

The Aborted Mobilisation of Jordan's Retired Servicemen



Rémy ROISNEL

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Executive Summary

In the last decade, Jordan has been facing a resurgence in public discontent against harsh living conditions and the corruption of the regime. Among the most vocal actors, the National Committee for Retired Servicemen (NCRS) has emerged as a key actor in successive episodes of social protests that have affected the Kingdom. Created in 2001 due to retired officers' defiance over the restructuring of the military and a shrinking social welfare system, this union progressively evolved into an important actor of the Jordanian opposition.

However, as leaders of the Committee adapted their discourse in order to build links with other activist groups, they abandoned their initial demands concerning the living conditions of veterans. Consequently, the bonds between the Committee's leadership and its base withered and calls to mobilise and protest were gradually ignored. Hence, the involvement of the Committee in Jordan's public debate is perceived by many retired servicemen as an act of disdain towards their demands. The recent creations of new committees representing former officers who criticise the NCRS's strategic choices mirror the marginalisation of the Committee among Jordanian veterans.

Résumé

La Jordanie fait face depuis une dizaine d'années à un regain de mécontentement visant les conditions de vie difficiles et la corruption du régime. Durant les épisodes de mobilisations sociales qui ont affecté le royaume hachémite, le Comité national des vétérans militaires (CNVM) s'est érigé comme figure de proue des manifestations. Né en 2001 d'une méfiance croissante de la part des officiers à la retraite envers la restructuration de l'armée et la réduction des aides sociales, ce syndicat s'est progressivement transformé pour devenir un acteur important de l'opposition jordanienne.

Toutefois, à mesure que les dirigeants du CNVM ont modifié leur discours pour se rapprocher d'autres groupes activistes, ils se sont éloignés de leurs revendications initiales propres à la situation des vétérans. En conséquence, le lien entre la direction du Comité et sa base s'est étiolé, et les appels à la mobilisation ont été de moins en moins suivis. L'intégration du NCRS dans le débat public jordanien a en effet été perçue par les vétérans comme un mépris de leurs revendications. La multiplication récente de nouveaux comités d'anciens militaires critiques des choix stratégiques opérés par le NCRS illustre le rejet du Comité de la part de nombreux vétérans jordaniens.

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Introduction

Over the past decade, the dissatisfaction of some of the most influential Jordanian army veterans has helped to make social movements more visible. These have affected the Hashemite kingdom, which is often presented as a haven of stability in the Middle East. In fact, while Jordan faces many challenges due notably to an unstable regional environment, it has been the scene of several social movements in recent years. After an episode of intense protests in 2011 against corruption and difficult living conditions, anger returned to the fore in May 2018, in the wake of demonstrations against a tax reform project. These outbursts of mobilisation were notably brought about by the emergence of the National Committee for Retired Servicemen (NCRS), whose leaders were among the organisers of the demonstrations. They were the signatories of a manifesto signed in October 2018 by the main militant forces, criticising Jordan's political power deemed too autocratic, with the manifesto calling for the establishment of a real parliamentary monarchy. This open letter resulted from the rapprochement between many opposition groups, and caused a stir on the Jordanian political scene, inspiring a new wave of demonstrations in Amman.

However, the relatively limited consequences of these episodes of social mobilisation are surprising. Certain constitutional amendments have indeed granted a more important role in Parliament, though it is in fact still controlled by the royal palace. Yet generally, the various social movements do not seem to have had a major impact on Jordan's political life, and are struggling to mobilise large numbers of people. The wave of protests in the autumn of 2018 was edifying in this respect: despite weekly rallies for almost six months, these protests failed to bring together more than a few hundred demonstrators. In particular, the NCRS has been unable to mobilise military veterans massively around a clear rhetorical line, which suffered from a lack of audibility. In twenty years, the NCRS has thus gone from its status as a union defending the interests of military veterans to being a crucial actor in Jordanian social movements and became a key player in the militant landscape. Yet its integration into opposition circles also seems to have led it to distance itself from its initial commitments to veterans.

It may therefore be asked in what way the mobilisation of veterans contains an under-exploited potential for protest. This study aims to explore the way in which the engagement of former soldiers within the framework of the NCRS has been weakened by the difficulties of this Committee in

handling both the rhetoric of protest with its social base and a political discourse that reaches beyond the immediate concerns of veterans. It is therefore necessary to understand how the original mobilisation was structured. Its claims were initially put forward in response to corporatist needs and the special interests of former servicemen. Yet this early mobilisation gave birth to a highly politicised group which ultimately moved away from veterans to pursue aims that were its own, to the detriment of its real mobilising capacity.

The Emergence of Veterans as a New Political Force

The presence of former high-ranking members of the Jordanian army among the front ranks of the demonstrators is a recent peculiarity in the history of the Hashemite kingdom, while opposition to the regime has long been presented schematically as coming from Islamist and Palestinian factions.¹ The emergence in the late 1980s of anger within tribal communities was a warning to a regime that had defined itself as being close to Jordan's tribes, and foreshadowed the discontent among veterans. The Jordanian army has historically had close ties to the monarchy and plays a fundamental role in the social integration of citizens. As a result, the protests by veterans seemed to present a challenge to the crown.

Veterans as a symbol of an eroded link between the king and his population

Since its birth in 1921, the army has gradually become an essential pillar of the Jordanian state, which was cemented by a form of contract binding King Abdullah I to tribal leaders and the urban gentry at the time. According to this pact, the latter recognised the authority of the Hashemite sovereign in exchange for social and economic benefits for the population, notably in the form of jobs in the public sector and in the army. This system has been described as “semi-rentier”,² and it established a clientelist relationship between the monarchy and the population, whose loyalty was conditional on an effective redistribution by the regime. The latter was able to preserve this costly model for a long time, thanks to the income from massive British and then American aid, as well as the strategic choices made by its leaders.

Anxious to save this expensive model despite the kingdom's growing budgetary difficulties during the second half of the 20th century, King Hussein focused redistribution efforts on populations of Transjordanian origin.³ In 1956, he decided to purge the army of its British elements in order

1. C. Ronsin, *Le rôle politique des tribus en Jordanie: les évolutions du contrat entre l'État et les tribus*, Master's dissertation, defended at Sciences Po Paris in 2010.

