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The Impact of Foreign Involvement on Political Reform Organizations in Jordan

Sravya Tadepalli
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The Impact of Foreign Involvement on Political Reform Organizations in Jordan

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Signed:

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in cursive script, which appears to read "Jesse Tuberville". The signature is written in dark ink on a light-colored background.

Date: December 8, 2018

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Abstract

This paper assesses the impact of foreign involvement on the effectiveness of political reform organizations in Jordan. Through the qualitative analysis of the democratization work of completely foreign-funded international organizations, partially foreign-funded Jordanian organizations, and Jordanian organizations that do not receive foreign funding, derived from several interviews conducted with democracy practitioners in international and local NGOs, political activists, scholars, and others, this paper examines the effect of foreign involvement on organizational strategies, credibility, and effectiveness, ultimately arguing that foreign involvement (and conversely, the lack thereof) has several effects on the way political reform organizations have carried out their activities. This study can hopefully be used to help both foreign and Jordanian policymakers and activists understand the way in which foreign involvement can help and/or impede democratic progress in Jordan.

ISP Keywords: Democratization, Political Reform, Foreign Funding

Introduction

Western governments have been interested in democracy promotion programming since the end of the Cold War. The fall of the Soviet Union and the emergence of new democracies across Eurasia led to a huge need for civil society assistance, democratic participation trainings, rule of law reform, elections expertise, and other types of democracy-focused programming—programming that was formerly small-scale and largely experimental (Carothers, 2009). But while Eastern European countries liberalized, countries in the Arab world remained largely authoritarian. In Jordan, western governments run several democracy promotion programs, largely with the goal of creating a culture of democracy and representative government in the country. But the impact of such programs is debatable. While some experts believe that foreign and foreign-funded programs play a helpful role in promoting democracy in Jordan, other experts believe that their work is ineffective, citing the current authoritarian situation as evidence (Dempsey, 2018; Haring, 2015; Khakee, 2009). Despite almost 30 years of western-funded democracy programming, Jordan remains undemocratic.

However, Jordanians themselves have organized independent of foreign-funded bodies in order to promote political change. During the 2011 Arab revolutions, the case of Jordan was quieter, without mass mobilizations or calls for the fall of the regime. But a series of smaller nonviolent protests from January 2011 through December of that same year generated enough pressure to push King Abdullah to enact some political reforms. In response to the protests, the king reformed the Constitution and created an Independent Election Commission. Five years later, in 2016, he established proportional representation for the House of Representatives and introduced reforms to the judiciary system, all moves that helped to liberalize the government

and create a slightly fairer playing field for opposition groups. At the same time, however, King Abdullah retains ultimate control over the government of the country, with many experts arguing that the political reform package enacted was simply a top-down measure designed to quiet internal opposition and concerns from the West (Barari, 2013; Yom, 2013a). The fact that political reforms were enacted and yet had a highly questionable impact on accountable government raises questions concerning the extent to which political reform may be possible in Jordan, and how it may come about. On one hand, local pressure managed to push the government to enact changes. On the other hand, the changes were largely superficial and implemented by a heavily pro-government committee.

My interest in democratization policy largely stems from the historical context of my childhood, where the Iraq War loomed in the background. The need for this war confused me—trillions of dollars were spent and thousands of lives were lost, all with the political justification of “democracy promotion.” Democracy, to me, was a good thing. Representative government was something we *should* be promoting as a nation with power and privilege. But was invading countries and causing catastrophic sectarian tensions the best way to do so? I have since been drawn to the question of whether western governments indeed *can* help to promote democracy in authoritarian countries, and if so, how they should go about promoting it. The case of Jordan is particularly interesting to study because both foreign and local bodies have been involved in trying to promote democracy through the use of soft power and public pressure respectively, with limited success. Studying the impact of foreign involvement (and conversely, lack of foreign involvement) on political reform organizations in Jordan can generate greater knowledge on how foreign bodies, foreign-funded local bodies, and independently-funded local bodies affect institutions of power and what kind of change they are able to produce.

This paper assesses the impact of foreign involvement on the effectiveness of political reform organizations in Jordan. Through the qualitative analysis of the democratization work of completely foreign-funded international organizations, partially foreign-funded Jordanian organizations, and Jordanian organizations that do not receive foreign funding, derived from several interviews conducted with democracy practitioners in international and local NGOs, political activists, scholars, and others, this paper examines the effect of foreign involvement on organizational strategies, credibility, and effectiveness, ultimately arguing that foreign involvement (and conversely, the lack thereof) has several effects on the way political reform organizations have carried out their activities. This study can hopefully be used to help both foreign and Jordanian policymakers and activists understand the way in which foreign involvement can help and/or impede democratic progress in Jordan.

Definitions

Political reform will be defined as reform toward democracy, which requires a definition of the term, “democracy.” While a so-called “liberal democracy” often brings many elements to mind, such as protection of individual liberties, legal protections for minorities, gender equity, and (ideally) government responsiveness to citizen needs, determining a base condition for what a democracy is provides the simplest way of determining a non-negotiable status of democracy. For the purpose of this research, the base condition for a democratic society is fair, competitive, and regular elections for offices of power, which allows citizens to hold their governments accountable and enforce the social contract. In addition, it is important to note that all lawmaking office branches must be accountable to the public. Even with the fairest, freest elections, a state cannot be democratic if a significant proportion of its governing power comes from an unelected

body. Without fair elections for offices of power, a government cannot be democratic (Dahl, 1979; Downs, 1985; Yom, 2013b).

Democracy assistance will be defined in accordance with Thomas Carothers' definition, which describes it as "aid specifically designed to foster a democratic opening in a nondemocratic country or to further a democratic transition in a country that has experienced a democratic opening" (Carothers, 1999). "Foreign-funded international organizations" shall be defined as organizations that are based in foreign countries and funded by foreign countries, in this case, specifically for the purpose of political reform/democracy assistance. A "partially foreign-funded" civil society organization shall be defined as a civil society organization that receives foreign funding for its primary activities, but may also receive contributions locally. "Civil society" shall be defined according to the World Bank's definition, which describes it as encompassing "a wide array of organizations: community groups, non-governmental organizations [NGOs], labor unions, indigenous groups, charitable organizations, faith-based organizations, professional associations, and foundations." This term is most often used to describe organizations that serve to check institutions of power and hold them accountable. A "locally-funded" civil society organization shall be defined as a civil society organization that does not receive foreign funding for its activities. This does not mean, however, that individuals partaking in such an organization have not benefited from foreign funding in the form of individual training, NGO participation, etc.

Literature Review

The State of Jordan's Government

Jordan's governmental structure is officially a constitutional monarchy, with separation of executive and legislative powers and an independent judiciary. The Jordanian Parliament has

the power to pass laws and hold debates, and the most recent elections have been determined to be free and fair according to international observers (Singh 2017, 297). However, the Jordanian Parliament does not have the power to introduce laws or introduce a budget. The Parliament only has the power to approve laws and a budget introduced by the government—which is ultimately established by the king.

The Parliament is not allowed to ask questions about military matters, national security matters, matters of intelligence, foreign policy decisions, policing decisions, and other issues relevant to the security of the state. The Prime Minister also lacks the power to hold military officers to account regarding budgeting, strategy, or anything else that can be interpreted as having to do with national security (S. Yom, personal communication, June 19, 2018).

In the end, it is the monarch (currently King Abdullah II) who holds the most power over the executive and legislative branches, with the power to single-handedly select the Prime Minister and all Senate seats. In addition, the Prime Minister he selects generally does not come from the elected parliament, but rather from the political elite who occupy cabinet positions or are otherwise highly favored by the king. The monarch also has the power to approve and fire judges, sign or veto laws passed by Parliament, and suspend or dissolve Parliament. Parliament does have the power to overrule the king's veto with a two-thirds majority vote, but the king's power to dismiss Parliament, handpick senators, and declare a state of emergency at will give the monarch ultimate control over all branches of government and all pieces of legislation that go into effect.

