

Jordan, Political Reforms and the Arab Spring: the Role of External Forces with Special Reference to the EU in influencing Reforms Process

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ABSTRACT

This research attempts to examine the extent to which the Arab Spring influenced the interests of foreign donors – with special reference to the European Union (the EU) - in shaping political reforms process in Jordan. Amidst rising instability throughout the Middle East since the outbreak of the “Arab Spring” the government has launched numerous domestic reforms in response to protests within his own country. However, these amendments seem to be nothing but cosmetic measures as it seems only implemented to appease the disgruntled masses. This paper will attempt through its descriptive approach to answer the perplexing question of to what extent did the Arab Spring influenced behavior of foreign donors’ foreign policy – with special reference to the EU - towards Jordan and its political reforms scheme in particular. To what extent have these forces impacted any genuine governmental attempt to trigger meaningful reform? The research will present at the beginning, the grievances held by the people that led them to call for “reforms”. Then, it examines the role of aid in international politics before examining the role of the EU as an external force in dealing with implications of Arab Spring at regional and at state level (e.g. Jordan) alike. The paper deduced that, shortly in the aftermath of the outbreak of the Arab Spring, the EU was reluctant to make any serious breakthrough in promoting political development towards its southern flank considering its vital interests in the region. Maintaining current political stability status quo option becomes at the expense of “reform option, from the EU foreign policy approach, considering the fear of unseen circumstances if political systems were to be altered, which may accordingly backfire on its interests. A moderate state such as Jordan must be preserved to fulfill the continuation of flow of interests of the EU in the region. In turn, the EU’s assistance was as expected, nothing but cosmetics and lack serious intentions in enforcing reforms such as adopting conditionality aid policy similar to those cases adopted towards central and Eastern Europe and some states in Africa.

Keywords: the Arab Spring, the European Union, Political Reforms, International Aid.

Introduction: Economic and Social Grievances and Calls for Political Reforms

Economic hardships, increases in the cost of fuel and gas, and governmental corruption are among the grievances that brought people out into the streets in dissent. The demonstrations showed that, “The economy is the number one powder keg, even before dissatisfaction over political reform” (Sunik, 2013, 190). Despite being surrounded by oil-rich countries, Jordan is a resource-poor nation that survives mostly on foreign aid, its tourism and service sector, and remittances from expatriate workers. The kingdom currently faces an economic crisis, which is especially strained due to the influx of more than 650,000 Syrian refugees, escaping the Syrian civil war (Idris,2016: 7). As the population continues to grow rapidly, levels of unemployment are also increasing to between 25-30% of the population. Currently, an astounding 30% of youth are jobless, which are 60% of the population, while 15-30% of the populous face poverty. Economic growth has substantially decreased from 6% to 3%. It does not help that thousands of well-educated and highly skilled Jordanians leave to search for better employment opportunities abroad (Sharp, 2014). The state is the largest employer as well. Forced to pursue an International Monetary Fund (IMF) loan in order to remain fiscally stable

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and prevent an economic collapse, however, much government spending had to be cut, angering many people. In August of 2012, the IMF granted Jordan a \$2 billion loan over a three-year period (Sharp, 2014). In order to be approved for an IMF loan, the state must agree to the terms and conditions, which include following the structural adjustment program. The regime, therefore, had no choice but to cut electric and fuel subsidies, which raised the cost of gasoline, diesel fuel, kerosene, and cooking gas. The IMF, also, recommended that the government address tax evasion, which amounts to around 1 billion Jordanian dinars (\$1.4 billion), and to cut military spending “In order to reduce the budget draining” (Al-Samadi, 2013). Economic pressures from IMF policies triggered mass protests in 2012 (Makara and Spath, 2013). For example, south of the capital, Amman, lies the impoverished city of Maan, which is home to 60,000 inhabitants. Maan has been plagued with violent unrest over the past year due to the deteriorating economic conditions and the failure of the government to address the grievances of the residents, including demands for governmental posts by tribal members. Various tribes and armed Islamist militants reside in the troubled area. The city of Maan reflects the worst fears of the regime, anarchy, which would occur if democratization moved forward (Al-Samadi, 2013). The Prime Minister, Abdullah Ensour, stressed that cutting subsidies was the only way to avoid economic collapse, which in effect would help the poor. These steps were “Absolutely essential to keep the country running. To be able to pay salaries and pensions, to finance energy and food imports, and to maintain a reasonable level of social services” (Susser, 2013). Jordanians, however, did not buy this. Many attributed the gross financial situation to government mismanagement and corruption. That being said, the kingdom has survived a similar situation before. In the 1980’s, the country faced unrest because of IMF recommended measures, highly resembling the current conditions. If the regime has survived before, it can surely survive again.

