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The role of political parties in shaping the democratic process in Jordan

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ABSTRACT

Because they strive to reflect the interests of the people, control political competition, and offer a framework for accountability and decision-making involvement, political parties are regarded as essential to the development and strengthening of the democratic process. With an emphasis on the difficulties parties have with pluralism, financing, and representation, this study attempts to assess how Jordanian political parties either help or impede the democratic process. Using a descriptive methodology borrowed from earlier research, the study's findings show how parties evolve and engage with society while examining laws and policies that impact their effectiveness. All things considered, assessing the function of parties helps to shed light on how best to increase their efficacy in advancing democracy.

1. Introduction

As One essential element of contemporary democracies' organizational framework is their political parties. They are essential in structuring the political process, giving different political parties and groups a forum to voice their concerns, encouraging political pluralism, and developing the idea of public involvement in decision-making. Parties are useful instruments in this regard for promoting the democratic transition process, helping to establish institutions, develop leaders, strike a balance between different political forces, and fight for liberties and rights [1].

The efficacy and cohesiveness of party politics are hampered by a number of issues and barriers in many nations, including Jordan, despite the significance of parties and their essential role in the formation of democratic systems. Despite having a long and rich political history, Jordan's party landscape suffers from low public participation and a lack of true representation of a range of interests. Legislation, the political climate, and government control over party processes are some of the causes of this. This restricts the parties' ability to improve democracy. These difficulties draw attention to a serious research gap concerning the effectiveness of the present parties' contributions to the democratic process, the causes of their inadequacy, and the implications for the long-term viability of democratic growth in Jordan [2].

The dearth of research that thoroughly assesses party performance, examines the functions of existing parties, and assesses how compatible they are with democratic ideals and their objectives of increasing political participation is indicative of this gap. In order to predict future developments in the Jordanian political system and the potential for using parties as a key force in bolstering

democracy, it is essential to comprehend the party landscape, examine the factors that threaten it, and offer unbiased insights into the opportunities and possibilities available to strengthen the role of parties [3].

The primary goal of the study is to evaluate how political parties in Jordan contribute to or detract from the democratic process by examining their makeup, history, and present performance as well as the difficulties they encounter. Additionally, it looks into how much each party engages with different facets of society, evaluates how much they contribute to supervision and responsibility, and examines the laws and policies that affect how they perform. In order to support democratic building, political stability, and the advancement of the national development process, the objective is to offer useful frameworks and insights that can be used to maximize the potential and opportunities for developing the role of parties [4].

2. Theoretical Framework

Social and political groups that unite groups of people with similar interests and concerns are known as political parties. By taking part in elections, forming governments, and keeping an eye on how well those governments are performing, they hope to have an impact on public policy. By emulating political plurality, representing the interests of diverse societal sectors, arranging political discussions, and offering a forum for public engagement, parties serve to strengthen democracy. Parties now play a crucial role in improving communication between the public and the government, fostering democratic institutions, increasing political legitimacy, and improving political stability [5].

2.1. Constants and Challenges Facing Parties in Democracies

Funding, legislative frameworks that limit their operations, a lack of membership, and a weak organizational identity are just a few of the obstacles that parties have faced throughout history that impair their performance and interactions. Their capacity to successfully integrate into the democratic process is impacted by socioeconomic changes, political pluralism, and internal party competition. Their effectiveness in promoting democracy is based on key tenets, including responsiveness to citizen demands and engagement and communication with civil society [6].

2.2. Related Political Theories

The most well-known theories that describe the function of parties in a democratic society are as follows [7, 8]:

- Liberal theory: This emphasizes the importance of parties in pluralism and the necessity of a free environment that allows parties to compete and offer diverse platforms to support the democratic choice process.

- Pluralist theory: This views parties as channels that represent the interests of different social groups and work to coordinate and multiply voices to achieve political balance.

- Functionalist theory: This emphasizes the importance of parties in performing the basic functions of democracy, including representation, leadership training, accountability, and stimulating political participation.

- Transformational Theory: This theory addresses how parties evolve and adapt to internal and external challenges, and their impact on the dynamics of the political system.

Generally speaking, evaluating the reality of Jordanian parties necessitates using these ideas and theories to comprehend how they either help or hurt the democratic process and to pinpoint areas that need improvement and assistance in order to increase their efficacy in social and political interactions [9].