In response to the protests in 2011, King Abdullah established the National Dialogue Committee, with the stated goals of recommending specific political reforms that could be taken to address the concerns of the populace. Some of these proposals were implemented. The Public

Assemblies Law was amended to allow public demonstrations with forty-eight hours notice, without the previously required approval from an administrative governor. The Independent Election Commission was established as a tool of creating a body of nonpartisan oversight over elections. But despite these reforms, there has been significant criticism that these reforms only provide an illusion of progress while maintaining the status quo; a government system where the monarch holds absolute power in the end.

Theoretical Framework

Adams (1998) theorizes that western democracy promotion operates in the pursuit of three main interests; humanitarian interests, political interests, and economic interests. Humanitarian interests refer to altruistic reasons for promoting democracy abroad, such as helping citizens of authoritarian states gain representative government. Political interests typically refer to a donor state's wish to enhance political leverage through aid, giving democracy aid primarily to strategic allies needed for the donor state's security. Economic interests refer to the donor state's hope of securing resources and gaining wealth through trade. He continues to argue that countries generally do have altruistic interests, but these interests come second to political and economic interests. Other scholars have gone further to compellingly argue that countries that promote democracy often sabotage their own efforts in democracy promotion when they legitimize authoritarian regimes to achieve security goals. Support of illiberal regimes through military and economic aid can reinforce the power and legitimacy of these governments, counteracting the power of political reform efforts (Borzel 2014; Barari 2013). Building on Adams' theory, I hypothesize that conflicting state interests have a direct impact on political reform organizations in Jordan.

Western funding of democracy aid has also been theorized to reduce the credibility of democracy. The history of the U.S. supporting dictatorships in countries such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq during the Iran-Iraq war have created a perception in the Arab world that the U.S. is a hypocritical country when it comes to democracy promotion (Singer, 2007; Hamid, 2011). One study done by POMED, the Project on Middle East Democracy, found that although democracy as a form of government was very popular among Jordanians, U.S. promotion of democracy was viewed much more negatively. A 2006 Zogby International poll cited by POMED found that only 10 percent of Jordanians believed that U.S. democracy promotion efforts improved their perception of the United States, while 72 percent said that U.S. democracy promotion efforts gave them a more negative impression (DeBartolo, 2008). Building on the results from these opinion polls, I hypothesize that low credibility creates a significant barrier for organizations that receive western funding.

Multiple scholars argue that the effect of democracy aid is a reflection of state interests (Alesina & Dollar, 2000; Easterly, 2002; Hancock, 1989). If a state has political and economic interests in a country, that state is likely to prioritize those interests—which often require regime cooperation—over democratic interests. In the case of Jordan, changing interests over time affect how states choose to allocate democracy aid. Bush (2015) suggests that democracy promotion has become “tame,” with western programs investing primarily in regime compatible programs that avoid being overtly political. These organizations focus primarily on issues such as elections management, women’s civic engagement, and local governance—issues that may be valuable to address, but do not have a particularly significant impact in an undemocratic state. Bush goes further to argue that the implementers of democracy work on the ground have an interest to pursue tame, regime compatible democracy promotion because they want to ensure

organizational survival. Programs that are more active in supporting dissidents, political parties, and unions—the kind of programs that were much better supported in the 1980s and 1990s in the Soviet Union—risk trouble with the government, and organizations that engage in these kinds of programs are likely to face increased interference. Tame projects help to ensure organizational survival, both because these types of programs are more measurable and ensure an inflow of foreign aid, but also because these are the kinds of projects least likely to cause trouble with the government. Building on Bush’s work, I hypothesize that funding has jeopardized the sustainability of NGOs while also encouraging them to pursue “tame” democracy promotion because of the political interests of donor states.

As Locke and Rousseau argued, government must derive from the consent of the governed. (*Contemporary Approaches to the Social Contract*, 2017). One of the main reasons that the Jordanian government enacted any reforms at all was because activist movements in 2011, also known as the HIRAK, had heavy participation from East Bank tribal youth, and East Bank tribal families had historically been the bedrock of the regime’s support and legitimacy (Yom 2014, 229). Ignoring the will of the people risked the Jordanian government falling apart in the same way as the regimes in Tunisia and Egypt. Still, Barari (2013) argues that the lack of international support for HIRAK and internal divisions created a situation where the regime was able to create top-down reforms largely drawn up by pro-government elitists. Based on Barari’s ideas, I predict that this study will find that while internal pressure is a necessary condition for reform, it is not enough.

Barari and Yom argue that neither foreign involvement nor the lack thereof has had a substantial impact on the effectiveness of political reform strategies in Jordan, based on the fact that INGOs, NGOs, and completely locally-based groups have all had little success in pushing

for systemic reform (H. Barari, personal communication, November 25, 2018; S. Yom, personal communication, June 19, 2018). However, I argue that foreign involvement still plays a role in how organizations choose to operate and how successful they are, even if it does not independently determine the course of events. While previous studies have primarily analyzed one organizational type at a time, this paper aims to assess the effect of foreign involvement across civil society types. And while most studies have analyzed political reform organizations by looking for the variable causing certain phenomena, this study aims to look at the phenomena caused by a particular variable. Looking at democracy assistance through this lens can hopefully develop a broader picture of the effect of foreign involvement on democracy promotion. Through side-by-side empirical analysis, this paper aims to help democracy practitioners, activists, and scholars understand specifically how foreign involvement or lack thereof affects political reform organizations/strategies, particularly in terms of organizational strategies, credibility, and effectiveness, a clear understanding of which can help build better foreign policy and better activism.

Foreign-Funded International Organizations: An Overview

While numerous foreign organizations participate in activities to encourage political reform in Jordan, one of the most significant organizations is USAID, which alone spends 85 percent of the \$3 billion the U.S. spends on global democracy assistance (Haring, 2015).. At the same time, as shown in Figure 1 (Bush, 2015), democracy aid makes up a very small component of U.S. aid to Jordan, which has consisted primarily of security and economic support, even during the years of reform in 2011 and 2012.

The U.S. also distributes democracy assistance dollars through the private non-profit National Endowment for Democracy. The National Endowment Democracy in turn distributes

approximately half of its funds to four organizations; the American Center for Labor Solidarity, the Center for International Private Enterprise, the National Democratic Institute (NDI), and the International Republican Institute (IRI). Interestingly, there has not been a significant amount of scholarship conducted concerning the work of NED's main partner organizations, although they are often cited in lists of democracy organizations in Jordan. While the first two organizations focus primarily on labor and free market issues, the latter two, NDI and IRI, are focused more on political reform. NDI's work in Jordan primarily focuses on youth political participation and parliamentary strengthening, while IRI's work in Jordan has focused on municipal governance and training for civic leaders. Both NDI and IRI have women's empowerment programs and collaborate on elections monitoring. IRI has also been well-known in Jordan for conducting highly-regarded opinion polls on democracy-related issues in Jordan.

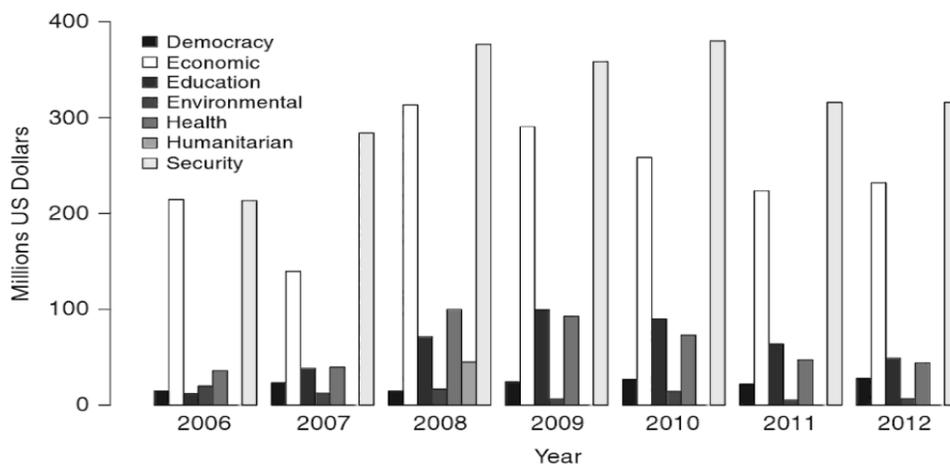


Figure 1 American aid to Jordan, by sector, 2006-2012.

