Recent developments in democratization in the Middle East: The case of Jordan

Abdelfattah Rashdan
Political Science Department, Mu'tah University, Jordan

Abstract
Political and economic changes in recent years have stimulated the growth of more democratic practices in parts of the Middle East. In several countries like Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Jordan, and Yemen, steps have been taken to ensure parliamentary elections; political parties have been legalized and operate with greater freedom; and the press has been given more autonomy to report news and comment on developments. This paper examines the basic forces of change that have influenced the movement toward democracy in the Middle East and investigates the prospects of democratization in Jordan.

1. Introduction
Political and economic changes in recent years have stimulated the growth of more democratic practices in parts of the Middle East. More than half of the Arab world's population is experiencing this process of liberalism, if not democratization. Some regimes--e.g., those in Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Jordan, and Yemen--have attempted to increase public participation so as to promote greater democracy. In all of these countries, steps have been taken to ensure parliamentary elections; political parties, including opposition parties, have been legalized and operate with greater freedom; and the press has been given more autonomy to report news and comment on developments.
Despite the efforts toward democratization and liberalization in various Arab States, most western scholars devoted relatively little attention to the processes of democratization in these states. For instance, Hudson (1991: 407) recently reported that “the editors of a recent four-volume survey on democracy in developing countries ignored the Arab World entirely” (Diamond, Linz and Lipset, 1989: 20). Other important research projects on the subject do not mention a single Arab country (O'Donnell, Schmitter and Whitehead, 1986).

It is also noted that the Islamic countries of the Middle East and North Africa generally lack previous democratic experience, and most appear to have little prospect of transition to even semi-democracies (Diamond, Linz and Lipset, 1989: 19). Some scholars argue that the prospect for democratic development seem slow in the Arab Middle Eastern states. Due in part to the lack of democratic practice in the Arab World, in part to the presence of other political preoccupations (notably the Arab Israeli conflict), and in part to the relative analytical weakness of Middle East studies, western area specialists were equally likely to overlook the subject (Bryen, 1994: 4).

The failure of western scholars to note the changes in the political order of Middle Eastern states is due, in part, to an absence until quite recently of even basic elements of democracy. It is pointed out that “since the end of World War II, the power of the Arab state has reached appalling levels. The state is the largest employer, and its chief executive is almost a god, protected by layer upon layer of secret police. He is obeyed out of fear or a desire to secure individual advantage” (Muslih and Norton, 1991: 5).

Obviously, under these conditions, there was little or no public political participation in decisions and no concept of public accountability or the human rights of citizens. This situation prevailed throughout the region until the late 1980s. Evidence of the lack of democracy in the region may be seen by the fact that the Arab Unity Studies Center in Beirut felt forced to hold its conference on the democratic crisis in the Arab world (November 1983) not in the Arab countries but in Cyprus. The fear of discussing such an issue reflects the lack of freedom and intolerance of democracy by Arab regimes.

In spite of this greater attention was given to democracy by Arab intellectuals and non-governmental organizations (the Arab Organization for Human Rights, the Center for Arab Unity Studies, and the Arab Thought
Forum, among others) starting in the mid-1980.¹

Many of the Arab scholars believe that democracy is not essential in itself but that it predicts stability and ensures prosperity and, as such, it is a prerequisite for economic growth and the welfare of the masses, and that democracy will overcome most of the Arab world’s current crisis.²

Even today, there is no guarantee that the recent progress toward democracy will not be reversed. These democratic advances may fail in some countries as the reversals in Algeria and Tunisia recently demonstrated. In both countries democratic changes have been harshly rescinded, and even Egypt has experienced difficulties in retaining its democratic advances.

This paper examines the basic forces of change that have influenced the movement toward democracy in the Middle East and investigates the prospects for democratization in Jordan. It reviews the prolonged debate over democratization in Jordan and traces events that have assisted in this development.

2. Basic forces of change

Much political change in the region occurred after the Gulf War in 1990-1991. The war greatly changed the political and economic landscape of the region. Many of the regimes felt threatened by the demise of the Arab system in which conflicting issues were resolved within the family. Relationships between states within the Arab World were dramatically altered and each regime had to reassess its position.

