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# The Role of Internal Dynamics in the Political Reform Process in the ASC 2004-2010

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## Abstract

This main paper's objective is to evaluate the role of the internal dynamics in the political reform process in the ASC. Its main problem is the deficit of political reform achievements compared to the people's demands in the period under study. Its central question is why this process couldn't overcome the deficit and what are the main repercussions of such failure on the political stability of the ASC regimes. A reform process is generally wide-reaching. It is economical and social and goes much deeper to affect change in society as a comprehensive process as per (Kroeber, 1996). However, the focus of this paper is mainly on the internal dynamics of the political reform process. Therefore, the paper analyzes the internal efforts, roles, and results of the political reform dynamics and initiatives and their applications. These efforts should be understood within the political scene that prevailed in the Arab Spring Countries "ASC" in 2004, which this paper considers as the start of the benchmark period for the political reform process. The paper analyzes the internal leading reform initiatives and efforts. It examines their elements, conditions, ability to affect the political reform process. It evaluates their results within the ASC context in the period under study 2004-2010 with a particular focus on the cases of Egypt and Jordan.

**Keywords:** Internal Dynamics, Political Reform Process, ASC

## Introduction

This main paper's objective is to evaluate the role of the internal dynamics in the political reform process in the ASC. Its main problem is the deficit of political reform achievements compared to the people's demands in the period under study. Its central question is why this process couldn't overcome the deficit and what are the main repercussions of such failure on the political stability of the ASC regimes.

A reform process is generally wide-reaching. It is economical and social and goes much deeper to affect change in society as a comprehensive process as per (Kroeber, 1996). However, the focus of this paper is mainly on the internal dynamics of the political reform process. Therefore, the paper analyzes the internal efforts, roles, and results of the political reform dynamics and initiatives and their applications. These efforts should be understood

within the political scene that prevailed in the Arab Spring Countries "ASC"<sup>1</sup> in 2004, which this paper considers as the start of the benchmark period for the political reform process.

The paper analyzes the internal leading reform initiatives and efforts. It examines their elements, conditions, ability to affect the political reform process. It evaluates their results within the ASC context in the period under study 2004-2010 with a particular focus on the cases of Egypt and Jordan.

### **The political scene in the ASC by 2004**

The dramatic political changes in Eastern Europe in 1989 and the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 made the people in the ASC believe in the “need for qualitative transform[ation]” towards more freedom and democracy. [These] developments (since [the] late 1980s to 2004) provided the emergence of new dynamics to enhance the political change process (Elhamad, 2007).

The political scene and its dimensions provide the framework for evaluating different political programs and emerging players and factors in the ASC during the political transformation period of 2004–2010. The political dynamic in 2004 concentrated on the popular struggles against corruption, oppression, and the respect of the rights of people and the honor of their dignity.

People’s demands included more liberties, constraining the security apparatuses, and measures to fight poverty and unemployment. Besides, youth citizens were uncertain of their future under these regimes. Thus, non-democratic practices became of primary common concern in many ASC in 2004. However, such struggles were ineffective because the gap between governments and people widened, and there was an increase in suppression and marginalization as well as corruption and abuse of power in the ASC in 2004.

Intellectuals, political parties, and civil society organizations failed to mobilize mass support for political reform as witnessed regarding Iraq and Palestine issue. The main dynamic was for political reform, freedom, and dignity, against the violation of different laws, and for respect for human rights. The leading players were political parties and civil society organizations (NGOs), including professional associations, youth, and women. They were against unfair government practices and the U.S. and Israeli policies toward Arabs at the same time (CCDP, 2012, p. 3).

Furthermore, the international community became aware of the potential threat to their interests in the ASC if they continued to support non-democratic regimes. In particular, the U.S. occupation of Iraq and the continued Israeli occupation of Palestine created fears of a threat to the political stability of the autocratic Arab regimes that were mostly U.S. allies.

Many ASC regimes such as Jordan, Yemen, and Egypt faced political challenges in spite of legislative elections being practiced in their countries. Nevertheless, the Arab situation deteriorated regarding democracy, freedom, and the economy, as noted in the 2003 U.N. *Arab Human Development Report* that drew a gloomy picture of the Arab world on all levels (Cofman Wittes, 2004). The U.S., with the G8,<sup>2</sup> sought to boost political reform in the ASC in 2004. Thus the race among governments, civil organizations and political parties, as well as international actors, especially the U.S., to produce reform initiatives, gained momentum, creating what seemed to be a window of opportunity for a better life in the future that would be achieved through a political reform dynamic

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<sup>1</sup> Arab Spring Countries will be referred to as "ASC" in this article. They include: Egypt, Tunisia, Jordan, Morocco, Yemen, Bahrain, Syria and Libya.