Note: Aid is in constant U.S. dollars.

Data source: ForeignAssistance.gov.

IRI also specialized in political party development work until 2017, when USAID cut funding for the program, deciding the program was not on track to meet the goals it was designed to achieve.

NDI and IRI are well-known in Jordan, particularly for their civic education trainings. 20,000 students have graduated from NDI's civic training program for university students, Ana Usharek. IRI documents many alumni who have gone on from their training programs to enter positions in local elected office and civil society. Some activists in popular movements in Jordan have received training from NDI and IRI, although it is unclear how common it is for activists to receive such training. NDI and IRI have been allowed to operate in many very undemocratic regimes, but have also been looked upon with suspicion. After Hosni Mubarak was ousted in Egypt, Mohammed Morsi's government raided the offices of IRI, NDI, and eight other civil society organizations, arresting and charging 19 American employees. The Russian government, which has recently banned NDI and IRI from working within its borders, carries the view that NDI and IRI are CIA-like agencies designed to subvert the government (Smith, 2013). However, the Jordanian government has a largely positive relationship with both NDI and IRI. This paper examines both NDI and IRI (through anonymous sources) when accounting for the impact of foreign involvement on political reform.

Non-U.S. organizations are also involved in promoting political reform. In 2005, the European Union created an EU-Jordan European Neighborhood Policy with the goals of promoting dialogue on democracy, developing an independent and impartial judicial system, and furthering freedom of the press. Another EU-sponsored program in Jordan is EU-JDID, which has a stated focus of parliamentary support, electoral assistance, and support to the political party system. However, European democracy promotion programming falls into most of the same problems that U.S. programming does. Preferring stability and security, European countries sacrifice their pursuit of democratic ideals and human rights when they contradict those efforts through other policies. A lack of communication between different EU institutions—including

ones focused on democracy promotion—also leads to a lack of cohesive strategy, with some institutions reinforcing the role of the government while others aim to challenge it (Jonasson, 2013). Most western institutions are engaged in activities that challenge the regime while at the same time engaging in activities that reinforce its authority.

Partially Foreign-Funded Jordanian Organizations: An Overview

Civil society organizations emerged in Jordan in the 1990s, as Jordan pursued an IMF-sponsored agenda of economic liberalization that required Jordan to cut subsidies and borrowing from the domestic banking system, resulting in a decrease of services provided by the Jordanian government. As a result, civil society organizations stepped in to fill the gap, particularly in the area of providing welfare services. This time period also resulted in some degree of political liberalization as the government began to once again allow political parties and associations to develop, leading to the formation of the first political reform oriented NGOs.

However, formal civil society organizations in Jordan face a considerable number of burdens. In the absence of a culture of NGO support, NGOs are almost entirely dependent on foreign funding for their survival. 91 percent of CSOs focused on democracy promotion and political reform receive foreign funding, with the average organization receiving funding from five international donors (Bush, 2015). Because of their dependence on foreign assistance, the aid they receive is largely dependent on the interests of foreign governments at particular moments in time. For example, Sweden and Norway both took funds out of their international aid budgets to accommodate the costs of refugees coming to their countries, effectively reducing the amount of aid that was generally distributed abroad for the purpose of civil society and democracy support (UN alarmed by Swedish development aid cuts, 2015). Foreign interests also force NGOs to negotiate significantly with their donors in order to implement the programs they

want to implement. While most organizations do have a say in the kinds of projects and programming they do, they will not be able to do them unless they get funding, which is contingent on approval from foreign governments. Any project that does not have the sanctioning of foreign donors will not be funded and will inherently not be put into place .

Government regulations also significantly hamper NGO activity. Societies that receive foreign funding may not have any “political goals” and are restricted from any activities that can be construed as the “activities of political parties.” Meanwhile, the state’s security department, or the *Mukharabat*, must approve all NGO registrations, elections, leaders, and members (Jarrah, 2009). Repeated attempts by the regime to pressure activists, use state security institutions to limit operations, and restrict public freedoms in the name of security have prevented civil society organizations from operating to their fullest extent. Provisions of the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) allow the Jordanian government to punish individuals who contribute to organizations that support terrorist groups, even if they are not aware of the connection. This contributes to reluctance among Jordanians to donate to civil society groups, and forces international organizations to give a significant amount of control over resource distribution to the Jordanian government, which argues that it can identify terrorism better than foreign groups (Interviewee O, personal communication, December 6, 2018).

In 2009, Jordan passed a law making it easier for NGOs to register, but increased government regulation of their work. Now, organizations must obtain approval from the Ministry of Social Development to legally operate. When an organization wants to register with the government, the MSD is supposed to give an approval or denial within three months. However, the Ministry can slow down the process by demanding significant amounts of extra information. In addition, the Ministry can deny an organization a license without having to give reason for the

denial, and judicial and administrative appeals are mostly unavailable as an option for organizations that feel they have been unjustly denied legal standing (Shutting 2007).

Jordanian organizations are also often dependent on support from ministries and royal NGOs (or RONGOs) in order to survive, with 38 percent of organizations working in the democracy promotion sector receiving some funding from the Jordanian government (Bush, 2015). The funding provided to these organizations gives the government an excuse to co-opt and control their activities. Events and workshops are highly monitored by the regime, often by members of Jordan's General Intelligence Directorate (GID). Organizations do not have the ability to conduct workshops, trainings, or organizational meetings without fear of being spied on by informants of the regime, and this significantly impedes on their ability to operate effectively. Organizations with foreign funding are eyed with particular suspicion and are more likely to be closely monitored, especially if their objectives include political reform and/or democracy promotion.

The kinds of projects local NGOs are able to pursue are also dictated by the NGOs' desire to survive in an environment that is both competitive and unfriendly to political reform organizations. Sarah Bush argues that civil society organizations that receive foreign funding are very likely to pursue "tame" democracy promotion projects that are regime compatible (such as women's participation projects) rather than more confrontational and substantial democracy promotion projects (like legislative advocacy) because they primarily aim for survival. Foreign donors prefer more measurable programs that tend to be less confrontational, and more confrontational and controversial programs face a higher likelihood of being hampered by the government. This results in a significant amount of resources being put toward projects such as women's empowerment or elections operations, areas that do not have a huge amount of

meaning in a country that is non-democratic. Most civil society organizations in Jordan have also not actively engaged in legislative lobbying. Only 19 percent of civil society organizations interact with legislators more than twice a month, 51 percent of organizations interact with legislators once or less per month, and 29 percent do not interact with legislators at all (Abdel-Samad, 2017). The lack of communication channels that exist between CSOs and legislators hurts the ability of civil society organizations to communicate with those with influence and power who may be supportive of work they are doing.

Civil society organizations that receive foreign funding sometimes face issues with public legitimacy. Many Jordanians eye western-funded NGOs with suspicion due to American and European policies regarding Israel and Iraq, worrying that support of such organizations may be implicitly supporting western foreign policies (Bush, 2015). Even though democracy-focused civil society organizations generally depend on foreign funds in order to operate, foreign funding generally results in increased legal bureaucracy and a loss in public trust.

Civil society organizations are also internally weak. NGOs within Jordan tend to have poor financial transparency, short-sighted goals, and ineffective management. One argument in favor of the 2009 NGO law was that it required NGOs to meet specific standards of transparency and management, such as conducting board elections on a regular basis (Jarrah, 2009).

Local Organizations Without Foreign Funding: An Overview

The organization of protest movements in 2011 and 2012, often referred to collectively as the Hirak, was instrumental to the mobilization of individuals across Jordan and was enough to pressure the Jordanian government to enact reforms. The Hirak was primarily made up of three constituent bodies; the Muslim Brotherhood; a scramble of youth protest groups; and various tribal groups, although the term is sometimes used to strictly refer to the youth from tribal groups

(Barari, 2013). The collective mobilization of these three groups helped to generate the push needed for some democratic changes in the country.

