

Identity Center Position Paper – 2016 Electoral Law

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The **Identity Center** is an independent civil society organization helping to lead development in the Middle East. The Center empowers people to fully participate in political, economic and social development through research, outreach, advocacy, and training and is engaged in issues across the democratic spectrum such as election observation, political reform, civic participation, decentralization and municipal affairs, socio-economic development, youth, parliamentary affairs, and social and economic rights.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Jordan's coming parliamentary elections, to be held on 20 September 2016, will be governed by a new electoral law that presents a number of fundamental changes to previous ones:
- Replacement of the Single Non-Transferrable Vote (SNTV) with multiple votes, determinate on the number of seats in a given district.
- Introduction of open candidacy lists of no more than 10 and no less than 3 candidates.
- New system of electoral districts. Reduced from 45 to 23.
- Each of the 12 governorates qualifies as a district, with Amman, Irbid and al-Zarqa divided into 5, 4, and 2 districts respectfully.
- Reduction of parliamentary seats from 150 to 130.
- Quotas remain: 15 for women, 9 for Christians, 3 for Circassians/Chechens, while the three Badia zones (North, Central and South) have three seats each.
- New law contains no mechanism for the equitable distribution of seats. Similar with its 2012 predecessor, seat distribution is left to a by-law.
- Law represents important institutional shift. However, a number of aspects, including manner of calculating vote percentages and seat allocations, limit its democratic/representative potential.
- Regional instability and domestic security threats also affect Jordan's reform path and thereby impact of new electoral law.
- Longevity of law is crucial for its ability to impact on electoral process and to effectuate a new kind of parliament.

INTRODUCTION

The 2016 Electoral Law, ratified by his Majesty King Abdullah II on 13 March 2016, represents the country's latest legal-political reform of the political system. Political reform, specifically parliamentary reform, has received renewed interest from Jordanian policy makers and outside observers since the uprisings, known as the Arab Spring, challenged domestic status quos across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region between 2011 and 2012. It departs from its predecessors in a number of key ways.

First, the Law rescinds the Single Non-Transferable Vote (SNTV) mechanism, and reintroduces the principle of multiple votes. Second, the country's electoral districts, which in accordance with the 2012 Electoral Law numbered forty-five, are both reduced and reformed by the Law. Each of the Kingdom's governorates constitutes a district, with the exception of Amman, Irbid and al-Zarqa which are divided into five, four and two districts respectively. Third, candidates must organize themselves onto candidacy lists, of no more than ten and no less than three candidates each. Fourth, the Law stipulates a reduction in the number of parliamentary seats from 150 to 130.

In addition to these new principles, the Law maintains the 2012 quota of 15 parliamentary seats for women. Quotas for the Christian, Circassian/Chechen minorities are preserved with nine seats for Christians, and three for their Circassian/Chechen counterparts. Similarly, the Bedouin in the Northern, Central and Southern Badia zones maintain their three seats per-zone allocation.

The following Position Paper is divided into five sections, each of which detailing a particular component of the new law. The first focuses on the introduction of the open candidacy lists, and outlines the processes by which the system works. The second considers the reintroduction of the principle of multiple votes and the subsequent removal of the Single Non-Transferable Vote (SNTV). Section three looks at the establishment of the electoral districts, suggesting that their overlap with the governorates constitutes a potentially positive reform development. Continuity and change regarding quotas for female and minority (Christian and Circassian/Chechen) candidates is considered in part four, before the final section evaluates the Law and comments on its capacity to induce further political and parliamentary reform in the Kingdom.

1 CANDIDACY LISTS

Each candidate in the upcoming elections must be associated with an open candidate list of no fewer than three, and no greater than ten candidates; dependent on the number of seats available within the electoral district. Open candidate lists provide individual voters with a degree of agency as to how their votes are allocated to individual candidates in a given list. Voters therefore do not need to vote for an entire list but may nominate specific candidates from the list in question. This is in contrast to closed lists where the voter has little or no agency to make preferences. In the context of Jordanian elections, the introduction of open candidate lists facilitates greater latitude in voter decision making than the previously used SNTV.