<sup>2</sup> The Group of Eight (G8) refers to the group of great industrialized nations—France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, Japan, the United States, Canada, and Russia—that hold an annual meeting to foster consensus on global issues like economic growth and crisis management, global security, energy, and terrorism.

regardless of restrictions imposed by governments<sup>3</sup>. (Cofman Wittes, 2004) Affirms that there were increasing discussions focused on the need for reform. These discussions were inevitable and could not be ignored by most of the ASC governments (Cofman Wittes, 2004).

By the end of 2004, there was considerable pressure for new political transformations, including popular mobilization in the form of protests and demonstrations by different sectors who were seeking improved political, economic, and human rights (Dunne, Hamzawy, & Brown, 2007).

The changed mood of the Arab people toward their governments, and the rise of new political players, as Kefaya and 6 April in Egypt, and other activists on the local, regional and international level, led to many efforts, initiatives, and action plans, as the change in the law of presidential elections in Egypt in 2007, to promote peaceful means for political change. The general regional scene encouraged the Arab people to react positively toward such new trends and energies. The role of the Islamic movement, Pan-Arabists, and leftists crystallized to cooperate, coinciding with the emerging influence of some Arab youth via violent “Islamic” organizations such as al-Qaida. The deteriorating economy, increasing poverty rates, increased rates of unemployment, and the rise in the cost of living were also considered to be catalysts for the consolidation of a reform movement among the Arab population (United Nations Development Program, 2004). The highly tightened security measures under the excuse of fighting terrorism created much frustration among the Arab people who became involved in different types of protests in Egypt and Jordan as examples.

Consequently, ASC governments started to contribute to the new reform dynamic and instituted some changes to counteract the emerging mood and trends and to contain protests, as in the cases of Yemen, Jordan, Morocco, and Egypt. Also, many non-governmental players contributed to political reform initiatives. Such players included the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan, Syria, and Egypt, civil society organizations, secular activists, and even research centers such as the Middle East Studies Center in Jordan.

Interaction from within these internal initiatives consolidated the Arab reform movement in general and energized the public to participate in mass protests to apply such needed political reform in Jordan, Egypt, and other ASC from 2004 onwards. External initiatives also, especially those of the U.S., played a role in encouraging debate on reform. The mutual role of both the external and internal reform dynamics energized the reform process, which passed through two main phases. In the first phase, from 2004 to 2008, the U.S. can be considered as a proactive actor and in the second phase, from 2008 to 2010, as an inactive one that sought to “drawback,” a U.S. position that was held by 2008 (Gill, 2013).

In spite of the “varying” U.S. role, the Arab reform movement learned to take full responsibility and a whole part to consolidate its call for political change with broader popular support, as was the cases in Jordan, Yemen, and Egypt. As such, 2004 deserves to be considered as the benchmark year for this article as well as for the Arab reform movement in the ASC.

### **Main internal initiatives for reform**

Many internal political reform proposals and initiatives, emerged for the first time in such quantity, quality, and from different parties during the period under study. Some of these initiatives were non-governmental, and others were governmental in origin. This paper clarifies the internal dynamics of reform in the ASC by examining the development of the main popular demands and the government responses to those demands, especially in Jordan and Egypt. In doing so, this paper looks at both the regional and local political reform dynamics.

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<sup>3</sup> This assessment is a summary of separate discussions the researcher had with different Arab intellectuals and prominent figures in Amman, Jordan in 2013.

## 1. Non-governmental initiatives

In this paper, the main aim is to explore and analyze the different reform initiatives that were put forward by a range of non-governmental players in the ASC, including Jordan and Egypt. This paper considers mainly the initiatives proposed by Islamists, civil society organizations, and other public bodies as well as those put forward by political parties. It compares these initiatives to identify any common or distinctive and different approaches or elements as well as their bases and goals. Hence, this paper crystallizes the primary internal dynamics and evaluates the impact of such initiatives on the political reform process.