Sean Yom (2014) suggests that the independence of the youth who participated in the protests helped them achieve their goals. Youth who participated in protests and demonstrations against the regime in 2011 and 2012 specifically stated that they wished to remain separate from political organizations already existing and attempted to use their lack of formal, elitist organization as an asset. In the wake of the Arab Spring in Tunisia and Egypt, the Hirak groups demanded three reforms. The first reform was to amend the Constitution, particularly articles 30 and 35 which gave the king unlimited power to select cabinet officials, dismiss parliament, and manage the country's security apparatus. Second, the Hirak wanted to amend the Elections Law in order to reduce the effect gerrymandering had on parliamentary elections. Third, Hirak wanted to fight corruption.

Hirak was moderately successful in its efforts, mostly due to the movement's persistence in organizing protests and effective lobbying of the National Dialogue Committee and Parliament (Interview K, personal communication, December 3, 2018). The fact that the group was made up of members of almost forty tribal groups, groups that had always been thought of as loyal to the authoritarian regime, pressured the Jordanian government enough that they approached the activists with caution. In the political context of the Arab revolutions, where authoritarian governments were being regularly toppled by the people, the regime understood that it could not ignore the demands of protesters. Yet the regime did not want to give up its power. In September 2011, the king ratified some constitutional amendments, but maintained his unhindered power over the government, resulting in more protests from Jordanian youth activists. In 2016, the government introduced proportional representation to the parliament, and

the Islamic Action Front Party participated in elections for the first time in years. Freedom House also moved Jordan from a ranking of “not free” to “partly free.” But in the same year, Jordan’s parliament amended the constitution to give the king greater power over the court system, Senate, and security institutions.

Hirak was unable to achieve more than the top-down reforms that emerged after the 2012 protests. Barari (2013) argues that Hirak’s lack of alliances with international partners, internal fragmentation, and lack of clarity in political goals have all kept it from having significant influence in the government. Because Hirak’s constituent bases are so different and have very different ideas about what a democratic Jordan should look like, the organization has not been able to convey a clear message to the Jordanian government about its desires and has not been able to generate enough pressure to force the government to listen to public demands. The Jordanian government was also successful in cultivating distrust between Hirak’s various parties, convincing Hirak’s youth and tribal divisions that the Muslim Brotherhood division was attempting to use Hirak to create an independent deal with the state.

The Jordanian government has also taken action to crack down on Hirak. In September 2013, eleven Hirak activists were tried before the State Security Court in the same month that the government stated it would restrict the Court’s intervention in activist organizations. These arrests are typically legitimized under the argument that incitement against the state supports terrorist activity, especially when such incitement may concern the Muslim Brotherhood. These random arrests, unsubstantiated by evidence of wrongdoing or actual terrorist activity, harm the reputation and efficacy of activist organizations by hampering participation and blocking organizing activities.

Some groups of youth that have organized since the Arab Spring have organized through informal means in order to avoid detection by intelligence agencies and law enforcement. These youth organizations are organized heavily by informal networks, making it difficult to establish exactly how many such groups there are and to what extent they are active. But these groups have shown evidence of making waves in their communities and on a national level.

One organization that has attempted to make waves is a grassroots youth movement called Shaghaf, formed in 2016. The group is primarily made up of both tribal and non-tribal young people from poorer areas of Jordan and is uniquely disassociated from Islamist groups, leftist groups, and western NGOs. In fact, the group has purposely avoided the funding structures of typical Jordanian civil society organizations, rejecting funding from western donors. While the group has to raise all of its funds from inside Jordan, its locally-based funding structure protects Shaghaf from the optics of pursuing a western agenda. At the same time, many of Shaghaf's activists have received training from INGOs or NGOs, and some similar youth organizations do accept small amounts of foreign funding, generally from NDI or IRI. However, the money they accept is generally in amounts small enough that it would not look suspicious to constituents.

In the light of the war in Syria and regional instability from terrorism and violence throughout the region, many Jordanians have been wary of loud opposition, fearing instability. Shaghaf has gained credibility because unlike Hirak, it does not participate in protests or boycotts, mostly because the organization sees them as ineffective in creating more than surface-level change. Shaghaf has gained support because its activism primarily focuses on increasing government accountability. The organization has hosted debates between candidates, created a database to keep track of campaign promises, and formed committees designed to hold government officials accountable for solving problems on both a local and national level. The

group has gained prominence in the headlines because of their focus on practically solving immediate problems by holding government officials accountable. Their quiet way of making change poses a problem for the Jordanian government. The group is actively making citizens more active in their communities and more willing to challenge officials (Yom and Al-Khatib 2016). However, due to the fact that Shaghaf makes change without protesting or throwing rallies, and has high support in Jordan, particularly in the rural areas the regime has traditionally depended on for support, the government cannot easily call the group a “security threat” and curtail their activities.

Political parties, which are not allowed to receive foreign funding in Jordan, have also pushed for political reform. The most active and organized party in Jordan is the Islamic Action Front (IAF), the political wing of the Muslim Brotherhood, and it has been one of the major players in pushing for democratization, although some doubt whether they have the best interests of Jordan at heart. After the initial protests in 2011, King Abdullah offered Islamists an increased role in the new government, but the Muslim Brotherhood refused, saying it wanted an elected prime minister with fair elections. It continued to protest along with tribal and youth activists and boycotted the 2013 parliamentary elections, accusing the government of gerrymandering. In 2016, after the introduction of candidate lists, designed to encourage political parties, the IAF ran as part of the National Coalition for Reform, a coalition that included Islamists, tribal candidates, and other minorities. The NCR ran on a platform of ending corruption and creating a “civil state of democracy” (Timreck, 2017). While the IAF has continued to lobby the government for relatively radical democratic changes, such as an elected prime minister, most other political parties have not been advocates of political reform, mostly because they lack the organization to be able to do so (Interviewee F, personal communication, November 19, 2018).

Methodological Framework

In order to investigate the impact of foreign involvement on political reform organizations in Jordan, I interviewed 16 individuals, including scholars, democracy practitioners, NGO employees, and activists, to get information about their experiences and thoughts about the role of foreign democracy promotion. All but one of the interviews was conducted in-person in Amman. I arranged most of the interviews by cold calling democracy promotion organizations in Amman. I also benefited from the assistance of Dr. Sean Yom, a professor at Temple University who has studied authoritarianism and democracy extensively in Jordan. He was kind enough to connect me with some of his colleagues in Jordan, who helped me get connected to other valuable contacts. I conducted most of the interviews at the workplaces of the interviewees, but occasionally met with individuals in coffee shops for their convenience.

In order to evaluate the impact of foreign involvement, this evaluation analyzed organizations through a multi-faceted framework that focused on understanding the goals, successes, and failures of the organizations interviewed, as well as how foreign involvement affected these areas. As repeated themes—to be precise, specific areas where foreign involvement seemed to play a role—showed up throughout the course of interviews, I took the extra step of asking about these common themes; namely, organizational strategies (in terms of how they were able to operate, what kinds of project they implemented, etc.), credibility, and effectiveness.

All of the research participants signed a consent form agreeing to participate in the research. The consent form was written in both Arabic and English and I asked all interviewees to read and sign whichever one they felt more comfortable with, to make sure that they

understood what my research would entail. Because the topic of research is politically sensitive and I wanted research participants to be open about their thoughts, I chose to protect the identities of all participants through the use of anonymity of name and organization and I avoided recording interviewees. To maintain the integrity of my data and avoid any misunderstandings, I took detailed notes of my interviews, and occasionally followed up with interviewees over email or text if I needed any clarification.

My primary obstacle was getting some NGO and INGO employees off a public relations script. NGO and INGO employees were very eager to talk about the activities of their organizations and their successes, and tended to pivot to comfortable talking points whenever I asked about more sensitive areas, such as organizational weaknesses or the impact of foreign funding. When this happened, I tried to ask more specific questions that were difficult to stray away from. I would also spend some time asking interviewees about their thoughts concerning organizations they were not a part of, to get a variety of third party opinions on the organizations I was speaking with. It was also somewhat difficult to probe into politically-sensitive issues—such as the impact of working with ministries and RONGOs—while also being culturally sensitive and respectful of people’s attitudes. I handled this obstacle by trying to be as open-ended as possible on such questions and hiding any bias I had developed through literature or my personal background.

