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INSTITUTIONS AND THE
POLITICS OF SURVIVAL

The monarchs of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan have endured in the face of economic crisis and regional political instability by following the spirit of Caliph Muawiyah ibn Abi Sufiyan's strategy. But how has the Jordanian regime managed to survive external challenges and control domestic threats at the same time? Can the Jordanian monarchy's success help explain the surprising durability of authoritarian regimes in the Arab world? And how can the lack of democracy in Jordan, and in the rest of the Middle East, be accounted for?

This book takes an institutional approach to answering these questions. Previously, some scholars have answered these questions by highlighting the lack of cultural or economic prerequisites for democracy in the Arab world. Other scholars, in contrast, have pointed to the evolution of civil society in the Middle East. But unlike other regions of the world, processes of political liberalization in the Arab world have not resulted in transitions to democracy. Yet, instead of tracing the persistence of authoritarian regimes to Islamic fundamentalism or to the uniqueness of Arab societies and economies, perhaps scholars must come to grips with the simple fact that democratization does not always lead to democracy.

By using an institutional focus, this book investigates the features of authoritarian regimes that facilitate the stability of autocracy. This approach blends the culturalist, structuralist, and rationalist accounts that are familiar in the social sciences. It highlights the way particular trajectories of institutional, ideological, and social interactions create distinctive paths of regime stability. In the face of external crises, the Jordanian regime has frequently used manipulations of domestic political institutions as a coping mechanism to quiet discontent caused by unpopular policies—especially during the 1990s. This book investigates the forms that these strategies have taken and the factors behind their success or failure in Jordan.

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Today, the main threats to the Jordanian regime come in two forms. Jordan, like many developing countries, faces a severe debt crisis because of a poor resource base and exploding demographics. Secondly, like many countries in the Middle East, regional war and peace threaten more than the kingdom's borders. In the past, security crises threatened to remove Jordan from the map. But today security threats and economic crises pose a different challenge to the Hashemite regime. Both threaten to disturb the balance between the monarchy and the constituent members of the regime coalition, thus empowering the opposition to stoke popular resentment against the government and, potentially, the monarchy. In the face of such existential threats, the regime has been forced to undertake domestic institutional manipulations in order to limit popular discontent, to contain the opposition, and to maintain the unity of the regime coalition—maneuvers that can be labeled "regime survival strategies."

The regime's catalog of survival strategies in the 1990s has included both moves toward and away from political liberalization. Since 1989, the regime has focused its survival strategies on three main centers of political and civil society: political parties, the parliament, and the press. The Jordanian regime has managed the rules of these institutions when it saw the need to contain opposition to unpopular existential policies. The monarchy in Jordan, however, is not alone in using the management of political rules to its advantage. Political incumbents, regardless of regime type, use institutional rules to their political advantage. However, studies of the Middle East have frequently neglected these features of domestic politics.

The success of the Jordanian regime in implementing these survival strategies has been varied. This book investigates three factors that have influenced the success or failure of survival strategies: the resourceful use of constitutional rules by the regime, the reinforcement of the opposition's disunity of collective action against the survival strategy and the regime's policies, and the attention to not imposing costs on sectors of the regime coalition that could fray its unity. In highlighting these three factors, this book hopes to further scholarly debates about the stability of autocracy and the limits of democratization.

EXPLAINING AUTHORITARIANISM AND DEMOCRACY IN THE ARAB WORLD

Many attempts at explaining the lack of democracy in the Middle East have highlighted the lack of economic and cultural prerequisites for democracy in the region. The political culture argument finds that the fragile flower of democracy cannot grow in the desert of Islamic and Arab culture. The political economy argument finds that dependent economic development has caused structural deficiencies in Arab societies. Arguments such as these drive most popular analyses of Middle Eastern politics—especially the first.[1]

However, reducing the complexities of politics in the Middle East—or else-where—to a single variable has so far failed to yield useful and compelling explanations of the weakness of democracy in the region—or anywhere.[2]

In recent years, with the growth of democracy in southern Europe, Latin America, and Eastern Europe, many social scientists have come to see democracy as a contingent process brought about by decisions within the regime and the opposition. While today this approach suffers from a number of detractors, its contribution as the base for current literature on democratization in the Middle East—and its difficulties—nevertheless stands as intellectually relevant.

In this approach to democracy, the primary object of study has become the choices of actors—especially elites—in negotiating the change of power from authoritarian regimes to democratically elected politicians.[3] Democracy is viewed as the outcome of a political process in which groups reach a political compromise to install an institutional framework in order to settle their differences. Authors in this approach see these agreements as contingent upon situations and choices; thus, no transition to democracy results from deterministic systemic requisites.

