The Unfolding Tribal Awakening in Jordan: Marginalization, Opposition, and an Uneasy Stability in the Hashemite Kingdom

by

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Abstract

This thesis addresses how and why the social contract between East Bank Jordanians and the Hashemite regime is changing, and the implications for these developments on the societal and political stability of Jordan. I first propose a theoretical framework for understanding and interpreting transformations in social contracts between a regime and certain segments of society based on three key determinants: the level of relative deprivation and grievances within co-opted segments of a population, the resulting level of opposition from these co-opted groups and subsequent revision of the traditional social contract, and the limiting effects of international conflict and external circumstances on opposition and the ensuing transformation of the social contract. Using this framework, I analyze the economic and structural issues responsible for the growth of East Bank Jordanian relative deprivation and grievances, and the effects on tribal discontent and frustration. I then examine how East Bank Jordanian opposition and activism during the Arab Spring protests served to foundationally transform the norms of the traditional state-tribal relationship and spark the evolution of a new social contract between East Bank Jordanian communities and the Hashemite regime. Lastly, I explore how the Syrian conflict has quieted East Bank Jordanian opposition, leading to a fragile and temporary lull in tribal activism against the social, political, and economic institutions of the Hashemite regime. I conclude by addressing the repercussions of continued East Bank Jordanian discontent and an evolving state-tribal social contract on future societal and political stability in Jordan.
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Introduction

East Bank Jordanians are a critical demographic of the Jordanian population and one that has been understudied in recent analyses of Jordanian domestic politics. East Bank tribes have historically been a central pillar of support for the social and political structure of Jordan, having traditionally served as main sources of support for state, military, and security services from the time of the Jordan’s inception to the present day. Tribal affiliation plays a critical role in the political and electoral landscape of Jordan, as well as in the identity of most East Bank Jordanians. Though traditional tribal practices and paths of influence have evolved in the past few decades in Jordan, tribal societal and cultural norms remain integral within Jordanian society.

Historically, scholars have understood the stability of the Jordanian regime to be due, in large part, to state co-optation of Jordanian tribes into the regime structure. East Bank Jordanians are not a monolithic entity; they comprise a large number of various clans and tribes that have their origins in the areas east of the Jordan River, mostly contained within the national boundaries of Jordan. From the early days of the country’s history, Jordanian authorities sought to coerce the local East Bank tribes to support the fledgling Hashemite monarchy, and “only after a decade of social conflict and British support did local Bedouin confederations begin grudgingly to obey their foreign king.” (Gause and Yom 2012, 79). Thereafter, East Bank Jordanian tribes
have traditionally been understood to be firm royalists and backers of the Jordanian regime by scholars and political analysts, alike.

In reality, however, the Jordanian regime has continuously faced challenges with certain sectors of its East Bank tribal constituency throughout its history, and these issues are now beginning to coalesce into systemic change within the country. A host of economic, educational, and political issues have plagued many East Bank Jordanian communities in recent years, spurring the development of East Bank opposition movements such as the youth-led Hirak movement during the Arab Spring protests in the country. These grievances have opened up a fault line among the younger generations of East Bank tribes in Jordanian society, serving as a source of unprecedented tension and anger directed towards the regime from this demographic of the Jordanian population. Moreover, East Bank Jordanian nationalist movements also contributed to creating a more radical and revolutionary platform for tribal protest during the Arab Spring period, and urban East Bank Jordanian activists also played an important, albeit, more minor and non-threatening role in opposition to the Hashemite regime. Although these opposition movements ultimately failed their goals to effect true political, social, and economic reform in Jordan, the same problems that elicited these movements are continuing to harshly afflict those East Bank Jordanian populations that have been marginalized from the centers of power in Amman.

These events naturally lead to the question of whether the recent bouts of grievances and unrest among both younger and older generations of East Bank Jordanians are indicative of a fundamental change within the traditional system of tribal co-optation by the Hashemite regime. In attempting to answer this question, this
thesis will draw upon traditional arguments for the persistence of authoritarianism in the Middle East and sociological theories such as relative deprivation and the “contagion effect” in addressing 1) how and why the social contract between East Bank Jordanians and the Hashemite regime is changing and 2) future ramifications on Jordanian society and the traditional socio-political system historically employed by the Hashemite regime since the country’s inception.

Case Selection and Methodology

1. Case Selection

This thesis strives to explore Jordan as a case study, analyzing current issues of marginalization and disenfranchisement among East Bank Jordanians to address new dynamics in the state-tribal relationship, as well as consequent ramifications on the future social and political stability of Jordan. East Bank Jordanians will serve as the primary focus of this thesis because of recent, significant East Bank Jordanian opposition towards the Hashemite regime during the Arab Spring protests despite a historically privileged relationship with the Hashemite regime throughout most of Jordan’s history. In analyzing the reasons behind the increased marginalization of East Bank Jordanians, this thesis aims to explore current transformations in the state-tribal social contract and prospects for future internal instability in Jordan.

Jordan was picked as the case for this thesis because of the history of state co-optation and tribal acquiescence in maintaining a popular base of support among its East Bank Jordanian population. Ruling bargains have characterized the political history of the Middle East, and have contributed to the persistence of authoritarianism
in the region. However, Jordan is unique among countries in the Middle East with regards to this social bargain. From the early decades of Jordan’s history, the historical co-optation and appropriation of tribal social structures, alliances, and customs by the regime formed the building blocks of the state-tribal ruling bargain upon which the Jordanian monarchy and state have managed to remain remarkably throughout many years of turbulence and conflict. Many other states in the Middle East underwent similar processes in creating social contracts and ruling bargains with specific groups within their populations. However, the process of co-optation in Jordan was of a significantly different flavor.

As Yoav Alon argues, the process of tribal co-optation in Jordan was not a zero-sum interaction in which the regime expanded its influence at the expense of tribal autonomy and identity; “[on] the contrary, tribes were active participants in the process of state-formation” (Alon 2007, 148). These processes were often the result of negotiations between state and tribes, with tribal opposition to certain government policies eliciting policy modification or abandonment on the part of state officials. Moreover, this state-tribal relationship did not end there. East Bank Jordanian tribes came to embody the national ethos of the country, and the state has subsumed tribal identity and traditions in how it presents Jordan to the world. For example, Layne explores how the state has appropriated aspects of tribal life and culture in attempts to construct a national heritage. As a result, Bedouin tribes have historically symbolized Jordan’s national identity, which has led Jordan to be frequently characterized as “tribal”.

As Layne explains,
“...[at] times, this can refers to Jordan’s past – the political/social importance of Bedouin tribes in the area that was designated as Transjordan in 1921, or to King Abdullah’s and later Hussein’s personal background and their special relation with Jordan’s tribes, and/or the importance of tribes in the Jordanian army and hence to the endurance of the state. At other times “tribal” is used with reference to Jordan’s preset. In these contexts, “tribal” is sometimes used in a positive sense, as a way of valorizing certain moral virtues felt to characterize the Jordanian people and thought to be the legacy of tribal social life. At other times, “tribal” is used pejoratively, to criticize aspects of contemporary society and culture deemed backward and outdated” (Layne 1989, 24).

Tribal culture and traditions came to define Jordanian identity through the long historical processes of state co-optation of Jordanian tribes, state-tribal interactions in society and politics, and purposeful efforts by the regime to create a national identity for a young nation centered around a celebration of Jordanian tribal history, culture, and values. As Alon eloquently states, “the two notions of being a proud Jordanian and a proud member of a tribe complement and strengthen each other. The local, familiar, concrete and tangible tribal solidarity mediates the more abstract notion of an imagined national community” (Alon 2007, 157).

This is not a relationship that is characteristic of most ruling bargains in the Middle East and that has been rarely achieved in post-colonial states, where a social group gradually co-opted by a ruling, foreign-based regime actually becomes a source of state-sponsored national pride and heritage. Though some critics criticize tribal culture and tribalism in Jordanian society and politics, whereby familial and tribal ties outweigh political allegiances, the state has historically promoted an interpretation of Jordan’s national heritage that favors a tribal representation of Jordan’s past. This specific form of Jordanian nationalism, especially prevalent after 1970, drew heavily upon heritage stemming from a combination of Transjordanian Emirate history, Arab
nationalism, Hashemite cultural legitimacy, Nabatean history in order to construct a new “tribalism” that attempted to nationalize tribal identities and integrate individual tribal loyalties into a single, unified national identity (Alon 2007, 156). As a result, the historical relationship and dialogue between the regime and East Bank Jordanian tribes served to construct a mutually intertwined national identity that continues to exist to an extent even today.

This makes Jordan a crucially important case for understanding state-tribal co-optation in the Middle East. The Jordanian state not only incorporated its support coalition of East Bank Jordanian tribes into the social and political apparatuses of the country, but even built the national fabric and artificial heritage of Jordan around these tribal elements. However, this relationship is deteriorating and transforming. By analyzing the current relationship between East Bank Jordanians and the Hashemite regime, it is possible to understand the unsustainability of ruling bargains in the region, even in countries like Jordan where co-opted tribal communities have historically played a large role in the formation of Jordanian national identity, heritage, and rhetoric. Factors that have traditionally explained the persistence of authoritarianism and the loyalty of co-opted East Bank tribes to the Hashemite monarchy no longer guarantee societal and political stability or East Bank Jordanian satisfaction, and the rules of the state-tribal social contract have dramatically changed.

By choosing Jordan as the case for this thesis, I choose a country that has been traditionally considered a successful model of social co-optation and regime stability, with a ruling bargain that has not only given the regime a firm base of support
throughout its history, but that has also been woven into the national fabric of the country. The fact that this relationship is deteriorating and dramatically changing has serious consequences for the social and political future of Jordan. In addressing these points, this thesis will have implications for the unsustainability of ruling bargains and the persistence of authoritarianism not only in Jordan, but in the entire region, as various events and crises across the region threaten to undermine the regional socio-political status quo that have existed since the birth of the state system in the Middle East after World War I.

Moreover, as a critically important country in the region, matters of regime stability and reform in Jordan have many consequences throughout a conflict-ridden region, especially in the years following the Arab Spring. Jordan is a country that is currently facing a myriad of challenges, including a lack of natural resources, a burgeoning refugee crisis, and worsening economic conditions. Increasing marginalization and disenfranchisement among East Bank Jordanians risks lighting a powder keg of social unrest, which already unexpectedly erupted once during the Arab Spring protests, in a crisis-ridden country facing an unprecedented number of internal and external threats to stability. However, though state-tribal relations are dramatically changing, significant dissatisfaction and deprivation among East Bank Jordanians does not necessarily translate to revolutionary political change in Jordan in the present day. This thesis will focus on the East Bank Jordanian case in terms of the formation of a new set of norms in the state-tribal social contract and the consequent effect on Jordan’s stability. In doing so, it will explain that, though changing state-tribal dynamics have major consequences for the future social and political fabric of
the country, current East Bank Jordanian marginalization and dissatisfaction will not result in imminent revolutionary opposition movements or political change in Jordan due to the Syrian conflict and consequent domestic fears of internal instability.

2. Why East Bank Jordanians?

The East Bank Jordanian demographic was chosen as the focus for this thesis because of their historically privileged relationship with the Jordanian regime in combination with the common perception of East Bank Jordanians as loyal supporters of the regime and the foundation of popular support for the Hashemite monarchy. Ruling bargains between authoritarian regimes in the Middle East and certain social groups within the national population are an established norm of domestic political dynamics in the region. As Bellin argues, patrimonialism and coalition building among the population aims to “[demobilize] the opposition and [build] a loyal base through selective favoritism and discretionary patronage” (Bellin 2004, 145); this makes authoritarian regimes more resistant to democratic reform and ensures loyalty to the regime within the security apparatus and among specific segments of the population. East Bank Jordanians have historically assumed this role as the loyal base of support in Jordan due to historical processes during the formation of the Jordanian state and to gradual state co-optation of Jordanian tribes. As a result, dramatic changes within the traditional state-tribal relationship in Jordan have significant ramifications for the future political and social landscape of the country. Consequently, analysis of this demographic of the Jordanian population is critically important in determining the stability and sustainability of Jordan’s current socio-political system.
Furthermore, I choose to focus on East Bank Jordanians with the recognition that Palestinians make up a very significant portion of the population. The exact number of Palestinians in Jordan remains a matter of intense debate, as official census data released by the Jordanian government tends to support the view that Palestinians comprise a significant minority, whereas scholars and alternative global data sources argue that Palestinian comprise a numerical majority in the country. For example, official Jordanian census data released in January 2016, the first official census conducted in Jordan in 11 years, listed the number of Palestinians without national ID numbers at 634,182, though did not include how many Palestinians who have achieved full Jordanian citizenship currently reside in the country (Ghazal 2016). Most international and scholarly sources estimate the total Palestinian population in Jordan to be over 3 million (Minority Rights Group International 2008), with about 2 million Palestinians remaining registered refugees and many continuing to live in established refugee camps in the country (UNRWA 2014). The exact number of Palestinians in Jordan is difficult to ascertain or define, as there is no census data on the amount of Palestinians with Jordanian citizenship and not all Palestinians have been fully naturalized into the country, with many retaining refugee status.

I also recognize that many Palestinians are socially and politically marginalized, and have been treated as such by the Hashemite regime since stepping foot in Jordan as refugees at various points in history. As Baylouny points out, the majority of Palestinians live in urban areas of Jordan, where most of the refugee camps administered by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) are located; these camps have become
permanent fixtures on the Jordanian urban landscape, and “[the] camps and surrounding low-income areas, all overwhelmingly Palestinian, are overcrowded and underserved in terms of electricity and running water” (Baylouny 2008, 283). Moreover, Palestinians are politically underrepresented and continue to face many forms of political discrimination. For example, as Stepan, Linz, and Minoves argue, district gerrymandering has overrepresented East Bank Jordanians and underrepresented Palestinians in the lower house. Moreover, the 1993 revisions to Jordanian electoral law based on the Single Non-Transferable Vote (SNTV) system were designed to cut back on opposition representation in the government; as Stepan, Linz, and Minoves contend, in solidarity with many other scholars, the 1993 electoral law strengthened the appeal of kinship and tribal ties at the expense of political parties. As a result, East Bank Jordanian political representation was strengthened and increased, while the formation of large party coalitions among Palestinians was made more difficult during this time period (Stepan, Linz, Minoves 2014, 48).

This thesis does not make the case that Palestinians have it better or that East Bank Jordanians have it worse in the present day. Similar to the reality for the wider East Bank Jordanian population, Palestinian individuals in Jordan can range from prominent businessmen to impoverished refugees, and both East Bank Jordanians and Palestinians are faced with a variety of political and economic challenges. As a result, I am not comparing these two segments of the Jordanian population and making judgments on which one is facing more discrimination and marginalization relative to the other.
However, there is a distinct dichotomy in the relationships of both Palestinians and East Bank Jordanians with the Hashemite regime. Many Palestinians view the Jordanian government as a guarantor of their civil liberties, as Jordan has arguably treated its Palestinian population the best out of any other Arab country in terms of political and economic rights afforded to them. Moreover, although Palestinians have never collectively held a privileged position in Jordanian society like East Bank Jordanians, Palestinians have largely benefited from the neoliberal economic structural reforms that began in 1989 and continue to the present day. The formation of a flourishing urban Palestinian business and entrepreneurial class is the product of these reforms, whereas the socio-economic and political entitlements traditionally reserved for East Bank Jordanians have drastically reduced. This has resulted in the sense of relative deprivation among the majority of East Bank Jordanians, which has given rise to significant dissatisfaction and social unrest among these supposedly loyal backers of the regime.

As a result, dissatisfaction among the Palestinian population in Jordan in the present day does not pose the same threat to the stability of Jordan or its socio-political landscape. During the Arab Spring protests in the country, Palestinians did not play a large role in the mass, popular protest and demonstrations, such as the East Bank Jordanian-dominated Hirak movements. Protests organized by Palestinian political coalitions are typically under tight control of the regime, and the majority of Palestinians in Jordan have been hesitant to make significant or radical political demands after the Jordanian civil war of 1970-1971, also coined Black September, which pitted the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) against the Jordanian
military. An uptick in anti-Palestinian discrimination resulted from the conflict, while East Bank Jordanians solidified their privileged status in the country. In contrast, and as will be addressed in this thesis, East Bank Jordanians engaged in unprecedented social agitation and unrest during the Arab Spring protests, and the gradual marginalization of many East Bank Jordanian communities since the early 1990s has resulted in ever-increasing frustration among this demographic of the population.

This has also resulted in intensified East Bank Jordanian-Palestinian social schisms, which will feature prominently in the analysis of this thesis. Witnessing the recent rise of Palestinians to the upper echelons of the economy and government, older generations of East Bank Jordanians have blamed Palestinians for economic and political grievances, lacing anti-Palestinian rhetoric into recent protests and opposition movements designed to gain concessions from the regime. This was visible during the Arab Spring protests, as older East Bank Jordanian conservatives and nationalists advocated an anti-Palestinian agenda in their opposition. However, as Yom observed, East Bank Jordanian youth activism during the Arab Spring protests differed from past, typical expressions of tribal grievance, and many actually “shied away from the anti-Palestinian xenophobia that flavored the complaints of tribal shaykhs and other East Bank conservatives” (Yom 2014, 229-230). Though East Bank Jordanians often fall back on anti-Palestinian sentiments in protest, demands for political and economic reform especially from the younger generations of East Bank Jordanians tend to recognize the need for systemic change and the nuanced role that Palestinians play within Jordanian society.
Therefore, the reason that East Bank Jordanians are chosen as the case for this thesis is because Palestinian dissatisfaction does not pose a threat to the stability of Jordan, whereas unrest among East Bank Jordanians does. Transformations within the traditional, historical contract between East Bank Jordanians and the regime represent a stark change in a system of tribal co-optation and acquiescence that has provided the Hashemite monarchy with a sturdy base of support throughout much of Jordan’s history. Unprecedented demands and levels of opposition, arising from numerous grievances and years of increased disenfranchisement, from old and young East Bank Jordanians alike have resulted in a new set of norms and dynamics in the state-tribal relationship. The Arab Spring protests were indicative of the dramatic changes in this relationship, and of the power behind an uncoordinated East Bank Jordanian opposition intent on having its anger and dissatisfaction known to the regime. This thesis will explore the East Bank Jordanian case and the evolving state-tribal contract through these lenses, and will analyze how regional dynamics and conflict are influencing East Bank Jordanian activism in assessing the future stability of the Jordanian regime and socio-political system.

3. Methodology

This thesis will analyze the new contract between East Bank Jordanians and the Hashemite regime, and its future socio-political effects on Jordan, through the contextual evidence provided through historical analysis. It will draw upon the historical state-tribal relationship throughout Jordan’s history, with more specific emphasis placed on the advent of neoliberal economic and structural reform beginning in 1989 and onwards, in order to explore shifts and nuances in the current
interactions between the majority of East Bank Jordanians and the regime. This case study approach, which is defined by George and Bennett as “the detailed examination of an aspect of a historical episode to develop or test historical explanations that may be generalizable to other events” (George and Bennett 2005, 5), includes in-case analysis that focuses on a “well-defined aspect of a historical episode that the investigator selects for analysis, rather than a historical event itself” (George and Bennett 2005, 18). As a result, this thesis will utilize the in-case analysis method by looking at different historical periods in Jordan and relying on historical context and comparison in order to analyze new dynamics in the relationship between East Bank Jordanians and the Hashemite regime in the present day, as well as implications for future change within Jordanian society and politics.

George and Bennett further describe the advantages of case study research methods, most notably “their potential for achieving high conceptual validity; their strong procedures for fostering new hypotheses; their value as a useful means to closely examine the hypothesized role of causal mechanisms in the context of individual cases; and their capacity for addressing causal complexity” (George and Bennett 2005, 19). This thesis will use Jordan as a case in order to challenge conventional cases on the sustainability of ruling bargains, and the consequent stability of authoritarian regimes. As a result, the case study that is employed by this thesis does not just involve in-case analysis, but is a theory-building case study that will foster new hypotheses for socio-political dynamics in Jordan and, consequently, in the region. It will develop a theoretical argument, with a focus on Jordan, that disputes traditional literature on the persistence of authoritarianism and the retention
of East Bank Jordanian loyalty to the Hashemite regime. Instead, it will analyze the unsustainability of the traditional social contract between the Jordanian state and its East Bank tribal constituency, and will develop new explanations for the current stability of Jordan. Consequently, the theory-building case study model of this thesis results in a theoretical framework that can have broad implications not only for Jordan, but also for the sustainability of ruling bargains and ruling political systems in other countries. Though Jordan is a unique case, the hypotheses that are developed in this thesis can be applied and tested in other countries in the future in order to determine applicability to a broader set of cases.

Moreover, George and Bennett make several warnings for researchers using historical analysis in case studies: namely, that researchers not rely on a single, seemingly authoritative study of the case at hand by a historian, that the researcher not assume that the best available historical study of the case will answer all the questions they are asking, that researchers go to original source material in order to obtain substantive answers to his or her questions, and that the researcher not assume that primary sources and declassified government documents alone will be sufficient for finding the answers to his or her research questions (George and Bennett 2005, 95-97). This thesis does not make assumptions on the authoritativeness or reliability of specific sources, and utilizes a wide range of diverse primary and secondary source material in making its theoretical argument and answering the research questions that it poses.

Another key task that George and Bennett specify for the case study process is “soaking and poking”, which involves “[identifying] the gaps in existing historical
accounts. These gaps may include archival or interview evidence that has not been examined or that had previously been unavailable. They may also include the measurement of variables… that historians have not measured or have not measured as systematically as the explanatory goals of subsequent researchers require” (George and Bennett 2005, 96). This thesis fills in the gaps in research on current dynamics in the relationship between East Bank Jordanians and the Hashemite regime by utilizing on-the-ground, interview-based research conducted in Jordan in August 2015. Whereas much analysis on recent state-tribal dynamics relies on research conducted from 2011-2013 during the Arab Spring protests in the country when East Bank Jordanian activism and opposition erupted, the research offered by this thesis presents a clearer picture of the situation on the ground in the present day. Therefore, I strive to fill gaps in most recent accounts on current state-tribal relations in this thesis through the use of my interviews. I also utilize a variety of sources ranging from scholarly analysis, local news sources, and official government and organizational reports on a wide timeline in order to maximize variability in the information collected for this thesis and to fill in gaps in historical accounts on state-tribal relations in Jordan and their subsequent effect on regime stability and Jordanian society.

In this thesis, I use primary sources from interview-based analysis conducted in Jordan in August 2015 complemented with the extensive use of secondary sources such as scholarly literature, online reports, Jordanian and international news sources, international data sources, and official Jordanian and U.S. government data. The primary source data collected for this thesis was collected during a month of
fieldwork and interviews in Jordan in August 2015. I held 16 interviews with Jordanians of both East Bank Jordanian and Palestinian descent across the country during this time. These include East Bank Jordanian tribal leaders or shiyukh, Jordanian government officials, Jordanian members of Parliament, human rights activists, opposition leaders from the Arab Spring protests, and Jordanian NGO leaders. These interviews provided valuable information on the current developments regarding the shifting relationship between the Jordanian regime and East Bank Jordanians, grievances facing many East Bank Jordanians in the country, and future developments in state-tribal dynamics with regards to the effect of regional influences like the Syrian civil war on current East Bank Jordanian desires and demands for social, political, and economic reform. I traveled throughout Jordan to conduct my research and was based in Amman at the American Center for Oriental Research (ACOR). The secondary sources used in this thesis provide information that will be extensively used in the development of the historical analysis and causal mechanisms posed within my theoretical argument.

*Theoretical Argument*

This thesis will analyze how and why the traditional social contract between the Hashemite regime and East Bank Jordanians is currently changing, and what this phenomenon means for the future stability of Jordan and the Hashemite regime. I will be utilizing a theoretical framework that serves to discount the factors that have traditionally explained the persistence of authoritarianism and regime stability in Jordan among scholarly and political circles. These factors are no longer guarantors
of regime stability or East Bank Jordanian acquiescence and loyalty, thereby leading to the current challenges in the state-tribal relationship and threats to Jordan’s societal and political stability.

The theoretical argument posed by this chapter addresses transformations in the social contract between ruler and ruled, and the future implications for regime and societal stability. The three determinants of this theoretical argument are, therefore, the level of grievances and relative deprivation among co-opted segments of the population, the level of frustration and opposition and subsequent pressure on the traditional ruling bargain and system of co-optation, and international conflict and external circumstances. Within the context of this thesis, this theoretical argument provides a framework from which to analyze the reasons behind East Bank Jordanian relative deprivation and grievances. In doing so, it will examine the effects of this relative deprivation on tribal protest and opposition to the Hashemite regime and, subsequently, on the evolution of a new state-tribal social contract that redefines the socio-political norms of the relationship between East Bank Jordanian tribes and the regime. This theoretical argument also makes the assertion that international conflict and external circumstances serve to maintain the status quo between ruler and ruled, even if a new social contract has formed due to significant protest and opposition. In the case of Jordan, this thesis argues that the Syrian conflict has temporarily quieted East Bank Jordanian opposition, thereby leading to a retention of the same problematic economic and socio-political systems in Jordan despite continued East Bank Jordanian relative deprivation and the growth of a new state-tribal social contract.
Lastly, through application of this theoretical framework, this thesis will conclude with future implications of this shifting state-tribal social contract on the stability of the Hashemite regime and Jordanian society. It posits that one of three scenarios will occur: 1) mass East Bank Jordanian opposition will rise again after the conclusion of the Syrian conflict, 2) if given a catalyst that transforms their current dissatisfaction into spontaneous mass mobilization, East Bank Jordanian opposition will rise at a point in the near future before the end of the Syrian conflict, and 3) marginalized, disaffected East Bank Jordanians will be drawn into radical ideologies and groups, and will constitute a significant internal security threat for the Hashemite regime. Moreover, this theoretical framework provides a general structure from which to analyze ruling bargains between regimes and co-opted segments of societies in a variety of cases.

Outline of Project

This thesis will begin with a review of the literature on the persistence of authoritarianism and the consensus-shattering events of the Arab Spring in Jordan and the Middle East. This review will analyze four factors, formal state co-optation of tribes, rentier state dynamics, the coercive apparatus, and cultural legitimacy, each of which have traditionally been used as reasons for authoritarianism in Jordan. These factors will be assessed in their accuracy and relevance to the persistence of authoritarianism, and will be used as criteria in assessing how the traditional structures regarding the co-optation of tribes are currently shifting. Chapter 2 will provide the theoretical argument of this thesis. Chapter 3 will provide a brief
historical overview of relations between East Bank Jordanian tribes and the Hashemite regime in Jordan in order to provide context with which to analyze current and recent developments in the state-tribal relationship. Chapter 4 will specifically analyze the neoliberal economic and structural adjustments beginning in the late 1989s and early 1990s, as well as educational and infrastructural flaws, and their deleterious effect on East Bank Jordanian communities. It will examine how the policies and reforms of this time period, in conjunction with various other grievances and internal issues, led to the “relative deprivation” currently experienced by many East Bank Jordanians. Chapter 5 will explore East Bank Jordanian activism during the Arab Spring protests and its subsequent effects on the formation of a new, evolving state-tribal social contract. Chapter 6 will address how and why Jordan has remained stable despite these transformations in the state-tribal social contract by making the assertion that the Syrian conflict has led to domestic fears of significant internal instability and civil war and, consequently, to the temporary quieting of East Bank Jordanian opposition. The concluding chapter will include implications for the future social and political stability of Jordan, as well as for the sustainability of ruling bargains and associated political systems, in general.
Chapter 1: Contextualizing and Theorizing the East Bank Jordanian Relationship with the Hashemite Regime

In this chapter, I will review several bodies of literature that will be pertinent to the argument presented in this thesis: the persistence of authoritarianism in the Middle East and Jordan, and the social mobilization seen in the region and in Jordan during the regional opposition movements that characterized the Arab Spring period. I will first examine the factors that have traditionally been considered as contributing to the persistence of authoritarianism in Jordan and the Middle East. This thesis will dispute the applicability of these factors in maintaining the traditional social contract between East Bank Jordanian tribes and the Hashemite regime, and consequently in preserving the presence of authoritarianism in Jordan. In doing so, it will provide the basis for analysis on how these factors no longer translate to unflappable East Bank Jordanian tribal loyalty to the Hashemite regime, and have instead failed to prevent a variety of grievances and perceptions of “relative deprivation” from afflicting many East Bank Jordanian communities. I will then look at the new scholarship developing after the Arab Spring, and in particular those works addressing the events in Jordan and the East Bank Jordanian role in the Arab Spring protests from 2011 to 2013, in order to develop new arguments regarding East Bank Jordanian opposition and activism against the Hashemite monarchy and wider political structure of Jordan.
Persistence of Authoritarianism in Jordan and the Middle East

Much of the literature on the Middle East before the events of 2011 focused on the persistence of authoritarianism among ruling regimes in the region. Authoritarian republics and monarchies constituted almost all regimes in the Middle East, resulting in exceptionally strong-handed, coercive regimes that were able to resist and suppress pressures for political reform from their citizens and the international community only until recently during the region-wide popular protests of the Arab Spring.

The existing scholarship identifies four main factors for the persistence of both authoritarian republics and authoritarian monarchies in the region and the arguments behind them, all of which are particularly relevant to Jordan: the formation of broad-based coalitions of popular support, the institutionalization of the military and security establishment, rentierism based on oil wealth and foreign aid, and cultural legitimacy, which is especially relevant for Arab monarchies.

1. Ruling Bargains and the State-Tribal Social Contract

Authoritarianism in the Middle East, as described by Bellin, involves rampant patrimonialism and favoritist policies in maintaining popular support within the regime apparatus and among certain key segments of the population. Most often, this is in the form of a social contract held between the regime and co-opted segments of the population. Social contracts such as these involve a “contract of submission… the people have made a contract with their ruler which determines their relations with him. They promise him obedience, while he promises his protection and good
government. While he keeps his part of the bargain, they must keep theirs, but if he misgoverns the contract is broken and allegiance is at an end” (Gough 1936, 2-3). The establishment of social contracts between a regime and segments of a population result in regimes that are “exceptionally able and willing to crush reform initiatives from below… The problem of conflation between authoritarian civilian regimes and the military is in no way peculiar to this region. Nevertheless, the prevalence of patrimonial logic in many regimes makes this problem particularly pervasive in the Middle East and North Africa.” (Bellin 2004, 143). This “patrimonial logic” involves drawing upon specific ethnic, religious, and familial ties in forming coercive ruling establishments, thereby ensuring the loyalty and stability of the regime apparatus. As a result, authoritarian regimes in the Middle East cultivated ruling bargains with specific social groups, prioritized personal linkages with favored elites in their populations, and, consequently, created high-level resistance to political reform. Therefore, these coalitions of support built by the regimes “[demobilize] the opposition and [build] a loyal base through selective favoritism and discretionary patronage” (Bellin 2004, 145).

These ruling bargains are described by Kamrava as “the basis of regime legitimacy through which a number of state services and functions were provided in return for general political acquiescence” (Kamrava 2013, 2). Kamrava argues that these ruling bargains were largely imposed by state elites rather than resulting from negotiations between state and social actors, thereby giving regimes in the region their authoritarian flavor. Repression and the threat of coercive action underlined regime relations with various social groups involved in these bargains. Though there
is no single type of ruling bargain that describes the political situation in each country in the Middle East, “bargains of various shapes and voracity came to underlie the legitimacy of one Middle Eastern state after another” (Kamrava 2013, 2). Authoritarian monarchs and leaders rely upon these bases of support to ensure political and social stability, as well as their own personal retention of power.

Similarly, with regards to Arab authoritarian monarchies, Yom and Guase argue that broad-based coalitions “have helped to forestall mass opposition and to bolster the ruling family against whatever opposition has emerged” (Yom and Gause 2012, 75) and are historical creations from a recent past in which monarchical claims to authority were built upon an intricate web of alliances and co-optation within the local populations. These coalitions are a crucial factor in the success of authoritarian regimes in the country, and are composed of “supporters who will not only validate regime policies but also counter opponents during crises.” (Yom and Gause 2012, 81). Moreover, Lucas writes that many of the Arab monarchies divided opposition bases by utilizing group-based patronage and favoritism that serve to produce internal competition among social groups rather than direct confrontation between the regime and its subjects (Lucas 2011). As a result, by varying their support coalitions and opening greater space for political pluralism and sparring in internal affairs, popular demands for serious political reform generally do not give rise to a unified opposition movement against the regime.

According to Lucas, monarchs in the region, such as King Abdullah II, current monarch of the Hashemite regime, are personalistic rulers who “[stand] at the center of a regime coalition that may be diverse and can include a broad social base” (Lucas
2005, 11). In Jordan, the Hashemite regime has cultivated East Bank tribal and Bedouin loyalties to build a support base that has historically insulated the monarchy from the rise of mass, popular opposition movements and internal crisis. The country’s East Bank Jordanian population is commonly described as the “backbone” of support for the monarchy, and has its roots in historical foundation of Jordan. In creating their new country after the events of World War I, “the Hashemites expanded the public sector in order to marginalize the Palestinian majority while incorporating tribal communities, the Christian minority, and other settled groups into the state after the politically tumultuous 1950s. Palestinian businessmen later became part of this authoritarian contract, receiving economic largesse in return for political acquiescence” (Yom and Gause 2012, 8). In effect, most East Bank tribal communities in Jordan became patrons of the Jordanian regime during this time, though bouts of tribal rebellion and unrest have frequently occurred in various areas of the country due to various grievances, economic issues, and socio-political crises. The majority of Jordan’s Palestinian population, on the other hand, has been largely deprived of political rights and representation, and has historically been blocked from pursuing state employment; consequently, Palestinians largely dominate the Jordanian private sector.

The tribal co-optation and acquiescence adopted by the Jordanian regime is characteristic of many of the authoritarian regimes in the region. As Kao argues, “tribes have become an integral element of Arab regime-maintenance strategies” and, in Jordan, “tribes provide the main source of access to basic government services and benefits through wasta, which is akin to a personal network of connections” (Kao
The Single Non-Transferable Vote system in Jordan reinforces East Bank tribal influence in politics and “[the] king has also condoned gerrymandering in order to overrepresent East Bankers and underrepresent West Bankers in the lower house.” (Stepan, Linz, Minoyes 2014, 48). However, the Jordanian regime has not completely ignored its majority Palestinian population. As Risa Brooks argues, the Hashemite regime “has also tried to maintain the complicity of Jordan’s Palestinians by safeguarding their basic security and livelihoods” (Brooks 1998, 24). However, the regime has also been slow to give Palestinians many of the political and social rights enjoyed by East Bank Jordanians.

By reinforcing tribal structures in society and integrating them within the governing apparatus, the Hashemite regime slowly developed social and political coalitions among East Bank Jordanian tribes that have historically served as bastions of regime support in times of internal strife and conflict. East Bank Jordanian tribes are not a unified entity, however; they represent a wide swath of different communities and social groupings in the country that became aligned, either peacefully or violently, with the Hashemite regime during its formation. The differing interests of East Bank tribes do not always align, and sporadically cause conflict within Jordanian society. The nature of this coalition, therefore, has induced the regime to build support upon a web of tribal ties, alliances, loyalties; as a result, mass opposition to government policies has historically been rare and political mobilization tended to occur along communal, clientelistic lines. As Kao states, this phenomenon by which “state-building elites took historically reliable means of social organization and cloaked them in national sovereignty and legitimacy, adapting very traditional
forms of social relations to the new realities of rentier or semi-rentier states” (Kao 2015).

This thesis will explore the current state of the relationship between the Jordanian monarchy and their traditional coalition of support composed of East Bank Jordanian tribes. As a result, scholarly work regarding co-optation and coalition building among the different tribes will play a major role in the analysis presented in this thesis. However, many of the arguments in this body of literature do not address more recent patterns in the relationship between the Hashemite regime and East Bank Jordanian tribes. There are many vague observations and statements by experts and politicians alike that hint towards current, post-Arab Spring East Bank Jordanian dissatisfaction and disenfranchisement with regards to the monarchy, yet there is a lack of substantive scholarly work on the subject. By contextualizing the historical relationship between the Hashemite monarchy and East Bank Jordanian tribes, this thesis will examine current shifts in the traditional system of state patronage and co-optation employed by regime on East Bank Jordanian tribes. An understanding of prior scholarship on the relationship between the traditional state-tribal ruling bargain and the persistence of authoritarianism in Jordan is necessary for the formation of a new theoretical argument on current transformations in the social contract between the Hashemite monarchy and East Bank Jordanian communities.