My initial proposal aimed to assess the impact of foreign involvement on the effectiveness of political reform organizations, but I soon realized that effectiveness would be quite difficult to evaluate. Different political reform organizations engaged in different activities with different purposes, valuable in different ways, and evaluating effectiveness would have required me to make quite a few assumptions regarding what effectiveness was. Because of this,

I decided to instead focus on assessing the ways in which foreign involvement and the lack thereof affected political reform organizations. This addressed a gap in existing literature while also allowing for a higher quality analysis that did not rest heavily on my assumptions as an individual.

Findings

Foreign-Funded International Organizations

In accordance with previously-cited literature by Bush (2015), programs conducted by international organizations with full foreign funding tend to fall into the category of “tame” democracy promotion, with international programs focusing heavily on civic engagement, capacity building, and women’s empowerment, programs that may indeed have short-term positive impacts, but fail to directly address Jordan’s undemocratic political institutions.

Building on this previously established idea, however, this study finds that the foreignness of INGOs specifically contributes to tame democracy promotion for two reasons; first, because foreign governments and INGOs want to maintain a good relationship with the Jordanian government; and second, because organization leaders are wary of the idea of pushing down change from the top, both for optical and altruistic reasons.

The kinds of democracy promotion programming most common among the INGOs interviewed fell into the categories of civic education, capacity-building (for both citizens and political party members), and municipal development. The programs varied in their degree of success. One European organization specializing in youth training, political party training, and technical assistance to the Ministry of Political and Parliamentary Affairs admitted that they had not been successful in creating party coalitions and could not cite a large number of successful alumni from their youth training programs. However, their program has existed in Jordan for a

little more than a year. Two American organizations with a much more established presence in Jordan cited a much greater track record of training individuals who have gone on to run for office and work in civil society, although only one of these organizations engaged in long-term tracking of their alumni. A commonality between all the INGOs interviewed was that they were all engaging in work that was grassroots driven and regime compatible. None of the INGOs were engaging in programs dedicated directly to institutional reform. This is in large part due to the fact that foreign organizations, to varying extents, wish to maintain friendly relationships with the Jordanian government. Foreign organizations working on legislative reform or constitutional reform would give the appearance of foreign intervention, which would be looked upon with great distrust by the Jordanian government. Such top-down intervention would be seen as a threat to sovereignty and integrity and has the potential to disrupt international relations and the ability of international political reform organizations to work freely (Interviewee O, personal communication December 6, 2018) .

The extent to which foreign organizations choose to distance themselves from the Jordanian government varies. One European organization has a very close relationship with a government ministry, and is even housed in the building of this ministry. An employee of this organization said that one its primary obstacles to doing more substantive programming, such as increased engagement with political parties and public discussions on controversial topics, is the limits placed on it by the ministry. For example, the host ministry did not allow the organization to host public conversations about the ongoing tax law because they said it was “too controversial.” Tellingly, when asked why the organization had a relationship with the ministry in the first place, particularly if the ministry impeded its abilities to carry out projects, both

employees in the room let out a visible reaction of exasperation, with one of them putting her head to the desk.

“Good question,” the other employee said, raising his eyebrows in a cavalier expression. “Why do we work with this ministry?” (Interviewee H, personal communication, November 14, 2018).

Neither employee knew why the organization had a relationship with the ministry—they figured that the partnership was established at higher levels of leadership. This may suggest that in alignment with theory, the “democracy promotion” the organization engages in may not really intended to promote democracy, but cement interests of donor states in other ways. The fact that this organization spends a considerable amount of resources working on technical assistance to the ministry, rather than direct engagement work, suggests that the organization may actually be helping to legitimize authoritarian institutions, rather than democratize them. Interestingly, the employee I spoke with had not even heard of the European Neighborhood Policy. Consistent with Jonasson (2013)’s argument, communication and strategy between different EU institutions appears to be extremely poor, and likely contributes to failures.

Some organizations, particularly the American ones, are considerably more independent, giving them more leverage to engage with parties and host more controversial discussions, but interviews with organization representatives also suggested a degree of wariness to confront the government on significant issues. One American organization said that it was engaging in conversation with the government about reform-related topics, but these discussions were happening “very diplomatically, very politely, and behind closed doors,” and do not make up a focus of the organization’s work (Interviewee D, personal communication, November 14, 2018). Another director of an American organization said that it was difficult to deal with issues such as

gerrymandering, identity politics, and more systemic political representation issues because these were highly sensitive (Interviewee H, personal communication, November 26, 2018). This representative believed that discussing these issues without seeming imperialist or threatening organization-country relations was one of the organization's greatest challenges. It is a particular challenge when western governments engage in numerous other policies that lend support to the regime in pursuit of other interests, legitimizing and entrenching the authoritarian status quo and slowing the progress of democratic reforms. While some organizations are significantly more co-opted than others, the extent to which many INGOs collaborate with Jordanian ministries inherently reinforces the legitimacy of very undemocratic institutions. INGOs are constantly trying to navigate a way between providing meaningful, democracy-promoting services and maintaining friendly relationships with the government that allows their programming to exist. This sometimes leads to a trade-off where both INGOs and the government operate in an implicit code of mutual non-interference. Although the closer an INGO's ties are to a government ministry, the more control government ministries can and do tend to exert.

INGOs are sensitive to the idea that their positionality as foreigners makes their role in political reform controversial, another reason they backtrack from advocacy roles. The previously mentioned American INGO director said that he is hesitant to get involved in legislation because he believes that such advocacy would risk being perceived as an "American lobby" for an "American law" in the same way that the highly unpopular 2018 tax law has been largely seen as an "IMF law." But he also believed that less foreign involvement in legislative action was not just good for optics, but for the country as well.

"We would rather empower citizens from the ground up than be drinking tea in a back room telling the government, hey, pass this or that legislation," he said. "I'm skeptical of top-

down development. I think helping the grassroots is preferable to flying in and creating all these changes” (Interviewee C, personal communication, November 26, 2018).

International NGOs are also sometimes viewed with suspicion by the public due to their foreign funding. The fact that INGO offices are primarily located in villas, without identifying information anywhere on or around their buildings, hints that INGOs may be wary of announcing themselves to the Jordanian public. However, anti-American views generally only affect organization programming as a result of controversial U.S. policy decisions made at particular moments in time and at high levels of government. In December 2017, after the United States moved its embassy in Israel to Jerusalem, several groups and individuals stopped working with political reform organizations funded by USAID, particularly the International Republican Institute. However, almost all of the groups that left ended their boycott of U.S. programs by February of 2018, with the exception of one group that had a high level of support for Salafi movements.

The level of success INGOs have had on political reform in Jordan is difficult to evaluate. Most of the INGOs interviewed reported evidence of short-term successes. For example, the National Democratic Institute’s Ana Usharek program, which educates youth and university students about civic engagement, has reported success in engaging young people to deal with issues in their communities. For example, at the beginning of Ana Usharek’s 2015/2016 second semester program, 52 percent of participants said that they were currently active in community service or politics. At the end of the program, 75 percent reported being active (*Ana Usharek, 2nd Semester 2015-2016 Program Assessment*, 2016). However, NDI does not track program participants past the end of the program, making it difficult to assess the long-term impacts of the program. While the International Republican Institute has a long list of program alumni who

have gone on to win public office and work in civil society, and a representative of one INGO said that after participating in its programs, women from Wadi Adaba who did not initially believe women should run for office began running and leading their municipal councils, the success of such organizations has been almost entirely extra-legislative. As such, it is difficult to assess the systemic impact of international organizations. Some activists and party members who have worked with such foreign programming have found international trainings to be helpful. A large number of activists in locally-based political movements and political parties participated in trainings with U.S. and/or European organizations (Interviewee E, personal communication, November 19, 2018; Interviewee F, personal communication, November 19, 2018). At the same time, it is impossible to prove a causality link between internationally-supported trainings and the effectiveness of public activism. One activist who now participated in the HIRAK movement and runs his own political development non-profit organization stated that while he had received training from Ana Usharek, his participation in Ana Usharek was not the catalyst for his activism work, and he does not believe such programs are the catalyst for most political activists (Interviewee L, personal communication, December 3, 2018). While it is clear that a large number of people who participated in foreign-funded programs went on to work in civil society, run and win municipal and governorate offices, and participate in public protest, it is difficult to generate a direct connection between training participation and later activities. The people who are likely to participate in political action trainings are likely to be already somewhat engaged in politics, and the same people are also the most likely people to be active in political movements. In addition, the INGOs that track the activities of program alumni tend to be organizations that hand-select participants for civic engagement workshops and training based on previous leadership and community involvement, ensuring an already civically-minded participant base.