3   History and Formation of Political Parties in Jordan

To comprehend how the political environment has changed, one must have a solid understanding of Jordan's political party history. The social, political, and economic transformations that the nation has seen are reflected in this history, along with the effects of laws that have either restricted or altered the conditions that have fostered political parties. Parties' histories have influenced Jordanian politics by establishing their roles in political conflict and the country's modernization as well as the character of their relationship with the government [10].

3.1. The Evolution of the Party Landscape in Jordan

Beginning around the turn of the 20th century, political parties initially appeared in Jordan as a result of efforts to involve the general populace in the political process, especially during the colonial and independence movements. Parties with varying ideas about the direction of the state, like the Independence Party, People's Party, and Socialist Union Party, came into being in the 1940s. A variety of political viewpoints have been made possible by the several parties that have existed since then, although communication between the parties and the government has remained restricted and frequently governed by the whims of the state, particularly since independence [11].

As efforts were made to broaden the party, the party landscape saw cycles of growth and decline in the ensuing decades. However, party activity was limited or occasionally sidelined by political and security developments, especially during times of regional instability and unrest, which made it harder for them to successfully influence the political system [12].

3.2. Party Laws and Related Legislation

Over the years, Jordan's governing parties' legal framework has undergone tremendous change. Party laws were initially harsh and restrictive, with governments placing stringent limitations on the formation and operations of parties in an effort to manage political forces and reduce possible risks to stability. The Parties Law, for instance, was passed in 1992 in response to calls for political change. Later, it was changed to promote party pluralism by enforcing restrictions on the number of members, finance, and electoral process. These changes had an impact on how the parties were formed and how diverse they were [13].

It was the intention of these measures to control the party process. However, it occasionally hindered parties' ability to grow on their own, causing them to focus on certain leaders or limited party goals. Additionally, the legislation is occasionally ambiguous, which can result in inconsistent application at times and affect the parties' freedom to carry out their operations, grow their membership, and formulate their political agendas [14].

3.3. General Features of Party Formation in Jordan

In Jordan, the political system is separated among Islamic, nationalist, socialist, and scientific parties, as well as liberal and nationalist parties. With a significant presence of powerful leaders and family or party networks, parties are distinguished by their makeup, which frequently relies on past leadership, established organizational frameworks, or interest groups. Parties also differ widely in terms of size and membership; most rely on low levels of support and participation, which affects their efficacy and political clout [15].

Furthermore, it should be mentioned that regional and global circumstances have a big impact on how parties are formed in Jordan because many of them take stances that support the objectives or policies of regional or external parties, especially those that deal with the Palestinian issue or relations with neighboring nations. As a result, a party's history and makeup reveal a strategic aspect that offers a framework for comprehending its capacity to meet social demands and involve the public in politics.

To sum up, researching the origins and development of political parties in Jordan can offer valuable perspectives on the development of party structures, organizational characteristics, and the laws that regulate their operations. Better knowledge of the elements affecting their present and future contributions to the democratic process can also result from it, as can the identification of areas that require improvement or reform in order to support the nation's political and democratic development objectives [16].

4. Analyzing the Role of Current Parties

Examining the real function of political parties in Jordan is essential to understanding how they affect the process of democratic change. This section assesses the efficacy of parties in the political and social spheres as well as their performance in representing interests, political platforms, and internal organization.

4.1. Representation of Various Interests

By supporting their causes and tailoring their political platforms to their demands, political parties in Jordan are crucial in expressing the interests of diverse societal groups. The rhetoric and policies of Islamist, liberal, leftist, and nationalist parties are centered on advancing the social, economic, and religious interests of their respective constituencies. But for a number of reasons, such as the poor relationship between the parties and the general public, the lack of a robust membership base brought about by poor communication between the parties and individuals, and the lack of confidence in their efficacy, which limits their capacity to adequately represent the interests of different societal groups, the effectiveness of this representation is still constrained [17].

Furthermore, given the political and economic difficulties the nation faces, some parties have a tendency to take stances that are in line with those of powerful parties or outside forces, which restricts their capacity to independently and successfully represent the interests of society. Therefore, the ability of parties to use organizational structures and policies to bolster their position as a legitimate way to reflect social goals continues to determine how much they represent these interests.

4.2. Political and Organizational Programs

Key concerns like political change, economic growth, raising educational standards, and advancing social justice are at the center of Jordan's modern political parties' platforms. However, the impact of these programs on national politics is diminished because they frequently lack particular implementation plans and are vague or inadequate. It is important to note that a lot of parties don't have clear programs that represent who they are and where they want to go. This makes it harder for them to draw in supporters and grow their membership.