The internal weaknesses of these regimes were also revealed by the publicity of the crisis. The value of the rhetorical style of leadership so common among Arab leaders did not sway the public when actual events were presented

¹ The discussions of Arab Scholars such as Boutros Ghali, Muhammad Al-Jabari, Adel Hussein, Ali Al-Dean Halal, Mona Suad Abrahim, Burhan Ghalioun and others can be found in Arabic Journals especially Al-Siassa Al-Dawlya, The Arab Future, Arab Affairs, and Arab contemporary thought.

² See:
   - Ali Al-Dean Halal, Democracy and Human Rights In the Arab World, The Center for Arab Unity studies, Beirut 1983.
side by side with the angry and bellicose statements of various leaders. A crisis of legitimacy was inculcated by the crowds who roamed the streets expressing their frustrations at their leaders' impotence and ineffectiveness.

Many of the regimes already were discredited in the eyes of their citizens well before the Gulf crisis (Ibrahim, 1993: 292-3). The decline in legitimacy of the various governments throughout the region can be traced to the humiliating defeat by Israel in 1967, which resulted in the occupation of the lands of three Arab countries, including all of Palestine. This loss was followed by one crisis after another. Lebanon was ravaged as a result of the civil war beginning in 1975, and Arab leaders failed to resolve the conflict despite the fact that continued bloodletting caused the Lebanese to suffer more while Israel occupied southern Lebanon in 1982. The despair raised by this unending tragedy in Lebanon, however, seemed mild to what Arabs consider to be an unpardonable insult when Anwar Sadat, president of Egypt, visited Israel in 1977. His attempt to bring peace to the region was perceived as a betrayal of the Arab cause, and later in 1978-1979 when Egypt and Israel signed a treaty at Camp David ending hostilities between them, many Arabs lost confidence in their leaders. These developments and the pressures for peace in the international community not only created a crisis in legitimacy in the Arab world, but also created serious division between individual Arab leaders.

The Iran-Iraq War in 1980 further exacerbated the growing division among the leaders in the region. There was no agreement among the various Arab states as to which side to support in this war. These crises convinced the Arab people that Arab unity was only a dream. Further, they created inter-Arab divisions between the leaders of various countries and made their relationships extremely fragile. The severity of the Gulf crisis dashed what little cohesiveness was left in the Arab political system.

External defeats and challenges were not the only causes of the weakness of Arab regimes. Internally, the performance of most Arab regimes in both the oil-rich and oil-poor countries deteriorated seriously during the past two decades with greater population growth and urbanization. Economic development has not kept pace with needs. The regional import substitution strategy of the 1950s, which promotes the idea of self-sufficiency, reached its peak in the early 1970s, and since then the region has become increasingly dependent on imports for food and essential industrial products. Food imports rose steadily from less than $5 billion in 1970 to nearly $200 billion in 1990 (Ibrahim, 1993: 293). The Arab states failed to develop their agricultural and industrial resources, and as a result they did not create enough jobs to employ the host of new entrants into the Arab labor market. Unemployment plagues
most Arab countries as foreign trade deficits continue to climb.

The vast oil resources found in the oil-rich Arab countries have not helped fulfill the dream of uniting the Arab world and have not ameliorated the deplorable conditions throughout region. The extremes of the haves and have-nots still divide Arab society despite talk of brotherhood and unity.

In the oil-rich Arab countries, the huge oil revenues of the post-1973 era were quickly depleted either as a result of ill-conceived adventures within and outside the region--as in the case of Algeria, and Libya--or because of wasteful spending and corruption and "grandiose white elephant schemes" in the Gulf and Arab peninsula countries (Ibrahim, 1993:293). The schism and hostility between the rich and poor were exacerbated by growing inequities between rich and poor Arab states even though oil-rich states employed their poor Arab neighbors to perform the tasks of developing their lands.