Authors of this more contingent and short-run approach to democracy draw a distinction between processes of liberalization and democratization. Perhaps Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter best express the distinction between political liberalization and democratization. Liberalization is "the process of making effective certain rights that protect both individuals and social groups from arbitrary or illegal acts committed by the state or third parties."[4] Democratization, for O'Donnell and Schmitter, centers on the greater inclusion of citizens into the political process. Analysts of Middle Eastern politics have adapted this distinction between political liberalization and democratization. They have found that, in the Arab world, while the former process sometimes exists, the latter generally does not.[5]

Transitions from authoritarian rule usually occur when the regime loses legitimacy, often through failed economic reform efforts or military misadventures. The regime may attempt a project of political liberalization in an attempt to regain its legitimacy.[6] For some proponents of the contingent choice approach, the possibility that a liberalization project would stabilize without a transition to democracy is theoretically possible but not elaborated upon. For Adam Przeworski, liberalization without a regime transition can occur only if liberalizers within the regime open the political system while attaching a high probability to the success of repression (if necessary). Moreover, the regime will choose repression if civil society organizes an autonomous mobilization. Civil society, knowing that the liberalizers will choose repression (which would probably be successful), chooses to enter the opening and to forgo mobilization outside the regime's desired limits.[7]

Yet, according to Przeworski, liberalization is inherently unstable because the regime's institutions cannot accommodate the opposition's demands.

In this manner, a full transition to democracy generally results from splits within a regime between soft- and hard-liners that widen under the instability of political liberalization. Liberalization leads to a resurgence of civil society beyond the regime's control. Thus, the contingent approach to democracy sees the choices of political actors in a transition as the key to understanding the development of democracy.

That political liberalization is "inherently unstable" provides the fulcrum in the contingent choice model of regime transitions.[8] Yet this book will argue that political liberalization did not lead to democratization in Jordan. The regime was able to use political liberalization as a survival strategy when it was needed. Political liberalization was reversed when it later produced undesirable results for the Jordanian regime. The contingent choice model of democratization generally does not account for a stable political liberalization that does not lead to democratization. It cannot because it assumes a particular type of relationship between the state, the regime, and society—one that was present in southern Europe and in Latin America—but may not be elsewhere.

Under the bureaucratic authoritarian regimes of Latin America, the regime attempted to eradicate civil society. Yet, in the end the regime was only able to freeze the shape of society.[9] Civil society bloomed again once the authoritarian regime began the thaw of political liberalization. However, the global variation in the structures of state-society relations is far wider than this model of regime transition literature considers. Political liberalization may not be such a risky proposition to an authoritarian regime when a different pattern of relations between the state and society exists. The trajectory of regime-led state building that took place in Jordan (and in many other Middle Eastern countries) contrasts with the capturing of an already existing state by bureaucratic authoritarian regimes in Latin America. Chapter 2 will discuss the historical paths of regime and state building in the kingdom.

This book joins with critics of the contingent choice model of democratization in focusing on two problematic aspects of this model. First, authors within the contingent choice tradition tend to discount the role that external factors play in bringing about regime change. Second, with this model's focus on agency and contingency, political legacies and institutional contexts are often ignored. This book will use these lines of critique to help uncover how the Jordanian regime has survived numerous external crises during the 1990s. In sum, this book explores the roots of the stability of authoritarian regimes and the difficulties of democracy in the Middle East.

EXTERNAL FACTORS AND DEMOCRATIZATION

Explanations of the global growth of democracy have highlighted disciplinary boundaries within political science. Scholars of international relations have tended to overstate the unity of factors in causing this wave of democ-

ratization—up to the point of seeing the "end of history."[10] Scholars of comparative politics can also be critiqued for ignoring variables external to the state in causing democracy.[11] The contagion of democratization has thus been both overplayed and underplayed by scholars. However, there is no shortage of scholars that will point to the Middle East's immunity to the recent spread of democracy. In explaining this resistance, a key task for analysts lies in incorporating external factors while leaving room for domestic actors and institutions.[12]

Both war and peace in the Middle East have buffeted Jordan's domestic politics since the state's creation. Some argue that Jordan's shifting external alignments in the 1990s—first with Iraq during the Gulf War, and then with the U.S. and Israel in the Middle East peace process—were caused by King Hussein trying to steer a rocky course between domestic discontent and external security. Alternatively, others explain Jordanian foreign policy as the quest for "budget security" and external rents to prop up Jordan's meager resource base.[13]

This need for external financial support of the kingdom has been a feature of Jordanian politics from its inception. Subsidies have come from Britain, later the U.S., changing to Arab states, and then switching back to the U.S. Yet the necessity for foreign subsidies has also had a dramatic impact on Jordan's domestic politics. Jordan can be classified as a "rentier state" since such a large share of the state's budget is drawn from fiscal sources outside the kingdom, not from taxing domestic production.