As voters will only be able to cast votes within as opposed to across different lists, there will foreseeably be competition between independent and party affiliated candidates for positions on favorable lists. This competition may be both an opportunity for the strengthening of political parties and the party system in Jordan, as well as a possible impediment. The opportunity derives from the possibility of coalition building and cross-candidacy networking between candidates, parties and movements. Coalition building will be an integral way through which candidates can be included on specific lists on the basis of policy or ideology. However, this requires that the principles of the Law be maintained over successive electoral

cycles, so as to facilitate behavioral shifts in the attitudes and behaviors of parties and independent candidates. Owing to the fluidity of the regional environment and the necessity for a balance between reform and stability, this continuity of practice cannot be guaranteed.

The current mechanism for the establishment of candidacy lists may simultaneously, especially in the short-term, provide an impediment to party development and cross-coalition building in some districts. This is because of the mechanism through which seats are allocated proportionally. It's a percentage game. Each list receives a certain number of votes on election day. This is converted into a percentage based on the number of total votes cast in the district. The available seats are then proportionately allocated.

Let us consider this process through a hypothetical electoral district, as depicted in Table 1.1 with 10 seats, 7 candidate lists each with a number of candidates ranging from 3-10, and 100,000 votes in total.

(Table 1.1)

| List | No. of candidates | Number of Votes | % of total votes (100,000 in this district) | multiplied by No. of available seats (10) | Seats acquired in First Round | Seats acquired in Second Round | Total seats won |
|-------------|--------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------|
| List A | 6 | 27000 | 27% (0.27) | 2.7 | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| List B | 3 | 22000 | 22% (0.22) | 2.2 | 2 | - | 2 |
| List C | 4 | 19000 | 19% (0.19) | 1.9 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| List D | 6 | 13000 | 13% (0.13) | 1.3 | 1 | - | 1 |
| List E | 4 | 8000 | 8% (0.08) | 0.8 | - | 1 | 1 |
| List F | 4 | 6000 | 6% (0.06) | 0.6 | - | 1 | 1 |
| List G | 5 | 5000 | 5% (0.05) | 0.5 | - | - | 0 |

The conversion of votes into seat allocation occurs in two stages. First, the lists are ranked highest to lowest in terms of their percentages. The seats are then divided accordingly, depending on the number of available seats and the nature of the percentages. As the table illustrates, List A, with 6 candidates, acquired the highest percentage of votes with 27%, followed by Lists B (3 candidates) and C (4 candidates) with 22% and 19% respectively. List D with 6 candidates achieved 13%, while Lists E (4 candidates), F (4 candidates), and G (5 candidates) won 8%, 6% and 5% of the vote each. As outlined in the table, these percentages, converted into a decimal number are subsequently multiplied by the number of seats in the district (in this case 10). The resulting number is used for the first round of seat allocations. Therefore, Lists A and B are both allocated two seats each, with Lists C, and D each allotted a single seat each (see table 1.1).

The second stage of parliamentary seat allocation comes into play if seats remain unallocated after stage one. In this instance, the highest margin method of calculation and distribution is applied and the remaining seats are divided accordingly. As outlined in Table 1.2:

(Table 1.2)

| List | Percentage multiplied by No. of seats | Stage Two (According to remaining No. Seats) |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| List A (6 candidates) | 2.7 | 3.0 |
| List B (3 candidates) | 2.2 | - |
| List C (4 candidates) | 1.9 | 2.0 |
| List D (6 candidates) | 1.3 | - |
| List E (4 candidates) | 0.8 | 1.0 |
| List F (4 candidates) | 0.6 | 1.0 |
| List G (5 candidates) | 0.5 | - |

As can be seen, Lists A, C, E, and F have their original totals altered according to the highest margin calculation. The seats thus allocated to the Lists will be divided amongst the individual candidates who acquired the majority of votes within the List. List G is ineligible because of the insufficient number of seats available after the first round of allocations. A number of important observations are worth highlighting.

