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Stability in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (HKJ) in the Post Arab Spring Era

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## *Preface*

During my last visit to Jordan in June 2014, I was troubled to see heightened level security on the streets of the Kingdom. Although my visit took place approximately two years after the height of unrest that ensued in Jordan after the start of the “Arab Spring,” I could still feel a profound sense of tension. Moreover, news networks critical of the Kingdom including Al-Jazeera, continued to raise a question regarding the stability of the Kingdom and the resiliency of the Hashemite Family. As a native of Jordan and having personally seen the level of cooperation between the U.S. and Jordan during the execution of the Global War on Terror, I felt compelled to investigate the roots of Jordan’s instability. I was also compelled to examine the resiliency of Jordan in the face of the grave challenges encountered daily. This research provides my assessment of the Kingdom’s resiliency today.

I would like to acknowledge Dr. Douglas Streusand, Dr. Francis Marlow, Dr. Matthew Slater, Dr. Amin Tarzi, Vern Liebl, Adam Seitz, and Lieutenant Colonel Mark Liston for their guidance and assistance in this endeavor. Lastly, I would like to acknowledge my wife Marine for her support during the countless hours of research and writing to complete this project.

## Executive Summary

**Title:** Stability of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (HKJ).

**Author:** Major Ziad Fakhoury, United States Marine Corps

**Thesis:** Despite, economic, demographic, and security challenges facing Jordan today, the Kingdom is capable of achieving enduring stability through its ongoing economic and political reform.

**Discussion:** Since the start of the Arab Spring in 2010, Jordan has experienced its fair share of popular unrest. Troublingly, the popular unrest in Jordan has since extended beyond the traditional Muslim Brotherhood's (MB) opposition to include that of members from the loyalist East Bank tribes. Although the demonstrations have gradually receded since 2012, many observers continue to question the resiliency of the regime and the overall stability in the Kingdom. Jordan's friendly relations with the U.S. and its continual role as a regional stabilizer, underscore the importance of the Kingdom's stability. Jordan's economic woes, complex demographic composition, and lack of resources continue to undermine its stability. The large number of refugees in Jordan from turmoil in neighboring countries, continue to strain the Kingdom's limited resources and fragile infrastructure. Equally, the increased influence of Totalitarian Islam in the region and the threat poised by returning radicalized fighters from Syria and Iraq, have increasingly compounded security challenges facing the Kingdom today. This study seeks to recognize factors undermining Jordan's stability through the identification of existing core grievance. This study also seeks to analyze Jordan's current efforts to remediate the existing disruptive influences in its efforts to achieve stability. With Jordan's role as a regional stabilizer and importance to U.S. national interest in the Middle East in mind, this study will also attempt to identify any U.S. role in supporting Jordan's ongoing efforts.

**Conclusion:** Jordan is a crucial part of Middle East stability. Despite great challenges faced today within a disorderly Middle East characterized by rising support for radical Islamic view, Jordan can achieve stability. As a significant partner, the U.S. should assist Jordan in achieving increased stability and enable it to continue its vital role as regional stabilizer.

## **Introduction**

Since the start of the Arab Spring in 2010, Jordan has experienced its fair share of popular unrest. Troublingly, the popular unrest in Jordan has since extended beyond the traditional Muslim Brotherhood's (MB) opposition to include that of members from the loyalist East Bank tribes. In 2012, King Abdullah's birthday celebrations were remarkably small in an indication of an increased displeasure with conditions in the Kingdom. Portraits of the King, customarily posted on the streets during these celebrations, were visibility absent, due to fears of defacement; a matter once considered treasonous and unlikely to occur.<sup>1</sup> Although the demonstrations have gradually receded since 2012, many observers continue to question the resiliency of the Hashemite family and the overall stability in the Kingdom. Jordan's friendly relations with the U.S. and its continuing role as a regional stabilizer, underscore the importance of the Kingdom's stability. Jordan's economic woes, complex demographic composition, and lack of resources continue to threaten its stability. The large number of refugees in Jordan from turmoil in neighboring countries continues to strain the Kingdom's limited resources and its fragile infrastructure. Equally, the increased influence of radical Islam in the region and the threat poised by returning radicalized fighters from Syria and Iraq have increasingly compounded security challenges facing the Kingdom today.<sup>2</sup> Despite economic, demographic, and security challenges facing Jordan today, the Kingdom is capable of achieving enduring stability through its ongoing economic and political reform.

This study seeks to identify factors undermining Jordan's stability through the identification of core grievance. This study also seeks to analyze Jordan's current efforts to remediate the existing disruptive influences in its efforts to achieve stability. With Jordan's role

in mind as a regional stabilizer and its importance to U.S. national interest in the Middle East, this study will also attempt to identify any U.S. role in supporting Jordan's ongoing efforts.

### **Background**

Since founding in 1946, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has faced repeated episodes of uncertainty pervaded with momentous challenges.<sup>\*</sup> Jordan's difficult journey since 1946 has included decades of conflict with Israel, complex relations with the Palestinian people, and undermining agendas of neighboring Arab states. This range of challenges stemmed from Jordan's unique geographic location and its close proximity to Israel and the West Bank. Sharing the longest borders with the State of Israeli, Jordan had found itself in direct confrontation with the newly declared Jewish State in 1948 and 1967.<sup>†</sup> Jordan's geographic location also obliged it to host several thousand refugees of the Arab-Israeli conflict. This obligation had resulted in a deliberate attempt to integrate hundreds of thousand of Palestinians in the 1950s and 1960s, profoundly altered Jordan's demographics.<sup>3</sup> With the Palestinians comprising a large segment of the Jordanian society that controls the majority of economic activities, the Kingdom's security has hinged upon the careful management of Palestinian-Jordanian population. This management transformed from periods of cordial relations and inclusion after forming the union in 1950 to an all out hostilities in 1970-1971.<sup>4</sup> The management has since evolved into a deliberate policy of marginalization that aims to limit Palestinian role in Jordan's political system today.

Jordan's relations with its Arab neighbors have not been immune to turbulence. These episodes ranged from political and economic pressure to direct meddling and confrontation as

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<sup>\*</sup> The Treaty of London in March 1946 ended the British Mandate of Transjordan. On 25 May 1946, the Parliament proclaimed emir Abdullah King and formally changed the name of the country from the "Emirate of Transjordan" to the "Hashemite Kingdom of Transjordan". In April 1949, the country's official name became the "Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan".