2. *Ibid.*

3. The term Transjordanian refers to Jordan's non-immigrant population, and is often used in contrast to the population of Palestinian origin, and more recently to refugees from neighbouring Arab countries (Iraq and Syria).

to emphasise the Arab dimension of the new “Arab Army of Jordan”,⁴ presented as a strong symbol of the State. Following the clashes of “Black September” in 1970, the systematic preference given to Transjordanians in the public service and the army, to the detriment of Jordanians of Palestinian origin,⁵ led to tighter links between the monarchy and the tribal communities. This “tribalisation” of the Jordanian State was visible in the emergence of an official discourse stressing the tribal heritage of Jordan, and in particular the warlike values of Bedouins.⁶ It led to a refocusing of the redistributive model in favour of the Transjordanian populations. Consequently, the massive integration of the Transjordanians into the public sector led to the *de facto* exclusion of Palestinians who invested in the private sector.⁷

Military pensions as the last vestiges of the historical redistribution system

In the late 1980s, the explosion in public spending, combined with the weakness of Jordan's unproductive private sector and the stagnation of foreign aid, led to a severe economic crisis. Being very dependent on foreign investment and the regional economic context, Jordan was hit hard by the difficulties of its neighbours, which were reflected in the increase in the costs of raw materials, as well as the decrease in remittances by Jordanian workers in the Gulf.⁸ In 1989, the country's gross domestic product (GDP) shrunk by 13.5%, and public debt surged to 190% of GDP. This prompted King Hussein to accept an adjustment plan by the International Monetary Fund (IMF),⁹ which sought a cut in public spending. The need for such austerity led Hussein to question the costly redistribution system. The ensuing reduction of many subsidies led to a spectacular rise in prices as well as the contraction of the public sector workforce. This had a strong impact on rural populations that had hitherto benefitted from significant advantages, and were the first defenders of the regime.¹⁰

Alerted by growing discontent, Hussein was forced to make concessions on several fronts. First, he tightened personal ties with many Transjordanian

4. U. Dann, *King Hussein and the Challenge of Arab Radicalism: Jordan, 1955-1967*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1989.

5. Depending on estimates, they account for 40% to 60% of the Jordanian population.

6. F. Amiri, “Amman: le roi et ses Bédouins, la fin d’une alliance?”, *Outre-Terre*, vol. 14, No 1, 2006, p. 67-72, available at: www.cairn.info.

7. C. Ronsin, *Le rôle politique des tribus en Jordanie*, *op. cit.*

8. S. Ramachandran, “Jordan: Economic Development in the 1990s and World Bank Assistance”, World Bank, 2004, available at: <http://documents.worldbank.org>.

9. B. Awadallah, “Jordan's Economic Upturn”, The Washington Institute, *PolicyWatch*, No 709, February 12, 2003, available at: www.washingtoninstitute.org.

10. C. R. Ryan, “Peace, Bread and Riots: Jordan and the International Monetary Fund”, *Middle East Policy Council*, vol. 6, No 2, October 1998, p. 54-66, available at: libres.uncg.edu.

tribal leaders and influential figures, and emphasised the historic alliance between the crown and the tribes.¹¹ In 1989, he also agreed to organise the first legislative elections since 1967, which preceded the legalisation of political parties in 1992. Finally, he redirected the redistributive model towards Jordan's military, which in the 1990s became the only sector to benefit from a growing budget.¹² His bet was to gamble on the over-representation of tribal communities in the army, considering the army as a sub-group of the Transjordanian population. From this point of view, the scrapping of conscription in 1992 made it possible to recruit almost exclusively soldiers from these backgrounds.¹³ This reflected the will of the State to preserve its special link with its social base.

The process described by Anne Marie Baylouny as "militarising welfare"¹⁴, combined with measures targeting the poorest, offered a helping hand to the tribes which had been made dependent on state aid and employment. Retired military personnel thus benefited from a spectacular increase in pensions, as well as housing assistance, subsidies, health coverage and quotas in public universities for their families. These various measures benefited not only servicemen, but also those around them, and were largely responsible for the tacit acceptance of the government's austerity measures.

King Abdallah's dilemma: rationalise spending or pamper supporters?

When King Abdallah II took over from his father in 1999, he reinforced the policy of supporting the army and veterans, and notably appointed soldiers to prestigious posts in his government. However, when Jordan entered the second phase of its IMF program in 1996, it had to continue with austerity measures and was forced to target military spending. Social policies benefiting the military had indeed made the army one of the main expenditure items of the State.¹⁵

Abdallah set out to rationalise the army's budget, while hoping to preserve the special link with the beneficiaries of the aid. In 2002, he merged the authority in charge of military pensions with the civil system of social security, in order to make savings in the redistribution system. He was also the instigator of several reforms to improve the profitability of the Jordanian

11. R. T. Antoun, "Civil Society, Tribal Process, and Change in Jordan: An Anthropological View", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 32, No 4, November 2000, p. 441-463.

12. SIPRI Military Expenditure Database, available at: www.sipri.org.

13. A. M. Baylouny, "Militarizing Welfare: Neo-Liberalism and Jordanian Policy", *Middle East Journal*, vol. 62, No 2, 2008, available at: pdfs.semanticscholar.org.

14. *Ibid.*

15. 18.3 % of the State budget was allocated to military spending in 2000. Source: SIPRI, *op. cit.*

army, which was reorganised to encourage the specialisation of its troops and the diversification of its activities. The creation in 2008 of a gendarmerie force (*Al-Darak*), which is separate from the military and open to Jordanians of Palestinian origin, was at the origin of tensions with the army, as many officers felt sidelined. The program to modernise and rationalise the army's budget therefore resulted in fuelling tensions between the State and the military personnel, who feared that their privileged status would be called into question.

Veterans at the heart of tensions

As social conflicts multiplied from the end of the 1980s, particularly in rural areas, the regime's response became more and more aggressive. In Maan, a week of particularly violent demonstrations in 2002 led to severe repression, leaving 6 dead and dozens injured.¹⁶ This became the subject of tensions between the regime and part of the security apparatus which recruited mainly from rural areas sensitive to the causes defended by the demonstrators. In response to certain voices criticising such repression, the strengthening of the special forces and the creation of a gendarmerie force separate from the army and the police enabled the regime to dissociate its repressive forces from the army, and thus avoid criticism from the military.¹⁷

The emergence of veterans and the questioning of "militarising welfare" policies

The success of these particular welfare policies designed for the military depended on the acceptance by Transjordanian communities of the new redistribution model via the preferential status granted to soldiers and their families. Also, this system facilitated the endorsement by a large majority of the new austerity measures implemented in the 1990s. However, in a tense social context, in particular as Transjordanians have been affected by decreases in their real incomes, measures targeting the reorganisation of the army and its social benefits led to an outcry among former servicemen fearing an attack on their status. This fear was accentuated by the restructuring of the army and the rise of a new hierarchy concerned by questions of efficiency and profitability, which gradually replaced a General Staff traditionally marked by its Pan-Arab views. This new organisation also

16. "Red Alert in Jordan: Recurrent Unrest in Maan", International Crisis Group, 2003, available at: www.crisisgroup.org.