1. List B whose 3 candidates attracted 22000 votes will finish with the same number of seats as List C, whose own 4 candidates acquired 3000 less votes.
2. Lists E and D will be awarded one seat each, despite the fact that List E attracted 5000 votes less than List D.
3. List F won less than half as many votes as List D, but finished with the same number of seats.
4. 50% of List A's candidates will be offered a seat in parliament.
5. 66% (two-thirds) of List B's candidates will acquire a seat.

Each of these points highlights in a particular way the importance of candidacy list composition. Candidates negotiating places on lists will have to evaluate the number of votes they are likely to receive in comparison to their counterparts on the list. The reason being, is that there are risks to candidates seeking to bandwagon onto the list of a popular competitor.¹ As demonstrated by List A in the above illustration, being on a list that acquires the highest number of votes, may not result in a parliamentary seat. Analogously, parties will have to be strategic in how they position their candidates on lists. In some districts it might be preferable to run multiple party candidates on a single list, while in others dividing them across different lists may prove more advantageous. The Muslim Brotherhood demonstrated the validity of this in the 1989 elections.²

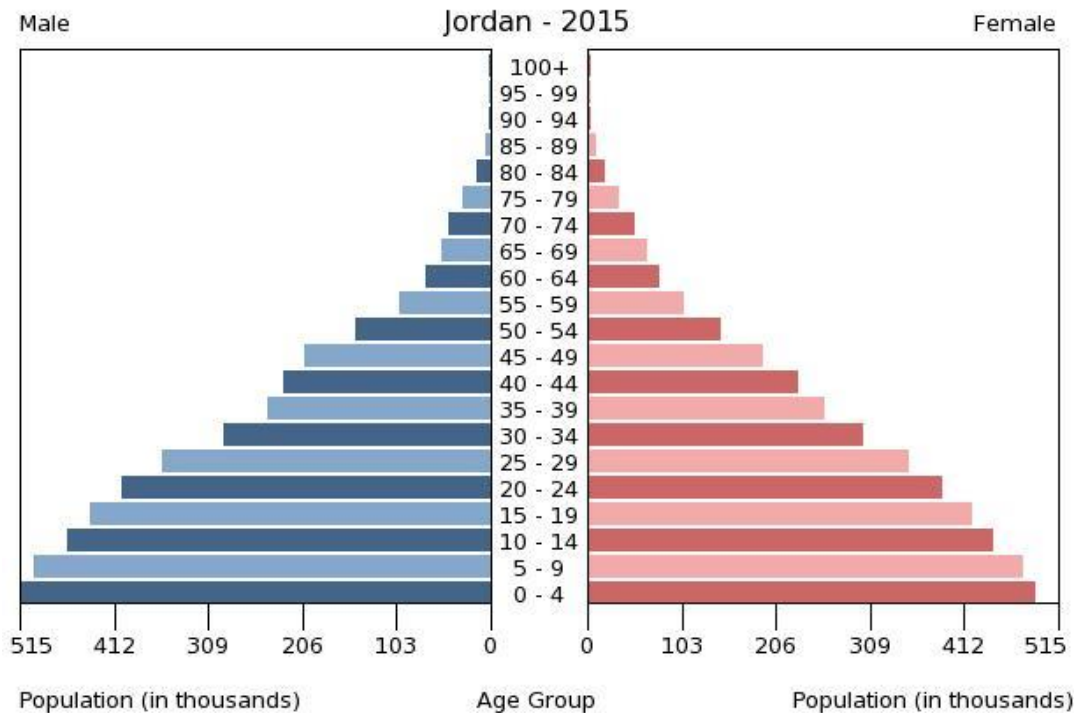
The open candidacy lists in the 2016 Law replaces the Closed-Proportional list system which was partially introduced for the 2013 elections. Thus the national list, which accounted for 27 seats in the 2013 parliamentary elections has been removed and will not be present in any form in the upcoming elections. This has been criticized by some sitting members of parliament (MPs) such as Abdul Hadi

¹ To bandwagon in this context refers to candidates working their way onto the list of a candidate/s whose vote attracting ability is, within reasonable estimation, substantially higher than their own.

