reviewers for their insightful comments on various drafts. The arguments and any mistakes are solely the responsibility of the author.

<sup>1</sup>“Political liberalization” and “democratization” (but not “democracy”) are used interchangeably throughout this essay. The terms connote a political process by which a polity combines characteristics of both authoritarian and democratic rule, and which is moving in the direction of the latter. The usual distinction between the terms—civil versus political rights, respectively—is less explanatory in the case of Jordan as both types of rights expanded simultaneously.

<sup>2</sup>Barrington Moore, Jr., *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), 418.

<sup>3</sup>Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Evelyn Huber Stephens, and John D. Stephens, *Capitalist Development and Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992). See also Ruth Berins Collier and James Mahoney, “Adding Collective Actors to Collective Outcomes: Labor and Recent Democratization in South America and Southern Europe,” and Nancy Bermeo, “Myths of Moderation: Confrontation and Conflict during Democratic Transitions,” *Comparative Politics* 29, 3 (April 1997).

<sup>4</sup>This school of thought is best elaborated by Seymour Martin Lipset. For his earliest statements on this relationship, see his “Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Democracy,” *American Political Science Review* 53 (March 1959), and idem, *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics* (New York: Doubleday-Anchor, 1963), chap. 2.

<sup>5</sup>Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 63. The figures are in 1976 dollars.

<sup>6</sup>Peter Smith, "Crisis and Democracy in Latin America," *World Politics* 43 (July 1991). Economic crises in relatively advanced countries as bases for democratization to occur are also stressed by Stephen Haggard and Robert Kaufman, *The Political Economy of Democratic Transitions* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995).

<sup>7</sup>For a classic statement linking individualism with democracy, see Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (New York: Doubleday-Anchor, 1966), vol. II, part II, chap. 2–5. For a more recent work which takes up the theme of individualism and its impact on politics, see Ken Jowitt, *New World Disorder: The Leninist Extinction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

<sup>8</sup>Lisa Anderson, "Introduction," *Comparative Politics* 29 (April 1997): 3. For an example of this process, see A. O. Hirschman, "Exit, Voice, and the Fate of the German Democratic Republic: An Essay in Conceptual History," *World Politics* 45 (January 1993).

<sup>9</sup>This literature is extensive. For a good introduction, see John Keane, ed., *Civil Society and the State* (London: Verso, 1988).

<sup>10</sup>For the best statement of this approach, see Giuseppe Di Palma, *To Craft Democracies: An Essay on Democratic Transitions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

<sup>11</sup>Adam Przeworski, *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 55–56.

<sup>12</sup>On rentier states see, for example, Hazem Beblawi, "The Rentier State in the Arab World," and Giacomo Luciani, "Allocation vs. Production States: A Theoretical Framework," *The Arab State*, ed. Giacomo Luciani (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); F. Gregory Gause III, *Oil Monarchies* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1994), esp. chap. 4; and Theda Skocpol, *Social Revolutions in the Modern World* (Cambridge University Press, 1994) chap. 10.

<sup>13</sup>Budgetary concerns have also been central to Jordanian foreign-policy-making. In *Jordan's Inter-Arab Relations: The Political Economy of Alliance Making* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), Laurie A. Brand argues that this is the key independent variable explaining Jordan's foreign policy.

<sup>14</sup>Richard Joseph has referred to a similar process in Africa as "virtual democracy." In these cases, states construct a democratic facade while maintaining the basic structure of power in order to please international donors in the aftermath of the Cold War.

<sup>15</sup>This observation was made to me by David Waldner in a private conversation, 30 April 1997.

<sup>16</sup>Unless otherwise noted, all data in this paragraph come from the World Bank, specifically its *World Tables 1994* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 376–79.

<sup>17</sup>This figure had rebounded to nearly \$850 million in 1993, in addition to \$600 million in repatriated savings: *Jordan Economic Monitor* 4 (April 1994): 3.

<sup>18</sup>World Bank, see n. 16.