2. The Rentier State

Authoritarian states in the Middle East are also characterized by rentier-state dynamics, in which regimes are propped up financially through either an abundance of oil wealth or through ample foreign aid gifted by the international community,
rather than through domestic taxation. Foreign aid transfers can be described as development assistance or military assistance, both of which are termed “strategic rents.” Much of the scholarly research on this subject has suggested a strong relationship between this rentier economic structure and the persistence of authoritarianism in the region. As described by Yom and Gause, these resources “pay for welfare and development programs mean to alleviate public discord…. [and] when all else fails, these [regimes] have enjoyed the backing of foreign patrons who assist them through diplomatic assurances, economic grants, and military interventions” (Yom and Gause 2012, 2-3). Hazem Beblawi has also described rentier state economics in the Middle East as a situation “in which only few are engaged in the generation of this rent (wealth) while the majority of the population is being involved in the distribution and utilization of it” and “in which the government is the principal recipient of the external rent in the economy” (Beblawi 1987, 51-52). In other words, authoritarian republics and monarchies in the Middle East have vast, reliable sources of income that allow them to continue to dole out resources and satisfy essential bases of support within their populations.

In Michael Ross’ foundational piece on rentierism’s influence on state configuration, he argues that there are three causal mechanisms for the influence of oil and foreign aid on the persistence of authoritarianism in the region: “a ‘rentier effect,’ which suggests that resource-rich governments use low tax rates and patronage to relieve pressures for greater accountability; a ‘repression effect,’ which argues that resource wealth retards democratization by enabling governments to boost their funding for internal security; and a ‘modernization effect,’ which holds that
growth based on the export of oil and minerals fails to bring about the social and cultural changes that tend to produce democratic government.” (Ross 2001, 327-328).

The formation of the rentier state directly ties into the placation of coalitions of support and traditional loyalties that favor the long-term stability of the authoritarian regime through these causal mechanisms.

With regards to the “rentier effect” mechanism, as Eduard Soler i Lecha argues, “[rent-based] state formation leads to particular structures within rentier states… [not] only does the existence of a rentier state serve as a strong impediment to a democratic rule, it also helps to conserve socio-political norms in Arab societies and polities, such as the patrimonial nature of social interaction and primordial loyalties, based on allocation patterns” (Soler i Lecha 2013, 13). State reliance on oil wealth and external sources of aid in the Middle East leads to strategic co-optation of certain social groups and, thus, to a reduction in political rights for the general populace. As rentier states are focused on the allocation of fiscal benefits from financial resources like oil revenue and foreign aid, Lucas similarly argues that this type of state “has no need for representative institutions, ‘no taxation, no representation’” (Lucas 2005, 8). Rentier economics not only allows for the formation of long-term coalitions of support, but creates little pressure for political and social reform that would disrupt these systems of strategic social co-optation.

In the case of the second mechanism, the “repression effect,” both Ross and Shwarz makes the argument that these types of rentier state dynamics “have permitted a degree of militarization which would have been impossible to maintain if states had to rely on domestic resource extraction for its financing” and, as a result, “has
contributed to domestic state weakness” (Schwarz 2008, 601). Inordinate amounts of income generated by oil wealth or foreign aid in the Middle East is spent on internal security and military functions, thereby impeding the ability of bureaucracies to implement effective state policies and to provide sufficient socio-economic welfare to their populations; this translates to a constant shifting of the state-society contract between ruler and ruled and to increased social and political instability. As a result, authoritarian values and policies remain integral to Middle Eastern governing systems, as an uncertain socio-political future within the country leads to repressive, heavy-handed responses from the government.

According to Ross, “the modernization effect does not work through the state: it is a social mechanism, not a political one” (Ross 2001, 337). If economic development through rentier state dynamics does not contribute to greater variety in industrial and service sector jobs, then there will be less incentive for social and political reform within the country. In other words, if the wealth gained from abundant oil wealth or extensive foreign aid and development were spent adequately on job development to better educate and train the populace, Ross argues that society would be better equipped to implement liberal social and political transformations. As a result of inefficient attention given these sectors, authoritarian states in the Middle East are less likely to face internal pressure for liberal reforms.

In Jordan, all of three of Ross’ effects are applicable. The Jordanian state’s need for external financial support has been a standard feature of the country from its creation. As Lucas points out, foreign aid has flowed into Jordan from a diverse range of actors throughout its history, including Britain, many of the Arab states, and most
recently the United States. As a result, “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” (Lucas 2005, 8). This type of state,
one that depends on foreign aid as a main source of rent rather than a natural resource
like oil, is also called a semi-rentier state; Jordan falls within this category.
Greenwood further argues that the Hashemite monarchy has relied upon an
authoritarian bargain offers economic security in exchange for political loyalty from
its two main constituencies: East Bank Jordanians and, after 1989, the Jordanian
business community, which is dominated mainly by Palestinians. East Bank
Jordanians traditionally received public jobs and subsidies, while business allies of
the monarchy receive regulatory protection and state contracts.

Political and economic crises during the 1980s resulted in a restructuring of
this system into a “new liberal bargain” that continues to exist today. According to
Scott Greenwood, Jordan implemented liberalization efforts during this time that
were part of a strategy “designed to ensure the long-term survival of the existing
regime” and to secure the financial resources necessary to satisfy its key constituents;
without these measures, economic difficulties would have caused “catastrophic
damage to the patronage networks that link the monarchy with its Transjordanian
support base” (Greenwood 2003, 250). Greenwood contends that, in adopting more
liberal economic policies due to international pressure and budgetary deficiencies, the
monarchy “was able to manipulate carefully economic liberalization measures in
order to win the economic and political support of the IMF and local business
community while also ensuring that these measures did not alienate its
Transjordanian base of support” (Greenwood 2003, 263). Glimpses of political liberalization, including the resumption of Parliamentary life in 1989, restored a sense of political legitimacy to the Jordanian monarchy among the international community, thus incentivizing the flow of more foreign aid to the kingdom. However, as will be addressed in the upcoming chapters of this thesis, these neoliberal economic reforms actually served to marginalize many East Bank Jordanian communities while restructuring the rentier state and patronage networks around an urban, Palestinian-dominated business class; moreover, the “democratizing” effects initially seen after the implementation of the neoliberal reforms did not take root and Jordan experienced a resurgence in authoritarian governance in the years following the reforms.

Under King Abdullah II, Jordan’s foreign economic package has grown. Perhaps most importantly, in addition to Jordan’s compliance with the IMF program, the monarchy’s support for the United State’s policies in the Middle East have “helped secure the economic aid necessary to finance political patronage during an era of economic austerity” (Greenwood 2003, 267) and have allowed for a continuation of authoritarian policies within the country. According to the Congressional Research Service, the United States has provided economic and military aid to Jordan since 1951 and 1957; total U.S. foreign aid to Jordan through 2013 equaled about $13.83 billion and, in 2008, “the U.S. and Jordanian governments reached an agreement whereby the United States agreed to provide a total of $660 million in annual foreign assistance to Jordan over a five-year period” ending in 2014 (Sharp 2014).
In February of 2015, it was announced that the United States would increase its annual aid to Jordan from $660 million to $1 billion (Mohammed 2015). The notable increase in these figures is due to the effect of a variety of regional security issues on Jordan’s stability, especially considering that Jordan is one of the few Arab state allies of American interests in the Middle East. However, this vast amount of foreign aid also serves to intensify the causal mechanisms discussed by the previously mentioned scholars that contribute to the persistence of authoritarianism within Middle Eastern rentier states: according to these analyses, Jordan will continue to use these abundant rents to bolster its web of strategically co-opted social groups and will continue to develop security capabilities that undermine efforts of socio-political development and reform within the country.

In formulating the argument of this thesis, rentier state dynamics will play a large role in analyzing the shifting dynamics of the ruling bargain between the Jordanian regime and East Bank Jordanian citizens. Though many scholars address Jordan’s economic restructuring of the 1980s and early 1990s in a positive, strictly developmental light, the neoliberal alterations to the traditional state-tribal ruling bargain served to marginalize and frustrate the Hashemite monarchy’s East Bank Jordanian base of support. In recent years, neoliberal economic and structural reforms have resulted in unprecedented strain on the traditional benefits allocated to East Bank Jordanian segments of society by restructuring the state patronage system that relied upon the steady flow of foreign aid and rentier benefits. This thesis will question arguments of authoritarian stability in Jordan due to rentier state dynamics in examining how the traditional economic and social privileges of East Bank
Jordanians changed, and continue to change, with the transformation of rentier state dynamics and the state patronage system in Jordan. I will connect this analysis to the main argument of my thesis as I explore how the system of tribal co-optation and acquiescence employed upon East Bank Jordanians by the Jordanian regime is currently shifting and evolving.

3. The Coercive Apparatus

The militaries of authoritarian regimes in the Middle East have played prominent roles in the political developments of the region, and are partly responsible for the stability of these governments through regular repression of opposition and manipulation of various social and economic dynamics. As Bellin argues, this capacity of “state’s coercive apparatus to suppress democratic initiative [has] extinguished the possibility of transition” to more liberal forms of government (Bellin 2004, 143). According to Bellin, this relationship between the political and the military constitutes the region’s true exceptionalism with regards to authoritarianism in other parts of the world (Bellin 2004, 143). These coercive apparatuses are an essential structure of popular control that ensures authoritarianism persists in the region. Bellin further contends that Arab authoritarian regimes remain stable when the security structures and military are socially and financially intact, and thus have the capacity to suppress opposition efficiently. Similarly, Brooks states that the balance between the civil authoritarian government and the military is the defining characteristic of these regimes. According to Brook’s analysis, “centralizing command structures, politicizing appointments, authorizing economic activity, buying prestige equipment rather than essential, but less glamorous, items, and exploiting
sectarianism and tribalism” have created coercive apparatuses that protect the stability
of the regime but contribute to inefficiencies in the military capabilities of these
structures (Brooks 1998, 2)

Scholars such as Bellin and Brooks point towards a number of factors that
have contributed to the strength of security structures in the Middle East, such as
rentier state dynamics and weak popular mobilization. The fiscal health of and
international support behind the coercive apparatus are directly related to the
economic capacity of the regime to finance security and military expenditures, which
bolsters the capacity of the regime to repress internal dissent. Bellin argues that, when
“the military can no longer pay the salaries of its recruits and the security forces can
not guarantee supplies of arms and ammunition,” the coercive apparatus tends to fall
apart (Bellin 2004, 144). In this case, either abundant oil reserves or extensive foreign
aid transfers allow for the continuous support received by security infrastructure in
the Middle East. As is addressed in the rentier state section of this chapter through
explanation of Ross’ “repression effect” with regards to rentierism, disproportional
spending of oil wealth and foreign aid on the capacity of the coercive apparatus leads
to inefficient state bureaucracies and inadequate socio-economic welfare, while
enhancing effective tools of repression in cases of internal opposition. Moreover, all
authors argue that mass popular opposition movements have failed in the region due
to a pattern of forceful repression by the coercive apparatuses in response to internal
dissent. As a result of this repression, there is a stark lack of institutional foundations
for popular movements within these countries. By endorsing policies of forceful
crackdowns on dissent and opposition, mass mobilization is effectively cast as a
threat to order and security by authoritarian regimes across the region. This analysis, of course, comes from a time before the Arab Spring, which will be addressed later in this chapter, when mass opposition movements spread across the region, thereby questioning the veracity of these theories and the effectiveness of these security structures in repressing opposition before it threatened the stability of authoritarian regimes.

The main characteristic of the military and security apparatuses of authoritarian regimes in the Middle East, however, is patronage and patrimonialism. Bellin states that patrimonial coercive apparatuses “spell a strong personal linkage between the coercive apparatus and the regime it serves. It makes for the coercive apparatus’ personal identification with the regime and the regime’s longevity, and thus fosters resistance to political reform” (Bellin 2004, 149). Patronage and patrimonialism in the military structures of authoritarian regimes in the region typically involves the installing of certain religious or ethnic minorities into the armed forces and positions of power within the coercive apparatus. As Brooks argues, regimes ensure the support and loyalty of the military through these types of methods, and “appoint members of specific groups to key posts. These groups are often privileged minorities that are also well-represented within the regime itself, thereby ensuring that the preferences of the officer corps coincide with those of political leadership” (Brooks 19, 1998).

Moreover, cultivating political control over the military through the application of patronage and patrimonialism involves first building social support among core coalitions in the population that provide stability to the ruling regime,
which involve the discussions of coalition building and state co-optation in previous sections of this chapter. As Brooks argues, the initial building of non-military support among certain social groups by the regime reduces reliance on the coercive apparatus, thereby lessening the political influence of the military and the threat of conspiracies and coups among the military ranks (Brooks 1998). These aspects of patronage within the security structures of authoritarian regimes in the region contribute to their stability and longevity, and also deprive the coercive apparatus of the tools to challenge the authority of the regime.

These phenomena are especially prevalent in Jordan. The Jordanian army originally formed from the Arab Legion led by British commander John Glubb, which existed as a tribal military unit until 1956 when King Hussein expelled all British officers and began appointing East Bank Jordanians to key command positions. As a result, “[the] bulk of the armed forces comprise members of the East Bank Jordanian tribes (also commonly referred to as Transjordanians or Bedouin)” (Brooks 1998, 15). The Hashemite regime has historically relied upon these tribal loyalties to balance power among the different military corps and to retain political control of the military. This strategy, Brooks contends, is the most effective strategy for a political regime to ensure the loyalty of its armed forces, as “[appointees] with a shared background help to ensure that the military’s preferences are similar to those of the regime… the groups underpinning the regime are all privileged minorities, which could be at risk under regimes governed by majority groups” (Brooks 1998, 32). Traditional East Bank Jordanian primacy within both the political apparatus and security establishment have contributed to the persistence of authoritarianism within
the country. As Bellin argues, “[regime] change would jeopardize the predominance of favored tribal elites in the Jordanian [military]… these officers have every incentive to close ranks behind the old authoritarian system, shoring it up even when natural calamity provides an opportunity for opening” (Bellin 2004, 150).

However, Satloff argues that, even beginning in the late 1980s, although East Bank Jordanians still occupy the majority of the military and most high-level military positions, Jordanians of Palestinian descent, as well as other minorities, began to occupy many of the lower-echelon military posts and play prominent roles in gendarmerie police forces due to their comparably higher technical and managerial skills (Satloff 1986, 63). As a result, the Hashemite regime cultivated support not just among East Bank Jordanians, but also among certain segments of the Palestinian population. According to Satloff, this created a more broad-based social support coalition that has contributed to the strength and loyalty of the coercive apparatus as a tool of the regime.

The coercive apparatus present within all authoritarian regimes in the region will play a large role in the analysis of my thesis. The Jordanian security establishment is shot through with patronage and patrimonialism that has traditionally favored East Bank Jordanian dominance and privilege, and it is indisputable that the Jordanian military establishment still retains blood and familial ties to the old tribal affiliations upon which Jordan was formed. However, as will be explored in this thesis, structural reforms in the past two decades within the military have steadily marginalized East Bank Jordanian communities and high-ranking East Bank Jordanian military officials. For example, Yom makes the argument that military
promotions have become more meritocratic and are no longer carefully distributed to balance tribal affiliations since King Abdullah’s reign began in 1999 (Yom 2014, 239). Tensions stemming from these changes in traditional military policy have aggravated grievances between East Bank Jordanian tribes and the monarchy, and led to shocking displays of protest and opposition among East Bank Jordanian military elites before and during the rise of the Arab Spring protests in Jordan. Though a strengthened security apparatus currently discourages public dissent, these events question the absolute loyalty and support of the Jordanian military establishment for the regime, and therefore jeopardize the argument that the patronage and patrimonialism present within the security establishment leads to complete political control of the coercive apparatus. As a result, this thesis will also question the contribution of the Jordanian coercive apparatus to the persistence of authoritarianism in the country by examining how the political-military relationship in Jordan is transforming, along with its extensive ties to East Bank Jordanian communities. This will play an important role in my analysis of how the traditional social contract between the Hashemite regime and East Bank Jordanian tribes is evolving in the present day.

4. Cultural Legitimacy

One of the most common and controversial arguments for the persistence of authoritarianism in the Middle East is the idea that Islamic or Arab culture is incompatible with democratization and, instead, provides support for the growth of authoritarian regimes. As Kedourie contends, “…there is nothing in the political traditions of the Arab world – which are the political traditions of Islam – which
might make familiar or indeed intelligible, the organizing ideas of constitutional and representative government” (Kedourie 1992, 5). This argument is especially popular when applied to authoritarian monarchies in the region, where ruling royal families build their regime upon traditional religious and tribal legitimacy that theoretically ensure the loyal support of the national population. As Gause states, “[the] monarchs of the region spend time and resources to portray themselves as authentic representations of their cultures. To varying degrees, they emphasize the compatibility of their regimes with their countries’ histories, with Islam, and with tribal traditions” (Gause 2013, 9).

Gause includes analysis of the writings of Khalid al-Dakhil, a renowned Saudi sociologist and political activist, who contends that there are three historical and cultural reasons for the persistence of authoritarian monarchies in the Middle East. Firstly, the historical norm of monarchical rule in the region contrasts with the newer creations of Arab republics and lead to their long-term stability. Secondly, since monarchies are traditional forms of governance that neatly fit into the societal structures of the region, they have greater legitimacy and are more successful when directing political, social, and economic change. Lastly, monarchies are closer to the societies they govern and, as a result, the monarchies share many of the socio-cultural values of their populations (Gause 2013, 8). These arguments are popular because they serve as simple explanations for the incompatibility of Arab historical and cultural norms with more liberal, democratic political values and, thus, help to explain the persistence of these authoritarian forms of governance in the region. However, legitimacy is a difficult thing to measure, and ruling monarchies across the
Middle East have been deposed in popular revolts or coups since the 1950s, including in Egypt (1952), Tunisia (1957), Iraq (1958), Yemen (1962), Libya (1969), and Iran (1979), leading to several fatal flaws in the cultural argument for authoritarianism in the Middle East (Gause 2013, 10).

As Yom and Gause state, “[cultural] arguments recycle old Orientalist logic, are patently unfalsifiable, and ignore the historical reality that powerful ruling monarchies owe much of their modern power to colonial machinations rather than indigenous forces” (Yom and Gause 2012, 2). In other words, though certain aspects of culture and history may influence the political and social norms of authoritarian regimes, and especially monarchies, in the Middle East, these factors do not contribute significantly to their persistence as a form of government in the region. In contrast to the argument that Arab authoritarian monarchies are more “legitimate” in the minds of their populace, and thus protected from internal opposition, Gause further contends that these monarchies are no more legitimate than the Arab authoritarian republics and that both are the products of a colonial era separate from past political and social norms in the region. Though these rulers attempt to build nationalist sentiments and loyalty to the regime through the manipulation of historical events, Islamic values, and tribal traditions, “these portrayals are just that – political constructions meant to convince their subjects and outsiders that their rule is the natural result of history and culture” (Gause 2013, 9).

Instead, Hinnebusch first argues that Islam does not pose a legitimate threat to more liberal forms of government. In fact, he states that “[modern] Islamic notions of leadership do also incorporate accountability, and nowadays when authoritarian leadership fails to live up to Islamic standards it suffers de-legitimation widely, with Muslims forming or joining opposition movements” (Hinnebusch 2006, 376). Hinnesbusch further argues that the clientelism and patriarchism present within Middle Eastern social structures are also present within the pluralistic, democratic governments of Mediterranean Europe, and that Middle Eastern culture does not promote political passivity, as Islamic principles actually promote high levels of civic participation. Furthermore, Yom and Gause add that cultural legitimacy arguments for authoritarian monarchies in the region “ignores the transition of Muslim and tribal societies elsewhere – in sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia, for example – from ruling monarchism to more democratic forms of government” (Yom and Gause 2012, 5). Though some of these socio-cultural aspects of the Middle East may interfere with the development of more liberal, democratic forms of governance in the region, Hinnebusch contends that they do not significantly contribute to the persistence of authoritarianism in the region. Rather, authoritarian regimes formed under a series of conditions and factors quite separate from culture, and have co-opted historical and traditional norms in order to prolong internal stability and regime longevity.

With regards to Jordan, the cultural and historical argument of legitimacy continues to hold much appeal in political circles, but has been buffeted by more recent scholarly work on the Hashemite monarchy’s resiliency through turbulent periods in its history. Legitimacy continues to be a difficult concept to analyze in the
context of Jordan, as there are no reliable means with which to validate the religious, tribal, or historical claims to legitimacy made by Arab monarchs, and Gause challenges the Jordanian monarchy’s claim to the contrary. He argues that Jordan and the other authoritarian monarchies in the region “are not regimes that have no need of the secret police. If we apply the most stringent test of legitimacy – the idea that no one could conceive of an alternative form of rule – then no monarchy in the Arab world is legitimate” (Gause 2013, 10). Rather, the Hashemite monarchy in Jordan is a product of colonial policies following World War I, and different forms of internal opposition have periodically called for the reform or even abolishment of the monarchy throughout its history; though there are undoubtedly many members of the Jordanian population that believe in the legitimacy of the Hashemite ruling family, internal opposition and conflict have put into question the extent of the regime’s social and political legitimacy in the eyes of its people.

A key strategy of legitimization used by the Jordanian monarchy is the royal family’s claim of direct descent from the Prophet Muhammad. This lends the regime Islamic credentials that serve to legitimize the monarchy on religious grounds more so than most of the Arab authoritarian republics in the region. This type of socio-cultural regime legitimization has been utilized by all of Jordan’s kings to varying degrees in times of crisis and to lend further backing for specific policy decisions. However, as Schlumberger and Bank argue, this type of religious-traditional legitimacy “does not play a crucial role in everyday life and politics in Jordan” (Schlumberger and Bank 2001-2002, 52). Though it may be one of the pillars upon which the Jordanian monarchy stakes its claim to power, it does not protect the
regime from opposition and internal dissent. It did not prevent the outbreak of civil war from 1970-1971, and has not prevented any of the many internal demonstrations, protests, and uprisings that have occurred since the creation of the Jordanian state. According to Gause’s theory, the religious-traditional legitimacy of a regime can be verified if no one in the country can conceive of an alternative form of rule in the country. Therefore, when applying this test to Jordan, cultural legitimacy as a reason for the persistence of authoritarianism in Jordan falls flat.

This argument especially applies to the traditional base of support for the Jordanian monarchy: East Bank Jordanian tribes. As Yom and Gause point out, “[only] after a decade of social conflict and British support did local Bedouin confederations begin grudgingly to obey their foreign king” (Yom and Gause 2012, 5) and there have been a variety tribal uprisings across the country in the past decades due to a variety of issues and grievances that will be addressed in this thesis. This stands in stark contrast to the image provided by the monarchy of a unified East Bank tribal population that retains constant loyalty to the King, and demonstrates that “the near-absolute power wielded by Arab royals originates not from some ancient cultural essence but from modern colonialism, which turned weak and fragmented claims of dynastic authority into centralized autocracies” (Yom and Gause 2012, 5); in Jordan’s case, this authority is based around a foreign ruling family, even if they claim religious, dynastic legitimacy to the throne.

This thesis will use these arguments dispelling the notion of cultural legitimacy for authoritarian regimes in the Middle East to counter the popular view that East Bank Jordanian tribes are loyal to the Jordanian regime due to inherent
historical, social, and religious factors that legitimize the rule of the Hashemite monarchy. Numerous tribal uprisings through Jordan’s history, including the most recent demonstrations and protests from 2011 to 2013 among various East Bank Jordanian opposition elements, serve to disprove the assertion that the Jordanian monarchy can effectively exert a historical and religious legitimacy that counteracts internal dissent and opposition among significant portions of its traditional tribal base of support. For example, as Yom states, East Bank Jordanian demonstrators repeatedly crossed “red-lines” of opposition during the Arab Spring protests, criticizing and insulting King Abdullah I and the Hashemite monarchy in unprecedented fashion (Yom 2014). This thesis will falsify theories of the cultural legitimacy of the Hashemite regime in contributing the persistence of authoritarianism in Jordan within its main analysis of how and why the traditional state-tribal social contract in Jordan is transforming, and what implications this holds for future social and political stability in the country.

The Arab Spring and Challenges to Authoritarianism

The Arab Spring uprisings began in December 2010 with a wave of protests in Tunisia that deposed President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali and quickly spread across the region, serving as the catalyst for mass uprisings and demonstrations across the Arab world. The international shock generated by the advent of the Arab Spring led many to question whether the relevancy of the factors that had traditionally been considered as ensuring the persistence of authoritarianism in the Middle East, or whether the extensive literature on this subject should be discarded entirely in light of regional
events. However, not all authoritarian regimes in the region succumbed to the popular uprisings, and many Arab countries even experienced a significant resurgence of authoritarian government and security structures. Bellin argues that, though almost no one predicted the rise of mass unrest against the repressive governing systems of the region, “[the] primary contribution of the ‘persistence of authoritarianism’ literature has been to explain the puzzling survival of authoritarian regimes in the region, some lasting as long as thirty, forty, or even seventy years. The insights developed by this literature… are no less valid just because two or three Arab regimes were toppled in the wake of mass protest in 2011” (Bellin 2012, 143).

In Jordan, massive popular demonstrations and protests did not result in regime change, and achieved minimal reforms on a political and economic level that will not be able to effectively address general grievances in the long-term. The fact that Jordan and many other regimes in the region remained politically intact, with some even adopting a more stringent form of authoritarian rule, after the Arab Spring largely ended in 2013 indicates that at least some of the traditional arguments for the persistence of authoritarianism that have been covered in this chapter might still apply to Jordan during and post-Arab Spring. This thesis will investigate whether the current stability of the Hashemite regime is due to the explanations offered in pre-existing literature on the persistence of authoritarianism in Jordan, or to other reasons.

Many scholars argue that rentier state dynamics and its contribution to the persistence of authoritarianism are just as applicable in post-Arab Spring Jordan. Yom and Tobin contend that, as a result of the extensive political and security linkages between Jordan and the West, tremendous economic rewards have been
gifted to Jordan by the West in order to shore up its patchwork economy and retain its status as one of the West’s staunchest allies in the region. Should Jordan be threatened with significant popular uprisings and subsequent regime change “the costs of such instability could be as great as Western involvement and a civil war” (Tobin 2012, 106). The benefits of extensive Western aid, in particular from the United States, are essential to the Jordanian economy and its national security, and allowed the Hashemite regime to maintain the resources necessary to survive the Arab Spring protests. However, Jordan’s deep connections with the West were often a source of contention during Arab Spring demonstrations in the country, and the massive influx of Syrian and Iraqi refugees into Jordan since 2011 have further strained an already-struggling economy. As a result, future popular uprisings that seriously threaten a Hashemite regime that has been continually loyal to Western interests may elicit foreign intervention or harmful policies that could further fracture a fragile society and economy.

Bellin stresses that the coercive apparatus played a major role in determining whether or not a ruling government would be toppled by popular movements during the Arab Spring. When mass uprisings within a country overwhelm the ability of police forces to control the populace, the regime will normally rely on the backing of the military to ensure its survival and continued dominance. As a result, “it is sufficient to look at the character of the military and its capacity and will to repress in order to reckon the immediate chances of regime survival” (Bellin 2012, 120). Many of the militaries of the Middle East retained the capacity and weaponry to dispel
popular protests through purely violent means during the Arab Spring, yet not all of them were willing to crack down on protesters using full, or even any, force.

The extent of the military’s loyalty to the regime, as well as the interests of the military in preserving its status within the country and the potentially costly nature of firing on civilian demonstrators, played a pivotal role in the success or violent failure of these various popular movements. In Jordan, much of the military largely remained loyal to the regime and did not, for the most part, employ deadly force on demonstrators; according to Bellin’s hypothesis, this played a central role in the Jordanian regime’s survival. This may be seen as surprising, as the Jordanian military has traditionally been characterized by patrimonialism and nepotism that have traditionally favored East Bank Jordanian elites and, where military leaders are bound to the regime through familial or ethnic ties, “military elite becomes deeply invested in the regime’s survival and perceives regime change as possibly ruinous” (Bellin 2012, 133). This type of behavior often leads to deadly conflict between military forces and protesters, but this was not the case in Jordan.

However, as was mentioned earlier in this chapter and will be explored further in this thesis, alterations within the traditional structure of the Jordanian military have escalated tensions between the monarchy and its East Bank Jordanian constituency, and between the monarchy and its military establishment. Moreover, the Jordanian military actually clamped down on East Bank Jordanian activism during the Arab Spring much more violently and coercively than with other opposition groups. As Yom states, the Jordanian police and mukhabarat (Jordanian intelligence forces) “arrested hundreds of Hirak youth on charges of slandering the monarchy or violating
public order” (Yom, 235) and a violent campaign of repression of protests in rural
tribal areas of Jordan even led to the brutalization by some East Bank Jordanians in
the gendarmerie forces of their relatives in the crowd; ordered to put down the tribal
protests, these forces would “beat them especially hard for embarrassing the tribe and
family” (Yom, 236). Not only did this symbolize a rift between East Bank Jordanian
communities and the regime establishment, but it indicated that the Hashemite regime
viewed East Bank Jordanian activists as the most pressing threat to the stability of the
country.

In contrast to much of this existing literature, this thesis contends that the
Arab Spring protests in Jordan, and their effects on traditional state-tribal relations,
directly challenged traditional arguments of the persistence of authoritarianism and
the old system of state patronage and co-optation with regards to East Bank Jordanian
communities in Jordan. The actual threat that the Arab Spring protests presented to
the regime in Jordan was the unprecedented social mobilization and rise of activism
among East Bank segments of the population that had previously been loath to enter
the political arena. These involve, in other words, the East Bank Jordanian protests
and opposition movements. In these cases, many of the traditional arguments of
persistence of authoritarianism in Jordan, namely coalition building through state
patronage and co-optation, satisfying coalitions through the rentier state apparatus
and welfare system, incorporating social groups and suppressing dissent within the
coercive apparatus, and the cultural legitimacy of the Hashemite regime, were wrong.
This is representative of the fact that the social contract between the Hashemite
regime and their East Bank Jordanian tribal constituents is changing in a post-Arab Spring Jordan.

The Arab Spring uncovered a variety of weaknesses within the social and political fabric of Jordan, many of which had been traditionally considered to be foundations upon which the Hashemite regime maintained its power and stability. As Bellin maintains, before the Arab Spring, societies across the Middle East had seen relatively low levels of political mobilization and popular movements. This is not to say that there had never previously periods of popular protest or insurrection, but that no Arab country “had seen the massive, sustained, cross-class, political mobilization of the sort that forced regime change in South Korea, Eastern Europe, Latin America, or sub-Saharan Africa” (Bellin 2012, 135). The repressiveness of the authoritarian regimes in the region had made it extremely costly, both personally and politically, to stage any kind of serious opposition to ruling governments. As a result, the social mobilization that spread across the Middle East during the Arab Spring shocked analysts, scholars, and the international community, alike. Bellin points to four factors, long-standing grievances, an emotional trigger, a sense of impunity, and access to new social media, as contributing to the sheer size and cross-class character of the Arab Spring popular protests.

In Jordan, the Arab Spring protests laid bare societal fault lines and grievances that showed themselves through large, wide-scale demonstrations across the country; however, this phenomenon was most noticeable among marginalized, frustrated, and impoverished East Bank Jordanian communities. Scholars such as Yom and Greenfield argue that large opposition groups like the Palestinian-dominated Muslim
Brotherhood and its political wing, the Islamic Action Front, though among the most well-organized and efficient opposition groups in the country, are hampered by their religious orientation, perceived loyalty to monarchical demands, and the popular assumption that they primarily represent the Palestinian-Jordanian community and exploit youth activist groups; this “makes it difficult to build coalitions with secularists, or form alliances with other youth organizations or other youth-led initiatives” (Greenfield 2013, 3). Moreover, the public protests in Jordan during the Arab Spring were noticeably absent of any significant Palestinian presence. Rather, the most jarring social mobilization for the Hashemite regime came from among East Bank tribal portion of the Jordanian population.

The rise of East Bank Jordanian activism was one of the most significant developments in Jordan during the Arab Spring. Moreover, unlike previous relatively minor protests that had been focused on mainly economic grievances, many of the East Bank demonstrations of the Arab Spring shockingly focused on political demands and reform for the first time since the formation of the Jordanian state. Yom contends that the East Bank Jordanian opposition seen during the Arab Spring protests made unprecedented demands upon the Hashemite regime, and did so in unparalleled, and occasionally extremely contentious, fashion. He argues that nowhere else was this more readily apparent than within the Hirak, East Bank tribal youth movements that “shattered the implicit redlines of protocol that had long constrained the boundaries of legal dissent in the country. Angry with repeated refusals from above to honor democratic reform promises, and constantly besieged by threats of repression, tribal youths organized innumerable demonstrations that
ridiculed the monarchy and royal family, demanded King ‘Abdullah’s abdication, and even called for the regime’s downfall” (Yom 2014, 230). This significant yet disorganized movement posed a more serious threat to the traditional system of tribal co-optation and acquiescence through its radical demands for political restructure and reform. These were often focused on the monarchy, political beneficiaries, and the security apparatus, all of which had traditionally favored the regime’s East Bank constituency.

However, the Hirak movement was not the only significant East Bank opposition force during this period. East Bank Jordanian nationalists within the regime establishment, revolutionary East Bank Jordanian nationalists in tribal communities, and the more moderate urban East Bank Jordanian activism composed joined many other East Bank coalitions and opposition groups to voice demands and concessions from the Hashemite regime. Yom’s work on East Bank Jordanian activism, especially among the tribal youth-dominated Hirak movement during the Arab Spring period, will feature prominently in my analysis and the argument of my thesis will build upon his work in order to address the evolution of new social contract between the Hashemite regime and East Bank Jordanian communities in Jordan. This thesis will also build upon Yom’s argument that increased economic and political marginalization among East Bank Jordanian communities has given rise to this unprecedented activism, especially among youth and rural tribal communities, in forming the argument that grievances and perceptions of relative deprivation within East Bank Jordanian communities are the cause of discontent with the Hashemite regime and the implicit renegotiation of the state-tribal social contract.
Despite the fact that the Hashemite monarchy was faced with unprecedented social mobilization during this time period, the popular protests in Jordan resulted in very little tangible political change or reform. Bellin also addresses the uprisings in Jordan and other countries in the region that did not result in regime change despite the fact that “[the] emotional triggers that propelled people into the streets, for example, the self-immolation of ‘martyrs’ and the exposure to the astonishing victory of ‘people power’ over dictators, were present” in these countries (Bellin 2012, 139).

Furthermore, the use of social media was extremely prevalent throughout the protests in Jordan and many segments of the population did, indeed, harbor long-standing grievances with the regime. This means that none of the factors that Bellin identified as being important to the success of protests in countries like Egypt and Tunisia are either necessary or sufficient to explain the incidence or success of mass protest witnessed in other countries during the Arab Spring (Bellin 2012, 139). Though King Abdullah issued a series of reforms designed to quell any threatening opposition forces, Yom points out that the regime “contented itself with making only the shallowest of political reforms” (Yom 2013, 127) and instituted more repressive policies while strengthening the role of the security apparatus. Consequently, he contends that the opposition in Jordan failed to make significant accomplishments because of these coercive measures undertaken by the regime and security apparatus in conjunction with the worsening civil war in Syria contributed to the chilling effect on the East Bank Jordanian opposition at the end of 2012 (Yom 2014, 247). This thesis will build upon this pre-existing literature to assert that the Syrian conflict did, and continues to, quiet East Bank Jordanian activism and opposition; however, it will
argue that the demands and desires of marginalized East Bank Jordanians for significant reform and change did not die with the street protests, and that shifting norms and parameters within the state-tribal social contract will facilitate future unrest among tribal communities at an indeterminable point in the future.

