

**JORDANIAN NATIONAL SECURITY
AND THE FUTURE OF MIDDLE EAST STABILITY**

W. Andrew Terrill

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Comments pertaining to this report are invited and should be forwarded to: Director, Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 122 Forbes Ave, Carlisle, PA 17013-5244.

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FOREWORD

The United States and Jordan have maintained a valuable mutually-supportive relationship for decades as a result of shared interests in a moderate, prosperous, and stable Middle East. In this monograph, Dr. W. Andrew Terrill highlights Jordan's ongoing value as a U.S. ally and considers ways the U.S.-Jordanian alliance might be used to contain and minimize problems of concern to both countries. Although Jordan is not a large country, it is an important geographical crossroads within the Middle East and has been deeply involved in many of the most important events in the region's recent history. Now, the importance of this relationship has increased, and Jordan has emerged as a vital U.S. ally in the efforts to stabilize Iraq and also resist violent extremism and terrorism throughout the region.

Dr. Terrill notes the importance of Jordanian political reform, but also recommends patience, opposing the idea of coercing Jordan on democratization issues while Amman is currently struggling to cope with severe refugee and terrorism problems resulting from the war in Iraq. He devotes considerable attention to threats against Jordan emanating from the ongoing terrorist activity and sectarian warfare in Iraq. Dr. Terrill takes an especially close look at the Jordanian program to train 50,000 Iraqi police officers and also considers the ongoing role of Jordan in training Special Operations forces of a variety of friendly Arab countries. This monograph also considers the broader implications for the United States and the region if the Jordan government is crippled in its ability to function by spillover problems from Iraq.

Jordanian differences with Iran, which go back to the 1979 Islamic Revolution, are also considered. While such differences are serious and have worsened since 2003, Jordan remains interested in improving its relations with Tehran and has sought out areas of agreement with the Iranian regime. On the Israeli-Palestinian front, Amman is seeking ways to calm the West Bank and Gaza Strip and serve as advocate of Palestinian rights while maintaining normal relations with Israel. A special Jordanian fear is that a possible Palestinian civil war between the Hamas and Fatah organizations will create a wave of refugees from the west just as the crisis in Iraq has led to at least 750,000 Iraqi refugees fleeing from problems in their country.

The Strategic Studies Institute is pleased to offer this monograph as a contribution to the national security debate on this important subject as our nation continues to grapple with a variety of challenges associated with the U.S. presence in the Iraq and the larger Middle East. This analysis should be especially useful to U.S. strategic leaders as they seek to address the complicated interplay of factors related to Middle Eastern security issues and the support of local allies. This work may also benefit those seeking a greater understanding of the strategic importance of Jordan. We hope this monograph will benefit officers of all services, as well as other U.S. government officials visiting Jordan or the larger Middle East region, and that it will contribute to strengthening the U.S.-Jordanian strategic relationship.



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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR

W. ANDREW TERRILL joined the Strategic Studies Institute (SSI) in October 2001, and is the General Douglas MacArthur Professor of National Security Affairs. Prior to his appointment, he served as a Middle East nonproliferation analyst for the International Assessments Division of the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (LLNL). In 1998-99, Dr. Terrill also served as a Visiting Professor at the U.S. Air War College on assignment from LLNL. He is a former faculty member at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia, and has taught adjunct at a variety of other colleges and universities. He is a retired U.S. Army Reserve lieutenant colonel and Foreign Area Officer (Middle East). Dr. Terrill has published in numerous academic journals on topics including nuclear proliferation, the Iran-Iraq War, Operation DESERT STORM, Middle Eastern chemical weapons, ballistic missile proliferation, terrorism, and commando operations. Since 1994, at U.S. State Department invitation, Dr. Terrill has participated in the Middle Eastern Arms Control and Regional Security (ACRS) Track 2 talks, which are part of the Middle East Peace Process. He has also served as a member of the military and security working group of the Baker/Hamilton Iraq Study Group throughout its existence in 2006. Dr. Terrill holds a B.A. from California State Polytechnic University and an M.A. from the University of California, Riverside, both in Political Science. He also holds a Ph.D. in International Relations from Claremont Graduate University, Claremont, California.

