

Heritage and Government Participation

A Study on the Disproportionate Palestinian-Jordanian
Representation Within the Jordanian State Apparatus

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ألف شكر!

Abstract

Jordan is the only Arabic country that has granted full citizenship to all its Palestinian residents, who now constitute half the population and dominate the private sector. Although a reasonable expectation would be that Palestinian-Jordanians hold half of all governmental positions, a 1997 survey reported much lower representation. This thesis attempts to investigate current (early 2009) Palestinian-Jordanian representation within the state apparatus, the institution that shaped it, and how Palestinian-Jordanians and Transjordanians frame this representation.

Through a field study made in Jordan, this thesis found that Palestinian-Jordanians are still underrepresented. No public discussion is held on the topic, but there seems to be a general ambiance toward this disproportionate representation. The notion of path dependency helps explain how the policy of preferential recruitment of Transjordanians into the political establishment—which emerged in response to the civil war in 1970—became a self-reinforcing institution. Interviews with 15 Jordanian academics and public officials revealed how views of government representation varied. While the Transjordanian elite frame it as fair, Palestinian-Jordanians frame their underrepresentation as discrimination. Since both frames and institutions are self-reinforcing, this thesis concludes that Palestinian-Jordanians will most likely continue to be underrepresented in Jordanian public life unless the contextual setting changes.

Key words: Frame, Institution, Jordan, Palestinian, Path Dependency, Representation

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1 Introduction

At the beginning of 2009, the world's eyes were fastened on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in Gaza, where blockades and Israeli bombardments killed more than 1300 Palestinians and thousands of people were left homeless in the remaining chaos. Developments there were sending chock waves to the other side of the Jordan River. Thousands of Jordanians joined in massive demonstrations on the streets of Amman to express their abhorrence and their allegiance with the people in Gaza. As the closest neighbor in the east, the Jordanian regime—and even more so the people of Jordan, of whom at least half originate from Palestine—has always stressed its commitment to the Palestinian cause. In fact, Jordan's distinctive feature is an amalgamation of two closely related, but different, populations: the original Transjordanians and the later Palestinian arrivals. To an outsider, this division might seem minor. But although language, religion, and general appearance are the same, it *does* matter whether you are “Jordanian-Jordanian” or “Palestinian-Jordanian”.

Some months before the crisis in Gaza, I spoke with a taxi driver on my way home from my studies at Jordan's largest public university—the University of Jordan. He told me that, like me, he had studied political science for five years at this same university. But after having applied for jobs within the Jordanian establishment for three years without success, he decided to take work as a taxi driver. *Why* was he refused employment? According to him, simply because he was Palestinian-Jordanian. *Could this be true?*

1.1 Statement of Purpose

“Jordan is [...] so situated, politically and geographically, that whatever happens to it affects everything else in the region,” writes Arthur R. Day (1986:3) about this small, stabile buffer state surrounded by more wealthy or powerful states in the heart of the Middle East¹. While many researchers have reflected on Jordan's strategic role and engagement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, few have looked inside the country to study its domestic features.

Unlike countries such as Lebanon and Syria, Jordan grants full citizenship to all resident Palestinians—except for the 120,000 refugees originally from the Gaza Strip (UNRWA). Palestinians are thus Jordanians. In fact, a Fafo² report

¹ See Appendix A: *Map of Jordan*

² A study based on results from the Jordan Living Condition Survey, a cooperation between Department of Statistics in Amman and Norwegian Fafo Research Foundation. (see Arneberg 1997)

from 1997 shows that Jordanians of Palestinian origin live in conditions similar to those in other households in Jordan, except for the small portion living in UNRWA³ refugee camps. Figures differed only in employment—other Jordanians had a far higher occupation rate in the public sector than did those of Palestinian origin.

Rania Qadiri, a journalist with Newsweek and the New York Times, states that there is a general ambiance in Jordan toward discrimination of Jordanians of Palestinian origin within government. At the same time, the Jordanian constitution⁴ states that “the Government shall ensure work [...] within the limits of its possibilities [...] and equal opportunities to all Jordanians”, prohibiting discrimination on grounds of race, language, or religion. Assuming that Jordanians of Palestinian origin make up about 50 percent of the population⁵, a representation ratio less than that is considered disproportionate.

So this thesis aims to investigate:

- (1) *Current representation of Palestinian-Jordanians within the Jordanian state apparatus*⁶.
- (2) *What institution or institutions emerged from historical processes to create the current situation.*
- (3) *The framing of Palestinian-Jordanian representation within the Jordanian political establishment by the two groups.*

1.2 Disposition

To give the reader an understanding of the context in which the bicomunal divide within Jordanian government has emerged, a historical background (1.3) precedes the definitions of Transjordanians and Palestinian-Jordanians applied in this thesis (1.4). A theoretical take-off (1.5) contains a brief introduction to the theoretical approaches and definitions of the key concepts *institution* and *frame*. The methodological discussion in chapter two contains reflections from the field study. Chapter three starts with a more comprehensive account of the historical institutionalist *path dependency* argument, paving the way for analysis and process-tracing of the East Banker first institution, which has shaped current Palestinian-Jordanian representation in the Jordanian establishment. Framing theory (4.1) then helps analyzing why Palestinian-Jordanians (4.2) and Transjordanians (4.3) conceive current Palestinian-Jordanian representation differently. Chapter five summarizes the findings and presents a conclusion.

³ United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

⁴ The Constitution of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, 1952. (Chapter II, Article VI).
http://www.kinghussein.gov.jo/constitution_jo.html (2009-05-14)

⁵ See section 1.4: *Who is a Jordanian?*

⁶ In this thesis, words like establishment, bureaucracy, state apparatus, and government refer to the same thing: the Parliament, Cabinet, City Councils, and Embassies.

1.3 Historical Context

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is a young state. Its present borders emerged in the aftermath of World War I when the League of Nations and occupying powers artificially redrew the map of the Middle East⁷. The area that was to become Jordan was designated as part of the British Mandate of Palestine in 1920. But the British kept it separate to solve strategic problems and appointed the Hashemite Abdullah ibn Hussein⁸ as Emir of Transjordan—an area that had previously not existed as a distinct entity—in 1921. (Day 1986:15; Nevo 1998:1) New boundaries were imposed on distinct, unrelated population groups—from the relatively developed north to the basically nomadic south—which ignored strong East-West ties that had existed for centuries. For example, inhabitants of the Houran area in the north had strong ties with neighboring regions of Palestine to the west but none with the Karak region inhabitants in the south. (CSS 1996:5) As an outsider, Abdullah had to not only win legitimacy with the indigenous population for his imposed rule but also gain their support for the idea of being inhabitants of the new entity (Nevo 1998:1). Thus, the Jordanian state was established before the concept of the people within its borders crystallized and before the institutions of the modern state were set up (CSS 1996:6).

During the state-building process, from Transjordan's foundation as an independent entity in 1921 until national independence in 1946, a unique Transjordanian identity began to emerge alongside development of a political structure. As their state grew in stability, so did the Transjordanians' sympathy for the Palestinians, who had to fight for what Transjordanians more easily achieved. (Abu Odeh 1999:30) The 1948 war ended with great losses of Palestinian land to the Jewish state of Israel, except for the Gaza Strip (held by Egypt) and the West Bank (held by Jordan). More than 700,000 Palestinians were expelled or fled from their homes, many of them directly to the East Bank of the Jordan River—Transjordan. In 1950, Abdullah annexed the East and West Banks, granting Jordanian citizenship to all Palestinians on both banks, and laid the formal political basis for the “unity of the two banks”. (Brand 1995:47)

Immediately, the Jordanian Kingdom's demography was transformed. Before annexation, Transjordanians numbered about 430,000; by 1950 almost twice that number of Palestinians—more than 850,000—joined the population. Many were refugees. Subsequently, elections were held on the East and West Banks to choose a new lower house in the Jordanian Parliament to represent both banks. (Day 1986:21f) But having just lost a war, the prevailing mood among the new citizens was one of frustration, despair, uncertainty, and militancy. Politically, they were torn by two conflicting aims; most initially refused assimilation into the new state in order to emphasize their determination to return to their former homes. For this

⁷ See Appendix A: *Map of Jordan*

⁸ The second son of Sherif Hussein ibn Ali, Emir of Mecca, who led the Arab revolt in 1916. This revolt aimed to secure independence from the ruling Ottoman Turks and to create a unified Arab state spanning from Syria to Yemen.

reason, some Palestinians boycotted the elections while others pressed for greater representation in Parliament—one that would reflect their majority, which the 50 percent division did not. In his attempts to enhance unity and gain support, Abdullah “adopted” local Palestinians from families whose interests were allied with his own and gave them prominent positions in Jordanian government and the upper house, in effect, replacing the leadership that had represented the Palestinians before the unity. For example, members of the Nusseibeh family of Jerusalem and the Tuqan family of Nablus served as ministers in a series of cabinet posts, which allowed them to give government jobs to family members and friends. Some ministries, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, became heavily Palestinian. In the early 1950s most of Jordan’s ambassadors were from loyalist Palestinian families. (Day 1986:22; CSS 1996:9)