² Curtis Ryan, 'Elections and Parliamentary Democratization in Jordan', *Democratization* 5:4, 1998, p. 182.

Majali, who argued in parliamentary discussions that the national list concept should have been refined rather than abolished.³

Article 10 of the 2016 Law stipulates a number of prerequisites for all potential candidates. Like its 2012 predecessor the Law requires all candidates to be a minimum of thirty years of age.⁴ This is significant in so far as it represents a continuing reversal of the 2011 Royal Constitutional Review Committee’s recommendation that the candidacy age be reduced to 25.⁵ Furthermore, age is an important socio-economic variable in Jordan as the below pyramid graph illustrates.⁶



The essential percentages represented by the above graph are as follows. Jordanians between the ages of 0 and 14 represent 35.42% of the population, while the next age group, 15 and 24 year olds constitute approximately 20.25%. Their compatriots in the age bracket of 25 to 54 years of age occupy a similarly large percentage of 36.12%. The three of these age groups dwarf both the 55 to 64 and 65 + age brackets who equate to 4.3% and 3.91% of the total population respectively.⁷ As these statistics evidently demonstrate, the decisions of policy makers will have the longest lasting impact on Jordan’s youth who are effectively denied any institutional involvement in such decision making. This is despite the fact that by the age of 18 they are given the capacity to vote. If you are old enough to make a decision at the

³ Raed Omari, ‘House Sharply Divided Over Suggested Elections Law’, *Jordan Times*, September 14, 2015.

⁴ http://www.eods.eu/library/FR%20JORDAN%2027.03.2013_en.pdf p. 15.

⁵ King Abdullah II, ‘Remarks by His Majesty King Abdullah II On the occasion of presenting the suggested constitutional amendments by the Royal Committee on Constitutional Review’, *The Royal Hashemite Court*, http://kingabdullah.jo/index.php/en_US/speeches/view/id/482/videoDisplay/0.html; Identity Center and Democracy Reporting International (DRI), ‘Assessment of the Electoral Framework’, *Final Report*, March 2013.

⁶ Central Intelligence Agency, ‘The World Factbook: Jordan’, CIA, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/jo.html> (accessed 12 May 2016).

⁷ Central Intelligence Agency, ‘The World Factbook: Jordan’, CIA, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/jo.html> (accessed 12 May 2016).

ballot box, there is an argument to be made for your ability to be actively involved as a candidate and member of parliament.

In addition, the financial costs associated with running as a candidate may impede many Jordanians, especially the youth from participating. According to Article Twelve of the Law, all candidates must pay a non-refundable 500 Jordanian dinar registration fee. On top of this each candidate list is required to pay an additional refundable collateral of two thousand Jordanian dinars.⁸ This is problematic for Jordanians when one considers that the individual candidacy registration fee is more than twice the monthly minimum wage of 190 dinars.⁹ In annual terms, if the minimum wage is 2280 dinars, then the initial registration alone absorbs 21% of yearly earnings. This inherent difficulty is compounded when considered in-light of unemployment. According to the Department of Statistics, total unemployment in the first quarter of 2015 was 12.9%.¹⁰ The May 2016 collective suicide attempt by five youths in Amman has cast new light on these official statistics with unofficial reporting more than doubling the unemployment rate to between 23 and 32%.¹¹

2 REINTRODUCING THE PRINCIPLE OF MULTIPLE VOTES

The replacement of the SNTV with a new vote casting mechanism has been on the agenda of the 2016 Electoral Law since its proposal was first announced by former Prime Minister Abdullah Ensour in August 2015. The SNTV restricted each voter to a single vote regardless of the number of candidates running within his/her district, and therefore precluded the possibility of meaningful candidate lists. Similarly, the SNTV weakened the position of political parties, as voting along familial/tribal lines has been a common characteristic of Jordanian voting in previous successive elections.¹² Resultantly, since its introduction for the 1993 general elections, the SNTV has been criticized by local actors and foreign analysts as un-necessarily limiting the democratic prerogatives of Jordanian citizens.¹³

