

# **The Causes and Consequences of Jordanians' Hesitancy to Protest**

Jamie Love  
International Studies  
The University of Kentucky  
Lexington, Kentucky 40506-0054

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Carlos de la Torre

## **Abstract**

Despite being positioned in the center of a turbulent region and having a history of being particularly vocal for a monarchy, Jordan is now known as an oasis in the Middle East that remained stable throughout the Arab Spring. While many factors have contributed to this identity and stability, this research examines specifically the hesitancy among Jordanians to protest. S.E. Finer published the concept of the façade-democracy in 1971. A façade-democracy is a government that uses democratic principles and ideals to further the interests of those in power, rather than the wants and needs of the people participating in these democratic institutions. Finer identified Jordan as a façade-democracy in 1971, and this classification was reanalyzed in 1993 by Beverley Milton-Edwards. She found that while Jordan had reinstated its' constitution and made minor reforms, these reforms were not aimed at creating a fuller democracy for the people. Therefore, Jordan was identified as a façade-democracy in 1971 and 1993, but is this a proper title for the Hashemite Kingdom now? Is the lack of protest in Jordan a signifier of a façade-democracy? These questions will be analyzed by exploring the reasons contributing to the hesitancy to protest as well as how Jordanians are expressing their grievances if they are not doing so through major protest. Based on this analysis, an argument will be made about whether or not Jordan can be accurately identified as a façade-democracy. The expected results from this analysis are that looking through the lens of protest, or lack thereof, Jordan is a façade-democracy.

**Keywords: Protest, Façade-democracy, Jordan**

## **1. Introduction**

Despite being positioned in the center of a turbulent region, Jordan is known as an oasis in the Middle East. Established in 1946, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has an ongoing history of stability and moderation.<sup>1</sup> While the Arab Spring was a major turning point for many countries in the region, Jordanians only demanded minor reform and have remained satisfied in spite of rising gas and water prices. The narrative taking place in Jordan is vastly different from that of surrounding countries; why is that?

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. History of Protest in Jordan**

Despite having limited social movement compared to the rest of the Middle East in recent years, Jordan has a history of being particularly vocal, especially for a monarchy. Jordan's first constitution, which was drafted in 1950, allowed public demonstration. The people took advantage of this freedom until 1957, when the constitution was suspended and the country was put under martial law. However, despite the illegality of protest, Jordanians continued to vocalize and congregate. The constitution was reinstated in 1989, and a rebirth of protest occurred, "with the emergence of

multiple political parties, activism, widespread public debate, and a free and vibrant press. The king lifted martial law, and the new constitution, which was an amended version of the old constitution, again allowed for public gatherings.”<sup>2</sup> However, this renaissance was not entirely celebratory because the revised 1989 constitution required Jordanians to inform the government of a public movement prior to its’ occurrence. This was revised in 2003 to require Jordanians to have permission to stage a protest. “One no longer only had to inform the government of a protest; one now had to gain its permission.”<sup>2</sup> This greatly altered the freedom of movement and existence that protests and social movements had.

While protests did occur between 2003 and 2011, the focus was predominantly on foreign issues. The Israeli bombings in Gaza in 2009 caused almost daily protest in Jordan’s capital Amman<sup>3</sup>, suggesting widespread freedom of expression during this time period. However, a lack of vocalization about domestic issues demonstrates a continued hindrance to protest caused by the constitutional revisions of 2003.

## 2.2. Risks Of Participating In Protest

Protests have the potential to bring about great reform and new social orders, but they also have equal potential to leave people worse off than before, particularly those who actively participate in the protest. Protests can be violent, as well as disruptive to daily life. One could be significantly hurt financially by not going to work in order to attend the protest, and one could get in major legal trouble or put in jail for participating. Furthermore, protest participants risk being viewed as ‘other’ by people in their country, which could lead to losing relationships, jobs, etc. Jordan’s limited movement during and post Arab Spring does not signify weakness on the part of Jordanians. In fact, it can demonstrate thoughtfulness to see the risks and decide against it. The priority for Jordanians may be stability, and it is their decision to choose stability over democracy. It should be clear that if it is found that Jordanians are choosing to not protest by their own will, that is their choice and should be respected. An issue only arises if it is seen that the monarchy is coercing citizens to maintain the status quo and in turn curb protest. The risks and consequences of protesting can be grave, especially in a monarchy. However, many of these risks are present in other countries that have experienced protest. What makes Jordan different? Are there additional risks present in Jordan that are not present in these other nations? And if so, have these risks been intentionally created by the monarchy? These questions will be explored by analyzing the factors that contribute to Jordanians’ hesitancy to protest, as well as ways Jordanians are expressing their grievances apart from protest.