But at the popular level rebelling political groups flourished among the Palestinians, especially on the West Bank. This eventually cost Abdullah his life. He was assassinated by a Palestinian in 1951 (Day 1986; 22*f*). The first years of King Hussein’s rule (1953–57) were distinguished by political openness where political parties on the two banks entered electoral campaigns with unified lists. Regardless of origin, political elites campaigned for political principles, rather than parochial concerns; people from Karak won parliamentary seats representing Jerusalem, while others from Hebron and Nablus won seats representing Amman and Irbid. Social and political unity and fusion were prominent features of political life; the two major groups did not oppose each other, nor did sectarian, tribal, and regional associations play the role then that they do today. (CSS 1996:9*f*)

Until 1967 the Jordanian-Palestinian relationship, which had become increasingly tense, was regarded as an internal Jordanian affair and was never viewed as a relationship between two entities, despite establishment of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1964 and its demands to represent all Palestinians, including those residing in Jordan (CSS 1996:10). The PLO came into existence at a crucial point in the integration process of the two banks, when many Palestinians already identified themselves as Jordanians, and it caused confusion as well as provided a concrete form of alternative attachment for those who had not made peace with the Jordanian regime (Abu Odeh 1999:112; Brand 1995:52).

After the Arab military defeat in the 1967 war, when the West Bank came under Israeli occupation, 250,000 Palestinians crossed the Jordan River to the East Bank, most now refugees a second time (Abu Odeh 1999:134). On the Jordanian side, this demographical change intensified sensitivity to Israeli claims of “Jordan is Palestine”, while an emerging Palestinian identity claimed that the government was attempting to “Jordanize” its citizens of Palestinian origin and challenged Hashemite claims to Palestinian allegiance. In following years, the PLO set up a nearly autonomous administration in Jordan, which led to the 1970–71 civil war between Palestinian fedayeen guerillas and the Jordanian army⁹. After the

⁹ It is important to emphasize that this was not a war between Palestinians and Jordanians, but between the state and the fedayeen. For example, most Palestinians in the army fought against the militias

Jordanian army's triumph, order was restored and Hussein was again king of his own "East Bank house". (Brand 1995:53f)

Although "Black September" was a conflict between the militias and the army, it had far-reaching consequences for Jordanian society and politics, where sectarian association was becoming increasingly important. The "East Banker first" trend emerged, implementing a policy of preferential employment of Transjordanians into the bureaucracy. Meanwhile, many Palestinians migrated to Arab Gulf countries during the oil-boom for employment and invested their capital in Amman. These developments widened the public-private sector gap that closely followed inter-communal lines. (CSS 1996:10f; *ibid.*) On top of that, the Arab League recognized the PLO as sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people¹⁰ in Rabat 1974, which directly challenged King Hussein's claim to the loyalty of Jordan's West Bank Palestinian citizens. Next, the king suspended Jordanian Parliament indefinitely, where half the seats were still appointed to West Bank representatives. (Brand 1995:53)

In the wake of the first Palestinian *intifada*¹¹, King Hussein announced Jordan's administrative and legal disengagement from the West Bank in 1988. This act deprived West Bankers of their citizenship, if not their passports, yet national unity within the East Bank was stressed by the king. After disengagement, Jordan's boundaries again resembled those before the 1950 amalgamation, but the demographic structure did not; at least half the population was still of Palestinian origin. (Abu Odeh 1999:229) In the early 1990s the influx of about 200,000 Jordanians (mainly of Palestinian origin) from Kuwait, due to the Gulf War, again changed Jordan's demographic structure, while inflation drove up food and housing prices, worsened the already critical unemployment problem, and "took a particularly heavy toll on the fixed wages of the largely Transjordanian state sector" (Brand 1995:55f). Many Transjordanians began to feel that control of their country was passing to these repeated waves of wealthy "outsiders" who were in a position to acquire even more power; the result was a more pronounced East Banker first trend (*ibid.*).

In 1993 Israel and the PLO signed the Declaration of Principles (DOP)¹² without Jordan's knowledge or assistance. The DOP, which has come to represent a reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians, paved the way for Jordan to open negotiations with Israel, which culminated in the signing of the 1994 peace treaty. Together with disengagement, these two accords implied that "Jordan is Jordan and Palestine is Palestine"—Transjordanian nationalists could now treat Jordanian Palestinians as an alien community; in the 1990s "Transjordanian exclusivists began agitating for a more Transjordanian-only Jordan". (Massad 2001:14; Abu Odeh 1999:193f)

throughout the war, as did Transjordanian fedayeen against the army. Thus, battle lines between the two communities were not clear-cut. (Abu Odeh 1999: 183-185)

¹⁰ Presumably even Jordanian citizens of Palestinian origin who resided in Jordan.

¹¹ The first Palestinian "uprising" started in 1987.

¹² Also known as the Oslo Accords.

1.4 Who is a Jordanian?

Today the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has about 5.8 million citizens (Dep.Stat.). Its “indigenous” East Bank population is a heterogeneous mix of different groups, including various Bedouin tribes, Syrians, Circassians, Lebanese, Armenians, Chechens, Egyptians, and Palestinians, many of whom had resided in the area before the country’s establishment in 1921. Jordan has long been a haven for people seeking refuge from turmoil elsewhere in the region. (Day 1986:57f)

The cut-off date for Palestinians was 1948. Those who came to Jordan in that year subsequently remained ‘Palestinians’ [until today’s date], even though they were accepted into Jordanian society and given [...] citizenship. It was not an arbitrary decision of the Jordanians. It accurately reflected the totally different circumstances under which these Palestinians arrived; ... [they] all left unwillingly. (Day 1986:58)

Thus, Palestinians who arrived before 1948 are considered “Transjordanians”. Overall, though, the kingdom has failed to create a national identity, where the sense of belonging is more important than one’s roots (Khoury 2009). In fact, many Jordanians identify themselves more with the tribe, the specific city, or geographical area of origin than with the national identity (Layne 1994:45f). This gives a more primordial essentialist dimension to it, where the identity is considered fixed and unchangeable, instead of a socially constructed phenomenon under constant change (Matthews – Solomon 2002:10ff). This also implies that it is difficult to “become” Jordanian. Today, the young third generation of “Palestinians” in Jordan are still considered “Palestinian”, even though the only home it has ever known is Jordan. And although Arabic is the language spoken by almost every Jordanian citizen, a Palestinian or Egyptian accent can reveal a person’s origin, as can the family name. When dealing with people, Jordanians (no matter origin) generally know *who* they are dealing with.

In everyday life, this is not a cause of problems. Palestinians, Syrians and Jordanians live in the same areas, are friends, and even intermarry¹³ (Qadiri 2008). Yet when it comes to politics and important positions within the state apparatus, Jordanians of Palestinian origin are referred to as “the other”—a rift mainly triggered by the fedayeen episode and Black September in 1970 (Massad 2001:222). This group is by far the largest of Jordanian “minorities”, probably even outnumbering East Bank Jordanians. No official statistics has been made public of the number of Jordanians of Palestinian origin residing in the country, but estimations vary from 46 percent (43 percent West Bankers and 3 percent Gazans) (Braizat 2009; Qatarneh 2009) to over 60 percent (Shobaki 2009; NE

¹³ If intermarriage continues, this sectarian divide will be increasingly difficult to maintain. To further complicate things, according to Palestinian law, you are Palestinian if your mother is Palestinian, but in Jordan you are Jordanian if your father is Jordanian. (Qatarneh 2009)

2009). This thesis assumes that around 50 percent¹⁴ of all today's Jordanian citizens are of Palestinian origin.

With this background, these terms will now be used:

Transjordanians: Jordanian nationals of Transjordanian origin: families resident within the boundaries of present-day Jordan before 1948.

Palestinians: Arab people who are living, or whose families lived, in the area controlled by the British Mandate of Palestine—present-day Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza—in 1920.

Palestinian-Jordanians: Palestinians who became Jordanian nationals after the unity of the West and East Banks in 1950.

Jordanians: Jordanian nationals, irrespective of origin, who hold a Jordanian passport.

1.5 Theoretical Take-Off

This thesis attempts to explain Palestinian-Jordanian representation in the Jordanian state apparatus from two perspectives: *(i)* the historical institutionalist approach, focusing on *path dependency*, because it is well suited to analyze the institution and processes that have formed today's distribution, and *(ii)* the social constructivist framing theory, because it helps explain why Palestinian-Jordanians and Transjordanians within the bureaucracy present different pictures of this phenomenon. These distinct theories are explored more thoroughly in chapters three and four, in connection with the empirical findings they attempt to explain, but here an introductory account is presented.

Historical Institutionalism.