SUMMARY

One of the most important and longstanding strategic relationships for the United States within the Arab World has been with Jordan. The value of this relationship has increased significantly since 2003 as the result of ongoing U.S. difficulties in Iraq and the wider Middle East. Jordan's longstanding ties with the West, ongoing counterterrorism efforts, and moderate policies toward Iraq and Israel suggest that it may become a central target of violent extremism in coming years. Moreover, Jordan's strategic location within the Middle East (bordering Israel, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and the Palestinian West Bank territory) make it an especially attractive target for any revolutionary group with region-wide aspirations.

Jordan strongly advised the United States against its 2003 invasion of Iraq but has, nevertheless, sought to find ways to help stabilize Iraqi society after Saddam Hussein's ouster from power. Amman has made these efforts (including a program to train Iraqi police) in partnership with the United States. Jordan's fortunes have often been linked to events in Iraq, its larger and more populous neighbor, and the current instability in that country is of special concern to Amman. The best possible Iraqi outcome for Jordan would be the eventual emergence of a stable, pro-Western, pro-Jordanian state, which effectively integrates Iraq's Sunni Arabs into the emerging political system. The realization of this goal does not appear likely for the foreseeable future, but the Jordanians can be expected to support any reasonable efforts to contain and minimize Iraqi internal warfare which impacts on them through such issues as refugee flow from Iraq and increases in cross

border terrorism and crime. Currently, there are at least 750,000 Iraqi refugees in Jordan.

Ongoing setbacks in Iraq's political reconciliation process suggest that stability there may remain problematic for some time, and that professional terrorists tempered in the crucible of Iraqi fighting may prove a region-wide menace. The Jordanians are concerned about this process and have defined terrorism as the greatest threat that their country is facing. They have also intensified efforts at fighting terrorists including Iraq-based radicals such as the now deceased Jordanian criminal turned al Qaeda leader, Abu Musab al Zarqawi, who was hunted down and killed by U.S. military forces with the aid of Jordanian intelligence. Jordan is also seeking to battle terrorism outside of its own borders and can be an important U.S. ally in containing and resisting radicalism throughout large parts of the region. In this regard, the Jordanian monarchy has often depended upon its highly professional military and intelligence services to help protect the government from both internal and external adversaries. The Jordanian government has for decades encouraged friendly Arab countries to send officers and soldiers to take advantage of training opportunities in Jordan. The new U.S.-funded King Abdullah II Special Operations Training Center builds on this tradition, and is an important tool in the struggle against terrorist extremism.

The Jordanians remain deeply suspicious of Iran and view the post-2003 expansion of Iranian political influence with great concern. Iranian influence in Iraq is a particularly troublesome concern. The Jordanians are also opposed to the development of an Iranian nuclear weapons option, but publicly oppose an Israeli or U.S. military strike against Iranian nuclear facilities.

Amman assumes that the Tehran leadership is rational and deterrable, and the Jordanians are willing to make that judgment despite the fact that an Israeli-Iranian nuclear exchange could have catastrophic consequences for Jordan. The Jordanian leadership also continues to stress that its primary regional concern is finding a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian confrontation through ongoing interaction with both parties. Jordan has worked closely with Palestinian Authority President Mohammad Abbas, but remains deeply suspicious and watchful regarding the activities of the Hamas organization which it views as inclined to unproductive meddling in Jordanian politics.

The value of the U.S.-Jordanian relationship can also be expected to grow in importance as the United States moves to withdraw eventually from Iraq. Under these circumstances, Jordan will continue to seek ways to address any cross border problems resulting from the ongoing conflict in Iraq. Likewise, Jordan will continue to use its excellent intelligence and military services to wage an unrelenting war on al Qaeda and help train friendly Arab forces to do the same. The United States must, therefore, continuously seek to aid Jordan in coping with terrorism and other dangers as part of a Middle East policy that aids moderation and hopes to provide the region with a viable future.

JORDANIAN NATIONAL SECURITY AND THE FUTURE OF MIDDLE EAST STABILITY

Many obituaries of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan have been prepared for instant use. . . . But it still lives and the obituaries gather dust on the files.

Peter Mansfield¹

I'll be quite honest with you. We're in a state of war. . . . I hate to say it, but we're picking up terrorist groups [at a rate of] one every two weeks.

King Abdullah II
December 2004²

We see there is great benefit of having the King Abdullah II Special Operations Training Center in Jordan and all friendly counter-terrorism forces from all over the world coming to train.

Colonel Maher Halaseh
Project Director for the development
of a now-operational, state of the art
special operations and counterterrorism
center in Jordan³

Introduction.