## 2.3. Jordan and U.S. Relations

The United States and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan have extremely intertwined interests and a mutual dependency on each other. In exchange for large amounts of aid money, Jordan acts as the U.S.’s main ally in the region, aside from Israel. The United States has been giving Jordan economic aid since 1951 and military aid since 1957.<sup>4</sup> Within 3 years of the inception of Jordan as an independent country, the U.S. began financially supporting them. This aid has increased significantly within the last year, as Jordan became the U.S.’s channel for fighting the Islamic State. The U.S. Department of State issued a briefing in February 2015 stating that Jordan and the U.S. have shared commitments to promoting regional stability, economic stability in Jordan, acting in the fight against ISIS, and providing for the influx of Syrian and Iraqi refugees.<sup>4</sup> Due to these shared commitments, the sum of U.S. aid to Jordan through FY2015 amounts to approximately \$15.833 billion.”<sup>4</sup> This amount of aid as well as a sustained relationship over several decades has created an entrenched relationship that has survived many offices of the U.S. presidency as well as two Jordanian kings.

Jordan intentionally began presenting itself as a stable oasis in the Middle East to appeal to the United States. When the second Cold War began with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, the Jordanian regime launched a campaign designed to present Jordan as a bastion of moderation and stability in a turbulent region. In speeches and in diplomatic overtures to the U.S., King Hussein, Crown Prince Hassan, and other decision-makers emphasized Jordan’s rejection of extremism, be it communist or Islamist in nature. Jordan’s wariness of the Soviets and of Iran’s brand of radical political Islam struck a responsive chord in Washington.”<sup>5</sup>

Washington’s view of Jordan has hardly shifted since then. The alliance between the two nations has only deepened since the Cold War. Both King Hussein and King Abdullah have prioritized the alliance with the U.S., even when it did not please citizens or other governments.<sup>6</sup>

## 2.4. Democracy in Jordan

While it is recognized that Jordan is a monarchy, there are varying opinions in the U.S. on the level of democracy this monarchy upholds. S.E. Finer published the concept of the façade-democracy in 1971. Finer defined a façade-democracy as, “a system where liberal-democratic institutions, processes and safeguards are established by law but are in practice so manipulated or violated by a historic oligarchy as to stay in office.”<sup>7</sup> In short, a façade-democracy is a government that uses democratic principles and ideals to further the interests of those in power, rather than the wants and needs of the people participating in these democratic institutions. Finer states that in 1971 there were 7 façade-democracies in the world, one of which was Jordan.<sup>7</sup> This classification was reanalyzed in 1993 by Beverley Milton-Edwards, finding that while Jordan had reinstated its constitution and made minor reforms, these reforms were not aimed at creating a fuller democracy for the people. The question was posed: “Is a full liberal-democracy on the agenda in Jordan or are the current reforms designed to strengthen and bolster the monarchy as the most important political institution in the kingdom?”<sup>8</sup> The answer to this question in 1971 and 1993 was that reforms were being used to curb popular dissent and strengthen the monarchy, but what is the answer to this question in 2015? Is the lack of protest in Jordan a signifier of a façade-democracy? Or is the hesitancy to protest simply a fear of the risks of protest that are present in all other nations? Analyzing the factors that contribute to a hesitancy to protest in Jordan will begin to answer these questions.