To historical institutionalists, it is not only the institutional setting, or the outcome, that matters. Rather, the emphasis lies on historical dynamics of political processes and institutional developments where an institution (such as the East Banker first policy) does not emerge from a vacuum, but instead originates from, and is imbedded in, concrete historical processes, conflicts, and constellations. (see Thelen 1999:369ff)

A broad definition of *institutions* will be used, which includes formal institutions (such as constitutional arrangements) *and* informal rules and procedures. For example, Peter Hall's widely accepted definition includes "formal or informal procedures, routines, norms, and conventions embedded in the

¹⁴ That Palestinian-Jordanians represent 50 percent of the population is a common assumption. (Abu Odeh 1999:196)

organizational structure of the polity or political economy” (Hall – Taylor 1996:938). Institutions matter because they shape, even determine, human behavior; actors in organizations are “kept in line” through controls such as hierarchies, rules, sanctions, procedures, organizational norms, and reward structures (March – Olsen 1989:23f).

Kathleen Thelen (1999:400) argues, “The key to understanding institutional evolution and change lies in specifying more precisely the reproduction and feedback mechanisms on which particular institutions rest”. A theoretical approach like this enables analysis of underlying reasons behind current political make-up. By tracing the historical process of an observed phenomenon, such a sequential approach allows us to understand the ways institutions emerge, are institutionalized, and continue to evolve over time. This thesis analyzes the patterns and mechanisms that limit and prevent institutional change. In other words, it attempts to explain processes of *path dependency*; “outcomes at a ‘critical juncture’ [formative moment] trigger feedback mechanisms that reinforce the recurrence of a particular pattern into the future” (Pierson – Skocpol 2002:6). So when a given path is taken, it becomes increasingly difficult to reverse or change path, which may help explain why institutions are change-resistant¹⁵.

Framing.

For social constructivists, reality is a constantly changing social construct. The emphasis lies on *how* this reality is perceived, interpreted, and presented to others. Kaufman *et al* (2003) mean that to make sense of reality and to organize complex phenomena into coherent, understandable categories; *frames* are indispensable.

Many definitions of *frames* and *framing* exist, but for the purpose of this thesis, definitions by scholars such as Tannen and Gray (in Kaufman *et al* 2003) are relevant. For them, frames are “cognitive structures held in memory and used to guide interpretation of new experience”. In addition, frames are defined as “collections of perceptions and thoughts that people use to define a situation, organize information, and determine what is important and what is not” (Lewicki in Kaufman *et al* 2003).

Needless to say, not everyone uses the same frame. Every story, or frame, expresses a different view of reality, or a problem. “Each story constructs its view of social reality through a complementary process of naming and framing. Things are selected for attention and named in such a way as to fit the frame constructed for the situation.” (Schön *et al* 1994:25) Thus, a frame attempts to make sense of a complex reality through simplification and selection, and to describe what is wrong with the present situation and how it can, or should, be changed (*ibid.*).

A sociological approach like this, enables analysis of why various actors frame a phenomenon differently. In fact, it helps to explain how colliding frames, by creating equally incompatible interpretations of events, can affect the endurance of a policy controversy¹⁶.

¹⁵ See section 3.1: *Path Dependency*

¹⁶ See section 4.1: *Framing and Colliding Frames*

2 Materials and Methods

2.1 The Process-Tracing Case Study

By attempting to explain Palestinian-Jordanian representation in the Jordanian government, this thesis investigates a specific case. To use Eckstein's terminology, this case study is a *disciplined-configurative* study, which implies that established theories are used to explain a certain case. It is thus theory consuming (George – Bennet 2005:213). Although not its main purpose, a theory consuming study also tests the validity of an established theory (Eckstein 1992:139; Esaiasson *et al* 2007:43).

One strength of the qualitative case study is that it enables a rich, in-depth description of a phenomenon that considers contexts and structures (Lundquist 1993:71). This coincides with the historical institutionalist approach that regards political phenomena as complex; such phenomena should be based on “relevant, verifiable causal stories resting in differing chains of cause-effect relations whose efficiency can be demonstrated independently of those stories” instead of large-N statistical analysis (Tilly in George – Bennett 2005:205).

Both the theoretical perspective and the methodology used in this case study emphasize the usefulness of *process-tracing*. This method attempts to “identify the intervening causal process—the causal chain and causal mechanism—between an independent variable (or variables) and the outcome of the dependent variable [in this case Palestinian-Jordanian representation]” (George – Bennett 2005:206). The process-tracing technique has foremost been used in studies with an initially well-known result, and where the course of events that brought it about is traceable (Esaiasson *et al* 2005:145). This research design well depicts the method this thesis uses. So this is a within-case analysis, which aims to describe the causes of effects in detail.

Ideally, process-tracing tracks all steps in an event to ascertain the development of a specific causal chain. But the use of *analytical explanation*¹⁷ delimits the variables studied; since historical institutionalism is the theoretical approach used, individual actors will not be included. In addition, the limitations of this thesis prevents inclusion of all potential steps in the process. The aim is to view the events of Jordanian history over time, to trace at least one plausible chain

¹⁷ *Analytic explanation* is one version of process-tracing, which converts a historical narrative into an analytical causal explanation embedded in explicit theoretical forms. (See George – Bennett 2005: 211)

of events that can help explain the current limited representation of Palestinian-Jordanians.

This method might be criticized for being deliberately selective, because the researcher, based on previous research, focuses on “what are thought to be important parts of an adequate or parsimonious explanation” (George – Bennett 2005:211). Because this thesis retains an open stance toward the theoretically chosen variables (the institutions), the process-tracing theory seemed to be the theory that best reflects the exploratory character of this thesis and was chosen—after an extensive search for a theory that could explain the unique case of Palestinian-Jordanian representation in Jordan. Thus, theory was chosen to match the case; the case was not chosen to illustrate theory.

2.2 Reflections on Field Research in Jordan

This thesis focuses on a topic that is highly sensitive in Jordan and rarely discussed in public (CSS 1996:3). Most Jordanians tend to be biased on the issue—wishing to make it appear that Palestinian-Jordanians are fully represented, or woefully underrepresented—which fosters perceptions rather than reality (M. Al-Masri 2009). These tendencies have negative impacts on a study that attempts to explain “reality”. Lack of transparency and official statistics further complicated the search for valid information. However, these obstacles were largely overcome through a quantitative data collection (see 2.2.1) and interviews (see 2.2.2) with politicians *and* academics who are well acquainted with the situation. Besides, prevalent perceptions are used in the second part of the analysis (chapter 4) to explain Palestinian-Jordanian representation from the popular perspective.

2.2.1 Screening the Jordanian Bureaucracy: Quantitative Data Collection

To get a fair picture of actual Palestinian-Jordanian representation within the Jordanian decision-making bureaucracy, some sort of quantitative material is required. So one step was to collect lists of cabinet ministers, members of the Senate and Chamber of Deputies, and Amman City Council officials¹⁸. Lists of Jordanian ambassadors were requested, but due to security measures, this task failed.

The origin of a person is fairly accurately traced by surname in Jordan and neighboring countries, so local assistance was employed to translate names and determine whether the person was of Transjordanian or Palestinian-Jordanian origin. Again, for the purpose of this study, to investigate *Palestinian-Jordanian*

¹⁸ See Appendix B for an overview of the Jordanian state apparatus.

representation, the Transjordanian definition refers to Jordanians of Syrian, Lebanese, Egyptian, Circassian and other Arabic origin. The name lists were processed by several authorities to minimize sources of error, careless mistakes, and bias (see Esaiasson *et al* 2007:321). In this way, a picture based as much as possible on fact instead of perception was built up. These figures were especially useful for comparison with Abu Odeh's similar screening of Palestinian-Jordanian representation in 1997 (Abu Odeh 1999:231). His definitions of Jordanians coincide with the ones applied in this thesis.

2.2.2 Interviews of Public Officials and Academics: Qualitative Data Collection

Because the issue examined in this thesis is sensitive and has been sparsely investigated, especially in recent years, the qualitative interview was an evident choice for gathering first-hand information about happenings behind locked doors in Jordanian political bureaucracy and decision-making today. Fifteen interviews were made in Amman between December 2008 and February 2009¹⁹.

Four interviews were conducted with powerful key actors within the Jordanian bureaucracy, two of Palestinian origin and two Transjordanians. These are particularly interesting interviewees since popularly elected parliamentarians and actors appointed by the king are a focus of this thesis. For example, Adnan Abu Odeh is probably the most outstanding Palestinian-Jordanian politician, having served as political advisor to King Hussein *and* King Abdullah II. He also wrote the book *Jordanians, Palestinians and the Hashemites in the Middle East Peace Process*, which may be the most extensive work on the Palestinian-Transjordanian domestic relationship yet published. In addition, two lower civil servants were interviewed to reflect the lower levels in the hierarchy and a Palestinian-Jordanian employee within a prominent western NGO, who regards himself as excluded from Jordanian decision-making. These interviewees were considered interesting because of their *centrality* (see Esaiasson 2006:291) and personal stories. The aim was to give equal room and time to Palestinian-Jordanians and Transjordanians, even though it became obvious during the interview that those of Palestinian origin were more devoted to the questions and consequently unfolded their answers to a greater extent.