The rentier state model argues that since states have enormous financial resources from nonproductive activities (oil revenues, large amounts of foreign aid, etc.), the state does not have to rely on taxation for its activities. As a state centered on the allocation of fiscal benefits, not on the extraction of taxes on production, the state has no need for representative institutions, "no taxation, no representation."[14]

Analysts have used the rentier state model to argue that the ending of external rents due to the fall in world oil prices—and the related declines in aid from oil states (to states such as Jordan)—has caused economic crises to lead to political crises.[15] In the "post-rentier" argument, the return of the necessity for taxation will lead to the return of representation. Democratization and political liberalization will be used by incumbent regimes to expand the base of support for necessary economic reforms, as well as to share the blame for such unpopular measures as cuts in subsidies and higher taxes. Yet, even if the post-rentier argument correctly sees economic and political crises as linked, the argument cannot predict the direction of the regime's reaction to the political crises: by using political liberalization or by using deliberalization (or even coercion). Jordan is thus similar to cases in Africa where Michael Bratton and Nicholas van de Walle found that "to the extent that economic and international forces were important to regime transitions, they were mediated by domestic political and institutional considerations."[16]

The effects of war-making in the Middle East, likewise, have produced varying effects on the paths of state and society building in the region—a variation that can be linked to regime type.[17] Has regime-led political liberalization allowed the leaders of Jordan and Egypt to pursue policies of conflict resolution with Israel—allowing the regime to mitigate both domestic and international conflicts? Or has political liberalization opened the door to sometimes quarrelsome public discussions of Jordan's best foreign policy interests?[18] The Jordanian regime, in the face of regional war and peace, first opened itself up for political liberalization in the late 1980s and early 1990s. It then reversed the process later in the decade. This raises questions of how the Jordanian regime was able to: first, liberalize politically without a resulting transition to democracy; and second, deal with unpopular foreign and economic policies in the context of stabilizing authoritarian rule.

LEGACIES OF REGIME TYPES AND DEMOCRATIC TRANSITIONS

These questions return us to the second major criticism of the contingent choice model of democratization: that the model tends to ignore the political and institutional context where "contingent choices" take place. Is there a relationship between the institutional features of the monarchical regime in Jordan which facilitates its survival?

Przeworski, for example, argues that agency is central to regime transitions since "conditions only structure conflicts, they do not make choices. But the structure of choices is the same."[19] However, a number of authors have responded to Przeworski by demonstrating that the structure of choices is *not* the same in different paths of transitions. In other words, political institutions have been the "missing variable in theories of regime change."[20]

Since regimes are generally seen as "the formal and informal institutions that structure political interaction," the institutional features of the regime in Jordan may explain why it has been able to liberalize politically without losing control over the process.[21] Richard Snyder and James Mahoney find that incorporating institutional variables into theories of regime change helps explain both how incumbents fail to survive and how challengers can succeed in transforming regimes. Perhaps investigating institutions can also help explain the opposite situation that has occurred in Jordan—incumbents surviving and challengers failing to transform the regime. In other words, an institutional approach toward the Jordanian monarchy would seem especially suited for investigating the factors influencing the success or failure of a regime's survival strategies.

A number of recent works on regime change have begun to remedy the lack of attention to the legacies of previous regime types that plagued the contingent choice model of democratization. Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan argue that "it should be clear that the characteristics of the previous nondemocratic regime have profound implications for the transition *paths* available

and the *tasks* different countries face when they begin their struggles to develop consolidated democracies."[22] Within this institutional approach, Linz and Stepan use a two-track research method. They first taxonomize the characteristics of the various regime types. They then delineate the possible paths from those regimes toward democratic transition and consolidation.

The monarchies of the Middle East, however, are generally left out of these general classification schemes. Moreover, there are a number of institutional differences between Middle Eastern monarchies and Latin American bureaucratic authoritarianism, Eastern European post-totalitarianism, and African neopatrimonialism. A near comprehensive survey of democratization by Barbara Geddes includes all authoritarian regimes lasting three years or more, except for monarchies.[23] As most current monarchical authoritarian regimes are in the Arab world, she neglects both a region and an important subtype of authoritarian rule. This book hopes to help remedy this neglect.