## 2.5. Summary

Jordan’s history of protest would suggest that it would be a major player during the Arab Spring; however, Jordan remained on the sidelines and experienced minor reform. Participating in protest has potential negative consequences, but these risks were present in countries that demanded major reform. Why is Jordan different? Analyzing the factors that contribute to the hesitancy to protest in Jordan will shed light on why Jordan was an outlier during the Arab Spring. These additional factors in Jordan could suggest unique uncontrollable issues that are present in the Hashemite Kingdom, or they could suggest that the monarchy has intentionally curbed protest in order to avoid upheaval, even if it is at the sacrifice of democracy. If the latter is found to be true, it could be suggested that Jordan is not the bastion of moderation that they or the U.S. present them as.

## 3. Theory

Manuel Castells argues that social movements come about when outrage and hope interact. He contends that being outraged by an injustice isn’t enough start a movement- it is essential for there to also be hope that a better society is possible or that a movement could be successful. He uses the example of Syria and credits the beginning of their movement to the combination of outrage at Bashar Al-Assad’s violence and hope that a revolution could occur because of the example of Egypt.<sup>9</sup> This combination of outrage and hope can be used to explain the beginning of Arab Springs in other countries. In Tunisia, the hope of Mohamad Bouazizi’s martyrdom combined with outrage at corruption and lack of employment led to revolution. In Egypt, the hope from the Tunisian revolution combined with outrage at extreme brutality sparked a revolution. In Syria, hope from Egypt and outrage at brutality led to revolution. Castells’ theory that the combination of outrage and hope leads to social movement has proven true in these countries, but not in Jordan. Jordanians have reason to have hope, the example of revolution in the surrounding regions, and reason to be outraged, high unemployment, infringement on basic freedoms, etc. Jordan’s position as an outlier in this theory of social movement demonstrates the importance of analyzing why Jordan it is an outlier and why Jordanians are hesitant to protest.

## 4. Background

### 4.1. Jordan During The Arab Spring

While there wasn’t an Arab Spring in Jordan on the same scale as Egypt or Tunisia, there was movement during this period that primarily consisted of minor protests demanding governmental reform. It should be emphasized that the focus was on reform, and unlike other Arab countries, there was never a demand for the King or the royal family to

be ousted.<sup>10</sup> January 28<sup>th</sup> of 2011 is when the first Arab Spring protest took place in Jordan. It attracted around 3,500 people and demanded governmental reforms, specifically for the prime minister to step down, and protested rising fuel and food costs, inflation, and unemployment.<sup>3</sup> King Abdullah responded by dismissing the prime minister and putting, “\$500 million into salary increases for government employees and subsidies for food staples and fuel.”<sup>23</sup> This demonstrated a perceived willingness by the King to respond to and act upon protestors’ demands. Protests continued in February 2011, to which King Abdullah promised more governmental reforms. The largest protest occurred on March 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> of 2011 in Amman’s Dakhliya Circle, and culminated with 58 injured police officers and 62 injured civilians.<sup>3</sup> This specific protest was different in that it diverted the legal system of protest in Jordan by not obtaining a permit for the demonstration. This is what prompted the police to respond violently. Wanting to avoid violence, “activists [returned] to the permit-seeking, pre-approved space-honoring sort of protest,” for the remainder of the movements in 2011.<sup>3</sup> These peaceful protests eventually came to a halt as well. This back and forth with protest and minor reform culminated in violence, which created a culture of fear and repression.

## 4.2. Jordan following the Arab Spring

Despite minimal reform since the promises King Abdullah made in 2011, protest has remained at a stand still in Jordan since the end of the Arab Spring. Clear frustration still remains, and the King’s main response has been through parliamentary election reform in 2013. “The elections were meant to mark the beginning of a new political phase in the kingdom, augmenting an intermittent, two-decade, palace-led reform program expedited since 2011 to mollify unrelenting public expression of frustration and grievance.”<sup>11</sup> The government promoted the election as a progressive reform that eliminated voting corruption and put the government in the hands of the people. However, the king still maintained the power to dissolve the parliament at will, and there was little excitement among the people to participate in this ‘democratic’ system. The immediate result of the election resulted in some minor protests but they quickly dissolved. This has been the main reform since the Arab Spring and it has been deemed, “an insignificant response to popular demand for greater participation in the democratic process.”<sup>12</sup> Despite public dissatisfaction with the reforms that have taken place since the Arab Spring, major protests have not taken place in Jordan.

