

MONARCHY IN WEST ASIA: A CASE STUDY OF JORDAN

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MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation entitled “**MONARCHY IN WEST ASIA: A CASE STUDY OF JORDAN**” submitted by me for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other university.

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CERTIFICATE

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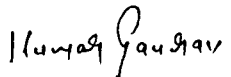
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Dedicated to My Parents ...

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PREFACE

Being a strategically important region, West Asia has always been a focal point in the international relations, particularly since the First World War after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, which led to the creation of modern Arab world and the formation of several new states, majority of which opted for a monarchical order of one brand or another. Understanding of West Asian monarchy- the failure of some and prevalence of others- merits a special theme which is the focus of this study.

After the First World War, several monarchical regimes that came into existence such as Jordan, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates are still surviving whereas several others such as Egypt, Iraq, Yemen, Libya and Iran have since collapsed. Jordan is a state where all the crosscurrents prevalent in the modern Arab world can be found and is a perfect example of rarest of modern political forms, i.e., the Absolute monarchy.

The Jordanian monarchy has proved to be one of the most resilient regimes in the modern West Asia. It has been blessed with two especially astute kings, Abdullah ibn Hussein, the founder of the kingdom, and Hussein ibn Talal, the architect of modern Jordan. The role of Abdullah and Hussein in providing leadership and in maintaining elite cohesion by serving as the “unifying essence” of the political order was of immeasurable importance at critical junctures.

Despite many vicissitudes, they have exhibited a remarkable ability to stay in power and rule their rapidly changing people - changing not only with respect to origin, but also in socioeconomic composition as well as to survive the pressures and forces exerted from outside the kingdom, from the region and from the broader world. However, King Abdullah ibn al-Hussein struggles to contain the Islamist challenge by cracking down on the opposition parties critical of Jordan’s accommodative approach towards Israel.

Thus, while the resilience of the institution of monarchy in Jordan has defied the predictions of Arab revolutionaries and political theorists, challenges to its stability and adaptability are no less formidable, which is the focus of this study.

CHAPTER - I
INTRODUCTION

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

A monarchy is usually defined as a form of government in which an individual rules as head of state and the person who heads a monarchy is called a monarch. However, there is no clear definition of monarchy as such. Holding unlimited political power in the state is not the defining characteristic, as many constitutional monarchies such as the United Kingdom are considered monarchy. Hereditary rule is often a common characteristic, but elective monarchies such as the Vatican City are also considered monarchy, and some states have hereditary rulers, but are considered republics such as the Dutch Republic. In general usage, however, it is the institution through which the post of head of state is filled through inheritance or dynastic succession. In absolute monarchy, the monarch claims, if seldom exercise, a monopoly of political power, i.e., Saudi Arabia and Morocco. In constitutional monarchy, the monarch fulfills an essentially ceremonial function largely devoid of political significance.¹

The term “monarchy” or monocratic rule, first suggested by Max Weber, has been coming into use in recent years. When anthropologists discuss monocratic rule, they usually mean one-person rule among primitives, which prevails, or prevailed before the European conquest, in Polynesia, Africa and Asia. The economic, political, judicial, and priestly functions of monocratic rulers differ widely within the same cultural zone. These rulers are generally regarded as of divine origin, and their acts are invested with divine qualities. The power of such a ruler is typically related in a magical way to successful crops and wars: there can be little doubt that military leadership is often at the heart of his power. When the rule of this kind of king-priest was extended over large territories, especially in the ancient Orient, it was accompanied by the development of a bureaucracy, which often combines priestly and administrative functions.²

¹ Andrew Heywood (2003), *Politics*, New York: Palgrave, p.342.

² David L. Sills (1968), *International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, vol. 9 & 10, New York: Macmillan and Free Press, p.412.

The subordination of government to a moral standard and to spiritual authority was probably the outstanding feature of most medieval political thinking. The use of political power was considered to be limited both by the reason implicit in customary law and by God's will and purpose as embodied in the law of nature. In contrast, one of the subsequent major traditions held that politics was ethically autonomous and supreme in and of itself. The development of the doctrine of sovereignty was one of the important reflections of this change, and a crucial stage in the transformation, was undoubtedly the formulation of the theory of the divine right of kings by which was maintained the notion of non-resistance to monarchs whether they observed the law or not.³

Hegel believed that only the constitutional monarch of a modern state, born to sovereignty regardless of his personal abilities or constituencies, limited by harsh experience and public sentiments to legitimization of public acts, could depoliticize the final power of decision. This alone would allow unimpeding public administration according to rational legal standards. Marxist and technocratic dreams of rational administration will remain dreams as long as the dreamers offer no alternative solution to the fundamental political problem.⁴ The fact is that, even in a limited context, there is no agreement on the precise meaning of monarchy. It could vary sharply, not only between different writers, but within the works of the same man. In addition, it evolved through the century, so that a clear understanding of what is meant at one time might be confusing when applied to a later part of the period. It is, therefore, necessary to explore and reconstruct contemporary understandings of the term, which is so important for its application to the political struggles of the time.⁵

West Asia is perhaps the only area of the world where traditional monarchies are still surviving. Here, the idea of monarchy simply based on the premise that one person has to be the head of the political community, i.e., one man personal rule- the rule of an individual- who governs in accordance with his personal desires without consulting anyone. It should also be hereditary, i.e., dynastic rule in which the headship of the state

³ W. H. Greenleaf (Oct.,1964), "The Thomasian Tradition and the Theory of Absolute Monarchy", *The English Historical Review*, 79(313):747-760, p.747.