The regime in Jordan can be taxonomized with the other examples of monarchical authoritarianism in cases such as Morocco, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Iran under the shah. In this type of regime, the monarch is a personalistic ruler, however, he does not rule alone. The king stands at the center of a regime coalition that may be diverse and can include a broad social base. A degree of political pluralism is allowed—if not encouraged—both within the regime coalition and the legal opposition. The mass population generally remains politically quiescent and is mobilized along communal or clientelistic lines. The monarchy is generally constitutionally organized and legitimized, but the constitution formally grants the monarchy unchecked power. However, informal constraints on the monarch's power come from social norms and protected spaces—such as the home and the mosque. Finally, a mentality (not quite an ideology) of the regime may be based on anticolonial leadership, religious prestige, or "traditional" privilege.[24]

SURVIVAL STRATEGIES

How does a monarchical authoritarian regime react to external crises that threaten to destabilize its rule? Like many other authoritarian regimes, the monarchy's reaction takes the form of a "satisficing" strategy to deal with these crises. The regime meets the crises with piecemeal reforms that privilege the regime's survival over making sweeping reforms that may upset the status quo.[25] These survival strategies vary with the nature of the crisis and the ability of the regime to successfully carry them out.

This book concerns itself with the Jordanian regime's manipulation of institutional rules in three venues: political parties, the Jordanian Parliament (specifically the elected House of Deputies), and the press. These three venues have been chosen because they are the three major objects of domestic political discussion among the Jordanian public and elite. Debates over the proper institutional rules for political parties, elections for Parliament, and

newspapers dominated the political attention of Jordanians in the 1990s. The regime has focused on these three institutional venues because they offer the best potential to contain the opposition and to limit popular discontent while maintaining the unity of the regime coalition and still appearing to outsiders to be offering a "march towards democracy." Political scientists have also focused on the role that civil society (in this study exemplified by the press) and political society (parliaments) and the linkage between the two spheres (political parties) have all played in political liberalization and democratization elsewhere in the world. Thus, this book focuses on these three institutional areas to help argue that democratization does not always lead to democracy. Rather, manipulations of the press, political parties, and elections for Parliament have helped insure the continued rule of the Jordanian monarchy. This book, however, will not only point out that survival strategies can maintain a regime's power. It also discusses some of the factors behind the success of regime survival strategies. Why do some institutional manipulations work in capturing the opposition while others fuel public discontent?

This book investigates three factors that have influenced the success or failure of survival strategies. The first factor is the resourceful use of constitutional rules by the regime. Actors, in choosing the venue for implementing or contesting institutional changes, seek the arena that will most likely yield positive results for that particular actor. Different institutional venues contain specific rules for behavior. In some institutional environments, actors may have incentives to "switch to neighboring institutional codes should their behavior prove incompatible with the rules of one institution."[26] Thus, it is up to the actors involved to use these sets of rules creatively for their strategic advantage. If, in implementing the institutional manipulation, the regime can more resourcefully use constitutional rules than the opposition, the more likely it is that the survival strategy will succeed. This factor behind the success or failure of survival strategies captures this idea of institutionally enabled action.

A second factor behind the success of survival strategies is the regime's manipulation of institutions to reinforce the disunity of the opposition's collective action against the regime's policies and the survival strategy itself. The contingent choice literature of democratization has highlighted the explanatory power of the agency of political actors. While this argument can be taken too far if the institutional context is ignored, agency nevertheless remains a useful explanatory tool when discussing contests over institutional rules. Often—especially in reference to Latin American cases of democratization—the unity of the opposition is assumed. In Jordan however, this assumption does not always hold. Ideological differences divide the Islamist opposition from Arab nationalists and leftists. Plus, within each trend, personal and programmatic disputes cause further fragmentation. One should not assume the unity of the opposition nor its choice to act.[27] Thus, regime survival strategies in limiting the role of the opposition accentuate these

divisions within the opposition—in other words, to divide and rule. The regime attempts to sow the seeds of disunity through selective incentives or disincentives to specific opposition groups or by institutionalizing rules that can capitalize on the variety of ideological trends within the opposition. The more likely the institutional manipulation's ability to promote disunity among the opposition, the more likely it is to succeed.