## 4.3. Why Would Jordanians Protest?

While the situation in Jordan is arguably more livable than the situation in other countries prior to the Arab Spring, the lack of revolution in the Hashemite Kingdom should not be taken as there being a lack of reason to protest. Jordan’s public debt has topped \$30 billion<sup>13</sup>, the unemployment rate has surpassed 30%<sup>14</sup>, and there are heavy limitations on freedom of speech and the press. Furthermore, Amnesty International expresses concern regarding infringements on basic freedoms such as expression, association, and assembly, as well as the ongoing issue of honour crimes, which the courts do not adequately punish.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, it is argued by Bosmat Yefet, author of The Politics of Human Rights in Egypt and Jordan, that the position of women is worse in Jordan than it is in Egypt.<sup>16</sup> The human rights of women are limited by both honour crimes as well as personal status laws, both of which Jordan has done very little to address. While the Hashemite monarchy has made limited reform and remained relatively nonviolent, there is still ample reason and motivation for Jordanians to demand major reform or even a revolution.

## 5. Sources of Hesitancy to Protest in Jordan

### 5.1. Religious Legitimacy Of The Royal Family

King Abdullah’s official website states: “The Hashemite name is derived from Hashem, a grandson of Qusai and the great-grandfather of the Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him). The Hashemites of Jordan are thus direct descendants of the Prophet through his daughter, Fatima, and her husband, Ali.”<sup>17</sup> This relation to the Prophet is what positioned the Hashemite family as leaders against the Ottoman Empire during World War I, as well as power holders once the borders of Iraq, Syria, and Jordan were drawn. Being related to the Prophet is what gives the Hashemite family legitimacy as leaders, both religiously and politically. Middle Eastern specialist and scholar Barry Rubin states that, “the only two monarchies not overthrown by revolutionaries or reinforced by oil wealth are Jordan and Morocco. It is no coincidence that both claim their legitimacy from religious mandate.”<sup>18</sup> The fact that the Hashemite family gets its’ legitimacy to rule from relation to the Prophet means that suggesting that they are unfit to rule is opposing their religious significance. This means that a direct attack on the royal family is a direct attack on the Prophet’s

bloodline. Barry is suggesting that this connection between the Hashemite family and the Prophet is what has kept them from being overthrown. This directly translates into the existence of a hesitancy to protest in Jordan due to a fear or unwillingness to critique the Royal Family because of their religious legitimacy from relation to the Prophet Muhammad.

## 5.2. Public Vs. Private Sector

The Palestinian presence in Jordan has been strong since nearly the creation of the country. Palestinians began to find refuge in Jordan in 1948 when the state of Israel was created. Then again in 1967 following El-Nakseh, thousands of Palestinians flooded the Jordanian border.<sup>19</sup> Palestinians have become a permanent presence in Jordan, but are considered refugees so as to not take away their right to return to Palestine. Despite this long history between the two countries, some tensions and distinctions still remain. "In 1988 the late King Hussein announced in a speech Jordan's legal and administrative disengagement from the West Bank."<sup>20</sup> Official laws or actions did not follow this announcement, but a trend of the 'Jordanisation' of the public sector began to take place. This meant that the public sector favored ethnic Jordanians, forcing Palestinians into the private sector.

Despite there no longer being such blatant exclusivity of the public sector, this distinction is still seen today. The public sector's stability is directly related to the stability of the government. This creates a scenario where those working in the public sector, predominately ethnic Jordanians, are hesitant to protest due to a fear of losing their job and livelihood. On the other hand, Palestinian Jordanians who make up the private sector, so do not have a fear of losing their job, are fearful of speaking out against the government due to an already existent feeling of 'other-ness'. Despite the Palestinian presence going back to 1948, there is still a fear among some that the Jordanian government could respond to unruly Palestinians with brutality and treat them as guests rather than Jordanians.<sup>20</sup> This creates a hesitancy to protest in both the public and private sectors, due to either a reliance on the government for livelihood or fear of harsher punishment for protesting due to Palestinian origin.