Current developments in state-tribal relations in Jordan have challenged much of the pre-existing literature on the persistence of authoritarianism in Jordan and the region both before and after the Arab Spring. This thesis will address the core issues that caused this sudden outpouring of East Bank Jordanian activism, issues that are currently being exacerbated by the deepening crisis in the region and Jordan’s fragile economic situation. In doing so, it will examine how the social contract between East Bank Jordanian tribes and the Hashemite monarchy is evolving, and consequently will problematize the accepted arguments of state patronage and co-optation, state rentier dynamics, the coercive apparatus, and cultural legitimacy that have been considered key factors in maintaining the traditional state-tribal relationship and preserving authoritarian order in Jordan. By utilizing recent literature on the Arab Spring protests and East Bank Jordanian activism in Jordan, along with significant input from original research and interviews, this thesis will demonstrate that an evolving social contract between the Hashemite regime and many East Bank Jordanian communities challenges prior literature and pre-conceived notions of authoritarianism and state-tribal relations in Jordan; in doing so, it will analyze implications for future state-tribal relations and socio-political stability in Jordan. The following chapter will provide the theoretical argument of this thesis in its examination of the relative deprivation of East Bank Jordanians, subsequent tribal
activism and opposition, and nascent transformations within the state-tribal social contract.
Chapter 2: Providing a Theoretical Argument for East Bank Jordanian Relative Deprivation and the Transformation of the State-Tribal Social Contract

The four factors discussed in the last chapter, state co-optation of tribes, rentier state dynamics, the coercive apparatus, and cultural legitimacy, are most often considered the bedrock upon which the Hashemite regime has retained the loyalty of the country’s East Bank tribal demographic throughout its history and remained internally stable. However, I argue that these factors no longer ensure a stable and amicable relationship between the Hashemite regime and the East Bank Jordanian population, and are not the main explanations for the current stability of Jordan. Instead, we are witnessing a new state-tribal contract emerging from neoliberal policies and various grievances within a country that remains stable because of external security threats and consequent domestic fear of excessive internal unrest and instability.

The Arab Spring protests in Jordan that caught fire among East Bank Jordanian constituents serve as proof of this assessment. However, the Arab Spring period in Jordan can also be viewed as a high-water mark for public East Bank Jordanian protest and opposition in the country. Organized demonstrations have largely disappeared from the streets of Amman and most other major Jordanian cities in recent months, and tribal areas that had been red-hot centers of unrest only a few years ago are now relatively quiet and calm. Nonetheless, the same critical issues that
led to this explosion of protest among East Bank Jordanians have not gone away; if anything, they have only worsened. Recent political and economic reforms put in place by Jordanian authorities have done little to change the status quo or fix existing problems, and have in some cases exacerbated tensions between the state and the East Bank Jordanian population.

Consequently, the common view of East Bank Jordanians as loyal backers of the regime in the present day factors must be seriously questioned, and so must the traditional factors that have explained the persistence of authoritarianism in Jordan and the stability of the Jordanian state. The theoretical argument provided by this thesis will explain the new dynamics in the current socio-political interactions between East Bank Jordanians and the Hashemite regime, and will analyze how extensive marginalization among this segment of the population is leading to an evolution in the state-tribal social contract that has profound implications for the future political and societal stability of Jordan.

The theory presented in this thesis is threefold. It first makes the argument that heightened grievances facing segments of the population that have traditionally held a privileged relationship with the regime through historical co-optation and incorporation into the state structure lead to relative deprivation within these groups. In other words, structural reforms implemented by the government and domestic socio-economic issues result in transformations to the state patronage system that inflict a variety of grievances upon co-opted social groups. These reforms and issues lessen the benefits accrued by co-opted segments of the population in the social contract held between the regime and these groups. As a result, co-opted social
groups view these transformations in relation to past privileges and benefits that are now disappearing and to the increased welfare of other social groups, thereby leading to perceptions of relative deprivation. Secondly, it argues that, as a result of relative deprivation, frustration and discontent arise within the co-opted segments of the population and, consequently, the existing social contract between the ruling authority and co-opted social groups undergoes significant internal pressure and will evolve according to the demands and desires of the co-opted groups. The third part of the argument asserts that external factors and international conflict can influence these internal societal machinations by affecting the co-opted group’s desire for protest and opposition. Therefore, the theoretical argument posed by this thesis asserts that the stability of regimes is decided by internal forces and is driven by the degree of relative deprivation experienced by co-opted segments of the population. However, it holds that external events and factors can retain the status quo within a regime despite the evolution of a new social contract by dampening the desire for continued, substantial opposition among co-opted groups.

Therefore, the three determinants of this theoretical argument are 1) the level of grievances and relative deprivation in co-opted segments of a population, 2) the level of frustration and opposition and subsequent pressure on the traditional ruling bargain and system of co-optation, and 3) international conflict and external circumstances. As a result, this thesis presents a multi-faceted theoretical argument; it is a structural, grievance-based argument that addresses the instrumental aspects of bargaining between regimes and their populations, while also containing an important international dimension.
When applied to Jordan, the theoretical argument of this thesis addresses the deterioration and unsustainability of the ruling bargain in Jordan through the lenses of these three theoretical determinants. It begins with historical contextualization of the state-tribal relationship in the country, and then analyzes how neoliberal structural reforms implemented by the Hashemite regime led to the gradual economic and political marginalization and relative deprivation of many East Bank Jordanian communities. Secondly, it examines how this sense of relative deprivation, in turn, led to unprecedented East Bank Jordanian opposition during the Arab Spring protests and to the evolution of a new social contract between the regime and East Bank Jordanian communities that is seriously challenging the socio-political norms of past state-tribal relations in the Hashemite Kingdom. Lastly, this theoretical argument explores why revisions to the state-tribal social contract have not given rise to significant social, economic, or political change in Jordan, asserting that the Syrian conflict has quieted East Bank Jordanian opposition by intensifying Jordanian fears of internal conflict and civil war. Thus, the theoretical framework provided by this thesis balances East Bank Jordanian grievances and desires with the reality on the ground, thereby positing that Jordan is currently stable in spite of a changing state-tribal social contract because of domestic security concerns due to regional war and violence.

This theoretical framework also makes several key assumptions about ruling bargains between regimes and co-opted social groups with regards to East Bank Jordanian behavior in the state-tribal social contract in Jordan. It assumes that East Bank Jordanians are rational and that they evaluate economic and political well-being in relation to other parts of the Jordanian population, thereby allowing for collective
perceptions of relative deprivation among marginalized East Bank Jordanian communities. This theoretical argument also assumes that East Bank Jordanians have agency in the state-tribal social contract, and that the state-tribal relationship is not a relationship of tribal acquiescence where the Hashemite regime can buy off and placate East Bank Jordanian communities with economic concessions and favors. To the contrary, this argument assumes that agency in the social contract goes both ways; both the Hashemite regime and East Bank Jordanian tribal communities can implicitly redefine and renegotiate the parameters of the state-tribal ruling bargain in Jordan.

**Grievances and Relative Deprivation**

The first part of the theoretical framework of this thesis posits that regime-sponsored transformations to the state patronage system through structural reform can give rise to significant grievances and hardship among co-opted segments of the population that are dependent upon government assistance. These now-struggling co-opted groups subsequently witness both the disappearance of past privileges and welfare previously accrued to them and the rise of other social groups in the country that are benefiting from the new structural adjustments. As a result, these co-opted segments of the population are susceptible to perceptions of relative deprivation.

I borrow Gurr’s argument of relative deprivation and apply it to social groups historically co-opted by a regime. Intended as a concept that helped explain the causes of political protest and rebellion, relative deprivation can be defined as the experience when an individual or group is deprived of goods or services to which
they feel entitled, especially in comparison their past condition or to those individuals or groups around them (Gurr 1970). Moreover, in an updated version of his argument, Gurr contends that relative deprivation cannot just be explained through feelings of injustice in comparison to another group, and that “[the] politics of identity are central to understanding people’s reference groups, their sense of collective injustice, and their susceptibility to appeals for political action” (Gurr 2015, 4). The theoretical framework of this thesis builds upon Gurr’s argument and asserts that co-opted segments of populations are susceptible to perceptions of relative deprivation in the event of structural transformations within state patronage that lessen traditional privileges while increasingly benefiting other social groups in the country. Most, if not all, members of the co-opted group will have a similar stake in the preservation of the status quo relationship with the regime. Therefore, due to this collective, traditionally privileged role within the state apparatus and welfare system, alterations in government assistance structures that transfer resources and benefits to other social groups in the country will result in a collective sense of relative deprivation among those previously co-opted segments of the population.

When applied to the ruling bargain between the Hashemite regime and East Bank Jordanian tribes, the first part of this theoretical argument addresses the deterioration of the state patronage and welfare system between the state and the majority of its East Bank Jordanian constituents, thereby laying the foundation for East Bank Jordanian relative deprivation. These developments can be traced to the neoliberal economic and structural reforms initiated in Jordan in 1989 that continue to the present day, as well as to significant structural transformations within the
Jordanian political and military spheres during this period. The neoliberal structural adjustments undertaken by the Jordanian regime, in combination with serious issues in education and infrastructure, made the previous system of state-tribal patronage and co-optation unsustainable, thus leading to severe economic and social issues that inflicted significant harm upon many East Bank Jordanian communities.

As a result, many East Bank Jordanians experienced relative deprivation and began to lose faith in the regime’s capacity and desire to provide for its tribal constituency. As Yom asks, “…if support from tribal communities has been central to its very survival, why would the Jordanian monarchy ever pursue policies that would threaten, marginalize, and otherwise injure them?” (Yom 2014, 237); many frustrated East Bank Jordanians wondered the very same thing. As the focus of this thesis, East Bank Jordanians, especially in the rural areas of Jordan, have felt collectively deprived of traditional social, economic, and political privileges that had been afforded them throughout most of Jordan’s history due to these neoliberal economic policies and structural reforms, and watched as urban, majority-Palestinian areas of the country benefited from the new developments sponsored by the Hashemite regime.

Consequently, discontent and unrest steadily grew within tribal communities until it found a more powerful outlet during the Arab Spring protests in Jordan, during which time significant East Bank Jordanian opposition to the Hashemite regime resulted in unprecedented popular pressure and a transformation of the socio-political norms that characterized the old state-tribal contract. The second part of the theoretical argument proposed by this thesis addresses the effects of relative
deprivation on the level of frustration and protest within a co-opted segment of the population that is directed towards the regime, and the subsequent pressures to redefine the parameters of the old social contract between the regime and the co-opted social group.

Relative Deprivation, Opposition, and Renegotiating the Social Contract

The second variable of this theoretical argument involves the process by which relative deprivation encourages co-opted segments of the population to challenge the boundaries of their traditional social contract with the regime. Loss of privileges combined with a perceived rise in the economic and social status of other groups within the country causes co-opted social groups to question the merits of their relationship with the regime. Following Gurr’s argument that relative deprivation and loss of past privileges leads to collective frustrations and political protest among groups sharing a similar political identity, co-opted segments of society that shared a similar stake in the regime will form protest movements revolving around their collective perceptions of an apparent campaign of marginalization and disenfranchisement being waged upon them by the regime. Gurr further elaborates on the growth of protest movements stemming from relative deprivation by arguing that, “[deprivation-induced] discontent is a general spur to action… The specificity of this impulse to action is determined by men’s beliefs about the sources of deprivation, and about the normative and utilitarian justifiability of violent action directed at the agents responsible for it” (Gurr 13, 1970). Gurr calls this the frustration-aggression relationship, in which the intensity of deprivation is
directly correlated with potential for collective violence. One of the basic hypotheses of relative deprivation is the greater the intensity and scope of relative deprivation in a population, the greater the potential for collective unrest and protest among the societal group that feels deprived and victimized (Gurr 1970). In other words, anger functions as a drive for social unrest and violence.

I utilize Gurr’s theory and develop it within my theoretical framework to argue that frustration and discontent among marginalized members of a co-opted social group that perceives once-guaranteed opportunities and welfare slipping away from them will, in response, protest and oppose the regime in demanding for reforms to the economic and socio-political systems at fault. As a result, significant pressure will be applied upon the regime to meet those demands. If adequate reforms are not made, significant pressure will be applied to the existing social contract between the regime and the co-opted social group that will challenge the traditional norms of their relationship. As Gough stated in his hypothesis on social contracts of governance, “if [the ruler] misgoverns the contract is broken and allegiance is at an end” (Gough 1936, 2-3); inadequate attempts to address their plight will be viewed by the co-opted social group as a violation of pre-existing conditions with the traditional social contract, and they will therefore push for a reform of the old ruling bargain.

In calling for reform through activist and opposition, these co-opted groups will redefine the parameters of the pre-existing social contract held between them and the regime. Unrest among these co-opted groups will challenge the legitimacy and stability of the ruling regime in their protests and demands for reform. Traditional norms of interaction between the co-opted group and the regime will shift as
extensive demonstrations among the co-opted group criticize and threaten the ruling authorities that had once acted as their patrons. Therefore, in sum, relative deprivations leads to frustration and opposition, which in turn leads to significant pressure and revision of the old social contract between the regime and co-opted segments of the population. The result is the evolution of a new social contract with new socio-political norms that is being implicitly renegotiated by frustrated members of marginalized co-opted groups in their activism and opposition against the regime.

When applied to Jordan, this theoretical argument addresses how East Bank Jordanian opposition stemming from their relative deprivation has challenged the socio-political norms of the traditional state-tribal social contract and has, consequently, led to the evolution of a new social contract between East Bank Jordanian communities and the Hashemite regime. Relative deprivation and grievances facing many segments of the East Bank Jordanian population gave rise to mass East Bank Jordanian opposition during the Arab Spring protests. Though spontaneous bouts of East Bank Jordanian unrest have occurred through Jordan’s history and more frequently in the past decades since the implementation of neoliberal structural reforms by the Hashemite regime, the East Bank Jordanian mobilization seen during the Arab Spring protests was unprecedented in both its scale and demands. New elements of tribal opposition exposed generational divides within the East Bank Jordanian population between conservative tribal leaders and tribal youth activists. They also fostered radical forms of protest that ranged from controversial to revolutionary within tribal youth protest movements and East Bank Jordanian nationalist opposition forces. In doing so, East Bank Jordanian opposition
during the Arab Spring protests challenged the legitimacy and stability of the Hashemite regime, and normalized forms of protest and demonstration that were once considered unthinkable from the traditional tribal bulwark of support for the Hashemite regime.

As a result, the socio-political norms of the state-tribal social contract in Jordan were seriously challenged and underwent significant revision. The elements of East Bank Jordanian activism that appeared during the Arab Spring protests, including generational divides and a radical framework for protest that facilitated previously unprecedented East Bank Jordanian demands and forms of demonstration, asserted significant pressure upon the parameters of the traditional state-tribal relationship. These noteworthy changes in the socio-political dynamics between East Bank Jordanians and the Hashemite regime transformed the foundation of the traditional contract held between the Hashemite regime and East Bank Jordanian tribes. As a result, the new elements that appeared within East Bank Jordanian opposition during the Arab Spring protests can be identified as elements of a new state-tribal contract that is currently emerging. East Bank Jordanian opposition laid the groundwork for the evolution of a new social contract that rejects the flawed, unsustainable systems of state patronage and tribal acquiescence that had previously defined state-tribal relations in the old social contract. Moreover, these new developments in the social contract are being renegotiated and redefined by East Bank Jordanians rather than the Hashemite regime, which had been the principle actor in altering the rules of the state-tribal ruling bargain during the implementation of neoliberal structural reforms.
This new social contract is being driven by a nascent political awakening within marginalized tribal communities, especially among the youth, that arose during the Arab Spring period and is altering the socio-political norms of state-tribal transactions and interactions. Moreover, the parameters of this new social contract are being molded by a deteriorating relationship between East Bank Jordanian communities and the Hashemite monarchy, and the strengthening role of tribal identity within East Bank Jordanian opposition movements and perceptions of the Jordanian political system. The consequences of these transformations within the state-tribal contract are unknown, but they portend the possibility of significant change in the Jordanian social, political, and economic spheres in the near future and have led to an uneasy stability in the Hashemite Kingdom.

The Effects of International Conflict and External Circumstances

The third part of this theoretical argument addresses how the evolution of a new social contract between a co-opted social group and the regime can fail to actually change the status quo economic and socio-political systems within the country. As outlined in the previous section of this chapter, the theoretical framework proposed in this thesis argues that, if a regime does not meet the demands for reform of the co-opted segments of the population, then substantial revision of the traditional social contract will occur. However, this third part of the argument contends that external factors and international conflict can influence these internal societal machinations by affecting the co-opted group’s desire for continued protest and opposition. Though coercive measures and crackdowns on dissent employed by the
regime also contribute to the fracturing of opposition, I argue that they are not the principle reason for the continued stability of the regime and state systems that have provoked co-opted groups into protest and opposition. Instead, this stability can be explained by fear of domestic unrest among co-opted groups, which is driven by international conflict and external circumstances.

Therefore, though the reform of the old social contract is decided by the degree of relative deprivation of co-opted segments of the population and is driven by their protest and opposition, the final variable of this theoretical argument holds that international conflict and circumstances can prop-up the status quo within the economic and socio-political systems governed by the regime despite the evolution of a new social contract. Though they do not prevent or halt the transformation of the social contract held between the regime and co-opted segments of society, international circumstances can delay the societal effects of a new social contract by changing the protest behavior of opposition forces and instigating a temporary fear of internal conflict, chaos, and civil war within co-opted groups.

This phenomenon can be explained through sociological application of the “contagion effect,” which theorizes that “affect, attitudes, beliefs and behaviour can indeed spread through populations as if they were somehow infectious” (Marsden 1998). This concept, when applied to international unrest and conflict, can explain the possibility of the spread of unrest or conflict across national borders and regions. The Middle East has been susceptible to a variety of contagion effects in the past. As Sadiki points out, “[the] most evident contagion effect in the 1950s and 1960s was that of Nasser’s military revolution of 1952 and attendant pan-Arab ideology…. A
quasi domino effect unfolded as coups in Algeria (1965), Iraq (1958), Syria (1954), Sudan (1958), Libya (1969), and North Yemen (1954) propelled the military into power. Similarly, the Ba’athist coup in Iraq in February 1963 proved infectious in neighbouring Syria whose own Ba’thists staged a coup a month later” (Sadiki 2009, 157). The Arab Spring popular movements that began in Tunisia in 2011 and quickly spread across much of the Middle East and North Africa also serve as a prime example of a sociological, region-wide “contagion effect.”

This theoretical argument, however, applies the “contagion effect” in a different manner. It asserts that domestic societal fear of the “contagion effect” in times of international chaos and conflict, especially among neighboring countries, can dampen the opposition of co-opted social groups that risks severely altering the status quo and creating the possibility for internal instability and civil war. Therefore, though the co-opted social group implicitly renegotiates a new social contract through opposition and protest, international circumstances can create a domestic fear of instability within populace that temporarily delays continued opposition and the full societal, political, and economic effects of the new developments in the ruling bargain.

In application to the case of Jordan, this final variable of the theoretical argument explains the absence of East Bank Jordanian opposition on the Jordanian streets in the present day despite the evolution of a new social contract between East Bank Jordanian communities and the Hashemite regime. As explained in the previous section, relative deprivation among East Bank Jordanians gave rise to a variety of tribal movements, demonstrations, and protests that demanded significant political
and economic change from the Hashemite regime and catalyzed the evolution of a new state-tribal social contract. However, despite these developments, public East Bank Jordanian opposition has largely disappeared within Jordan in the years following the Arab Spring protests in the country. Though the Hashemite regime did not meet the demands of the East Bank Jordanian opposition, thereby giving rise to new state-tribal social contract, many of the same economic and socio-political issues that originally marginalized East Bank Jordanian communities remain prevalent.

The theoretical framework provided by this thesis challenges the two most commonly cited reasons for the disappearance of public East Bank Jordanian protest: the implementation of reforms by the Hashemite regime and crackdowns on dissent and opposition carried out by the Jordanian security apparatus. Contrary to popular opinion, the Hashemite regime did not implement reforms that adequately solved or addressed the various grievances that initially gave rise to relative deprivation of East Bank Jordanians, and the majority of East Bank Jordanians continue to be afflicted by feelings of marginalization and disenfranchisement. Furthermore, though the Hashemite regime did not set its military upon the local population, it did employ significant policing measures in response to popular unrest during the Arab Spring protests, especially with regards to the East Bank Jordanian opposition movements. However, these measures did not abolish East Bank Jordanian opposition movements, as tribal activism continued despite regime crackdowns on dissent throughout the Arab Spring protests. Nevertheless, mass mobilization among East Bank Jordanians has largely subsided or been absent from Jordanian streets in recent months.
This theoretical argument posits that the Syrian conflict and the subsequent fear of domestic unrest and instability in Jordan silenced public East Bank Jordanian opposition and has temporarily tempered the societal effects of a new, nascent state-tribal social contract. A domestic fear of the sociological “contagion effect” with regards to the Syrian conflict inflicted East Bank Jordanian activists with the fear that the growing violence and instability in Syria could spread to Jordan if internal protests and opposition continued to threaten the stability of the Hashemite regime. In other words, these tribal opposition forces recognize that Jordan is not immune from the spillover effects of the conflict in Syria and its consequences, which include a growing Syrian refugee crisis and the proliferation of extremist militant groups. As a result, though tribal opposition elements has facilitated the transformation of a new social contract between East Bank Jordanian communities and the Hashemite regime and continue to desire serious systemic reform, the Syrian conflict is temporarily dissuading them from continuing public protests and possibly tipping Jordan’s fragile stability into the direction of a civil war reminiscent of the Syrian situation. Therefore, the new state-tribal contract has not yet resulted in substantial social, political, or economic change in Jordan in the present day, and currently boils under the surface of an uneasy stability within the Hashemite Kingdom.

Implications of this Theoretical Argument

What are the implications of the theoretical argument proposed by this thesis in the case of Jordan? Though serious opposition, and consequent political instability and reform, may be out of the question for now, does the evolution of a new state-
tribal social contract foreshadow significant political unrest and change in the near future? Will East Bank Jordanian anger and dissatisfaction simply remain bottled up for the foreseeable future while Syria burns next door?

This thesis argues that, given the persistence of relative deprivation and the various grievances afflicting East Bank Jordanian communities, there are several possible scenarios: 1) mass East Bank Jordanian opposition will rise again after the conclusion of the Syrian conflict, 2) if given a catalyst that transforms their current dissatisfaction into spontaneous mass mobilization, East Bank Jordanian opposition will rise at a point in the near future before the end of the Syrian conflict, and 3) marginalized, disaffected East Bank Jordanians will be drawn into radical ideologies and groups, and will constitute a significant internal security threat for the Hashemite regime. The last scenario may already be occurring within Jordan and represents an additional destabilizing factor for the regime, though it does not necessarily involve the new state-tribal social contract as discussed previously. However, I will argue that the evolving state-tribal social contract will play a core role in future tribal opposition movements, as will the emerging political awakening occurring within many East Bank Jordanian communities. Whether opposition arises again from the East Bank Jordanian hinterlands before or after the Syrian conflict ends, the socio-political norms set during the Arab Spring protests will drive the agenda and demands of future East Bank Jordanian activists. Nevertheless, only time will tell how these transformations occurring within East Bank Jordanian communities will serve to affect the stability of the Jordanian political and social systems in the future.
Lastly, this theoretical argument also has broader implications for the relationship between regimes and co-opted segments of societies in a variety of contexts. It provides a general structure with which to analyze the effectiveness and sustainability of social contracts between ruler and ruled, and the effects that social and economic reforms can have on these social contracts. As a result, it raises bigger questions on the general impact that reforms and revisions to ruling bargains can have on co-opted communities and on the social and political stability of the country in question.

The following chapter provides historical contextualization of the relationship between East Bank Jordanian tribes and the Hashemite regime in order to facilitate a better understanding of the past processes, strategies, and machinations that gradually developed the state-tribal social contract in the Hashemite Kingdom. The subsequent chapters will then empirically apply the three determinants of the theoretical argument as outlined in this chapter to more recent developments in the relationship between East Bank Jordanian communities and the Hashemite regime, with implications for future developments in the state-tribal social contract and for societal and political stability in Jordan.
Chapter 3: The Historical Relationship Between East Bank Jordanians and the Hashemite Regime

Figure 1: The Historical Locations of Major East Bank Jordanian Tribes in Jordan (Muhammad 1999, 71)
**Analytical Framework**

This chapter will utilize historical analysis of the contract between East Bank Jordanians and the Hashemite regime in order to provide contextual background for the development of the theoretical argument of this thesis. It will provide an overview of the historical relationship between East Bank Jordanian tribes and the Hashemite regime, and will focus on the development of state co-optation of tribes that resulted in their integration into Jordanian society and politics. It will initially begin with a brief overview of Arab tribes, and their social and political roles in state formation in the Middle East during the first half of the twentieth century.

Alon argues that a tribe, in the context of the Arabs of the Middle East, is “a group of people distinguished from other groups by notions of shared descent, whether real or imagined. This… best conforms to local conceptions of tribes in Arabia [the Middle East]” (Alon 2007, 8). Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad believes that “[what] traditionally makes a person ‘belong’ to a tribe is not merely successive degrees of genetic relationships… but rather that a person and his/her tribe think the same way; believe in the same principles; assimilate the same values and ethos; act according to the same unique rules and laws; respect the same hereditary Shaykh (Tribal Lord); live together; migrate together; defend each other; fight together, and die together” (Muhammad 1999, 13). Both of these definitions accurately describe the role of Arab tribes in the region. Tribes play an extremely important role in individual and familial identity, as well as the societal and political makeup of Middle Eastern societies.
Throughout the Middle East, states after the events of World War I have accommodated tribes into the state structure to varying degrees. For example, in the Gulf States, such as Yemen and Saudi Arabia, carrot-and-stick approaches to state co-optation and patronage of tribes built up tribal alliances that supported the regime in power. Alon points out that financial compensations, inter-familial and inter-tribal marriages, recognition of certain tribal branches, and forced exile of certain groups or individuals contributed to the state’s ability to control and co-opt tribal elements in society. However, often these policies did not necessarily serve to simply integrate tribes within the national body. Alon argues,

‘[The] link between the tribe and the state only deepened patron-client relations and strengthened the incentive to identify with a tribal group since social promotion became contingent upon finding a distinguished patron. Loyalty to the state remains weak as tribes transform themselves into pressure groups, lobbying for special benefits and defending particular interests. In this way tribes survive the forces of modernisation that were thought to erode tribal identities’” (Alon 2007, 9).

Though many of these state-tribe interactions accurately describe Jordan historically and in the present day, the East Bank tribes are unique in that Jordanian tribalism was conducive to the emergence of Jordanian nationalism in later years after the formation of the state. Jordanians of East Bank tribal descent, or “native” Jordanians, have origins that have traditionally been described as settled, semi-nomadic, and nomadic or Bedouin. As can be gleaned from Figure 1 above, numerous semi-nomadic and nomadic tribes and tribal confederations have historically dominated many of the areas east of the Jordan River that now comprise the state of Jordan (Muhammad 1999, 71). According to Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad, the roots of Jordanian tribes can be slotted into either “traditionally Settled (that is, urban
dwellers and/or farmers and peasants), Semi-Nomadic (that is, who move only twice a year and within a limited area, and rear sheep and goats) or Bedouin (that is, ‘fully nomadic’, i.e. who move thousands of miles into the inner deserts of Arabia and rear camels” (Muhammad 1999, 9). As will be explored in this chapter, these distinctions were vital to the political strategy and ability of the fledgling Jordanian state apparatus to co-opt Jordan’s most powerful and influential tribes and to build a long-lasting regime that survived through its incorporation of various tribal elements in the country.

By playing a major role in state formation in Jordan, East Bank Jordanian tribes gained privileged positions within the socio-political system of the country. Betty S. Anderson argues that those peoples affiliated with the formation of a state structure gained the ability to “define [the state’s] history, its boundaries, and its peoples… throughout the Fertile Crescent, notable families and tribal and village leaders all gained positions within the new colonial structures and thus became beholden to the states’ continued existence” (Anderson 2005, 17–18). She argues that the formation of the Jordanian state followed this same process. Through a multilateral approach to achieve the loyalty of East Bank tribes that involved the provision of services and the manipulation of tribal alliances, among other strategic policies, the Jordanian regime was able to involve Jordanian tribes in the formation of the state structure and keep tribal interests invested in the longevity of the state. This specific process of state formation began during the years of the British mandate in Jordan, and this early combination of a foreign, colonial regime with indigenous tribal
society resulted in the foundation of the social and political structures that exist in the country today.

This chapter will address the gradual formation of the ruling bargain between East Bank Jordanian tribes and the Hashemite regime through the analysis of separate time periods in Jordanian history in several sub-sections. The first section will analyze the years from 1916 to 1930, beginning with the Arab Revolt and the establishment of the British mandate era in what was then called Transjordan. During this period, co-optation of Jordanian tribes by a nascent Transjordanian government began with muted success and met significant tribal unrest and opposition. The second section will cover the years from 1930 through the late 1960s, when extensive patronage offered to Jordanian tribesmen within both the political and military spheres of the government led to the consolidation of government influence and control over of Jordan’s tribal communities and the successful incorporation of Jordanian tribesmen into Jordanian society and politics. However, Jordan also experienced sporadic bouts of tribal opposition in response to the growing power of the regime over the population during this time period. The next section addresses the Jordanian civil war of 1970-1971, after which the privileged status of East Bank Jordanians within Jordanian society, politics, and the security apparatus was fully cemented. The final section analyzes the years following the Jordanian civil war until the implementation of neoliberal economic reforms in 1989, with a focus on the increase in economic and political grievances afflicting East Bank Jordanians during this period that led to their relative deprivation.
During and directly after the Arab Revolt from 1916-1918, Prince Faisal, the son of Sharif Hussein bin Ali and a member of the Hashemite dynasty, cultivated alliances with many of the tribes of Transjordan. These tribes were active participants in the early Syrian National Congress formed after British and Arab forces seized Damascus from the Ottoman Empire in 1918. However, by the end of 1919, the new Arab government based in current-day Syria began to lose political influence in Transjordan.

A short time later, French intervention in Syria in 1920 led to the mandate-era in the Middle East and to the end of the dream of a unified Arab political body controlling the region. As Alon asserts, the state of society in Transjordan at this time was in flux and there was a restoration of tribal societal and political order with the absence of foreign influence. Jordanian tribes, nomadic, semi-settled, and settled, were redrawing internal political boundaries, establishing new alliances, strengthening old ones, and repositioning themselves to better adapt to the new political and social vacuum in the area (Alon 2007, 18).

In this climate, the British made their first attempt to control Transjordan through sponsorship of Abdullah I, other son of Sharif Hussein bin Ali, as Emir of Transjordan after his moves to liberate Damascus from the French after the forced expulsion of Prince Faisal. However, as Alon contends, poor understanding of the area and its people led the British to fail to successfully control the country. The inheritance of previous Ottoman government institutions as well as the establishment of colonial state infrastructures led to the creation of “a skeleton administration
complete with local bureaucrats, tax collectors, courts and a police force, all of which meant that Abdullah’s government did not have to start from scratch. This institutional configuration became the nucleus of the young Emirate” (Alon 2007, 35). Abdullah I’s fledgling regime was therefore faced with the challenge of controlling and earning the loyalty of “several well-organised tribal alliances, all armed to the teeth, with extensive military experience and able leadership” (Alon 2007, 36).

Abdullah I managed to gain the support of large tribal confederacies that controlled areas on both sides of the Hejaz railway stretching from Ma’an to Amman, namely the Huwaytat and Beni Sakhr tribes and their affiliates. Many other tribal leaders within cities such as Karak and ‘Ajlun ignored calls to ally with Abdullah I and maintained traditional local governance until Abdullah I entered Amman in March 1921. When he entered the capital city, Abdullah I garnered more support from these leaders. Alon writes, “[in] Qatrana, on his way to Amman, Abdullah received pledges of loyalty from the shaykhs of Karak and Tafila” (Alon 2007, 40). Alon contends that tribal leaders in Transjordan found an ally in Abdullah I during a time of extreme uncertainty and fear regarding the future of Transjordan, strained relations with British officials, and Jewish penetration into the region (Alon 2007, 39). However, Abdullah I also had cultural appeal to tribal leaders due to his religious heritage and knowledge of tribal customs and traditions, and had significant skills and experience in manipulating tribal politics to support his cause.

After assuming control of Amman, Abdullah I dissolved local governments created by the British and established a central administration staffed by Arab
nationalist exiles that oversaw the three newly established administrative provinces of ‘Ajlun, Balqa’ and Karak. He left the central government in the hands of his appointed officials, and made frequent trips into tribal territories to win support from nomad and semi-nomadic tribes. Abdullah I won the support of tribes through stage patronage and his own interpersonal skills in interactions with tribal leaders. As Alon states,

“[The] British financial assistance together with support from his father and money borrowed from rich Transjordanian merchants allowed him to cement his relationships with tribal shaykhs... [and] Abdullah lavished other privileges on the most important leaders. He offered presents ranging from headgear to cars, transferred plots of state land to private owners and exempted or reduced the tax burden for certain tribes. The Emir offered his new supporters public recognition and respect. He granted them honorary titles, invited them to public ceremonies, and allowed them to escort him on his many tours of the country to the extent that several of them become an integral part of his entourage. He often generously entertained them in his camp, or, more importantly, honoured them by visiting their homes. The chiefs enjoyed free access to the Emir, who acted on their behalf in government affairs, often bypassing and overruling government orders” (Alon 2007, 42).

As a result of Abdullah I’s extensive interactions the tribes, two almost separate forms of government. Nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes were under Abdullah’s personal rule, whereas the settled population was controlled by the central government. These tribal alliances were of vital importance to Abdullah I, as they allowed him to maintain regime survival through the strength of large tribes that could retain control of the country. These alliances provided him with the military power of allied tribes to defend it from external threats and incursions.

However, many of Jordan’s tribes did not so easily succumb to the gifts and influences of Abdullah I. By focusing his attention upon the nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes, Abdullah I inadvertently neglected settled tribes. As a result,
Abdullah I did not account for the power of several settled tribes when their dissatisfaction erupted into open rebellion. Through blatant non-settled tribe favoritism, as well as the exclusion of Transjordanians from positions of political power in the central government, many tribes began to loosely form opposition movements designed to make the government and policy decisions more inclusive of the entire population.

Several small revolts in 1921 and 1922 were put down militarily with the aid of the British, but strained relations between settled tribes and the regime resulted in the Balqa’ Revolt of 1923. A formative event in future state-tribal relations, the Balqa’ Revolt marked the last time a tribal chieftaincy launched an armed struggle to preserve their autonomy under a foreign ruler in Jordan. After hundreds of tribesmen confronted King Abdullah I, the Arab Legion and other government forces defeated the opposition tribal forces, resulting in the end of the Balqa’ tribal alliance.

Anderson states that, after this rebellion, “the tribes would slowly be subsumed into the Hashemite project through repression and co-optation. Tribes would serve as instruments of the state, not as initiators in their own right” (Anderson 2005, 45).

Though the central government did take tribal grievances into account and make several reforms after the Balqa’ Revolt, state-formation in Transjordan gained momentum and resulted in the consolidation of government control over much of tribal society. Abdullah I and the central government remained dependent upon tribal authority and law in the desert regions of Transjordan outside of the settled zones of the state, but the 1930s and the 1940s ushered in a new era, one in which the Hashemite regime’s increased dominance of the political, military and economic
spheres in the country paralleled the weakening of East Bank tribal society and its relegation to a position of dependence upon the government (Anderson 2005, 107).

1930 – 1970

During this time period, nomadic tribesmen also faced extreme poverty, and a lack of resources stretched the central government thin in its attempts to retain the support of its subjects. Increased taxation from the central government, the decline of camel nomadism, famine, and Saudi raids from the south most directly caused poverty among tribal communities (Bocco and Tell 1994). The Arab Legion, established in 1920, became the security force of Transjordan during this time. It played an integral role in providing employment opportunities for impoverished tribesmen and ensuring that Jordanian tribes remained a privileged sector within both Jordanian society and the political and security systems.