While there is no guarantee that a change in the voting mechanism will automatically result in a shift in voter behavior, the new Law does enable voters to cast multiple votes within candidate lists. At the very least this increases the number of options available at the ballot box. The exact number of votes will vary

⁸ Ministry of Parliamentary and Political Affairs, 2016 Elections Law, Article 12.

⁹ Dana Al Eman, 'Unionist, Private Sector Leaders at Odds Over Possible Minimum Wage Rise', *Jordan Times*, December 29 2015, <http://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/unionist-private-sector-leaders-odds-over-possible-minimum-wage-raise> (accessed 5 May 2016).

¹⁰ Department of Statistics, '12.9% The Unemployment Rate during the first quarter of 2015', The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, http://dos.gov.jo/dos_home_e/main/archive/Unemp/2015/Emp_2015-q1.pdf (accessed 12 May 2016).

¹¹ Laila Azzeh, 'Collective Suicide Attempt by "Unemployed" Youth Sounds Alarm', *Jordan Times*, <http://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/collective-suicide-attempt-unemployed%E2%80%99-youth-sounds-alarm> (accessed 12 May 2016).

¹² See for example: Quintain Wiktorowicz, 'The Limits of Democracy in the Middle East: The Case of Jordan', *Middle East Journal* 53:4, 1999, p. 618; National Democratic Institute (NDI), *Final International Election Observation Report on the Jordanian Elections*, November 9, 2010, pp. 5, 8, 9-11.

¹³ Curtis Ryan, 'Elections and Parliamentary Democratization', p. 184; Laurie Brand, 'The Effects of the Peace Process on Political Liberalization in Jordan', *Journal of Palestine Studies* 28:2, 1999, p.92; On the question of motive see: International Crisis Group, *The Challenge of Political Reform: Jordanian Democratization and Regional Stability*, Middle East Briefing, October 8, 2003, p. 18; National Democratic Institute (NDI), *Final International Election Observation Report on the Jordanian Elections*, November 9, 2010, pp. 10, 16.

depending on the method employed by the voter. Article 9 of the Law outlines three possible scenarios. First, the voter may cast their vote for the whole list without any further preferences. The list in question then receives a vote, without preferences proceeding to individual candidates. A list which receives a vote of this variety may gain a percentage advantage in terms of the available primary vote. This makes it attractive to unified lists of party candidates. However independent candidates competing directly against each other will arguably prefer that they receive a direct vote. The second voting mechanism, therein allows voters to vote for a list in addition to selecting specific candidates from within that list. Finally, voters may cast votes for multiple candidates on the one list, without voting for the list itself.¹⁴ This is important because voters are not permitted to vote for multiple lists, or for candidates across multiple lists. Each vote must be contained within a single list.

Therefore, its rescinding is a consequential step forward on Jordan's reform trajectory. However, there is a question mark over the timing of the decision. Many of Jordan's most significant parliamentary reform initiatives, both the positive and the negative, have occurred in the wake of domestic tensions or in preparation for potential future domestic instability. The decision by King Hussein to enact political and economic liberalization following the 1989 Ma'an riots, and Jordan's structural adjustment agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is a case in point. So too was the decision to introduce the SNTV system in time for the 1993 elections. That this occurred within sight of the 1994 Wadi Araba peace agreement with Israel is unsurprising.