Since their activities are restricted to election-related events or seasonal protests, the majority of parties suffer from poor organizational structures, little resources, and a lack of continuity in their work. Additionally, it seems that a lot of parties depend on particular leaders, which hinders contact and renewal with their supporters and limits the opportunity for in-house political thinking [18].

4.3. Party Performance in Terms of Effectiveness and Influence

Even though there have been occasions when parties in Jordan have been able to make a big impact during elections or on particular social concerns, an evaluation of their performance shows that they are not very effective at the national level. The majority of parties are unable to meaningfully impact public policymaking or advocate for legislative change, even in the face of successful civil society-active parties like the Unity and Development Party and the Islamic Action Front [19].

Parties' capacity to establish coalitions, broaden their support base, and make use of representative democracy's resources—particularly in relation to voting and tracking government performance—determines how much of an impact they have on national politics. Parties' efficacy as active participants in the democratic process is impacted by low voter turnout, election results manipulation, and restrictions on liberties. Consequently, an examination of the present parties' function in Jordan shows that, in spite of their theoretical promise, they encounter many real-world obstacles when trying to exert their actual political impact. This is brought on by inadequate programs, lax regulatory frameworks, and problems with financing and governmental supervision. As a result, increasing their efficacy necessitates refining their programs, strengthening their organizational structure, and fostering a political climate that permits them to actively engage in decision-making. This opens the door for a fundamental shift that solidifies democracy in the nation and reinforces the function of parties as important drivers of this evolution [20].

5. Challenges Facing Parties in Jordan

Jordanian political parties deal with a number of issues that have an adverse effect on their effectiveness and function in democratic processes. Studying these issues necessitates both a deep comprehension of the factors that reduce their efficacy and an investigation of potential solutions to enhance their position as important participants in the democratic process.

5.1. Funding and Government Control

One of the biggest issues impeding their influence and operations is party funding. Their reliance on a few number of sources, frequently government assistance or modest member contributions, represents the problem of inconvenient finance, which restricts their capacity to plan election campaigns, provide programs, and grow their membership. The state or official entities' control over financial sources casts doubt on the parties' independence because funds can be politicized, used to further certain goals, or obstructed by opposition parties [21].

Additionally, Jordanian law gives international organizations and private finance a restricted role, depriving parties of essential resources to improve their political competitiveness. This results in a weak financial structure, which in turn affects their capacity to carry out their plans, develop a variety of innovative public-serving activities, and enhance their reputation as a viable choice.

5.2. Weak Membership and Identity

One of the biggest obstacles to enhancing internal party democracy is low membership. Low numbers of real members and a lack of dedication to its objectives and plans are characteristics of several Jordanian parties. This is ascribed to a number of things, such as the lack of initiatives that appeal to young people or underrepresented groups, the lack of compelling reasons to switch parties, and the inability to convey themes that forge a distinct and powerful party identity.

A state of overlap between party identity and personal loyalties or traditional frameworks results from this weakness, which also lowers party participation, hinders their ability to represent the interests of the largest segments of society, and leaves them more susceptible to the influence of outside forces or powerful leaders [22].

5.3. Pluralism and Internal Competition

Jordan has many parties, but there isn't much real internal competition, which hinders political plurality. Because they rely on coalitions based on personal consensus, fear that divisions will undermine their chances, or both, many parties avoid intense rivalry for power despite having comparable platforms and goals.

There is frequently little internal competition among party leaders, which serves to protect the leadership's interests at the price of updating initiatives and enhancing output. As a result, there is a lack of diversity in visions and concepts that satisfy the needs of different societal segments, poor creativity, and a weakened spirit of party allegiance. Furthermore, political and authoritarian forces exert pressure on certain parties, restricting their ability to compete and alter their internal structures [23].

5.4. The Impact of Policies and Legislation on the Formation of Challenges

Another barrier to the growth of parties is the laws and policies that govern party activity. Certain laws are characterized by a lack of flexibility, or they center on limitations that prevent parties from forming, or they impose stringent requirements for state support or recognition, which restricts their freedom of action and organization and makes it more difficult for them to develop and engage with society. Legislative limitations on organizational and political plurality also hinder growth and diversity, restrict freedom of expression and assembly, and lessen the flexibility of parties and their ability to compete [24].