17. M. Kamrava, *Beyond the Arab Spring: The Evolving Ruling Bargain in the Middle East*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2014.

generated greater inequalities within the army, between the highest ranking officers and other soldiers.¹⁸

In response to the fear of social decline, nearly 800 retired officers gathered in 2001 around former General Ali Habashneh to found the National Committee for Retired Servicemen.¹⁹ This mobilisation by veterans was intended to mirror the corporatist demands of army members, as Jordanian law prohibits the establishment of unions for active servicemen.²⁰ The rapid success of the NCRS, which grew in importance to the point of claiming to have 140,000 members in 2010, was a consequence of its vocal condemnations of the loss of social rights, particularly adapted to the concerns of veterans. This success also contributed to the rising popularity of the Committee leaders, who came from influential families, close to Transjordanian nationalist movements.²¹

Gradual changes in the NCRS's focus: from a corporatist role to a political discourse

The engagement of Jordanian ex-servicemen through the NCRS has been a rare form of mobilisation by former soldiers, which goes beyond issues concerning the recognition of their combat experiences. The NCRS has displayed a desire to preserve the social benefits of veterans, but also to defend a certain vision of the Jordanian army, which its members consider to be in decline. Yet over the years, the rhetoric of the NCRS has become more sophisticated, taking into consideration not only issues relating to the defence of the interests of both the army and its veterans, but also in distinguishing itself by taking positions on economic and political issues.

A promising corporatist discourse

During the first years after its creation, the NCRS endeavoured to be audible for a large number of former servicemen, who shared the fear that the army would be the target of further budget cuts. Round tables were organised in many regions, and their organisation by former officers from the concerned localities played a big part in their success. The mobilisation promoted by the NCRS targeted veterans, as well as their families who benefit from

18. A. M. Baylouny, "Militarising Welfare: Neo-Liberalism and Jordanian Policy", *op. cit.*

19. T. Tell, "Early Spring in Jordan: The Revolt of the Military Veterans", Carnegie Middle East Center, 2015, available at: carnegieendowment.org.

20. Interview with a brigadier in the Jordanian army, October 2018.

21. L. Zecchini, "Jordanie: la charge d'un général contre le pouvoir", *Le Monde*, December 2010, available at: www.lemonde.fr.

numerous advantages. This finds a particular echo in Transjordanian communities, for which the army constitutes a prime employer.²²

As of 2002, the demands made by the NCRS have highlighted their commitment to improving the living conditions of veterans, as well as defending the integrity of the army.²³ This latter concern is specific to the NCRS, as it differs from special-interest issues by formulating a criticism of the recent orientations of the regime, accused of harming the interests of the army, which became a symbol of the progressive privatisation of the Jordanian state.²⁴

A corporatist union with nationalist tones

Between 2002 and 2008, the dialogue between the Committee and the regime resulted in agreements on several increases in pensions. However, in 2009, the appointment of Samir Rifai as Prime Minister led to a new wave of austerity measures, and heralded the end of a peaceful dialogue with the ex-servicemen. Gradually, the leadership of the NCRS moved away from its status as a professional union and took position on a growing number of general policy issues. As an indication of the participation of the Committee in broader public debates, Ali Habashneh and some of the main leaders of the NCRS obtained an interview with the king in 2009, during which they stressed their opposition to the liberal policies implemented by the “technocrats and businessmen” of the Rifai government, and called for the constitution of a government of national unity.²⁵

This new political discourse defended by the NCRS emerged in the public debate in 2010 when the management of the Committee published several manifestos, detailing its criticisms of a regime accused of not defending the interests of the country, and of the control of the State apparatus by a new technocratic elite. Thus, this dissatisfaction was close to traditional discourses of the Transjordanian nationalist opposition, and was articulated in the form of criticisms linked to the economic and political orientations of the regime.

22. T. Tell, “Early Spring in Jordan: The Revolt of the Military Veterans”, *op. cit.*

23. P. Debruyne and C. Parker, “Reassembling the Political: Placing Contentious Politics in Jordan”, in F. A. Gerges (dir.), *Contentious Politics in the Middle East: Popular Resistance and Marginalized Activism beyond the Arab Uprisings*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, p. 437-465.

24. *Ibid.*

25. L. Zecchini, “Jordanie: la charge d’un g  n  ral contre le pouvoir”, *op. cit.*

A criticised political governance

In a first manifesto published on 1st May 2010, signatory officers particularly targeted the way the governance of the country escaped from the influence of traditional Transjordan communities, to be ever-more concentrated in a few hands. Thus, although the king was not targeted in name, his weakened link with tribal circles was contrasted with King Hussein, who assigned an advisory role to tribal leaders.²⁶

This manifesto took aims at the political and economic choices made since the 1990s. They have contributed to the emergence of a new elite from the private sector, in which Jordanians of Palestinian origin are over-represented. The strong nationalist dimension of the NCRS's discourse targeted the strengthening of the royal court's political prerogatives during the first years of Abdallah's reign. This anger was directed particularly against Queen Rania, from a Palestinian family which had taken refuge in Kuwait, and who was perceived as responsible for the "Palestinianisation" of Jordan. Ali Habashneh accused the Queen in particular of having instigated the naturalisation of 86,000 of Palestinians between 2005 and 2008. For him, this reflected an integration policy of Palestinians, threatening Jordan's integrity.²⁷ With this accusation, the signatories of the manifesto have publicly expressed their worries about the exclusion of Transjordanian elites from the usual mechanisms of power, in favour of many foreign advisers who have entered the entourage of the king.