While the Arab Legion was under the command of British soldier John Bagot Glubb from 1939 to 1956, he recruited from the Huwaytat, Bani Sakhr, and Sirhan tribes, which had up to this point avoided direct co-optation by the government. Glubb had been an officer in the Legion since 1930 and was able to transform it into the best-trained Arab army in the region under his command. He formed the Desert Patrol, which consisted entirely of Bedouin tribesmen and “provided another means of redistribution. A jundi’s (soldier’s) pay could sustain several Bedouin families in the famine conditions of the 1930s” (Bocco and Tell 1994, 122). By providing subsidies to tribesmen, providing stable employment, and shoring up Transjordanian defenses against raids and external threats, the Arab Legion played a major role in
successfully integrating tribal society into the state during a time of suffering for many rural, poor tribal communities.

As Alon states, this “process of submitting the desert tribes to the rule of the central government was unique in the Middle East in that the use of violence was minimal” (Alon 2007, 108). Moreover, the Arab Legion not only served as a tool of repression against opposition to the regime but as a method of nationalizing Bedouin tribesmen and instilling loyalty to the monarchy and regime, as “[in] Arab Legion schools, every effort was made to teach the boys a straightforward open creed – service to king and country, duty, sacrifice, and religion” (Anderson 2005, 58). Therefore, the Arab Legion was able to incorporate East Bank tribes into the state and security apparatus without the use of force, all the while promoting nationalist ethos within its ranks in order to ensure future tribal loyalty within the military and with respect to the Hashemite regime.

However, the consolidation of state control over those Bedouin tribes that had previously remained largely independent from the state was not solely due to Glubb’s policies as commander of the Arab Legion or to Abdullah I’s skills in interacting and allying with the tribes of Transjordan. Rather, Bocco and Tell challenge the common belief that “the Bedouin were won over to the state solely through the coercive force of the Arab Legion. Instead… the interwar period represented years of hardship and famine which left the nomads too weak to bargain with the government and almost wholly reliant on handouts dispensed by the state” (Rogan and Tell 1994, xxi). Therefore, economic and political crises weakened Transjordan’s nomadic tribes particularly during the 1930s, and made these trades ripe for co-optation through
carefully orchestrated state patronage on the part of the regime and security apparatus.

By the end of the British mandate and the establishment of the “Hashemite Kingdom of Transjordan” in 1946 (renamed “The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan” in 1949), thousands of tribesmen served in the Arab Legion, while the state encouraged the development of cultivation and a pastoral economy that led nomadic tribes to achieve social and economic mobility. A variety of services were offered to these tribal communities, and schools were provided in order to educate the tribal youth. These policies formed the foundation of a state welfare and patronage system that provided socio-economic benefits to impoverished East Bank tribal communities throughout much of Jordan’s history. Tribes also became integrated into the political structure of the state, as “[tribal] shaykhs became officials of the state. Many were rich and influential, could mediate for their kin in government circles and remained the prime interface between the government and their fellow tribesmen. Shaykhs themselves belonged to a state elite cultivated and organized by Abdullah. Moreover, many aspects of tribal life continued to prevail and were respected, if not actively encouraged, by the government” (Alon 2007, 147). By giving tribal communities ample opportunities within both the state and military, in addition to substantial welfare benefits, East Bank Jordanian tribes were given a clear stake in the survival of the regime. As a result, the regime of Abdullah I was able to successfully co-opt Jordan’s tribal population.

Despite these developments, tribal loyalty to the monarchy was not completely solidified at this point. Significant opposition occasionally flared from
tribal elites within the political and security structures of the state in response to regional dynamics. For example, an East Bank Jordanian-led military *coup d’état* in 1957 directly challenged the authority of the Hashemite monarchy, but only a small group of politicians and senior military officers were responsible and the coup did not gain enough widespread support among military elements so as to seriously threaten the survival of the regime (Alon 2007, 153). This crisis began with a military confrontation and encircling of Amman by a regiment of the Jordanian military, coined Operation Hashim, that did not result in an actual *coup d’état* event and was waved off by the regiment’s commander as a “pre-planned exercise” (Satloff 1994).

However, only a few days later on April 13, 1957, another *coup d’état* scare brought tensions to a head. In response to King Hussein’s attempt to name a royalist as prime minister earlier that day, several Jordanian officers relayed a message to King Hussein that vaguely threatened the survival of the monarchy unless a cabinet more inclusionary of all peoples and parties, in particular the Arab nationalist Ba’athist party, was created. Reports of fighting between loyal and rebellious tribal troops at a military camp in Zarqa alerted King Hussein to the possible *coup d’état* and he preemptively cut it off before it could formulate into a serious threat to the monarchy by traveling to Zarqa himself and welcoming confused, but loyalist, Bedouin troops as they approached Amman (Satloff 1994).

These events, and many other similar ones, were mostly due to Ba’athist and Arab nationalist elements within the Jordanian military and political scene that attempted to provoke radical changes in the political status quo. As a result, though these crises never amounted into a serious attempt to overthrow the ruling regime,
they do question the narrative of an East Bank tribal-based military always loyal to the King and the monarchy.

At the same time, Bedouin troops recruited into the military reaffirmed their loyalty to the Hashemite regime during these events. The Zarqa incident in 1957 showed that the military’s tribal troops were “willing to fight for the throne without even knowing if its occupant were still alive. Such loyalty left an indelible mark on Hussein, who thereafter never over-looked the bedouin’s bedrock role in maintaining the army and the Hashemite system in general” (Satloff 1994, 168). Though several of the elites within the Jordanian military held traitorous convictions, the ground troops were recruited from rural tribal villages, employed by the military, and gifted with generous benefits and subsidies. These ground troops remained loyal to the regime despite an atmosphere of doubt and confusion with regards to the ruling power in the country.

However, another coup scare in 1963 served as a reminder to the Hashemite regime that tribal loyalty within the high ranks of the military was not to be taken for granted, despite the privileged position that Jordanian tribes had achieved in the few decades since the establishment of the British mandate (Jewish Telegraphic Agency 1963). These incidents also harmed the prospects of democratic reform in Jordan at this time, as King Hussein implemented a ban on the formation of political parties in 1963 that would last until 1992 (BBC 2015). As a result, this helped to cement the traditional, patronage-oriented influence of East Bank Jordanian tribes within the political structures of the state.
The state-tribal contract was once again threatened during the latter half of the 1960s, as Jordan’s population grew by about half due to an influx of Palestinian refugees during and after the 1967 war. With the increasing strength of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) within Jordanian borders, they began to be seen as a state within a state. The PLO became a threat to Jordanian security as its forces clashed violently with the Jordanian military and incurred Israeli military strikes within Jordan. The conflict escalated between Jordanian armed forces and PLO forces until the eruption of outright civil war in September 1970, coined “Black September,” that lasted until July 1971.

Though these events may have threatened the state-tribal relationship under different circumstances, “[the] regime responded by turning back to relying on its old support base. The old patterns of state-tribal relations that characterized the Emirate days were now either reactivated or exposed. The regime rested on “the Transjordan sectors of society, the tribes in particular, which were by now fully integrated into the state, co-opted and devoid of their former autonomy” (Alon 2007, 153). State authorities relied upon tribal loyalties and manpower in order to force the PLO out of the country and into Lebanon, thereby saving the regime and ensuring that Jordan remain under the rule of the Hashemite monarchy. As a result of this severe internal crisis that faced Jordan, tribal ties with the regime were deepened and strengthened. East Bank Jordanians experienced an even more privileged position within both Jordanian society and politics, especially with regards to an ever-increasing
Palestinian population in the country that would quickly become a numerical majority in the country.

1971 – 1989

Several grievances in the following years afflicted many East Bank Jordanians, and especially those residing in rural areas of the country. Rising inflation, rising prices, and growing wage-price disparities in the late 1970s led to considerable dissatisfaction among many rural tribal communities. For example, in October 1979, tribal leaders and former army officers demonstrated in Amman against the central government’s economic policies. In July 1983, tribal discontent erupted into direct confrontation with security forces as members of the Bani Hasan tribe in northern Jordan prevented government agents from implementing a plan to fence in tribal land and were subsequently imprisoned. Satloff notes that, “such an overt expression of opposition is even more significant given former intelligence chief Badran’s [Prime Minister of Jordan from 1976 to 1984] reputation as ‘bête noire’ of Jordan’s Palestinian population” (Satloff 1986, 66). A gradual push for political and economic modernization within Jordan during this time period aggravated tribal leaders and rural tribal communities, leading to increased tensions between these constituencies and the state (Satloff 1986, 67). The Hashemite regime unleashed a series of partial reforms and remedies designed to quell opposition, but these did not actually serve to seriously address the issues facing the Kingdom.

These economic grievances afflicting mainly rural tribal communities stand in stark contrast with the apparent political privileges bestowed upon East Bank
Jordanian tribes, particularly when compared to the politically disenfranchised Palestinian population of the country. These political advantages bestowed upon the tribes are direct results of the state co-optation of Jordanian tribes outlined in this chapter. However, the system of state patronage that integrated East Bank Jordanian tribes into the socio-political structure of the state also created a myriad of problems as the Jordanian economy faced difficulties and subsequently transformed. The subsequent unrest in East Bank Jordanian communities underscored the unsustainability of a ruling bargain that would begin to disintegrate during the 1990s.

East Bank tribesmen already dominated high-level positions in the political and security apparatuses of the state and dominated the legislature. After the Jordanian Parliament, which was suspended in 1971 after the loss of the West Bank territories in the 1967 war with Israel, was recalled in 1984 by King Hussein, East Bank Jordanians continued to be overrepresented in comparison to other segments of the population. Under the 1986 Election Law, and its subsequent 1989 amendments, thousands of Palestinian refugees were enfranchised for the first time. However, “Jordan’s electoral districts were severely malapportioned and remained so with the later 1993 amendments… most urbanized areas tended to be underrepresented” (Lucas 2005, 28). Overrepresentation of East Bank tribal communities located outside of urban areas allowed traditional tribal allies to gain seats in Parliament, while excluding Palestinians and ideological groups from gaining power within the legislature. As a result, most of the members of Parliament were, and still are, representatives of tribal constituencies with special seats reserved for Jordan’s Bedouin communities.
However, the Jordanian Parliament was, and remains, essentially ineffectual, with true authoritative power resting with the King and monarchical establishment. Moreover, East Bank tribal officials in the political and security apparatuses are constantly shuffled to prevent the strengthening of one family or tribe over another and to prevent threats to Hashemite rule, while also creating expectation that a particular family or tribe’s position in the power structure will improve in future political shuffles. This created a power elite that is relatively small, with a few dozen tribal families that had dominated in Transjordan since 1946 enjoying most prominent status.

Furthermore, tribal connections have an influence on the decision-making processes of the state. The traditional system of state patronage “takes place according to tribal or familial lines. It is the tribe which serves as the main constituency for an aspirant politician. This partly explains the weakness of the party system in Jordan” (Alon 2007, 155). Tribal lobbying, or “tribalism”, plays a major role in the political structure of Jordan, with many appointed and elected officials expected to prioritize kin or members of their same tribe when carrying out their political and societal duties. *Wasta*, or familial and tribal connections, play a critical role in the distribution of state resources and employment among the Jordanian population, and in particular East Bank Jordanian communities.

Herein lies a weakness in the political aspects of the relationship between regime and East Bank Jordanian tribes that highlights the unsustainability of this ruling bargain. Through the system of tribal privilege and integration within the political structure, state patronage did not extend to many rural East Bank Jordanians
who desperately needed it during times of economic crises. Though East Bank Jordanian tribal communities had traditionally been protected from significant economic and social harm via their privileged relationship with the regime, internal demographic shifts with an influx of Palestinian refugees into the country and a rising economic crisis made satisfying tribal communities a much more challenging task for the regime.

As economic grievances increased at the end of the 1980s, East Bank Jordanian dissatisfaction with government policies, despite their “favored” position in Jordanian society and politics, was shown through organized protest and demonstrations. However, it was not until 1989, with the announcement of extensive neoliberal economic and structural adjustments by a Hashemite regime that recognized the necessity for serious reform, that many East Bank Jordanians began to become truly marginalized from the centers of power in Amman. In the next chapter, I will explore how the neoliberal reforms initiated in 1989 contributed to the relative deprivation of East Bank Jordanians, thereby setting the stage for the current transformations in the traditional social contract between state and tribes in Jordan.
Chapter 4: Neoliberalism, Grievances, and the Relative Deprivation of East Bank Jordanians

By juxtaposing prior patterns in state-tribal relations in Jordan, as was outlined in the previous chapter, with the grievances caused by the economic and structural adjustments of the late twentieth century, the current relative deprivation of East Bank Jordanians can be contextualized and further developed for the purpose of this thesis. The neoliberal economic reforms of the late 1980s and early 1990s, as well as the continuation of these policies to the present day, has exposed the unsustainability of the traditional ruling bargain between the regime and East Bank Jordanian tribes. This neoliberal economic restructuring, in combination with welfare reallocation to the security apparatus and inadequacies in the Jordanian educational system, is directly linked to the social, political, and economic marginalization experienced by many rural East Bank Jordanians since the early 1990s. As a result of the reforms, specific segments of the Jordanian population became impoverished and rural East Bank Jordanian communities were amongst the hardest hit.

Economic and political grievances experienced by East Bank Jordanians in the decade prior to the reforms initiated in 1989 were exacerbated, and privileges historically accorded to most East Bank Jordanians consequently dwindled and deteriorated. In many rural East Bank Jordanian communities, previous entitlements were not guaranteed to bring wealth and prosperity and often did little more than
stave off poverty or provide lower-middle income status. As Yom states, “…due to intense competition for available positions, a single modest civil or military salary would often support entire tribal families” (Yom 2014, 242). The rural-urban divide, as well as the East Bank Jordanian-Palestinian divide, in Jordan will play a critical role in this analysis. The vast majority of the rural population in Jordan is of East Bank Jordanian origin. In contrast, the urban populations of the country in and around Amman are majority Palestinian. However, this thesis is not asserting that urban and rural areas of the country are completely split along ethnic lines, as urban areas of Jordan also contain East Bank Jordanians. Therefore, when discussing East Bank Jordanian relative deprivation, this thesis and theoretical argument are mainly addressing those more rural East Bank Jordanians that live in the tribal heartland of Jordan’s southern and northern areas. Urban East Bank Jordanians were certainly affected by the aforementioned neoliberal structural adjustments and internal domestic issues, but rural East Bank Jordanian communities were amongst the most severely affected by the reforms and crises of this time period and represent the traditional political center of the Hashemite regime.

The disappearance of these privileges during this time period, in combination with harsher socio-economic conditions, severely hit these communities and gave rise to a variety of grievances that eventually led to mass relative deprivation among much of the rural tribal population. However, this is not just an argument of grievances. The foundation of East Bank Jordanian relative deprivation is situated upon perceptions of socio-economic and political marginalization in relation to the country’s Palestinian population, East Bank Jordanian fear of Jordan becoming an
alternative homeland to Palestinians, and new fears of increased isolation and poverty with the current Syrian refugee crisis.

This chapter will analyze how neoliberal economic restructuring, state welfare reallocation to the security apparatus, and issues within the Jordanian educational system have contributed to the relative deprivation currently experienced by many East Bank Jordanians. I will draw upon these sections in broadly describing the historical processes behind East Bank Jordanian relative deprivation, and will use them to explain the deprivation-induced discontent that has inspired multiple bouts of East Bank Jordanian unrest during this time period and the current dissatisfaction among many East Bank Jordanian communities in Jordan today. Gurr’s theory of relative deprivation will provide a framework from which to explore the causal mechanisms behind East Bank Jordanian relative deprivation from the 1990s to the present day, as well as the occasionally violent reactions from a social group being progressively torn away from the traditional parameters of its privileged relationship with the Hashemite regime.

The Neoliberal Economic Strategy of the Hashemite Regime

This section will begin by addressing the internal and international crises that gave rise to the neoliberal economic and structural adjustments beginning in 1989. It will then address the affects of these reforms on the state patronage and welfare system traditionally employed by the Hashemite regime upon its East Bank Jordanian constituency, as well as on traditional modes of employment and sustenance utilized by East Bank Jordanian communities. Finally, as a result of these significant
economic and structural transformations, this section will analyze the root causes and nature of East Bank Jordanian relative deprivation that arose during this time period and persists to the present day.

Neoliberal economic doctrines began to dominate the world scene in the 1970s and set the standard for the global economic and political agenda during the early 1980s. Steger and Roy contend that neoliberal policies subscribe “to a common set of ideological and political principles dedicated to the worldwide spread of an economic model emphasizing free markets and free trade” (Steger and Roy 2010, 10). According to proponents of neoliberal economic theory, government regulation, public spending, and high trade barriers were responsible for the poor economic growth of developed countries in the 1970s. As a result, a global neoliberal development agenda developed that stipulated that developing countries would benefit from the economic structural adjustment programs and the expansion of free trade. As Steger and Roy state, this led to world economic institutions like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank to impose a “neoliberal agenda on heavily indebted developing countries in return for much-needed loans” (Steger and Roy 2010, 10). However, the neoliberal economic model, built upon global ideals of market deregulation and trade liberalization, also resulted in uneven distribution of wealth and material benefits in developing countries, leading to many national crises and protests across the world.

Jordan was subjected to this neoliberal economic and structural adjustment program beginning in 1989, immediately affecting the privileged status of East Bank Jordanians within the political and social spheres of the country. As Steger and Roy
contend, neoliberal programs implemented within developing countries also involved the co-option of local elites “often by means of indirect coercion through international economic institutions like the IMF and the World Bank” in executing the recommended structural adjustment programs (Steger and Roy 2010, 119). However, in the case of Jordan, East Bank Jordanians had already been co-opted by the state in a lengthy, historical process that began during the British Mandate era. Rather, the neoliberal structural adjustments that began in 1989 served to benefit urban elites, entrepreneurs, and businessmen at the expense of the previously privileged and co-opted portion of the population, East Bank Jordanians.

The Jordanian economy grew exponentially from 1973 to 1883, with the annual economic growth rate ranking as one of the highest in the world at almost 10 per cent per year. Increases in world oil prices during the 1970s brought with them a flood of foreign assistance into Jordan. This, in combination with ample remittances from Palestinians and Jordanians working abroad, provided ample revenue to the government with which to rapidly expand the public sector. Remittances amounted to nearly one quarter of Jordan’s GDP in 1984 and. Between 1973 and 1980, foreign aid made up nearly 55 percent of government revenue (Brynen 1992, 79). This favorable economic atmosphere allowed rentier dynamics within the country to thrive, and the regime continued doling out economic resources, patronage, and social services to loyal constituencies and, in particular, East Bank Jordanians. Resources were only partially extracted from the domestic economy and direct domestic taxation only financed about 10 to 20 percent of state expenditures, allowing the regime to offer large benefits to many East Bank Jordanians while avoiding heavy taxation on these
communities and, thus, holding the central government politically accountable to the desires of the populace. Palestinian and East Bank Jordanian entrepreneurs in the trade, service, and manufacturing sectors also benefited during this time period (Brynen 1992, 79). Nevertheless, as had been the trend during the past few decades, a privileged relationship with the regime led “[state] investment funds…[to be] disproportionately directed towards the provision of services and infrastructure to those areas of the country predominantly populated by Transjordanian rather than Palestinian citizens” (Brynen 1992, 82).

However, as a country dependent on external revenue due to its lack of resources and a relatively smaller population base, the Jordanian economy was and still is highly susceptible to the adverse effects of global economic crises. The fall of world oil prices in the early 1980s led to a steady decline in the rentier economy employed by Jordan. As the income of oil exporting states decreased, foreign assistance and remittances from abroad also decreased; these two mainstays of the Jordanian economy declined from JD 735 million (US$42.3 billion) to JD518 million (US$1.5 billion) between 1981 and 1987. Unemployment increased as Jordanians returned home from abroad to less and less work opportunities and, though the government attempted to solve this issue by further expanding domestic employment, further strain was placed upon the public sector and, subsequently, the state budget. Consequently, high levels of debt and inflation in combination with rising unemployment began to cripple the financial capabilities of the state. Due to hesitation in reducing state expenditures and threatening the ruling bargain held between regime and its traditional recipients, the economic recession facing Jordan
deepened later into the 1980s. In 1987, the state budget deficit had grown to $880 million, half of state expenditures and more than one quarter of GDP. In 1988, GDP shrank by 3.5 percent and did not grow at all in 1989 (Brynen 1992, 85-88). Jordan had officially entered a financial and monetary crisis, with East Bank Jordanian elites and communities alike feeling increasingly isolated from the regime.

This series of internal fiscal and monetary crises led Jordan to negotiate a neoliberal economic adjustment plan with the International Monetary Fund, announced in 1989, to find relief from its economic woes. As Baylouny states, this plan involved “the removal of subsidies, privatization of public sector investments, cuts in state employment, and gradual elimination of customs duties” (Baylouny 2008, 292). The IMF deal was a five year economic restructuring program that aimed to reform Jordan’s borrowing policies, strengthen foreign reserves, reduce inflation, improve the current account balance, reform the tax system, and reduced the state budget deficit (Brynen 1992, 90). Privatization of national industries and sectors, as well as the removal of subsidies on products such as fuel and food during the 1990s, inflicted increased economic stress upon poorer and rural communities. In the years following the implementation of neoliberal reforms in 1989 and the early 1990s, Jordan did not witness a significant change in the regime’s economic policies and instead experience a continuation and escalation of economic liberalization in the late 1990s and 2000s. However, as is often the result of neoliberal strategy, the global financial crises of 2008-2010 revealed the “vulnerability and unreliability of such an economy with the ceasing of many real estate projects, termination of hundreds of thousands of jobs, and the lack of socioeconomic stability” (Akçalı 2016, 57).
Consequently, as a result of the neoliberal economic reforms instituted under the IMF deal, the ruling bargain between the regime and East Bank Jordanians underwent extensive transformation and the relative deprivation of East Bank Jordanian communities became fully exposed.

Before the neoliberal structural reforms of the 1990s, Jordan maintained a welfare regime that ensured the loyalty and prosperity of state-employed East Bank Jordanians. However, as Baylouny argues, “[while] supporting the regime’s allies, the welfare system contributed to labor market configurations that in economic liberalization bode poorly for the very constituency previously privileged” (Baylouny 2008, 281). In other words, the generous public employment traditionally afforded to East Bank Jordanians had led to an unsustainable state-tribal ruling bargain when confronted with comprehensive neoliberal economic reform. As Dr. Akram Kreishan, a human rights activist and professor in Ma’an, observed, “In the past the government decided that the state employees should be East Bank Jordanians, and that is why West Bankers [Palestinians] were pushed to the private sector and obtained a good education, and after they got a higher education they were able to start businesses and make investments and began to control the private sector. When East Bank Jordanians were forced to go to the private sector during these very bad economic circumstances, they were not able to compete or to maintain or gain success.”¹ As a result, the neoliberal economic structural program resulted in a reduction in the traditional privileges afforded to East Bank Jordanians in return for increasingly scarce economic opportunities, thereby leading to their relative deprivation.

¹ Interview by the author, Dr. Akram Kreishan, August 13, 2015, Ma’an, Jordan.
² Interview by the author, Ibrahim Gharibeh, August 5, 2015, Center for Strategic Studies
Since the 1930s and 1940s, East Bank Jordanians had typically been employed in public sector jobs and have traditionally received the largest portion of the regime’s largesse by way of their privileged relationship with the state. Nearly 50 percent of domestic employment in Jordan in 1991 was in the civil service and army, with only 11 percent of jobs in industry in 1986 (Baylouny 2008); as a result, “a large portion, estimated at three-fourths of East Bankers nationwide, worked for the government in some capacity, in the regions outside the capital this proportion reached staggering heights… At the advent of structural adjustment, 92% of the domestic labor force in Karak worked in the public sector; 99.5% in Tafileh; 90% in Ma’an – all in the southern region. By contrast, the central areas of Palestinian concentration, ‘Amman, Zarqa’, and Balqa, had 58%, 56%, and 58% public employment respectively” (Baylouny 2008, 285). Karak, Tafileh, and Ma’an are all located in rural areas of Jordan, whereas cities like Amman and Zarqa are considered urban centers of the country. These figures describe the extent to which East Bank Jordanian communities, and especially those in poorer, rural areas of the country, relied upon state employment and patronage for economic survival.

Agriculture also served as the main substitute for state employment among East Bank Jordanians in these areas of the country. However, agriculture declined as a sustainable source of income for rural communities during the oil boom of the 1970s, with opportunities for employment within the public sector expanding during this time period. Once an economic pillar for these communities, agriculture declined to less than 10% of domestic labor in the 1980s, with foreign labor assuming many of the low-paying jobs in the farm labor market (Seccombe and Wilson 1987). By the
time neoliberal reforms arrived after 1989, the almost complete lack of rural industry excluded rural, mainly East Bank Jordanian communities from many of the economic benefits of the structural program, thereby exacerbating income inequality between the urban and rural areas of the country.

When economic reforms were announced in 1989, the urban population in Jordan, composed of East Bank Jordanians as well as the vast majority of the country’s Palestinian population, was best positioned to take advantage of the new business and investment opportunities created by the neoliberal economic package. Palestinians, which had often suffered repeated political and socioeconomic persecution especially after the events of Black September in 1970, had traditionally occupied a different labor market than East Bank Jordanians. Due to large-scale exclusion for state job opportunities, as Baylouny elaborates, Palestinians collectively organized in the private sector and were sustained through substantial remittances from Palestinian migrants working in the Gulf states (Baylouny 2008, 281). This is not to say that all Palestinians were well off; as poor living conditions and relatively high levels of poverty characterized the makeshift refugee camps and urban sprawls where many Palestinians resided. However, as a result of their dominance in the private sector, Palestinians were able to cope much more effectively with the new economic circumstances imposed by structural adjustment due to the consequent growth of private business and industry in the urban areas of Jordan, and many Palestinians profited significantly in the new economic atmosphere.

Many rural East Bank Jordanian communities, on the other hand, suffered from lack of state employment and the disappearance of agricultural work as an
adequate source of income; the result was poverty for almost one-third of the population, with the highest concentrations “in Mafraq in the north, then Karak in the south, followed by Balqa, Irbid, Tafileh, and Ma’an” (Baylouny 2008, 295–296). These cities and regions of the country are populated mainly by East Bank Jordanians. The structural adjustments wrought by the reforms led to a substantial reduction in state welfare programs and the removal of state subsidies in sectors like water, electricity, and telecommunication. Privatization characterized this period, as NGOS and multinational corporations assumed traditional roles of the state in a rapid expansion of the private sector. As a result, dramatic falls in government subsidies and welfare, the introduction of foreign corporations into the country, and rises in prices of basic goods and services gave rise to a spike in income inequality and increased marginalization for rural East Bank Jordanian communities (Daher 2015, 48).

Removals of subsidies, reduction in state employment, and declining employment opportunities abroad led to an unemployed professional class outside of the urban areas of Jordan that suffered from increasing impoverishment. Jordanians employed in the agricultural sector, once a staple of employment and sustenance for many rural East Bank Jordanian communities, suffered particularly during this time. As Baylouny states, “[forty] percent of agricultural engineers were unemployed, and the rest had an average salary of only 120 Jordanian Dinars (JD)/month, less than $170, a borderline poverty salary” (Baylouny 2008, 294). With agriculture no longer a sustainable source of income and state employment reduced with the structural
adjustments, East Bank Jordanian communities suffered from high unemployment and were forced into informal work.

The end result was poverty for much of the Jordanian population, with the highest rates of poverty in the early 1990s in Mafraq, Karak, Balqa, Irbid, Tafileh, and Ma’an where East Bank Jordanians constituted the vast majority of the population (Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, 43). Moreover, between 1992 and 1997, prices dramatically increased for food, education, rent, healthcare, heat and electricity, and even clothing, and continued to climb in the following years (Baylouny 2008, 296). The central government did attempt to create several programs designed to address the economic grievances of the poor, but these were often ineffective and were unable to reach or adequately many poor Jordanians, especially in rural areas of the country (Baylouny 2008, 298–299). East Bank Jordanian communities away from urban centers of power like Amman were not equipped to deal with these harsh economic changes in such a short period of time, and the poorer members of these communities struggled to get by on meager income. Though major financial assistance and investment during the war in Iraq in 2003 did stimulate a partial recovery for the Jordanian economy (Baylouny 2008, 301), the deep scars caused by the neoliberal structural adjustments continued to afflict these portions of the population.

The continuation of neoliberal economic policies has allowed these problems to persist and intensify into the present day. The public sector is at full capacity and is no longer a guaranteed source of employment for East Bank Jordanians, and opportunities for East Bank Jordanians to join the military are also decreasing as the
number of personnel in the army is reducing. Moreover, the agricultural industry remains neglected. For example, in the southern tribal city of Karak, about 40 percent of inhabitants continue to rely on farming for their income and sustenance, yet they face a myriad of issues from lack of water to lack of government programs to provide adequate subsidies and oversight for the agricultural industry. These challenges are especially relevant for most southern tribal communities in Jordan. However, their effects have been felt by East Bank Jordanians for more than two decades, and have given rise to acute feelings of relative deprivation among disadvantaged tribal communities.

The dramatic socioeconomic changes wrought by the neoliberal economic reforms effectively renegotiated and rebuilt the underlying ruling bargain between the regime and East Bank Jordanians around an urban professional and business class. As a result, many East Bank Jordanian communities that previously held a privileged status within the political and economic spheres were marginalized from the centers of power in the country. Many rural East Bank Jordanians reliant upon state and agricultural employment suffered from decreased work opportunities, cuts in government assistance and social welfare, and general poverty. Less money flowed into East Bank Jordanian areas of the country, and informal, poverty-wage labor replaced stable jobs in the agricultural and public sector. On the other hand, much of Jordan’s Palestinian-majority urban population reaped the economic benefits of the reforms. Palestinians were already an established majority in the private sector, and the fact that they resided mostly in urban areas and benefited from generous

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2 Interview by the author, Ibrahim Gharaiheb, August 5, 2015, Center for Strategic Studies (CSS), Amman, Jordan.
3 Interview by the author, Hamed al-Nawaysah, August 19, 2015, Karak, Jordan.
remittances from abroad allowed this segment of the Jordanian population to better adjust to the neoliberal structural transformations occurring within the country (Baylouny 2008, 303).

However, though East Bank Jordanians faced increased marginalization, and subsequently grew more disaffected with regime policies, this is not merely an argument about a portion of the population that is reacting angrily to specific economic grievances. As Bienen and Gersovitz argue, economic austerity measures such as subsidy cuts do tend to spark violent protest, but are not fundamental causes of serious political instability and regime change (Bienen and Gersovitz 1986, 25-44). This is partly because protest tends to spark repression on the part of authoritarian regimes. However, it is also because economic factors can serve to reshape political coalitions and cause the regime to build new social contracts with other segments of society, thereby contributing to the resilience of the regime in the face of dissatisfaction among other segments of the population. In rentier states, Brynen contends, this restructuring is even more pronounced. Economic crises, and subsequent austerity measures, can force “recourse either to more coercive patterns of political dominance or a transformation of the regime’s post-rentier bases of legitimacy” (Brynen 1992, 96). The neoliberal economic reforms implemented in Jordan beginning in 1989 did not just cause a rash of economic grievances met with public unrest, they fundamentally altered the rules of the political system and the traditional ruling bargain held between the regime and Jordanian society. The development of the private sector and privatization of previously state-owned economic activities led to the transformation of the economic foundation of the state
and, thus, a transformation of the relationship between the state and Jordanian society. Consequently, many East Bank Jordanians began to experience relative deprivation during this period due to this restructuring of the historical state-tribal relationship and the rapid growth of urban, majority Palestinian areas of the country.

As defined earlier, relative deprivation involves the perceived discrepancy between a social group’s expectation in terms of goods and conditions of life to which they believe they are entitled, and their actual capabilities to achieve these goods and conditions of life given the social means available to them. It implies that one group feels unjustly treated in relation to other groups, and can result in deprivation-induced discontent against the ruling authorities or social groups that they perceive as responsible for their marginalized position (Gurr 1970). Many East Bank Jordanians faced massive economic challenges that gradually reduced the perks that had been historically bestowed upon rural tribal communities in their previously privileged relationship with the Hashemite regime. In return, many of the economic benefits of the neoliberal restructuring period and the following years funneled into urban areas of the country. Whereas Palestinians had previously been subject to increased political and social marginalization following the Jordanian civil war of 1970-1971, their urban locations in Jordan placed many Palestinian professionals, businessmen, and entrepreneurs in a position to capitalize on the new economic atmosphere pervading the country. As Schwedler states, the economic and socio-political benefits attributed to neoliberal economic reforms “do not map neatly or exclusively along class lines, but spatially: those residing, working, or traversing particular spaces, regardless of economic class, may reap at least some of the benefits of these reform
priorities”; these particular spaces are the urban centers of economic and political power in the country, such as Amman (Schwedler 2012, 266).

East Bank Jordanians located in urban areas of Jordan benefited from the neoliberal economic reforms, but many rural East Bank Jordanian communities suffered increased economic hardship and witnessed the rise of the private sector populated mainly by urban, Palestinian businessmen and entrepreneurs. As a result, relative deprivation struck East Bank Jordanians because of a deterioration in the traditional state-tribal ruling bargain and the economic and political rise of other social groups in Jordanian society; economic grievances from the neoliberal structural program served as the catalyst for this phenomenon. This perception, which formed during the neoliberal structural reforms of the Hashemite regime, is stronger than ever today and was expressed repeatedly throughout interviews held in all areas of Jordan. “The people from the West Bank [Palestinians], they are the ones in the private sector,” said Member of Parliament Hind al-Fayez, the first female representative of the Central Badia District where the majority of its inhabitants are East Bank Jordanians, “They are the ones who are controlling the economy in Jordan… And if you control the economy you can control anything. The former Prime Minister was originally Palestinian, the head of the Royal Court is originally Palestinian, the Queen is originally Palestinian… If anyone told you East Bank Jordanians have the distinction and privilege [now], this is stupid.”

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4 Interview by the author, MP Hind al-Fayez, August 11, 2015, House of Representatives, Amman, Jordan.
Neoliberal Reforms to the Security Apparatus

As asserted in the previous section, the sharp decrease in state-provisioned social welfare allocated to many East Bank Jordanian communities, and especially those in rural areas of the country, as a result of the economic reforms led to increased socioeconomic and political marginalization for many East Bank Jordanians. Moreover, these reforms also strengthened the security apparatus and initiated a series of structural alterations within the Jordanian military. East Bank Jordanians continued to dominate high-level military positions, and military service remained a large source of employment for East Bank Jordanian communities in the country. However, the benefits allocated to the military through these neoliberal reforms shifted resources away from traditional social welfare structures at the expense of the majority of the East Bank Jordanian population.

Neoliberal reforms, in addition to large amounts of U.S. aid, restructured the support coalition around the Jordanian regime during this time period by significantly strengthening the security apparatus. In contrast to state employment and agricultural job opportunities, “[the] military and security services were the only sector growing in structural adjustment. Instead of subsidizing Jordanians or East Bankers in general, the state began to target its social largesse to a sub-group of East Bankers – the military” (Baylouny 2008, 302). While social welfare allocations and economic opportunities decreased for the majority of East Bank Jordanians, those employed by the military received increasingly generous benefits and perks for their service. The military also diversified, expanding into sub-contracting, military training of Palestinian Authority police, and participation with foreign and UN forces, and
Jordan even initiated its own defense industry in 1999 “not to aid the military capacity of the country but to increase its economic capacity”; a small number of Jordanians were employed in this industry (Baylouny 2008, 302). However, in 1997, military employment only reached 10 percent of the labor force (Abrahart, Kaur, and Tzannatos 2002); in rural East Bank Jordanian communities, only 20 percent worked in the army (Center for Strategic Studies 2002).

The economic largesse allocated to the security apparatus during the neoliberal reforms, therefore, only benefited a small amount of Jordanians, and also a small portion of the rural tribal communities that had traditionally served as the backbone of the Jordanian military from the days of the Arab Legion. Consequently, though the Hashemite regime allocated significant resources to the security apparatus in order to increase employment opportunities in this sector and to strengthen the military, it only preserved the ruling bargain between the regime and a smaller subgroup of East Bank Jordanians employed in the military. Many East Bank Jordanians, even in rural areas of the country, did not benefit from these policies.