The divisions of the Arab states in the gulf crisis led to new migrations of people and disruption throughout the region. The already strained relations between the oil-rich and oil-poor states were further aggravated. The legitimacy of all Arab regimes was further eroded by increasing cynicism. All of the unkept promises and slogans used by the political elites since the 1950s to placate the public--such as achieving social and economic prosperity, Arab unity and pan-Arabism, anti-Zionism, and regaining the lost homeland (including Palestine)--helped to create a wave of cynicism among the populace and led to increased demands for greater liberalization.

The sense of hopelessness and failure to succeed increased the popularity and political activism of Islamic movements. These groups altered the balance of power in several countries (Bianchi, 1971: 5) such as Egypt, Algeria, and even Jordan. These groups began by pressing their demands through conventional channels such as political parties, elections, and parliamentary debates; when they failed they took to the streets where mobs quickly shouted, down government opposition. The legitimacy of governments was seriously challenged by the claims of these religious groups and this threatened the regimes' very existence. For instance, Bill and Leiden point out that "all political elites attempt to maintain their legitimacy and, if possible, to increase it ....Every government attempts to increase the sense of its legitimacy on the part of its population" (Bill and Leiden, 1984: 287). Legitimacy is the most precious possession of any regime, and if it is lost the regime will fall.

In the face of these threatening environmental pressures, most Middle Eastern regimes made some concessions to their citizens' demands. It became evident to the leaders of these countries that force and secret police alone could
not cope with the new pressures caused by change, and that their positions were not invulnerable (Hudson, 1991: 3-4). Yet, despite this recognition, none of the regimes have fully responded or capitulated to the demands for full democratization such as legalized political parties, free and honest elections, freedom of speech and press, and civil rights for all people.

The ideological underpinnings of some Arab regimes and political parties were further weakened when the totalitarian states in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union collapsed. The demise of these single party, autocratic regimes with their state-owned and state-dominated economic and social systems discredited the Soviet model which sought to achieve social justice and comprehensive development through the leadership of a single party of the labor class headed by an autocratic leader. Without the Soviet model, those who believed in this ideology were willing to turn toward democracy as the means of ensuring freedom and prosperity.

The demise of the Soviet Union as a major competitor of the West freed the United States to some extent from the compulsion of supporting only political leaders in the region who opposed the Soviets and took the American side in the global ideological struggle. No longer was the United States forced to follow a rigid ideological strategy to counter the Soviet Union. In the decades before the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Farhang points out that

the United States pursues three strategic goals in the Middle East: containment of Soviet influence, maintenance of access to oil at a stable price, and assurance of Israel’s security. The means used to protect or advance these priorities were determined by geopolitical and balance-of-power considerations. Arms sales, covert action, and economic and military assistance were the primary policy instruments... In the convulsive political environment of the region, the United States was ready to collaborate with any regime that accommodated it. The question of how a regime ruled or treated its own people did not enter the equation. Conversely, any government that exhibited serious resistance to United States expectations was seen as an adversary regardless of its character or motives (Farhang, 1993: 1).

Democracy in the Middle East and elsewhere in the Third World was not necessarily encouraged by the United States because of its attempt to block the influence of the Communists. After the breakup of the Soviet Union, the United States was less likely to support undemocratic regimes or leaders in developing countries. This development in the international arena strengthened the ranks and spirit of pro-democratic groups and governments in the Middle East and throughout the Third World.
The new international atmosphere promoted the advocacy of human rights, including the rights to freely choose representatives of government, express opinions and political views, and organize interest group and political parties. This led to a growth of democratic movements throughout the world and forced even authoritarian regimes to wrap themselves in the rhetoric and constitutional trappings of democracy, or at least to claim them as their ultimate goals (Diamond, Linz, and Lipset, 1989: 10). The Middle East is no exception. Middle Eastern autocrats have been no more successful in insulating their realm from the global revolution in communications than have autocrats in Africa and Asia. The Middle East, like the rest of the world, is bombarded with information (Norton, 1993: 206). Today, human rights organizations and women's organizations in the Arab world are at the forefront of efforts to break up authoritarian patterns of control.