The most notable, and seemingly inclusive and comprehensive of the non-governmental initiatives, were those made by the Islamic movement, especially in Syria, Egypt, and Jordan in 2004–2005. The proposed political reform initiatives were within the Arab cultural spectrum, recognizing, on the one hand, the need for democratic change and, on the other, the existence of diversity across the Arab nations. They called for the consensus of all factions, religious and ideological affiliations, and political elite on the main ideas and approaches to achieve political change that would improve democracy in the ASC, including Jordan and Egypt. They also acknowledged the need for the renewal of a religious discourse regarding democratic principles and public legitimacy from their side as well as other Islamic institutions. As such, they advocated for democracy in the political system to improve the social and political as well as the economic development of the country (Elhamad, 2017).

Civil society organizations (NGOs) as Kefaya and 6 April in Egypt also contributed to reform proposals. However, most of their demands were focused on modernization rather than democratization. They stressed that there was a need for reform to guarantee people's basic rights while acknowledging the social and cultural diversity of ASC societies. They mostly emphasized individual freedoms, women's rights, governance, and transparency. Generally speaking, their models were developed in such a way to tolerate "moderate" Islamic movements as a part of the reform movement in the ASC (Elhamad, 2017, p. 93).

In spite of their conservative ideological approaches regarding Islam's role in the state and in politics, these movements accepted the Islamists as they explicitly acknowledged the need for political reform that would develop into a democratic political system. As such, both civil society organizations (CSO's) and Islamic movements paved the way for cooperation among non-governmental players. This paper explores and analyzes the content of a sample of the non-governmental reform initiatives and their main impacts on the political reform process in the ASC, including Jordan and Egypt, in the following analysis.

### A. Reform initiatives of Islamist movements

The Islamic movements in the ASC are mostly represented by the Muslim Brotherhood, as it is considered the main widespread mobility, and whoever is affiliated to the Brotherhood's political and Islamic ideology (Hamid, 2014).

The Islamists in the ASC, especially Egypt, Syria, and Jordan, are grappling with the issue of democracy and political participation (Hamid, 2014). They emphasize that there should be a transformation of the political system to one of democratic. They believe that religion should have a role in social and political life and that it can be introduced within a democratic framework. They recognize the citizens', individual, and public rights, including the rights of women, youth, and minorities. They also acknowledge that there are particular 'limitations' that need to be taken into account in each country, such as the 'Copts' in Egypt, the 'tribal' issue and the issue of 'citizens' origins in Jordan, and the sectarianism and 'Alawiyat' ruling minority issue in Syria (Vidino, 2013).

The Egyptian Islamists' version of a political change program was published in 2004 (Muslim Brotherhood, 2004). They stated that the people should be the source of all authorities and that the transfer of power should occur through free general elections. They also called for an end to torture, the release of political detainees, the repeal of emergency laws, and a consolidation of the independence of the legal system (p. 3).

On the other hand, the Syrian Islamists' version, which was also published in 2004 (Muslim Brotherhood in Syria, 2004), addressed the issue of just governance based on constitutional principles. They also supported the peaceful transfer of power in line with the people's will through ballots and that the right of people to choose their beliefs should be protected (p. 26).

The Jordanian Islamists' version was leaked and published in 2005 (Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan, 2005). They called for comprehensive political reform to establish democracy and that pluralism should be respected, and that there should be no racism or discrimination on ethnic, religious, or geographical bases. They also promoted the protection of public freedoms, democratic norms, freedom of the press and expression, the establishment of civil society organizations (NGOs), and the modification of the election law (p. 2).

## **B. Reform initiatives of civil society organizations**

Many civil society organizations have proposed different initiatives at many conferences during the period under study. They resulted in numerous political reform documents. The most well known of these are the Beirut Declaration in 2004, the Doha Declaration in 2004, the Bibliotheca Alexandrina Declaration of 2004, and the Sana'a Declaration of 2004.

These initiatives had many commonalities in terms of their advocacy for reform, including the call for free and transparent elections, the repealing of emergency laws, and any extraordinary courts. They also agreed on calling for a peaceful transfer of power to form "accountable" governments (Heydemann, 2007, p. 10). They yet decided to create an independent judiciary and to respect the separation of power.

They also contained some distinctive approaches to the political reform process. For instance, the Beirut Declaration emphasized the empowerment of legislative councils, while the Doha Declaration urged that Arab culture and Islam support the main democratic principles. It also called for the transformation of absolute monarchies into constitutional ones.