While the main concern of the people stemmed from economic problems, there were also calls for greater democratizations and political reforms. Jordanians demand an end to corruption and a strong legislature elected on the basis of a fair electoral law (Makara and Spath, 2013). The old election law based on the one-person-one-vote system was highly criticized as it favored East Jordanian loyalists to the regime, hurting the chances of opposition groups like the Muslim Brotherhood and the underrepresented Palestinian population at the polls. This was due to the “Gerrymandering that tilts toward conservative rural districts over the capital, Amman, and other urban areas, where Jordanians of Palestinian origin and Brotherhood supporters are concentrated” (Sweis, 2012). Therefore, people are protesting the not so proportional representation and a “Parliament that most Jordanians already realize is no different than the old one” (Muasher, 2013). The masses are fed up with more of the same parliament and prime ministers, which are all members of this elite loyalist group that are disconnected from the stark reality of the majority of Jordanians. Because electoral districts are highly gerrymandered, “Urban areas with Palestinian majorities are under-represented, while rural and mainly East Jordanian districts are comparatively over-represented” (Muasher, 2013). More proportional representation would promote the growth of political parties, strengthening the move towards democratization. Political parties are extremely weak in Jordan with the Islamic Action Front, a wing of the Muslim Brotherhood, as the only well-organized movement. The IAF would be predicted to secure way more seats if there was a vote on the number of representatives that each constituency sent to Parliament (Susser, 2013). This would encourage voters to choose based on ideology not just based on tribal connections.

Accordingly numerous stockpile pressing issues were conducive for Jordanians demands for reforms which indeed had been exacerbated with the outbreak of Arab Spring in late 2010.

I. Jordan and the Arab Spring: Re-launching “Reforms”

The Jordanian government introduced various reforms to appease the masses, preventing a large-scale uprising. However, these appear to be nothing but surface measures, failing to produce any meaningful change. Jordan's former Deputy Prime Minister Marwan Muasher believes, “The country has lacked the political will to move toward serious political reform” (Sprusansky, 2013). He is not the only one that hold this view. Many are convinced that these initiatives are nothing more than “window dressing.” Superficially, King Abdullah II would be applauded for the 42

amendments he made to the constitution, a new election law, and his commitment to appoint prime ministers only after extensive consultation with the newly elected parliament, giving them most of the authority to make the choice (Susser, 2013).

He also revised the law of the SSC, which protects civilians from having to stand trial before it unless it is a case dealing with treason or the smuggling of drugs (Al Sharif, 2013). His majesty also displayed willingness to fight corruption by allowing a government anti-corruption body to prosecute prominent loyalist figures” (AL Sharif, 2013). To ensure fair elections, an appointed commission was set up to monitor the process instead of the Interior Ministry. The King has time after time responded to calls for change by ordering early elections, changing the prime minister or members parliament constantly. A constitutional court and committees for amending the constitution and reforming the highly contested electoral law, including the Independent Electoral Commission, was formed.

In 2013, observers commended the kingdom on taking steps towards democratization through the elections to the lower house of Parliament. As a result, they saw the election of more reform-minded MPs, a high of 18 women, and a significant turnout of 56.6% of eligible voters, even with the boycott of the Muslim Brotherhood. Deep below the surface, however, these reforms actually made little to no change, especially in terms of the king’s power (Middle East Eye, 2016). For instance, although the new electoral law allowed for greater opposition representation, introducing 27 new seats, making a total of 150, to be elected on the basis of party lists and the quota of women was increased, the one-person-one-vote system remained prominent, keeping power and influence within the hands of loyalists. Not to mention, the party system is extremely underdeveloped, with the only well-organized group as the IAF, who boycotted the elections, and the remaining opposition forces unable to form actual parties. Therefore, this new system clearly did not change enough to ever allow an Islamist party to win. Parliament, dictated by traditional TransJordanians, still lacks adequate representation that reflects the wide array of interests and demands. Notably, even after parliament was given the power to appoint the new prime minister, they reelected Abdullah Nsour. Many of these “newly “elected government officials, such as the conservative former PM, Fayez Tarawneh, who was elected as the Chief of the Royal Court, “An institution that is more powerful than Parliament,” had actually already previously held posts (Sunik, 2013: 192). So, while it seemed like these reforms were bringing about change, they actually brought more of the same. In some cases, some laws actually changed for the worse. A prime example is the Press and Publications law, which expanded restrictions on freedom of speech (Murad, 2014). As of September 2012, this new decree heightened regulations on media, altering to include the internet as well as print. As a result, three local internet service providers were forced to shut down almost 200 news sites just in June of 2013 alone (Murad, 2014).