By amplifying the host of national and regional problems the communications revolution has forced political incumbents to seek out supporters in civil society to help them to legitimize their actions and to share the growing burden and responsibilities of leadership. At the same time, groups and individuals are organizing themselves from the bottom up to demand new power-sharing arrangements with authorities.

3. Political change in the Middle East

How national leaders react to popular demands depends on a number of factors, including the nature of the demands themselves. Demand for greater liberalization in the Middle East generally has been received more favorably than demands for institutional changes and full democratization. Liberalization, according to Samuel P. Huntington, is the partial opening of an authoritarian system short of choosing governmental leaders through free competitive elections—which he defines as democracy (Huntington, 1991: 9). Despite the increase in demand for liberalization and democratization, changes toward these goals have been hard to come by.

Middle Eastern regimes since the Gulf crisis have undertaken a number of measures liberalizing their societies, such as the creation of consultative councils in Bahrain, Oman, and--most notably--in Saudi Arabia, where the king announced the creation of a consultative council in March 1992. At best, these appointive bodies are several steps away from even an inchoate legislature, but the tenor or direction of government is toward greater liberalization (Norton, 1993: 207). Other actions liberalizing Middle Eastern states, such as multi-party electoral competition, a rarity 20 years ago, are making modest advances. Egypt
has held regular legislative elections since 1967, the most recent being in 1990. Morocco also holds regular elections and has a limited multi-party system. In 1989, Jordan held its first full legislative elections since 1967. Party participation was formerly illegal but in reality tolerated (Hudson, 1991a: 409). Shortly after unification in March 1990, Yemen announced its intention to introduce a multi-party system in a full-fledged democracy; a parliamentary election was held in 1993. The first parliamentary elections in 20 years were held in Lebanon during August and September 1992. Parliamentary life was also resumed in Kuwait with a heated and spirited campaign during the summer and fall of 1992 (Ibrahim, 1993: 297-9).

As this account shows, political change occurred in a major portion of the Middle East. Jordan, perhaps, has moved further toward democratization than any other Arab country and will be examined separately in the next section.

4. Political change in Jordan

Change came more easily to Jordan for a number of reasons: First, the nature and character of the monarchy provide a more open system, especially compared to those regimes that have been dominated by the military or traditional tribal governments. Jordan's constitution of 1928, as amended in 1946 and 1952, established a kingdom headed by the Hashemite family; the fact that the king is from the Hashemite family with distant ties to the prophet Muhammad gives him a unique position of legitimacy in the country.

Furthermore, Jordan's vulnerable position militarily and economically has prompted the king, during his 40-year reign, to develop political skills and understanding of how to cope with crisis. Few other leaders in the region could have survived the numerous crises faced by the king much less maintained his personal popularity among the nation's people.

The nature of the Jordanian people also makes them capable of participating in their own governance. The fact that Jordan's population is composed of not only the original East Jordanians but also a host of Arab immigrants from the series of wars and civil wars in the region, gives it a unique character of pluralism. These new immigrants, many of whom were cosmopolitan and well-educated, expected and encouraged greater freedom and more democratic government than existed in many other Arab countries. Even the meagerness of economic resources in Jordan worked to the kingdom's advantage by causing education to be seen as essential for survival.
Consequently, national promotion of schools and colleges in Jordan has far outpaced most other Arab countries, and Jordan today had one of the most educated citizens in the entire Middle East. Education, in turn, has enabled many Jordanians to migrate to either the oil-rich Arab countries or to Western countries for employment. Travel and exposure to other cultures has made them more cosmopolitan increasing their expectations in terms of their own involvement in decisions that affect their lives as well as their expectation to have a limited governmental system subject to the rule of law.