Questioning the orientation of economic policy

In a second manifesto published a few weeks after the first open letter, the NCRS detailed a number of privatisations suspected of having involved corruption. The role of the king's economic advisers, who encouraged privatisations from which they themselves profited financially, illustrated the direct link between privatisations and corruption of the political apparatus. By recalling the sale of Abdali's military land to a semi-private entity in charge of building a new business district, the NCRS protested that the privatisations were also affecting the army, a symbol of the Jordanian State.²⁸ In a letter published in the autumn of 2010, the NCRS reiterated its

26. C. R. Ryan, "Jordan First: Jordan's Inter-Arab Relations and Foreign Policy under King Abdullah II", *Arab Studies Quarterly*, vol. 26, No 3, 2004, p. 43-62, available at: libres.uncg.edu.

27. L. Zecchini, "Jordanie: la charge d'un général contre le pouvoir", *op. cit.*

28. P. Debruyne and C. Parker, "Reassembling the Political: Placing Contentious Politics in Jordan", *op. cit.*

opposition to the reorganization of the army in the name of profitability and efficiency, which was accused of contributing to the weakening of Jordan's security apparatus.

The Consolidation of a New Actor: A synthesis between Political Demands and Corporatist Roots

The sudden emergence of a nationalist discourse in 2010 reflected the first mutation of a Committee that had previously presented itself as a union furthering the combined interests of the military and 140,000 retired servicemen. Although the subjects discussed reflected widespread fears, these attacks were considered too strident by many members. A few days after the publication of the manifesto of the 1st May, an internal rebellion failed to remove the hierarchy of the Committee, which was accused in a statement of using the NCRS for its own purposes. This attempt at restructuring was short-lived, but illustrated internal tensions that could arise from a change of discourse, and the need for the NCRS to juggle between a political discourse and its corporatist roots with former servicemen.

The development of a discourse specific to the NCRS

As a gesture towards Transjordanian nationalist groups, the NCRS put emphasis on the power grab by a new urban elite to the detriment of the Transjordanian population. But this led to heavy criticism of the Committee. In particular, a few weeks after the publication of the manifesto, a communiqué written by Ahmad Obeidat -a former Prime Minister and member of a prominent family from the north of the country- and signed by many left-wing and Islamist groups, accused the NCRS of inciting community divisions in Jordan.²⁹

This incident was indicative of the Committee's initial difficulties in developing a discourse that goes beyond nationalist constituencies. In response, leaders of the NCRS formulated a new discourse in which they portrayed themselves as the spearhead of an alliance of disaffected persons.

29. J. Al Shalabi, "Jordan: Revolutionaries Without a Revolution", *Confluences Méditerranée*, vol. 77, No 2, 2011, p. 91-104, available at: www.cairn.info.

Hence, they began a regular dialogue with different opposition groups, which led to a new discourse promoted in numerous manifestos, as well as through social networks.³⁰ As of 2010, the NCRS's commitment hinged on its reappropriation of several discourses, via a rhetoric combining politics, identity issues, and economics.

Rejection of the domination by new elites and of a closed-off political life

Over the years, the discourse of the NCRS raised increasingly political demands, including calls for the democratisation of the regime. Indeed, the political liberalisation granted by King Hussein had certainly resulted in the return of political parties. However, given the absence of an active parliament, the political game had remained artificial.³¹ The absence of real progress contrasted with the monarchy's discourse on the democratisation of Jordan, which had helped to spread the image of an inclusive and reasonable regime among Western governments. Although the 2013 constitutional reform was supposed to have given more powers to the Parliament, the latter remains under close control of the monarchy, and is more a debating chamber than a real legislative body with power. In this context, long periods without elections and the co-optation of many candidates by the regime did not make it possible to consolidate the electoral model as a political ritual.

Long reserved for isolated militants from NGOs or left-wing circles, discussion on political governance was taken up as of 2011 by former servicemen and Transjordanian nationalists. This gave political claims a new resonance in Jordanian society. Through demonstrations and open letters, the NCRS appropriated calls for further democratisation within the framework of a constitutional monarchy and an active parliament.³² While criticism of the "government" has historically been a form of discourse which avoided attacking the monarchy in name, the October 2018 communiqué co-signed by NCRS leaders and representatives of other militant groups targeted the autocratic nature of the monarchy and the frequent violations of the separation of powers. It concluded moreover that the salary and travel costs of the monarch should be subject to parliamentary approval.

The participation of veterans in political life illustrates their desire to forge links with other Jordanian opposition groups. However, for the most

30. The Facebook page of the NCRS, available at: web.facebook.com.

31. M. Lavergne, *La Jordanie*, Paris: Karthala, 2000.

32. Al Shalabi, "Jordan: Revolutionaries Without a Revolution", *op. cit.*

nationalist, these demands are inseparable from criticism of the “clique”³³ in power, and the Palestinians’ access to political jobs. Such criticism is targeted especially at the royal court, whose extensive prerogatives make it “an authority above all others”.³⁴ Consequently, the motivation for these claims tends to question the NCRS's commitment to parliamentary democracy. The repeated demands of a sovereign parliament reflect the fears held by Transjordanian nationalist communities of being marginalised in the exercise of power. Despite attempts at rebalancing the situation, as illustrated by the new electoral law passed in 2010,³⁵ constituency boundaries continue to favour the representation of rural regions, and persistent support for the Parliament amounts to defending an institution in which Transjordanians are overrepresented. The democratic rhetoric of the NCRS should not be mistaken for an attachment to democratic values, and in fact corresponds to a way of perpetuating the status of the Transjordanians, recalling the identity discourse defended by former servicemen.

The centrality of an identity discourse

Criticisms levelled at the NCRS when the 2010 manifestos were published focused on an identity discourse accusing the regime of abandoning the country's original population. Demographics are a major issue in Jordan, where more than half the population comes from families that migrated there after the birth of the country. Denouncing attacks on the Transjordanian nature of the Hashemite kingdom, the May 2010 manifesto took aim at the Palestinian population head-on, recalling that their presence should remain temporary, even though it has been established for more than 60 years.³⁶

Faced with numerous critics accusing the NCRS of inciting division among the Jordanian population in times when the emphasis should be placed on national unity,³⁷ the Committee clarified its position in a communiqué in July 2010, in which it detailed its position with regard to the Palestinian question. The NCRS thus declared that it did not wish to

33. P. Debruyne and C. Parker, “Reassembling the Political: Placing Contentious Politics in Jordan”, *op. cit.*

34. Communiqué of August 6, 2018 by the National Monitoring Committee.

35. The new constituency boundaries added several seats to large cities such as Amman and Irbid. Source: C. R. Ryan, “We Are All Jordan... but Who Are We?”, Middle East Research and Information Project, 2010, available at: merip.org.