The third factor behind the success of regime survival strategies can be seen as a mirror image of the second. If the institutional manipulation does not impose costs on sectors of the regime coalition—which fray its unity—the more likely the survival strategy is to succeed. The contingent choice model of democratization highlights the role that divisions within an authoritarian regime coalition have in leading toward a regime transition. If institutional manipulations can be found to resolve—or at least contain—natural divisions within the regime coalition, then a major cause of regime failure can be avoided. The institutional structure of monarchical authoritarianism aids in this project—as the king stands in the center of politics and builds policy coalitions around him. However, policy differences in Jordan have threatened to tear the coalition apart. Thus, survival strategies aim to minimize this potential by providing a clear policy agenda for the regime coalition, as well as minimize ideological disputes within the regime coalition that could be capitalized on by the opposition.

These three factors combine to explain the success or failure of a regime survival strategy. As these factors vary, so does the potential for the success of an institutional manipulation by the regime. However, the success or failure of a survival strategy does not stand alone in time. Background and context do matter. Thus, regime survival strategies in Jordan are investigated historically in this book. Past events—especially past successes or failures of survival strategies—can influence the outcome of a later episode by offering new interpretations of institutional rules, by creating differing degrees of opposition disunity, or by resulting in various levels of regime coalition unity. Thus, this book will pay careful attention to the historical sequence of events surrounding the regime's survival strategies in Jordan between 1988 and 2001.

Chapter 2 offers a historical background to this study. This chapter briefly explains the process of regime-led state building in Jordan. It will pay special attention to critical junctures in Jordan's history such as the founding of the state in the 1920s, the challenge of Arab nationalism in the 1950s, and the civil war with the Palestinian *fedayeen* in 1970. The legacies of these junctures set the stage for the events studied in this book by empowering the monarchy, creating a set of social allies for the regime, and by setting the institutional, economic, and cultural contexts in which events after 1998 played out.

Chapter 3 will begin the book's discussion of regime survival strategies. It focuses on the domestic ramifications of King Hussein's 1988 decision to sever administrative ties with the Palestinian West Bank and the resulting

economic crisis in Jordan. The regime responded to riots in April 1989 with a series of survival strategies that offered greater political liberalization. The two main survival strategies were the 1989 parliamentary elections and the National Charter pact of 1990. The domestic impact of the 1991 Gulf War will also be noted in this context.

The analysis of the period of political liberalization continues in chapter 4. After the end of the Gulf War, the Jordanian regime joined the U.S.-led Middle East peace process. The Madrid conference and the following Washington talks offered the hope for a peace treaty between Jordan and Israel. On the domestic front, however, the regime was involved in a number of institutional debates with the opposition. The legislation of laws relegalizing parties (1992) and allowing greater press freedom (1993) institutionalized the process of political liberalization. However, both laws privileged the regime's desire for limits to public freedoms.

The summer of 1993 offered a crucial turning point in the process of political liberalization as discussed in chapter 5. As a peace treaty with Israel began taking form, the regime moved to curtail political liberties. Through the decree of amendments to the election law the regime dramatically reduced the opposition's role in the Parliament. This new Parliament quickly ratified the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty in 1994.

Chapter 6 explains how, over the next few years, opposition grew to the regime's existential policies of normalizing relations with Israel and implementing economic structural adjustment reforms. Moreover, the Middle East peace process began to slow and promised economic rewards failed to appear. These events resulted in greater domestic discontent that would be addressed through later survival strategies.

Chapter 7 describes how the regime cracked down on political liberties in order to contain domestic discontent. The most notable of these survival strategies was the legislation of laws to curtail press freedom. After failing to make a decreed amendment to the press law stand in 1997, the regime succeeded in 1998. In the meantime, the opposition boycotted the November 1997 parliamentary elections. As a result, an even more progovernment parliament took office. Thus, on the eve of King Hussein's death, relations between the regime and opposition had reached a nadir.

The succession of King Abdullah II in 1999 promised a return to greater political liberalization. The results of this promise are discussed in chapter 8. The press law of 1999 offered fewer limits on press freedoms than the 1997 and 1998 versions of the law. However, the collapse of the Middle East peace process and the second Palestinian intifada presented the new king with significant external challenges that called for domestic survival strategies—and a return to the process of deliberalization. The regime delayed parliamentary elections and further manipulated the electoral and press laws to keep regional tensions from overflowing into the kingdom.

The concluding chapter will recap the discussion of the factors behind the success and failure of regime survival strategies. It will also put regime survival strategies in Jordan in a comparative perspective with cases of authoritarianism in Morocco, Kuwait, Egypt, and Iran under the shah.