The following sections will cast the second part of the research. The researcher will try to examine the role of external factors – the EU in specific – in influencing political reforms in Jordan. It will firstly demonstrate the conceptual framework of research before getting involved in the empirical analysis assessment.

II. Defining Aid-Interests Synthesis within Political Aid Context

To unleash the complexity over the intensions of donors in providing aid, it is certainly highly important to examine the dynamics between aid, interests and democracy assistance. With no doubt, understanding the EU’s interests-aid dynamics shall considerably reflect on the EU’s political development policy towards its southern region and Jordan in particular. To analyze how the nature of donors’ interests determine the shape of foreign aid towards their recipients’ counterparts.

“a motive is an emotion. Hopes, fears and desires; these are motives. The exercise of these emotions in specific situations gives rise to the identification of objectives, i.e. things to be done” (White, 1974: 35).

Defining foreign aid is a controversial issue amongst political scientists particularly amongst Left and Right scholars expressing opposing perceptions and assumptions regards motives of aid. Whereas the former limit the definition of aid (as it perceives aid as an ‘entitlement’), the latter favors to broaden the definition of aid to include loans (as it perceives aid as an charity) (Therein, 2002: 451). The president of the United States, Dwight Eisenhower viewed foreign aid as “the least understood function of the government, and John F. Kennedy stated, half seriously,

that he would discontinue it if he could” (Montgomery, 1967: 6). Indeed, the term is very elusive and complicated as it is continuously undergoing continuous geopolitical transformations in which the role of interests in shaping foreign aid policy would continually fluctuate. An understanding of how and why these changes have taken place and the extent to which these affect donors’ foreign policy should clarify much of the ambiguity surrounding the politics of foreign aid, objectives and its implications on developing countries. In this respect, foreign aid can be a useful developmental instrument for a particular country whilst a ‘destructive’ one for another. Montgomery asserted,

“its [foreign aid] purposes are interlocking and sometimes contradictory. One distinguished diplomat has likened it to a screwdriver, because it has so many potential uses, both wise and foolish. Much of the controversy over its alleged successes and failures has arisen from a confusion about the purposes to which it has been put” (Ibid. 7).

What incites donors to give away assistance ‘free’? From a moral perspective, is foreign aid a charity? Or is it an entitlement? From political perspective, is it donors’ interests? Or is it recipients’ needs? Without doubt, the issue of why donors offer or ‘donate’ ‘free’ assistance remains and will expectedly remain a controversial topic amongst political aid scholars. In fact, it could be argued that the complex nature of the international politics of aid would be much better understood if the answers to these questions were available. Peter Burnell defined donor’s interests mainly within their external development context. He maintained that, “official donors usually have a number of aims, objectives and goals of aid ... development could be served by the promotion of some intermediary condition such as political stability. Development might be both an objective in its own right and means to advance some further ends, such as the recipient’s (and the donor’s) national security” (Burnell, 1997: 7).

Apparently the whole notion of donor’s incentives to provide assistance to poor recipient countries is to a considerable extent based upon those particular characteristics enjoyed by donors as well as recipients. In other words, the recipient’s significance, along with donors’ economic, political, and cultural characteristics shall more or less formulate the leverage and the nature of aid towards particular recipient’s state (Breuning and Ishiyama, 2003: 251-253). Accordingly, regardless of whether aid is construed a charity or entitlement policy, interests remain the common dominator behind donors’ incentive to give aid despite the fact that the nature of donors’ interests may vary even within the same aid policy. For the purpose of this research, as far as the third observation is concerned, the questions worth asking here are, what is and who determines the shape or the nature of donor’s (EU) interests towards its southern flank and Jordan in particular particularly in the aftermath of the Arab Spring?

III. Jordan and the European Union

III.I. Historical Cooperation at Glance:

The 1957 Treaty of Rome is construed the legal basis for the European Community’s (EC) external trade relations with third world countries (Gronbech-Jensen, 1999: 1). It was formulated under an ‘association policy’ whereby the then French government insisted on introducing new provisions (part IV of the Treaty) “for the ‘association’ of the dependencies of the European signatories” (Lister, 1997: 62). Along with other African and Caribbean colonies, the EC’s trade relation with the Maghreb region (Arab North African States) of the Mediterranean was established especially with the launching of the so-called Yaoundé Convention. As a result, Morocco and Tunisia became the first two Maghreb countries to enter into an agreement with the EC¹. In 1972, the Community introduced the Global Mediterranean Policy (GMP) in line with the

Community’s global co-operation framework policy towards third world countries. The latter was considered a response to the European initiative to identify and foster its role internationally (Xenakis and Chrysochoou, 2001: 57).