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is central to the geopolitics of the Middle East region and borders on Syria, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Israel, and the Palestinian West Bank. This geography also places the Jordanians adjacent to two major centers of actual and potential conflict: (1) the Israel-Palestine theater and (2) the Iraq/Gulf theater. Although it has an important geographical position, Jordan is also a relatively small

country (about the size of Indiana) with only around 6 million citizens. It has limited natural resources and no oil, leaving the Jordanians with uncertain leverage to influence regional events. To the extent possible, Amman has sought to remain engaged with all of its neighbors and head off any potential problems before they can develop into a crisis. Hostile neighbors can be particularly problematic for a small country like Jordan, and when considering policy options, the Jordanians often draw from their unpleasant experience of severe regional isolation at some key times in the region's history. Additionally, throughout its existence, Jordan has depended heavily on foreign aid to support its often fragile economy. In recent years, such aid has been provided by a diversity of donors including Arab states, the European Union, and especially the United States.⁴

The United States and Jordan have maintained a mutually-supportive and positive relationship for decades as a result of shared interests in a moderate, prosperous, and stable Middle East. This bilateral relationship has often been of considerable value to both nations despite obvious disparities between the two in size and power. The relationship has also been able to survive and overcome various periods of disagreement and division such as occurred in 1990-91 when Amman was unwilling to join the U.S.-sponsored United Nation's coalition to eject Saddam Hussein from Kuwait. In the turbulent post-Saddam era, the future of Jordan can be expected to relate directly to the future stability of that region, as well as to the possibilities for meaningful U.S.-Arab collaboration. A prosperous and stable Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan clearly remains strongly in U.S. national interests.

Jordan's fortunes have often been linked to events in its larger and more populous neighbor, Iraq, and the

current instability in that country is correspondingly of special concern to Amman. The best possible Iraqi outcome for Jordan would be the eventual emergence of a stable, pro-Western, pro-Jordanian state, which effectively integrates Iraq's Sunni Arabs into the emerging political system. Reaching such a goal does not appear likely for the foreseeable future, but the Jordanians can be expected to support any reasonable efforts to contain and minimize Iraqi internal warfare which affects them through such issues as refugee flow out of Iraq and increases in cross border terrorism and crime. Conversely, a full-scale Lebanese-style civil war in Iraq would be a nightmare for Jordan, and the Jordanians will need tremendous help in coping with the consequences should such a catastrophe occur. Under these circumstances, Jordan can either be a helpless conduit for radical influence coming out of Iraq or it can be a wall of resistance halting and perhaps helping to roll back radical advances depending, at least to some extent, on the support it receives from the United States and other allies.

Other challenges that Amman must address include problems with terrorism, the dangers posed by an empowered Iran, and ongoing Israeli-Palestinian and intra-Palestinian difficulties. Terrorism is not a new concern for the Jordanians, but new and more virulent strains will provide a different kind of threat. Additionally, relations between Jordan and Iran have been marked by suspicion since the 1979 revolution and may become even more problematic as the Iranians extend their influence into Iraq. Moreover, problems in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process always have a ripple effect for Jordan. Correspondingly, the Jordanian monarchy will have to be especially adept at addressing a number of challenges that will require

wise statesmanship to be combined with reasonable efforts at political modernization and reform.

As the United States copes with ongoing challenges in Iraq and throughout the region, it cannot afford to neglect the interests of its allies along Iraq's borders including Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Jordan. Of these states, Kuwait and Jordan have often been most directly influenced by Iraqi events in previous historical eras.⁵ Jordanian leaders usually display a keen understanding of Iraqi political dynamics because of a history of economic and other ties between the two states and because Jordan's survival has often depended heavily on the efficiency of its intelligence service in assessing and countering threats to regime survival. Jordanian views on Iraq are often informed by a solid understanding of Iraqi issues based on a longstanding interest in Baghdad's political and economic actions and are therefore always worthy of serious consideration. The continuing overlap between a number of U.S. and Jordanian goals for Iraq and the region often present a useful backdrop for U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East.

Nature of the Jordanian Monarchy.