The strategic location of Jordan, which borders Israel and the Arab states of Syria, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states, has made it the center of conflict between the Arabs and Israel, and in turn, has affected Jordan’s political evolution since the first Arab-Israeli War in 1948. The pressures created by this conflict have influenced the government. The founder of Jordan, king Abdullah, was assassinated in Jerusalem in 1951 and a new liberal constitution was promulgated the following year. This constitution reflected the liberal attitudes of the masses of new Palestinian immigrants and provided for citizen participation and representation through a freely elected parliament. A prime minister and his cabinet were responsible to the people’s representatives in the House of Representatives (Jordan’s Constitution, 1952). The constitution also recognized the basic personal freedoms of speech, press, and assembly, as well as the rights of citizens not to be subjected to illegal arrest or search (Jordan’s Constitution, 1952: 5-23). Under this new constitution, Jordan experienced a period of liberalism unknown in most of the Arab world.

The period of liberal government, which lasted only a few years (1952-1957), was ended by the growth of radical ideologies and pan-Arabism that swept through the Middle East. The domestic political situation deteriorated in the mid-1950s and political riots erupted. Despite attempts by the regime to conciliate the opposition, the extreme opposition could not be reconciled, and the political situation worsened. A new election was held in 1956, and Sulaiman Nabulsi, the leader the pan-Arab National Party, won a majority in the House of Representatives and became the prime minister.

Nabulsi’s government, although in office for only a few months, took aggressive political measures to ally Jordan with Egypt and Syria and sought to strengthen relations with Communist states. All of this was done without consultation and against the wishes of the king. The normal and typical power-sharing arrangements between the king and his prime minister in Jordan were broken (Robins, 1991: 188). In fact, the Nabulsi government challenged the king’s authority and attempted to reduce his ruling power. A coup attempt in April 1957 ended the crisis, and the king dissolved the cabinet and appointed
a new government, which imposed martial law and banned political parties.

Martial law was enforced only for a period of months, but the ban on political parties continued until 1992. Despite the fact that parties were outlawed, elections continued to be held. Elections were held several times during the 1950s and 1960s, until the war of 1967 caused martial law to be reinstated after the loss of the West Bank. In April 1967, just a few months before, the war elections for the House of Representatives occurred, and the elected members served until 1974. The 1974 Arab Summit in Rabat presented Jordan with still another serious challenge. The Arab leaders at the conference decided that the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) was the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinians. Because half of the Jordanian legislators were Palestinian, under the electoral law, the king called Parliament into session to amend the constitution and enable him to postpone elections for a period of one year. The Parliament was not called back until February 1976, again to amend the constitution in order to give the king the power to postpone elections indefinitely (Khoury, 1981: 426). The king, however, asserted his continuing commitment to parliamentary rule at this time.

Demands in the country for more participation in political processes led the king to create a national consultative council in 1978. The king's decree establishing this council stated:

We, therefore, believe that until conditions permit the return of full parliamentary life, a National Consultative Council should be established and should be compromised of competent men who can truly represent various public sectors and who are loyal to the country and its constitutions. The task of the council would be to advise the government, discuss public policy, and consider all legislation and laws... It became obvious that it was unnatural for the country to remain without one of its main foundations while waiting for circumstances to improve. The burden of legislation must not be borne by the executive alone (Al-Dustour Newspaper, 1978: 1, 13).

During the six years of the council's activity, the country continued to change. The growing middle class in Jordan as well as an already highly politicized population culminated with regional developments: "the conclusion of Israeli-Egyptian Peace Treaty, the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, and the structuring of the PLO led to increasing pressured for opening more channels for political expression (Brand, 1991: 21).

As a result of these growing demands, the king recalled Parliament in January 1984. The old Parliament elected in 1967 was recalled without new elections, and the restrictions on parties and the press continued.
Despite the recall of Parliament, there was increasing criticism of the government for the lack of democracy in the state. One senior Jordanian official commented, “We in Jordan feel that it is not realistic to expect our own political development to be forever frozen because of lack of progress on resolving the Palestinian issue” (Jordan Times, 7 January 1984). Critics of the old Parliament stated that it could not reflect modern-day Jordanians' point of view because its members were elected twenty years ago and were no longer in touch with current matters.