As such, the common participation of individuals in both INGO programs and locally-based activist movements may be correlation based on personal characteristics rather than some kind of causation. While INGO programs have clearly graduated alumni who have gone on to further work in civic change, and while some of their work has resulted in change that may not have happened otherwise, it is difficult to establish a direct connection between the work of INGOs and broader movements for systemic change.

The foreignness of completely foreign-funded, internationally-based political reform organizations causes them to engage in tame forms of democracy promotion for two reasons. First, both the organizations themselves and the countries they belong to want to maintain good relations with the government in order to continue programming and pursue other policy interests respectively. State interests sometimes even lead to international organizations to collaborate extensively with the Jordanian government, legitimizing the current state of affairs at higher levels while supposedly advocating for political reform on the ground. Second, INGOs are wary of being western interventionists, some fearing bad optics and some believing that top-down reform is not a good way of promoting democracy. In terms of effectiveness, INGOs may be effective at generating short-term change, and the fact that they are foreign does not generally affect how they are able to carry out programming. Many participants in semi-successful activist movements have also attend workshops led by international political training groups. However, it is difficult to link the success of these activist movements directly to INGO trainings.

Partially Foreign-Funded Jordanian Organizations

In the absence of a culture of local support for NGOs, almost all registered NGOs in Jordan are partially foreign-funded. For political reform organizations, this is practically universal. Political development NGOs need foreign funding in order to survive, making them

highly reliant on scarce resources and subject to the ever fluctuating interests of donor countries. In the wake of major political changes, priorities of aid agencies often change and governments choose to redistribute resources. Some political reform organizations have been negatively affected by the Syrian refugee crisis, as donors have redirected large portions of their government and civil society budgets toward civil society programs designed to specifically address the needs of refugees (Interviewee I, personal communication, November 28, 2018, Interviewee K, personal communication, December 3, 2018; Interviewee L, personal communication, December 3, 2018). NGO representatives consistently mentioned the lack of sustainability in funding as one of their foremost challenges. They reported that it was very difficult to engage in strategic planning when funding is not guaranteed, and in turn, funding is unlikely to be given to NGOs that do not have strategic planning. The recent drop in funding for political reform organizations in the wake of the Syria crisis—which some also attributed to the desire of western countries to retain stability in Jordan—has resulted in some organizations disappearing entirely, while others have not been able to maintain projects and programs to the standard they want to. Other organizations have refocused their goals on areas—particularly concerning the refugee crisis—where there is both more donor money and government support (Interviewee A, personal communication, November 8, 2018).

Furthermore, in order to receive foreign funding, political reform NGOs have to design their programs according to the criteria set out by foreign mandates. This means that foreign governments have a direct line of control over what the NGOs do with the money they receive. While NGO goals and foreign government goals sometimes overlap, the system does not allow full autonomy. Organizations are fiscally incapable of doing any project that is not approved by donors ((H. Barari, personal communication, November 25, 2018). For example, one debate-

centered NGO was asked to conduct an event on Article 308 of the Jordanian Penal Code, which allowed rapists to avoid punishment by marrying their victims. The NGO agreed to hold the event, but as a debate-centered NGO, it wanted to hold a debate where participants would argue both sides of the issue. The donors were against this proposition and withheld funding, preventing the event from happening (Interviewee K, personal communication, December 3, 2018). One NGO representative criticized the fact that some donors ask organizations to do very specific projects within a particular time limit and with specific groups of people without having thoroughly researched the project's potential. However, he also added that more autonomy would not necessarily make their organizations more impactful, saying that the way NGOs choose projects depends a lot on the individual people running them (Interviewee I, personal communication, November 28, 2018). A representative from a USAID contracting organization said that many NGOs do not know how to develop and maintain programs, and that funding NGOs that lacked monitoring and evaluation capacity with grants led to an inefficient use of resources (Interviewee J, personal communication, December 2, 2018).

Jordanians tend to be somewhat skeptical of foreign-funded NGOs. The high salaries that NGO directors and employees receive creates a perception that these organizations are job-providers more than democracy builders (H. Barari, personal communication, November 25, 2018). In addition, the fact that most NGOs are headed by English-speaking, highly-educated, Amman-based leaders creates the perception that such NGOs are not representative of the Jordanian people and do not understand their problems and concerns (Interviewee L, personal communication, December 3, 2018). However, local NGOs feel that they have more success than INGOs in promoting their programs, because their names are Jordanian and their organizations are primarily driven by Jordanians. Foreign donors tend to understand that some people look at

foreign funding with suspicion and do not generally force recipients to publicly list their donors (Interviewee I, personal communication, November 28, 2018) .In general, negative perceptions of foreign donors do not seem to have a major impact on how successful or unsuccessful organizations manage to be.

The projects foreign-funded local NGOs tend to implement, as predicted by theory, tend to be what Bush refers to as “tame” projects. These projects are primarily aimed at empowering youth and women to participate in politics, monitoring elections, and assisting in the political reform process when the government provides an opening for new legislation to take place, but they do not aim to address systemic issues. Most NGOs are especially careful to avoid any kind of lobbying because they do not want to look like political parties, which are widely distrusted and prohibited from receiving foreign funds. Such lobbying would cause these NGOs to lose their professional standing and credibility with the government, further decreasing their autonomy and leverage with the government (Interviewee A, personal communication, November 8, 2018; Interviewee B2, personal communication, November 13, 2018).

A few organizations are engaged in much less tame democracy promotion work, focusing on legislative and constitutional advocacy, community organizing, and youth empowerment programs that aim to have young people engage in more substantive policy-based activities. However, these few programs appear to be exceptions to the rule, mostly running the way they do because of the individuals who run them. It is also important to note that the level of success of more confrontational organizations is doubtful. Representatives of the more confrontational NGOs all said that they were able to enact the most substantial change during the political opening generated by the Arab Spring and the Hirak movement (Interviewee L, personal communication, December 3, 2018; Interviewee M, personal communication, December 3,

2018). This suggests that there is a larger problem beyond just “tame democracy” that causes democracy promotion NGOs to be unsuccessful, and that solving the problems behind tame democracy promotion will not necessarily push Jordan closer to democracy.

Most civil society organizations are co-opted by the Jordanian government to varying degrees, often through individuals running such organizations and the means through which they obtain funds, and the organizations that get the most government funding tend to engage in significantly tamer programs. For example, one well-known organization that works primarily in parliamentary and government monitoring receives significant amounts of funding from foreign governments and significant amounts of funding from the Jordanian Ministry of Political Development, the King Abdullah II Fund for Development, and European organizations that tend to funnel their funding through RONGOs. Two independent sources active in political reform at both the INGO and NGO level also stated that the head of this organization had ties to the intelligence department, although this is not unusual (Interviewee C, personal communication, November 14, 2018; Interviewee K, December 3, 2018). According to Barari, the center’s co-optation shows in the work it presents. While some of the monitoring the center does is valuable, such as keeping track of MP attendance and their level of participation, and while it has encouraged the government to adopt more transparent measures, such as information sharing websites, the center also shows all reports to the government before it publishes, allowing the government to respond to methodologies and share thoughts on the report, and the center often withholds publishing critiques of the government until the government solves the problem being critiqued. For example, a report critical of government-run websites was withheld for three years, as the center, in a representative’s own words, said their goal “wasn’t to embarrass the government” (Interviewee B1, November 13, 2018). Somewhat tellingly, in the same interview,

another representative of the organization condescendingly dismissed activists in the Hirak movement for acting like political parties, coarsely describing them as “communists” (Interviewee B2, November 13, 2018). The fact that the center allows the government to monitor their work, withholds information from the public, and seems to carry rather condescending attitudes toward the activists most directly responsible for pushing for change in 2011 and 2012 shows that systemic change is not a priority of the organization. Rather, the center and centers like it, in the words of another political reform activist “are tools to keep election and government observation under control” (Interviewee K, personal communication, December 3, 2018). But this particular center is not alone—in order for any organization to operate its programs, good relations with intelligence and government ministries is key. An organization that engages in unsanctioned programs risks being labeled as an opposition group and getting shut down—or in the worst case, having its leaders go to jail (Interviewee O, personal communication, December 6, 2018).