## 5.3. Consequences Of Arab Spring In Other Countries

Despite the hope initially brought about by the Arab Spring, there has been little to show in terms of democracy and reform. It would be impossible for Jordanians to see the outcome of the Arab Spring in surrounding countries and not become slightly hesitant to disrupt the status quo for an outcome that isn't guaranteed. Tamer Khorma, a Jordanian that was active in the protests in 2011, reflected in an interview on why the desire to protest went away after the demonstration in Dakhliya Circle. He stated:

Reason why the protests vanished was, of course, Syria. The government-controlled media maintained its focus on the protests in Syria. Everyday the news was full of images of the victims. And so people became cautious. They didn't want the same things happening to them. And then there was Egypt, where the Muslim Brothers hadn't lived up to their promises. People still had the same problems. So the Jordanians became full of despair. It wasn't working in Syria; it hadn't worked in Egypt, why should it work in Jordan?<sup>21</sup>

This quote coming from an active protester demonstrates the loss of hope that took place following the failure of the Arab Spring in the surrounding region. Being able to see the potential consequences of major upheaval dissuaded Jordanians from risking the loss of their livable situation for a desired reform that was not guaranteed.

## 5.4. Jordan's Alliance With The United States

The strong alliance between the U.S. and Jordan affects the willingness of Jordanians to protest. Jordanians are aware of the aid that the U.S. gives their country, and could assume that this aid would not continue if someone else came to power. The close relationship between the Hashemite family and the United States contributes to the comfort and security of Jordanians, and the risk of losing this by demanding the overthrow of the monarchy might not be worth it to all Jordanians. Furthermore, the U.S. would not be willing to assist with the removal of Jordan's monarchy because of the importance of that alliance for both countries.

## **6. Sources of Hesitancy to Protest Created by the Monarchy and Government**

### **6.1. Freedom Of Speech**

Jordan's constitution states that it protects freedom of speech, but there are still limitations on what people are able to say without fear of consequence. The U.S. State Department's 2010 Human Rights Report on Jordan stated:

The law provides punishment up to three years' imprisonment for insulting the king, slandering the government or foreign leaders, offending religious beliefs, or stirring sectarian strife and sedition. In practice citizens were generally able to criticize the government, although they reportedly exercised caution in regard to the king, the royal family, the GID, and other sensitive topics such as religion.<sup>22</sup>

This demonstrates the limitations on Jordanians' ability to fully critique the monarchy. While it is typically not punishable to condemn the prime minister, cabinet, or other government members, there are real consequences for defamation of the royal family. This could be a contributing factor to the trend of calling for the ouster of prime ministers, but not for the ouster of the king. While Jordan is praised as a bastion of moderation, this lack of freedom of speech demonstrates an intentional will of the monarchy to curb Jordanians' ability to protest.

### **6.2. Freedom Of The Press**

Freedom of the press is similarly lacking in Jordan. Imprisonment for discussing sensitive issues in the press was abolished in 2007, yet journalists have continued to be jailed for it. Five journalists were arrested in 2008 for insulting government officials.<sup>23</sup> This inconsistency between what is stated as the rule of law and what is actually enforced creates fear of pushing boundaries and writing potentially inflammatory things. While journalists may know that what they are writing is legal, there is a latent fear that there could still be backlash with severe consequences. This stifles people's ability to fully express themselves, and is intended to eliminate the possibility of organizing and spreading protest through the press. Furthermore, there is a hesitancy to participate in protest, seeing that consequences for critiquing the government don't always follow the rule of law.

There are also restrictions for online press. In 2012, Jordan established a revitalized Press and Publications Law aimed at harboring the scope of online news sources. This law requires online news sources to register for a license and for the editor to be a 'member of the government-approved Syndicate of Journalists'.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, this law, "[makes] it unlawful for online outlets to insult the royal family, harm Arab-Islamic values, or incite sectarian strife... Site owners are also responsible for patrolling reader comments to ensure that they do not violate the law."<sup>25</sup> This demonstrates extreme restriction on what Jordanians are able to express on the Internet. Online sources have been critical in the organization and success of movements in other Arab countries, and these limitations make having a successful movement in Jordan extremely difficult. In the case of Egypt, Manuel Castells credits the Internet as the tool that allowed the revolution to take place, the tool that allowed outrage and hope to interact.<sup>9</sup> Jordan's limitation on online press severely limits the ability of the Internet to connect outrage and hope, thus harboring the ability of Jordanians to unify in protest.