Neoliberal welfare adjustments within the security apparatus also allowed the Hashemite regime to promote a form of militarized liberalization in the years that followed the national neoliberal economic reforms, thereby complementing the economic and political liberalization of the early and mid 1990s with a strengthening of ties between regime and military. However, the late 1990s saw a retrenchment of authoritarian policies as the regime cracked down on rising political dissent and social unrest due to the neoliberal economic reforms and regional crises such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Lucas 2003). The strengthening and channeling of wealth to the
security apparatus also contributed to the atmosphere of political and social repression that characterized the late 1990s and 2000s. However, Schwedler argues that this “increased securitization is not anti-liberal so much as it is neoliberal” (Schwedler 2012, 265). The military and security apparatus, long-time bastions of East Bank Jordanian privilege and dominance, cracked down on political dissent and demands for democratic accountability while aiding the regime in advancing a neoliberal economic and socio-political agenda. The securitization of the state served to enforce a national narrative of a unified Jordanian body politic that would develop and modernize through implementation of the neoliberal economic reforms, embodied through the “Jordan First” campaign launched in 2002 by King Abdullah II that advocated an agenda with the stated goals of reform and democratization (Schwedler 2012). As a result, economic liberalization through structural adjustment did not foreshadow political liberalization, as many observers believed in the early 1990s. Instead, it led to a militarized semi-authoritarian regime that used the security apparatus to reinforce a continuation of neoliberal economic policies and other liberalizing measures at the expense of the socio-political and economic health of much of the regime’s traditional base of support.

These developments intensified East Bank Jordanian relative deprivation. Though increased welfare to the military and security apparatus benefited a sub-group of East Bank Jordanian employed in the military, these benefits did not extend to the majority of East Bank Jordanian communities suffering from the regime’s neoliberal economic tilt. Most East Bank Jordanians, especially in rural areas of the country, continued to face reductions in state welfare and a lack of job opportunities in the
agricultural and public sectors that had for so long been economic staples for these communities. Moreover, the Hashemite regime utilized the security apparatus to actually reinforce many of the neoliberal policies that had damaged the privileged relationship of East Bank Jordanians with the state. Many marginalized East Bank Jordanians perceived the regime as purposefully advocating for increased neoliberal measures to further isolate their communities from the economic and political centers of the country, while those residing in the Palestinian-majority urban areas of the country received the bulk of the wealth and political capital flowing into Jordan from foreign sources. The use of a security apparatus that had historically represented rural tribal communities within its ranks to reinforce these neoliberal objectives served to further deprive East Bank Jordanians of the privileges they assumed under the traditional ruling bargain between the regime and East Bank Jordanian communities. Instead, it contributed to the renegotiation of the social contract between state and society in favor of a largely Palestinian urban class of businessmen, professionals, and entrepreneurs that could take advantage of the new economic atmosphere.

However, not all military elements were satisfied with the neoliberal structural changes occurring within the military regime and the wider political economy of the country. Under King Abdullah II, further reforms to the armed forces and the military welfare regime resulted in a leaner military specializing in commercial security services, peacekeeping, and asymmetric warfare rather at the expense of heavy armor and artillery and social services distributed to military personnel. In this military restructuring, particular emphasis was placed on the formation of a new gendarmerie, the security body responsible for policing duties among the civilian population, that
would be “only one-third Transjordanian, with Palestinians and recruits from tribes that straddled Jordan’s borders with Syria supplying the remainder” (Tell 2015). Though East Bank Jordanian ties and influence within the military and security apparatuses prevented this large-scale involvement of Palestinians in the security forces from coming to complete fruition, it symbolized East Bank Jordanian relative deprivation within the military regime.

By allocating greater economic benefits to the Jordan’s Palestinian population while attempting to restructure the Jordanian military in favor of a larger Palestinian demographic, the Hashemite regime steadily marginalized high-ranking East Bank Jordanians within the military and security apparatuses from the centers of power in the country. King Abdullah’s continued push for a strategy of militarized neoliberalism that had begun under his father King Hussein in 1989 eventually isolated many of the tribal elements within the military that had provided loyal support for the monarchy since the country’s inception, and isolated them not only from traditional socio-economic privileges but from the political centers of power. For example, despite his military background, King Abdullah’s “closest associates were in fact neoliberal technocrats or like-minded entrepreneurs recruited from a newly formed Economic Consultative Council” rather than military officials and other tribal elites (Tell 2015). This has led to the relative deprivation of high-ranking military officials hailing from East Bank tribal backgrounds. As a result of King Abdullah’s policies, East Bank Jordanian military officials perceived a certain favoritism for Palestinians and neoliberal advocates within the military and the royal court, and watched as their family’s communities lacked employment and remained
impoverished. Their views erupted into open discontent during the advent of the Arab Spring, and the next chapter of this thesis will explore the relative deprivation of tribal elements in the military in the context of a new, yet still evolving, state-tribal relationship.

_A Flawed Educational System_

The third major factor behind East Bank Jordanian relative deprivation during this time period was, and remains, the myriad of issues within the Jordanian educational system. The Jordanian educational system has improved markedly over the past few decades on paper, with “universal or near-universal primary education (grades 1-6) enrollment and secondary education enrollment, which is comparable to OECD member countries. Post-secondary (or tertiary) education enrollment has generally remained steady over the past ten years, and is higher for women than it is for men… [and] Jordan’s postsecondary enrollment is higher than other developing countries in the MENA region” (RAND Corporation 2014, 15).

However, Ibrahim Gharaibeh, a scholar at the Center for Strategic Studies (CSS) located within the University of Jordan, and many others painted a very different picture of the educational challenges facing Jordan, and neoliberal policies are partly to blame. “If you are talking about the educational system here in Jordan, it is has not been renovated in 25 years. It is not advanced.”⁵ According to Kaitlin Roh of USAID, Jordan’s education system has suffered from a chronic lack of funding and maintenance. The Jordanian Ministry of Education does not have the funding to build,

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⁵ Interview by the author, Ibrahim Gharaibeh, August 5, 2015, Center for Strategic Studies (CSS), Amman, Jordan.
expand, or renovate schools, and therefore cannot address such critical uses as overcrowding of classrooms in urban areas. These issues impact the quality of education that young Jordanians are receiving, with most students in early grades not being able to read or do math with comprehension. At the present, all of these issues have been exacerbated by the Syrian refugee influx into the Jordan (Roh 2015).

Most of the issues facing the Jordanian educational system are most prominent in rural East Bank Jordanian communities away from urban centers of the country. Within Palestinian-majority urban areas of Jordan, access to quality education, as well as adequate resources, technology, and other opportunities, is much higher than in those communities far from Amman and the surrounding cities. Moreover, international organizations such as UNRWA subsidize and provide quality educational services to many young Palestinians in urban settings of Jordan. As will be addressed in this section, these and other issues put many East Bank Jordanian communities at distinct educational disadvantage in comparison to the rest of the country, thereby further fostering senses of relative deprivation within these communities.

Bana Dabbas and Amani al-Zoubi, representatives of Madrasati Initiative, a royal initiative spearheaded by Queen Rania that seeks to help and reform Jordan’s most neglected public schools, acknowledged this divide between schooling systems in urban and rural areas of the country. “There is a clear difference between the education in Amman and outside Amman,” said Bana and Amani, “In Amman you find all the resources available in the schools, universities, institutions, all the opportunities are there even in work and in distance, as Amman is the heart and
capital of the country. *In [rural areas] there are less opportunities and less schools.*”

This disparity is also recognized by older generations of East Bank Jordanians in these communities. “If there is a beautiful flower and it is in the desert, no one will ever smell it,” said Hamed al-Nawaysah, a prominent sheikh in Karak, “Students in Amman have a lot of technology and resources and are well-prepared, but students in the far places of Jordan have less resources and are less qualified.” For many rural East Bank Jordanian youth, poor school infrastructure, unequal access to education, and the quality of education remain sources of grievance and particular challenges for a country with an extremely young population. Moreover, these issues also contribute to the relative deprivation of many East Bank Jordanian communities by limiting their access to quality education and by underpreparing them for labor opportunities in the private sector in comparison to schools in urban and Palestinian areas of the country.

With regards to infrastructure, a poor transportation system hinders the education of much of Jordan’s young school attendees. In a 2011-2012 survey conducted by Jordan’s Land Transportation Authority, 35 percent of those surveyed reported that they used the transportation system for educational purposes; in the same vein, a 2014 survey conducted by the World Bank found that 80 percent of Jordanian students relied on public transportation to reach their schools (Gibreel 2015). However, this transportation system is rarely reliable and often impedes the ability of Jordanian students to reach the classroom and receive an education, especially for those students in rural areas of the country. In areas of Jordan that are sparsely populated, there is talk of closing down those schools that have a minimum

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6 Interview by the author, Bana Dabbas and Amani al-Zoubi, August 20, 2015, Madrasati Initiative Office, Amman, Jordan.
7 Interview by the author, Hamed al-Nawaysah, August 19, 2015, Karak, Jordan.
number of students; however, this presents a major problem due to Jordan’s poor transportation infrastructure. MP Hind al-Fayez commented on these issues.

“The Bedouin there, they’re spread around villages so you don’t find more than 10 or 11 students in those schools. So if you’re closing down those schools, the family cannot afford the transportation [to other schools] because we also have problems with public transportation in Jordan. I think this is one of the main issues... We have districts in Jordan, but everything is focused on Amman. The figure that the Minister of Municipalities gave us was that in Amman we have 3 million people, they are the people with money, the crème de la crème of the Jordanian people. The rest of the 11 districts can’t find public transportation to move people to schools, to hospitals, to the center of Jordan.”

Government support has done little to address this issue, as resources to fix infrastructural issues are low and many of the public transportation lines in Jordan are run by private, individual companies (Gibreel 2015). As a result, the youth of rural communities remain without the means to regularly and consistently access an education in contrast to those of wealthier, urban areas of the country, despite macro-level advances within the educational system in recent years.

Moreover, the skills taught in many Jordanian schools do not meet the standards of a labor market that transformed over the decades since the neoliberal economic reforms that began in 1989. As a result, many Jordanians in rural communities do not learn the appropriate skills to prepare them for employment in the private sector, even though work in the public sector has dwindled drastically in the past few decades. The main issue is that many Jordanian youth lack the appropriate academic focus and a range of skills, such as technical and soft skills, such as problem solving, teamwork, and work ethic, that are considered important for work in the private sector. Due to a lack of skills in the high-demand technical and

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8 Interview by the author, MP Hind al-Fayez, August 11, 2015, House of Representatives, Amman, Jordan.
vocational industries that comprise lucrative sectors of the private sector in Jordan, employers in these fields favor students educated in wealthier, urban school systems and are even forced to import labor to meet these demands (RAND Corporation 2014, 16). Consequently, students in areas of the country that are underserved in terms of education face steep disadvantages in finding employment in a labor market that is shifting more towards a demand for skills that are not being taught in many Jordanian schools.

The inferior educational system in the rural areas of Jordan has a cascading effect in terms of its impact on the future aspirations of and opportunities presented to rural East Bank Jordanian youth. In Jordan, students choose between a science or literature track of study, and must take the tawjihi exam during their final year of secondary school in order to obtain spots in public state universities; tawjihi can also refer to the track of study that one takes (RAND Corporation 2015, 12). Within many East Bank Jordanian communities, the focus of many schools is upon literary studies rather than skills that would provide future economic opportunities to young Jordanian students in the private sector. According to MP Hind al-Fayez, the lack of appropriate skills being taught in the schooling system, in combination with the poor transportation system in Jordan, contributes to the under preparation of Jordanian youth for the labor market. As a result, underserved areas of the country, and particularly East Bank Jordanian communities, do not receive an adequate education with which to pursue an economically sustainable career path in the future.

“In our schooling system in the Central Badia and in the other Badia districts [that] are spread across 12 districts all around Jordan, in all of our schooling systems when you go to the high school starting from grade 10 to 12, all of the schools do not teach the students the scientific skills. It is based on the
literature. When you graduate from high school, you are forced to go through the literature channel, because if you want to go through the scientific channel you are forced to go far from your village, really far, to the civilized cities. You end up with specific tracks in the universities, such as geography, history, or teaching language, but you can’t be an engineer or any related profession.”

These inadequacies in the rural schooling system also harm the ability of East Bank Jordanian students to attend universities and achieve a higher education by negatively affecting their performances on the *tawjihi* exam, one of the most important tests that a Jordanian student will take throughout their education. MP Amjad Abu Jiri, a representative of Ma’an governorate, has first-hand experience in analyzing and addressing Jordan’s educational woes.

“The problem with education in Jordan is huge. The general education is a big problem, seen in high school and higher education teaching... I was a member of a Parliament initiative to further develop the education system in Jordan. Working on this project, we discovered big issues concerning the education system in Jordan, and worked hard with the government to create a program addressing these issues. However, during the last few weeks the marks for the *tawjihi* exam came out, and we found that 370 schools had no students passing the exam from these schools... Around 80 percent of these schools are in rural areas of the country... [and] the students are mostly East Bank Jordanians.”

The exact number of schools that failed to have a single student pass the *tawjihi* exams in 2015 was 349, with a total of 29, 451 students failing to pass the exam last summer. This is emblematic of the educational challenges that Jordan and its youth face through many rural and disadvantaged areas of the country (Magid 2015). Consequently, underserved areas of the country, and particularly East Bank

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9 Interview by the author, MP Hind al-Fayez, August 11, 2015, House of Representatives, Amman, Jordan.
10 Interview by the author, MP Amjad Abu Jiri, August 15, 2015, Jabal al-Weibdeh, Amman, Jordan.
Jordanian communities, do not receive an adequate education with which to pursue an economically sustainable career path in the future.

These issues comprise a laundry list of grievances that afflict many Jordanians of all backgrounds and ethnicities with regards to the educational challenges facing the Hashemite Kingdom. However, these issues also contribute to East Bank Jordanian relative deprivation by way of perceived discrimination in terms of educational benefits being received by certain segments of the population. “The level of education… from the people from the West Bank that are living in the refugee camps [with] the UNRWA schools is extremely advanced compared to the schooling system in the northern and southern and central Badia district schools,” said Hind al-Fayez. She continues, saying that by the time residents of the Badia districts reach a secondary education institution, “they can barely write their name or talk about any subject but the issues that have nothing to do with politics. And then you put them into competition with the graduates from the UNRWA schools or the refugee camp schools and they can’t compete. They end up with no degree, and the only solution for them is to work for the army or the gendarmerie or the public sector.”11 However, as has been addressed earlier in this chapter, public sector jobs have dwindled ever since the economic crisis of the late 1980s and the advent of neoliberal structural reforms in 1989 to the present. As a result, the educational challenges facing these communities cause a vicious cycle whereby youth from rural Jordanian communities cannot find work in the public sector and must turn to the private sector, but do not learn the correct skills to find employment in the private sector; the main

11 Interview by the author, MP Hind al-Fayez, August 11, 2015, House of Representatives, Amman, Jordan.
consequence of this is bulging youth unemployment, currently at about 30 percent for youth ages 15-24, and dissatisfaction among these rural communities.

Furthermore, in the East Bank Jordanian case, it breeds the perception that ruling authorities seek to further isolate their communities from the centers of power in the country. “I think that there is a... I’m not going to say conspiracy theory, there is some sort of political decision regarding that issue [education]. There is a strategy regarding that issue... How come that you see in the refugee camps all the infrastructure that you can imagine, all the support that you can think of. That is something that you can see with your naked eye,” said Hind al-Fayez in reference to the inferior educational infrastructure and institutions in her district. Kaitlin Roh, of USAID in Jordan, also cited the superiority of UNRWA schools in comparison to general public schools in Jordan. UNICEF has also focused large amounts of resources to targeting schools in refugee camps and host communities in Jordan to benefit young Syrian refugees (Roh 2015). Moreover, faltering education levels have even harmed the prospects of young East Bank Jordanians in rural areas of the country in entering traditional positions in the military for several decades, as “Palestinians are in greater demand in the military because they are more likely to have the technical and managerial skills necessary for manning a modern army... Although education levels among Bedouin have risen sharply over the past two decades [1970-1990], they still do not match the performance of Palestinians” (Satloff 1986, 63).

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12 Interview by the author, MP Hind al-Fayez, August 11, 2015, House of Representatives, Amman, Jordan.
These grievances also contribute to East Bank Jordanian perceptions of relative deprivation in relation to other segments of the population, as the educational advantages offered to several other social groups in the country, namely Palestinian and Syrian refugees, through foreign and organizational assistance has led to feelings of isolation and marginalization among many East Bank Jordanian communities.

Therefore, East Bank Jordanian relative deprivation occurs in two separate instances with regards to educational challenges. As stated earlier in this chapter, neoliberal restructuring led to reductions in the traditional state employment afforded to East Bank Jordanian communities, with many of the social and economic benefits of the reforms funneling into urban, economically attractive areas of Jordan. Consequently, the educational issues addressed in this section have put rural East Bank Jordanian youth at a disadvantage when attempting to enter a private sector job market for which they lack the adequate skills or even more traditional positions in the military, thereby exacerbating the inability of East Bank Jordanians to find economic opportunities and intensifying their feelings of relative deprivation in relation to other social groups in the country. Secondly, many East Bank Jordanian communities perceive that they are being underserved in terms of education services with regards to Palestinian and Syrian refugee populations in the country, thereby leading to a reduction in the privileged economic and socio-political opportunities that these communities were able to attain in the past. Jordan’s flawed education system helps fuel the flames of East Bank Jordanian relative deprivation, further intensifying the grievances of many rural East Bank Jordanian communities by entangling younger
generations in a cycle of poor education and even poorer economic and social mobility.

Relative Deprivation and East Bank Jordanian Discontent

Neoliberal economic structural reforms, the strengthening of the security apparatus, and a flawed educational system have given marginalized many rural East Bank Jordanian communities from the urban political and economic centers of power in Jordan. However, when applied to the case of Jordan and the traditional state-tribal ruling bargain, relative deprivation theory does not merely involve with East Bank Jordanian dissatisfaction towards the policies of the Hashemite regime with no repercussions for the stability of the regime. As Gurr argues, the greater the intensity and scope of relative deprivation in a population, the greater the potential for collective violence against ruling authorities. This is most aptly summed up in Gurr’s frustration-aggression hypothesis, which contends that if these frustrations are sufficiently prolonged or sharply felt, aggression is quite likely, if not certain, to occur. Relative deprivation theory becomes more than a cause of dissatisfaction and marginalization, and is additionally a driver for social unrest and political violence. In other words, while relative deprivation can be considered as a deprivation of political and economic rights, it can also have revolutionary consequences (Gurr 1970).

After the imposition of neoliberal economic adjustments in 1989, the new austerity measures sparked widespread protest in southern East Bank Jordanian towns and communities, such as Ma’an, Karak, and Tafilah. The protests later spread to Salt, an East Bank Jordanian-majority city just west of Amman. Approximately eight
people were killed and hundreds arrested before the mass rioting simmered to an uneasy halt. The protesting East Bank Jordanians called for a reversal of the austerity measures which had led to a dramatic price increase in fuel and other amenities and for increased support for farmers and rural communities negatively effected by the structural adjustments, demanded the resignation of Prime Minister Zayd al-Rifa’i and his cabinet, and decried economic inequality and corruption in Jordan (Brynen 1992, 90). As Lust-Okar points out, Palestinians, which had previously been considered the greatest political threat to the stability of the regime, generally refrained from joining the riots as unrest spread across the country during this time (Lust-Okar 2005, 158); the economic measures did not harm urban Palestinian populations nearly as severely as rural East Bank Jordanian communities, and therefore did not elicit a violent response from Palestinians in the country. Consequently, the social unrest among southern East Bank Jordanian communities, once considered traditional strongholds of support for the Hashemite monarchy, demonstrated the severity of grievances facing these communities and the unsustainability of the traditional ruling bargain between state and tribes in the face of neoliberal structural adjustments.

The demands made by East Bank Jordanian community leaders in southern tribal towns and communities were soon joined by professional organizations based in Amman, composed primarily of Palestinians, who demanded greater political freedoms than those that had traditionally been afforded to the Palestinian population (Brynen 1992, 90). Therefore, after the 1989 riots, East Bank Jordanian economic grievances and Palestinian political grievances came to the fore. However, only one
of these sets of grievances was adequately addressed by the regime. The Hashemite regime could not reverse the neoliberal structural package implemented in 1989 without risking a future economic collapse, and also hesitated to intensify repressive measures that could have further alienated those East Bank Jordanian communities that had previously constituted the foundation of the Hashemite monarchy’s popular support. Therefore, political liberalization was the only true option for the monarchy, and the riots of 1989 led to a flourishing of political freedoms under the watchful eye of the Hashemite regime, encouraging the participation of opposition groups in mainly urban areas of the country. This is not to say that many of the demands of East Bank Jordanians regarding political reform were met, but many of the core grievances of rural East Bank Jordanian communities were largely left unaddressed.

However, though many have considered the few years after 1989 to be a significant period of democratization and political liberalization, Lucas describes it as a period that “was intended to invite more guests into the living room for ‘coffee talk,’ with a few welcome to stay for dinner. None were to be invited into the kitchen, though, and certainly none were welcome in the rest of the house” (Lucas 2003, 139).

In 1989, King Hussein held national parliamentary elections for the first time in more than two decades, thereby allowing candidates from the Muslim Brotherhood, secular leftist and Arab nationalist movements, and independent liberals to win more a majority of the contested seats despite a gerrymandered electoral system that favored conservative tribal provinces over Palestinian-dominated cities. The application of martial law was suspended in 1990. The Muslim Brotherhood and professional associations, both dominated by Palestinians in urban areas of Jordan, became the
most prominent actors in a Jordanian civil society and body politic that took full advantage of expanded freedoms and political rights (Yom and Al-Momani 2008, 46). Though the re-emergence of the Jordanian parliament and political parties were indicative of substantial liberalization, true power remained with the king and monarchical establishment; Jordanian civil society and political bodies continued to be isolated from the decision-making powers in the country. Rural East Bank Jordanian communities in the country suffered from continued economic hardship and poor political organization compared to the Palestinian-dominated political bodies in urban areas of Jordan.

This period of political liberalization began to end in the early to mid 1990s, as the threat of a mass-mobilizing opposition in response to foreign and economic concerns began to cause the regime to rethink the process of political liberalization. Expectations of the opposition for the regime to address rampant corruption and internal crises went unfulfilled, and political actors began to make increased demands upon the Hashemite monarchy. After the Oslo Accords of 1993, King Hussein introduced a revision to the electoral system that introduced a single, nontransferable vote (SNTV); this tipped the electoral balance in favor of tribal candidates rather than city-based opposition candidates like the Muslim Brotherhood (Lucas 2003, 140). In response to popular discontent over the peace accord with Israeli in 1994 and continuing economic concerns, the regime responded with harsher political and press restrictions. While continuing to rollback its political liberalization efforts, the regime continued to institute neoliberal structural adjustments within the economy. In
response to the deteriorating state of the economy in 1996, the regime decided to raise the price of bread despite widespread objections.

In response to this unforgivable austerity measure, mass riots broke out in many of the same cities that had served as the stage for rural, tribal protests in 1989 (Lucas 2003, 140–141). However, the regime was not interested in catering to its tribal constituency this time around and responded with force. The army violently repressed the protesters and, unlike the last riots, “the regime framed the incident as a threat to national security; the King ignored demands to dismiss al-Kabariti [the prime minister at the time], and threatened to crush further disorder ‘with an iron fist’” (Yom and Al-Momani 2008, 47). The Hashemite regime was no longer afraid to use repressive measures against its rural, tribal base of support.

The economic, educational, socio-political grievances of rural East Bank Jordanian communities analyzed in this chapter gave rise to the relative deprivation of this demographic of the Jordanian population, and intensified neoliberal policies led to eruptions of violence stemming from a general perception among these communities that traditional privileges once afforded to them in the past were now disappearing. The heavy-handed response from the regime symbolizes the relative deprivation of these East Bank Jordanian communities and their gradual isolation from centers of power in the country. Rather than placating these rural tribal communities with traditional state patronage and welfare or political concessions, the regime made a calculated decision that it did not need to rely on these communities for political and social support and decided to employ military force. This is indicative of the shifting social contract employed by the regime during this time.
period, with urban areas of the country receiving the majority of the economic and socio-political benefits attributed to neoliberal structural adjustments in comparison to relatively underserved and isolated rural East Bank Jordanian communities.

By the advent of the 2000s, the political atmosphere of Jordan had nearly returned to the authoritarian years prior to 1989. Regional developments led the regime to stifle domestic discontent, with public unrest during the second intifada in the Palestinian territories leading to little tolerance for public demonstrations. Western aid, mostly from the United States, increased during this time and reached its peak during the war in Iraq; since 2003, the average amount of U.S. aid to Jordan has been $750 million per year (Baylouny 2008, 301). The influx of foreign aid strengthened the economy and security sector of Jordan, allowing the regime to avoid having to sacrifice operational budgets and employment opportunities to economic austerity, which would have further seeded discontent among tribal communities and potentially led to regime-threatening unrest. This situation lasted through the 2000s, with Western aid reinforcing neoliberal economic policies and authoritarian governance, both of which solidified the marginalization of rural East Bank Jordanian communities.

The Hashemite regime faced increased criticism from tribal sheikhs and leaders during the 2000s. However, another fierce crackdown on dissent in Ma’an in 2002, which occurred after bloody clashes in the southern tribal city between Jordanian security forces and residents following the assassination of a US diplomat, led to a forced quiet among East Bank Jordanian communities for much of the rest of the decade (Tell 2015). Public unrest was strongly discouraged, and the securitization
of the state escalated after the November 2005 terrorist bombings in Amman. In a survey from the Center for Strategic Studies (CSS) at the University of Jordan citing that 75% of respondents feared criticizing the government in public, slightly down from its peak of 83% in 2003 (Yom and Al-Momani 2008, 51). Meanwhile, the decline of the agricultural sector and reductions in public sector employment continued to harm many East Bank Jordanian communities in rural areas economically; in 2006, the poverty rate in rural areas of Jordan was 19 percent compared to 12 percent in urban areas, with Jordan’s rural population constituting 22 percent of Jordan’s total population (Chauffour 2012).

The relative deprivation of East Bank Jordanians, which had erupted occasionally as a result of excessive economic austerity measures and neoliberal structural policies, was ripe for devolving into another bout of social unrest directed towards the regime. It only required a spark to set fire to their discontent and deprivation.

The Transformation of the State-Tribal Social Contract

As a result of neoliberal restructuring of the Jordanian economy and social welfare allocation beginning in 1989, the nature of the ruling bargain held between the regime and East Bank Jordanians changed dramatically. Many East Bank Jordanians reliant upon state and agricultural employment suffered from decreased work opportunities, cuts in government assistance and social welfare, and general poverty, while much of Jordan’s Palestinian-majority urban population and the security apparatus reaped the economic and socio-political benefits of the reforms. Consequently, much of the East Bank Jordanian population began to experience
relative deprivation, as they witnessed the decline of traditional entitlements and the economic and political rise of other social groups and professional classes. Flaws in the Jordanian educational system have compounded the economic grievances facing rural East Bank Jordanian communities, and further fueled perceptions of deprivation in relation to other social groups in the country.

Suffering reductions in traditional economic, and socio-political privileges that had so long been afforded to them, many rural East Bank Jordanian communities became marginalized from the centers of power in the country. Growing progressively dissatisfied with the neoliberal policies and flavor of the Hashemite regime, as well as with continuous issues of political corruption, the relative deprivation and frustration of East Bank Jordanians occasionally erupted into social unrest and violence in response to intensified austerity measures and regional concerns. The regime dealt with these internal issues in a gradually more repressive manner, neglecting traditional methods of dealing with tribal unrest through state patronage and political benefits due to a stark lack of economic resources and a bloated public sector. Many of the grievances of rural East Bank Jordanians were not addressed during this time period, and their continued perceptions of deprivation and marginalization remained as threats to regime stability if given the right impetus for mass mobilization.

The eye-opening events of the Arab Spring protests in Jordan beginning in 2011 came as a shock to both the Hashemite regime and the international community. The worldwide economic crisis from 2008 to 2011 had exacerbated this pre-existing socio-economic marginalization, and provided fertile ground for rural tribal
communities to erupt into nationwide protest. As a result, the nature of the opposition, especially from East Bank Jordanian elements, made the relative deprivation of East Bank Jordanians more visible and acute than at any point in Jordanian history since the co-optation of East Bank Jordanian tribes during the formation of the state. The Hashemite regime managed to escape the regime-toppling protests that occurred across the region, and the public demonstrations and protests gradually petered out over the next few years. However, these pre-existing tensions combined with current issues such as the influx of nearly 1.4 million Syrian refugees into Jordan and the persistence of poor economic conditions for much of the Jordanian population, have actually intensified the relative deprivation of many East Bank Jordanian communities.

During the Arab Spring, East Bank Jordanian opposition forces created the foundation for a new state-tribal social contract through their unprecedented demands. Though East Bank Jordanian dissatisfaction today reflects many of the same grievances and desires as past discontent, the current state of relations between East Bank Jordanian communities and the regime is different in several fundamental aspects and East Bank Jordanian elements continue to mold a new relationship between state and tribes; one that is a reaction to more than two decades of gradual deprivation and frustration. The next chapter will address these developments by focusing on the Arab Spring protests and the new elements of tribal opposition that arose during this period, and their implications on a new, evolving social contract between East Bank Jordanian communities and the Hashemite regime.
Chapter 5: East Bank Jordanian Opposition and the Evolution of a New Social Contract

This chapter will address the fundamental changes within the state-tribal relationship since the mass Arab Spring protests in Jordan. Due to more than two decades of relative deprivation among many rural tribal communities, the Arab Spring period in Jordan served as a launch pad for marginalized East Bank Jordanian communities to voice their demands for economic and political change, and to directly challenge the socio-political parameters of the traditional ruling bargain held between the Hashemite regime and East Bank Jordanian tribes. As a result, tribal opposition movements posed the greatest challenge to the Hashemite regime during this period and dramatically altered the socio-political norms traditionally held between the Hashemite regime and its tribal constituency. The subsequent changes in the traditional state-tribal ruling bargain that began during this period have given rise to the beginning of a radical transformation within the traditional social contract between the Hashemite regime and East Bank Jordanians. Marginalized and dissatisfied East Bank Jordanians from tribal communities and cities across the country are driving the impetus for a new social and political state-tribal relationship with the Hashemite monarchy and regime that is starkly different from past manifestations.
The first part of the chapter analyzes the unprecedented social mobilization and political demands among the Jordanian population, and specifically East Bank Jordanian communities, during this time. This section is split between three sub-sections: the first analyzes the ineffectual protests in urban areas of Jordan by Palestinian and Islamist elements, the second explores the mosaic of East Bank Jordanian activism that defined the Arab Spring protests during this period, and the third addresses the eventual decline of the Arab Spring protests in Jordan. The second part of the chapter will explore the new elements and divides that emerged within East Bank Jordanian opposition and activism during and after the Arab Spring protests. These include a blurred generational divide among East Bank Jordanians in terms of demands and methods of activism, and the evolution of a more radical framework and platform for tribal opposition against the Hashemite regime. Lastly, the third part of this chapter will then address the formation of a new social contract between East Bank Jordanian communities and the Hashemite regime, one that is still changing and unfolding but that has incorporated the socio-political precedents set during the Arab Spring protests in renegotiating the state-tribal relationship.

The Hashemite regime is no longer dictating the parameters of the ruling bargain with tribal communities, as had occurred since 1989 through neoliberal restructuring within the Jordanian political economy. The Arab Spring protests have allowed East Bank Jordanian opposition elements to change the rules of the game and renegotiate a new social contract with the regime that is redefining the socio-political norms of state-tribal relations in Jordan.
The Arab Spring Protests in Jordan

1. Jordan’s Urban Protests

The Arab Spring protests in Jordan are widely regarded to have begun on January 14, 2011, when thousands of people in cities across Jordan, ranging from Amman to Ma’an, Irbid, Karak, and al-Salt, protested in response to multiple economic grievances and called for the ouster of Prime Minister Samir Rifai’s government, widely perceived to be corrupt and ineffectual (Sandels 2011). These mass protests were strikingly reminiscent of the mass public protests that had erupted in Tunisia only weeks earlier, and the Hashemite regime quickly mobilized forces to peacefully contain the protests and prevent the unrest from escalating further. On January 28, 2011, the Palestinian-dominated and urban-located Muslim Brotherhood, which remained the most well-organized opposition group in the country, joined the protests in Amman in unison with leftist organizations and trade unions, swelling the ranks of demonstrators in the capital into the thousands (Al-Jazeera 2011). These earliest manifestations of the Arab Spring protests in Jordan cited unemployment, inflation, corruption, and political and electoral reform as the main issues of contention with the regime. Moreover, many of the elements within these high-profile protests in Amman and other urban areas of the country brought together a variety of actors despite long-standing divisions between them, as Islamist, secular, professional, and youth groups marched together to demand reform (Ryan 2011).

King Abdullah II complied with some of the protesters’ demands immediately, dismissing Prime Minister Samir Rifai and his cabinet on February 1, 2011 after succumbing to popular pressure and pledged immediate political and
economic reform (Greenberg 2011). King Abdullah II replaced Rifai with Marouf al-Bakht, a military veteran of East Bank tribal background, on February 9, 2011.

However, these acts and promises did not quell the protests. On March 25, 2011, a Jordanian man set himself on fire outside of the Prime Minister’s office in an act of self-immolation reminiscent of the one that sparked mass protests in Tunisia in December 2010 (AP 2011). Later that month, clashes between regime loyalists, protesters, and police forces in Amman drew widespread coverage as the violence of protests in the capital seemed to be on the rise (Marsh, Finn, and Chulov 2011).

However, despite an escalation in violence and tensions at this time, many of these high-profile protests planned by organized opposition groups in Amman and other urban centers of Jordan did not pose a credible threat to the regime. They did play an important role in contributing to popular pressure upon the regime due to their proximity to the economic and political centers of power in the country, especially as protests intensified in late 2012. However, they typically did not cross known “red lines” of protests, such as directly challenging or criticizing the King, and did not pose a real threat to the stability of the regime (Yom 2014). They did not threaten revolutionary action, and mainly operated from a strategy of reform and dialogue directed towards the Prime Minister and other government officials; loyalist forces also tended to turn out in significant numbers in Amman during scheduled protests and rallies to counteract the opposition movements. Moreover, many of the protests that occurred in urban locales such as Amman followed the typical, traditional of protest in Jordan; organized events that begin in pre-planned locations at a scheduled time involving extensive coordination with police forces and the regime (Schwedler
2012). As a result, many observers of the Arab Spring protests in Jordan noted the nonviolence of the protests in Amman, the cordiality with which police forces treated the protesters, and repeated statements of continued loyalty to the monarchy coming from many of the high-profile protesting elements (Yom 2014, 232).

2. The True Arab Spring in Jordan: East Bank Jordanian Activism

East Bank Jordanian participation in this early phase of the protests was much more significant and actually drove many of the public protests in the country, especially in northern and southern tribal cities and towns once considered the bulwark of the monarchy’s support such as Irbid, Tafileh, Karak, Ma’an, and others; moreover, the rules and niceties regarding traditional protests in urban centers like Amman did not apply to much of the East Bank Jordanian opposition and activism during the Arab Spring protests. In contrast to controlled demonstrations in Amman, the protests that embodied a true threat to the regime “were primarily organized by East Bank Jordanians and lacked any significant Palestinian element” (Köprülü 2014, 122–123). In the same vein, Tobin states that, during interviews with Palestinians in Amman, many of them indicated that the Arab Spring in Jordan was not their fight and that the “real” Arab Spring was being fought by those experiencing economic and political marginalization (Tobin 2012). Consequently, rural tribal opposition, rather than the demonstrations organized by Palestinian and Islamist groups, led to increased internal unrest during the most chaotic and charged moments of the Arab Spring protests in Jordan. Though protests and demonstrations in the urban centers like Amman often attracted many participants, opposition in the rural southern and northern tribal areas of Jordan directly threatened the idea of a loyal tribal contingent
to the monarchy. Moreover, this East Bank Jordanian activism was especially significant, as it was the first time that demands for political reform had arisen among rural tribal communities without being driven by a singular internal event or policy (Köprülü 2014, 123).