36. *Ibid.*

37. Al Shalabi, “Jordan: Revolutionaries Without a Revolution”, *op. cit.*

question the citizenship of the Palestinians, who could enjoy “all rights, except political ones”, and recalled its opposition to naturalisations.³⁸

In order to justify its positions vis-à-vis the Palestinian population, the NCRS adapted its public discourse by reclaiming codes of the Palestinian struggle, such as the right of return or the criticism of Jordan's position towards Israel. In a communiqué of July 2010, the leaders of the Committee recalled that one of the prime objectives of the Jordanian government should be to facilitate the return of the Palestinians to their lands.³⁹ Such rhetoric of the right of return serves to justify opposition to the complete integration of Palestinians into Jordanian society. While emphasising the fraternity between the populations of the two banks of the Jordan river, the NCRS regularly opposes the naturalisation of Palestinians, as well as the presence of Palestinians in the highest spheres of the State.⁴⁰ The NCRS also joined other opposition groups in criticising the very unpopular Israeli-Jordanian peace treaty of Wadi Araba. Even though it was signed over 25 years ago, this treaty is seen by many as an open door to a normalisation of bilateral relations with Israel. In recent months, the NCRS has been vocal in denouncing the American “Deal of the Century”, which is accused of “liquidating the Palestinian question at the expense of Jordan”, by making it an alternative homeland for the Palestinians.⁴¹

The insistent denunciation of the prerogatives of Jordan's Royal Court mirrors critics of a State controlled by a foreign elite, the “urban aghrab”,⁴² often of Palestinian and Syrian origins, who allegedly do not act according to the interests of the Jordanians. On various occasions, this criticism was levelled at Bassem Awadallah, the former adviser to the king, who is of Palestinian origin, and more recently at Omar Razzaz, the Prime Minister of Syrian origin, who is a former World Bank economist. They have been accused of not working in the interests of Jordanians.

38. Manifesto of the NCRS, July 9, 2010.

39. *Ibid.*

40. P. Larzillière, *La Jordanie contestataire. Militants islamistes, nationalistes et communistes*, Paris: Sindbad-Actes Sud, 2013.

41. Minutes of a meeting by the National Committee on July 6, 2019.

42. Z. Abu Rish, “On the Nature of the Hashemite Regime and Jordanian Politics: An Interview With Tariq Tell (Part 1)”, *Jadaliyya.com*, August 2012, available at: www.jadaliyya.com. The term “aghrab” refers to a nationalist view criticising the presence of foreigners among Jordan's new middle classes.

An economic discourse critical of neoliberal policies

Finally, the increasing complexity of the NCRS's discourse has also contributed to the development of a new economic rhetoric, centred around criticisms of neoliberal policies and corruption. The challenge to the army's restructuring programs and the criticism of the impoverishment of the Jordanian population are two edifying examples of the opposition to neoliberal policies implemented by successive governments. Protecting the status of the army is a common thread in the positions of the Committee, which emphasises that the military institution constitutes the “pride” and the “shield” of the Jordanian nation.⁴³ Recently, this engagement revolved around calls for the resignation of British military adviser Alex Macintosh, whose plan for the “modernisation” of the army was accused of leading to its weakening.⁴⁴ On the other hand, the frequent reminders of the impoverishment of the Jordanian population are references to the drop in disposable incomes caused by austerity measures, as well as to the negative effects of the abandonment of the redistribution system in favour of Transjordanian populations.

As such, the defence of the public sector is a historic clarion call for NCRS leaders, who have regularly attacked the numerous privatisations, considered as one of the reasons for Jordan's economic difficulties. As of 2010, corruption charges against the various privatisations carried out by the Jordanian state have illustrated the ambient scepticism about economic choices made, which are accused of enriching a small, corrupt group, without any positive repercussions for the rest of the economy.⁴⁵ Since the IMF's first recovery plan in 1989, unpopular austerity measures have also been presented by many opponents as an attack on Jordanian sovereignty, with reforms seen as being dictated by international creditors. This relative loss of sovereignty constitutes an offense for the NCRS, which considers that these measures are not in the Jordanians' interests, and instead views them as a form of “unprecedented oppression”.⁴⁶

However, economic considerations are less important than other aspects of the NCRS program. They are used rather to legitimise the attacks against a ruling class, for its corruption and for being responsible for the many evils affecting the country, especially the problems facing the Transjordanian population.

43. Communiqué by the National Monitoring Committee, October 2018.

44. Communiqué by the National Monitoring Committee, December 2018.

45. Communiqué by the NCRS, July 2010.

46. L. Zecchini, “Jordanie : la charge d'un général contre le pouvoir”, *op. cit.*

The NCRS's mobilising capacity in 2011-2019: from one *Hirak* to another

The politicisation of former servicemen through the NCRS stands out in its formulation of an original discourse, resulting from a desire to transcend the contours of the various Jordanian militant groups. In practice, this politicisation has led to several episodes of protests during which the veterans took to the streets alongside other groups, over issues that went beyond their own interests. In particular, the *Hirak* (movement) of 2011, as well as the protest movements in 2018 and 2019 were events during which the NCRS played a dominant role, whether through coordination between different groups or calls for protest on the basis of its discourse and its leaders.

The Jordanian Hirak of 2011 and the emergence of veterans on the public stage

In a social climate made tense by a difficult economic situation, the rapprochement at the end of 2010 of many professors and student groups with some of the most popular leaders of the NCRS constituted the embryo of the social movement which would then shake Jordan. In January 2011, demonstrations gathered tens of thousands of people in most cities of the country, around the *Jayeen* movement ("We are coming") in which the NCRS coexisted with nationalists, leftist militants and many Islamists.⁴⁷ Contrary to the revolutions which were shaking the region, the main demands of this *Hirak* were aimed at improving living conditions and reforming the regime, not abolishing it.

Within this movement, the NCRS adopted a very striking political discourse, managing to mobilise massively its members, who were among the main active forces of the numerous demonstrations.⁴⁸ The mass participation of veterans and their families was then a major feature of the movement: they were originally mobilised against attacks on their social benefits, before joining demands expressed by other groups and protesting against falling living standards and the corruption of the regime. They thus illustrated their support for the discourse of the NCRS, calling for further democratisation.