Similarly, the establishment of the constitutional review panel in June 2011, and the subsequent amendments to the constitution were initiated in the wake of the domestically unprecedented demonstrations and protest movements associated with the so-called Arab Spring. In each instance, concessions were made to the demands of the situation, but the overall structure of the political system, and the distribution of power within it did not change. By comparison the decision by the al-Ensour government to end the SNTV and return to the principles of the 1989 Elections Law was undertaken in a less pressurized domestic environment. However, the increasing population of Syrian refugees, the consequent strain exerted on Jordan's resources, and the recognition that this population will remain in Jordan for many years if not decades; represents a near-permanent source of domestic tension.¹⁵

3 ELECTORAL DISTRICTS

The 2016 Electoral Law establishes the division of the Kingdom into a new electoral map of twenty-three electoral districts. In a development unprecedented in Jordanian history, each governorate constitutes a district, with Amman, al-Zarqa and Irbid, the Kingdom's three most populous urban centers divided into five, four and two districts respectively. The Northern, Central and Southern Badia zones will similarly constitute distinct districts. This new system of division replaces the forty-five districts through which the 2013 elections were organized in accordance with the 2012 Electoral Law.

Consequently, the 2016 Law simplifies the system of districts, and if maintained over successive electoral campaigns will enable candidates, both independents and party members to develop a familiarity with their district and its voting population. This will be significant in strengthening the parliamentary process in Jordan, as both independent and party candidates will have the opportunity to develop issue based

¹⁴ Jordanian Royal Court, *Election Law for the Chamber of Deputies 2016*, Article 43.

¹⁵ Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, 'Jordan Response Platform for the Syria Crisis' <http://www.jrpdc.org/> (accessed 5 May 2016).

campaign platforms attuned to local concerns. That said it is important to comprehend how the 130 parliamentary seats are divided amongst the districts. Similar with the 2012 Law, the current Law does not provide any mechanism for the equitable allocation of seats to districts. In the past this has resulted in the over-representation of rural communities at the expense of urban centers, where the majority of Jordan's population reside. While the district system over-time may provide incentives for parties and other collective actors to diversify their constituencies, it simultaneously facilitates the perpetuation of familial and tribe-based voting behaviors. As voting is not compulsory in Jordan, it is incumbent on candidates to convince eligible citizens to vote.

Being able to persuade voters of their ability to utilize parliament for the betterment of the voter and their community is therefore an important occupation of any candidate. This process is made easier if candidates utilize established socio-cultural repertoires of action and identification to bring voters to the ballot box. In Jordan a key component of socio-cultural repertoires are kinship networks and personalized relations. Such provides candidates with large kinship networks with an advantage in the electoral game. There are two main reasons for this. Firstly, strong kinship and familial ties can be readily converted into votes if the candidate is able to draw on a history of relations between themselves, the voter and their families. As the institutional memory of Jordanian families is considerable, this history of candidate-voter relations can go back several generations. Therefore, candidates are able to leverage these links, and the familiarity they generate to either constitute or buttress their campaign platform. Such an option is not available to candidates with smaller kinship networks.

The second reason why - for the short-to-midterm at least - candidates with large familial networks have an advantage is found in the positioning of the parliament in the wider socio-political structure of Jordanian politics. While it shares a Westminster heritage with its British, Australian and Canadian counterparts, the Jordanian parliament does not function in a similar manner. It does not possess the same legislative or governance roles as parliaments in the aforementioned states. This is because political authority and executive decision-making is centralized, not in the institution of parliament, but in the executive.

Furthermore, in part because the majority of members of parliament in each of the parliaments since 1989 have been independents, forming a government with sufficient unity to draft and legislate policy has historically been problematic. Whereas in Australia, Canada or Britain it is possible to say that a party *won* an election and formed government; the same cannot be said in the Jordanian context. Parties remain weak, and lack the required nation-wide distribution to form government. The King's role as per the Constitution, in selecting the Prime Minister and approving the cabinet has therefore been a decisive one.

Subsequently, while establishing new electoral districts and removing the SNTV will incentivize the development of new political behaviors on the part of voters and institutionalized actors, it is important to note that these measures are external to the parliament and its place in Jordan's political architecture. Resultantly over time, the nature of how the parliament functions need to evolve or parties will simply learn to adapt to the structural limitations of the institutions, and operate in ways similar with their independent parliamentary colleagues. That is to say that their platforms will be delimited to a small constituency within a district or spread between several districts, and party energies will be focused on acquiring benefits for these constituencies rather than on governing.