On the other hand, the Bibliotheca Alexandrina Declaration recognized that freedom was a paramount value, while the Sana'a Declaration called on governments to reinforce the role of women. A summary of the output of each of the above conference's Declaration is provided in the following content analysis.

The Beirut Declaration of 2004 called for the repeal of emergency laws and any extraordinary courts, the release of political prisoners, and a cessation of any forms of torture, as well as a respect of freedoms and the empowerment of legislative councils (Yacoubian, 2005).

The Doha Declaration of 2004 asserted that Arab culture and Islam should support the main democratic principles. It also called for the transformation of absolute monarchies into constitutional ones. On the other hand, it also called on republics to empower governments rather than presidents. Also, it affirmed the need for free and transparent elections to be held (Yacoubian, 2005, pp. 6–7).

The Bibliotheca Alexandrina Declaration of 2004 (Arab Reform Forum, 2004) affirmed that the Arab people ought to take charge of their affairs to build their democratic systems. The Declaration recognized that freedom was a "paramount value," and that this included respect of all rights for all people. It considered the political

pluralism as a means to lead a regulated and peaceful transfer of power to form accountable governments. It also called for the creation of an independent judiciary and respect for the separation of powers (Arab Reform Forum, 2004).

Lastly, the Sana'a Declaration of 2004 called on governments to "reinforce" the role of women and their public participation. The Declaration advocated for the creation of an independent judicial system and to put the separation of powers into effect. It also advocated for the respect of equality before the law and the right to a just trial for all citizens (No Peace without Justice NPWJ, 2004).

### **C. Other reform initiatives**

Other popular reform movements emerged in the period 2004–2010. In Egypt, two such movements emerged: the Kefaya (Egyptian Movement for Change) in 2004 and the 6th April Movement in 2008. The main goals of Kefaya include preventing the extension of the presidential term of Muhammad Husni Mubarak who had been in power since 1982. It also aims not to allow him to pass the presidency to his son Jamal, and to call for civil freedoms and rights to be respected (Oweidat et al., 2008). Hundreds of academics and activists of different political persuasions joined the movement.

The 6 April Movement, on the other hand, was established on 28 June 2008 as a youth organization rather than a political movement with the first conference to convene in the Journalists' Syndicate in Cairo. The movement called for solving some problems, including the high prices, the minimum labor wages, the exporting of Egyptian gas to Israel at low prices. They contributed to many activities concerning reform as well as in support of the Palestinian cause. They usually join events organized by other civil political parties. They could not express a comprehensive vision for change in Egypt<sup>4</sup>.

In the case of Jordan, a conference was convened on the future of political reform in Jordan in 2005 (Middle East Studies Center, 2006) in which diverse political currents participated, ranging from political parties to civil society organizations and reform activists as well as some government officials. The communiqué issued by the conference advocated for political reform as well as economic reform to be adhered to by the government in the coming years. It also affirmed the need for the election law and political parties' law to be amended accordingly.

It also called for freedoms to be strengthened and the corruption in the government to be contained. It also advocated building national unity through national dialogue, including government and different civil society organizations, to agree on the path, content, and program for the reform process in the country so that it would succeed (Middle East Studies Center, 2006).

On the other hand, the opposition political parties (11 parties) in Jordan formed a coordination council to promote other goals for democracy and freedoms in the country (Muasher, 2011). As such, this council uncovered obstacles that hindered the success of the reform process in the country. The council's dynamic depended on communication, protest to advocate, and exert pressure for political reform in Jordan.

The two examples of Egypt and Jordan above are just examples of the other advocates of public reform in the Arab Spring. All those concerned were interested in ensuring the democratic practices of government, and at the same time, they were willing to support other efforts for reform.

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<sup>4</sup> See Dr. Mostafa Al-Najjar analysis for more detail (<https://bit.ly/2SCSYkU>)

## 2. Governmental reform initiatives

Governments also contributed to the trend toward freedom and democracy by taking their approach. This contribution included initiatives made by governments under pressure from their people and the U.S., each of which had their perspectives. The governments aimed to diffuse international pressure, especially from the U.S., which was encouraging the promotion of reform and democratic change through peaceful means (Ottaway & Hamzawy, 2004).