The foundation for significant opposition among East Bank Jordanians during the Arab Spring protests was laid long before the beginning of the regional protest movements that constituted the Arab Spring. Several East Bank Jordanian nationalists\(^\text{13}\), such as the eccentric Dr. Ahmad al-‘Uwaydi al-‘Abbadi\(^\text{14}\), had been attempting to sow discontent toward the regime among rural tribal communities throughout the late 2000s, and tribal leaders and elders of rural East Bank Jordanian communities increasingly criticized the economic policies of the regime.

On May 1, 2010, the National Committee for Retired Servicemen (NCRS), a group of Jordanian military veterans hailing from tribal backgrounds, released a manifesto pushing an East Bank Jordanian nationalist agenda that utilized anti-Palestinian rhetoric in criticizing King Abdullah II’s neoliberal policies of privatization and private sector promotion at the expense of rural tribal communities. These neoliberal policies, in combination with the decline of active service personnel in the military regime and the diversion of social services from military personnel to Palestinian refugee camps, drove members of the military establishment previously considered loyal to the regime to launch an internal revolt decrying the political and

\(^{13}\) East Bank Jordanian nationalism, or nativism, is a brand of national identity held by many East Bank Jordanians that prioritizes Transjordanian tribal heritage, culture, and history as that of the “true Jordanians,” and views the growth of the Palestinian population and other nationalities in the country as threatening to traditional tribal privileges and tribal “ownership” of the state.

\(^{14}\) Interview by the author, Dr. Ahmad al-‘Uwaydi al-‘Abbadi, August 8, 2015, Wadi al-Seer, Amman Governorate, Jordan.
socio-economic strategies of the Hashemite monarchy. The manifesto also underlined the fears of many East Bank Jordanians, especially those of the older generations, that Jordan will become an “alternative homeland” for the Palestinian people, and that East Bank Jordanians will continue to become steadily marginalized socially, economically, and politically within the country (National Committee of Retired Army Personnel 2010). These actions precipitated the eventual mass opposition seen among rural East Bank Jordanian communities during the Arab Spring protests.

Following this pattern, the Arab Spring protests in Jordan actually began in southern East Bank Jordanian communities before moving into Amman and other urban areas of the country, with media coverage focusing more extensively on demonstrations and protest activities in and around the capital. On January 7, two weeks prior to the beginning of mass demonstrations across the country, 250-300 young individuals in the tribal town of Dhiban just 30 miles south of Amman in the Madaba Governorate, most of whom hailed from Beni Hamida tribal families, organized via social media and protested against political corruption and poor living conditions. It was the first such movement to demonstrate on the Jordanian streets in early 2011. One of their demands was the resignation of Prime Minister Sami Rifai, who was also a member of a politically elite tribal family. Therefore, for many East Bank Jordanians, he symbolized the disconnection between the grievances of rural East Bank Jordanian communities and the elites within the regime establishment, even those of East Bank tribal heritage, in urban areas of the country. After the ousting of President Zine El-‘Abidine Ben ‘Ali in Tunisia, protests continued in Dhiban for the rest of the month (Yom 2014, 233).
However, the appointing of Marouf al-Bakhit as Prime Minister did not quell protests among rural East Bank Jordanian communities. Rather, the target of East Bank Jordanian anger was not certain corrupt government officials, but the regime, monarchical establishment, and even King Abdullah II himself (Yom 2014, 233). This represented a stark difference in strategy from Palestinian and Islamist-led protests in Amman; rural tribal communities that had long suffered from socio-economically induced relative deprivation were now beginning to mobilize and shift anger from typical scapegoats, such as Palestinians and corrupt government officials, to the Hashemite monarchy and regime establishment. This discontent was especially prevalent among East Bank Jordanian youth. Thus was born out of Dhiban the Hirak movement, a disjointed and decentralized collection of tribal youth protest movements inspired by the popular protests in Tunisia and Egypt that decried the regime on a similar platform of reform and change. Rural East Bank tribal relative deprivation and opposition manifested itself most clearly in the Hirak movement during this period and, spreading rapidly across tribal communities in Jordan after the episode in Dhiban, this youth-based tribal opposition became the most ground-shaking of the social movements facing the Hashemite regime.

As Yom explains in his extensive research on the Hirak movement, the protests in Dhiban caused a flood of tribal youth-based opposition across the governorates of Jordan, including “northern cities and towns of Irbid, Jarash, ‘Ajlun, and Salt; to areas on the fringes of the capital, including the East Amman neighborhood of Tufayila; and to the southern cities of Madaba, Shubak, Karak, Ma’an, and Tafila” (Yom 2014, 233). These movements were not unified under a
central command or platform and tended to differ slightly based on geographic location. For example, the Hirak movements from tribal communities closer to Amman tended to prioritize political reform, whereas poorer tribal communities in the south of Jordan, including activists within the Huwaytat and Beni Hamida tribes, viewed economic and political reform as equally important issues (Yom 2014, 245). However, the relative deprivation among many East Bank Jordanian communities in combination with similar grievances led these movements to identify as separate parts of larger social movement pushing for radical reform at the highest levels of government.

As a result, many of these tribal youth movements utilized similar names utilizing the term hirak (Arabic for “movement”); these include Al-Tafileh Quarter Movement located in Amman, al-Hirak al-Sha’bi fi al-Shamal (the Popular Movement of the North, based in Irbid), Ahrar al-Salt (The Free of Salt), al-Hirak al-Shababi wa-l-Sha’bi fi al-Karak (the Popular Youth Movement in Karak), and Ahrar Muhafazat al-Tafila (the Free in the Tafila Governorate), among others (Yom 2014, 233-234).

As Yom points out, many of these tribal movements also formed around tribal and clan identity. For example, Hirak Shabab al-Khalayila (Movement of the Khalayila Youth) represented a clan of the northern Beni Hassan tribal confederacy that had historically been close to the Hashemite monarchy, Tajammu’ Abna’ Qabilat Beni Sakhr li-l-Islah (Group of Beni Sakhr Tribal Sons for Reform) represented opposition from the Beni Sakhr tribal alliance in central Jordan, and 23 Ayyar Abna’ al-Nu’aymat li-l-Islah (May 25 Movement of the Sons of the Nu’aymat for Reform)
represented youths from the large Huwaytat tribal confederation in southern Jordan. Moreover, some movements represented not just their tribe but the entire place they resided in Jordan, such as the entire northern township of Sakib in the case of Hirak al-‘Ayasara li-l-Islah (the ‘Ayasara Movement for Reform) (Yom 2014, 233–234). These latter movements that involve a more pronounced tribal and clan-based identity will play a particularly important role in the analysis of a new state-tribal contract later in this chapter.

King Abdullah II warned of the potential for youth unrest and opposition in 2003, when he stated during an interview that “[the] leadership of the Middle East [does not] understand that 50 percent of the population is under eighteen, and if they don’t get going to create some means for real political participation for these young people, they are going to have serious problems” (Diehl 2003). As the King foretold, the main demands of the Hirak movement, rather than revolving around increased economic welfare and opportunities as in past East Bank Jordanian opposition movements, involved limiting the absolute power of the King, revising the current electoral laws to promote more political participation and pluralism, and ending endemic political corruption (Yom 2014, 230). Though socio-economic issues and the rising inequality between urban and rural communities were main factors in the opposition, the fact that many of these movements targeted the regime and monarchy in their reform-minded demands was significant. As a result, these tribal youth movements represented the greatest challenge to the Hashemite regime during the Arab Spring protests and became a flagship for East Bank Jordanian opposition. The protesters represented traditional southern and northern bastions of tribal support for
the monarchy, but were not afraid to criticize and insult the King, his family, and the constitutional monarchical system that stands as the foundation of Jordan’s political and social institutions; these had always been “red lines” of protest that Jordanians, and East Bank Jordanians in particular, had been loathe to cross in the past.

However, more radical forms of East Bank Jordanian opposition during the Arab Spring protests did not just occur among rural, marginalized tribal youth; a minority of revolutionary-minded East Bank Jordanian tribal leaders and elders took advantage of the political atmosphere in Jordan to push for an end to the Hashemite monarchy. East Bank Jordanian nativism has existed in multiple forms in Jordan since the 1920s. The strengthening voice of East Bank Jordanian nativists, or nationalists, in recent years, itself a direct product of East Bank Jordanian relative deprivation, was given a wider audience during the Arab Spring protests. A more left-leaning brand of East Bank Jordanian nationalism influenced the contentious politics of the protest period, led in part by Dr. Ahmad al-‘Uwaydi al-‘Abbadi, a former member of Parliament who was sentenced to two years imprisonment in 2007 for “undermining the country’s reputation, membership in an illegitimate organization, and distributing illegal pamphlets” (House (U.S.) Committee on Foreign Affair, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations 2016, 1925). He was arrested again in 2012 for “inciting to topple the regime,” and was later released in March of that same year after a large showing of tribal support demanding his release and the overthrow of the regime, especially among his native ‘Abbadi tribe (Varulkar 2012).

Dr. al-‘Abbadi is the current head of the Jordan National Movement and one of a minority of East Bank Jordanian nationalists who pushes for the abolition of the
Hashemite monarchical system and the establishment of an East Bank Jordanian republic that would “reclaim” Jordan from foreign elements in the country, namely the Hashemites, Palestinians, and Syrian and Iraqi refugees.\textsuperscript{15} These views, though held by a radical minority of East Bank Jordanians, illuminate the most paranoid perceptions of relative deprivation among rural tribal communities. They were given greater credence by tribal opposition forces in the Arab Spring protests and, consequently, did have an influence on the most revolutionary aspects of the more mainstream East Bank Jordanian opposition during this period.

Urban East Bank Jordanians and East Bank Jordanian elites within the regime establishment also protested against what they saw as increased marginalization of East Bank Jordanians in favor of Palestinians and rampant political corruption. The National Committee for Retired Servicemen (NCRS) continued to foment significant opposition to the Hashemite monarchy from within the military establishment. The National Front for Reform, established by former Prime Minister (1984-1985) Ahmad Obeidat in May 2011, was one of the most significant reformist protest movements during this period that contained many nationalist and establishment figures and attracted many urban East Bank Jordanians to its cause. This movement focused its demands on political reform to eradicate corruption, including fairer social justice, a larger role for civil society, and free and fair elections of government (Sadiki 2012; Yom 2013, 133).

Urban East Bank Jordanians were also largely involved in the protests in Amman and the other urban centers of Jordan that were most often affiliated with the

\textsuperscript{15} Interview by the author, Dr. Ahmad al-‘Uwaydi al-‘Abbadi, August 8, 2015, Wadi al-Seer, Amman Governorate, Jordan.
Muslim Brotherhood and professional organizations that dominated the urban protests at this time. However, as with the Palestinian and Islamist-led protests in Amman and other urban areas of Jordan, many of the urban East Bank Jordanian protests constituted a “legal opposition” that did not involve demands for radical change and were easily controlled by Jordanian security officials. This was especially true for many protest movements organized by urban East Bank Jordanians, such as the March 24 Movement, which was mainly a university youth movement that called for the dissolution of parliament, the dismantling of the intelligence apparatus, and a more inclusive government (Halaby 2011); however, it promoted a gradual approach to political reform rather than immediate action on the part of the regime, which stood in stark contrast to the demands of rural tribal opposition movements (Yom 2014, 232).

East Bank Jordanian protests and opposition intensified throughout 2011 and 2012. Wide and varied tribal opposition contributed to the resignation of multiple Prime Ministers and other government officials, though it failed to achieve the major political and economic overhauls that so many rural communities were demanding. Due to popular pressure, Prime Minister Marouf al-Bakhit was forced to resign in October 2011 as a result of stalled political reforms and continued public perceptions of corruption within the government. Protests continued sporadically into 2012, with the resignation of Prime Minister Awn Shawkat al-Khasawneh, who succeeded Bakhit, in April 2012 indicating a political crisis within a Hashemite regime that was split on how to strategize reform processes to appease the opposition movements (al-Samadi 2013). In early September of 2012, thousands in Ma’an, Irbid, and Karak
protested in response to a fuel price hike and what they viewed as corruption within the Royal Court, leading to the cancellation of the fuel price increase; the Muslim Brotherhood also led a smaller demonstration composed of 600 people in Amman (Kadri and Kershner 2012). On September 8, East Bank Jordanian protesters chanted anti-regime slogans criticizing King Abdullah II in response to the arrest of a tribal activist who had been arrested for criticizing Queen Rania (DPA 2012). In October 2012, King Abdullah II dissolved parliament, announced new early elections, dismissed Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh, and appointed Abdullah Ensour as new Prime Minister.

However, the protests took a more violent turn in November, as further price increases on fuel and other basic goods resulted in near chaos in many rural cities and towns, such as Ma’an, Salt, Sareeh, and Mazar, and intensified protest in tribal communities like Jerash, Irbid, Tafileh, and Karak. Protesters attacked police stations, closed roads with burnt cars, and torched government buildings, while some called for the abdication of King Abdullah II and the downfall of the regime; hundreds of people were arrested, with hundreds more injured and several killed. Protests later spread to Amman where the Muslim Brotherhood organized rallies that contained similar charged rhetoric but were far more peaceful in nature (al-Khalidi 2012). The violent protests largely subsided after a few days.

3. The Decline of Mass Opposition

By 2013, the mass demonstrations and protest movements that characterized the Arab Spring in Jordan from 2011 to 2012 declined drastically. Though small marches continued every Friday afternoon in Amman at pre-specified locations
throughout 2013 and 2014, they were miniscule and insignificant compared to the mobilization seen during the height of the Arab Spring protests. Several of the *Hirak* protest groups continued to hold weekly demonstrations in cities like Amman, Irbid, Karak, and Tafileh, with a notable series of demonstrations occurring in southern Jordanian cities like Karak and Mazar in July 2013 to demand political reform and an end to corruption (Greenfield 2013, 3). However, in 2014 and 2015, even these small, yet regular, demonstrations declined and faded from the Jordanian streets. Many scholars and officials observed this phenomenon and declared Jordan to be a case of an “anti-revolution”, as the large protest movements did not result in regime change or significant societal instability and political chaos (Tobin 2012). Many observers glowingly attributed the decline of Jordanian protests to rapid economic, political, and electoral reforms and promises issued by King Abdullah II in order to appease the protesters. As a result, Jordan has been highlighted as a country that successfully weathered the Arab Spring regional movements and as a model example for other regimes that wish to survive future internal unrest and instability.

However, Yom argues that the reforms issued by the regime during the height of the protests in 2012 only served to preserve the authoritarian power of the King and the elites gathered around him; “[the] parliament remains a toothless body, created by an electoral law so tilted to favor conservatives that it triggered a boycott by Islamists and other opposition figures. The kingship and its government still dictate all major policy stances, and the security apparatus continues to loom over civic life with overarching authority” (Yom 2013, 127–128).
As a current member of Parliament and the first female representative of the Central Badia district, Hind al-Fayez also had harsh words for the political reforms of the Hashemite regime, and especially with regards to the political power of King Abdullah II.

“Where is the political reform that the American people are so happy and satisfied with? Where is it?... [King Abdullah II] has absolute power. In the constitution, in Article 34, he can dissolve the parliament in a second. No justification, and we are elected by the people... If we are talking reform, about reforming the country, we need to get rid of that article so that the people will believe and will have faith in the parliament that represents them. [The parliament’s] weakness is like a domino effect.”

Moreover, sweeping economic reforms to address the grievances of rural East Bank Jordanian communities have not come, and instead King Abdullah II resorted to economic relief packages bolstered by foreign aid and targeted toward marginalized tribal communities in order to try to quiet the tribal opposition (Alianak 2014, 126-128). Though they have acted as a temporary relief from extreme poverty in these disadvantaged areas of Jordan, it is not enough; for example, both MP Amjad Abu Jiri and Abdel Salam Dwarej, Director of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs in Ma’an, believed that government efforts to tackle economic grievances in Ma’an have not been adequate and that frustration could possibly boil over in the future. Similarly, judicial reforms to the flawed court system have not resulted in true change; in establishing a new constitutional court system, the Jordanian government kept the state security courts intact and continue to try civilians in these special courts for crimes such as terrorism, smuggling weapons and drugs, and insulting the King.

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16 Interview by the author, MP Hind al-Fayez, August 11, 2015, House of Representatives, Amman, Jordan.
17 Interview by the author, MP Amjad Abu Jiri, August 15, 2015, Jabal al-Weibdeh, Amman, Jordan; Interview by the author, Abdel Salam Dwarej, August 13, 2015, Ma’an, Jordan.
(Schienberg 2013). In other words, the same exact issues that gave rise to East Bank Jordanian relative deprivation and mass opposition remain as prevalent as ever, and demands for social, political, economic reform were largely not met.

Coercive measures that particularly targeted tribal opposition movements, rather than rapid-fire reform on the part of the regime, played a more influential role in discouraging continued mass mobilization in the streets. In stark contrast to the more controlled urban and Islamist-led protests in Amman, the Hashemite regime utilized force and coercive tactics in order to crush rural tribal opposition, which was viewed as far more threatening to the stability of the state due to the radical platform for protest it had unleashed and the traditional tribal forces that were implicated in the opposition. Yom argues that this especially harmed tribal youth movements such as the Hirak movements, as “…mukhabarat [secret police] sowed friction within many tribal communities, playing on anti-Palestinian sentiment by spreading rumors that Hirak protesters were actually Palestinian provocateurs” (Yom 2014, 235). The Jordanian security and intelligence apparatus also induced conservative tribal leaders and groups to deter and speak out against youth activism, hoping to marginalize tribal youth protesters within their own communities (Yom 2014, 235).

Moreover, the use of violence and imprisonment by regime forces occurred much more commonly in response to rural tribal opposition, with harsh punishment meted out to much of the rural tribal opposition. For example, during the protests of September 8, 2012 in the southern tribal city of Tafileh, a local activist was arrested for criticizing Queen Rania and, in response, about 60 protesters gathered and chanted slogans insulting King Abdullah II; Jordanian security forces responded by firing tear
gas and live rounds into the crowd while arresting 15 of the protesters for “undermining the regime” and “inciting a riot”, despite the fact that many of the activists present claim that their rally was peaceful (DPA 2012). The fact that a small rally, in contrast to the massive protests in Amman, elicited such a violent response from Jordanian forces is emblematic of the harsher repression inflicted upon rural tribal opposition, especially in comparison to their urban counterparts.

Additionally, the brewing civil war in Syria and, to a slightly lesser degree, the violent “second revolution” in Egypt in 2013 served to have a chilling effect on the entire Jordanian opposition. Jordanian fears that increased internal opposition could land the country in a similar state of social and political chaos “served as powerful disincentives to revolutionary change… [these] external factors have dampened much of the early enthusiasm for Arab awakening sentiments” in the country (Greenfield 2013, 1–2). Increasing tensions with the Hashemite regime while the country absorbed an ever-growing number of Syrian refugees and while neighboring Syria and Iraq spiraling further into chaos and instability threatened to put Jordan in the crosshairs of potential societal and political collapse, and the Jordanian opposition recognized this. The Syrian civil war and its tragic consequences continue to silence public unrest among Jordanians, especially among East Bank Jordanian communities, as will be explored in the upcoming chapter.

Despite the decline of the mass mobilization and opposition in Jordan seen during the Arab Spring, the issues and anger that initially gave rise to the protests are ever-present and are actually worsening, as the Jordanian economy remains in dire straits and about 1.4 million Syrian refugees are stretching the limits of the country’s
social, economic, and political stability. Though external factors and coercive measures served to dampen tribal opposition during the Arab Spring protests, East Bank Jordanian relative deprivation runs as deep as ever and underground tribal opposition continues to exist. Tribal youth movements remain active on social media and express their bitterness and dissatisfaction with the regime.\(^\text{18}\) Revolutionary East Bank Jordanian nationalists continue to conspire in abolishing the Hashemite monarchy and establishing new forms of governance in the country.\(^\text{19}\) Though the Arab Spring protests in Jordan ultimately declined and disappeared, tribal unrest during the Arab Spring protests exposed new elements within East Bank Jordanian opposition that were markedly different from past manifestations of tribal protest. As a result, East Bank Jordanian activism during the Arab Spring abruptly changed the rules of the traditional state-tribal relationship and has contributed significantly to the molding of a new, evolving social contract between the Hashemite regime and East Bank Jordanians. These developments will be explored in the following sections of this chapter.

*New Elements in East Bank Jordanian Opposition*

The scale and nature of popular mobilization in Jordan during the Arab Spring protests from 2011 to 2012 far surpassed protest movements in the country in recent decades, and this was especially true for East Bank Jordanian communities across Jordan. Fueled by more than two decades of gradual marginalization and relative

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\(^{18}\) Interview by the author, MP Hind al-Fayez, August 11, 2015, House of Representatives, Amman, Jordan.

\(^{19}\) Interview by the author, Dr. Ahmad al-'Uwaydi al-'Abbadi, August 8, 2015, Wadi al-Seer, Amman Governorate, Jordan.
deprivation, East Bank tribal opposition mobilized in a variety of forms and brought with them a multitude of demands for political and economic reform that spanned the spectrum from gradualist to radical and revolutionary. However, two new elements arose among East Bank Jordanian activism during the Arab Spring protests that served to change the rules of the state-tribal relationship in Jordan; namely, blurred generational divides between younger and older generations of East Bank Jordanians, and a radical and revolutionary platform for tribal protest that had not existed in the mainstream discourse of protests in Jordan previous to this period.

1. Generational Divides

Many of the tribal opposition movements, especially in rural areas of Jordan, symbolized generational divides between younger and older generations of East Bank Jordanian tribes in terms of social interactions with the regime and Hashemite monarchy and norms of protest. Conservative older generations of East Bank Jordanians tended to frame their protests within demands for economic concessions and reform blunted by repeated public expressions of loyalty to the Hashemite regime. This had typically been the norm of socio-political interactions between East Bank Jordanian tribes and the regime during disputes and conflicts in past decades. As a result, tribal elders and many East Bank Jordanian government officials tend to play down the Arab Spring protests as mainly a temporary reaction due to poor economic circumstances rather than a phenomenon involving various political movements sprouting up among East Bank Jordanian communities. For example, MP Amjad Abu Jiri said, “I think that the demonstrations that happened during the Arab Spring made it seem that there is a problem with our political system… We go back
to our roles, the main dissatisfaction for them is an economic one, they don’t have political dissatisfaction. Their problem is not with the politics but most of it is with the government because they are responsible for people’s economic needs, so I’d like to restate that the problem in Jordan is an economic one, not political.”

Several East Bank Jordanian shiyukh and elders interviewed even declined to fully address many of the challenges facing East Bank Jordanian youth. When asked about the unemployment facing tribal youth, Daoud al-Khrashah, a prominent sheikh and tribal judge in Karak, confirmed that the “sons of tribes” no longer have guaranteed jobs in the government because the public sector is full, but quickly followed that statement by saying, “I am afraid of this question because they are loyal to this country. I don’t want to show that there are any complaints from the tribes.”

Though acknowledging several of the grievances, including economic and political, currently facing the youth of their communities, many of these tribal leaders and elders did not consider the East Bank Jordanian youth movements or tribal opposition movements, in general, as legitimate expressions of opposition and frustration with the Hashemite regime. Many shiyukh, including Daoud al-Khrashah and Hamed al-Nawaysah of Karak, even placed principle blame on Islamist forces as stoking support for protest among East Bank Jordanian youth and opposition forces, and discredited political forms of protest among East Bank Jordanians as contradictory to tribal moral code and traditional loyalty to the Hashemite monarchy.

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20 Interview by the author, MP Amjad Abu Jiri, August 15, 2015, Jabal al-Weibdeh, Amman, Jordan.
21 Interview by the author, Daoud al-Khrashah, August 19, 2015, Karak, Jordan.
22 Interview by the author, Daoud al-Khrashah, August 19, 2015, Karak, Jordan; Interview by the author, Hamed al-Nawaysah, August 19, 2015, Karak, Jordan.
However, contrary to the claims of their elders, younger generations of East Bank Jordanians did in fact tend to utilize a very different path of opposition during the Arab Spring protests. As Yom notes, the tribal youth activists of the Hirak movement generally entered the political arena with calls for democratic and pluralistic reform; in contrast, “many tribal leaders responded by calling for economic restitution as would have occurred in the past” (Yom 2014, 231). As MP Hind al-Fayez observes, “[With] the young generations… you can sense that bitterness and that lack of satisfaction with the government. Not only with the government performance, but also with the Hashemite regime.”

As will be addressed in the next section of this chapter, the content of the political demands of tribal youth and the manner in which they were made represented a radical shift from past socio-political norms in the relationship between the Hashemite regime and East Bank Jordanian communities. However, the very fact that East Bank Jordanian youth framed their protest in political terms represented a sharp break from many of their elders and tribal leaders.

This led to several conflicts between youth opposition movements and tribal leaders and conservatives in their communities during the Arab Spring protests. At the beginning of the Hirak movement’s protests and demonstrations, tribal youth activists accused more than 90 percent of tribal leadership of corruption. “The problems is that the leadership cares only about their personal interests and the circle of people closest to them,” said MP Amjad Abu Jiri, “Which led other tribesmen to

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23 Interview by the author, MP Hind al-Fayez, August 11, 2015, House of Representatives, Amman, Jordan.
24 Interview by the author, MP Amjad Abu Jiri, August 15, 2015, Jabal al-Weibdeh, Amman, Jordan.
say, ‘The leadership can’t give me my rights, they care only for themselves’… The youth are the main ones pushing for reform and for a civil state, and they are the ones most effect by economic and political issues.”25 In contrast, several influential leaders of tribes near Amman held public councils denouncing youth protests. The Hashemite regime also played upon this generational divide to disrupt rural tribal youth activists, with Prince Hasan publicly criticizing youth opposition and meeting with older tribal elders and leadership in order to further marginalize protesting East Bank Jordanian youth (Yom 2014, 235). Though these strategies did contribute to the eventual decline of mass tribal opposition, the propensity of youth protesters to break away from older, more conservative tribal elements in their communities and directly target the Hashemite regime in protest was a new phenomenon that exposed a deep disconnect between younger and older tribal generations.

The desires for expansive political reform expressed by tribal youth across the country were certainly inspired by the demands for democratic and pluralistic reform seen among youth across the region during the Arab Spring, but they also represented a distinct transformation in the socio-political norms of East Bank Jordanian tribes. By directing their discontent at the Hashemite regime and royal figures and framing it in political terms, East Bank Jordanian youth sharply broke from older tribal opposition that tended to focus on reforms to the economic strategy of the regime. Staggering high rates of youth unemployment among rural tribal communities had not dampened their desire for comprehensive economic reform, but their anger manifested itself into more direct confrontation with the regime and monarchy. Tribal

leaders and elders typically avoided crossing “red lines” that involved direct criticism of the Hashemite regime and monarchy, as had always been the norm during past bouts of unrest among East Bank Jordanian tribal communities.

However, not all East Bank Jordanian youth are political activists, and not all East Bank Jordanian political activists are youth. There are certainly East Bank Jordanian youth who are satisfied with the status quo due to positions of superior privilege or wealth relative to their peers. In the same vein, it is not the case that all East Bank Jordanian youth are mainly politically driven while older generations of East Bank Jordanian tribes are solely economically driven. Though tribal leaders and elders, especially those in more rural, impoverished communities, may be more likely to prioritize economic reforms, many would not reject a political opening in the governance of Jordan in order to open the political system to a larger plurality of voices and opinions. Dr. Ahmad al-‘Uwaydi al-‘Abbadi, as an older tribal military veteran and former member of Parliament who pushes for radical political transformation, serves as a perfect, albeit radical, example.

These sentiments were evident at a wedding that I attended with Dr. ‘Abaddi and multiple shiyukh and elders of the influential ‘Abbadi tribe in Wadi al-Seer, the traditional homeland of the ‘Abbadi tribe located on the outskirts of the Amman governorate. Dr. al-‘Abbadi told me before the wedding that I would not hear a single word of support for the Hashemites, and he was correct; Dr. al-‘Abbadi publicly criticized King Abdullah II, Queen Rania, and other regime officials at the wedding, asking the other tribal elders at our table if they agreed with him. The other shiyukh and elders did not agree or disagree with Dr. al-‘Abbadi, but many were visibly
uncomfortable by the turn that the conversation had taken. One ‘Abbadi elder left the table, joking that he did not want to get arrested by the mukhabarat. Dr. al-‘Abbadi said afterwards that, had he said the same things 15 or 20 years ago at a social gathering, there would have been an opposite reaction; the other tribal leaders and elders would have quickly denounced his words and pledged loyalty to the monarchy. In other words, perceptions of the Hashemite monarchy are changing, even among older conservative tribal elements, and the unconditional support for the regime once seen among established tribal elements is deteriorating. However, though older generations of East Bank Jordanians may desire political change, most are unwilling to express these desires in the form of revolutionary opposition directed at the Hashemite monarchy like Dr. al-‘Abbadi. Many remain hesitant or fearful to cross traditional boundaries of protest and opposition, as they were during the Arab Spring protests.

This is the main division between younger and older generations of East Bank Jordanians. East Bank Jordanian youth that protested for political and democratic reform would not and did not reject economic packages given by the regime, and this is especially true for those in poorer communities. However, the fact that many of their demands did not stop at economic concessions and reform is significant, as is the fact that many of the tribal youth movements were not afraid to cross “red lines” of protest regarding criticism of the regime and monarchy.

This represented a profound change in traditional tribal opposition. Defiance of both tribal elders and the Hashemite regime, in combination with their demands for

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26 Interview by the author, Dr. Ahmad al-‘Uwaydi al-‘Abbadi, August 8, 2015, Wadi al-Seer, Amman Governorate, Jordan.
dramatic political change, became the norm for protest among East Bank Jordanian youth opposition such as that seen in the Hirak movement. Though much of the older generations of East Bank Jordanians would certainly welcome political reform in combination with economic restructuring, most would not contribute to more radical forms of protest that willfully targeted the Hashemite regime. Rural tribal youth exposed the sharp divides between older conservatives and the supporters of political reform and change within tribal communities through a distinctly different, more radical form of tribal opposition. Economic and political frustrations among the youth would not be assuaged by monetary packages supplied by the Hashemite regime, which simply act as a temporary band-aid on a gaping neoliberal economic, structural wound. Instead, in direct opposition to conservative, older tribal elements, marginalization and disenfranchisement acted as a catalyst for the youth opposition forces to target the regime, monarchy, and political actors they saw as responsible for their grievances. The radical framework for opposition created during the Arab Spring protests created by East Bank Jordanian youth and other radical tribal elements served to push the envelope of protest even further, and to reshape the norms and parameters of the socio-political relationship between East Bank Jordanian communities and the Hashemite regime.

2. Radical Framework for Protests

Various East Bank Jordanian opposition movements during the Arab Spring protests, including among youth and more radical, nativist tribal elements, created a radical framework and platform for protest that challenged the norms of traditional socio-political interactions between East Bank Jordanians and the Hashemite regime.
This was especially prevalent within rural, socio-economically disadvantaged tribal communities, and occasionally gave rise to shocking public displays of dissatisfaction. For example, when King Abdullah II visited Tafileh in June 2011, several Jordanian and international sources provide eyewitness accounts of people in the crowd throwing stones and bottles at the King’s royal convoy, though an official spokesman denied that such an attack occurred (Black 2011). In January 2012, a young activist in Madaba burned a poster featuring King Abdullah II and was arrested for “harming the King’s dignity” (Ghabayen 2012).

Unprecedented expressions of anger and marginalization within East Bank Jordanian opposition characterized much of protests during the Arab Spring period, and were especially revolutionary given the laws forbidding criticism of the King and a long tradition of avoiding overt criticism of the Hashemite monarchy in past bouts of unrest. These acts symbolized the extreme tensions between marginalized communities in the tribal hinterlands of Jordan and the Hashemite regime, and the radical offspring of these tensions manifested themselves most visibly in the opposition movements led by nativist, anti-Palestinian East Bank Jordanians and those led by East Bank Jordanian youth.

Older, left-leaning East Bank Jordanian nativists represented a major radical force in tribal opposition during the Arab Spring protests, and utilized the political space created during this period to push an anti-Palestinian, nationalistic agenda criticizing and even calling for the overthrow of the Hashemite monarchy. This ideology represents the most radical offspring of the acute relative deprivation experienced by many East Bank Jordanian communities since 1989, and held a major
influence on East Bank activism during the Arab Spring protests. For example, the political manifesto released by the National Committee for Retired Servicemen (NCRS) in May 2010 promoted this brand of East Bank Jordanian nativism, exposed strong nationalist sentiments within a traditional tribal bulwark of regime support, and precipitated the mass East Bank Jordanian opposition seen during the Arab Spring protests. Dr. al-‘Abbadi, a former member of the regime establishment, is representative of the relevance of nativist sentiments to the national imagination of many East Bank Jordanian activists. The fact that tribal military veterans broke from the Hashemite regime and made a number of demands for political and economic reform in line with their nativist sentiments is a radical event in and of itself; however, Dr. al-‘Abbadi, his supporters, and like-minded activists promoted an even more extremist, revolutionary form of East Bank Jordanian nationalism during the Arab Spring protests.

Dr. al-‘Abbadi advocated, and continues to advocate, for an East Bank Jordanian nativism that celebrates tribal heritage and identity, while disparaging tribal ties to the Hashemite monarchy; moreover, what distinguishes Dr. al-‘Abbadi is that he pushes for regime change, and the establishment of an East Bank tribal-based republic in place of the Hashemite monarchy.

“[There is] no loyalty to the monarchy at all. It is coming from some persons, not from the ‘Abbadi tribe and not from other tribes. All tribes are against the monarchy. Don’t talk about the media. The media is in the hands of the state. Don’t talk [with] some of the old people who are taking more from the purse and from the intelligence. Talk with your age, with the youth below the age of 45. They are all against the monarchy, they are all supporting my idea of having a republic.”27

27 Interview by the author, Dr. Ahmad al-‘Uwaydi al-‘Abbadi, August 8, 2015, Wadi al-Seer, Amman Governorate, Jordan.
Though it is verifiably false that all East Bank Jordanian youth support a tribal-based republic form of governance, Dr. al-‘Abbadi recognizes the very same rift between young activists and many conservative, older trial elements addressed in the previous section of this chapter and their desires for change. He also emphasizes his belief that the Hashemites are foreign rulers that have stolen the land of the East Bank Jordanian tribes, and that the Hashemite monarchy has created a deep rift between the centers of power in the country and East Bank Jordanian tribes. He elaborated on a divide between the “deep state” of Jordan, which is comprised of the King, royal court, and other decision-makers within the Hashemite regime, and the institutions of the state, which are mainly composed of East Bank Jordanian tribesmen. In Dr. al-‘Abbadi’s words, “The deep state is underground doing everything. Queen Rania and Basem Awadullah are working behind the curtains making all the decisions against us. The real, deep institutions are the tribes… There is a split between the deep institutions and the deep state.”

Political figures such as Queen Rania and Basem Awadullah, the former Finance Minister accused of corruption by many East Bank Jordanians, are viewed by East Bank Jordanian nationalists as a prime examples of Palestinians in positions of political power who are eroding the traditional status and privileges of East Bank tribes.