Jordan was established as a British-supported administrative entity in 1921 and as a British League of Nations' Mandate in 1923 in the aftermath of World War I. It originated as Transjordan, an artificial state with long straight borders and few natural frontiers except the Jordan River, which was used as the boundary with the Palestinian mandate.⁶ Transjordan was created out of the "unallocated" parts of the Palestinian mandate east of Jordan River in former territory of the Ottoman Empire on the initiative of key British leaders including

Colonial Secretary Winston Churchill.⁷ The United Kingdom placed Transjordan under the administration of Abdullah bin Hussein who was given the title of emir (usually translated as prince). Emir (later King) Abdullah had been a British ally during World War I and was viewed by London as a useful partner to help maintain its influence in the region.⁸ As the first leader of Transjordan, Abdullah received a British subsidy for administration and seeking the loyalties of local tribes. British army officers were also sent to Transjordan to provide the nucleus of a more modern military to be created from the tribal forces loyal to the new emir.⁹

Transjordan became formally independent in May 1946, at which time Abdullah assumed the title of king. King Abdullah led Transjordan (re-named the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in 1949) until his assassination in 1951 in Jerusalem by a Palestinian gunman.¹⁰ Transjordan under Abdullah fought in the 1948-49 Arab-Israeli war, with its military doing far better in the fighting than the other Arab forces committed to the conflict. An Arab-Israeli armistice signed in April 1949 left the Transjordanians in control of the eastern part of the city of Jerusalem and the West Bank of the Jordan River. King Abdullah announced the planned annexation of these regions into his kingdom on October 20, 1949. He also changed the country's name, and granted full Jordanian citizenship to West Bank Palestinians. No other Arab state recognized this Jordanian annexation as legal, and there were serious but unsuccessful efforts to expel Jordan from the Arab League for seizing what the other Arab states widely viewed as Palestinian territory.¹¹ King Abdullah responded that the area was in danger of being seized by the Israelis unless it was protected through unification with Jordan (which had security ties with the United

Kingdom). The West Bank, nevertheless, was captured by the Israelis in the June 1967 Six Day War and, after a series of diplomatic setbacks, the Jordanians renounced all “legal and administrative ties” to this territory in favor of the Palestinians on July 31, 1988. Despite losing the West Bank and East Jerusalem, more than half of Jordan’s current population is composed of Jordanians of Palestinian origin, who dominate the private sector of the economy.¹²

Following King Abdullah’s assassination, his son, Prince Talal, became king but proved unable to govern effectively due to deepening schizophrenia. In 1952, Prince Hussein acceded to the throne at age 18, replacing his father who sought medical treatment abroad.¹³ King Hussein thus began what was to become 46 years in power in which the political identity of modern Jordan was formed. Throughout his life, King Hussein’s foreign policy remained consistently friendly to the West, involving a special relationship with the United Kingdom which after 1956 was overshadowed by ties to the United States.¹⁴ Jordan also sought good relations with the Arab states but faced consistent problems with more leftist Arab regimes such as Egypt under President Gamal Abdul Nasser.¹⁵ Despite Amman’s participation in the 1967 War, Jordanian relations with Israel were generally much better than those of any other Arab state with the brief exception of Egypt, which entered into a 1979 peace treaty with Israel.¹⁶ Jordan, which has a history of strong informal relations with Israel, established its own peace treaty with the Israelis in October 1994.¹⁷ The Jordanian peace with Israel was often “warmer” than the Israeli-Egyptian relationship, involving more economic and political cooperation. When King Hussein attended the 1996 funeral of assassinated Israeli Prime Minister

Yitzhak Rabin, he referred to the Israeli leader as “a brother” and incurred considerable criticism for doing so.¹⁸

King Hussein died on February 7, 1999, after a long struggle with cancer, leaving Jordan without the leader who had come to epitomize the state. Moreover, in a startling January 1999 revision to the line of succession, Prince Abdullah, the king’s oldest son was selected by King Hussein to become monarch rather than the king’s younger brother Hassan ibn Talal who had been crown prince since 1965. This change was made only 2 weeks before King Hussein’s death in apparent response to his fear that Hassan would permanently move the line of succession to his own branch of the family.¹⁹ King Abdullah II (hereafter King Abdullah), therefore, unexpectedly assumed the Jordanian throne at the age of 37 after a career as an army officer in which he had risen to the rank of Brigadier General and commanded the Jordanian Special Forces Brigade.²⁰ His formal coronation as king took place on June 9, 1999, despite holding actual power since February of that year. Although Abdullah’s knowledge of military and security issues is impressive, his lack of political experience in 1999 and rise to the throne at a relatively young age caused some concerns in Jordan and internationally. Prince Hassan was widely considered a “deputy king” who had been groomed to be head of state for over 30 years.²¹ The sudden change of plans could have caused serious problems in a number of other Arab countries, but the Hashemites would not allow a dynastic issue to become violent or even to be aggressively disputed in public. Since the startling events of 1999, Prince Hassan has continued to live in Jordan and has made a special effort to display his continuing loyalty and subordination to King