In response to the growing turmoil, King Abdullah decided to use a much-proven tactic,⁴⁹ and dismissed the very unpopular Prime Minister

47. P. Larzillière, *La Jordanie contestataire*, op. cit.

48. T. Tell, "Early Spring in Jordan: The Revolt of the Military Veterans", op. cit.

49. Since 2005, there have been ten Prime Ministers.

Samir Rifai, replacing him with Maarouf Bakhit, a former general close to the NCRS. The new government therefore worked to put an end to the protests, beginning a dialogue with the demonstrators and announcing the implementation of a roadmap to fight against corruption and to change economic governance.⁵⁰ These cosmetic announcements were accompanied by targeted measures directed towards the groups composing the *Jayeen* movement, several of whose personalities were named to head ministries.⁵¹ Veterans were particularly concerned and received massive pension increases from 2011 on, inevitably leading to the decline of the *Hirak*.⁵² These achievements reflected the influence of the NCRS during this episode of protests, which crowned the new political and militant tack taken by the former servicemen.

2018-2019: a vocal mobilisation with little follow-up

In the spring of 2018, the tax reform project proposed by Prime Minister Hani Mulqi stirred the anger of a large share of Jordanian society. Depressed by years of austerity measures and the rise in inflation, the population protested massively against the increase in income tax from 5% to 25%, and its extension to people with an annual income of over 8,000 dinars (around €10,000).⁵³ For several weeks, thousands of demonstrators gathered in most cities of the kingdom to denounce this new austerity measure. This spontaneous movement, born of a general distrust of the Mulqi government, quickly became very popular.⁵⁴ As the demonstrations gained momentum, the NCRS and several opposition groups joined the protest, and were decisive in coordinating citizen's actions against the reform.

The numerous calls to protest on social networks by NCRS leaders did lead to the participation by hundreds of veterans to demonstrate against this reform.⁵⁵ However, its role should not be overestimated: the particular resonance of the NCRS among demonstrators was largely due to the established popularity of leaders from very influential families,

50. T. Tell, "Early Spring in Jordan: The Revolt of the Military Veterans", *op. cit.*

51. M. Shahin, N. Issa and G. Azar, "Jordan's Angry Tribes", *Al Jazeera*, 2019, video available at: www.aljazeera.com.

52. S. Yom, "Tribal Politics in Contemporary Jordan: The Case of the *Hirak* Movement", *Middle East Journal*, vol. 68, No 2, 2014, p. 229-247, available at: www.jstor.org.

53. M. Zerrouky, "La contestation prend un tour politique en Jordanie", *Le Monde*, June 8, 2018, available at: www.lemonde.fr.

54. F. Braizat, "Income Tax Law and Protest Action", *Jordan Times*, September 15, 2018, available at: jordantimes.com.

55. L. F. Al-Ajlouni and A. S. Hartnett, "Making the Economy Political in Jordan's Tax Revolts", Middle East Research and Information Project, 24 February 2019, available at: merip.org.

capped by the prestige of their military careers, as well as the mobilisation of many members seeking to defend their interests as the reform that was to increase the number of taxable veterans.⁵⁶ The dismissal in June 2018 of Prime Minister Mulqi was followed by the appointment of Omar Razzaz, who announced the temporary withdrawal of the project, and then the exemption of retired soldiers from new taxes. Despite these changes, the NCRS urged its followers to continue their protests against a corrupt regime, but its calls were little followed by veterans who lost interest in the movement.

On 6th October 2018, a manifesto was co-signed by various opposition groups, including more than 25 former officers, targeting the regime's corruption and calling on opposition forces to meet for weekly demonstrations. Starting on 20th October, the revived *Hirak* brought together hundreds of people every Thursday in Amman. However, this *Hirak* never reached the size of the protests in 2011. Despite the efforts of NCRS leaders, the movement never spoke with one voice and the mobilisation of veterans never exceeded a few dozen politicised and committed members of who had belonged to the Committee over the years.⁵⁷ The gatherings reflected the diversity of the groups present, while slogans against the monarchy coexisted with those against censorship, or privatisation. Yet by spring 2019, the movement only brought together a few dozen activists and slowly faltered.

From the convergence of discontents to veterans' involvement in militant circles

Following the 2011 *Hirak*, the perpetuation of the same policies by successive governments combined with the immobility of Parliament pushed the leaders of NCRS to gradually approach other activist groups.⁵⁸ Following regular dialogues between different movements of the *Hirak*, veterans emerged as a new militant force, pushing for some form of union of the Jordanian opposition. Struggling with the image of a privileged group enjoying close historical ties with the regime,⁵⁹ the leaders of the Committee sought to get involved in other structures to obtain political legitimacy for their positions.

56. Interview with an opposition militant to the tax reform, December 2018.

57. Interview with a former Jordanian army officer at the margins of a demonstration in December 2018.

58. Interview with a former Jordanian army officer, Amman 2018.

59. Exchange with a brigadier of the Jordanian army, 2018.

Attempts at integration into the partisan system

The NCRS's emphasis on the need to make Jordan a true constitutional monarchy with an active parliament has led it to encourage dynamic partisan life. Since 2012, several members of the NCRS have followed Ali Habashneh to found the National Congress Party (NCP), alongside popular figures such as the nationalist Nahed Hattar, and activists who broke away from the Islamic Action Front (the political wing of the Muslim Brotherhood).⁶⁰ Internal divergences however impeded the beginnings of such partisan engagement. Several NCRS leaders hastened to denounce the regime's pressures on some of its founders. This led Habashneh especially to consider that the NCRS's engagement was perceived as a threat by the monarchy, which would not tolerate opposition from a key support base.⁶¹

In parallel, in 2014, some veterans also joined the National Front for Reform (NFR) of former Prime Minister Ahmad Obeidat, who hoped to recreate the alliances seen during the *Jayeen* movement.⁶² Yet, the NFR never succeeded in transforming its views into an electoral victory and declined quickly. But it was an important step in the politicisation of the leaders of the NCRS, who realised the importance of links with other opposition actors. Consequently, the good relations forged with some of the dissident members of the Muslim Brotherhood enabled a rapprochement between the NCRS and the "Group of Elders", made up of former influential personalities of the Muslim Brotherhood,⁶³ who in 2017 had created the Partnership and Rescue Party (PRP), in which many members of the NCRS are involved.⁶⁴ The members of this Party are aware of the current limits of Jordan's Parliament, which is unable to influence decision-making, being neutralised by strong cooptation.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, the members of this party are seeking to enter the electoral game, in order to make dissenting voices heard.⁶⁶

60. T. Al Naimat, "The Continued Fragmentation of the Jordanian Brotherhood", Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 18 October 2018, available at: carnegieendowment.org.