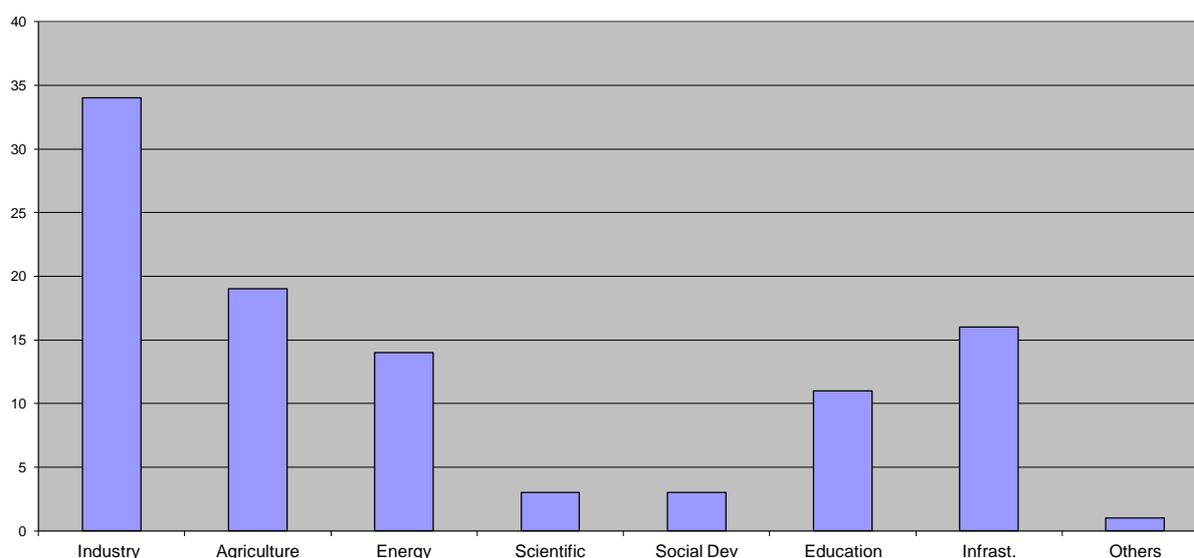
¹ It worth noting here that the Treaty made a special exemption for Algeria under Article 227 of the treaty as the then French government expressed no intention of granting it independence. For further details on EU – Arab relations read, Assessing the Political Implications of the Euro-Jordanian Economic Partnership: 1995-2005, *Dirasat Journal*, University of Jordan Publications, February 2013. And The Euro-Jordanian Partnership, Regional Instability and the Modernization Theory, *Dirasat Journal*, University of Jordan Publications, May 2013 by Abudalbouh w. (2013a&b).

In 1989, the EU recognized the need to launch a ‘Renewed Mediterranean Policy’ (1991-1995). Despite the EU’s earlier initiatives (1970s-1980s), the economic and financial cooperation had considerably failed to meet either the expectation of the SMS or the overall developmental objectives that were addressed earlier in the Treaty of Rome towards the Mediterranean. Along with the above-mentioned shortcomings of the Community’s cooperation policy, the United Nations Report summed up the state of the cooperation by concluding the following:

“The policies undertaken during the 1970s and 1980s by the then European Economic Community in relation to SEM countries followed a traditional approach, based primary on trade concessions, and policy of financial cooperation, based mainly on traditional project finance. These policies have proved insufficient to sustain the economic development of the SEM countries” (United Nations Report, 1999: 3).

Taking Jordan as a case study, the above-mentioned brief analysis of the economic cooperation between the two shores of the Mediterranean since the early 1960s can be concluded (as shown in table 1 and figure 2) the cooperation was overshadowed by profound economic, socio-economic, and financial components with almost no political substance or initiatives (e.g. political development assistance).

Figure 1. Jordan-EU: Sectoral Distribution (Protocol I,II,III)
Source: 1999 Annual Report, Delegation of the European Commission, Jordan



| Period/ Cooperation Framework | 1960s-1972 | 1972-1976 | 1976-1989 | 1989-1995 | 1996- |
|-------------------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|--|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Type of Cooperation | Contractual/ Preferential Agreements | Revised & Global Med Policy | Global & Reshaping Med Policy | New Med Policy | Euro-Med Partnership |
| Political Cooperation | N/A | Euro-Arab Dialogue | Euro-Arab Dialogue | Pol/Security OSCE/ WEU | MEDA Democracy |
| Economic Cooperation | Protocols | Association Agreement | General Agreement | General Agreement | Association Agreement |
| Financial Instrument | Association Agreement | Association Agreement | Protocols (1 st -3 rd) | Protocols (4 th) | MEDA |