These interviews had an informant *and* a respondent character (Esaiasson *et al* 2006:), so that prime information of procedures and so on, besides personal reflection, would be communicated. To get a more neutral, comprehensive picture of this loaded issue and the political system and situation in Jordan in general, more interviews were conducted with Jordanian academics and journalists. But complete neutrality is obviously impossible to attain. Although, some of the academics were clearly more distanced to the subject than others, no one is

¹⁹ See Appendix B for the complete list of interviews.

immune to framing or bias. Moreover, the interviews were conducted within one month of the Gaza conflict, which might have influenced responses.

Due to the sensitivity of the subject, and to avoid misunderstandings, most interviews were held in English (with two exceptions in Arabic). Although this greatly limited the number of potential interviewees, theoretical saturation (Esaiasson *et al* 2006:309) was attained where informants confirmed each other and answers recurred. To make contact with informants, snowball selection (Esaiasson *et al* 2006:291) was first applied, one personal contact leading to another. Within the Amman academic and political world, everyone knows each other, which greatly simplified the process of contacting interviewees.

The interviews were exploratory in character in so far as they did not follow a strict pattern or structure (Kvale 1997:117). The peculiarity of each interviewee and the intention to allow each informant to steer the direction of the interview made this necessary. Nevertheless, the interviews were not completely unstructured; they included some common questions²⁰ and some queries tailored to each interviewee to maximize information without straying from the subject. This open approach probably resulted in more unexpected responses and profound reasoning than if a cross-examination had been held.

Moreover, it is important to mention the variety of settings in which the interviews were conducted, especially since Jordan is a non-democratic country. Most informants were still in service and were interviewed in their institutional setting. Others were interviewed at private offices (one was retired) so they represented themselves, not their employers, which reduced the possibility of self-censorship. Due to the sensitivity of the subject studied, some interviewees demanded anonymity. All interviewees participated in this thesis voluntarily, and some informants were interviewed or contacted more than once for further clarification and information. Follow-up opportunities are definitely a positive feature of the interview method (Esaiasson *et al* 2006:283).

²⁰ See Appendix D for Interview Guide.

3 From Civil War to Asymmetric Power Institution

3.1 Path Dependency

Path dependenc[y] has to mean [...] that once a country or region has started down a track, the costs of reversal are very high. There will be other choice points, but the entrenchments of certain institutional arrangements obstruct an easy reversal of the initial choice. Perhaps the better metaphor is a tree, rather than a path. From the same trunk, there are many different branches and smaller branches. Although it is possible to turn around or to clamber from one to the other—and essential if the chosen branch dies—the branch on which a climber begins is the one she tends to follow. (Levi in Pierson 2000:252)

With these words, Levi summarizes the core of the historical institutional path dependency argument, which is based on two claims. The first involves arguments about “crucial founding moments of institutional formation” that send institutions along broadly different and unpredictable paths (cf. ‘critical junctures’). The second claim suggests that “institutions continue to evolve in response to changing environmental conditions and ongoing political maneuvering but in ways that are constrained by past trajectories” (Thelen 1999:387). The first stresses discontinuity, sequencing, and timing, while the second focuses on mechanisms for continuity.

Pierson (2000:252) argues that the latter claim—continuity—is well captured by the concept of *increasing returns*, a notion borrowed from the rationalist school. In an increasing returns process, the likelihood of further steps along the same path increases with each move down that path. This is because “the costs of exit—of switching to some previously plausible alternative—rise” over time (Pierson 2000:252). Path dependent patterns are therefore characterized by self-reinforcing positive feedback mechanisms, which can lead to institutions that become increasingly blocked, if not entirely cut off (Thelen 1999:392ff). Consequently, earlier events matter much more than later ones, and different sequences may have different results (Pierson 2000:253). This suggests that it is hard to change an institution, even when it outlives its usefulness. According to Pierson (1993:607), even the most rational actors can behave in ways that are collectively suboptimal once an institution is adopted.

Drawing on insights about mechanisms conducive to path dependency of technological processes, Pierson (2000:254) argues that similar mechanisms

operate in the fields of politics to produce sunk costs and vested interests to particular policy paths. These positive feedback mechanisms are; *large set-up or fixed costs*, *learning effects* (“learning-by-doing”), *coordination effects*, and *adaptive expectations*.

But the complex political world differs in many ways from the flexible economical one. Pierson (2000:257) mentions four interconnected aspects of politics that make this sphere of social life conducive to path dependency processes: (i) the central role of collective action, (ii) the high density of institutions, (iii) the possibilities of using political authority to enhance asymmetries of power, and (iv) intrinsic complexity and opacity. For example, he argues that due to the prevalence of adaptive expectations, actors must constantly adjust their behavior to how they expect others to act when “picking the wrong horse may have very high costs”. Even in voting, in absence of a pure system of proportional representation, the actions of a person who does not want to “waste” his vote may well turn on what he expects others to do.

Yet concerning the topic of this thesis, the third aspect Pierson mentions is the most relevant. Politics is characterized by disagreement over the goals of and disparities between those in power; in fact, institutions are not neutral coordinating mechanisms but often reinforce and magnify particular patterns of power distribution in politics (Thelen 1999:394). Pierson argues that path-dependent processes over time can transform a situation of balanced conflict, in which one set of actors must openly impose its preferences on another set, into one in which power relations become so uneven that assumed reactions and ideological manipulation make open political conflict unnecessary (2000:259). Both Mahoney (in Pierson 2000:259) and Thelen (1999:394) emphasize that institutions actively assist the organization and empowerment of certain groups while actively disarticulating and marginalizing others. Thus, over time, path dependency increases power asymmetries and makes power relations less visible. The allocation of authority to specific actors is a key source of the self-reinforcing mechanisms that characterize an institution. (Pierson 2000:259)

But the groups that are disadvantaged by prevailing institutions do not necessarily disappear, and their adaptation to the situation can imply something different from embracing and reproducing the institution. For them, adapting may mean awaiting their time until conditions shift, or working within the existing framework with goals different from—maybe even subversive to—those of the institution and its designers. (Thelen 1999:386)

3.2 Process-Tracing the East Banker First Institution

Below follows an account of the emergence of the East Banker first policy, and its path up to today. Since the West Bank belonged to Jordan until 1988, this section contains two parts: before and after disengagement.

3.2.1 From Critical Juncture to Disengagement

When preferential recruitment of Transjordanians in the state bureaucracy began is undisputed. All literature and every interviewee emphasize how tensions during the fedayeen episode (1968–71), which culminated in Black September, had a crucial impact on the Jordanian-Palestinian relationship. This basically prompted the Transjordanian elite to regard Transjordanians and Palestinian-Jordanians as two distinct communities. Before that, political life in Jordan was rich and communal ties were insignificant. Within public administration, Palestinian-Jordanians and Transjordanians were mixed, working side by side, with a nearly 50:50 proportion. (Shobaki 2009; Tell 2008) But after the civil war, the Jordanian state felt betrayed and began to mistrust citizens in general and Palestinians in particular. Whether it was to placate Transjordanians and secure their loyalty and support, to punish Palestinian-Jordanians, to improve security, or some combination of the three, a gradual shift in policy occurred with the introduction of Transjordanian allotment in the bureaucracy. (T. Al-Masri 2009; Brand 1995:53) Thus, Black September illustrates the formative moment, or the critical juncture, of the East Banker first institution.

The first significant reduction in Palestinian-Jordanian representation occurred in 1974, some weeks after ratification of the Rabat Resolution, which recognized the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people—regardless of domicile—in disagreement with King Hussein who, naturally, also regarded himself as the representative of the Palestinian-Jordanians who resided on the East and West Bank and were Jordanian citizens. In the new cabinet, formed by Zeid Al-Rifa'i, the percentage of Palestinian-Jordanian ministers dropped from 46 to 20, and Parliament—in which West Bankers controlled 50 percent of the seats—was suspended. In addition, some Palestinian-Jordanian government personnel were let go and replaced by Transjordanians (Day 1986:62; Abu Odeh 1999:211). In the 1976 cabinet, only four of the 18 ministers were Palestinian-Jordanian. Four of the 14 Transjordanian ministers were known Transjordanian nationalists (Abu Odeh 1999:213), which indicated that the de-Palestinianization process had begun in earnest.