### **6.3. Need Permission To Protest**

As discussed earlier, Jordanians must have permission from the government to have their demonstration in order to protest legally. This is a clear limitation on their ability to freely protest, but what truly contributes to a hesitancy to protest is how often protest permit applications are denied. "Often the government would balk at certain requests, noting that planned protests were too large or were scheduled to occur in an unsuitable space... These informal negotiations, as a form of discourse, contains protests by rendering them 'safe' in the eyes of the government."<sup>3</sup> Not only must protestors seek permits and permission thus eliminating spontaneous protest, Jordanians are also often turned down or forced to conform to the desires of the government. Often permits are denied on vague grounds, permission is initially granted but then the protest is canceled the day of, or the protest is allowed but only if brought down in scale.<sup>26</sup> This process is complicated and time consuming, and places a burden on those wanting to protest. This burden, put into place by the government and monarchy, is contributing to a hesitancy to protest in Jordan.

## 6.4. Need Permission For Community Meetings

Jordan has a Law of Public Meetings, which states that Jordanians must receive permission to have public meetings that discuss politics. When asking for permission, the organizer of the meeting must inform the district governor of the agenda for the meeting including a list of topics that will be discussed. If permission is granted, the governor will attend the meeting to ensure that other topics are not addressed.<sup>26</sup> This demonstrates the inability of Jordanians to freely discuss politics. Furthermore, it shows how difficult it is to politically organize. Sophia Donoso argues that it is essential to have organization for a social movement to not only be successful, but also to simply exist.<sup>27</sup> According to Donoso, a social movement will not occur without organization. Jordan's Law of Public Meetings makes forming political organization extremely difficult, thus highly inhibiting the ability of Jordanians to form a social movement.

## 6.5. Monarchy's Emphasis On National Unity

The ongoing position of the monarchy is that national unity is Jordan's priority, and is the factor that has led to the kingdom's stability and success. Following the 2011 protest in Dakhliya Circle, King Abdullah stated: "What matters to us in this stage is that our national unity must not be undermined... We are proceeding in earnest with the political reform process and we have nothing to fear."<sup>28</sup> Rather than focusing on the reforms that would be taking place, the speech centered on the importance of national unity. This discourse suggests that protesting is a danger to national unity, the reason for Jordan's success as a country. King Abdullah reiterated this sentiment in a speech later in 2011, stating that actions that sought to undermine national unity would not be tolerated.<sup>29</sup> The speech was centered on opposition complaints, thus implying that critique of the government threatens national unity. This furthers the notion that by protesting the monarchy or actions of the monarchy, one is undermining the key to Jordan's success. Despite the fact that national unity and protest can coexist, the monarchy's presentation of protest suggests that Jordanians must choose one or the other. This discourse dampens Jordanians' willingness to risk the success of their country for the potential success of a protest.

# 7. How Jordanians are Expressing Grievances

To gauge whether or not Jordanians have grievances that they think are worth expressing, other forms of political discussion will be explored. While the situation in Jordan may warrant desire for major reform, it cannot be assumed that Jordanians want that. If grievances are being expressed in ways other than major protest, it can be inferred that there are Jordanians who desire major reform.

## 7.1. Art

The political satire play entitled "*Al'an fahimtku*" was released in Amman in the summer of 2011. Drawing inspiration from the Arab Spring, this daring piece uses a fictional account of a Jordanian family to express bold critique of the Jordanian government and Royal Family. The critical discourse of the play includes allegations of corruption within the political system and asserts that Jordanian political leaders are out of touch.<sup>30</sup> The play has remained extremely popular and had around 100,000 viewers within its' first year, including the King and Queen. Despite the controversial assertions made during the play, the only semblance of consequence for those involved was the main actor being told by several government officials that it was inappropriate for him to make such assertions in front of the king.<sup>31</sup> The fact that the play received high praise by the public rather than criticism demonstrates that the public agreed with the sentiments of the play. This suggests that the 100,000 viewers within the first year would sympathize with a movement that protested political corruption.