4 QUOTAS FOR WOMEN AND MINORITIES

The 2016 Law maintain quotas for both female and minority community candidates. There are some changes that distinguish the new law from its 2012 counterpart. With regards to the latter for example, the number of seats reserved for female parliamentarians has not been modified and remains at fifteen seats. However, because the number of seats within the parliament has been reduced from 150 to 130, the percentage of women representatives in the parliament has increased from 10% to 11.5%.

As it stands, female candidates therefore can win parliamentary representation in two ways. First, they can, through the regular candidacy lists secure enough votes to acquire a seat. Second, candidates can win seats through the quota system, which is applied according to the percentage of votes female candidates receive out of the total number of votes cast in their governorates.

Though the quota system is welcomed as a mechanism to improve female participation in institutionalised parliamentary life, the Jordanian National Commission for Women (JNCW) argues that the new Law does not go far enough. Instead of maintaining the 15 seats, the new law should have provided for a reserved seat for women in each of the electoral districts, therein in improving the country-wide representation of women in the parliament.¹⁶ As it stands, the women's quota is in essence a floating allocation which may be applied in any district where it is requested by a candidate. This may result in uneven distributions and generate uncertainty within lists about candidacy status.

Regarding minority quotas, Jordan's Christian and Circassian/Chechan communities retain their 9 and 3 seat quotas from the 2012 Law. The seats are allocated to specific districts in which these minorities constitute a sizeable portion of the population. Resultantly, candidates who identify with these minorities can only compete for a quota seat if they reside in a district which has been allocated such a seat. An implication of this structural arrangement is that candidates may be influenced to organise electoral campaigns on ethnic/sectarian platforms, that may disassociate them from the developing party system and thus entrench myopic familial and communal voting behaviours.

5 CONCLUSION

The 2016 Electoral Law represents an important institutional shift in Jordanian parliamentary politics. Specifically, the reintroduction of the principle of multiple votes, absent since 1992, and the new electoral districts have the capacity to reinvigorate the parliamentary process in the Kingdom.

Political parties stand to benefit from the rescinding of the SNTV, as there will be more opportunities for voters to cast votes for both enterprising party candidates in addition to the conventional familial-tribal candidates. Subsequently an increased degree of competition can be expected, especially with regards to the development of candidacy lists prior to election day. As outlined in section two, candidates for office, whether independent or party members, will need to think strategically about how to maximize their prospects through the lists. Being on the strongest list in terms of the number of votes received may not guarantee the acquisition of a seat.

¹⁶ Rana Hussein, 'Activists to Picket Parliament Over Women's Quota in Elections Law', Jordan Times, February 13, 2016.

In this manner, the 2016 Law has the potential to usher in what State Minister for Media Affairs Mohammad al-Momani describes as a ‘new political phase’ for the Kingdom.¹⁷ However, whether it does so or not will be dependent upon factors both internal and external to the Law itself. Internally, there are a number of facets to the law which limit its democratic/representative potential. While quotas for Jordan’s minority communities are a positive asset, they concomitantly complicate Jordan’s reform trajectory. Firstly, the allocation of minority seats may be understood as problematic, as a given minority candidate who does not reside in a district with an allocated quota seat will foreseeably struggle to compete on equal terms. Furthermore, the existence of minority quotas themselves may impede the emergence of issue based campaigning as minority candidates seek votes from within their own communities.

In addition, although the Law sustains the quota for female parliamentary representation, this does not address the question of fair representation on two levels. Firstly, for a population constituting roughly 50% of the population, a quota of 11.5-12% of parliamentary seats appears insufficient. Second, the Law does not depart from its 2012/2013 predecessor’s mechanism for the calculation of which female candidates are awarded a reserved seat. In essence a candidate in Amman’s Third District may receive more than twice the number of votes as a compatriot in Ma’an, and not acquire a seat. The question therefore emerges as to who is being represented.