In the late 1970s, the Likud²¹ gained power in Israel. According to their political ideology, Jordan, or the East Bank, was originally part of Palestine. Thus, the Palestinians already had their state—Jordan—which legitimized the Israeli policy of building settlements in the West Bank that was implemented. The Jordanians viewed this as a strategy for depopulating the West Bank of Palestinians, which was Jordan's nightmare and could only imply additional influxes of Palestinian refugees. When Israel re-elected the Likud in 1981, King Hussein tried to establish an alliance with the PLO to find a political resolution. To pressure Yasser Arafat, Parliament (suspended since 1974) was activated in 1984. Since half of the members of Parliament were West Bankers, this reactivation sent an implicit message to the PLO that Jordan had another choice for partnership—the West Bankers. (Abu Odeh 1999:213-221) In 1984 the

²¹ Israeli right-wing party.

Palestinian-Jordanian Adnan Abu Odeh was appointed minister of the royal court—the king’s political advisor—which is one of the most important positions in Jordan. In April 1985, a one-time increase in proportion of Palestinian-Jordanians cabinet ministers to the pre-Rabat level occurred (to 10 Palestinian-Jordanian ministers of 23) to symbolize the equal affiliation that a confederal agreement²² envisaged. (Abu Odeh 1999:221ff)

Despite King Hussein’s intense efforts to cooperate with the PLO (1982–88), all failed. In the wake of the first Palestinian *intifada*, Parliament was dissolved and administrative and legal disengagement from the West Bank inaugurated. (*ibid.*) Even though Palestinian-Jordanian representation in the 1985–89 cabinet was relatively high, the government did not curb the de-Palestinianization policy. In the period between Rabat and disengagement, a level of one-third Palestinian-Jordanian representation in the cabinet was upheld, but with some volatility depending on Jordanian-Palestinian relations at the external level, which immediately affected internal levels (in this case, representation of Palestinian-Jordanians in high governmental positions) (Tell 2008).

3.2.2 From Disengagement to Rigged Elections

In his disengagement speech, Hussein strongly stressed the issue of national unity. But contrary to the king’s words, Transjordanian nationalists within the bureaucracy interpreted the speech as approval of the ongoing East Banker first policy and an indication to start promoting institutionalization of Transjordanian domination over Palestinian-Jordanians in Jordan (Abu Odeh 1999:227f; Massad 2001:262f).

After disengagement, a new election law for the House of Deputies that excluded the West Bank had to be legislated. The number of governorates increased by seven, to match demographic and economic changes of the preceding 30 years. This in turn raised the number of districts and, thus, the number of seats for deputies, from 30 for the East Bank before 1988 to 80 for Jordan afterwards. Except for one governorate with a high concentration of Palestinian-Jordanians (Az-Zarqa), the other six new governorates were overwhelmingly populated by Transjordanians. Of the 80 seats total, three were allocated to Circassian and Chechen minorities, six to Bedouins, and seven to Christians (six of these to districts where most Christians are Transjordanians). Thus, in the worst-case scenario for Transjordanians—and best-case for Palestinian-Jordanians—Transjordanians would occupy 15 of 16 seats for minorities. Transjordanians and Palestinian-Jordanian Muslims competed for the remaining 64 seats. (Abu Odeh 1999:229ff)

But the new election law favored rural areas that were not populated by Palestinian-Jordanians. Consequently, according to Abu Odeh’s calculations,

²² The Amman Accord, signed on 11 February 1985, in which Jordan and the PLO called for total Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories (Abu Odeh 1999: 221f).

Palestinian-Jordanians could secure at most 20 seats, or 25 percent²³. Knowing this, it is hardly surprising that Palestinian-Jordanians occupied only 13 seats in the lower house between 1993 and 1997 (Abu Odeh 1999:229-31; M. Al-Masri 2009). Senators in the upper Parliament house are appointed, not elected, as are cabinet ministers, ambassadors, and other key and senior posts²⁴. Why, then, did allocation have this shape in 1997, when Palestinian-Jordanians constituted 50 percent of the population? (See table, next page.)

Preferential recruitment of Transjordanians into the state bureaucracy—which emerged in response to Black September in the early 1970s—had clearly become an institution. After disengagement in 1988, the divide increased, leading to Palestinian-Jordanian representation of less than one-quarter in positions of power in state administration (Tell 2008). A substantial drop occurred immediately after the Peace Accords in 1994, when 4 of the 31 (12.9 percent) cabinet ministers were Palestinian-Jordanian (*ibid.*).

This trend has continued during the reign of Abdullah II—who took the throne after his father’s death in 1999—even though the new queen, Rania, is of Palestinian origin. Despite a new electoral law in 2001²⁵, the imbalance between population and geographical position was still ignored; thus, representation ranges from 45,000 individuals per seat in urban districts (as in Amman, which is densely populated by Palestinian-Jordanians) to 10,000 citizens per seats in others (Hourani 2004:41).

Even though the election law was designed to prevent Palestinian-Jordanians from achieving political power through democratic means, elections could still be rigged, as were some in 2007, such as those to City Hall Amman²⁶ (Shobaki 2009; Khoury 2009). According to Taher Al-Masri (2009), *Al-Mukhabarat* (the Intelligence Agency) was enormously active, preventing the Islamic Action Front²⁷ from attaining majority. Since most hard core Islamists are Palestinian-Jordanian, the election law both prevents high Islamic *and* Palestinian-Jordanian representation. (Shobaki 2009) With this in mind, we turn to the situation today and compare it with Abu Odeh’s survey from 1997.

²³ Only 25 percent of the seats would be secured if all Palestinian-Jordanians voted purely on a communal basis.

²⁴ See Appendix B for an overview of the Jordanian state apparatus.

²⁵ E.g., the voting age was lowered from 19 to 18 and the number of electoral districts increased from 21 to 45, bringing the electoral system closer to the “one man, one vote” system. (Hourani 2004)

²⁶ An important note is that the majority of Amman’s inhabitants are Palestinian-Jordanian. In 1986 they constituted 75 percent of the population (Day 1986:59), today the percentage may be higher.

²⁷ The political wing of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan.

	Transjordanians		Palestinian-Jordanians		Palestinian-Jordanians (%)	
	1997 ^a	2009 ^b	1997 ^a	2009 ^b	1997 ^a	2009 ^b
Cabinet ministers	18	22	6	6	25	21
Ambassadors	39	*	6	*	13	
Key and senior posts	80	*	20	*	20	
Members of Parliament						
Lower house (elected)	67	93	13	17	16	15
Upper house (appointed)	33	12	7	43	18	21
Members of City Hall						
Lower council (elected)	**	19	**	15		44
Upper council (appointed)	**	24	**	10		29

* Information unavailable to author, ** Not investigated; ^a Abu Odeh 1999:321; ^b Material for screening Jordan's bureaucracy was collected in December 2008 and January 2009²⁸.

None of the 12 governorates have Palestinian-Jordanian leaders—nor do any of the ministries have a secretary general of Palestinian origin (US 2007; US 2008). Estimations of the number of Jordanian ambassadors of Palestinian origin exist vary from 1 to 9 out of 55 (M. Nabulsi 2009; Nahar 2009; T. Al-Masri 2009).

3.3 Analyzing the Features and Mechanisms of the East Banker First Institution

Clearly, the East Banker first policy has shaped, and even determined, the behavior of political actors in Jordan. Over the last 40 years, through path dependency, it has transformed a situation of balanced conflict into one of asymmetric power. The de-Palestinianization trend is an obvious case of an institution that actively empowers certain groups (the Transjordanians) while marginalizing others (the Palestinian-Jordanians), as Thelen argues. The only formal institution that favors Transjordanians above Palestinian-Jordanians is the election law, which only concerns the House of Deputies. How then is such low representation of Palestinian-Jordanians maintained?

Most interviewees agreed that it is common knowledge that important posts are intended for Transjordanians (e.g. Mohammad 2009; Qadiri 2008; T. Al-Masri 2009)—it is an informal institution. Here, adaptive expectations are a factor. For instance, since it is known that the Mayor of Amman (a position never held by a Palestinian-Jordanian) should be Transjordanian, no one will jeopardize his or her

²⁸ See section 2.2.1: *Screening the Jordanian Bureaucracy: Quantitative Data Collection*

position by suggesting a Palestinian-Jordanian for the post. Due to the humiliation Palestinian-Jordanians felt after the 2007 elections outcome, there is considerable risk that fewer Palestinian-Jordanians will candidate or participate in the next election since it is a “hopeless case” (T. Al-Masri 2009). This might lead to even lower Palestinian-Jordanian representation and turnout²⁹.

An important feature of Jordanian society is tribal affiliation, and this has had a significant impact on politics. In a country without political parties, voters vote for persons who might be able to increase their power, or broadly interpreted, the tribe. As Linda Layne writes about Jordan, “there has been a striking degree of personal and familial continuity in the holders of political office, even in the context of drastic changes in the political atmosphere over time” (1994:112). Consequently, whether Transjordanian or Palestinian-Jordanian, one must belong to a large tribe to get promoted. Tribes such as Al-Majali and Al-Fayez, who have proved loyal and supportive of the regime, are notably well represented in positions of power within Jordan’s establishment (Qadiri 2008; Hamarneh 1997:172). Thus, not all Transjordanians are preferentially recruited. In addition, *wasta* (connections) is used extensively within Jordanian bureaucracy to create advantages for oneself and relatives (T. Al-Masri 2009; Samira 2009; M. Al-Masri). In this way, Transjordanians reinforce and spread their power and authority, while marginalizing Palestinian-Jordanians who have less *wasta*. Powerful Transjordanians who benefit from this system naturally have a great interest in preserving it, since a more democratic system would lessen their power.