<sup>†</sup> Jordan abstained from joining the Arab attack on Israel in 1973.

seen in September 1970 when the Syrian army supported the Fedayeen against King Hussein's rule.<sup>5</sup> In the 1990s and in the wake of Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, the diplomatic and economic pressure reached an unprecedented level, when Gulf States expelled thousands of Jordanian workers and cut its vital aide to Jordan's economic wellbeing.<sup>6</sup>

Since founding, the Kingdom's challenges have not been limited to geopolitical factors. With a nearly landlocked territory and remarkable lack of natural resources, Jordan has depended heavily on aid and low-priced oil from its wealthy Arab neighbors. This dependence has disadvantaged Jordan by transforming it to nation with a feeble and heavily subsidized economy. This dependence also presented the Kingdom with the predicament of having to choose between continually changing alliances in region. Notably, the impact of Jordan's decision to side with Iraq during the invasion of Kuwait in 1990 resulted in aid cuts that continue to affect the Kingdom today.<sup>7</sup>

In recent years, political scientists and reputable journalists have increasingly questioned Jordan's stability. For example, Mudar Zahran, an exiled Palestinian-Jordanian opposition figure, has advocated the removal of the Hashemite family and the creation of an alternative Palestinian State on the East banks of the Jordan River.<sup>8</sup> He views establishment of a Palestinian State in the East Bank as the only viable solution to the Palestinian question and the ongoing Arab-Israeli conflict.<sup>9</sup> Mudar's position however, enjoys little support among Palestinian-Jordanians who desire to return to their homeland. His views also imply an unacceptable position by most Palestinians who reject any steps that would forfeit the right to return to Palestine.<sup>10</sup> Lastly, Mudar's position ignores the profound desire that exists among many Palestinians (i.e. Hamas), to destroy the Jewish State.<sup>11</sup>

Jordan's political reform that had begun in 1989 has also been the topic of scrutiny. Political scientist Sean L. Yom dismisses Jordan's ongoing reform as political maneuvers designed to preserve the monarchy.<sup>12</sup> As such, Yom predicts that this survival strategy will fail in light of the increased opposition to the status quo. Although the political reform has thus far been measured, one can argue the need for a deliberate process to prevent a radical takeover. Recent failed experiences across the Middle East underscore the danger inherent to any abrupt political transformation. The failed experiments of Yemen, Egypt, and Libya have decreased the desire for rapid change among Jordanians.<sup>13</sup>

Lastly, since the start of the Arab Spring, some have suggested the Jordanian peoples' desire for an increased role of Sharia Law in nation building. News agencies hostile to the Kingdom, interpret the political maneuvers of the vocal Muslim Brothers as a representative of Jordanian's sentiment. These agencies also cite the small Totalitarian Islamist groups as a representative of Jordanian society.<sup>14</sup> These claims not only ignore the small size of these radicalizes groups but also ignores the society's growing rejection for them.<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, the recent increase of DAESH aggression and their misrepresentation of Islam, has contributed to a growing rejection of Totalitarian Islamist in the Kingdom.<sup>16</sup> Surveys conducted in Jordanian university underscore the true desire of the Jordanian people. It clearly demonstrates that the desire for increased role of Sharia Law, is not synonymous with the radicalize form Islam seen in DAESH today.<sup>17</sup>

### **Drivers of Instability**

To best assess Jordan's degree of stability, it is imperative to develop an appreciation for its conflict dynamics. The State Department's newly adopted Interagency Conflict Analysis Framework (ICAF 2.0) offers a suitable tool to enhance the understanding of instability drivers

in the Kingdom.<sup>18</sup> In addition to the core grievances of a given society that may lead to violence, the framework attempts to analyze the process of mobilizing social groups around these core grievances to incite violence.<sup>19</sup> The framework also addresses the aspect of key players who mobilize social groups to achieve desired aims within a given state.<sup>20</sup> The following section of this paper will utilize the ICAF 2.0 to analyze factors that contribute to Jordan's instability. It will attempt to identify existing key players and their aims. It will also analyze the population's core grievances and resiliencies. Lastly, the following section will attempt to recognize windows of risk as well as triggers that key players would use to achieve their aims.

### **Key Actors**

Since the armed confrontation between Jordan and the Palestinian Fedayeen in 1970, a great deal of mistrust developed between East Bank Jordanians and those with Palestinian origin.<sup>21</sup> This mistrust has prompted a deliberate attempt to reassert Jordanian sovereignty while marginalizing the Palestinian population in key government positions and within the security apparatus. The process to marginalize the Palestinians became increasingly noticeable with a clear decrease of Palestinian representation in the government's key posts and more importantly in the Kingdom's security apparatus.<sup>22</sup> Despite this political marginalization, Palestinians today continue to control a large segment of the Jordanian economy. Although, Palestinian political representation is disproportionate with the level of economic contribution, a fundamental grievance, a bonafide key player that strictly represents Palestinian interest, does not exist in Jordan's political system today. Instead, Palestinians voice their grievances through other existing political entities that cater best to their interest and political stance. The MB and its political faction the Islamic Action Front (IAF) for instance, enjoy a great deal of Palestinian support. The MB and IAF's opposing stance to the peace treaty and normalization (*tatbe'a*) with

Israel, is particularly attractive to Palestinian-Jordanians.<sup>23</sup> The Palestinian support for the MB and IAF extends beyond the support through voting. The MB and IAF represent two organizations of a very few that Palestinian can join in an active membership.<sup>24</sup> The MB and IAF tend to do fairly well in urbanized electoral districts, due to a heavy Palestinian presence in cities like Amman and Zarqa.

Four key players exist today in Jordan. The first and most important of these key players is the Islamic-themed political parties. Such Islamic-themed parties constitute the majority of opposition in the Kingdom. Within the Islamic-themed political parties, it is imperative to distinguish between two distinct groups. The first group accepts the political process and is represented by MB, IAF, and other smaller political organizations including the Islamic Center Party and Du'a' Party.<sup>25</sup> These parties have been for the most part active participants in Jordan's parliamentary elections since 1989.<sup>26</sup> The pro-democratic process Islamic parties continue to generate support through stance that opposes the government domestic and regional policies. These groups aim to limit the power of the monarch and implement Sharia Law through the legislative process. Although, their methods appear nonviolent, experiences in Palestine and Egypt, demonstrate the risk of increased radicalization in the event of political success.<sup>27</sup> The other Islamic-themed parties are the rejectionist represented by the hardline Hizb Al-Tahrir, Al-Salafiyah Al Taqlidiyah, Jama'at Al-Da'wa Wa-T-Tabligh, and Al-Salafiyah Al-Jihadiyah.<sup>28</sup> These rejectionists oppose the democratic process and are willing to resort to violence to achieve their desired objectives – the overthrow of the monarch.<sup>29</sup> The recent atrocities committed by DAESH and the increased rejection of the portrayed radicalized form of Islam, have considerably decreased their support in Jordan.<sup>30</sup>

Leftist and Pan-Arab (Nationalist) parties represent the second key player in Jordan. These parties include the Jordanian Communist and Socialist Parties and Ba'athist, which have received support from foreign governments.<sup>31</sup> Despite participation in parliamentary elections since the lifting of the ban on political parties in 1992, these parties have enjoyed limited support.<sup>32</sup> The limited support enjoyed is a result of distant and less appealing ideologies that fail to compete against traditional Islamic ideas. Although, these groups lack the necessary base to achieve political dominance, they nonetheless, aim to increase their popular support and representation in the parliament. They also seek an increase participation in key government positions. The third key player in Jordan's political system is the pro-monarchy political parties. These political parties are numerous and represent the general sentiment of East Bank tribes. These political parties, which overlap with tribal affiliations in rural areas generally favored in election law, have won representation in the Parliament since 1989. They provide the backbone of support for the monarchy, because they view the monarch as the only guarantor of East Bank tribes' privileges in the face of a growing Palestinian majority.<sup>33</sup> The pro-monarch political parties constitute the safety valve of political reform. With an increased desire for political reform among Jordanians, they offer a loyal representation that counters the Islamic opposition.<sup>34</sup> The safety valve they represent is critical to facilitating a measured and deliberate process to transition the Kingdom to a true constitutional monarchy. The last key player is the emerging youth movements. These movements represent the general sentiment of the young educated segment of the population. Although in the infancy stage, these groups have become more visible since the start of the Arab Spring.<sup>35</sup> These groups continue to leverage social media and attract increasing number of Jordanians. Despite, their minimal political influence today, these groups

represent a promising political platform in the future. They are a potential platform that is vital to countering the organized MB and IAF in the process of liberalization.