Abdullah. He has publicly stated that he believes that “primogeniture is the right of the head of state in the Hashemite context” and that Abdullah’s succession “was in a sense a return to normalcy.”²²

In an assessment that would be difficult for a knowledgeable person to dispute, author Alan George maintains that, “King Abdullah presents not so much as a monarch but as an approachable, plain speaking, down to earth and even slightly self-effacing professional army officer.”²³ Some of his critics like to suggest that Abdullah spoke English better than Arabic in his initial public addresses as king.²⁴ If so, his problems with formal spoken Arabic were rapidly overcome, although King Abdullah has clearly experienced a close relationship with the West in a region where such ties are sometimes looked upon with suspicion. In addition to having a British mother, the king received much of his early education in the United Kingdom (at the Saint Edmonds School in Hindhead) and the United States (at two schools in Deerfield, Massachusetts). As a young man, Abdullah was admitted to the United Kingdom’s Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst and upon graduation commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Jordanian Army.²⁵ He was then seconded to a British Army unit for a tour of duty as a “Reconnaissance Troop Leader” serving in both England and what was then West Germany.²⁶

King Abdullah came to power while Jordan was mourning a leader known to be a giant of Arab politics and diplomacy. Unable to move directly into his father’s role as a major regional and international political figure, King Abdullah focused on more prosaic but nevertheless vital economic goals. This was probably an unavoidable choice since in 1999 around a third of the national budget was taken up by repayments on a

\$6.8 billion foreign debt, and approximately one-third of the population was living below the poverty line.²⁷ Independent sources estimated that unemployment ran as high as 27 percent in the same time frame.²⁸ In addressing these concerns, King Abdullah has been an advocate of what he calls “Jordan First” policies which include a special emphasis on improving the economic welfare of Jordanian citizens.²⁹ The king has stated that throughout his career in the Army, he encountered Jordanian soldiers who sought out military service as a way to escape from oppressing and often rural poverty.³⁰ He maintains that he wishes to make a difference on this issue for reasons of personal compassion as well as regime stability.

The “Jordan First” approach appears to define priorities in a way that allows the king to more easily justify Jordan’s cooperation with the West and its willingness to continue normal relations with Israel (to the extent domestic and regional conditions permit). It has also been viewed by critics as a way for Jordan to distance itself from regional problems involving the Palestinians and Iraqis. President Bashar Assad of Syria in a March 12, 2006, statement suggested that “such a slogan is a separation from the Arab [identity] and pan-Arab nationalism.”³¹ He also stated that “first slogans effectively mean that the United States, Israel, or any other non-Arab country comes second.”³² The Jordanian leadership hotly denies this interpretation of its policies, and Syrian-Jordanian relations were strained for some time after Assad made his comments, although they had improved significantly by 2007.³³

King Abdullah’s westernized outlook appears to have been reinforced by the values he developed as a modern military leader including a focus on discipline, efficiency, and organization. Consequently, King

Abdullah's approach to leadership has sometimes caused problems in his interaction with Jordanian tribal leaders. Some such leaders have reportedly complained that he is abrupt and has lost touch with tribal customs and traditional values.³⁴ King Abdullah starts and ends meetings on time, which is not always viewed as appropriately respectful by more traditional Jordanian leaders. The king's patience for time-consuming social events which help bind the tribal leaders to the monarchy is also much more limited than that of his father. Some tribal leaders have reportedly been hopeful that Abdullah might eventually be replaced by his younger brother, Prince Hamza. Hamza became crown prince in 1999 when Abdullah became king, but was removed from this position in late 2004.³⁵ Hamza bears a much stronger physical resemblance to King Hussein than does Abdullah, and he seems to have a similar personality and manner. Rather opaquely, King Abdullah explained his decision to remove Hamza from the role of crown prince by suggesting that the position of crown prince was an encumbrance in his performance of other duties.