61. D. Hassan and J. Lusted (eds.), *Managing Sport: Social and Cultural Perspectives*, Abingdon, Routledge, 2012.

62. According to the Islamist leader Aki Bani Ersheid, quoted in S. Khatatbeh, "Government Attempted to Obstruct National Front for Reform – Islamist Leader", *AmmonNews*, May 23, 2011, available at: en.ammonnews.net.

63. S. Hamid and W. McCants (eds.), *Rethinking Political Islam*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2017.

64. *Ibid.*

65. P. Larzillière, *La Jordanie contestataire*, op. cit.

66. Interview with a former officer of the Jordanian army, December 2018.

Coordination of mobilised actors and encouragement of cooperation between different opposition groups

At the same time, the NCRS hierarchy turned to the links established during the various waves of protest to get closer to other activist circles in a more informal way. In particular, its entente with the teachers and engineers' unions was consolidated by the ties established with the various groups of the *Jayeen* movement in 2011, as well as with dissidents of the Muslim Brotherhood. These special relationships have enabled the NCRS to become an important player during the episodes of protest, when the Committee was praised by many activists for its efforts in planning and coordinating actions between activist groups.⁶⁷

In the summer of 2018, disappointed with the fizzling out of demonstrations against the tax reform, the NCRS was proactive in creating links with various opposition groups. This led to the establishment of the National Follow-Up Committee (NFUC), bringing together the various tendencies present in Jordan's street protests. After months of negotiations, the NMC manifesto of 6th October 2018 crowned the union of more than 140 opposition figures from the NCRS, tribal communities, as well as nationalist, communist and Islamist movements. The manifesto set out a common program criticising corruption, and called for limits to the king's powers, as steps to create a genuine parliamentary monarchy respectful of the constitution.⁶⁸ In order to avoid the disintegration of the movement during the winter of 2019, the NCRS approached student circles and NGOs advocating respect for human rights and democratic values.⁶⁹ These associations were very active in militant circles, but lacked popular support comparable to that of the forces covered by the NFUC. They thus gained influence and recognition in the Jordan's political debate, but could not prevent the movement's exhaustion in May 2019.

The integration of former servicemen into the conventional opposition structures put an end to the politicisation process of the NCRS. From being a corporatist union advocating the improvement of the living conditions of retired officers and consideration of the military, the Committee has initially succeeded in becoming a fundamental player in the *Hirak* of 2011, raising points of disagreement with government policy. But the connection with other opposition groups that has been in place since 2010 has given it a different political stature, and the challenges of this development go far

67. Interview with a Jordanian human rights activist, December 2008.

68. Communiqué of October 6, 2018 of the National Monitoring Committee.

69. Interview with a Jordanian human rights activist, April 2019.

beyond issues concerning veterans. The NCRS, however, lost part of its social base as it became more influential in public debate.

From the Frontline to Internal Crisis: More Influence Than Actual Impact

By becoming more influential in the public debate, the NCRS has however moved away from its social base, which has witnessed the reorientation of its discourse towards issues of general policy, at the expense of claims related to the situation of veterans. The public moving away from the NCRS's original rhetoric has been accompanied by the stronger perception of veterans that the NCRS's leadership has taken over the organisation, giving its leaders a springboard to promote their own political agenda.

The influence of veterans on militant circles has made the NCRS a highly politicised group, and one of the main players in the various Jordanian social movements. The limits on this politicisation strategy have, however, put the orientations of the Committee back in perspective, which in 2019 was especially hard-pushed to mobilise former soldiers during its calls to demonstrate. Consequently, due to internal choices, but also following attempts by the regime to weaken the Committee, the NCRS finds itself today at odds with many veterans, who accuse it for having left them aside.

The relationship between the regime: a shift from cooptation to division

Faced with the discontent channelled by the NCRS, the first response of the monarchy was to insist on the historical bonds which tie it to the army, and to recall its concerns for the situation of the former servicemen. Inspired by the example of Hussein, who had decided in 1974 to increase pensions in order to calm a revolt stemming from part of the army,⁷⁰ the king announced increases in pensions for veterans after the *Hirak* in 2011, as well as in March 2019, in the midst of the protests. This policy allowed the regime to move away from the debate on political issues, to refocus it on the corporatist demands specific to veterans, who were relegated to the background in the NCRS's overall discourse. The strategy also made it possible to emphasise

70. C. Ronsin, *Le rôle politique des tribus en Jordanie*, op. cit.

the fact that the leaders of the Committee, often former generals, benefitted from far higher pensions than average veterans.⁷¹ Indeed, in the fall of 2019, many veterans criticised the fact that most modest pensions are less than 300 dinars a month.⁷² They thus protested against the privileged status of the Committee leaders, as the pensions of the highest ranking officers have increased sharply since the creation of the NCRS.⁷³

At the same time, the regime tried to offer a credible alternative to the NCRS. The *Economic and Social Association for Retired Servicemen and Veterans* (ESARSV), created in 1974 to facilitate the reintegration of former military personnel into working life, and led by the Prime Minister, has seen its budget increase since the beginning of the 2000s. Its role has expanded to now form an entity in charge of implementing social policies: the ESARSV offers loans at favourable rates, and finances development projects in the regions where its members come from.⁷⁴ In the fall of 2019, the Prime Minister announced a reform of the ESARSV governance, aiming to be more inclusive, as well as an expansion of its activities and the organisation of round tables for discussions with veterans.

In order to dissuade further protests by veterans, the regime has also put pressure on the NCRS by using repression on several occasions. In 2017, the dissemination of news about the arrest of a retired major and active member of the NCRS, Mohammed Otoum, notably caused the Internet site *Kull Al-Urdun* ("We are all Jordan") to be shut down for a month.⁷⁵ Pressure on the NCRS leadership mainly led to threats of arrest of Ali Habashneh, a few days after the publication of the NFUC manifesto in October 2018. He had strongly contested the dissuasive methods used by the secret services in a critical article on the repression orchestrated by the regime.⁷⁶ In May 2019, worried that opposition to the American agreement on the Palestinian question would add to the climate of controversy, King Abdullah urged his Prime minister to undertake a cabinet reshuffle with clear security overtones. The appointment as Minister of the Interior of Salameh Hammad, known for his very controversial methods deemed to be brutal, was a clear message of firmness sent to the protesters. The repression against NCRS leaders and the main opponents of the regime took on a new

71. P. Larzillière, *La Jordanie contestataire*, *op. cit.*

72. "Communiqué published for the meeting of veterans 'pulse of the nation'... details", *nayrouz.com*, October 12, 2019, available at: www.nayrouz.com.