With the end of the Cold War and along with the advent of the Barcelona Process and the introduction of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership in 1995, strong expectations of potential political as well as economic returns aroused. Most importantly, it is believed that for the first time ever for the EU to express its willing to assist states for democratization and political development within its aid global policies. The EU promised to introduce huge ‘unprecedented’ cooperation scheme between fifteen European states and their twelve Mediterranean counterparts. The apparent distinctive feature of such cooperation resides in its comprehensive approach by integrating another two main pillars – political and cultural- of cooperation to the traditional economic and financial pillar. Accordingly, the MEDA program (budget line B7-4100), became the key financial instrument of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, to implement a set of measures and objectives set by the Barcelona Process aiming at supporting economic transition, developing a better socio-economic balance, and fostering regional integration for free trade by the year 2010 through a multi-sectoral approach. Accordingly, the EU pledged to dedicate 4.68 billion ECU (European Currency Units) within MEDA I budget during the period of 1996-1999 and MEDA II (2000-2006) with a budget of € 5,350 million, consists of bilateral co-operation and regional co-operation instruments.

III.III. The Political Dimension of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership

“The inconsistent way in which the EU promotes democracy could reduce its effectiveness in convincing third countries to launch and proceed with democratic reforms... But there are reasons to doubt the extent to which democracy promotion really matters for the EU, because other interests and objectives tend to trump democracy promotion in practice” (Smith, 2004: 36-38).

The political dimension reveals so far is that the EU is facing serious dilemma over its ‘democratization’ promotion policy as it failed to fulfill its earlier commitments conveyed by the Barcelona Declaration. Table (2) depicts the imbalanced as well as the inconsistency of the EU political development policy towards Jordan. The economic dimension remains to dominate the nature of cooperation whilst the political one received very modest interest.

| Table (2) Source: European Delegation Annual Report (2002), p22. | | |
|---|---|----------|
| MEDA I | | |
| Year | Project | MEUR |
| 1995 | Private Sector Development | 7 |
| 1996 | Structural Adjustment Facility I | 100 |
| 1997 | Risk Capital Resources in Support of SMEs | 10 |
| 1999 | Industrial Modernization Program | 45 |
| 1999 | Protection & Promotion of Cultural Heritage | 4.1 |
| 1999 | Amman Water Management | 7 |
| 1999 | Structural Adjustment Facility II | 80 |
| MEDA II | | |
| 2001 | Risk Capital Resources in Support of Private Sector | 15 |
| 2002 | Regularity Reforms and Privatization | 20 |
| 2003 | Structural Adjustment Facility II | 60 |
| 2004 | Support Program for the Implementation of the Association Agreement | 20 |
| 2005 | Institutional Support for Aqaba Special Economic Zone | 10 |
| Ends 2006 | Promotion for Human Rights and Democratization | 2 |
| Ends 2007 | Emergency Budget Support Program | 35 |

IV. The EU, Jordan and the Arab Spring

A) An overview: the EU and its southern Mediterranean region in the post Arab Spring Period

Since the first demonstrations in Tunisia in December 2010, the EU's strategic response to the Arab Spring came as early as 8 March 2011, with the joint communication of the High Representative/Vice President (HR/VP) Catherine Ashton and the Commission proposing "A partnership for democracy and shared prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean". It took the EU three months to decide the direction of its foreign policy reflecting its reluctance to take any serious involvement in influencing events in favor of citizens' demands for reforms. For instance the EU refrained from using aid conditionality where to tied aid with political reforms – exact similar policies used in Eastern and Central Europe and even in Africa alike reflecting its genuine intentions to trigger reforms.

Generally speaking, when reviewing and examining the attitude sought by the EU as a policy objective, after/during the Arab Spring, it becomes vivid that the EU, through “wait and see” approach, is redefining stability that accept new actors (e.g. Islamists), in order to preserve the stability of the relationship” with its southern Mediterranean partners. Given this, the EU nonetheless refrain from supporting them to reach power but seems to be unwillingly ‘forced’ to deal with them considering their vital interests regionally with no option available but to deal with them. Hence, the EU tends to support whoever strong regime/political system that can guarantee the flow of cooperation enough to preserve its interests in/from the region. In short, the EU has not done much meaningful breakthrough compared with its past policies especially as far as promoting political reforms southwards.