<sup>19</sup>Laurie A. Brand, "Economics and Shifting Alliances: Jordan's Relations with Syria and Iraq, 1975–81," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 26, 3 (August 1994): 410.

<sup>20</sup>For the most recent arguments about civil society in the Middle East, see Augustus Richard Norton, ed., *Civil Society in the Middle East* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995). Similar arguments can be found in a special issue of *The Middle East Journal* (47, 2, spring 1993) devoted to the subject of civil society. See also the reports issued by the Ibn Khaldun Center in Cairo concerning its own civil-society project, including an annual survey titled *al-Mujtama' al-Madani* [Civil Society]. What most of these sources share is a general optimism about the direction of political change in the Middle East today. Works on the rentier state are cited in n. 12.

<sup>21</sup>Data on the 1989 elections come from *Intikhābāt 1989: Ḥaqqā'iq wa Arqām* (The 1989 Elections: Facts and Figures) (Amman: Markaz al-Urdunn al-Jadīd l'il-Dirāsāt, 1993).

<sup>22</sup>Members of the military and the security services were not permitted to participate in the elections.

<sup>23</sup>Due to the obvious difficulty in labeling some candidates, accounts vary slightly in the reported number of independent Islamist candidates who won office. I am relying on the categorization made by the al-Urdunn al-Jadīd research center.

<sup>24</sup>In fact, Communist and Ba'ṯhist parties were initially denied legalization by the Ministry of the Interior, causing an intense political controversy. The problem was ultimately solved when the parties altered their names slightly: *Middle East International*, 18 December 1992.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup>Nabil al-Sharif, "Opposition in the Print Media," in *The Role of the Media in a Democracy: The Case of Jordan*, ed. George Hawatmeh (Amman: Center for Strategic Studies, University of Jordan, 1995), 11–12. The *Jordan Star* recently (8 May 1997) reported government ownership at 62 percent of *al-Raʿi* and 32 percent of *al-Dustūr*. *Ṣawt al-Shaʿb* closed in 1995.

<sup>27</sup>Interview with George Hawatmeh, editor of the *Jordan Times*, 4 April 1994, Amman.

<sup>28</sup>Al-Sharif, "Opposition in the Print Media," 15–16.

<sup>29</sup>Interview with Hawatmeh, Madaba, 15 April 1994.

<sup>30</sup>Interview with Musa Kilani, Amman, 9 April 1994. Even speculation about the king's health—he has cancer—is off-limits. A well-known journalist, Rami Khouri, lost his television news program and, for a period, his syndicated column for suggesting that Jordan must begin to contemplate its post-King Hussein future (because of death or abdication). This eminently reasonable advice was viewed as near-heresy in some circles.

<sup>31</sup>Interview with Usama al-Sharif, Amman, 7 April 1994.

<sup>32</sup>Interview with Usama al-Sharif, Amman, 17 April 1994.

<sup>33</sup>This was confirmed in a number of interviews with leading members of the political establishment. The only one who volunteered this information on the record was Ibrahim ʿIzz al-Din. ʿIzz al-Din was the minister of state for prime ministry affairs at the time this decision was made.

<sup>34</sup>One should not view the elections of a number of tribal elements as an example of a victory for "traditional" politics. There is a great deal of anecdotal evidence to suggest that many of the clan dynamics present during this process were very new, including the ways in which members were chosen to run and who participated in the selection of candidates. In short, the process tended to be less hierarchical, less patriarchal, and more fluid and flexible than one would expect of "traditional" clan politics. Thus, it really is better seen as an example of state policies not just tapping into or even re-invigorating but transforming "traditional groups" and their politics.

<sup>35</sup>Unless otherwise noted, figures for the 1993 elections come from al-Urdunn al-Jadid Research Center, *Intikhābāt 1993: Dirāsa Tahliyya Raqmiyya* (The 1993 Elections: An Analytical and Statistical Study) (Amman, February 1994), and *Post-Election Seminar* (Amman, February 1994).