The “old Parliament” continued to function from 1984 to 1988, despite increasing public discontent. Regional developments again affected Jordan's political system. The uprising by Palestinians in the occupied territory in 1987 and the declaration of Palestinian statehood by the PLO in 1988 contradicted Jordan's long-held claim that the occupied West Bank was an integral part of Jordan. The king's reaction was that, because the PLO had been designated as the sole spokesman of the Palestinians, its declaration of the statehood of Palestine meant that Jordan was no longer primarily responsible for the West Bank. He decided, therefore, to formally disconnect the occupied territories from the State of Jordan. To dissolve these bonds between Jordan and the West Bank, he first dissolved the "old Parliament" and called for a new electoral law to hold an election. In the early 1980s, the king had promised to call a new election for Parliament, but he could not do so because there was no way to hold an election in the occupied territories. Now, by disconnecting the West Bank from Jordan an election could be held in the East Bank alone, but the call for a new Parliament did not occur until 1989.

Economic conditions in the region in the mid-1980s also contributed to political change in Jordan. World oil prices were falling dramatically which seriously affected the economies of the Gulf states. The economic downturn resulted in a reduction in the number of Jordanian workers in these countries and also cut off some of the grants that the Gulf states had given Jordan to ensure their national defense. These economic changes, in turn, created unemployment, a decline in remittances from workers in the oil states, and a general recession in Jordan (Metz, 1991). In an attempt to get the oil-rich states to continue their financial aid, king Hussein complained in 1983 that the failure of Arab states to meet their financial obligations had compelled Jordan to arrange payment for arms deals via normal commercial loans. “I need, this matter has caused us economic confusion” (FBIS, 8 November 1983).

The economic situation in Jordan continued to decline as the oil states failed to provide financial assistance. Jordan's economy became increasingly dependent on exports to Iraq through the 1980s. Devaluations of the Dinar
occurred in May, June, and October 1988, and the currency was removed from the International Monetary Fund’s special drawing rights in that year. Jordan had been borrowing money from the IMF in order to compensate for shortfalls in aid promised by the Gulf states, and by April 1989, was some $7 billion in debt—the second highest per capita debt of any country in the world (Piro and Bown, 1991: 42).

Responding to the pressure from the IMF, the government announced structural readjustment that would force Jordan to confront a per capita debt burden heavier than that of either Brazil or Mexico (Robins, 1990: 55-9).

These measures resulted in an increase in the prices of fuel and other basic commodities, and were compounded by a lack of confidence in government because of charges of corruption and mismanagement. Anger over the new policies exploded in the southern part of Jordan in April 1989, and soon was transformed into a protest for wider participation and a fairer distribution of wealth (Andoni, 1989: 3).

The riots brought down the government of Zaid Rifai, who was blamed for the severe deterioration of the economy, and within days king Hussein replaced Rifai’s government with an interim prime minister, the king’s cousin, Field Marshall Sharif Zaid Bin Shaker. Among his first acts were relaxing restrictions on the press, announcing parliamentary elections, and restoring the authority of Jordan’s central bank.

The message from the riots was obviously received. In order to ensure stability and to create public approval for the necessary austerity measures, the government had to respond to public concerns with regard to political participation. The king moved immediately to defuse the situation by declaring that elections would be held before the end of the year and that a new Parliament would be convened to represent public interests (Roberts, 1991: 122).

On November 8, 1989, Jordan held its first full parliamentary election since 1967. Although political parties had not been formally legalized, they did operate and present candidates for election. International observers stated that the election was among the most free, open, and fair ever held in the Arab World (Piro and Bown, 1991: 46). The Muslim Brotherhood movement, a conservative group, won control of the Parliament.

Two weeks after Jordan’s first parliamentary election in twenty-two years, another development indicated further liberalization. The restrictions of the intelligence agencies were reduced. The new government enacted rules and regulations that restricted the role of intelligence agencies and the authority of
emergency courts. Prime Minister Mudar Badran won a vote of confidence from Parliament, and within a month prohibitive laws and restrictive procedures that had characterized and inhibited political life in Jordan for more than three decades were either abolished or were in some stage of repeal.