Andrea Teti uses critical discourse analysis (CDA) to analyse the EU's first policy reassessment in light of the Arab uprisings. COM(2011)200 A Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity (PfDSP) claims to outline a new framework for EU Democracy Assistance (DA) based on a new conception of democracy, and a new position for democracy in the EU's external relations. He concluded that the conceptual structure – and therefore policy implications – of PfDSP “maintain unaltered the substantive vision of a liberal model for both development and democratization in the region. This continuity sets the EU up to repeat earlier mistakes, which resulted before 2011 in the poor reputation of the EU on democracy promotion among pro-democracy opposition groups – many of which were central to the Tunisian and Egyptian uprisings” (Teti, 2012).

The current vivid conflicting policies/ double standards democracy promotion mechanism approach adopted by the EU's decision policy makers towards the Arab states, also support our understanding of the newly redefined concept of stability, as a policy objective of the EU in the aftermath of the Arab Spring.

Today, the EU is supporting both autocratic as well as “democratic” Arab regimes (e.g. Tunisia) and continued to support both and cooperate with them. As far as the newly democratic political system is concerned, the EU has allocated huge budget and commitments to support their political path towards deepening democracy. A Speech by Stefan Fule, European Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy, on *One year after the Arab spring*, at the European Parliament, Committee on Foreign Affairs defended that, “This is crucial to ensure lasting and genuine prosperity and stability ... Our approach is based on two key principles: "more for more" and mutual accountability”² (Fule, 2012).

Hence, unlike Barcelona process, the EU, under the framework of "A partnership for democracy and shared prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean”, began to adopt a more balanced policy (political and economic) with those states pursuing change and reforms based on a double edge policy: first, deep democracy, rule of law and human rights. Second, inclusive economic and social development taking into consideration the introduction of "3 Ms" mechanism: Money, Mobility and Markets.

For the period 2011 to 2013, the EU planned, “additional grant funds of up to €1 billion for the Neighbourhood as a whole. This is on top of the €5.7 billion already programmed. For the Southern Neighbourhood we have established a new program called SPRING. This has a budget of €350 million for 2011 and 2012 to provide support to partner

²PressSummary: 24 January 2012, Brussels.

countries that are consolidating reforms. In addition to these grant funds EIB funding available for investment in the Southern Neighbourhood has been increased by €1 billion. The EBRD's lending mandate is also being extended to cover the region, allowing for €2.5 billion in additional lending per year”³.

The EU is seemingly seeks to invest on stability, not political reforms, as flexible, double edge, foreign policy objective that corresponds to national security objectives emanating from its southern flank of the Mediterranean. Hence, stability as such, is “in terms of the “stability of relationship”: a state of order in the Southern Mediterranean flank that ensures the continuing pattern of cooperation between the shores of the Mediterranean conducive to EU’s internal, as well as, external security interests, regardless of the nature of the political system exists in the south.

These findings were formulated based on the following findings:

A. The unwillingness of the EU to genuinely promote democracy in the southern Mediterranean states before Arab Spring (e.g. EMP).

B. The Reluctance of the EU to take a quick and firm position towards Arab Spring and people’s demands in the region during the Arab Spring (Wait and See approach).

C. The current vivid conflicting policies/ double standards democracy promotion mechanism approach adopted by the EU’s decision policy makers towards the Arab states.

Accordingly, it is stability of political regimes, not democratizations or political reforms is seen as the EU’s foreign policy objectives to guarantee EU interests in the region and which can sustain and deliver and preserve the continuation pattern of cooperation to meet the EU’s security interests.

- The EU and Jordan in the post Arab Spring Period

As far as Jordan is concerned, to some extent the EU’s attitude towards Jordan’s political developments initiatives and process is the same. The EU’s remain reluctant to push for democratization or impose conditionality on Jordan despite its initial optimism that the kingdom was about to make a serious turning point on this front.

“At the beginning of 2012, Catherine Ashton said that Jordan was developing into a “democratic, constitutional monarchy” and that “for Jordan, 2012 will be the year of delivery”. Looking back at events since then, she must wish she had been less bullish. The EU should moderate its rhetoric on conditionality and democratic reform in Jordan, or it will sound less and less credible to governments, opposition parties and civil society alike in the region. And it should stop rewarding a stalling Jordan with SPRING funds” (Burke, 2013, 12).

The EU’s response to Arab Spring avoids any gesture for any political reforms support and continued to have it focused merely on economic reforms, the official EU’s statement on this regards was framed on December 2011 maintaining and reinforcing its classical approach of reforms,

“In order to assist the Jordanian government in addressing the current economic challenges, the EU agreed in May to frontload to 2011 an additional €40 million from the 2012/2013 programs. This funding will support the development of SMEs with the aim of tackling poverty and unemployment in less-favoured areas, increase the contribution of research & innovation to growth and employment and further strengthen the public finance management” (Europa official website of the EU, 2011).