As a result, governments such as those in Syria, Egypt, and Jordan, among others, initiated different forms of reform in, for example, their constitutions, laws, and governance. These reforms included permitting some freedom of speech and establishing contact with the opposition. They also allowed discussions on democracy and any related issues; they were considered to be “premature steps to openness,” (p. 5) as governments aimed “to sustain their authority” (p. 1). They never proposed that democratic change would happen as a continuous process (Ahmad, 2005). They are yet to legalize these governments’ continuous control. As such, many of the reform activists questioned and rejected such cosmetic and controlled reforms.

Most governments’ reform programs were “ad hoc” programs, as in the case of changing election law in Jordan and Egypt. They were designed to address specific issues but merely on the superficial level. They were not “holistic” in terms of looking at all necessary elements for change, nor were earnest attempts at real reform process (Muasher, 2011, p. 17). At the ASC governments’ level, there were some collective initiatives aimed at reform, while others were at the country level. Both types of effort are explored and analyzed in this paper.

After the attacks on Washington and New York on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, Arab governments proposed political reform as a means of “jump[ing] on the reform bandwagon” of the U.S. to consolidate their stability (Yacoubian, 2005, p. 11); (Ahmad, 2005, p. 2). However, the government of each country had its interests and approach concerning reform initiatives. Thus, they differed in “scope and intent.” The proposed changes are of cosmetic sort and superficial to relief domestic and international quarters’ pressure. The governments did not implement a real substantial reform (Yacoubian, 2005; Ahmad, 2005).

### A. Collective governmental reform initiatives

Some of the joint initiatives were made by bodies such as the League of the Arab States<sup>5</sup>, which is comprised of all the Arab countries, including the ASC. Representatives of each country convened and adopted the final documents for reform. However, some other initiatives were organized by international bodies such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (U.S. Department of State Archive, 2005)<sup>6</sup>. This paper explores two examples of such initiatives.

The first is the Tunisia Declaration (2004) (League of Arab States, 2004), which was articulated in Tunisia on March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2004. The declaration asserted a commitment to humanitarian principles and to reinforce freedom of expression, thought, and belief. The declaration announced that Arab governments would be obliged to respect the independence of the judiciary. They would also consolidate democratic practices by widening political participation to include women.

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<sup>5</sup> League of Arab States is the organization that includes all Arab states. It represents the major sort of collective Arab Council at different levels to decide on the Arab affairs and security. The main bodies are the summit, the ministerial councils and the permanent council of representatives. <http://www.lasportal.org/ar/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>6</sup> <https://2001-2009.state.gov/p/inl/rls/other/42298.htm>



The second is the Dead Sea Declaration (2005)<sup>7</sup> (League of Arab States, 2005); (United Nations Development Program, 2005). The declaration reconfirmed the mentioned Tunisia Declaration. Besides, it reaffirmed that the signatories would “respect the principles of fairness and equality before the law” and the need for good governance to “respond to people’s needs and [establish] social justice.” It also called for the implementation of “accountability measures, to combat corruption [and] reduce poverty rates” (UNDP, 2005, p. 2).

As such, the two declarations contained similar statements. Their assertions and commitments were all cosmetics rather than real political reforms. They seemed to be aimed at controlling authority and enhancing popular participation (Muasher, 2011, p. 5), which would improve their international image (especially, regarding the U.S. reform initiatives 2002,2004), and release people’s pressure on governments that calling for comprehensive reform. However, when the content of these declarations is examined in detail in conjunction with the people’s demands that had emerged by the year 2004, these declarations can be considered as part of a process of containing reformists rather than driving a shift to democracy.

The ASC governments were keen to retain their current norms of governing rather than allow all political parties to contribute to the shaping of the political system respecting major democratic principles. These principles are to include transparency, accountability, respect for human rights, and the proper response to the needs of their people, as was claimed in these declarations. Therefore, the political parties, civil society organizations, and the public did not take these declarations seriously. Instead, they evaluated the evidence for actual transformation and the practice of democratic norms, which showed that these governments' records on these issues were poor (Ottaway & Choucair-Vizoso, 2008, p. 161).

## **B. Individual governmental reform initiatives**

Many Arab governments, as mentioned above, collectively contributed to reform efforts. Some also individually proposed different reforms. This paper highlights two examples, one from Egypt and one from Jordan, to show the sort of individual government’s efforts that were put forward and their impact on political reform.