This is the essence of the East Bank Jordanian nativism promoted by Dr. al-‘Abbadi: the Hashemite regime has knowingly and purposefully marginalized East Bank Jordanian tribes to further an agenda that seeks to funnel Jordan’s wealth to

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28 Interview by the author, Dr. Ahmad al-‘Uwaydi al-‘Abbadi, August 8, 2015, Wadi al-Seer, Amman Governorate, Jordan.
29 Interview by the author, Dr. Ahmad al-‘Uwaydi al-‘Abbadi, August 8, 2015, Wadi al-Seer, Amman Governorate, Jordan; Interview by the author, MP Hind al-Fayez, August 11, 2015, House of Representatives, Amman, Jordan.
regime supporters and destroy the identity and livelihood of East Bank Jordanian tribes. His views are not just his alone; he has a large contingent of supporters among his native ‘Abbadi tribe and across the country, several of whom I met with at a small café in Wadi Seer. In unison with Dr. al-‘Abbadi, they all supported the idea of an East Bank Jordanian republic that would reverse the marginalization and relative deprivation of tribal communities across the country and abolish the rule of the Hashemite regime.³⁰

The radical socio-political beliefs espoused by Dr. al-‘Abbadi and his supporters also contain strongly anti-Palestinian rhetoric that is typical of East Bank Jordanian nativist ideology but was not present within many other forms of radical tribal opposition during the Arab Spring protests. An ugly product of the relative deprivation of many East Bank Jordanian communities and perceptions of East Bank Jordanian marginalization in comparison to urban Palestinian populations, many of the desires for political change and reform among East Bank Jordanian nationalists revolve around these anti-Palestinian viewpoints. Chief among them is the ever-present fear that Jordan will become an “alternative homeland” for Palestinians in the country, thereby further marginalizing tribal communities from centers of power in Amman. East Bank Jordanian nationalists like Dr. al-‘Abbadi suspect King Abdullah II, and in particular his Palestinian wife Queen Rania, of promoting policies that would favor intensified Palestinian political and economic dominance in Jordan in the future.

³⁰ Interview by the author, Dr. Ahmad al-‘Uwaydi al-‘Abbadi, August 8, 2015, Wadi al-Seer, Amman Governorate, Jordan.
The idea of an East Bank Jordanian republic clearly discriminates against the Palestinian majority of Jordan, and the anti-Palestinian nature of Dr. al-ʿAbbadiʾs nationalist, revolutionary ideology manifested itself multiple times during our interactions. It was perhaps most clearly expressed when, during a brief period of time in Amman, Dr. al-ʿAbbadi blamed overflowing trash bins on the “greediness and corruption” of the Palestinian people in the urban areas of Jordan, and repeatedly denounced King Abdullah II as a puppet subject to the devious machinations of Queen Rania. Moreover, these nativist, quasi-racist views do not end with Palestinians, but also involve fear of Syrian refugees flowing into the country and further depriving tribal communities of basic services. Dr. al-ʿAbbadi even warned of an impending civil war between Jordanians and Syrian refugees, perhaps thinking back on the civil war between Jordanians and Palestinian refugees from 1970-1971.31

These views are indicative of relative deprivation’s most extreme effects upon marginalized tribal communities in Jordan, and are not just held by a radical minority of East Bank Jordanians. In February of 2011, “a prominent group of 36 tribal leaders publicly decried corruption and privatization, but blamed Palestinians for these issues; among other allegations they accused Queen Rania of nepotistic cronyism and claimed that 80,000 West Bank Palestinians had been secretly naturalized” (Yom 2014, 246). Relative deprivation has fanned the flames of these radical East Bank Jordanian nationalist and nativist ideologies by fueling perceptions of marginalization in comparison to Palestinians and refugee populations within the country; as a result, East Bank Jordanian nationalist forces focused their rage not just on the Hashemite

31 Interview by the author, Dr. Ahmad al-ʿUwaydi al-ʿAbbadi, August 8, 2015, Wadi al-Seer, Amman Governorate, Jordan.
regime, but on social groups in the country they considered foreign and detrimental to traditional tribal status and privilege.

East Bank Jordanian nativism experienced relatively wider appeal and popularity within certain elements of tribal activism during the Arab Spring protests. It also provided a framework for protest that was far more radical than past forms of tribal opposition. This was especially visible in the East Bank Jordanian nationalist agenda espoused by Dr. al-‘Abbadi, as he and like-minded supporters called for the overthrow of the monarchy in favor of a tribal-based republic. In other words, this former member of the regime establishment turned radical East Bank Jordanian nativist proposed an indigenous alternative to the Hashemite rule. Very few other opposition elements during the Arab Spring protests advocated views as radical or revolutionary as these. The extremist political views spewed by establishment East Bank Jordanians and respected tribal leaders and elders, alike, influenced East Bank Jordanian activism, and opened space for more radical forms of tribal opposition during the Arab Spring protests. However, East Bank Jordanian nationalist ideology also incorporated intense anti-Palestinian rhetoric and views due to fears among East Bank nativists that their country was gradually being stolen from them by Palestinians, refugees, corrupt regime officials, and royal figures. Other elements within East Bank Jordanian opposition during this period tended to avoid the anti-Palestinian, anti-refugee rhetoric typical of East Bank Jordanian nativism. Tribal youth opposition, such as the Hirak movement, provided a more mainstream, radical platform for protest by pushing for more democratic, pluralistic political reforms.
while willfully crossing “red lines” of protest that directly questioned and threatened the legitimacy of the Hashemite monarchy.

Protest movements among East Bank Jordanian youth, in particular the Hirak movement, were less extreme in terms of revolutionary ambitions and rhetoric, but represented a radical break from past forms of tribal opposition. As stated earlier, Hirak activists framed their opposition in political, rather than economic terms; not content with economic concessions from the regime, many young East Bank Jordanians desired democratic and pluralistic reform. Many may ask why these opposition movements framed their protest in political terms, as East Bank Jordanians have always been viewed as the favored political constituency of the Hashemite regime that benefited from a gerrymandered districting system favoring tribal areas of the country and that traditionally dominated the public sector. However, the public sector is no longer a reliable source of employment and the Jordanian parliament is a largely ineffective body in terms of true political and decision-making authority and does not represent the interests of many in East Bank Jordanian communities. The districting system favors a system of tribalism where citizens vote for a representative within their tribe or clan or are induced into voting for a certain candidate through economic favors, but the elected official may not actually represent their best interests.

MP Hind al-Fayez addressed the tribalism and corruption within the Jordanian parliament.

“Now look at this current Parliament [that has existed] since 1989, [everybody says] that the MPs are elected a huge percent, I’m not going to say what percent, because they buy people’s votes. And why do people sell their votes for 50 JDs? Because of poverty. They’re not thinking. ‘I’m going to
go to the ballot boxes and vote for this person that is paying me 50 JDs not knowing if the decisions this person is taking will be for my sake or not. ’ This person is not going to take the right decisions because he wasn’t elected on the right roots, the right basis... And nobody is taking any action against any of them. Three of our current MPs were transferred to the DA [District Attorney] and now the cases have evaporated and nobody is talking about it...[The] government wants them to be in the parliament in order to force them to take decisions or to vote for any article that the government wants and the people don’t want.”

As a result, these types of tactics created a feeble bond of trust between East Bank Jordanian youth and elected officials, leading to low expectations among tribal communities that political authorities would fight for the political and economic reforms that would address rural grievances and marginalization. As Yom states, this caused East Bank Jordanian youth activists to recognize that the elite East Bank Jordanian nucleus of the regime, including the royal court, the regime’s political supporters in the parliament and governing apparatus, and the security apparatus, was the true obstacles to reform (Yom 2014, 231).

Consequently, during the Arab Spring protests, East Bank Jordanian youth targeted the Hashemite regime in their opposition, rather than the traditional scapegoats for tribal discontent like Palestinians and other social groups in the country. Tribal youth mobilized in unprecedented fashion to make political demands for constitutional and electoral reform and the abolition of political corruption. These demands diverged sharply from past forms of East Bank Jordanian protest and, subsequently, threatened to radically alter the norms of the political relationship between East Bank Jordanian communities and the regime.

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32 Interview by the author, MP Hind al-Fayez, August 11, 2015, House of Representatives, Amman, Jordan.
The manner in which these demands were presented to the Hashemite regime were also unprecedented and radical in nature, especially given past patterns of protest among East Bank Jordanian communities. Tribal youth activists within the Hirak movement crossed two “red lines” of protest. As Yom contends, “[the] first entailed the public insulting, questioning, and ridiculing of a sitting Hashemite king… [the] second redline was openly debating issues of royal succession, a sensitive topic unfathomable just years earlier” (Yom 2014, 234–235). East Bank Jordanian youth opposition movements openly criticized King Abdullah II and his supporters in the royal court and political sphere, throwing into question the legitimacy and competence of the King in ruling the country. These included acts addressed earlier in this section, such as burning the King’s picture and the throwing of bottles at the royal motorcade in the southern city of Tafileh. Youth activists also insulted the King for his awkward Arabic and alleged gambling habits and, among northern Hirak movement in the summer of 2011, began shouting the phrase al-sh’ab yurid isqat al-nizam (“the people want the downfall of the regime”) made popular during the regional Arab Spring uprisings. Notably, this popular slogan was absent from the protests in Amman (Yom 2014, 234). Tribal youth movements also incorporated local culture and shocking displays of protest into demonstrations designed to disparage and vilify the Hashemite regime. The al-Tafileh Quarter Movement, a tribal youth movement located in Amman affiliated with the Free People of Tafileh Movement in Tafileh, both of which spawned from the nation-wide Hirak movements, utilized such tactics as dabka, a popular folk dance, and mock funerals for the “death” of fair parliamentary elections to express their views and demands. The al-Tafileh Quarter
Movement was one of the most famous opposition movements in Jordan during the Arab Spring protests due to these types of controversial demonstrations and expressions and its strong statements against the Hashemite monarchy, which resulted in the arrest of a large number of its members (The Identity Center and the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy 2013-2014). These types of protest, also present among other youth activist movements across Jordan, represented a radically different pattern of opposition from a wide collection of East Bank tribal forces that were traditionally aligned with the Hashemite monarchy, and therefore constituted the most direct threat to the Hashemite regime during this period.

However, tribal youth activists did not threaten a republican overthrow of the Hashemite regime, as did Dr. al-‘Abbadi and like-minded East Bank Jordanian nationalists. Moreover, tribal youth activists within the Hirak movement espoused far less anti-Palestinian rhetoric than the nationalist East Bank Jordanian opposition forces. Rather, these youth movements pushed for extensive democratic and pluralistic reforms within the constitutional and electoral system that were starkly different those pushed by revolutionary nativists, yet remained radical in nature when compared to past norms in the socio-political relationship between the Hashemite regime and East Bank Jordanian tribes.

One of the most notable of these demands from the Hirak movement involved revisions to electoral law, particularly the single non-transferable voting system (SNTV) put in place in 1993 under King Hussein, which allowed tribalism and economic incentives to decide the candidates elected for office in an effort to discredit the Palestinian-dominated Muslim Brotherhood and other opposition
movements (Yom 2014, 244). As a result, tribal conservative elites would often win elections through these methods, frustrating younger and more liberal East Bank Jordanian youth who wished for electoral and governing system more representative of the opinions and views of the people. Moreover, many tribal leaders and elders wholeheartedly support the application of this controversial electoral law; Daoud al-Khrashah expressed his belief that the voting system allowed people to be loyal to Jordan instead of political and religious parties and voiced his fear that the Muslim Brotherhood would win more seats in elections with revisions of the law, saying that the SNTV system has no negative aspects and is “one of the pillars” of Jordanian society.  

Proposed revision to this law by tribal youth activists threatened to undermine the political power held by tribal elites for decades, and drew the ire of tribal leaders and regime officials who feared that the youth movements would disrupt the methods of patronage that had traditionally handed political authority to conservative tribal elites trusted by the regime. The Hashemite regime retained the SNTV electoral method, leading to the boycotting of the January 2013 elections, the first since the beginning of the Arab Spring protests, by a number of Hirak groups (Yom 2014, 245). Activists within the Hirak movement also pushed for significant constitutional reform to limit the authoritative power of King Abdullah II and the security apparatus, and campaigns against political corruption to rid the government of cronyism and patronage; these, too, threatened both the authority of the Hashemite monarchy and the traditional, privileged status of tribal leaders and elites within the socio-political sphere of Jordan.

33 Interview by the author, Daoud al-Khrashah, August 19, 2015, Karak, Jordan.
Tribal youth movements were also the most progressive regarding identity politics and did not use common anti-Palestinian rhetoric targeting Queen Rania or the country’s Palestinian population, while noting that those blocking reform within the palace and security forces tended to be members of the royal family or those of East Bank Jordanian, rather than Palestinian, origin (Yom 2014, 246–247). The Hirak movement was split on how to deal with the gerrymandered districting system that gave greater representation to rural tribal areas rather than the more-populated urban, Palestinian areas of Jordan, with many agreeing that Jordan must not become an “alternative homeland” for Palestinians (Yom 2014, 246). However, the fact that they actually gave debate to the districting system, with some movements proposing complete overhaul of the districting system in favor of a pluralistic form of governance, shows that East Bank Jordanian youth activists do not harbor the same anti-Palestinian views as their nativist tribal brethren. If political pluralism does become the reality in Jordan, however, East Bank Jordanians, including the youth, will find the dominant political representation of the Palestinian majority hard to swallow on top of their established urban and economic positions in Jordanian society; this may lead to greater relative deprivation among already-marginalized, rural East Bank Jordanian communities and to greater unrest and friction among the social groups.

Despite these concerns, the political demands and pluralistic nature of East Bank Jordanian youth protests represented not just a radical shift in tribal opposition, but another generational divide in radical protest among East Bank Jordanian communities. Younger generations, likely inspired by the regional Arab Spring
uprisings, framed their opposition in democratic terms that sought to give adequate political rights to marginalized communities across Jordan while addressing political corruption and restricting the authoritative powers of royal family and security apparatus. Older generations of radical tribal activists supported a similar political agenda, though many also advocated for a more revolutionary framework of opposition that condemned the Hashemite monarchy as usurpers of tribal authority and promoted the formation of a nativist tribal republic. Moreover, much of the tribal opposition during this period repeatedly crossed “red lines” of protest that directly criticized and insulted the Hashemite regime and royal family in unparalleled fashion.

The largest difference between these two radical forms of East Bank Jordanian opposition seen during the Arab Spring protests was in identity politics. Radical, older tribal opposition, as well as many East Bank Jordanian tribal leaders and elites, frame their relative deprivation in anti-Palestinian, and occasionally anti-refugee, terms; consequently, older generations utilize a platform for protest that is constructed upon ethnic faultlines. In contrast, younger generations of East Bank Jordanians tended to use a radical framework of protest that pushed for truly democratic reforms. They did not use divisive rhetoric targeted towards Palestinians and other social groups in the country and even attempted to include these populations in their goals for a more pluralistic Jordanian society, though fears of further marginalization of rural tribal communities with regards to Palestinians did remain. Rather than blaming their relative deprivation on other social groups in the country, however, tribal youth targeted the dissatisfaction and anger of their marginalization at the Hashemite monarchy and its support network; the nature and
methods of this opposition symbolized a radical break from traditional forms of East Bank Jordanian protest in past bouts of opposition and societal unrest.

3. Changing the Rules of the Game

These two new elements that appeared among East Bank Jordanian opposition during the Arab Spring protests, a blurred generational divide and the formation of a more radical platform for protest to the Hashemite regime, created the socio-political space necessary for East Bank Jordanian opposition elements to catalyze a renegotiation of the traditional state-tribal ruling bargain. As a result, they effectively changed the rules of the contract held between the Hashemite regime and East Bank Jordanian communities. Large numbers of young tribal activists broke away from more conservative tribal elements in making unprecedented political demands of the Hashemite monarchy; they no longer accepted the traditional social, political, and economic contract adhered to by their parents and past generations. Moreover, tribal youth movements, in combination with East Bank Jordanian nativist movements, normalized radical forms of protest to the Hashemite monarchy in the public sphere; through protest and demonstrations that criticized and insulted the Hashemite royal family, as well as revolutionary calls for the overthrow of the Hashemite monarchy, the most extreme demands of East Bank Jordanian activists reached an unprecedented level of radical opposition that seriously questioned the legitimacy and right to rule of the Hashemite regime. As a result, the groundwork was laid not just for future tribal uprisings against the regime, but for the renegotiation of the state-tribal contract. However, rather than the Hashemite regime redefining the parameters of this ruling bargain with its tribal constituency as had occurred in the past, marginalized and
dissatisfied East Bank Jordanian communities are now the ones determining the boundaries of a new, evolving socio-political relationship with the regime.

*The Evolution of a New Social Contract*

The repercussions of East Bank Jordanian unrest during the Arab Spring protests is starkly different from the aftermath of major protests among southern tribal communities in 1989 and 1996 and other bouts of tribal unrest with roots in East Bank Jordanian relative deprivation. Not only did East Bank Jordanian opposition spread across the entire country in a variety of forms during the Arab Spring protests, but it also gave rise to new manifestations of discontent in reaction to the acute marginalization felt especially in rural tribal communities. New elements of tribal opposition that appeared during the Arab Spring protests embodied a collective, yet dispersed and disorganized, “awakening” among marginalized East Bank Jordanians that directly threatened past norms of state-tribal relations; they also represented a stark divide between many East Bank Jordanians and the tribal leaders and elites within the regime establishment. Catalyzed by the events of the Arab Spring protests and these new norms for tribal unrest and activism, the traditional socio-political ruling bargain held between the Hashemite regime and East Bank tribes is being renegotiated and redefined.

This is not to say that East Bank Jordanian protesters and the Hashemite regime are creating an actual “contract” in an official setting. Rather, the tribal opposition forces that arose in reaction to their relative deprivation, which had afflicted and alienated the traditional tribal core of support for the Hashemite
monarchy for more than two decades, changed the rules of the relationship between
the Hashemite regime and East Bank Jordanian communities. The new elements of
East Bank Jordanian opposition discussed in the previous section of this chapter,
namely the generational divides in tribal opposition and the radical nature of tribal
opposition movements, laid the foundation and created the political space necessary
for marginalized East Bank Jordanians to mold a new social contract between the
Hashemite regime and disaffected tribal communities through protest and
mobilization.

The old, unsustainable state-tribal social contract was defined by a system of
state patronage and tribal acquiescence. This new contract is defined by a political
awakening among East Bank Jordanians that was exposed during the Arab Spring
protests and continues to unfold in the present day, and one that is changing the socio-
political expectations of many East Bank Jordanians and that is moving away from
traditional systems of patronage. This awakening is being further strengthened by a
fraying relationship between King Abdullah II and East Bank Jordanian tribal
communities and the strengthened role of tribal identity and loyalty in opposition
movements and in tribal perceptions of the Jordanian political system. However,
rather than involving all East Bank Jordanian opposition movements and
marginalized communities in a collective renegotiation of state-tribal relations, East
Bank Jordanian youth are currently the true driver behind this tribal awakening and
the formation of a new social contract between the Hashemite regime and disaffected
East Bank Jordanian.
East Bank Jordanian nativist movements composed a formidable force in the tribal opposition movements during the Arab Spring protests. Tribal nationalists built radical platforms for protest that issued previously unprecedented demands and proposals, and they constituted a distinct, and often revolutionary, political threat to the Hashemite regime. However, East Bank Jordanian nationalist ideology existed long before the advent of the Arab Spring protests and nationalist activism during this period does not represent a new phenomenon in East Bank Jordanian opposition, even if the extreme nature of their demands has intensified in recent years. Moreover, nationalist activists continue to be composed of a radical minority of East Bank Jordanians that utilize old anti-Palestinian rhetoric to whip up tribal fervor against not just the Hashemite regime, but those social groups that they view as foreign and antithetical to their conception of Jordanian identity. Though it is possible that radical East Bank Jordanian nationalist ideologies may find more adherents among tribal activists and youth if relative deprivation and grievances continue to intensify and frustration builds within their communities, the Arab Spring protests demonstrate that a plurality of tribal opposition embraces far different values.

The true tribal political awakening is occurring among East Bank Jordanian youth, who were responsible for the most confrontational, controversial, and revolutionary opposition movements against the Hashemite monarchy in the past few years. Though youth activists were influenced by the extreme methods of East Bank nationalist opposition, East Bank Jordanian youth represented a completely new form of tribal opposition to the Hashemite regime, and one that was far more representative of the demands and desires of East Bank Jordanian communities across the country.
As was reflected in the nationwide Hirak movement, tribal youth activists broke from older tribal elements, fearlessly confronted the regime and monarchy on various social, political, and economic grievances, and pushed for democratic, pluralistic reform that threatened to foundationally alter the system of state-sponsored patronage that had traditionally benefited tribal elites in political office. They focused the rage of their relative deprivation not on those social groups, such as the country’s Palestinian population, that had been traditionally blamed for the marginalization of East Bank Jordanian communities, but rather solely on the Hashemite regime itself. They viewed the regime and monarchy as responsible for their disenfranchisement and deprivation. Subsequently, this is breaking down the old parameters of the traditional state-tribal ruling bargain in favor a more inclusive, pluralistic socio-political agenda. Dr. Akram Kreishan touched upon the effect of tribal youth activism upon the old social contract in answering a question on whether East Bank Jordanian tribes can still be considered a traditional backbone of support for the Hashemite regime after the Arab Spring protests.

“In the past [the tribes] were, but not now. Because now the active power in the Jordanian society is the youth, and they need a lot of attention. [The youth] are the strongest power in all of the communities in Jordan and they have the ability to change the society. They are also the group in the communities that are suffering all of the problems, they are suffering from unemployment and everything else. As a result, they are the active power for change in the society.”

A progressively worsening relationship between East Bank Jordanian tribes and King Abdullah II also characterizes this new social contract. Tribal leaders and elders currently complain of an inattentive Hashemite monarch, and tribal youth

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34 Interview by the author, Dr. Akram Kreishan, August 13, 2015, Ma’an, Jordan.
continue to be deterred from traditional interactions with the Hashemite monarchy. As a result, this poor relationship is hastening the growth of the divide between disenfranchised East Bank Jordanians, particularly among tribal leaders and youth, and the Hashemite monarchy, thereby contributing to significant tensions in state-tribal relations and to a political awakening within tribal communities.

These developments represent a significant transformation from past relations between the regime and East Bank tribes. Abdullah I faced obvious difficulties in consolidating his control over Jordanian tribes in the early years of Jordan’s formation, but subsequent Hashemite monarchs have enjoyed mostly favorable relations with East Bank Jordanian tribes; this is not the case with the current King. Ever since King Abdullah II took power in 1999, many tribal leaders and elders have complained of increasing isolation from a King who is unskilled in tribal relations. As Goldberg described in a recent interview with King Abdullah II, the relationship is characterized by a “coldly transactional quality”, where issues arise if the Hashemite regime is not attentive to the problems of certain East Bank Jordanian tribal communities (Goldberg 2013).

According to MP Hind al-Fayez, the Hashemite King’s relationship with East Bank Jordanian tribal networks has worsened drastically since he assumed power.

“It is much worse because of the entourage that is surrounding the King. The messages that they are sending to him. The Head of Tribal Affairs is one of the Hashemite family. He is appointed and he has nothing to do with the Central Badia district [the district that MP Hind al-Fayez represents]. He is [saying] that everything is under control and the tribes of the Badia are happy and fulfilled, but they are not. They are not whatsoever. [The Hashemite family] is interfering in their affairs to the extreme.”

35 Interview by the author, MP Hind al-Fayez, August 11, 2015, House of Representatives, Amman, Jordan.
For the past decade and more, many tribal leaders have also complained that King Abdullah II is openly ignoring or disrespecting them, with many looking upon the reign of King Hussein, often considered a great ally of tribal culture and tradition, with nostalgia. For example, Dr. al-'Abbadi said that, “King Hussein used to not touch the private things of the Jordanians. But this King and his wife [Queen Rania], they touch the private life of the Jordanians. They despise us. They believe as that we are not existing.”\textsuperscript{36} Dr. Kreishan also believed that King Hussein was closer with the East Bank tribes than King Abdullah II and, similar to MP Hind al-Fayez, blamed this mainly on the people surrounding the King who are sending him the “wrong messages” about the general situation.\textsuperscript{37}

The subject of excessive interference in tribal affairs by King Abdullah II and the royal court was also a repetitive issue that came up in interviews with East Bank Jordanian representatives, leaders, and elders. MP Hind al-Fayez complains of the involvement of the royal court in tribal councils, where the regime is now appointing the \textit{sheikh} of a tribe, whereas before the \textit{sheikh} of a tribe was appointed by the tribe through evaluation of his family name, lineage, and strength of character.\textsuperscript{38} The frustration with current state-tribal relations seems to go both ways, as King Abdullah II showed obvious frustration with tribal leaders and even called them “old dinosaurs” in a too-frank interview with \textit{The Atlantic} that caused a minor uproar among East Bank Jordanian leaders (Goldberg 2013). Tensions plague current state-tribal relations, and the main complaints of East Bank Jordanians across all spectrums with

\textsuperscript{36} Interview by the author, Dr. Ahmad al-'Uwaydi al-'Abbadi, August 8, 2015, Wadi al-Seer, Amman Governorate, Jordan.
\textsuperscript{37} Interview by the author, Dr. Akram Kreishan, August 13, 2015, Ma’an, Jordan.
\textsuperscript{38} Interview by the author, MP Hind al-Fayez, August 11, 2015, House of Representatives, Amman, Jordan.
regards to the Hashemite regime are mainly twofold; many perceive that King Abdullah II and his royal court are too beholden to the interests of powerful elites within his inner circle at the expense of the marginalized East Bank tribal constituency, and that the Hashemite regime is attempting to control tribal interests by selecting favored, loyal tribal leaders to represent the tribal communities.

The worsening relationship of King Abdullah II with East Bank Jordanian tribes has only suffered more in the years after the Arab Spring protests. This is especially the case for East Bank Jordanian youth, who, as addressed earlier in this chapter, were unafraid to openly criticize the King and the Hashemite family during the protests and view many elite, conservative tribal leaders as compliant backers of a regime that does not represent the general population. These radical forms of protest opened up political space among these communities for more extreme opposition and increasingly contentious methods of disparaging the regime. Consequently, a deteriorating relationship between the Hashemite monarchy and the East Bank Jordanian tribes serves to further encourage a political awakening among tribal youth and the subsequent formation of a new state-tribal contract. In the past, particularly during the initial years of state formation in Jordan, the station of the Hashemite monarchy served as the glue that held the various tribal alliances and confederations together in a complex system of patronage and patrimonialism, and especially in times of societal conflict and unrest. This is no longer the reality in Jordan, and traditional methods of state patronage will not satisfy East Bank Jordanian youth who desire more than economic concessions.
A more antagonistic relationship with the Hashemite monarchy translates to less tribal trust of the royal family and less coordination with the regime with regards to internal crises or issues. Though many young East Bank Jordanians have their correlate in a relatively young King, they do not consider the Hashemite monarchy to be a force that is fighting for their socio-political and economic interests. As a result, East Bank Jordanian youth are, and will continue to be, dissuaded from utilizing the traditional routes of social and political transactions and patronage with the regime in order to achieve short-term concessions in the coming years like much of the older tribal generations. Rather, a worsening relationship with the Hashemite monarchy will further incentivize East Bank Jordanian youth to pursue the more radical methods of opposition and protest that were normalized by youth activists during the Arab Spring protests in pushing the democratic and pluralistic agenda of a new state-tribal contract.

Another development in this new social contract involves the strengthening role of tribal institutions and identity in the opposition movements and national imagination of East Bank Jordanian activists. Much of the tribal opposition formed along clan and tribal lines. As stated earlier in this chapter, and as observed by Yom, many of the youth protest groups in the Hirak movement formed around tribal and clan identities. Similarly, Dr. al-‘Abbadi constantly reaffirmed his loyalties to the ‘Abbadi tribe, and described the concerns of the tribe as the main priority of all opposition activists in Wadi al-Seer.39 Tribal identity was universally important to the construction and facilitation of multiple forms of East Bank Jordanian opposition

39 Interview by the author, Dr. Ahmad al-‘Uwaydi al-‘Abbadi, August 8, 2015, Wadi al-Seer, Amman Governorate, Jordan.
during the Arab Spring protests and represented a reiteration and resurgence of tribal loyalties in protest towards a Hashemite regime that they felt did not represent the interests of their communities. In contrast, though past protests had often occurred in specific communities and geographic locations inhabited by one or a few tribes in previous decades, East Bank Jordanians had not formally coalesced around clear tribal lines in such mass mobilization movements since the initial years of state formation in Jordan.

Moreover, Dr. al-‘Abbadi also made a striking statement about the split between the corrupt “deep state” of Jordan, composed of King Abdullah, Queen Rania, the royal court, and other decision-makers in the country, and the “deep institutions,” comprised of East Bank Jordanian tribes. This suggests that tribes are now being seen as more legitimate and effective socio-political bodies by members of marginalized tribal communities, whereas many of the state institutions are seen as ineffective and illegitimate. Though these views may only exist within an East Bank Jordanian nativist framework, they could influence future East Bank Jordanian activism and, as a result, future state-tribal relations with the Hashemite regime. Consequently, the more prominent role of tribal identity in both opposition and in the perception of the political system may remain an important feature in the evolving parameters of a new social contract that provides an interesting avenue for future research.

This youth activism and rejection of traditional transactional and socio-political norms of state-tribal relations are the basis of a new social contract that is just beginning to unfold. As stated numerous times in this section, East Bank
Jordanian youth are experiencing a political awakening, but an awakening to what exactly? There is currently no centralization to tribal youth activism and there is no unified voice among East Bank Jordanian youth calling for a particular system of governance or set of reforms, just as there is insufficient evidence to assert that this awakening applies to all East Bank Jordanian youth or only those that were actively involved in the Hirak and other opposition movements.

However, the youth opposition seen during the Arab Spring protests represented a profound shift in the traditional tribal opposition. A shift that reflects significant change in the social and political attitudes of East Bank Jordanian youth, and one that was heavily influenced by the regional pushes for pluralism by Arab youth seen throughout the Arab Spring uprisings. This shift continues to exist today. Though the mass street protests seen during the Arab Spring period in Jordan have largely subsided, youth activism remains very strong on social media and other underground platforms. “Reforms were one of the demands of the youth but they are still asking for more,” said Hamed al-Nawaysah, “Every day they need new things, they will not be satisfied. They will stay and keep asking for more.” The son of the sheikh commented on the current relationship between the regime and East Bank Jordanian youth during the interview, saying “They are asking for many rights but the government deals with them according to the strategy of the carrot and the horse – ‘I can give you just what I have, so don’t ask for what I don’t have.’” However, empty words and unfulfilled promises from the Hashemite regime have not satisfied the younger generations of tribal communities. A very significant number of East Bank

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40 I am grateful to Sean Yom for raising this point in a personal correspondence.
41 Interview by the author, Hamed al-Nawaysah, August 19, 2015, Karak, Jordan.
42 Interview by the author, Hamed al-Nawaysah, August 19, 2015, Karak, Jordan.
Jordanian youth, due to relative deprivation and subsequent frustration, remain dissatisfied with the socio-political and economic status quo, and continue to desire substantial change.

Moreover, these youth activists are the future generations of East Bank Jordanians, and will one day take the place of more conservative tribal elders and leaders. As a result, tribal youth will be a highly influential force on the future policies of the Hashemite regime if a significant percentage of them continue to push for the reform and change that were demanded during the Arab Spring protests. If East Bank Jordanian youth can even put aside tribal and geographic differences and formulate a centralized social, economic, and political agenda, which weakened tribal youth opposition during the Arab Spring protests, then they could effect real change on a systemic level in Jordan while avoiding being smothered by the regime and conservative tribal voices.

Even more importantly, the ideas and principles expressed by many tribal youth opposition movements during the Arab Spring protests may influence many older East Bank Jordanians to push similarly democratic and pluralistic agendas. For example, Dr. Kreishan identifies with many of the demands and desires of the youth for reform, especially since one of his sons graduated from university in 2009 and is waiting to find a job until now. He struggles to provide for his son because he must care for his other sons and daughters, and is highly critical of the socio-political system of Jordan that is steadily distancing the young and disadvantaged in rural tribal communities from achieving future success.\textsuperscript{43} This narrative is not very different from those of many other disadvantaged, rural East Bank Jordanian families.

\textsuperscript{43} Interview by the author, Dr. Akram Kreishan, August 13, 2015, Ma’an, Jordan.
in the country. Moreover, radical nativists like Dr. al-ʿAbbadi regularly mentioned the youth movements with pride and reverence, suggesting that the more egalitarian agenda expressed by tribal youth opposition may eventually influence and dilute the revolutionary, nationalist ideology of East Bank Jordanian nativists in the future.\footnote{Interview by the author, Dr. Ahmad al-ʿUwaydi al-ʿAbbadi, August 8, 2015, Wadi al-Seer, Amman Governorate, Jordan.}

Therefore, the political awakening that is occurring among East Bank Jordanian youth is having a profound effect on the socio-political attitudes not just of East Bank Jordanian activists, but of the wider East Bank Jordanian population marginalized from the regime. This is the underlying force behind the future of state-tribal relations, and the activism and collective demands of tribal youth serve as the defining feature of a new social contract between the Hashemite regime and a tribal constituency that has achieved the political space and audacity to seriously challenge the status quo.

Only time will tell whether this tribal political awakening and the unfolding transformations in state-tribal relations will give rise to a significant change in the political and socio-economic direction of the Kingdom in the coming years. If tribal activists are able to consolidate popular support in the future and put the necessary amount of pressure on the monarchy to enact the political and economic reforms demanded by the opposition, then this might very well become the reality. Youth and activists within rural East Bank Jordanian communities, those most economically marginalized but very much situated in the political center of the Hashemite regime, will be a particularly powerful voice in the formation of new socio-political norms
between the regime and marginalized tribal populations, just as they were during the Arab Spring protests.

If the groundwork has been laid by East Bank Jordanian activists for the formation of a new social contract and change the status quo of state-tribal relations, then why are the current status quo policies and strategies of the regime being met largely by silence from marginalized tribal communities in recent months? A tribal political awakening and a new, unfolding state-tribal contract would logically encourage significant internal unrest and opposition among those East Bank Jordanian elements that rose up during the Arab Spring protests. Instead, Jordan remains stable and the Hashemite regime maintains social, political, and economic institutions and systems that hardly changed following the Arab Spring period. Rather, the tragic consequences of the Syrian civil war have dampened current enthusiasm for the resurgence of significant internal opposition to the Hashemite regime. Though many East Bank Jordanian communities continue to suffer from relative deprivation and the same grievances that provoked them to public protest, all remains tensely quiet in the tribal towns and cities that had previously been a hotbed of anger and unrest during the Arab Spring period. The following chapters will address the continued stability of Jordan despite the prevalence of the status quo within the social, political, economic spheres of the country, arguing that the Syrian civil war has quieted mass opposition but has created a fake sense of stability in Jordan that barely bottles up the discontent and frustration of marginalized communities in the country.
Chapter 6: Syria and the Quieting of Jordanian Opposition

The regional instability and conflict stemming from the Syrian civil war is currently quieting public protest and opposition among Jordanians, particularly with regards to the marginalized East Bank Jordanians who spearheaded the most derisive opposition to the Hashemite regime during the Arab Spring protests. The incessant fear among Jordanians that increased internal unrest could create significant instability and eventually give rise to civil war and conflict similar to that of Syria is currently governing the minds and actions of activists and opposition forces.

The escalating Syrian conflict chilled both urban and rural opposition in Jordan during the Arab Spring protests; as the violence in Syria increased dramatically, the scale and regularity of the protests and demonstrations dramatically declined. A similar phenomenon is occurring today in East Bank Jordanian communities that remain marginalized and dissatisfied with the status quo. Despite a nascent tribal political awakening and the birth of a new social contract, many of the same East Bank Jordanians that had propelled unprecedented tribal movements against the Hashemite regime during the Arab Spring period are now reluctant to revive public opposition and continue to demand for reforms that have not been met by the regime. Stability in Jordan is now more important than the continued fight for social, economic, and political reform and rights.
This section will begin by outlining how the Syrian war influenced the Arab Spring protests in Jordan. It will then analyze how the escalation and violence of the conflict, the consequent refugee crisis, and the proliferation of militant Islamist groups have further impacted Jordanian attitudes toward protest and opposition directed towards the Hashemite regime in more recent years, as well as freedom of expression and civil rights within the country. Lastly, it will address how the Syrian war is currently affecting Jordanian opposition, especially regarding the relative deprivation and discontent within rural tribal communities in the present day.

During its initial months in 2011, the Syrian conflict did not have a large effect on Jordanian opposition movements, though the increasing occurrence of police and military crackdowns on Syrian protesters captured the wary attention of Jordanian activists across the border. King Abdullah II even offered to house Syrian President Bachar al-Assad and his family and provide them with protection several times since the onset of the civil war, receiving a sharp rebuke in return from the Assad family to mind the societal unrest within his own country more than in Syria (Goldberg 2013). However, beginning late 2011 and early 2012, the bloodshed in Syria escalated severely, as the anti-government protests developed into armed conflict between rebel groups and government and pro-government forces.