<sup>36</sup>The ratification of the Jordan–Israel peace treaty by Parliament in November 1994 closely mirrored these numbers, with fifty-five of the eighty deputies voting in favor.

<sup>37</sup>Of note, the first woman—Tujan Faysal—was elected to Parliament. Faysal won a Circassian quota seat on the strength of support from Christians, who apparently voted en masse for a liberal, secular Muslim knowing that their own quota seats were assured. In an open election, Faysal probably would not have won.

<sup>38</sup>In fairness, it should be pointed out that the prime minister, ʿAbd al-Salam al-Majali, won an unexpectedly close vote of confidence in Parliament. However, this was not a sign of political unrest or opposition on major issues. Rather, the closeness was viewed as a snub at Majali for his publicly declared policy of not drafting any cabinet ministers from Parliament.

<sup>39</sup>*Post Election Seminar*, 47.

<sup>40</sup>Interview with Usama al-Sharif, Amman, 17 April 1994.

<sup>41</sup>In fact, ʿArabiyyat was defeated in the 1993 elections primarily because of the mobilization of the Palestinian vote in the Baqʿa camp at the expense of traditional clan candidates, in this case ʿArabiyyat. Residents of Salt—who have a reputation of being the most chauvinistic Jordanians—complained bitterly to the king after losing some of "their" seats. As a result, there is a great deal of speculation that electoral districts may be changed to remove Baqʿa from the Salt district. Some observers speculate that a special "camps" electoral district may be created.

<sup>42</sup>*Middle East International*, 23 October 1992.

<sup>43</sup>See *al-Safir*, Beirut, 14 November 1992, as reported in FBIS, 19 November 1992.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

<sup>45</sup>See Glenn E. Robinson, *Building a Palestinian State: The Incomplete Revolution* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), chap. 6, and "Can Islamists Be Democrats? The Case of Jordan," *Middle East Journal* 51, 3 (summer 1997).

<sup>46</sup>Responsibility for the car bomb—deep inside Pakistan—has never been determined, although even some non-Brotherhood activists in Jordan are suspicious about its origins. Interview with Mahmud Abu al-Ruz, Fatah political activist, Amman, 15 April 1994. Shaykh Khalifa died in 1994.

<sup>47</sup>*Jordan Star*, 6 March 1997 and 1 May 1997.

<sup>48</sup>*Jordan Star*, 1 May 1997.

<sup>49</sup>In the mostly Palestinian cities of Amman and Zarqa, only 24 percent and 21 percent, respectively, of eligible voters cast ballots. In non-Palestinian areas, well over half of all eligible voters cast ballots, including, for example, 87 percent of eligible voters in Karak. See "Jordan's Parliamentary Elections: Facts and Figures," al-Urdunn al-Jadid Research Center, Internet edition.

<sup>50</sup>The armed forces have always been dominated by East Bankers, especially the officer corps. However, that domination was strengthened—not coincidentally—during liberalization: in 1992, the army abolished universal conscription. In practice, this has allowed the armed services to decrease Palestinian representation and increase the percentage of East Bank recruits.

<sup>51</sup>The form of extraction shifted under public pressure from an income tax to a sales tax. This point was made to me by Bryan Daves.

<sup>52</sup>*Middle East International*, 9 September 1994.

<sup>53</sup>Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe C. Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 69. For a more recent re-statement of this proposition and related problems, see Doh Chull Shin, "On the Third Wave of Democratization: A Synthesis and Evaluation of Recent Theory and Research," *World Politics* 47, 1 (October 1994).

<sup>54</sup>*Middle East International*, 18 November 1994.

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*, 16 December 1994.

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*, 7 July 1995. The government's offensive paid some dividends when Islamists subsequently fared rather poorly in municipal elections in 1995.

<sup>57</sup>*Ibid.*, 26 May 1995.

<sup>58</sup>*Ibid.* The confiscation order was later suspended, but not revoked.

<sup>59</sup>The full text of the letter can be found in the *Jordan Star*, 13 March 1997.

<sup>60</sup>*Associated Press*, 8 January 1997.