A further point of contention is the manner by which vote percentages and seat allocations within districts are calculated. The current process of proportional allocation is not entirely representational, as lists receiving the majority of votes in a district may acquire only a marginally larger number of seats than lists which attracted a reduced percentage of votes. A final key limitation of the Law is its silence on the question of how to increase participation of Jordanian Youth in the political process. The new law reaffirms that policy makers have little desire to lower the candidacy age below the age of thirty. Furthermore, running for office carries with it substantial financial requirements in the realms of both individual (500JD) and candidacy (2000JD) collateral which is divided amongst candidates on a given list.

On the external level, there is a saying that Jordan is located between ‘Iraq and a hard place’. This succinctly encapsulates the difficulty of enacting and maintaining political reform initiatives in Jordan, because invariably the regional environment has a defining influence.¹⁸ This is particularly true of the present regional situation. Fears of regional instability radiating from the Syrian civil war has strengthened the discourse of securitization in Jordan. Two factors are particularly salient in this regard: the social and economic costs of hosting an increasing refugee population, and the risks of expanding Salafi networks in the Kingdom.¹⁹ Future developments may restrict further reform initiatives, as the

¹⁷ Al-Ghad, ‘Majlis al-Wuzarā’ yaqraa al-A’sbāb al-Muwjabat li mashru‘ Nizām al-Duwā’r al-Intikhābiyya’, *Al-Ghad*, March 29, 2016.

¹⁸ Sultan Barakat and Andrew Leber, *Fortress Jordan: Putting the Money to Work* (Doha: Brookings Institute, 2015), p. 10.

¹⁹ The extent of these ongoing costs are outlined in the Jordan Response Plan (2016-2018), which is dependent on continual foreign aid funding, see for example: Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, *Jordan Response Plan for the Syria Crisis 2016-2018* (2016), 10; King Abdullah II, ‘The Burden on Jordan Far Exceeds that on the West. Help is Needed’, *The Independent*, February 3, 2016, Voices. Accessible at <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/the-burden-on-jordan-far-exceeds-that-on-the-west-we-need-help-a6849391.html>; Jordan Times, ‘Jordan Wants Investments to Benefit Jordanians, Syrians – Fakhoury’, *Jordan Times*, February 3, 2016, Local. Accessible at: <http://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/jordan-wants-investments-benefit-jordanians-syrians-%E2%80%94-fakhoury>.

The Salafi presence has a number of forms in Jordan. Since the Irbid raids by security forces in March 2016 against a suspected ISIS cell, more analysis has emerged regarding the evolution of radical Salafi groups in the Kingdom. For background see: Muhammad Abu Rumman and Hassan Abu Hanieh, *The “Islamic Solution” in Jordan*:

regime endeavors to safeguard security and national unity on the one hand, while balancing the interests of domestic constituent groups on the other. Owing to the logic of behavioral change in politics, it is unlikely that the new law will result in a radically different parliament to the one currently sitting. This in turn underscores the importance of longevity. The extent to which the new law is able to influence future parliamentary reform in the Kingdom will be dependent on all stakeholders, including the voting public, becoming familiar with the new structural/institutional processes inherent in it.

Islamists, the State and the Ventures of Democracy and Security (Amman: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2013); Muhammad Abu Rumman, *I Am a Salafī: a Study of the Actual and Imagined Identities of Salafīs* (Amman: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2014); for analysis of the Irbid raids see: Reem al-Maṣri, ‘‘Amaliyya Irbid: Min A’yna ya’ti al-Muhtamun bil-irhāb?’’, *7iber.com*, March 2, 2016, Politics and Economics, accessible at: <http://7iber.com/politics-economics/irbid-suspect-terrorists/>; Anonymous, ‘Has IS Established Foothold in Jordan?’, *Al-Monitor.com*, March 9, 2016, accessible at: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/03/jordan-irbid-attacks-islamic-state-threat.html>.