In 2004, the governing National Democratic Party (NDP) in Egypt, which was the party of the president, introduced reform measures and “endorsed the fifth term for President Hosni Mubarak,” but it did not make any promises “to lift the emergency law of 1982” (Yacoubian, 2005, p. 13; Dunne, 2006, p. 3). Indeed, the government seemed reluctant “to implement several key elements” of reform that were necessary for a “meaningful reform package.” However, they agreed to “lift restrictions on political parties” (Yacoubian, 2005; Dunne, 2006, p. 13).

On another hand, the lack of reform has crystalized under the amended constitutional article no. 76. By such amendment, President Mubarak could run for the sixth term (he was in office since 1981) as an evident false sign of reform (Dunne, 2006, p. 8).

Then, in 2005, the government cracked down on Islamist opposition activists, which resulted in many arrests and the closing down of the Muslim Brotherhood’s website. Hosni Mubarak's will to run for the sixth term was considered as a clear example of the Egyptian government’s non-democratic behaviors against reform activists (Yacoubian, 2005).

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<sup>7</sup> The venue was near the Dead Sea in Jordan and the meeting was held on February 6th and 7th, 2005. It was organized by the UNDP and the OECD and Jordan’s Justice Ministry and included representatives of Arab governments.

In the case of Jordan, in specific, there is a “low-profile” democracy in the Jordanian political system, whereby the members of parliament’s lower house and the municipalities are directly elected. The constitution of Jordan requires the government to hold parliamentary and municipal elections regularly, and in general, elections have occurred since 1989.

During the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and the 2000s, many developments in Palestine, Iraq, and Syria weighed heavily on Jordanian decision-makers during the period under study. As such, parliamentary elections were suspended in June 2001 but then resumed and were held in June 2003 two years after dismissing parliament. However, the 2003 elections were widely boycotted by political parties, especially the Islamic Action Front (IAF) of the Muslim Brotherhood Movement in Jordan as a protest against the existing system of vote that restricts the right of voters to choose one candidate for the multi-candidate seats of the district (Muasher, 2011, p.21).

The following year, in 2004, the Jordanian government established the Ministry of Political Development and the Royal Human Rights Center, both of which had limited authority (Yacoubian, 2005, p. 12). Then, in 2005, a plan to decentralize the government was endorsed, but it was received cautiously by political parties as it overrode their “demands for political reform in the country” ( Yacoubian, 2005, p. 12; Shonaq et al., 2006, p. 66; Elhamad, 2007).

The political discourse in Jordan during this time indicated that different efforts were being made by society and government together to develop and implement political reform and democracy. The most distinctive of these efforts were the Jordan First initiative of 2002, the National Agenda of 2005, and the We Are All Jordan initiative of 2006 (Muasher, 2011).

The King appointed all committees in charge of these initiatives. They consisted of a range of political and social sectors, including opposition representatives. The outcomes addressed the reform process as well as the development of government practices (Muasher, 2011, p. 220). They recommended many amendments to the relevant legislation concerning the laws on freedoms, elections, and parties as well as the participation of women in political life (IDEA, 2005, p. 6).

However, successive Jordanian governments during the period 2004–2010 only applied a little of the reform agenda, and at the same time, they instituted new restrictions on movement and freedom of expression as well as on the forming of NGOs and political parties (Muasher, 2011, p. 22).

Therefore, in spite of these initiatives and promising announcements, the Jordanian people began to lose their trust in the political process as well as in the ability of their government to lead the country to an era of democracy and stability (Mahafzah, 2012, p. 2).

Many such as Marwan Muasher (2011) argue that the main obstacle to reform in Jordan was the ruling elite who were “built-in structurally” into the system. Others, such as Yacoubian (2005), state that regional political and security developments were the main hindrance to such reform. Also, some researchers such as Freer et al. (2010) conclude that the supposed potential threat of the Islamists gaining enough seats to influence parliament is behind the elite’s opposition to real political reform. In support of their perspective, the ruling elite refers to the results of Egyptian and Palestinian elections in which Islamists won numerous seats in 2005 and 2006, respectively (Freer, Kubinec, & Tatum, 2010; Mahafzah, 2012; Majed, 2005; Muasher, 2011).