### **Core Grievances**

The key players use four core grievances to mobilize Jordanians. These core grievances in the order of popularity among the Jordanians are: the economic conditions, the uneven representation of Jordanians in the political system, the demand for and increased role for Sharia Law, and finally, Jordan's pro-Western foreign policy and good relations with Israel. The weak economic conditions in the Kingdom remain the stimulus for the most predominant core grievance in the Kingdom. The displeasure with increasing poverty, inflation of prices, and high unemployment rate triggered the vast majority of the demonstrations that engulfed the Kingdom since 2010.<sup>36</sup> The economic conditions that have triggered unrest reveal Jordan's need to satisfy domestic anger with sound economic reforms that will benefit the economy in the long run. Despite domestic resistance, the removal of subsidies in compliance with IMF requirements for instance, have triggered the most violent demonstrations and resulted in the dismissal of cabinets.<sup>37</sup> The opposition, mainly the MB, has been successful in provoking the unrest as Jordan continues to implement the necessary economic restructuring steps. Aware of the overwhelming majority's concern with this core grievance, the King continues to emphasize economic prosperity as a long-term goal for all successive cabinets.<sup>38</sup> This cognizance has also resulted in the reversal of subsidy reductions, which would ultimately prolong the Kingdom's path to a sound economy.<sup>39</sup>

The bias towards East Bank Jordanians in the political system denotes the second most shared grievance. With Palestinian-Jordanians constituting over 50% of the population and contributing greatly to the economy, this core grievance is particularly of interest to the

Jordanian opposition. In addition to mobilizing Jordanians around the poor economic conditions grievance, the MB has been successful in mobilizing the disenchanting Palestinians by providing a venue for political representation in the Jordanian political system. The MB ability to receive a majority of votes in urban electoral districts is attributed to their success in mobilizing the Palestinians. Although support and active membership in the opposition provides a venue otherwise not available, the current electoral system minimizes Palestinian influence on domestic politics.<sup>40</sup>

A growing number of Jordanians support an increased role of Sharia Law. This growing number, however, does not represent the majority. More importantly, views of increased role of Sharia Law vary significantly among Jordanians. A strict rule of Sharia Law to the extent of Saudi Arabia for instance enjoys limited support among Jordanians.<sup>41</sup> The demands for an increased role also reject the skewed form of Islam imposed today in DAESH controlled territories.<sup>42</sup> Although, a growing number advocates imposing limitation on alcohol sales and bacchanalian gatherings, the vast majority of Jordanians reject gender segregation and the restraint of women's participation in economic activities.<sup>43</sup> Both, pro-democratic Islamic parties and rejectionist groups appeal to Jordanians who seek the increased role of Sharia Law.

Opposition parties including the MB and leftist political organization frequently criticize Jordan's relations with Israel. Jordan's close relations with the U.S. and its support for the War on Terror also represents a core grievance shared by a small percentage of Jordanians. The inflammatory broadcast by Arab news agencies' when covering events in Gaza, the West Bank, Iraq, Syria; contribute significantly to frequent rise in anti-government sentiment.<sup>44</sup> This sentiment is however intermittent and short-lived. Furthermore, the news agencies' frequent criticism and repeated threats uttered by DAESH have often had a rallying effect on the

Jordanian population.<sup>45</sup> Jordan's peace agreement and normalization with Israel although frequently cited to provoke unrest, enjoys inexplicit support by East Bank Jordanians. East Bank Jordanians reject the uncertainty that would result from any reversal of the peaceful relations forged with Israel in 1994.<sup>46</sup>

### **Social Resiliencies**

The Bedouin tradition and the associated code of conduct, plays a significant role in strengthening the society in Jordan. Jordan's ability to wither significant challenges in the past is partially attributed to resiliencies inherent to the Bedouin tradition and code of conduct. Although, many ethos and values exist in the Bedouin code, the value of *sharaf* and its vitality to group cohesion, has particularly played a significant role in fastening the Jordanian society.<sup>47</sup>

Historian and orientalist Raphael Patai defines *sharaf*, the Arabic word for honor, as:

Honorable behavior that which is conducive to group cohesion and group survival, that which strengthens the group and serves its interests; while shameful behavior is that which tends to disrupt, endanger, impair, or weaken the social aggregate.<sup>48</sup>

Dr. Patai's definition highlights an important aspect of group cohesion vital to the survival of Bedouin communities that tend to reside in harsh environment. Though, the vast majority of Bedouins in Jordan have settled since the turn of the Twentieth Century, social traits that strengthen group cohesion still exist. A few of the traits are deemed necessary to strengthen the group, and henceforth enable its survival. Three traits in particular are instilled in male children and are expected to maintain as they enter adulthood. The first trait is *hamasa* or bravery. Simply put, a group that lack brave members who are willing to defend its honor would not survive, hence *hamasa* is a prerequisite to group survival.<sup>49</sup> A closely related trait is *murūwa*, which is translated to masculinity. Although *murūwa* promotes aggressiveness, Bedouin tradition dictates it should be directed at member outside one's own group.<sup>50</sup> Contrarily, any in-group aggression

is considered intolerable. As such, outside aggression is considered a blemish on a group's honor and therefore commands revenge.<sup>51</sup> This clearly corroborated in the Bedouin proverb "*Dam butlub dam*," blood calls for blood.<sup>‡</sup> It is essential to recognize that the distinction between in-group and intragroup can be elusive. The elusiveness stems from the interchangeability of one person across the blurred line between an in-group and intragroup. This vague distinction is clearly demonstrated in the famous axiom "I against my brother, my brother and I against my cousins, my cousin and I against the stranger."

The previous discussion of the Bedouin code should imply that any factual or perceived outside threat against the Kingdom, would have a uniting effect on the Jordanian society. It would also imply an increased sense of duty to defend the bigger tribe – Jordan. Although, DAESH's burning of the captured Jordanian pilot in January 2015 and the consequential Jordanians unity and military response may have come as surprise to Western news agencies, it reflects the Bedouin tradition of the Kingdom.<sup>52</sup> In addition to the Bedouin code, two other resiliencies exist in Jordan today. First is the ability to foresee the likely negative outcome of any rapid political change in the Kingdom. The unenthusiastic aftermath of the Arab Spring in countries like Yemen, Libya, and Egypt; has increased the desire among Jordanians to avoid any dangerous escalation of unrest.<sup>53</sup> The Jordanians' desire to avoid drawing the Kingdom into an endless cycle of violence has strengthened the will to prevent any hasty and risky change. The second existing resiliency stems from the legitimacy that the Hashemite Family enjoys, as direct descendants of the Prophet Mohammed.<sup>54</sup> Although this resiliency varies among the East Bank tribes, there is a universal appreciation of the Hashmites as impartial mediator capable of

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‡ "*Dam butlub dam*" is a common Bedouin Saying in Jordan.

quelling the occasional tribal disputes.<sup>55</sup> The East Bank tribes also fear the potential danger of tribal confrontation that would ensue in the absence of the Hashemites.<sup>56</sup>