Although many government positions are influential, it is the king who enjoys *real* power. He is the one who appoints the prime minister and his cabinet, the Mayor of Amman, the ambassadors, and the senators, among others. But these are mostly appointed due to political experience as e.g. cabinet ministers, which naturally increases the chance that a Transjordanian will be appointed. (M. Al-Masri 2009) In addition, the king does not make his appointments through personal chemistry but is surrounded by advisors with long political careers, presumably most of them Transjordanians, who make suggestions. Al-Mukhabarat³⁰ must also approve, which further decreases prospects of Palestinian-Jordanian appointments for security reasons. (Mohammad 2009) This implies that the same kind of people (Transjordanians from influential tribes) get suggested, which perpetuates a vicious circle. Between 2003 and 2007, King Abdullah II encouraged the upper house to more closely reflect social composition by appointing journalists and cultural artists to Parliament. The experiment failed, though, and the previous division returned (ibid.; M. Al-Masri 2009).

Long employment in the state apparatus—starting in the 1920s through participation in the military and institution-building—has given the Transjordanians administrative experience and knowledge that the Palestinian-

²⁹ There is already a low turnout in big cities that are overwhelmingly populated by Palestinian-Jordanians. In the 3rd district of Amman only 30 percent votes, while in small cities the turnout is around 70 percent. (T. Al-Masri)

³⁰ The Intelligence Agency is an organization with even higher Transjordanian dominance. (Brand 1995:53)

Jordanians do not possess (Shobaki 2009). The East Banker first institution is thus also characterized by self-reinforcing learning effects.

To conclude, the East Banker first policy is largely an informal institution that is underpinned by positive feedback mechanisms such as learning effects and adaptive expectations, as Pierson predicted. Many interviewees emphasized the difficulty of reorganizing the system: when kinship ties, tribal affiliation and the extended family are still important, there will be “no new blood in the organization” (M. Al-Masri 2009). This implies that intentional discrimination is not necessarily the reason for low Palestinian-Jordanian representation. But since the ruling Transjordanian elite’s interest in keeping this system is great, and the increasing returns process has been allowed to operate for 40 years, it is theoretically difficult to change paths. As Muin Khoury (2009) puts it, “It would have been much easier to solve this ‘rift’ during the 1970s. The problem is becoming more complicated the longer time passes... Now it is extremely complicated”.

4 Two Colliding Frames of Palestinian-Jordanian Representation

4.1 Framing and Colliding Frames

To understand and interpret the world we live in and represent it to others, we use *frames*. By labeling a phenomenon, we give meaning to some aspects, while rejecting others that might appear irrelevant. Thus, “frames provide meaning through selective simplification, by filtering people’s perceptions and providing them with a field of vision for a problem” (Kaufman *et al* 2003).

But framing is not just an instrument for interpreting events, it can also be used to promote strategic advantage (Kaufman *et al* 1999:164ff). Schön *et al* clarify that framing has a big impact on policy-making and on influencing public opinion. “Policy positions [just like frames] are resting on underlying structures of belief, perception, and appreciation” (1994:23f). Difficulties appear when various frames collide with each other. Schön *et al* see policy controversies “as disputes in which the contending parties hold conflicting frames” (1994:23). When we are involved in a controversy, we have an extraordinary ability to ignore the facts affirmed by our antagonists, by focusing our attention on different facts and by interpreting the same information differently. Consequently, the ability and will to “patch” our arguments to assimilate counterevidence and oppose countervailing arguments seems to be stronger than the virtuosity of reconciliation. (Schön *et al* 1994:5)

Frames are not free-floating but are grounded in the institutions that sponsor them, and policy controversies are disputes among institutional actors who sponsor conflicting frames. The actors are in contention with one another; the frames they sponsor are in conflict, in the sense that they represent mutually incompatible ways of seeing the policy situation. (Schön *et al* 1994:29)

This, in turn, often results in enduring policy controversies and intractable conflicts. Since frames are self-reinforcing, shared through community storytelling and socially reinforced through community interaction, they are quite stable over time, even when certain actors move in or out of the picture. In addition, frames interact, often in ways that tend to reinforce the stability of other frames. (Gray 2003:13) Together these factors tend to result in institutionalized political contention, “leading either to stalemate or to pendulum swings from one extreme position to another, as one side or another comes to political power”

(Schön *et al* 1994:8). Yet in some intractable conflicts, frames are modified through intervention or changes in context, and this “reframing”, in turn, has increased the tractability of the conflict (Gray 2003:15f; Schön *et al* 1994:38ff).

4.2 The Palestinian-Jordanian Frame

All Palestinian-Jordanians interviewed consider the Palestinian-Jordanian situation within the Jordanian decision-making apparatus to be worse today than before; representatives are fewer (T. Al-Masri 2009; Abu Odeh 2009; Ahmad 2009). As Adnan Abu Odeh says, “Today Palestinian-Jordanians are treated as residents, not as citizens”. According to him, the few Palestinian-Jordanians who have powerful positions within the establishment are chosen to cover up for real discrimination; but they are just “faces” who play the regime’s game and exercise no real participation. (Abu Odeh 2009)

Ahmad perceives himself as a victim of this discrimination. Two years ago he applied to become an attaché at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which is the first phase of a diplomatic career. After having passed the written exam with distinction, he was dismissed at the interview because he was “one month too old” (at age 28 and one month)³¹. This reason upset Ahmad who was certain that if he had been 35 years old and had *wasta*, he would have been accepted. He is highly qualified and is currently employed by a prominent western NGO where his origin does not restrain him. (Ahmad 2009)

You are always looked at as Palestinian-Jordanian. There is no hope since I don’t belong to [a certain] tribe. When *Al-Mukhabarat* [who approves attachés] sees that you come from a tribe that has proven loyal to the king and the state during long time, your chances increase manifold [while decrease if your name is Palestinian]. This fact is very frustrating. You cannot change your origin. [...] I want to feel like a [complete] citizen – feel accepted!” (Ahmad 2009)

”Palestinian[-Jordanian]s of course want to be part of the decision-making. But since they have almost no chance of getting a job within this sector, they have kind of given up.” (T. Al-Masri 2009) In addition, Ahmad mentions that Palestinian-Jordanians fear losing their passport due to saying something inappropriate or being active in, or starting, a political activity or party. “The passport is the only privilege of being a Jordanian citizen.” (Ahmad 2009) Palestinian-Jordanians feel like they are considered disloyal, or perhaps even permanent suspects, which has led to political passivity (Abu Odeh 1999:198). Actually, Abu Odeh says that he is the only one who has raised the issue of increasing Palestinian-Jordanian representation, which he did on the Arabic news channel Al-Jazeera two years ago, but as a result he has been permanently

³¹ When Ahmad asked for a good reason, the interviewer refused to give one; ”That’s it. I can’t say more.”

boycotted from the government. In fact, he is the one Palestinian-Jordanian who has worked at the top of the Jordanian establishment more than 30 years, having been one of King Hussein's closest co-workers and even one of the ministers in the military cabinet set up during Black September. Despite this, he is now known for his "disloyalty" since he addressed the issue of discrimination. Only a handful of people stood by his side; in his words, "There is no national memory, just a tribal memory". (Abu Odeh 2009)

The Palestinian-Jordanian interviewees stressed their commitment to Jordan. For example, Taher Al-Masri (2009) says, "I am Jordanian. My sentiments are with Palestine, but my life is here now, and I want what's best for this country." Even after a possible solution of the Palestine problem, most Palestinian-Jordanians would stay in Jordan (Qadiri 2008; Khoury 2009). But Taher Al-Masri does admit that there is a conflict in "enjoying full citizenship and still being guaranteed the right of return"³². For this reason, he would not demand completely equal representation. On the other hand, Muin Khoury (2009) considers this a simple issue: "Now the third generation of Palestinians are living in Jordan as Jordanian citizens—they should have the same rights and opportunities as Transjordanians." Though he admits that the Transjordanians are not the only ones to blame, Palestinian-Jordanians must also change their mindset and act as Jordanian citizens; some "still live in a dream. [However] the dream of the Palestinian state is old". At the same time, Transjordanians must accept the fact that Jordan is not a transit zone for Palestinians and stop living with the illusion that there are no Palestinians in the country. "Say come or go! Now we are living in an intermediate position—we are put on hold in a frozen state." (Khoury 2009) Taher Al-Masri (2009) considers *Al-Watan Al-Badil*³³ already a reality in Jordan; 35 percent of Jordanians are UNRWA-registered refugees and 42 percent of all Palestinian refugees live in Jordan, which exceeds the combined population of Gaza and the West Bank.