A massive, bloody crackdown on protests in Hama in July 2011 precipitated the formation of the Free Syrian Army, one of the most widely recognized Syrian opposition forces, and foreshadowed the rise of a multitude of other militant rebel groups (Al Jazeera 2011). Early 2012 brought the conflict to Homs, one of the cities most devastated by the civil war. Indiscriminate bombings by government forces and
extra-judicial killings by pro-government groups killed hundreds of civilians in and around Homs, and similar tactics were utilized across the country. By the end of 2012, 34,346 Syrian civilians had been killed in the conflict and hundreds of thousands of Syrians had been internally displaced or fled the country to seek safety in neighboring countries (Human Rights Watch 2013). The fighting between rebel groups and government forces and affiliates had made a battleground of the Syrian countryside and many of its major cities. At the end of 2011, Jordan had accepted 1,500 Syrian refugees with possibly thousands more unregistered (Faraj 2011); by the end of 2012, that number had risen to 142,000 registered refugees and many thousands of unregistered refugees (UNHCR 2016). These figures exponentially grew in 2013 and the years after. Jordan currently houses approximately 1.4 million Syrian refugees, with 636,040 of them registered (UNHCR 2016).

By mid-2012, it was apparent to the international community that the Syrian conflict was only getting progressively bloodier and chaotic as ceasefire efforts failed and the violence escalated across the country. In combination with coercive measures employed by the Hashemite regime, the instability and bloodbath in Syria chilled the Jordanian opposition movements and contributed to the decline of mass street protests and demonstrations. As was discussed in the previous chapter, the peak of the Arab Spring protests in Jordan occurred in late 2012, as fuel price hikes led to the most violent demonstrations in the country in years, especially within impoverished, marginalized rural communities. However, this proved to be the high water mark of public unrest, and particularly East Bank Jordanian opposition, during the Arab Spring period in Jordan. The mass protests and demonstrations devolved to small,
weekly scheduled marches in 2013 and 2014, with the exception of several notable incidents involving East Bank Jordanian youth-led protests in southern tribal communities (Greenfield 2013, 3).

However, though the Syrian conflict contributed to the decline of protests, it did not change many East Bank Jordanian sentiments on radical reforms and political change. Dr. al-‘Abbadi commented on how the surrounding instability is playing a factor in East Bank Jordanian opposition, and specifically East Bank Jordanian nationalist movements, yet emphasized that tribal activists were merely waiting for the right moment to rise up once again. “*We delayed the execution and action until the situation around Jordan is stable,*” said Dr. al-‘Abbadi, “*Things are still not yet finished in the Arab world.*”45 East Bank Jordanian opposition networks continue to operate on social media and other underground platforms and, as addressed in the previous chapter, youth activists continue to desire reform and change. Therefore, East Bank Jordanians did not change their perceptions of the social, political, and economic reforms they viewed as necessary during the Arab Spring protests, and rather did not mobilize as the Syrian conflict intensified because they recognized that the timing for opposition and protest was no longer ripe.

Though the sentiments and desires of many East Bank Jordanian activists have not changed, the dissipation of mass public mobilization in Jordan is directly related to the increase of violence in Syria. As can be gleaned from Figure 2 below, the death toll in Syria spiked in the latter half of 2012 and continued to hover at very high levels through 2013 and 2014. It is not a coincidence that the Arab Spring

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45 Interview by the author, Dr. Ahmad al-‘Uwaydi al-‘Abbadi, August 8, 2015, Wadi al-Seer, Amman Governorate, Jordan.
protests in Jordan declined at the end of 2012, devolved into small, weekly
demonstrations during the following two years, and then gradually disappeared from
the Jordanian streets. Public opinion polls analyzed in the upcoming sections of this
chapter, in combination with interviews, show that Jordanian activists and opposition
figures were very aware of the worsening violence afflicting their war-wracked
neighbor and recognized that anti-government protests had served as the catalyst for
the civil war. Though the Hashemite regime had not utilized security and military
forces in bloody crackdowns on protesters like the Assad government in Syria,
Jordanians feared that excessive internal unrest and protest would threaten the social
fabric of the country and pit a multitude of opposition and government forces against
each other in possible armed conflict if the protests persisted and intensified. MP
Amjad Abu Jiri commented on the effect of the Syrian civil war on Jordanian
demonstrations during the Arab Spring protests.

“I think that what happened to Syria was a big lesson to the rest of the Arab
countries. And the demonstrations in Jordan were influenced by what
happened to Syria. Everyone is thinking, ‘What is the point of the piece of
bread when I can’t even find safety and security for my family and my
children?’ So the Jordanians say ‘Security first, so what if we are hungry for
a bit.’ I think that this situation is very tough, it's a dangerous point that the
whole Arab world is going through. But Jordanians all agree that security is
most important.”

46 Interview by the author, MP Amjad Abu Jiri, August 15, 2015, Jabal al-Weibdeh, Amman, Jordan.
As addressed earlier, the Syrian conflict has forced hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees to flee to Jordan, thereby contributing to another major factor in the decline of Jordanian opposition during this time: the collective memory, especially among East Bank Jordanians, of the Black September civil war from 1970-1971. A series of refugee crises in the past few decades had given rise to similar concerns among the Jordanian population. For example, Iraqi refugees that flowed into Jordan during the Iraq War of 2003 sparked fears that “Iraqis [would become] like the millions of Palestinian refugees to whom Jordan already plays host, many of whom are provided their own schools and social services through the UN. From the outset,
Jordan made it clear that it would not accept such an outcome. The government argued that many displaced Iraqis were not refugees – instead, they were ‘guests’ whose stay would be temporary”; those Iraqi refugees who could not afford residency permits were not able to gain legal status in Jordan, and many lived in constant fear of harassment or deportation (Seeley 2010).

However, for many Jordanians, the Syrian refugee crisis represents a more dire threat to stability than past refugee crises. When discussing the Syrian conflict and refugee crisis in Jordan, Dr. al-‘Abbadi repeatedly voiced fears of an imminent civil war between Jordanians and Syrians, perhaps thinking back on the events of Black September and the subsequent civil war.\(^{47}\) During the Black September civil war, the Hashemite regime, bolstered by East Bank Jordanian tribal forces and allegiances, fought Palestinian militants led by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) for control of the country and eventually expelled the Palestinian fighters to Lebanon. The Syrian refugee crisis in Jordan is reminiscent of the hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who had fled to Jordan in previous decades, especially after the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, and triggered the civil war in Jordan. As Malik argues, “… the 1970 Black September civil war between the Jordanian government and Palestinian refugee militias weigh heavily on many East Bankers’ minds, and they make Jordanian authorities wary of any political activity among the Syrian refugees” (Malik 2014). Though Syrian refugees continue to show no sign of militarizing or rising against their Jordanian hosts, the influx of refugees into Jordan continues at a steady rate. As a result, Jordanian opposition declined in part for fear of instigating

\(^{47}\) Interview by the author, Dr. Ahmad al-‘Uwaydi al-‘Abbadi, August 8, 2015, Wadi al-Seer, Amman Governorate, Jordan.
conflict between the refugee populations and Jordanians, and many East Bank Jordanians remain wary of Syrian refugees and their effects on the socio-political stability of the country.

The rise of the Islamic State in the summer of 2014 and their rapid spread across wide swathes of Syria and Iraq compounded internal Jordanian fears of internal unrest and terrorism, while also serving to unify several prominent East Bank Jordanian tribes against provoking internal unrest and providing the Hashemite regime with massive public support for aerial intervention in Syria against the Islamic State. When Jordanian pilot Moaz al-Kasasbeh was shot down over Syria and taken hostage by Islamic State forces in December 2014, East Bank Jordanian tribes became inextricably linked to the fight against the Islamic State. Kasasbeh was the member of the Bararsheh tribe, an influential East Bank tribe from Karak (Nordland and Kadri 2015).

In January, protests among East Bank Jordanians, especially among members of Kasasbeh’s tribe, sprang up outside King Abdullah II’s Royal Palace in Amman in reaction to reports that Jordan was helping free two Japanese hostages from the clutches of the Islamic State rather than focus on retrieving Kasasbeh; the protesters directly targeted the King in their demonstrations, and “were chanting slogans calling the king a coward bought by American dollars” (Nordland and Kadri 2015). King Abdullah II moved to defuse the situation by inviting the family of the pilot into the palace for talks. However, when the Islamic State released video footage of Kasasbeh being burned alive in a cage in early February, the Jordanian population erupted in anger and mourning. Thousands of Jordanians marched in the streets in demonstration
against the Islamic State, held pictures of King Abdullah II and Moaz al-Kasasbeh, and pledged support for an escalation of military actions against the Islamic State (Mezzofiore 2015). The brutal murder of a respected young man from an important tribal family drew a quick response from the Hashemite regime in order to channel public rage into support for the Kingdom’s military actions against the Islamic state, and King Abdullah II escalated air strikes against the terrorist group in a self-proclaimed “turning point” in the fight against the Islamic State (AFP 2015).

The ascent of the Islamic State and other extremist groups in Syria also contributed to the strengthening of the Jordanian security apparatus to the detriment of civil rights and public expression. As Lynch states, “[the] rise of the Islamic State offered unprecedented political cover for heavy-handed security crackdowns on all forms of dissent in the name of combatting extremism and terrorism” (Lynch 2015, 4). Amendments to Jordan’s “anti-terror” law were made in 2014 that broadened the definition of terrorism to include any act mean to create sedition, harm property, jeopardize international relations, or use the Internet and media outlets to promote “terrorist” thinking and strengthened the punishments for such acts to range from 10 years in prison to the death penalty (Abuqudairi 2014). These amendments were mostly considered reactions to an increased terrorism threat stemming from the proliferation of extremist groups in neighboring countries. However, many feared that this would allow the Hashemite regime to further crack down on opposition groups and restrict media freedom by significantly strengthening the Jordanian security apparatus and state security courts.
These predictions turned out to be accurate. Dozens of journalists and activists have been prosecuted under the new “anti-terror” laws, with many accusing Jordan of using the threat of terrorism to silence political speech and any form of dissent. One independent Jordanian journalist, Musab al-Shawabkeh, stated that Jordan allowed more press freedoms during the Arab Spring protests to appease opposition forces but, after the civil war in Syria began, the Jordanian security apparatus reversed direction and began to crack down on the press and media freedom (Alami 2015).

The Hashemite regime, and its security apparatus, continues to use the pretense of threat of terrorism from the Islamic State and other extremist elements, which is understandably very high, to attempt to control media outlets and all forms of dissent. Dr. al-‘Abbadi, often subjected to imprisonment and intense scrutinization by the security apparatus for his views, commented on the current atmosphere for dissent in Jordan due to these crackdowns. “[The] people say ‘al-shab yurid isqat al-nitham,’ the people want the downfall of the regime… Now they are making laws that are against terrorism, and the Americans are supporting that, and if anyone is talking about his rights they are going to call us a terrorist. But this will not last all, no. Things will change in a moment. And you are coming to two things, against the monarchy and against Syrians.”48 As a result, the increasingly coercive tactics of the Hashemite regime in response to the worsening conflict in Syria and the rise of capable, dangerous terrorist groups in Syria and other neighboring countries have further stifled public opposition and dissuaded many Jordanian activists from resuming open protest.

48 Interview by the author, Dr. Ahmad al-‘Uwaydi al-‘Abbadi, August 8, 2015, Wadi al-Seer, Amman Governorate, Jordan.
Therefore, the entrance of the Islamic State into the Syrian conflict in 2014 further dampened enthusiasm for opposition against the Hashemite regime by both focusing Jordanian rage against a common enemy in the Islamic State and restricting freedoms of speech and expression. Kasasbeh’s death unified the Jordanian people in supporting the Jordanian military’s efforts to eradicate the Islamic State, and it was the unspoken consensus among demonstrators that criticism of the Hashemite regime and monarchy would not be tolerated at that time, especially after the country had suffered such a brutal loss at the hands of the Islamic State. This was especially true for East Bank Jordanian tribes, and particularly the clans and tribes of Karak that felt personally victimized by the Islamic State. Yet how long this phenomenon lasts in unifying the Jordanian people against a common enemy in the Islamic State, only time will tell. This is solely an issue of support of military action against the Islamic State, and is not an issue of mollifying the desires of many East Bank Jordanians for radical protest and reform. Though many recognize that the priority needs to be internal stability and military action against Jordan’s enemies in Syria, the elements of East Bank Jordanian opposition were exposed during the Arab Spring protests continue to contribute to an evolution of the state-tribal social contract, as is indicated within the interviews cited in this chapter and the conclusion of this thesis. Moreover, the rise of the Islamic State also incentivized the Hashemite regime to institute restrictive laws that cut back on freedoms of speech, press, and media.

In sum, the proliferation of extremist elements within the Syrian civil war did not just lead to increased Jordanian fears of the consequences of unrest within their own country; it rallied many Jordanians around a common fight against the Islamic
State in support of the monarchy and military that distracted many from previous social, political, and economic grievances and discouraged expressions of public discontent against the regime, while also allowing the Hashemite regime to strengthen the security apparatus through harsh amendments to “anti-terror” laws that most actively targeted dissidents, activists, and journalists. These events contributed to the absence of the mass, regime-threatening public opposition and protest that had filled the Jordanian streets only months prior.

Today, the violence, displacement, and extremism stemming from the Syrian conflict continues to obstruct public opposition and protest against the regime in Jordan. Many Jordanians that took part in the Arab Spring protests now favor the preservation of the status quo for fear of instigating an internal conflict in the country on the scale of the Syrian conflict, and the possibility of civil war dissuades people from supporting mass protest. According to polls conducted in Jordan in 2014 by World Values Survey, 62.4 percent of respondents viewed “maintaining stability in the country” as a top priority above other options such as “fighting rising prices” and “giving people more say in important government decisions,” and roughly 50 percent of respondents worried either “very much” or “a great deal” about the prospects of a civil war in Jordan (World Values Survey 2014 – see Figures 3 and 4 below). During the Arab Spring period in Jordan, rising prices and political rights were among the very issues that had given rise to mass street protests, especially among marginalized tribal communities. Moreover, according to polls conducted by Arab Barometer, nearly a third of participants disagreed with the statement “citizens must support the government’s decisions even if they disagree with them” in 2011 during the rise of
the Arab Spring protests in the country; this number dropped to 26.8 percent in 2013, with 42.1 percent of respondents agreeing that citizens must not question government decisions (Arab Barometer 2011/2013). Whether this was due to fear of government reprisal in cases of public protest or to fear of causing internal instability and therefore, risking civil war, was not addressed in the survey. However, all of this data indicates that the public tolerance and desire for the mass social mobilization that characterized the Arab Spring protests has dissipated in the years since the escalation of the Syrian civil war.49

![Aims of respondent: first choice]

**Figure 3:** The above public opinion poll was carried out by World Value Survey in Jordan in 2014, and surveyed 1200 Jordanians. 1. Question wording for "Aims of respondent: first choice": If you had to choose, which one of the things on this card would you say is most important? (World Values Survey 2014).

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49 It should be noted that these public opinion polls include predominantly urban populations in Jordan.
Figures 4: The above public opinion polls were carried out by World Value Survey in Jordan in 2014, and surveyed 1200 Jordanians. 2. Question wording for “Worries: A civil war”: To what degree are you worried about the following situations? A civil war. (World Values Survey 2014).

Despite the disappearance of public demonstrations on the Jordanian streets, the country continues to face the same internal issues that gave rise to the Arab Spring protests in the first place. As a result, many Jordanians remain unsatisfied with the state of the country despite a lack of mass mobilization. For example, in a March 2013 survey conducted by the International Republican Institute, about 60 percent of Jordanians polled believed that the country was headed in the wrong direction (The International Republican Institute (IRI), Middle East Marketing and Research Consultants (MEMRC) 2013). This is especially true within the marginalized and rural tribal communities that fostered the most volatile opposition movements of the Arab Spring period in Jordan, as they continue to be afflicted by a variety of intensifying grievances and their calls for social, political, and economic reform have gone largely unheeded by the Hashemite regime. “I think that the Arab Spring
brought to light the injustices facing East Bank Jordanians that were a result of government failures,” said MP Amjad Abu Jiri, “I think now the government is aware of the problem and is beginning to put in effort to change things, but I think that their effort is not enough.”

Therefore, though the Syrian conflict and all of its consequences, including the chaos of war, the rise of extremism, and the massive influx of refugees into Jordan, have discouraged many from open protest in the streets, the artifacts of the Arab Spring protests remain very present within Jordanian society and in the marginalized communities that played the most prominent roles during the protests.

The political awakening among East Bank Jordanian youth, and the subsequent renegotiation of the state-tribal social contract as a result of the new elements of opposition that appeared during the Arab Spring protests, threaten to disturb the surface of apparent calm and quiet in Jordan. Despite the current desire of tribal activists and opposition movements for stability and security as the war rages in Syria next door, frustration threatens to boil over and many remain certain that the time for mobilization to demand for reform and change will come once again in the near future. The concluding chapter will argue that the stability currently seen in Jordan is a façade of stability, and one that endures because of regional chaos and internal fear. The continued political and economic marginalization of tribal communities, combined with absent social, political, and economic reforms and anger attributed to an increased suppression of dissent, counteracts this stability and acts as societal pressure cooker with tensions and discontent steadily building in more rural

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50 Interview by the author, MP Amjad Abu Jiri, August 15, 2015, Jabal al-Weibdeh, Amman, Jordan
areas of the country. The transformation of socio-political norms within state-tribal relations in a new social contract, driven by an embryonic tribal awakening, remains hidden within the current silence on the Jordanian streets, but these developments have profound, unknown consequences for the future stability and direction of Jordan.
Conclusion: Implications for the Stability of Jordan

Since the decline of the Arab Spring protests in Jordan, scholars and international observers have dismissed future internal unrest among tribal communities as the most serious threat to the stability of the Hashemite regime and have instead turned their focus to the Syrian conflict and the rising tide of Syrian refugees flowing into the country. For example, a recent March 2016 update, titled “Growing Stress on Jordan”, to the Council on Foreign Relations’ 2013 Contingency Planning Memorandum on political instability in Jordan, is indicative of current analysis on Jordanian stability. It argues that “[although] economic privation, the slow pace of reform, and a widespread perception of corruption remain significant sources of popular frustration in Jordan, the palace has since vitiated its most potent tribal and Islamist domestic political opposition… But as the risk of domestic unrest has diminished, the potential for spillover from the Syrian conflict has grown, posing an increasing threat to Jordan” (Satloff and Schenker 2016). Only two years ago, the assessment of Satloff and Schenker concluded that, of all scenarios for instability in Jordan, “disaffection among the regime’s East Bank core is the most threatening and, since the emergence of the persistent and vocal Hirak in 2011, the most plausible as well” (Satloff and Schenker 2013). Why this sudden change in opinion on the potency of East Bank tribal opposition?
One of the main reasons is because of the threats of terrorism and violence stemming from the Syrian civil war, in combination with the very real strains on Jordanian society emanating from the more than 1.4 million Syrian refugees that currently reside within Jordan’s borders (Sweis 2016). However, the other reason lies in the fact that most of the analysis on Jordan’s stability is looking at the wrong determinants and factors for domestic unrest among tribal communities in the present day. Many observers see no public protests and assume that marginalized East Bank Jordanians are satisfied enough with the reform efforts of the Hashemite regime and with current socio-economic and political developments in the country that their desire for opposition has disappeared. As a result, challenges such as the Syrian refugee crisis have replaced discontent among East Bank Jordanian communities as a major threat to the stability of the Hashemite regime in the international and scholarly consensus. However, contrary to popular belief, many East Bank Jordanians are not satisfied with the status quo, and the internal stability currently seen in Jordan masks the tensions boiling under the surface in the tribal communities dotting the southern and northern areas of Jordan. An unfolding tribal political awakening that is redefining the traditional state-tribal social contract, in combination with the persistence of relative deprivation and familiar grievances in these communities, may have significant consequences for regime and societal stability in Jordan in the coming years.

One of the principle implications of these new developments is that tribal opposition is bound to once again fill Jordanian streets if and when the conflict in Syria eventually dies down. Tribal youth activists that played an active role in the
Arab Spring protests continue to be cautious with outward protest for now, but anger and frustration is rising. As Abdullah Mahadin, a young activist, stated in an interview with *Foreign Policy*, “We’re not at the point of full-scale revolution, but I think we’re near where Egypt was in 2010. We’re still watching what’s happening with our neighbors” (Schienberg 2013). Similarly, Dr. al-‘Abbadi’s belief that tribal opposition has delayed protest and demonstration until the regional situation is more stable indicates a sentiment among tribal activists that they are currently waiting and watching for external conflicts to diminish before resuming public protest and mobilization efforts. The new norms for protest and the new sets of political demands developed and imposed upon the Hashemite regime by East Bank Jordanian opposition elements during the Arab Spring protests did not disappear after the decline of mass mobilization on the streets, and will resurface in future episodes of domestic unrest among disenfranchised and rural East Bank Jordanians. Most importantly, the political awakening among tribal youth, and ongoing reformation of the state-tribal social contract, will drive a resurgence of tribal protest activity in the future. Desires for democratic, pluralistic reforms among youth activists, in combination with the normalization of radical forms of public opposition and the deterioration of traditional methods of state-tribal patronage and acquiescence, will set the standards for future opposition among marginalized tribal communities. Consequently, they may also encourage the revival of street protests after the Syrian conflict, and subsequent fears of internal instability and domestic terrorism, is resolved and is no longer an obstacle to public opposition in Jordan.

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51 Interview by the author, Dr. Ahmad al-‘Uwaydi al-‘Abbadi, August 8, 2015, Wadi al-Seer, Amman Governorate, Jordan.
However, the relative deprivation and grievances of East Bank Jordanian communities may cause the frustration and anger of marginalized East Bank Jordanians to boil over regardless of whether or not an end to Syrian conflict and regional instability actually occurs in the near future. Tensions in rural, marginalized tribal communities are already extremely high, and could be sparked into open protest by a specific act or event, as had happened in Tunisia in 2011 with the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi that sparked nation-wide protests. When asked about the likelihood of future unrest among East Bank Jordanians, MP Hind al-Fayez touched on the possibility for mass protest among tribal communities occurring spontaneously across the countryside in the coming weeks and months.

“I keep saying don’t take [East Bank Jordanians] for granted. And don’t underestimate that yes Jordan is safe, Jordan is secure, everything is under control, but that can change in less than a couple of hours if an incident or an accident happened. And it’s a trigger. You hold one match and you go to a forest, and you can burn it... I can’t say whether East Bank Jordanian youth will rise up in the next few years, I might say the next couple of weeks. You can’t predict what’s going to happen because you know what happened in Tunisia. One person burned himself and it was the beginning of no return. And I keep saying let’s act let’s act, we love the country and we’re not going to give up or give in on this country. And this misinterpretation, this misleading from the people that are surrounding [King Abdullah II] is not helping, it is killing us... [they are] close to the King while we are the people whose great-grandfathers protected the country, and we are disconnected from the King.”

This quote is especially significant because not only does it convey how relative deprivation and a perceived disconnect from the Hashemite monarchy among East Bank Jordanians is manifesting itself in a new social contract that is challenging the traditional parameters of the state-tribal relationship, but it implies that internal unrest at any moment. Dr. Akram Kreishan also believed that future unrest among the

52 Interview by the author, MP Hind al-Fayez, August 11, 2015, House of Representatives, Amman, Jordan.
youth and other marginalized members of rural tribal communities was imminent, and stated that the East Bank Jordanian-dominated security forces will not play a real factor in quelling unrest in the event of mass protests and demonstrations among these communities. “Let’s take an example from some of the Arab countries where its armies are from the people and this doesn’t prevent anything from happening, to have a group of this people among the security forces doesn’t change anything in the end. Also, just because you are a member of the security forces does not mean that you are living prosperously. You are suffering the same just like the people,” said Dr. Kreishan, “I hope that nothing will happen but there is a silent anger from the people and it is just covered by a straw, and we hope that nothing will happen.”

As addressed in the previous chapters, whereas past expressions of tribal frustration may have targeted Palestinian and refugee populations in the country and would not have crossed “red lines” of protest with regards to criticism of the Hashemite monarchy, East Bank Jordanian perceptions of deprivation and marginalization are driving discontent that is being targeted at the Hashemite regime and monarchy in unprecedented fashion. MP Hind al-Fayez and Dr. Akram Kreishan accurately sum up the sentiments of East Bank Jordanians in disadvantaged and rural communities who have witnessed their traditional privileges erode since 1989, and this anger and frustration is feeding the tribal political awakening and the possibility of imminent opposition among tribal communities. Dr. ‘al-‘Abbadi offers a similar, if slightly more revolutionary, sentiment.

53 Interview by the author, Dr. Akram Kreishan, August 13, 2015, Ma’an, Jordan.
“Revolution is coming to Jordan. Now the country is collapsing. It might happen tomorrow. Everything is going to collapse at any moment.”

Though the apocalyptic vision of Dr. al-‘Abbadi may not come to fruition, it reflects the beliefs of many East Bank Jordanian activists that tribal anger and opposition has not died and may erupt at any moment. Therefore, in contrast with the previous situation in which East Bank Jordanian activists and opposition elements will rise up again once the instability around Jordan is no longer a factor, this alternative scenario implies that an explosion of East Bank Jordanian unrest and opposition could reoccur at any moment given the right impetus.

These developments are not very likely in the present day. As addressed in the previous chapter, the majority of Jordanians currently favor stability in the country over the resumption of protests and opposition. Mass unrest among East Bank Jordanian communities could risk tipping the scales in Jordan toward the path of chaos and civil war as the country faces a myriad of issues, both internal and external, that weaken the regime’s ability to adequately address the demands and desires of frustrated members of its population. As a result, the current conflict in Syria will most likely continue to obstruct and delay popular mobilization among East Bank Jordanian communities into the near future. However, the Hashemite regime must be careful to avoid acts that would incite unrest among these communities, such as extrajudicial killings, excessive force and repression, and torture; these tactics added fuel to the flames of social unrest in Syria that eventually turned into all-out civil war against the Assad regime, and they could do the same in Jordan. Increased repressive tactics by Jordanian security forces and allegations of abuse, such as the alleged

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54 Interview by the author, Dr. Ahmad al-‘Uwaydi al-‘Abbadi, August 8, 2015, Wadi al-Seer, Amman Governorate, Jordan.
torture underwent by Dr. al-‘Abbadi during his most recent imprisonment, continue to build upon the grievances already afflicting many tribal communities and risk sparking the premature resumption of protests and demonstrations before conflict subsides in neighboring countries. Moreover, the Hashemite Kingdom is sitting atop a powder keg of tribal youth discontent and frustration. “The issues facing the youth are a major threat to the stability of the regime. They could lead to lots of unrest,” said Dr. Kreishan, “We are talking about thousands of graduated students every year in all sectors and they are waiting to have jobs with the government… This could lead the youth to wrong ways, and if this happens then Jordanian society will suffer from lots of problems and this will harm general societal security. The government knows all of these issues but there are no solutions, there are no plans from the government to solve these problems.”\(^55\) Regardless of whether tribal opposition resurfaces tomorrow or after the Syrian conflict ends at an indeterminable point in the future, the nascent tribal political awakening among East Bank Jordanian youth and the redefined norms and principles of an evolving state-tribal social contract would play similarly key roles in the political demands and agenda of future tribal opposition. Moreover, in both cases, East Bank Jordanian unrest will likely begin in rural communities initially and spread across the country in a similar fashion to the Arab Spring protests.

Another consequence of the amplification of East Bank Jordanian relative deprivation and the persistence of social, economic, and political grievances is the potential radicalization of members of marginalized tribal communities, and especially disaffected, frustrated youth. Since the brutal killing of Moaz al-Kasasbeh, public opinion in Jordan has turned sharply against the Islamic State and other

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\(^55\) Interview by the author, Dr. Akram Kreishan, August 13, 2015, Ma’an, Jordan.
extremist groups involved in the conflict. However, as addressed in the previous chapter, there are still pockets of radicalism in Jordan; these are inhabited by Jordanian supporters of extremist ideologies espoused by groups such as the Islamic State, and often attract frustrated youth.

Jordanians has a long history of involvement in extremist movements; the Salafi jihadist movement in the Kingdom thrived in the early 1990s after Arab fighters returned to Jordan from Afghanistan in the 1980s, and many of al-Qaeda’s spiritual leaders and lieutenants were Jordanian (Al Sharif 2016). Impoverished areas of the country such as Ma’an have long been considered as hotbeds of support for extremist ideologies and groups. Hussein al-Rawashdeh, an expert on Islamist movements, estimates that there are 7,000 Salafist jihadis in Jordan, of which about 2,000 are sympathetic to the Islamic State and 1,300 are actually fighting with the Islamic State, Jabhat al-Nusra, and other extremist groups in Syria and Iraq (Al-Monitor 2016). Youth who are frustrated economically and politically are especially susceptible to the influences of radical ideologies. For example, the Sons of the Call for Tawhid and Jihad, the youth wing of Jordan’s Salafist movement, reportedly represented over 70 percent of Jordan’s Salafi Jihadists in 2014 and have pledged allegiance to the Islamic State (Luck 2014). Many observers also believe that the Hashemite regime has taken a softer stance on the Salafi jihadist movement in the country in an attempt to diminish the power of the Muslim Brotherhood, and look the other way as Salafi jihadist leaders in Jordan spew propaganda supporting the Islamic State and encouraging Jordanians to join the fight in Syria (Al Sharif 2016).

Consequently, the threat from extremism in Jordan remains high; only a few weeks
ago on March 2, a security operation in Irbid resulted in the deaths of seven extremists and the arrests of 13 others, all of whom were Jordanian nationals planning on carrying out attacks on military and civil targets in the country (Al-Monitor 2016).

Frustrated Jordanian youth are prime recruits for extremist groups. MP Hind al-Fayez also addressed the risk of marginalized youth joining these groups in greater number in the near future.

“The concept of ISIS [Islamic State], the concept of a terrorist organization, sometimes has nothing to do with ideological thoughts or principles. It has to do with poverty, with bitterness. 70% of the Jordanian people are below 30 years old, so you’re talking about the youth population. And it’s very easy for that population to be dragged into any organization because of the bitterness, because of the lack of justice that they are facing.”

In particular, many East Bank Jordanian youth suffering from poor rural educational infrastructure, economic challenges, and disillusionment with the political system will be susceptible to the negative influences from these groups in the future.

For example, the southern tribal city of Ma’an is often considered a bastion of Salafism in Jordan and has experienced a rash of episodes in recent years concerning extremist elements and their supporters, and the northern city of Irbid just experienced a shocking attempt at homegrown terrorism. East Bank Jordanian relative deprivation and the economic impoverishment within more rural cities like Ma’an and Irbid are major contributing factors to the prevalence of radical ideologies in these areas of the country, and may entice more disenfranchised rural, tribal youth into falling prey to the recruitment tools of groups like the Islamic State and joining the Syrian conflict. Moreover, once the Jordanians fighting in Syria and Iraq decide to move back home, then the Salafist scene in the country could witness a huge upsurge.

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56 Interview by the author, MP Hind al-Fayez, August 11, 2015, House of Representatives, Amman, Jordan.
similar to the 1990s. If the social, economic, and political reforms demanded by East Bank Jordanian activists are not met by the Hashemite regime and the status quo remains, then an increase in tribal discontent will not only result in the resumption of protest and opposition either before or after the end of the Syrian conflict, but in the possibility of youth who reside in marginalized tribal communities to be drawn in greater numbers to violent Salafi jihadist movements in and around Jordan. The ramifications of such a phenomenon may be an increased number of violent terrorist attacks and the proliferation of more radical ideologies within the Kingdom.

Therefore, the unfolding transformations occurring within the state-tribal social contract and sustained tribal discontent have created an uneasy stability in Jordan with unknown future consequences. However, though an increased threat of terrorism among marginalized segments of Jordanian society is a frightening prospect for Jordanian authorities and the general population, an uptick in the popularity of radical ideologies and groups among frustrated youth will not prove to be an existential threat to the Hashemite regime. Rather, future East Bank Jordanian opposition spurred by a political awakening and a transforming state-tribal social contract will have a much larger influence on the stability to the Hashemite regime and Jordanian society.

The explosion of frustration and opposition that swept across the tribal countryside of Jordan during the Arab Spring protests was the culmination of more than two decades of relative deprivation among rural East Bank Jordanian communities across the country, and the desire for another “Arab Spring”-style bout of social mobilization is bubbling under the surface of the tensely quiet rural areas of
Jordan. Just as the new elements of tribal opposition that formed during the Arab Spring period cultivated the tribal political awakening that is currently driving an implicit renegotiation of the traditional state-tribal social contract, the coming months and years will bear witness to whether these fundamental transformations in state-tribal relations will result in substantial change and reform within the Jordanian socio-political and economic systems. Future tribal frustration and opposition in all of its possible manifestations will inevitably be directed towards the Hashemite regime and monarchy, and if King Abdullah II and other Jordanian authorities can adapt to the demands and grievances of their aggrieved tribal constituency then the country can weather future tribal unrest through a comprehensive, effective strategy of reform. However, if the regime responds with increased repression or force, or does not adequately address the needs and wants of marginalized tribal communities, then it risks inciting levels of mobilization and opposition on a similar, or even greater, scale as the Arab Spring protests.

Today, many East Bank Jordanian communities are susceptible to future unrest. The tearing down of boundaries in the traditional social contract between the Hashemite regime and East Bank Jordanians, spurred by an emerging tribal political awakening, has kept the flames of protest and opposition alive within marginalized tribal communities, the consequences of which are unknown. There is no clear consensus among East Bank Jordanian opposition elements on a single agenda or set of demands, and geographic, tribal, and generational divides hindered a unification of tribal protest movements during the Arab Spring period. However, the formation of a more coordinated, ideologically-similar collection of East Bank Jordanian opposition
movements that would directly challenge the Hashemite regime is the realization of a new state-tribal social contract. Future East Bank Jordanian activist and opposition elements will push for a socio-political agenda that is starkly different than the ones advanced by past, older generations of East Bank tribe, and one that is heavily influenced by the ideals of democracy and pluralism that were unleashed during the Arab Spring regional movement. As a result, the Jordanian social and political scene in its current manifestation is facing an uncertain future, and one that will be heavily influenced by the nature of East Bank Jordanian opposition and unrest in the coming years.

In conclusion, the theoretical argument posed by this thesis also has broader implications for the relationship between regimes and co-opted segments of societies in a variety of contexts. The case study of Jordan analyzed by this thesis is unique and limited in generalizability to other cases and ruling bargains. However, the discussion of the general propositions that co-opted social groups respond to domestic and international contexts in a manner that challenges the traditional social contract between ruler and ruled can be generally applied to a variety of cases. Moreover, though the specificities of neoliberalism are Jordan-specific, the argument and analysis of this thesis also raises bigger questions regarding how social, political, and economic reforms impact communities and affect their relationship with the regime or governing structure, especially when combined with pre-existing internal issues within the country. Therefore, it provides a general structure with which to analyze the effectiveness and sustainability of social contracts between ruler and ruled, as
well as the general impact that reforms and revisions to ruling bargains can have on co-opted communities and on the political stability of the regime.

Though the theoretical argument provided in this thesis does not provide a clear answer on the result of transformations within the social contract between a co-opted social group and a regime, a lesson can be learned from the current situation in Jordan. The uneasy stability currently seen in the Hashemite Kingdom is the result of international factors dampening the societal and political effects of a new, evolving state-tribal social contract. Thus, as addressed in this chapter, the future of the relationship between East Bank Jordanian communities and the Hashemite regime is uncertain, and future unrest and protest can occur at an imminent point in the future. As MP Hind al-Fayez said, “You hold one match and you go to a forest, and you can burn it.” In other words, East Bank Jordanians, as well as marginalized co-opted groups, in general, are the architects of their future roles in the country and can dictate the terms of the social contract through their protest and opposition. The only thing that remains to be seen is how and when these transformations will solidify and cement true social, economic, and political change within the Hashemite Kingdom.

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57 Interview by the author, MP Hind al-Fayez, August 11, 2015, House of Representatives, Amman, Jordan.


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