It is noticeable that government loyalists-controlled parliament for the whole period under study as in 2010 elections when the opposition occupied only 17 seats out of 120, and 103 for loyalists to government, i.e., 14.2% for the opposition and 85.8% for loyalists.<sup>8</sup>

The parliament contributed to the reform process in spite of the loyalists' majority to some extent (Freihat, 2012, p. 307). Furthermore, at the same time, the government of Jordan approved more than 211 pieces of legislation during the dissolution of parliament in 2001..., and while they defined them as "provisional laws," they included major laws on freedom, syndicates, and elections (Muasher, 2011, p. 6). Most of these laws continued for the whole period under study as considered the base and reference for any later improvement or amendments.

## **Analysis and Discussion**

### **At non-governmental level**

This paper has explored some examples of the reform efforts that were made by non-governmental parties and actors. It illustrated the principal elements and conditions of their advocacy for political reform. It showed that there were many common aspects in their approaches to change, especially concerning free elections and the low density of democratic practices by governments. It also revealed that there were differences as well. However, whether these were based on ideological background or the prioritization approach of each party, they did not come to the surface in the initial stages and didn't hinder these players' overall efforts and cooperation in reform advocacy.

The main outputs of non-governmental efforts for reform were advocacy papers and communique. There were also some organized protests and demonstrations. This two-pronged approach (announcements and mobilizations) succeeded in creating a broader awareness of the issues among the general public and the media. Through these means, these non-governmental actors were able to pressure governments to propose some cosmetic changes, at least.

It should also be mentioned that activists sometimes sacrificed their freedom to continue to convey their message to the people. The impact of such efforts was twofold. First, they created a public reform movement, even if it was not well organized. Second, they created a dynamic for reform in the governments' programs as governments wished to contain protests and be seen to advocate for political change. The governments want to create their image to respond to people's demands at the international level, as there was an awareness that these governments needed to address the violation of human rights and abide by the results of free elections.

### **At governmental level**

In the ASC, and especially in Egypt, the study of the evidence shows that the cosmetic changes in legislation concerning political change were frustrating and that there was continuous harassment of the opposition (Dunne & Hamzawy, 2010). The governments in the ASC continued to behave in such a way as to allow non-democratic practices to prevail in their countries. The regimes couldn't meet the people's demands for freedom and dignity. People became angry and filled with anxiety, especially youth and political actors. Many activists and organizations, as Kefaya and the Muslim Brotherhood, created their discourse on the reform agenda and established reform movements (Dunne and Hamzawy, 2007, p. 3).

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2010/11/2010111011597439770.html>

Jordan, in specific witnessed the dynamics of “pro-reform” initiatives and advocacy during the period 2004–2010, but there was “little effective change” in the political system (Ryan, 2011, p. 1.). The ruling elite “resisted [anything] more than cosmetic reform,” and they hindered real democratic developments (Ryan, 2011, p. 1). Successive Jordanian governments during this period could not convince their people of the results of reform trends, as many efforts were invested in articulating different reform proposals (Muasher, 2011). These efforts included proposals from political parties, civil society organizations as well as the collective proposals by Arab governments. The same situation prevailed in dealing with the outcomes of the committees formed by the King that included representatives from most of Jordan’s political, social and economic spectra. These committees’ proposals included the National Agenda of 2005 as well as We Are All Jordan initiative of 2006. The few changes in the legislation and the behaviors of governments, which was called reform, was secondary to the policy of containing people’s demands, and so these changes did not meet these demands.

## Conclusion

The paper addressed its problem clearly of deficit in political reform achievements. It evaluated the internal dynamics in this process, yet it found out that such efforts didn’t produce the goals of these dynamics. The main reason for such failure to achieve the goals of political reform is the ruling elite as per the analysis. The main research prediction provided that instability is inevitable if this problem of democracy deficit is not solved at the time. It depended on the content analysis of both governmental and non-governmental initiatives and actions regarding political reform which provided the shortage of its achievements. As such, people got frustrated and anger against their governments which is the primary source of instability for the political system of the ASC regimes in the next years.

Hence, the lack of democracy and the continued refusal to acknowledge or accede to people’s demands as well as the continuous non-democratic practices of governments prevailed by the end of the period under study in the ASC, including Jordan and Egypt. The political climate became filled with anger and frustration, especially among reform activists, including political parties from different political left and right, pro-democracy institutions, youth movements, and social media. The potential consequences of instability were predicted by many experts and alarmed both the reformists and the incumbent politicians.

However, despite the warnings, the governments of Jordan, Egypt, and other ASC did not pay enough attention to solving the problem of lack of democracy in good time with the appropriate measures.

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