The government also controls NGOs through the control of foreign funding. All NGOs that receive foreign funding have to get approval from the government, and while the government does not generally deny funding, it can delay it, and without money, the organizations cannot implement programming. Good relationships with the government and intelligence are key to avoiding trouble. One year ago, the head of an organization found himself on trial for misrepresenting his organization after a new intelligence officer replaced a former officer he had a relationship with (Interviewee O, personal communication, December 6, 2018). Organizations that engage in more confrontational or sensational programming face particularly heavy government surveillance. When the previously-mentioned debate-centered NGO would hold public debates, police and intelligence officers would attend the events and ask organizers

to hand over the content of the arguments before the debates began, although the debate arguments were not pre-planned. The debate organizer would hand over post-debate summaries to security officials in order to maintain good relations (Interviewee K, personal communication, December 3, 2018). While government surveillance tends to be common among political groups in Jordan regardless of whether they receive foreign funding or not, government officials often claim foreign funding as their excuse for increased monitoring (Interviewee O, personal communication, December 6, 2018).

While some NGOs are independent from ministry funding and do not want to take funds from RONGOs, many donors—primarily western government donors—channel their funding through RONGOs, forcing NGOs to cooperate with RONGOs in order to be able to maintain programming (Interviewee I, personal communication, November 28, 2018). In turn, it is of interest that government donors channeling aid for the purposes of democracy promotion do so through undemocratic institutions, reinforcing their power while supposedly challenging them. The Jordanian government argues for such channeling in the name of national security, an argument that one representative of a development organization said was hard to combat, as Jordan was a sovereign nation and ally they did not want to disrespect (Interviewee O, personal communication, December 6, 2018).

Foreign-funded Jordanian NGOs that work on political reform issues are directly impacted by the political interests of donor countries, who ultimately decide what kinds of organizations are going to receive funding, and in the context of Jordan, survive. Because NGOs depend entirely on foreign funding, foreign governments have the final say in what kind of projects NGOs are able to implement. Foreign funding makes Jordanians generally distrustful of NGOs, but does not significantly impact NGO programming. While Jordanian NGO programs

tends to largely be tame in order to avoid interference and ensure survival, both tame and confrontational programs tend to be largely unsuccessful at generating systemic change, except when an opening arises due to public pressure. The government also uses foreign funding as an excuse to co-opt and control NGOs, heavily monitoring their activities to make sure they do not step too far out of line.

Local Organizations Without Foreign Funding

The work of street protestors and independent activists during 2011 and 2012, also known as the Hirak, was key to putting pressure on the government, which enacted significant constitutional reforms in response to the political situation regionally. The movement had even more credibility because it was locally-driven, particularly by youth from rural areas that have traditionally been the bedrock of support for the monarchy. According to one activist, the movement would have simply not existed had western governments been remotely involved.

“Mentioning anything related to western governments in public activism will result in people not following you,” he said. “If people are getting foreign funds, no one will listen to them, especially in rural villages” (Interviewee L, personal communication, December 3, 2018).

Some people in the INGO and NGO sphere have pointed out that many of the individuals involved in independent activism received training from INGOs and NGOs, and thus benefited from foreign training. However, as discussed earlier, it is very difficult to prove a link of causality between participation in foreign funded trainings and later participation in independent activism. Correlation is a much more likely scenario, with politically-interested individuals partaking in both trainings and activist movements, without one necessarily inspiring involvement in the other. Almost all of the individuals who developed the specific constitutional proposals that were delivered to the National Dialogue Committee and parliament had partaken

in some form of INGO or NGO political training, but according to one activist who was heavily involved in the proposal process, they never ended up using the skills taught to them during trainings to advocate for their proposals, which ended up being successfully implemented. However, the activist was quick to note that words of advice had been helpful. One INGO member who had spoken with the king warned him that the 2011 opening for constitutional reform was likely a one time chance to make substantial change, and he and his fellow activists needed to seize the moment. That advice stuck with him and motivated him, but beyond that, INGOs did not play a role in creating the political reforms that resulted from the movement.

A smaller group of activists within the Hirak pushed for the constitutional changes that were eventually created. This group was an educated group of young people involved in the NGO sphere, and the group pushed for constitutional changes that reduced the some of the king's power, but did not transform Jordan into a constitutional monarchy. One activist involved in this group said that they did not believe Jordan was ready for a constitutional monarchy. However, the changes that the government implemented were considered radical at the time, and went beyond what most people thought was possible (Interviewee K, personal communication, December 3, 2018). This change was largely possible because of the fact that the independent Hirak had gained the trust of ordinary people.

However, the Hirak movement was not able to generate a more substantial impact on the government for a number of reasons, many of them having to do with how foreign influence played and did not play a role. For one, the Hirak movement was not completely free from the influence of foreign governments and movements. A number of participants in the protests were inspired by foreign political movements, including members of the Muslim Brotherhood, Hezbollah supporters, and Baathists, a fact that has been used by the Jordanian government to

discredit the movement. The Jordanian government has used the same reasoning to discredit the Islamic Action Front Party (Barari, 2013). The government also worked hard to disrupt the power of the movement by arresting and sowing rumors about anyone they perceived to be a leader. In addition, many of the people in HIRAK did not know what strategies to use to put substantial change into place. While the work of the young activists who came up with the final proposals was significant for what it did, the suggestions were still written by a small group of people who were not lawyers or policymakers (Interviewee L, personal communication, December 3, 2018). Barari attributes the lack of more substantial political reforms partially as a result of HIRAK's lack of foreign partners, and the lack of a comprehensive foreign policy from the western world prioritizing democratic change in Jordan (H. Barari, personal communication, November 25, 2018). A representative from a government development organization said that he personally would like to see more engagement with marginalized, rural, politically-empowered communities, but there is not a lot of space to work with HIRAK without risking breaking relationships with the Jordanian government and key pro-government partners, which his organization's country of origin needs to maintain in order to achieve key security interests (Interviewee O, personal communication, December 6, 2018). Broader foreign policy interests of the West keep western countries from supporting HIRAK—whether that is for better or for worse is ultimately a question up for debate.

At the same time, it is important to recognize that HIRAK gained momentum partially due to historical events, and lost momentum for the same reasons. The crisis in Syria led to an easy argument for the government and the monarchy to make—stability and security are more important than democracy. For most Jordanians, and the western world, this was a highly

compelling argument, and allowed the government to make shallow reforms without a significant amount of public criticism (Amos, 2013).

For groups like Shaghaf, a lack of foreign funding can be a detriment as well as an asset. While their independence gives them credibility and support, their lack of a strong financial footing makes them unsustainable. Because such groups provide no way for the people who run them to earn a living, organizers must seek regular employment to support themselves and their families, resulting in political movements dying from a loss of human capital.

Lack of foreign funding also cannot be taken for granted as an instigator of change. Groups like Shaghaf have pushed for change at a local level and have kept parliamentarians on their toes by holding them accountable, using their independence and lack of structure in order to accomplish tasks quickly and efficiently. But at the end of the day, they are not pushing for systemic change in the government. The fact that activist movements are not institutionalized and generally have few inner connections generally results in such movements being left out of major meetings and decisions, reducing their ability to create influence (Interviewee E, personal communication, November 19, 2018). A lack of foreign involvement is not an independent predictor of whether a group will succeed. In the case of Hirak, public protest—a tactic that was not possible under a western funded model—put enough pressure on the government that it felt the need to adopt reforms.