The overwhelming significance of the monarchy in Jordanian political life, and especially the longtime reign of King Hussein, is a vital component of the Jordanian national identity, even among Jordanians of Palestinian origin. Moreover, Jordan has often had much better and less repressive government than many of the other states in the region. The security services, while efficient and tough, are not a notable presence in the everyday life of ordinary citizens. Despite this success, the Jordanian leadership is aware that the current political system cannot continue indefinitely without greater political reform and more democratic input. Consequently, the challenge of opening the

political system, while avoiding the dangers of doing this in a hurried, poorly-planned, or sloppy manner, is one of Jordan's greatest contemporary challenges.

The Modern Jordanian State and the Issues of Governance and Opposition.

The Jordanian monarchy dominates the state but also considers itself to be modernizing and reformist. Some foreign observers view Jordanian political reform as little more than an exercise in image management by the ruling elite, but this interpretation is a serious oversimplification.³⁶ Although the Jordanian leadership is concerned about how the regime is viewed by the West and other sources of foreign aid, carefully managed and halting political reform in Jordan is part of an overall strategy of meeting public expectations to ensure regime survival. Such reform tends to expand during times of economic discontent but contract when the government is seeking to implement what it views as essential but unpopular policies such as the 1994 Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty and various forms of Israeli-Jordanian cooperative behavior based upon that treaty. Additionally, Jordanian leaders are currently interested in underscoring an image as democratic reformers in order to avoid running afoul of the post-September 11, 2001 (9/11), U.S. demands for increased democracy in the Middle East. Unlike Saudi Arabia and Egypt, the Jordanians have managed to deflect most U.S. media and other U.S. criticism by stressing their interest in reform and by serving as an especially important partner in efforts to stabilize the Middle East during its current era of turbulence.³⁷

Jordan's most democratic institution is the Parliament which was created in its modern form by

the 1952 Constitution, although there have been earlier parliaments (which have sometimes been dissolved for significant periods of time) as far back as 1929. The current Parliament's lower house is elected and includes 110 (formerly 80, then 105) members who hold office for a 4-year term. The Upper House is appointed by the king and has 55 members. The Parliament was eventually suspended and temporarily replaced with a National Consultative Council in the aftermath of the June 1967 Arab-Israeli War when Israel seized control of the West Bank.³⁸ The Jordanian leadership resorted to this expediency because it was not prepared to hold elections with the West Bank under Israeli occupation. It was also unwilling to conduct East Bank-only elections, which might have appeared too accepting of the Israeli occupation of what Amman then viewed as Jordanian land. This reason for reluctance about elections disappeared when King Hussein severed legal and administrative ties with the West Bank in 1983. After a hiatus of over 22 years, Jordan held parliamentary elections in 1989 achieving a 70 percent turnout.³⁹

Jordanian democratic and economic reform made significant strides from 1989 until 1994. Reform slowed down in 1994 as a result of King Hussein's decision to implement several unpopular policies which he felt were necessary for the country's well-being. These new courses of action could be reasonably expected to garner intense opposition in any sort of strengthened Parliament elected under more democratic election laws than those in place at that time. The most controversial of these policies was the establishment of the Israeli-Jordanian Peace Treaty signed in the presence of U.S. President Bill Clinton in October 1994. Another unpopular policy change was the progressive hardening

of Jordanian policies toward Saddam Hussein's Iraq after the 1991 Gulf War.⁴⁰ In the short-term aftermath of the 1991 fighting, the Jordanians limited their criticism of Saddam due to widespread public sympathy for the defeated Iraqis and because Amman was not yet certain of the long-term consequences of antagonizing its larger neighbor. This situation had changed by 1996 when the Jordanian government granted asylum to Saddam's defecting sons-in-law, Lieutenant General Hussein Kamil and Lieutenant Colonel Saddam Kamil, and their families. The Hussein Kamil defection was especially serious since he was the former Minister of Industry and Military Industrialization (MIMI) and began providing some of Iraq's most sensitive military secrets to United Nations (UN) officials investigating Saddam's weapons of mass destruction (WMD) program.⁴¹

In assessing the viability of Jordan's parliament, it is also important to consider the issue of political parties. Jordan has over 30 political parties, most of which are small and inconsequential. These parties came into existence following the passage of the 1992 Political Parties Act.⁴² Some Jordanians appear reluctant to become involved with political parties out of a concern that the government views political activity and activism unfavorably.⁴³ The concern is often most pronounced among the many Jordanians who work in public sector jobs. The most notable exception to this trend involves members of the Islamic Action Front (IAF), which is Jordan's only important political party at the present time. The IAF is the political arm of the Jordanian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood and serves as the major opposition party to many government policies including support for U.S. efforts in Iraq and the continuation of normal relations with