### **Windows of Opportunity and Conflict Dynamics**

The Department of States' conflict analysis framework defines windows of opportunity as "[a] change in the strategic situation providing incentives or capacities for key actors to mobilize people or resources for or against conflict."<sup>57</sup> Since the start of the Arab Spring, there has been a profound change in the region's strategic situation. Regimes have changed in Libya, Egypt, Yemen, and Tunisia, transforming the Middle East's geopolitics. Ongoing turmoil in Syria and Iraq increases the instability of the region. Lastly, the rise of radical Islam reaching an unprecedented level with DAESH's takeover of significant parts of Syria and Iraq, signifies a profound development in the region. Besides, Al-Qaeda, once deemed significantly degraded, is making a strong showing in various regions around the world.<sup>58</sup> Jordan's geographic location increases its vulnerability to the effects of ongoing profound regional shifts. As such, Jordan has experienced its share of unrest, prompted by calls for liberalization and political reform. The ongoing conflicts in Iraq and Syria have affected the Kingdom's already fragile economy. Finally, the threat of radical Islam to Jordan has reached an unprecedented level with external threats from DAESH and Al-Qaeda and internal threats from homegrown radicals and returning fighters from neighboring anarchic countries.<sup>59</sup>

The profound regional shifts have provided the Jordanian opposition a plethora of opportunities to pursue its undermining agenda. The opposition continues to criticize Jordan's involvement in fighting radical Islam.<sup>60</sup> It also continues to cash in on the frail economic conditions, to inflame the population. Although, the support for radical Islam within the Kingdom has decreased considerably in light of recent DAESH atrocities, economic conditions

continue to enable the opposition's endeavors. Strategic shifts in the region have also provided the King with an opportunity to pursue meaningful and deliberate political and economic reform. Despite a risky period of unrest that reached its peak in 2012, and although the demands for political and economic reform still exists today, Jordanians are becoming increasingly cautious about rapid change. From the Jordanian government's perspective, the window of risk that emerged in early 2010 has transformed into a promising window of opportunity.

Despite the reduced risks since 2012, Jordan's stability remains uncertain. Today, the internal threat poised by the opposition remains credible. As the opposition continues to use the weak economic condition to incite widespread anger that provokes a heavy-handed security forces response. The opposition's desired heavy-handed response has the propensity to influence Jordan's delicate stability. As such, unfavorable news of inflation, unemployment, and poverty; represents the most dangerous triggers of conflict in the Kingdom.

### **Political Reform: The Perceptible Driver of Conflict**

Although poor economic conditions have been the leading cause for widespread unrest since the start of the Arab Spring, the demand for political reform has also contributed to driving angry Jordanians to the streets.<sup>61</sup> This growing demand stems primarily from a general dissatisfaction with governmental economic policies and perceptions of the legislative body's inability to influence these policies.<sup>62</sup> Although Jordan's political reform continues to be the topic of scrutiny, the King has been keen to pursue a course of transformation. Since 1989, the Kingdom has held six elections for the lower body of the Parliament, *Majlis Al-Nuuab*.<sup>63</sup> Except in 1997, when the MB boycotted the cycle, the elections have been mostly successful as voter turn out exceeded 50%. Since the first elections, candidacy has progressively increased to reach

an all time high of 1400 candidates competing for the 150 *Na'eb* seats in the last elections held in 2013.<sup>64</sup>

The Kingdom's political reform also included substantial changes that extend beyond simply holding the elections. Since the early 1990s, a trend of increased liberalization has existed. In 1991, the late King Hussein abrogated martial law, which had been in place since the 1970s.<sup>65</sup> In the same year, the Kingdom introduced a new Press and Publication Law that considerably enhanced freedom of press.<sup>66</sup> Moreover, the Kingdom introduced a new National Charter that lifted a three-decade ban on political parties.<sup>67</sup> This charter has opened the door for diverse political participation in all subsequent elections. King Abdullah II is also responsible for a significant share of liberalization. In 2010, the King approved 42 constitutional amendments conceding a part of his constitutional powers.<sup>68</sup> The conceded powers included a key opposition demand to require the King to consult the Parliament before selecting a new prime minister.<sup>69</sup> The King also introduced a new Law for Public Assembly, removing a contentious requirement that obligated organizers to obtain prior approval from the Ministry of Interior.<sup>70</sup> Other key reforms include the creation of a Constitutional Court, National Integrity Commission, and a new ministerial post to oversee the Kingdom's political development; indicating a genuine desire to reform.<sup>71</sup> Despite continued opposition criticism, the newly formed institutions contributed to the successful execution of the 2013 parliamentary which international monitors deemed competitive.<sup>72</sup>

Oppositions criticism, that has occasionally inspired election boycotts, is mainly centered on the election law. Despite undergoing many amendments, the opposition, led by the MB, continues to challenge the fairness of the law's electoral provisions. They have accused the government of engineering the constituencies to favor East Bank Jordanians in the rural areas.<sup>73</sup>

Although currently law may support these claims, the government has nonetheless showed a trend of a deliberate process to increase the fairness of the laws. Besides, the growing skepticism of rapid political change among Jordanians in light of recent experiences in the Middle East, and the fear of Totalitarian Islamist takeover, has decreased the level of criticism. The possibility of an MB takeover has obliged more Jordanians to support a deliberate process of reform. Moreover, with potential moderate counter-political organizations in the infancy stage, a deliberate and slow process has become increasingly appealing. Lastly, Jordanians favor the current rural areas-weighted constituency in order to preserve the Jordanian identity increasingly threatened by a growing Palestinian population in the Kingdom.

### **Economic Conditions: The True Driver of Conflict?**

Despite the declining frequency of unrest since 2012, economic conditions continue to threaten Jordan's long-term stability. The economic injustice felt by many continues to be a leading cause of the tension between Jordanians and their government. Although it has become increasingly noticeable since the start of the Arab Spring, the rift between the people and government dates back to the 1980s. In 1989, the southern town of Ma'an was the center of a violent uprising triggered by the removal of bread subsidy.<sup>74</sup> Since then, the implementation of IMF restructuring, mainly the removal of subsidies, has triggered popular displeasure.

Today, the poor and underprivileged town of Ma'an continues to be the center of recurrent unrest. Historically the bedrock of Hashemite family, the increasing rift with the government has transformed it to an attractive hotbed for Islamist and returning Mujahideen with external loyalties.<sup>75</sup> The presence of these groups has become increasingly visible through the years. In 1998, security forces' operations to restore order in Ma'an, resulted in the killing of six extremists. The operations also yielded the arrests of many pro-Iraqi Ba'ath parties member

among others with external loyalties.<sup>76</sup> These events are indicative of an increasing role of outsiders who have cashed in on the economically disadvantaged to destabilize the Kingdom.

A study conducted in Jordanian Universities showed a correlation among males between lower living standards and higher mosque attendance. Increased attendance often means more exposure to radicalized ideologies.<sup>77</sup> A poll conducted by the Strategic Studies Center in the University of Jordan in 2007 indicated declining confidence in the government and a strong correlation between this decline and rising unemployment, poverty, and poor living conditions.<sup>78</sup> The economically triggered protests that were initially limited to the poor South have extended to other areas across the Kingdom. The economic austerity caused by regional disorder has widened the rift between Jordanians and their government. The influence of economic injustice on the rift between Jordanians and the government underscores the need to pursue counteractive path. Hence, true economic development in the Kingdom is vital to a stable Jordan in the end.