The Islamic Action Front Party, which also does not receive foreign funding (as political parties in Jordan are forbidden to receive foreign funding) has been the most active political party in pushing for political reform and is one of the few groups continuing to advocate for constitutional and legislative reform. And unlike the Hirak and Shaghaf groups, they have remained strong in their advocacy long past the Arab Spring. One IAF member stated that IAF's

independence from foreign governments gave it a significant amount of credibility in the public eye. However, she also said that foreign governments have a positive impact when they issue statements against unfair elections and government practices. For example, after a 2007 election that was widely believed to be rigged against the IAF Party, western groups brought attention to the issue (Interviewee F, personal communication, November 19, 2018). But again, nothing really changed until the protests in 2011 and 2012.

Independent political movements gain credibility and support among Jordanians—especially rural Jordanians—because they are independent. But their independence from western governments also leaves many of them unsustainable. In addition, the Jordanian government has used the influence of foreign political movements on the Hirak and the Islamic Action Front Party as a reason to discredit them and make excuses for controlling them. However, as Barari suggests, such government action may have been harder to do had foreign governments been more actively supportive of the Hirak movement.

Conclusion/Summary

“We don’t push the Jordanian government too much because we want to achieve mutual interests,” said Interviewee O, a democracy practitioner from a western government organization. “Until there’s a more representative system in parliament, the street will be the most effective way of creating change.”

While this study analyzes a wide variety of effects of foreign involvement, its main conclusion is that foreign involvement affects political reform organizations through their strategic interests. In the case of INGOs, the interests of donor governments to maintain a relationship with the Jordanian government in other areas of policy, such as security, keep the government from pushing for more systemic reform. In the case of NGOs, the interests of donor

governments redirects funding to areas they see as a higher priority—in recent years, the Syrian refugee crisis. Donor interests also influence the kinds of programming NGOs are able to do—but without foreign funding, such programming likely would not exist at all. In addition, contrary to what I predicted in my hypothesis, foreign involvement does not appear to have a significant impact on INGO/NGO programming. In the case of organizations that do not have foreign influence, the lack of foreign involvement gives them increased credibility and standing among Jordanians, allowing them to build the numbers to put real pressure on the government. However, the Hirak movement’s lack of international allies also made it weak at the negotiating table.

My main hypotheses about the role of foreign involvement, built on the work of previous scholars, were generally correct. Strategic interests play a key role in how both INGOS and NGOs are able to implement programming, foreign funding projects tend to fall into the category of “tame” democracy promotion, and independent political movements tend to be better at putting pressure on the government to create change, although pressure alone has not been enough. However, my hypothesis was incorrect on one count. I initially believed that foreign involvement would hurt the credibility and programming of INGOs and NGOs in significant ways, due to negative perceptions of western interference. However, I found that INGO and NGO services were generally well-accepted among Jordanians, and while some people viewed them with skepticism, the fact that they were western-based did not have a major negative impact on their effectiveness.

Yom and Barari argue that foreign involvement has not been a major factor in why the political landscape of Jordan has not changed. However, while not the sole variables in the equation for democracy, foreign involvement and the lack thereof still have major impacts on the

ability of political reform organizations to contribute to democratic change. Understanding the ways in which foreign involvement impacts organizations can allow scholars, policymakers, and activists to better understand the ways in which foreign policy and international coalitions affect the chances of political reform happening in Jordan. This analysis can hopefully guide democracy practitioners in understanding the different ways that state and personal interests play a role in shaping organizational practices and impact.

Study Limitations

One major limitation was the regional limitation of the study. As I did not have access to safe and inexpensive transportation outside Amman, I was restricted to only interviewing people within the city. However, I managed to somewhat overcome this obstacle by interviewing people whose organizations were based outside of Amman and people who had worked significantly in rural areas. Still, this study may not give the most well-rounded view of political reform organizations in the rural parts of Jordan.

Another limitation was the time limit to the study. Because we were only given four weeks to conduct research, I was not able to interview many of the contacts I had gathered through other sources.

Another limitation was my knowledge of Arabic. While I was able to use an interpreter for one of my interviews, most of my interviews were conducted in the interviewees' second language. Although almost all of the interviewees were highly proficient in English, the language barrier left some room open for the possibility of mistranslation or misunderstanding.

Recommendations for Future Study

Future studies could certainly build on some of the questions raised in this research. One of the major questions this research leaves unanswered concerns the impact of INGO/NGO

political training participation on long-term political involvement or involvement in activism. Such an analysis would do a great deal to assess the impact of such civic trainings in creating change. Analyzing the comparative impact of different international donors (for example, USAID, IRI, KAS, etc.) through a side-by-side set of case studies would give greater insight into what specific donors lead to specific organizational impacts. Comparing the effectiveness of similar programs across INGO/NGO lines (for example, comparing INGO political party development programs with NGO political party programs) would be a very useful way of comparing the impacts of INGOs and NGOs without having to be concerned about the significant variable of program type. Looking into these questions and questions along similar lines would help provide democracy practitioners with great insight into how political reform organizations work and how foreign involvement affects them.

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*The numerical value indicates a different person at the same organization.

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Appendices

Sample Interview Questions

1. How did you begin to work at this organization?
2. What are your short-term and long-term goals?
3. How successful have you been in achieving in your short and long-term goals?
4. What are the major challenges you have faced in achieving your short and long-term goals?
5. How do you think foreign involvement and funding affects your organization?
6. Are you trying to push for more long-term systemic change or short-term change? Why do you choose to push for short-term (or) long-term change?
7. (For organizations that work with government ministries and/or RONGOs) Why do you choose to work with government ministries and/or RONGOs?
8. What do you think about the impact of INGOs on political reform? How does their foreignness affect them?
9. What do you think about the impact of local NGOs on political reform? How does their foreign funding affect them? How does the fact that they are locally-based affect them?
10. What do you think about the impact of independent political movements on political reform? How does their independence affect them?

Informed Consent Form



Title: The Effects of Foreign Involvement on the Efficacy of Political Reform Organizations in Jordan

Your Name/Homeschool: Sravya Tadepalli, University of Oregon

School for International Training—Jordan: Geopolitics, International Relations, and the Future of the Middle East

1. The purpose of this study is to assess the effects of foreign involvement on political reform organizations in Jordan.
2. **Rights Notice**
If at any time, you feel that you are at risk or exposed to unreasonable harm, you may terminate and stop the interview. Please take some time to carefully read the statements provided below.
 - a. **Privacy** - all information you present in this interview may be recorded and safeguarded. If you do not want the information recorded, you need to let the interviewer know.
 - b. **Anonymity** - all names in this study will be kept anonymous unless the participant chooses otherwise.
 - c. **Confidentiality** - all names will remain completely confidential and fully protected by the interviewer. By signing below, you give the interviewer full responsibility to uphold this contract and its contents. The interviewer will also sign a copy of this contract and give it to the participant.

3. Instructions:

Please read the following statements carefully and mark your preferences where indicated. Signing below indicates your agreement with all statements and your voluntary participation in the study. Signing below while failing to mark a preference where indicated will be interpreted as an affirmative preference. Please ask the researcher if you have any questions regarding this consent form.

I am aware that this interview is conducted by an independent undergraduate researcher with the goal of producing a descriptive case study on the effects of foreign involvement on political reform organizations in Jordan.

I am aware that the information I provide is for research purposes only. I understand that my responses will be confidential and that my name will not be associated with any results of this study.

I am aware that I have the right to full anonymity upon request, and that upon request the researcher will omit all identifying information from both notes and drafts.

I am aware that I have the right to refuse to answer any question and to terminate my participation at any time, and that the researcher will answer any questions I have about the study.

I am aware of and take full responsibility for any risk, physical, psychological, legal, or social, associated with participation in this study.

I am aware that I will not receive monetary compensation for participation in this study, but a copy of the final study will be made available to me upon request.

I [do / do not] give the researcher permission to use my name and position in the final study.

I [do / do not] give the researcher permission to use my organizational affiliation in the final study.

I [do / do not] give the researcher permission to use data collected in this interview in a later study.

Date:

Participant's Signature:

Participant's Printed Name:

Researcher's Signature:

Thank you for participating!

Questions, comments, complaints, and requests for the final written study can be directed to:

Dr. Raed Altabini, SIT Jordan Academic Director

Email: raed.altabini@sit.edu