Israel. It takes pride in identifying itself as a “loyal opposition.”⁴⁴ It also has the potential to strengthen, while some of the smaller parties may be forced to dissolve under a new more stringent law that requires a political party to achieve some minimal indicators of viability in order to enter the electoral process. These requirements include a minimum number of 500 founding members, with members drawn from at least 5 of the country’s 12 governorates.⁴⁵ The smaller parties are calling upon the king to seek the revocation of this new, tougher version of the political parties law.⁴⁶

The Jordanian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood was established in Amman in 1945.⁴⁷ Throughout its history, the Brotherhood in Jordan has been willing to tolerate or even support the Hashemite monarchy and was often opposed to groups that constituted a much more serious threat to the throne. In the 1950s and 1960s, the Islamists were a useful counterweight to leftist Arab nationalists opposed to the monarchy and Palestinian nationalists who wanted to overthrow the Hashemite government in order to wage war against Israel without the constraints imposed by the Jordanian leadership.⁴⁸ The government was therefore often more interested in co-opting rather than suppressing those Islamists who did not show an interest in overthrowing the monarchy. The Muslim Brotherhood had relatively good relations with King Hussein at various points in time such as the 1960s when traditional forces seemed to be under assault by republican leaders such as those of Egypt, Syria, and Iraq. Egyptian President Nasser’s anti-Jordanian rhetoric also coincided nicely with his unyielding campaign against the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, helping to push both sides towards each other. On at least one occasion in the 1960s, the Jordanian government and the Islamists cooperated to organize

an Amman demonstration protesting the Nasser government's repression of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood as well as the execution of several of its members.⁴⁹

Following a decision to outlaw political parties in a 1957 crackdown on anti-government activity, Jordan's Muslim Brotherhood was seldom seriously repressed because it was not generally viewed as subversive. Thus, the organizational foundation for the IAF's success was set during the time frame when the Muslim Brotherhood grew and developed, while competing opposition movements faced serious harassment by the security forces. When parties were legalized once again in September 1992, the Brotherhood was consequently well-prepared to use the IAF to fill the former political void and establish itself as the leading Jordanian party.⁵⁰ The IAF was also one of the primary vehicles for expressing public discontent over the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty and the subsequent normalization effort. Unfortunately, for the Islamists, the IAF lost 6 seats out of 22 in the 1993 elections due to new electoral laws and vigorous government restrictions of political activity imposed in the aftermath of the Madrid peace talks with Israel, which the IAF opposed.⁵¹ It boycotted the 1997 elections because of constricting electoral rules, but in 2003 it ran 30 candidates and won 17 seats in the expanded 110-seat lower house.⁵²

The IAF's emergence as Jordan's dominant opposition party has often been viewed with alarm within Western circles due to its opposition to the West and Israel as well as various extreme statements and actions by some of its members (such as when two IAF members of Parliament paid their respects at a funeral service for Abu Musab Zarqawi as discussed later in this monograph). While such concerns are

reasonable, the regime sees a strong positive side to political participation by the Muslim Brotherhood and the IAF. In particular, these groups have provided a credible, nonviolent political opposition that has traditionally defended and been loyal to Hashemite rule.⁵³ The viability of the Muslim Brotherhood has occasionally undercut the rise of much more radical Islamic opposition groups such as the Liberation Party which was outlawed in 1956 and severely repressed thereafter.⁵⁴ Additionally, the IAF appears to be handicapped by factionalism. Thus, ironically, the Jordanian political system may work best for the regime when the Muslim Brotherhood and IAF are legal but never quite strong enough to gain real power. These groups naturally have no interest in playing this government-scripted role indefinitely. Instead, for the last decade, the IAF has used legislative action, boycotts of some elections, charges of rigged voting procedures, and appeals to international organizations and the world media as ways to pressure the Jordanian government to open up the system and give them a serious opportunity to share power indefinitely.⁵⁵

The Jordanian opposition has frequently complained about the press and election laws being designed to ensure the dominance of pro-government forces in Parliament. The ways in which the government draws Parliamentary districts has often been a particular source of opposition concerns since traditional pro-monarchy rural districts are over-represented at the expense of urban areas that are often the strongholds of Islamist power.⁵⁶ Tribal candidates can also work around bans on electioneering before the appointed time by flowery media descriptions of how and why a particular tribal candidate was chosen to run for public office. In 1997 this disagreement reached an