In Jordan and as far as opposition parties are concerned, the Islamic Action Front for instance has sharply criticized the EU for pressing it to engage in a national dialogue that it dismisses as based on an entirely disingenuous reform commitment from the king. This is an example of how opposition forces can often see in external actors’ support for impartial and generic dialogue a covert form of support for a regime’s stalling tactics. For example, the EU justifies projects that support government-organized nongovernmental organizations in Jordan as part of its bridge-building approach, but local reformers commonly despise these groups. Rather than reducing friction, external support to these organizations heightens local tension. To move forward, the EU will have to promote more genuine and tangible political reform to flank and help sustain the process of national dialogue (Young, 2014: 16).

³ Official site of the EU, Europa 2: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-12-33_en.htm

The fear from the EU is from mounting Islamic popularity and certainly reforms will most likely have them in power. Since the Islamic Action Front is the only organized party in Jordan, the democratic process would be strained because that would be the only option if the political system was to fall. Party politics was practically non-existent in the Arab countries that underwent revolution. In most cases, the Islamist party was the only or most structured group that was able to run for election. It is important to note that they usually did not have bureaucratic experience to rule as their country had been dominated by an authoritarian regime for a very long time. Fears of an Islamist party take over are based on sound evidence as people watched turmoil engulf each nation following elections. With an ongoing conflict occurring next door in Syria, an Islamist government would not be conducive to stability. There is a risk, they might support extremist rebel groups, which would receive retaliation from Assad. Also, since the Islamist group is comprised of mostly Palestinians, the peace treaty with Israel might be broken, especially if they begin to support Hamas. This would not only result in backlash from Israel, but from the West, too, ending the much-needed aid to Jordan. Because Jordan acts as a buffer state, the only source of stability within a volatile region, democratization would be disastrous if an Islamist party was elected to power.

The perception that Brotherhood parties in both Egypt and Syria have displayed political ineptitude has also raised popular anxiety about what the Brotherhood would do in Jordan if they were to come to power. These fears have understandably gained popular traction given deepening regional turmoil, helping quell demands for deeper reform (Barnes-Dacey, 2013).

While at first the success of the Islamists was inspiring to the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan, it later turned sour as not only was their image now tainted, but it caused hopelessness as well. Islam, as a religious ideology, condemns corruption, greed, and injustice.

As mentioned before, the reluctance of the EU to assist in triggering genuine reforms is highly due to the fear of unseen circumstances in case existing political systems were to be altered especially by Islamic parties or factions. In this respect, Dominique Fenech contends,

"Indeed, since the Mediterranean represents the meeting point between Europeans and Arabs, the history of Euro-Mediterranean relations can be said to have travelled full circle. The phenomenon of Islamic fundamentalism, denoting as it does the rejection of the western model of the modern state, introduces more than a casual suggestion that the distinction between the opposite shores of the Mediterranean is susceptible to be defined in terms of Christian versus Muslim. Whether spoken of openly or in whisper, this phenomenon has been at least the catalyst, if not the prime cause, of Europe's concern about the dangers to itself issuing from the Mediterranean" (Fenech, 1997: 153).

A moderate ally such as Jordan become of high interest of the EU to preserve its existing political status quo, of course at the expense of reforms. So the question worth asking here is how significant is Jordan for Europeans' security interests in the region that cause them to adhere the stability status quo option over reforms option?

No doubt that regional security becomes a paramount decisive factor for the formulation of stability structure foundations not only for Jordan but also for the whole Mashreq region in general. For years, regional instability has been directly associated with the Arab-Israeli conflict. Asher Susser defended that,

"Jordan's role as a regional stabilizer would continue to be recognized by Britain, as well as by the United States, Germany, a variety of Arab states, Israel, Japan, and others" (Susser, 2000: 9).

Other regional unrest have had also contributed and exacerbated the already volatile political situation in the area. Nonetheless, the distinctiveness of the formal crises resides in its perpetuity and complexity compared to other regional conflicts. Despite the endorsement of three main bilateral peace agreements, the region remains in state of fiasco and in complete rampant. New pitfalls always presented themselves since the creation of state of Israel in 1948. Economic, political, and social consequences were accordingly emerged particularly within the Mashreq region of the Mediterranean. Jordan for instance, has endured a sequence of political and economic instability which had endangered its overall economic development and growth. Let alone, the financial and demographic burdens accrued by regional instability repercussions with the displacement of mass Palestinian refugee aftermath of the 1948 and 1967 Wars,

Second and third Gulf Wars, and the Arab Spring. Hence with its moderate and pro-western policy, Jordan is seen as one of main stabilizing factors and a buffer zone in this frenzy region even before the signing of peace treaty with Israel in 1994.