### **Understanding Jordan's Economic Woes**

Jordan's lack of natural resources and its chronic low GDP present momentous obstacles to its development. In 2013, Jordan's GDP dropped to \$23.85 billion.<sup>79</sup> Despite a drop from the previous year, Jordan's national account deficit in 2013 was \$3.345 billion.<sup>80</sup> Comparatively, the GDPs of each of the fifty States surpassed that of Jordan in the same year. The lowest GDP, that of Vermont exceeded Jordan's by approximately \$5.65 billion.<sup>81</sup> According to the World Bank estimates, Jordan's per capita for that same year was limited to a modest \$5,214.2.<sup>82</sup> This low per capita places Jordan at 97 among the world. It also places Jordan below all its neighbors with the exception of Syria, which has had no reported data since the start of the civil war.<sup>83</sup> The low figures of GDP and per capita, highlight Jordan's difficult path to decrease the perception of economic injustice.

Jordan's lack of natural resources contributes to its low GDP. Jordan's low national production is mainly composed of the services sector. In 2013, the production of commodities accounted for only 33.4% of the GDP.<sup>84</sup> Jordan's tourism sector that accounts for 12.3% of the GDP, is vulnerable to regional instability.<sup>85</sup> Despite attempts to maximize the benefits of one of the world's most desired destinations, Petra, the ongoing unrest continues to hamper efforts to realize its full potential.<sup>86</sup> Beside, the ongoing turmoil has adversely affected direct foreign investments that have significantly contributed to Jordan's economy since the 1990s. As a result, Jordan's manufacturing sector has not developed its potential due to the lack of capital. There was a surge of foreign investments in the mid-2000s. The unrest since 2011 however, has hampered the Kingdom's ability to attract investors. The recent unrest trigger by the Arab Spring has reduced direct foreign investment in Jordan from 23.5% of available capital in 2006 to only 4.8% in 2012.<sup>87</sup> The uncertainly in Jordan's political future makes the prospect of foreign investment uncertain.

The mass of refugees has restrained Jordan's economy further. U.N. estimate shows an enormous number of Syrian refugees currently reside in the Kingdom. The latest estimates from 2015 indicated the presence of over 600,000 Syrians.<sup>88</sup> Syrians refugees represent the latest of many refugee waves that had been residing in the Kingdom for decades. Government 2015 estimates indicate that approximately 46% of population in Jordan is foreign born.<sup>89</sup> This high percentage of foreign-born individuals of Palestinians, Iraqis, and Syrians make the Kingdom one of the top ten immigrant and refugee hosting nations in the world. The continued flux of long-term refugees has eroded the Kingdom's scare resources and its ability to achieve meaningful economic development.

## **The Chronic Problem of High Unemployment**

Jordan's high unemployment continues to present a persistent problem. The Central Bank of Jordan's (CBJ) annual report indicated a high unemployment rate of 12.6% in 2013. The report also indicated that the rural poor areas experience a higher than average unemployment rate. With the exception of Amman and nearby Jerash, all governorates suffer from a higher than average rate. Moreover, a prohibitive rate of 17.8% of unemployment exists among the college educated.<sup>90</sup> As such, this category has been vocal in criticizing the government. Jordan's chronic unemployment problem started in the early 1990s when the workforce abruptly absorbed thousands of Jordanians and Palestinians expatriates expelled from Gulf countries.<sup>91</sup> Since then, high unemployment has been a lingering problem. The government has estimated the cost of the returning expatriates at \$3 billion and sharp unemployment rise of 25-30% in 1990-1991.<sup>92</sup>

Moreover, Jordan hosts a large number of documented and undocumented foreign workers. Estimates show 250,000 documented workers from Egypt, the Philippines, and other South Asian countries reside in the Kingdom today. The government also estimates a staggering number of undocumented workers, some four times the number of documented workers.<sup>93</sup> Foreign workers have undercut the local workforce due to their willingness to accept lower wages. The privatization of previously public run mining and tourism sectors has also resulted in a significant transfer of jobs to foreign workers.<sup>94</sup>

## **The Fiscal Deficit**

The projected budget for 2016-2018 shows average annual spending of JD10.18 billion with an average deficit of JD1.9 billion.<sup>95</sup> This deficit would increase to an annual average of JD2.86 billion without substantial grants from outside sources.<sup>96</sup> The fiscal deficit is partially attributed to high spending on defense, subsidies, and public sector wages. For decades, regional

threat has required the Kingdom to maintain a strong military force. Although, the traditional threat of Israeli aggression has ended since 1994's peace treaty, repeated attempts of Arab neighbors to undermine the Kingdom and the rising threat of radicalized group continues to exist. In 2016, Jordan is expected to allocate 22.5% of the overall government spending to its military.<sup>97</sup>

Government fuel and food subsidies continue to burden Jordan's treasury. The loss of cheap oil supplies from neighboring countries has prompted an increased expenditure on fuel subsidies. The government has also been subsidizing food to prevent rapid increases in prices triggered by unstable international markets. Jordan has been attempting to reduce subsidy spending in compliance with International Monetary Fund (IMF) austerity measures for more than two decades. Since then, the government's systematic reduction of fuel and food subsidies, has triggered unrest.<sup>98</sup> In fact, the frequent demonstrations in Jordan that started in Ma'an with 1989 bread riots have been mainly triggered with subsidy reductions. The sensitivity to price hikes from the removal of subsidies, has compelled unprecedented concessions on multiple occasions. In September 2012 for instance, the ensuing unrest and mass resignation of parliament members, prompted the King to order the reversal of economic policies.<sup>99</sup> The 2013 IMF report on Jordan projected food subsidies to continue through 2018. The report also projected a slight increase during the period of 2016-2018 due to expected market turbulence.<sup>100</sup> Despite popular dissent, Jordan successfully eliminated fuel subsidy in the 2013, putting the economy on the path to recovery.<sup>101</sup>

Due to the limited size of the economy, the government has traditionally employed a large segment of the population. Although economic reform calls for a reduction in government spending, the private sector's inability to absorb public workers would likely limit the ability to

reduce the governments' role as the biggest employer in the foreseen future. The projected 2016 government spending on wages and salaries or pensions for retired military and public sectors employees is a sizable 29.3% of the annual budget.<sup>102</sup>

Jordan's low taxation policy presents yet another contributing factor to the lingering public deficit. Although, IMF restructuring calls for increased domestic taxation, the government has been keen to limit the burden of income tax on the average Jordanian. Instead, the government has put emphasizes on sales taxes as revenue generating tool. The steps taken to close the gap, although in motion for a decade, projection through 2018 indicate persistence in deficit.<sup>103</sup>

### **Governmental Response to Economic Woes**

A 2009 International Republican Institute (IRI) poll revealed that Jordanians viewed the rising prices and cost of living as the most important problems facing the country. The polls also indicated that unemployment as a distant second problem facing the Kingdom.<sup>104</sup> The popular displeasure with both issues has been leading cause in the ensuing unrest that overwhelmed the Kingdom since the start of the Arab Spring. Nevertheless, the Jordanian government's efforts to address this issue go back to 1990, when Iraq invaded Kuwait. In the aftermath of the invasion, Jordan's refusal to support Kuwait liberation efforts resulted in drastic cuts to wealthy Arab States' aid and loans to the Kingdom.<sup>105</sup> Additionally, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia expelled thousands of Jordanian and Palestinians expatriates reduced revenues from remittance of workers abroad. The loss of remittance seriously strained the Kingdom's public spending.<sup>106</sup> Besides, the sanctions imposed on Iraq, adversely impacted Jordan as it lost a big trade partner and cheap oil supplier. In an attempt to cope with the adverse effects of its position in Desert Storm, the Kingdom increased its dependence on foreign loans. By 1998, foreign debt exceeded 100% of

the Kingdom's GDP.<sup>107</sup> Although, foreign debt has decreased sizably since 2009, estimates of government debt remained at a staggering \$13.6 billion or 64% of that year's GDP.<sup>108</sup>