## 7.2. Social Media

In response to the 2012 revisions of the Press and Publications Law that severely limits freedom of the press for online sites, a group called 7oryanet organized an Internet blackout. Hundreds of sites replaced their normal content with a black screen on August 29<sup>th</sup>, 2012.<sup>32</sup> This protest proved to be ineffective because the Press and Publications law remained, but the existence of this movement demonstrates that Jordanians are in agreement that their freedom of the press is being infringed upon.

### 7.3. Friday Gatherings

Traditionally, most protests in Jordan take place on Fridays after noon-prayer, and centrally located mosques are typically the meeting place for demonstrations.<sup>33</sup> It has become tradition for Jordanians to gather at the mosque on Fridays to discuss social issues, even if there is no planned agenda or protest. Egypt experienced a similar phenomenon, where Fridays became the day when people with grievances would gather and discuss, and eventually this day became the day of protest and, “the weekly moment to rekindle the revolution.”<sup>39</sup> While Jordan currently has this symbolic day of gathering, it has not progressed into a day that demands for revolution. These Friday gatherings serve as a forum for Jordanians to meet with each other and air their grievances, but they are a mostly symbolic event. However, the fact that this is a weekly occurrence demonstrates that there are Jordanians who are willing to gather and express their grievances.

### 7.4. Summary

The high number of participants in these alternative forms of expressing grievances shows the high number of Jordanians who have issues they would be willing to protest. It cannot be argued that Jordanians do not have reason or desire to protest; this demonstrates that a lack of protest is due to outside factors rather than the internal desire of Jordanians.

## 8. Analysis

### 8.1. Factors Contributing To Hesitancy To Protest

A myriad of reasons contribute to Jordanians’ hesitancy to protest, ranging from factors intentionally created by the monarchy and government to those that simply exist on their own. While most of the factors have ties to the monarchy, it cannot be said that the majority of factors were intentionally created. However, the limitations on protest created by the government are extremely powerful in their ability to inhibit Jordanians from expressing their grievances. The legislation that limits freedom of speech and the press as well as the requirements to obtain permission to protest and have public community meetings demonstrate that the Jordanian government and monarchy are actively curbing protest.

### 8.2. Factors That Make Jordan A Façade-Democracy

To be identified as a façade-democracy by Finer’s 1971 definition, Jordan’s government and monarchy would need to be actively manipulating democratic institutions so that they further the position of the monarchy rather than the wants of the people. This is evident in several of the factors discussed. First of all, the requirement of obtaining a permit for a protest gives the government the ability to claim that protest is allowed; however, the frequency that permits are denied or that the protest is made smaller in scale demonstrates that Jordanians do not truly have the freedom to protest in whatever way they desire. This makes Jordan a façade-democracy because the government is able to claim that the democratic freedom of protest is allowed, when in reality it is not an accessible freedom.

Another factor contributing to the argument that Jordan is a façade-democracy is the need for a governor to grant permission and then attend public meetings that discuss politics. Similar to needing to obtain a permit to protest, this process allows the government to claim that community meetings to discuss politics are allowed, but in reality very little can be openly discussed. By monitoring and controlling the topics of these meetings, the government simply reinforces its’ own power. It can be assumed that topics that suggest that the monarchy is unfit to rule would never be approved, so the monarchy’s position is never challenged. Jordanians are able to critique other parts of the government, but not the monarchy. This demonstrates the intentional use of these meetings to divert criticism away from the monarchy so that its’ position is not threatened.

Similarly, the regulations on freedom of speech keep Jordanians from critiquing the monarchy, but allow them to critique the rest of the government. While technically Jordanians have freedom to critique the government, an essential right in any democracy, the inability to critique the monarchy that is in charge of the rest of the government shows that there isn’t true freedom to critique those in authority. Having it legal to critique the parliament distracts from the illegality of critiquing the monarchy, thus making it a factor of a façade-democracy.