73. M. Shahin, N. Issa and G. Azar, "Jordan's Angry Tribes", *op. cit.*

74. "Issawi Visiting Madaba on the Orders of the King", *khaberni.net*, September 2019, available at: www.khaberni.net.

75. "Freedom in the World 2017 – Jordan", Freedom House, available at: freedomhouse.org.

76. "Habashneh has sent a message to the public and the National Monitoring Committee detailing the pressures put on him", *Al-Talea News*, October 2018.

dimension. During the days after his taking office, demonstrations following the arrests of dozens of opponents saw the NCRS attempt to re-mobilise its supporters. But this ran up against new repressions, which definitively put an end to the *Hirak* in 2019.⁷⁷

The internal disintegration of the NCRS: a crisis of representativeness and tensions

The collegial committee fighting for the recognition of veterans' rights created in 2001 has completed its transformation to become a means of expressing the political demands of its leadership.⁷⁸ Although local cells remain in each governorate, decision-making within the NCRS is now concentrated in the hands of a dozen key people.⁷⁹ Gradually, the participation of the Committee in the 2018-2019 *Hirak* became a symbol of the growing gap within the NCRS. While its leaders were in the front line of the demonstrations and constituted one of the main forces of the movement, the lesser mobilisation of former soldiers illustrates the growing mistrust of the latter towards a Committee perceived as working for its own interests.

In its communication, the NCRS still claims to represent 140,000 pensioners of the Jordanian army, defending the interests of their families.⁸⁰ However, it appears that the NCRS is having difficulty maintaining consensus among its members, and its popularity is deteriorating among veterans.⁸¹ Its political program is far from getting unanimity among its base, which is turning more and more towards the social measures offered by the ESARSV. As an illustration of the disintegration of the Committee, the calls to demonstrate in the spring of 2019 came directly from its leaders, and no longer from the NCRS in its own name. Its failure to mobilise its grassroots base testifies to the fact that its influence in the political debate is ultimately superior to its authority over pensioners of the Jordanian army.

At the same time, the NCRS is finding it difficult to keep control over its most militant fringes, who wish to see the Committee confront the regime head-on. In 2017, it had to issue a communiqué dissociating itself from a group of unidentified veterans who were calling for massive demonstrations against the regime by using the social network accounts of the NCRS. As

77. "Jordan: Crackdown on Political Activists", Human Rights Watch, June 4, 2019, available at: www.hrw.org.

78. Interview with a brigadier of the Jordanian army, 2018.

79. Exchange with Tariq Tell, 2018.

80. The Facebook page of the NCRS, available at: web.facebook.com.

81. Interview with a brigadier of the Jordanian army, 2018.

occurred during the riots of Ramtha in the summer of 2019, or the teachers' strike in September of the same year, some veterans have stood out from the Committee by joining protest movements. This has led to the widespread feeling that the NCRS no longer has an impact on veterans, who no more follow its calls, and who have gone on to set up new committees.

The proliferation of representative committees symbolising the feeling of abandonment by veterans

The break between former servicemen and the NCRS came to light in September 2019. In the middle of the long teachers' strike which was supported by the NCRS, the king announced an increase in pensions for veterans, a few days before reaching a pay rise agreement with the teachers' union. Many veterans saw this as a welcome measure that had been desired for many years, in contrast to the silence of the Committee, which had long moved away from corporatist demands.

The plan to raise pensions was set out a few weeks later, and only offered around 1 dinar more per day. This was less than the king had indicated, and was rejected by veterans, whose feelings of injustice and betrayal exploded on social networks. On 13 October, retired Brigadier Bassam Rubin then called for the gathering of all former servicemen around the new General Union of Military Veterans, which stressed the unity of veterans against the bill. This preceded the publication of many other communiqu  s announcing a proliferation of new groups, unions and committees representing veterans.

In the effervescence of this new corporatist surge, views and discourses converge to denounce the small pension increases provided for in the bill, which is accused of not respecting veterans. But they are also very critical of the NCRS. While the Committee is not named directly, they criticise its supposed disinterest in their plight, and call for a rebalancing of the redistribution scales used to calculate pensions. At the end of 2019, these different groups began coming together, with the aim of creating a single entity, in order to defend their interests in negotiations on pensions with the government.

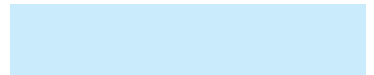
Conclusion

The mobilisation of Jordan's former servicemen is a symbol of the Jordanian regime's difficulties in preserving its privileged relationship with the army, established since the 1990s as the main support base of the monarchy. Since its creation in 2001, Jordan's National Committee for Retired Servicemen has managed to capitalise on the dissatisfaction of retired soldiers with regard to the neoliberal economic policies implemented since the 1990s, and in particular the reform of the military. By mobilising veterans around fears of losing social benefits, the Committee consolidated itself as their main representative body in the 2000s, before gradually breaking free from its corporatist nature and developing an activist discourse emphasising the unity of opposition forces.

The NCRS then emerged as a major militant player in 2010, whose decisive role during social movements, as well as its partisan engagement, reinforced the emphasis placed on its activist nature, to the detriment of its commitment to veterans. The social movement of 2018-2019, however, brought to light the disintegration of the link between the leaders of the Committee and its membership. The former have been highly involved in the coordination of rallies, whereas the membership has not been very mobilised and has taken more and more distance vis-à-vis the NCRS.⁸²

The extensive integration of the NCRS into the opposition structures has had the corollary effect of accentuating veterans' perception of having been abandoned in favour of a political discourse which is far removed from their concerns. The NCRS has attracted criticism from its former supporters, who no longer adhere to its political discourse and blame it for being elitist. The multiplication of committees defending the demands of veterans for an increase in pensions was a major event in the autumn of 2019. The mobilisation of veterans under the aegis of the NCRS has certainly resulted in the loss of support following its controversial politicisation. But the renewed rise in protests by former soldiers confirms the level of tension between the monarchy and one of its major support bases.

82. Exchange with a brigadier of the Jordanian army, 2018.



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