In parallel, along with its regional significance, EU Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy Johannes Hahn Maintained that the EU considers Jordan “a main partner, and that the union is keen on supporting the Kingdom in implementing its development and economic plans. He also expressed the EU’s appreciation for the “big” contributions of Jordan in hosting large numbers of Syrian refugees and praised the humanitarian role that Jordan plays towards the refugees and to ensure safety and stability in the area” (Jordan Times: Oct 23,2018).

Conclusion:

External and internal factors played a significant factor in determining the shape of politics of any given political entity at any particular critical events and turning point. This paper tries to reflect the role of external factors – the EU’s financial assistance – in influencing domestic politics of states – Jordan in specific in aftermath of Arab Spring period. Accordingly, the research attempts to examine the extent to which the Arab Spring influenced the interests of foreign donors – with special reference to the European Union (the EU) - in shaping political reforms process in Jordan.

Since the first demonstrations in Tunisia in December 2010, the EU's strategic response to the Arab Spring came as early as 8 March 2011, with the joint communication of the High Representative/Vice President (HR/VP) Catherine Ashton and the Commission proposing "A partnership for democracy and shared prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean". It took the EU three months to decide the direction of its foreign policy reflecting its reluctance to take any serious involvement in influencing events in favor of citizens’ demands for reforms. As far as Jordan is concerned, as shown above, the EU seems to demonstrate more or less same strategy like that during pre the Arab Spring period despite cosmetic changes in its political reforms and democratizations policy. Similar to other Arab states, the fear of unseen, unpredictable and possible uncontrolled scenarios, the EU seems to prefer to maintain the option of “stability” over political reforms to preserve its interest in the region especially when considering strategic, moderate state like Jordan.

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الأردن والاصلاحات السياسية خلال الربيع العربي: دور العوامل الخارجية، ومنها الاتحاد الأوروبي بالتحديد في التأثير عملية الاصلاح

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ملخص

يحاول البحث تحليل دور تلك القوى الخارجية - وبالتحديد دور الاتحاد الأوروبي - في التأثير في رسم شكل الاصلاحات في المملكة الأردنية الهاشمية، ولاسيما تلك التي تبلورت نتاج تزايد حالات الفوضى، وعدم الاستقرار في الشرق الأوسط منذ اندلاع "الربيع العربي" مما أدى إلى اطلاق الحكومة الأردنية حزمة "إجراءات اصلاحية" كرد فعل للمظاهرات والاحتجاجات الداخلية المطالبة بالاصلاح. ولكن بالرغم من ذلك، وجاءت تلك الإجراءات كما يبدو إلى حد ما "تجميلية" بوصفها وسيلة احتواء للسخط المتزايد في الشارع، ومن هنا جاءت هذه الورقة للبحث في نهجها الوصفي في الأسباب الكامنة وراء تردد الحكومات المتعاقبة التي تلت مباشرة اندلاع "الربيع العربي" في اتباع اصلاحات حقيقية، وقد تطرقت الورقة إلى أهم الأسباب الكامنة، وبالتركيز بشكل أكبر إلى العوامل الخارجية ودور الاتحاد الأوروبي على وجه الخصوص، وقد توصلت الدراسة إلى أن هناك تردد كبير من الاتحاد الأوروبي لإحداث خرق حقيقي في التأثير على عملية الاصلاح السياسي في منطقة جنوب المتوسط والأردن كذلك على حد سواء. ويبدو أن الأسباب وراء ذلك يعود من التخوف من المستقبل السياسي في المنطقة في حال تبدلت الأنظمة السياسية هناك، وبالتالي الخطورة على الاستمرار في المحافظة على مصالحها في المنطقة، وعليه يبدو أن الاتحاد اختار خيار "الاستقرار" والمحافظة على الوضع السياسي الراهن بدلاً من خيار الإصلاح السياسي والمجازفة السياسية التي يصعب تنبؤ شكلها والسيطرة عليها على حد سواء. وعليه فإن دولة معتدلة مثل الأردن تحب المحافظة على وضعها السياسي لاستمرار ديمومة مصالح الاتحاد في المنطقة. ومن هنا، وكان دور المساعدات للاتحاد الأوروبي شكلياً وليست جوهرية أو مشروطة - كما تبناها الاتحاد تجاه أوروبا الوسطى والشرقية وحتى بعض الدول الإفريقية - ليدل على نواياه الحقيقية في الإصلاح بحيث جاءت لتشابه سياساته اليوم بسياساته السابقة غير الفاعلة بغض النظر عن تغيير الشكل الخارجي لهذه المساعدات.

الكلمات الدالة: الإصلاح السياسي، الاتحاد الأوروبي، المساعدات الدولية، الاستقرار السياسي، الربيع العربي.

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