Also, King Abdullah's frequent dismissal of parliament is seen on the surface as the monarchy bringing about change when the people demand it. This suggests that there is democracy because the monarchy is responding to the peoples' demands; however, the reality is that this is a quick solution that does not bring about long-term political reform. This is a factor of a façade-democracy because the reform is designed to look democratic, but in reality it simply reinforces the position of the monarchy. This was seen following the protests in 2011, as well as in the parliamentary election reform in 2013. In both cases the government made minor reform that didn't truly address the demands of the people. The government was able to claim that they made reforms, when in reality the reforms were made so that they could remain in power and avoid a revolution. None of the reforms actually put power back in the hands of the people.

Furthermore, limitations on freedom of the press in both print and online sources demonstrate that the government has intentionally manipulated Jordanians' ability to critique both the government and the monarchy. Vague limitations result in the government's ability to punish anyone who says something that challenges them. Even more troubling is that the government is not even attempting to make it look democratic.

Finally, the monarchy's emphasis on national unity has curbed protest by making a dichotomy between protest and national unity. In an interview with World Policy Journal, King Abdullah discussed Jordan's reforms and steps towards democracy. He concluded the interview by stating:

Key to the success of this process is citizen participation—not simply voicing one's own views, but listening to others respectfully and together finding workable solutions to national priorities like jobs, energy, water, and more. I see citizen engagement—active citizenship—as more than a right. It is a responsibility, the core of peaceful development and security. Building democratic culture, with active citizenship at its core, is at the heart of Jordan's new Demokrati initiative, which supports civil society, especially young leaders and grassroots activists.<sup>34</sup>

This speech praises activism and political engagement, yet at the same time King Abdullah actively limits the ability of Jordanians to engage in protest. While the monarchy claims to stand with democracy, it also encourages a status quo that isn't fully democratic. This inconsistency demonstrates that the monarchy utilizes the rhetoric of a democracy to promote itself, yet in practice does not uphold democratic ideals; this makes Jordan a façade-democracy.

All of these factors demonstrate that while the Hashemite monarchy allows Jordanians rights that suggest it is a democratic monarchy, the true outcome of these democratic principles is the reinforcement of the monarchy's power. Therefore, Jordan is a façade-democracy.

### 8.3. Theory

As previously discussed, Sophia Donoso argues that organization is essential for a social movement to develop. Due to limitations on community meetings and infringement on freedom of speech and the press, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, for Jordanians to politically organize. Furthermore, Castells emphasizes the importance of the Internet in spreading and popularizing social movements. Jordan's restrictions on online freedom of the press keep the Internet from being a place that people can discuss and spread social movements. Therefore, both the tool that allows movements to develop as well as the tool that allows them to spread are heavily restricted. These two factors are what make social movements possible, and the government is actively restricting Jordanians' ability to utilize them. Therefore, it can be argued that it is nearly impossible for a social movement to develop and spread in Jordan. The arguable impossibility of protest puts the hesitancy of Jordanians in perspective. While this paper has been analyzing factors that contribute to a hesitancy to protest in Jordan, a more accurate analysis would have focused on factors that inhibit the possibility of protest in Jordan. It can no longer be assumed that Jordanians are simply hesitant to protest which is why there has not been a revolution; the majority of Jordanians may desire a revolution, but the factors inhibiting the development of a social movement have kept revolution from occurring.

### 8.4. Summary

In 1993, Beverley Milton-Edwards posed the question: "Is a full liberal-democracy on the agenda in Jordan or are the current reforms designed to strengthen and bolster the monarchy as the most important political institution in the kingdom?"<sup>38</sup> Her answer in 1993 was that the aim of the monarchy was not to further democracy, but to use the façade of democracy to reinforce its' own position. Based on the monarchy's actions that inhibit Jordanians' willingness to protest as well as its' limitations on the tools that allow social movements to occur, I would argue that this answer is also true in 2015. The necessity of obtaining permission to protest and hold a community meeting regarding politics,

the limitations on freedom of speech and the press, the focus on quick reform rather than long-term change, as well as the emphasis on national unity all combine to make participating in protest extremely difficult, thus making Jordan a façade-democracy. Furthermore, limitations on organization and Internet usage make social movements nearly impossible, once again making Jordan a façade-democracy.

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