In his book *Our Last Best Chance: The Pursuit of Peace in a Time of Peril*, King Abdullah admitted that his first challenge when he became a king in 1999 was not war or a terrorist attack, but was "to pull Jordan's economy out of a short-term crisis and put it onto a path of strong and resilient growth."<sup>109</sup> Realizing the limitations on expanding the agricultural sector that only continued 3% to the GDP due to water scarcity issues, King Abdullah recognized the need to increase competitiveness.<sup>110</sup> Subsequently, the Kingdom took serious measures to promote foreign investment and remove existing obstacles to foreign trade. Despite the threat of unrest, the Kingdom began to implement IMF structural adjustments to improve the state of the economy in 1989. The IMF structural adjustments included privatization and downsizing of the public sector and other contentious measures to end food and fuel subsidies. The government also realized the need to improving education, promoting innovative and competitive industry while removing all trade barriers.<sup>111</sup> In 1996 and in light of the peace treaty signed with Israel, the U.S. established a Qualified Industrial Zone (QIZ) designed to promote peace and cooperation between Jordan and Israel.<sup>112</sup> The agreement granted all goods produced in the zone by joint Jordanian-Israeli ventures, duty-free privileges.<sup>113</sup> The benefits reaped through this trade agreement inspired Jordan to join the World Trade Organization (WTO) and open new markets beyond its traditional trade partners.<sup>114</sup>

Since 1999, the Kingdom has slowly rid itself of public sector inefficiencies to enable development. The government also made substantial change to existing laws to encourage private sector expansion and attract foreign investors. Jordan then began to promote investment opportunities in world economic forum, citing new attractive laws.<sup>115</sup> Shortly after, high tech and

communications companies from abroad started to take advantage of investment opportunities in the Kingdom. By 2008, direct investments from Arab countries in the Aqaba Duty-Free Zone reached \$20 billion. This figure well exceeded the stated goal of \$6 billion by 2020.<sup>116</sup> Today, duty-free zones have been opened in Mafraq, Ma'an, Irbid, the Dead Sea, and Ajloun and the Kingdom continues to attract investors with smart policies.<sup>117</sup> Jordan's modest industrial base in the early 1990 has expanded exponentially to fields not previously explored including a growing defense industry. The industrial sector in 2013 contributed 20.1% of the GDP and is expected to maintain a healthy trend of growth.<sup>118</sup>

Despite difficulties that have been faced through years of economic development, the benefits of the Kingdom's sound policies demonstrate a great potential for growth. From 1998 to 2008, unemployment fell from 15.3% to 12%.<sup>119</sup> For the same period, the Kingdom succeeded in doubling the per capita GDP.<sup>120</sup> In 2007, a U.N. survey placed Jordan sixth in the world in terms of attractiveness to foreign investment.<sup>121</sup> In 2008, the World Economic Forum ranked Jordan's economy the 48th most competitive in the world; this position placed the Kingdom ahead of major economies including Italy, Russia, Brazil, and India.<sup>122</sup> According to the IMF report on Jordan published in 2013, Jordan's baseline external debt decreased from \$43.3 billion in 2007 to \$22.3 billion in 2012.<sup>123</sup> As the Kingdom continues to pursue a path of development, the effects of ongoing regional turmoil will continue to disrupt direct foreign investment and slow down the Kingdom's economic growth. Having withered some alarming unrest since 2010, the Kingdom has proved resilient. The latest projection in the Economist Intelligence Unit's country report published in December 2012, predicted significant improvements to the economy in the upcoming years as much-needed foreign investments increase.<sup>124</sup>

## Energy Dependence

Energy dependence poses another obstacle to the Kingdom's economic development. Jordan is an energy poor country with heavy reliance on fossil fuel imports. This reliance has grown drastically since the 1990s with substantial population increases following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. While cheap Iraqi oil imports during the 1990s lessened the burden of increased consumption, a considerable hardship emerged when the U.S. invasion of Iraq cut off these supplies.<sup>125</sup> The ending of relative energy security era and the skyrocketing crude oil prices since the invasion of Iraq impacted Jordan's trade significantly with a widening deficit. Between 2004 and 2007, the annual cost of Jordan's energy imports nearly doubled from JD1.153 Billion to JD 2.280 Billion.<sup>126</sup> In 2009, a troubling 96% of primary demand for energy arrived from abroad at high cost equivalent to 11.8% of the Kingdom's GDP.<sup>127</sup> In an attempt to decrease this burden, Jordan gradually increased reliance on more affordable natural gas imports from Egypt.<sup>128</sup> The Kingdom also began to exploit existing oil shale reserves. In 2011, the gradual easing of the burden that resulted from the shift to natural gas imports quickly ended with repeated terrorist attacks on the pipeline connecting the Kingdom with Egypt. The interruption of natural gas supplies forced the Kingdom to revert to crude oil imports at a staggering cost of \$4.8 billion or 20% of GDP.<sup>129</sup>

A major part of Jordan's energy imports is dedicated to electricity production. The sudden shift in reliance to crude oil in 2011 cost the treasury an astounding oil bill that averaged \$4 million/day for electricity production.<sup>130</sup> The Kingdom has since implemented new pricing policy to cope with the increasing cost of electricity production. The new policy resulted in a varied increase in consumer electricity prices. While industrial customers saw the highest increase at 30%, prices for residential customers who consumed less than 750 kilowatt-

hour/month remained unchanged. Although the new pricing methodology spared the majority of Jordanian from increases cost, Jordanians endured a portion of the burden indirectly through hikes in goods' prices.<sup>131</sup> Jordan's energy dependence is expected to continue to rise steadily at an annual average increase in oil demand of 5.5% through 2020,<sup>132</sup> prompting the need for long-term solutions.