5.5. The Impact of Challenges on the Democratic Process

All of the aforementioned difficulties make it more difficult for parties to become successful mediators in representative democracies, which limits their capacity to foster advancement, carry out their plans, take part in elections successfully, and keep an eye on the performance of the government. Due to the domination of some powerful forces and the lack of balance in the representation of interests, party weakness also poses a threat to the problem of party pluralism. This undermines the independent oversight and balancing principles, which harms the legitimacy of democratic institutions overall [25].

5. Results and Discussion

For democratic systems to be strengthened, political parties are essential. The study showed that Jordanian parties have a variety of roles, supporting democracy and opposing its impact on social and political outcomes. The key conclusions based on the previously indicated classification are described here, together with an academic discussion and a reference to the gathered theoretical evidence.

1. The Importance of Parties in Developing Democracy

According to the study, parties are an important instrument for expressing public interests and coordinating political life. Theoretically, they mediate disputes between the public and the government, help shape public policy, and give people political options. However, it is observed that parties in Jordan have not yet attained the intended degree of influence because of their inadequate organizational structures and restricted capacity to interact widely with societal concerns, which lessens their efficacy in advancing democratic fight.

2. The Reality of Parties in Jordan.

The findings show that the competitiveness and foundations of the Jordanian party scene are poor. Instead of having distinct political agendas, many parties are focused on specific people or clans, which limits their ability to represent a range of national interests. Furthermore, stringent policies that restrict parties' growth and influence—especially through state control over finance—are a hallmark of legislation governing the formation and funding of parties. As a result, resources are scarce and independence is weak.

3. Study Objectives and Questions

The study's findings showed that its main goals were to evaluate the degree to which parties support democracy, examine the difficulties they encounter, and make recommendations for how they can perform better. The efficacy of parties in representation, their influence on political decision-making, and their relevance to social issues were among the main topics of the inquiries. As a result, it was determined that parties need to immediately reorganize their responsibilities and strategies because their engagement with society is limited.

4. Analyzing the Role of Current Parties

The findings indicate that while Jordanian parties acknowledge the need of expressing interests, their influence is constrained by their small platforms and subpar organizational and administrative capabilities. Additionally, different parties have different levels of effectiveness and influence, with most of them falling short in their capacity to address social and political challenges. Among the problems that show that parties have not made the most of their ability to involve many facets of society are the low participation rates of women and young people.

5.   Challenges Facing Parties in Jordan

The findings highlight a number of significant obstacles to party effectiveness, including government control over the political process, which restricts their freedom of action; state-directed funding, which limits their independence; low membership; deteriorating party identity; and internal issues with pluralism and competition among parties, which cause divisions and fragmentation of efforts.

6.   Parties' Contributions to Supporting Democracy

Data indicates that some parties still support the transfer of power, electoral engagement, and the creation of platforms for transparency and supervision in spite of the difficulties. Additionally, they have a limited amount of interaction with civil society, especially when it comes to political education and raising awareness of democracy. However, they still need to expand their institutional instruments and strengthen their capacities because their supervision and participatory role hasn't had a significant influence yet.

According to the study's conclusions, political parties in Jordan continue to play a small role in society and are hampered by organizational, structural, and financial issues that prevent them from playing a significant role in promoting and bolstering democracy. Parties would be more effective and contribute more to national decision-making if the legal environment were developed, funding mechanisms were improved, organizational structures were modernized, internal participation was increased, and an atmosphere that encouraged pluralistic competition was created.

7. Conclusion

According to the objective assessment based on the study's findings, Jordan's political parties present a number of opportunities for reconstruction through radical policy reforms, improving the operating environment for the parties, bolstering their organizational and financial capacities, and encouraging the involvement of women and young people. More diversity and representation will be guaranteed, which is crucial for democracy to succeed.

The recommendations center on the necessity of enacting legal amendments that ensure the independence of parties, offer independent and transparent funding sources, and raise public understanding of democracy in light of the study's findings. Additionally, they must promote party competition and pluralism in order to establish a party system that is powerful and able to effect the intended political reform.

In conclusion, Jordanian political parties are still at a turning point in their history. Either they can overcome their obstacles and fulfill their role in bolstering and strengthening democracy, or they will be stuck in a rut of limitations and weaknesses that will hinder the growth of the democratic system overall. As a result, improving party performance necessitates coordinated political, legislative, and social initiatives to create a contemporary and regenerated party system that successfully supports Jordan's democratic transition to prosperity.

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