The king also took steps to liberalize government. In a speech delivered to the first session of the new Parliament on November 27, 1989, King Hussein pledged to gradually reduce the role of the extraordinary courts whose power stems from martial law. He indicated that this was a first step toward the removal of these courts. He also said that a national charter would soon be formulated to regulate the formation of political parties in accordance with Jordan's constitution (Andoni, 1984: 10).

The king appointed a Royal Commission to present to all political groups from the extreme right to the extreme left the formulation of a national charter to regulate political parties. The regime's objective was to achieve a national consensus on two fundamental issues: commitment to the monarchy as a system and banning parties that were manipulated or supported by any government or organization outside Jordan.

The National Charter was completed in December 1990, just before the Gulf War began. The document dealt with many public issues. The most important chapter in the charter concerned how the state would be subject to the rule of law and how political participation could be promoted. The right of Jordanian citizens to form political parties was asserted, but they were to function democratically and not be linked to any foreign government or organization (Jordanian National Charter, 1991).

After the charter was drafted, King Hussein called a National Conference to ratify it. The conference was composed of a wide range of political elites, including members of organized groups and associations in the country, Parliament members, local and community leaders, and a number of prominent citizens from various professions, including the media. With the ratification of the National Charter on June 9, 1991, the groups that had functioned as political parties in national elections were recognized. This led to the enactment by Parliament of a new Political Parties' Law in September 1992 and a new Freedom of the Press Law in 1993.

The increasing tensions in the Arab world during the Gulf crisis and the war put Jordan's new, more liberal measures to the test. The intense emotions of the people led to demonstrations that could easily have gotten out of hand and led to riots against the government. The fact that more democratic measures had been enacted gave the king a greater sense of legitimacy and permitted him
to act as a mediator between the opposing parties. Furthermore, the more
democratic environment caused aggrieved citizens, particularly Jordanians from
Palestine, to demonstrate and express their view against the allies' actions. This
freedom of expression helped to unify the country during the crisis despite the
intensification of actions and attitudes of Islamic activism among various
political groups. This later helped Jordan to withstand the economic recession
caused by loss of support from the Gulf states.

5. Conclusion

As successful as Jordan has been in liberalizing and opening its political
system, it is possible that these reforms may fail. Democratization is fragile in
the Middle East and depends largely on how supporters of democratic
institutions support and nurture them so that they can evolve into strong
traditional institutions. Jordan is extremely vulnerable to changes in the region
because of its strategic location. Every regional crisis threatens Jordan, and puts
its government to the test. It is also vulnerable because of its meager economic
resources, and it must constantly seek aid from outside.

Economic recessions, no matter what their cause, create unrest among the
populous and demonstrate the inherent weaknesses of the state. Finally, Jordan
is vulnerable because it depends so much on one man--the king--for its
legitimacy. Throughout the region, Jordan is the only country with the
possibility of evolving into a stable and secure constitutional monarchy.
 Constitutional monarchy is very difficult to develop, as can be seen in Western
history. The real test will come during a transition of kings. Jordan's future may
well be tied to whether King Hussein's successor can follow in his footsteps and
advance democracy as well as the nation's well-being while preserving peace
and order within the nation and region.
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Özet

Orta Doğu demokratikleşme sürecinde yeni gelişmeler: Ürdün örneği

Son yıllarda ekonomik ve politik değişimler Orta Doğu bölgesindeki bazı ülkelerde demokratik uygulamaların artmasına sebep olmuştur. Misir, Tunus, Cezayir, Fas, Ürden ve Yemen gibi ülkeler parlementer seçimlere doğru adımlar atılmış, siyasi partiler yasallaşmış, bu partilerin daha özgür davranmaları sağlanmış, basının haber verme ve yorum yapma özgürlükleri artmıştır. Bu çalışma Orta Doğu‘daki demokrasiye yönelik hareketleri etkileyen temel değişim dinamiklerini incelemektede, ve özellikle Ürdün‘deki demokratikleşme sürecinin geleceğini araştırmaktadır.