### **Jordan's National Energy Strategy**

Foreseeing the threatening energy crisis by 2020, Jordan has formed a Royal Commission to review and update the Kingdom's Master Strategy for Energy Sector in 2004.<sup>133</sup> The Commission established three committees: the oil, electricity, natural gas, and renewable energy committee; the energy conservation committee; and the alternative and local energy sector committee.<sup>134</sup> The published strategy included three stated goals: to achieve security of oil supply, to shift energy fuel mix from oil to gas in power generation and industry, and to achieve security in the electricity supply.<sup>135</sup> Jordan outlined four approaches: the exploitation of indigenous oil shale, the development of civil nuclear power, the generation of electricity by clean and renewable means, and the improvement of energy consumption efficiency.<sup>136</sup>

The strategy encouraged private sector investments in the fields of renewable energy production. Notably, the strategy projected locally supplied energy to increase to 39% in 2020.<sup>137</sup> The strategy's end state indicated a transformed energy mix of 39% oil, 29% natural gas, 10% renewable energy, 14% oil shale, 6% nuclear, and 1% imported electricity by 2020.<sup>138</sup> In the field of renewable energy, the strategy indicate an end state of production at 300-600 MW solar, 600-1000 MW wind, and 30-50 MW from biofuel (waste to energy).<sup>139</sup> Lastly, the strategy aims to benefit from the increasing regional gas pipeline interconnectivity that would tie Syria, Egypt, Lebanon, Iraq, Libya, and Turkey through Jordanian territory.<sup>140</sup>

## **Energy Conservation and Renewable Energy**

Jordan's ambitious strategy is reliant on an increased efficiency of energy consumption and a larger production of renewable energy. Accordingly, the Jordanian government has drafted new laws that include fiscal incentives and encourages independent power production. These incentives extended beyond residential costumers to the industrial and commercial sectors. The Kingdom believes that conservation has the potential to decrease overall energy demand by a substantial amount. In a 2005 study conducted on energy use rationalization among industrial and commercial institutions, concluded the potential for significant savings. The study estimated 15.9% cut down in electricity bill, 31.1% in the fuel bill, and total energy bill saving of 21.7%, if the institutions implemented the recommended measures.<sup>141</sup> In a similar study conduct on public sector, a 20% of energy bill savings are achievable through similar measures by the year 2020.<sup>142</sup> The study indicates that measures would mount to a public sector energy-spending cut of approximately \$1 billion.<sup>143</sup>

Jordan has been at the forefront of its neighbors in creating an energy saving legislative framework. The Kingdom has also been a pioneer in providing potential investors with incentives, tax credits, and customs exemptions. The Renewable Energy & Energy Efficiency Law of 2004 is designed to facilitate Jordan's goal of 10% renewable energy production by 2020.<sup>144</sup> It also serves as framework for energy conservation. The law aims to achieve the reduction of energy consumption, without affecting industrial production or standards of living by imposing tariffs and removing subsidies on petroleum and electricity. It uses a pricing structure that is based on actual cost.<sup>145</sup> The law also encourages the use of high efficiency equipment and services. In accordance with the 2007 renewable energy law, qualified renewable energy plants receive a 75% income tax exemption for the first 10 years of the project's life.<sup>146</sup>

Finally, in 2011 the royal commission initiated the development of multiple efficiency codes that included updated guidelines for thermal insulation and energy efficient building codes.<sup>147</sup>

Renewable energy creation in the Kingdom includes increased exploitation of solar, wind, and hydropower. Currently, a number of ambitious projects to produce solar energy exist in the Kingdom. Since the 1980s, Jordan has established several wind energy projects. Six of the projects have proven feasible with a total capacity of 500-660 MW, promoting plans to expand this field of energy production.<sup>148</sup>

Hydropower exploitation in Jordan remains very modest. Total electricity generated by renewable means accounts for only 0.3% of all national electricity production.<sup>149</sup> Jordan currently has two hydro systems that contribute minimally to energy production. The first is King Talal Dam that was constructed in the 1970 on the Zarqa River.<sup>150</sup> The second hydro project is the Aqaba powers station.<sup>151</sup> The limited water resources in the Kingdom will continue to limit the extent of hydropower exploitation. Lastly, biofuel appears to provide another attractive option. It entails the capturing of landfill gases that had been in limited use since 1981. Feasibility studies indicated great potential for expansion.<sup>152</sup>

### **Civil Nuclear Program**

The recent discovery of yellow cake deposits in Jordan, offers a glimpse of hope in the efforts to reduce energy imports. King Abdullah proclaimed that “for the first time in [Jordan’s] history, [Jordanians] are sitting on a commodity that people are interested in.”<sup>153</sup> Jordan has an estimated reserve of 60,000 tons of uranium in the central region.<sup>154</sup> In 2011, geological surveys identified 12,300 tons of potential uranium in an 18 square Km area. The area is capable of yielding 2000 tons annually, which would be sufficient to fuel a proposed local civil nuclear program with a spare for exportation.<sup>155</sup> In 2010, Jordan signed a deal with the French company

AVERA to commence mining operations.<sup>156</sup> By 2030, the Kingdom's intends to provide 30% of overall energy demand through nuclear power fueled with indigenous uranium deposits.

Accordingly, the Kingdom is planning to have an operational reactor by the year 2020.<sup>157</sup> The proposed nuclear program would have several benefits. It will lead to energy independence, delivery of reasonably priced-electricity, and revenue generation through export. The program will also provide an opportunity for infrastructure upgrade and job creation. Additionally, Jordan anticipates a decreased of carbon dioxide emission with a reduced reliance on fossil fuels.

Moreover, the program would play a critical role in supporting a proposed joint Jordanian-Israeli project designed to save the steadily vanishing Dead Sea – the Red-Dead Canal.<sup>158</sup> Since 2008, Jordan has signed bilateral nuclear cooperation agreements with France, China, the Republic of Korea, Canada, Russia, Argentina, the U.K., Spain, Japan, Romania, and Turkey; paving the way for program implantation.<sup>159</sup>

The early phase of the program involves of a nuclear plant construction in the Gulf of Aqaba area that would produce electricity in addition to supporting a desalinate plant. A second reactor will then be constructed to support water pumping and desalination in concert with the Red-Dead Canal. The long-term plan includes the four reactors that will provide the Kingdom with 30% of its annual energy needs and excess electricity for export to neighboring countries.<sup>160</sup>

The Fukushima nuclear accident has resulted in an increased opposition to Jordan's plan to exploit nuclear energy.<sup>161</sup> Despite the opposition, Jordan's plan to pursue the nuclear program remains on the table. Another hurdle to Jordan's civil nuclear program is the steep cost. The Kingdom envisions a public-private partnership to generate the necessary capital for the program.<sup>162</sup>

## **Oil Shale**

Since the steep increase of crude oil price in 2011, there has been an uptake in Jordan's exploitation of its oil shale deposits. Studies have indicated that Jordan has the third largest oil shale reserve in the world. Geological surveys indicate a reserve that covers 60% of the country. The survey indicated an estimated reserve of 40,000 million tons of shale rocks that is equivalent to 4000 million ton of oil.<sup>163</sup> In 2011, the Jordanian government signed a deal with an Estonian state-owned Eesti Energia. The agreement stipulates the production of 36,000 barrels annually. The increased annual production is expected to achieve maximum productivity over a 10-year period. The agreement also contains a plan to generate 600-900 MW of electricity with a plant expected to become operational in 2015.<sup>164</sup>

## **Water Scarcity**

As the world's fourth driest country, the chronic water deficit presents a potential undermining problem to the Kingdom's long-term stability. Jordan has been considered a water poor country since 1955. Since then, Jordan has gradually dropped below the international standard for poverty line of 1000 cubic meters (cm) of water annually per person.<sup>165</sup> Since the 1950s the increasing population and decreasing water supply, has brought the Kingdom to a troubling level of per capita of 145 cm annually in 2007.<sup>166</sup> Jordan's per capita consumption is expected to decrease steadily to 91 cm of water by 2022 with a projected population reaching 7.8 million.<sup>167</sup> Correspondingly, this per capita will place Jordan in the Absolute Water Shortage Category, prompting a serious effort to avert the problem.<sup>168</sup>

Facing water shortage for five decades, the Kingdom has thus far been able to mitigation the effects of the problem. The kingdom's implementation of several water conservation programs and its concerted efforts to reclaim wastewater, have lessened the effects felt by the

population. This mitigation however, has also placed an overreliance on groundwater exploitation. The excessive use of non-renewable groundwater has brought it down to a dangerously low level.<sup>169</sup> Despite, the Kingdom has satisfied domestic, agricultural, and industrial needs for the most part. Jordan's ability to cope with water demands in the future is diminishing at a troubling rate due to a growing population and treacherous depletion of non-renewable groundwater.<sup>170</sup>

### **2008's National Water Strategy**

Faced with a daunting future, the Kingdom has been studying potential long-term solutions. In 2008, the Kingdom published a national water strategy to confront the looming problem.<sup>171</sup> The ambitious strategy delineates a comprehensive approach to meet the growing demands by the year 2022. In addition to refining existing water conservation policies, the strategy outlines new policies that deal with dangerous practices concerning the excessive use of non-renewable water and application of risky artificial recharge of ground water. In addition to policy reforms, the strategy's proposes innovative methods and projects for water procurement beyond Kingdom's existing capacity. The strategy advocates efficient desalination methods and regional solutions for a problem looming in the face of the Jordan River basin riparian states.