All Palestinian-Jordanian interviewees emphasize the importance of this issue. "It is important to bring [it] up. If we continue keeping silent, it will keep growing inside." (Ahmad 2009) But according to Abu Odeh, there is no spokesman for the Palestinian-Jordanians. "I was. And the suppression of me silenced everyone else. They do not want to loose more. [...] They are just covers." In fact, during the interview, Taher Al-Masri was working on a document for reform that proposed increased representation of Palestinian-Jordanians. But he says that he cannot raise the issue in the Senate, since the speaker is very conservative. "So what I will do with it, I don't know ..."

³² According to UN Resolution 194, article 11, Palestinian refugees have the right of return; thus, the right to citizenship, financial settlement and, in some cases, return to former homes in what is today Israel.

³³ *Al-Watan Al-Badil* means the "alternative homeland" and refers to Jordan as the solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, where Palestinians can live. This phenomenon is also called the *Jordan Option*.

4.3 The Transjordanian Frame

Omar Nahar, Director of Policy Planning and Research at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Amman, does not want to distinguish Palestinian-Jordanians from Transjordanians. He considers talk of clashes to be exaggerated:

The fragmentation is a poison. [...] We are living as a family; a unity. [...] I have to stress the fact that all Jordanian citizens are Jordanians. The Jordanian ambassadors are Jordanian, representing His Majesty the King and his country [whether they are Transjordanians, Circassians or of Palestinian origin]. (Nahar 2009)

The Transjordanians interviewed stress the fact that representation of other minorities, such as Circassians, is high and pointed out that the prime minister, Nader Al-Dahabi, is of Syrian origin. Taher Al-Masri (prime minister in 1991) is also mentioned as a successful Palestinian-Jordanian example. (Dr. Al-Abbadi 2009; Nahar 2009) According to Nahar, discrimination does not exist within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where everyone can apply on equal terms in a fair system without *wasta*. He continues, “Everyone who lives in Jordan enjoys full-fledged citizenship rights ...”

The reason for low Palestinian-Jordanian representation within the Jordanian establishment is rather seen as derived from the Palestinian-Jordanians themselves than a deliberate Transjordanian policy. Since wages are low within the Jordanian public sector, compared to wages in the overwhelmingly Palestinian-Jordanian private sector³⁴, there is little interest in working within the Jordanian bureaucracy among Palestinian-Jordanians, according to Qatarneh and Nahar. That only one Palestinian-Jordanian out of 45 was writing the final exam in the “Diplomatic Program” in 2008 shows that “the best ones just don’t apply ...” (Tell 2008) “... Palestinian[-Jordanian]s simply do not look for these posts” (Qatarneh 2009). According to Nawaf Tell, this has been the trend during the last 10 years. “If we should try to activate more Palestinian-Jordanians, we need a quota. Like with the women. And is that democracy?” (Qatarneh 2009) But Dr. Memduh Al-Abbadi (2009) says that an increase in Palestinian-Jordanian representation must come gradually; “there should not be decisions from above”. According to him there already exists “a positive trend” with more Palestinian-Jordanians in positions of power in the Jordanian establishment.

Yet, Nahar acknowledges that it would be a security risk for the Jordanian state if Palestinian-Jordanians feels greater affinity to Palestine than to Jordan (cf. Black September). This is an illustration of Transjordanian suspicion of Palestinian-Jordanian loyalty to Jordan. But this security dimension was not seriously tackled during the interviews with the Transjordanian politicians.

³⁴ A 1996 study conducted by the Center for Strategic Studies showed that Palestinian-Jordanian capital participation in the country was 86.6 percent compared to Transjordanian participation, which amounted to 11 percent. (Abu Odeh 1999: 196) Actually, the Jordanian bourgeoisie is predominantly Palestinian-Jordanian. (Shobaki 2009)

Instead, Dr. Al-Abbadi clarified that the issue of “underrepresentation” of Palestinian-Jordanians is not discussed, whether within Parliament or elsewhere in powerful political bodies. “There are just foreigners asking these questions, seeking problems; we don’t.” (Dr. Al-Abbadi 2009) Finally, though, especially when it comes to the army and the Intelligence Agency, Dr. Al-Abbadi admitted that it is a proactive safety measure not to let many Palestinian-Jordanians work there:

We will not play with those places! We are not in Sweden. We are in the Middle East, surrounded by conflicts. We have been struggling and are working very hard for the stability and security we have. It is also in the interest of the Palestinian[-Jordanian]s, maybe more so than for the [Trans]jordanians, to maintain this stability, because of all their investments in the country. They want to save their money, of course.

4.4 And the Security Frame?

Surprisingly, while none of the Transjordanian politicians interviewed mentioned the *Jordan Option* and the Transjordanian fear that they might become a minority in their own country, the other interviewees emphasized this issue. In fact, the security dimension is Transjordanians’ main argument for low Palestinian-Jordanian representation, to prevent another Black September. *Al-Watan Al-Badil* was mentioned, also by the king³⁵, in connection with the Gaza conflict, which raised worries of more Palestinian refugees fleeing over the Jordan River.

Already before the conflict in Gaza, Rania Qadiri (2008) said that the option for Palestinians on the West Bank to move to Jordan seemed to be a more acceptable one as the situation at the other side of the Jordan River was becoming more difficult (Qadiri 2008; Abu Odeh 2009). According to Fares Braizat (2009) there are Palestinians becoming new Jordanian citizens every day, which in the long run implies further demographical change that could lead to political change. Palestinian-Jordanian underrepresentation is a way of hindering internal conflict. And certainly, an influx of additional Palestinians, since they concerning politics are seen as “the other”, would be a strategic threat to the Transjordanian political elite, given the civil and political rights that Palestinians in Jordan enjoy as Jordanian citizens.

Muin Khoury and Yasar Qatarneh spoke of how the Transjordanian establishment brings up the issue of an alternative Palestinian homeland “when it suits them”; “when the state is in trouble it is used to ‘cover’ other problems. It is like a scarecrow!” (Khoury 2009); “... like waves that are coming and going” (Qatarneh 2009). When the issue is brought up occasionally, it “keeps old wounds

³⁵ see, e.g., “King warns of a plot against the Palestinian people”, <http://en.ammonnews.net/article.aspx?articleNO=206> (2009-02-05). Also John Bolton, former US ambassador to the UN, argued for “the three state option”, where Gaza is returned to Egyptian control and the West Bank reverts to Jordanian sovereignty. (see Bolton 2009)

[from 1970] open”, which creates and maintains the rift (Khoury 2009). According to Mohammad Al-Masri (2009), *Al-Watan Al-Badil* is simply a concept that the Transjordanian political elite uses to scare Transjordanians and secure their power base when they feel threatened and to maintain status quo. As many interviewees stressed, Jordan’s current demography—but not Jordan’s political establishment—has already realized the Jordan Option.

5 Conclusion

The notable underrepresentation of Palestinian-Jordanians in Jordanian government—considering they constitute half the Jordanian population—cannot be denied. This thesis shows how this twisted divide has increased in the last 40 years. The response to Black September, the deliberate East Banker first policy, was the starting shot for an institution that, due to path dependency, has become increasingly blocked, with a continuous decline in recruitment of Palestinian-Jordanians into the state apparatus. This vicious circle has been perpetuated through self-reinforcing mechanisms that characterize an institution, such as adaptive expectations and learning effects. Thus, through path dependency, the East Banker first institution has transformed a situation of balanced conflict (before 1970, when representation was equal) into one of asymmetric power today. In addition, it has been underpinned by Palestinian-Jordanian relations at external level and clearly influenced by developments on the other side of the Jordan River. For example the disengagement in 1988, giving the PLO legal and administrative responsibility of the West Bank, led to a new election law to the lower house of Parliament, favoring rural areas dominated by Transjordanians above the overwhelmingly Palestinian-Jordanians urban areas.

Clearly, Transjordanians and Palestinian-Jordanians within government each have distinct perceptions of this institution—in fact, their frames represent mutually incompatible ways of viewing Palestinian-Jordanian underrepresentation. For example, Palestinian-Jordanians interpret the fact that there are few attachés at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as proof of discrimination while Transjordanians perceive it as evidence of no Palestinian-Jordanian interest in working within the government. According to the Transjordanian frame, all Jordanian citizens have equal opportunities, irrespective of origin, and discrimination is non-existent. In contrast to Palestinian-Jordanians, Transjordanians frame the East Banker first institution as fair and see no reason for bringing the issue up for discussion—rather, the Transjordanian frame justifies it. Since Transjordanians clearly benefit from the existing institution, which actively empowers them, this is hardly surprising. With a more democratic system, where tribal affiliation and *wasta* are less important, the Transjordanian elite would be less powerful. Today power relations within the Jordanian political establishment between Transjordanians and Palestinian-Jordanians have become so uneven that no open conflict is necessary. The state-sponsored, official Transjordanian frame is thus the visible one, while Palestinian-Jordanians struggle to even visualize their frame of discrimination without being suppressed.