### **Institutional Reform**

To ensure success, Jordan's water strategy places emphasis on the enforcement aspect of water conservation and groundwater misuse prevention. The enforcement of policies that tackle topics of domestic water overuse, inefficient irrigation practices, and other groundwater and wastewater control will play a significant role in achieving water security over the next decade. In addition to the enforcement aspect of policy, the Ministry of Water and Irrigation underscores the importance of public's awareness in defying the approaching problem. Since publishing the

strategy, the Ministry of Water and Irrigation has sanctioned a structured tariffs system that decreases non-revenue consumption of water to 25%. The new tariff system also addresses the wasteful agricultural sector's water consumption by incentivizing efficient irrigation.<sup>172</sup> Finally, the strategy implements policies designed to maximize graywater reclamation to increase its share of the water supply to 15% by 2022.<sup>173</sup>

### **Regional Cooperation**

Regional cooperation, mainly with Israel, will play a vital role in solving both states' growing water poverty issue. Since forging peace in 1994, both states have increased their collaboration to solve the growing problem, exhibiting a unique case of cooperation between former enemies.<sup>174</sup> Cooperation has since included the dedication of a supplementary Jordan Basin share of 50 Million Cubic Meters (MCM) to the Kingdom, the storage of Jordan's water share in Lake Tiberius, and the sharing of enhanced irrigation equipment and methods.<sup>175</sup>

More notably, cooperation between both countries extends to the arena of tackling common environmental concerns. Both states are getting closer than ever to the execution of an ambitious joint project designed to address the Dead Sea's declining level. The joint project that transfers waters from the Gulf of Aqaba will ultimately restore the historical level of Dead Sea at 416m below sea level by 2054.<sup>176</sup>

### **The Red Sea – Dead Sea Canal**

The joint project to save the declining Dead Sea level will also provide a major solution for the region's water woes. Aside from restoring the Dead Sea's original level, the proposed project includes a plan to generate hydropower and desalinate sufficient seawater to satisfy Jordan, Israel, and the Palestinian Territories demands. In 2012, a host of nations including the U.S., provided funds that facilitated a World Bank feasibility study for the proposed project.<sup>177</sup>

The study concluded that the project is indeed feasible, opening the door for funding discussions. The project indicated a potential intake near Aqaba port with a capacity of 2,000 MCM. The transferred water would require pumping of 220m in elevation before it descends 650m and travels 174km to the Dead Sea.<sup>178</sup> The difference in elevation would then facilitate hydropower generation that would power desalination plants with a capacity of 858 MCM. Once reached, the projected capacity would supply the demands of Jordan, Israel, and the Palestinian territories.<sup>179</sup> Other tourism and agricultural projects would be feasible along the canal's path as it traverses the Wadi Araba (Arava).<sup>180</sup> Though the project still demands pledges of loans and international grants, it presents a prospect for a long-term solution. Although, Jordan's strategy requires time to mature, the Kingdom's concerted efforts to resolve its chronic water shortage significantly enhance its long-term stability.

### **Recommended U.S. Role**

Since its founding, the Kingdom has maintained cooperative relations with the U.S. With the exception of brief period in the early 1990s when Jordan refused to join the coalition to liberate Kuwait from Saddam's aggression, the Kingdom has been a reliable ally. Since the attacks on September 11, 2001, the Kingdom has demonstrated a higher level of friendship and cooperation as it wholeheartedly supported the U.S. in its global war on terror. Jordan's enormous participation in the efforts to fight Totalitarian Islamist continues to be exemplary today. Since the rise of DAESH and the establishment of radical state saddling the Iraqi – Syrian borders, the Kingdom has been at the vanguard of the fight. Moreover, since signing the peace treaty with Israel, the Kingdom has played a critical role in promoting Arab – Israeli peace. The U.S. has provided significant economic and military aid that contributed considerably to the Kingdom's resiliency since the 1950s. It is of U.S. national interest to maintain a stable Jordan as

an integral ally for regional stability. The U.S. ability to strengthen the Kingdom is critical to maintaining orderly Middle East. The recommended role of the U.S. includes but not limited to following:

Diplomatically:

- The U.S. should renew its efforts to restart the Arab-Israeli peace process. By facilitating an enduring resolution to the Palestinian question, long-term regional stability will ensue. Moreover, such a resolution will deprive radical Islamic movements in the region of their most persuasive recruiting rhetoric.
- The U.S. should apply diplomatic pressure to prevent aspiring regional hegemony (i.e. Iran and Turkey) from threatening the stability of the region including that of the Kingdom.
- The U.S. should support the Kingdom's path for political reform. This support however, should avoid applying pressure for rapid reform. The risk of rapid reform and the likelihood of a Totalitarian Islamist takeover remain too high.

Economically:

- The U.S. should continue its trend of aid and direct foreign investment in the Kingdom. U.S. aid has been critical to the Kingdom's economic restructuring and will likely be needed for the near future.
- The U.S. should maximize its trade with the Kingdom and exploit the existing trade agreement to the fullest. The growing trade with the Kingdom has been vital in closing the lingering deficit.

- The U.S. should support Jordan's civil nuclear program with funding and expertise to lessen the Kingdom's high dependence on imported energy and its overburden on public spending.
- The U.S. should support the joint Jordanian-Israeli endeavors to solve water scarcity problem through funding and expertise provided for the Red Sea – Dead Sea Canal project.

Military and Intelligence Cooperation:

- The U.S. should maintain its current level of military cooperation with the Kingdom.
- The U.S. should continue arms transfers that have played a fundamental role in the modernization of the Kingdom's armed forces.
- The U.S. should support the Jordanian armed forces' endeavors to fight radicalized movements within the Kingdom and regionally.
- The U.S. should continue its intelligence sharing and cooperation with Jordan's General Intelligence Directorate (GIJ) to fight undermining radical movements threatening the Kingdom and U.S. interest in the Middle East

**Conclusion**

Throughout its short history, the Kingdom has weathered grave internal and external challenges due to its effective governance and the resiliency inherent to its Bedouin tradition. The Kingdom today is embarked on political and economic paths of reform designed to generate enduring stability. Although its efforts for political and economic reform are in their infancy, they nonetheless offer a glimpse of optimism. With the support of the U.S., international community, and regional partners, the Kingdom will transform its blueprint of ambitious and innovative solutions into reality.

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