Yet, the recurring waves of *Al-Watan Al-Badil* in Transjordanian political discourse, whenever the state is in trouble or the Israeli-Palestinian peace process becomes twisted, reveals a Transjordanian fear of losing power to Palestinian-Jordanians. So Transjordanians do not appear to regard their power base as

completely secured, which is understandable when the Jordanian demographical make-up differs significantly from the decision-making one.

Since frames are self-reinforcing, as are positive feedback mechanisms that characterize institutions, the official Transjordanian frame and the East Banker first institution will most likely opt to stay on their current paths. No signs of Transjordanian political will to increase recruitment of Palestinian-Jordanians into the Jordanian decision-making apparatus are in evidence. Even discussing the subject is taboo. Such preconditions give little hope for improvement in the situation for Palestinian-Jordanians. It seems as if outside impetus is needed—perhaps a solution to, or even some change in, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?

5.1 Zooming Out: The Issue in the Big Context

This thesis has attempted to shed light on a complex, sensitive issue in Jordan: Palestinian-Jordanian representation in the state apparatus. While I was in Amman, the Center for Strategic Studies (CSS) was in the planning phase of an extended project on this topic. My hope is that these plans will be realized so that this sensitive issue is opened up for public discussion, and that the findings of this thesis can in some way contribute to the CSS project.

Lastly, I want to put the issue of domestic Palestinian-Transjordanian relations in perspective on a larger scale. What almost every informant emphasized was that Jordan's current demographic make-up is the result of the actions of one entity: Israel. "Jordan is just trying to solve the problems Israel started. It interferes everywhere and is the cause of all conflicts in the Middle East. [...] Yesterday we had headache. Today fever. Tomorrow the flu." (Braizat 2009) Clearly, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has had major consequences for Jordan, who has shouldered the main responsibility for the Palestinian refugee stream. However, despite imbalances and underrepresentation, Jordan is the only Arabic country in which all Palestinian refugees are granted national citizenship and passports, and it is thus still the best place for Palestinians to live.

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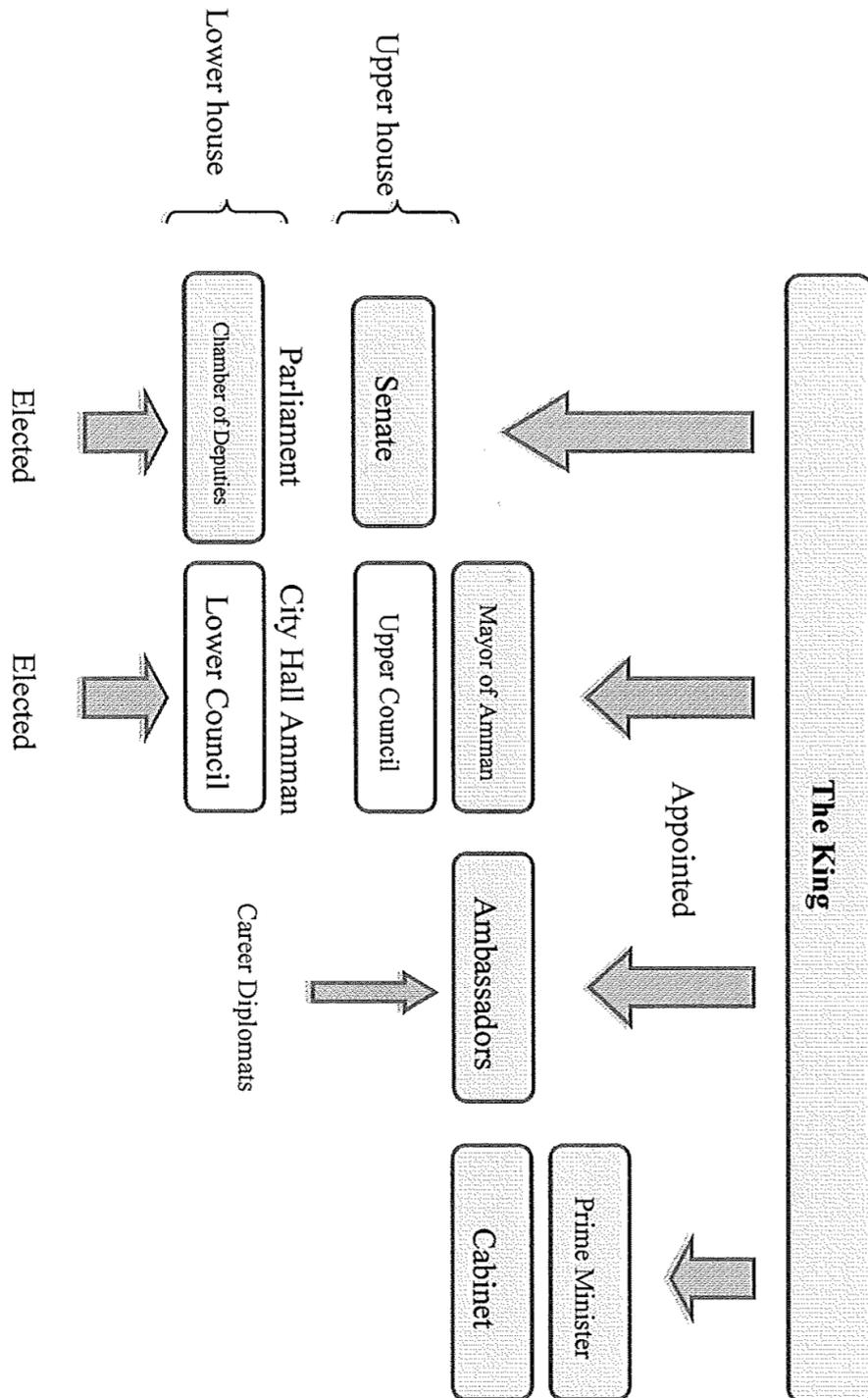
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Appendix A: Map of Jordan



Source: (Abu Odeh 1999:2)

Appendix B: Chart of the Jordanian State Apparatus



Appendix C: Interviews

Representatives from the Jordanian State Apparatus

Transjordanians

Dr. Memduh Al-Abbadi
Member of the House of Deputies (first representative for Amman's 3rd district)
Former Mayor of Amman and Minister of Health (2009-02-02)

Mr. Omar Nahar
Director of Policy Planning and Research, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Amman
(2009-01-28)

"Mohammad"³⁶
Lower civil servant (2009-01-20, 2009-01-26)

"Samira"
Lower civil servant (2009-01-26)

Palestinian-Jordanians

Mr. Adnan Abu Odeh
Former political advisor to King Hussein and King Abdullah II (2009-01-29)

Mr. Taher Al-Masri
Vice President of the Senate
Former Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs (2009-01-31)

³⁶ Names within quotation marks are pseudonyms.

Representatives from outside the Jordanian State Apparatus

Transjordanians

Dr. Fares A. Braizat
Deputy Director, Center for Strategic Studies (2009-01-27)

Dr. Mohammed Al-Masri
Center for Strategic Studies (2009-01-19, 2009-02-05, 2009-02-09)

Mr. Mohammad Nabulsi
Center for Strategic Studies (2009-01-18)

Dr. Yaser Shobaki
Independent debator and critic (2009-01-27)

Dr. Nawaf W. Tell
Director, Center for Strategic Studies (2008-12-22)

Palestinian-Jordanians

Mr. Muin Khoury
Director, Research Department, The Royal Hasehemite Court (2009-01-31)

”Ahmad”
Administrative officer of prominent NGO (2009-02-04)

Transjordanian/Palestinian-Jordanian

Mr. Yasar A. Qatarneh
Director, Regional Center on Conflict Prevention, Institute of Diplomacy (2009-02-09)

Independent

Mrs. Rania Qadiri (Lebanese)
Correspondent, Newsweek and New York Times (2008-12-17)

Appendix D: Interview Guide

Although not all interviewees were asked the same questions, here are some common ones.

- Do you agree that the state appears to be divided on a politically bicomunal basis?
- If yes, what is the reason for this bicomunal rift? When did it emerge?
 - Deliberate policy? If so, constitutional?
 - Security problem? Jordan Option?
 - Unwritten rule?
 - *Wasta*?
 - Transjordanian experience?
- Do you think that there has been a change in Palestinian-Jordanian representation since King Abdullah II came to power? Greater or lesser representation?
- Can you describe the employment process? To become an attaché, for example, on which grounds is he or she chosen? How did you become employed?
- Is the issue of few Palestinian-Jordanians within the Jordanian state apparatus discussed in public at your workplace?
 - Is the issue too sensitive?
 - Is there no will to raise the issue?
 - What would happen if someone did raise it?
- Do you think this imbalance could be corrected? If so, *how*?