⁴ Bernard Yack (Sep.,1980), "The Rationality of Hegel's Concept of Monarchy", *The American Political Science Review*, 74(3): 709-720, p.709.

⁵ James Day (Jun.,1978), "The Idea of Absolute Monarchy in Seventeenth-Century England", *The Historical Journal*, 21(2): 227-250, p.228.

is transmitted from one member to another of the same family.⁶ The puzzle of monarchical persistence reveals the need for an understanding of the institutions of monarchy in West Asia. How have these regimes survived, in a region hardly famous for political stability and in an age hostile to monarchism is a matter of speculation.

Being a strategically important region, West Asia has always been a focal point in the international relations, particularly since the First World War after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Empire (1299-1922) at the height of its power (16th-17th centuries) spanned three continents controlling much of Southeastern Europe, the West Asia and North Africa with Istanbul as its capital. During the 19th century, the rise of nationalism swept through many countries of the Ottoman Empire and despite efforts of reform and reorganization led to the administrative instability due to the breakdown of centralized government. The Young Turk Revolution began on 3rd July 1908 and quickly spread throughout the empire and speeded the process of disintegration. Finally the defeat of the Ottoman-German alliance in the First World War sealed the fate of the Ottoman Empire and was forced to submit to complete partition.⁷

The fall of the Ottoman Empire led to the creation of modern Arab world and the formation of several new states, majority of which opted for a monarchical order of one brand or another. For setting up political regimes in West Asia, the new states had several options to consider. One distinct choice was the long-familiar order of unchallenged autocracy, subject to no controls. Another option was the novel model of a republican regime, with popular sovereignty and elective government. Other possibilities were non-absolute monarchy, limited by constitution and parliament, as practiced in certain Western States, above all in Britain; and some other variations of kingship, familiar in certain local politics mostly in the Arabian Peninsula - tribal chieftancies headed by widely accepted leaders with or without regal titles. Most of the Arab states had opted for a monarchical order of one brand or another.⁸

⁶ Bernard Lewis (2000), "Monarchy in the Middle East" in Joseph Kostiner (eds) *Middle East Monarchies: The Challenge of Modernity*, Boulder London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, p.15.

⁷ see Stanford J. Shaw (1977), *History of the Ottoman Empire and modern Turkey*, vol. II, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.273-339; H. S. Deighton (Oct., 1946), "The Arab Middle East and the Modern World", *International Affairs*, 22(4): 511-520.

⁸ Ami Ayalon, "Post-Ottoman Arab Monarchies: Old Bottles, New Labels?", p.23.

Infact, the monarchy which succeeded the Ottoman Empire can be summarized by two main characteristics. Firstly, monarchical principles were applied without official Islamic legitimacy. Secondly, without an official religious sanction, adoption and exercise of rulers' practices did not develop into a desired norm or into an official doctrine of monarchical rule. Islamic monarchy, therefore, had to cope up with the two main challenges: the need to legitimize and justify a rule, and the need to balance absolutist rule based on administrative and military arms, with deference to ascriptive, religious, ethnic, and class divisions, to sustain dynasty and factional dynamism. Thus, the monarchical rule which originated from seizure of power by force was directed towards perceiving the common good for society in general and put in Islamic terms to gain the support of the people and Islamic community. It also demonstrated how "kin-based organisation can co-exist with bureaucratic institutions and how state control and centralisation may be achieved on the basis of coalescing a melange of groups, through patrimonial methods, i.e., by offering administrative ranks and economic benefits as well as through rough bargaining."⁹ However, the longevity of the monarchy depends upon its administrative and military caliber as well as its ability to serve the society because the ruler can claim legitimacy only through his performance.

Political Ideologies and Institutions

For most newly independent countries, the basic political challenge for the West Asia in the World War II era has been the task of state building: the creation of governments that are legitimate, stable and capable of acting autonomously both regionally and globally. For a variety of reasons, this has not been easy. Firstly, the current political structures of many West Asian countries were imposed by outside powers, rather than resulting from a gradual, internally driven process. Thus, the governments of these newly independent countries often lacked the political, economic and social institutions and the widespread legitimacy that would have existed had the state-building activity begun at the grassroots level. In many countries, the presence of powerful multinational corporations notably international petroleum companies, meant that the new states were immediately drawn into the global political economy without

⁹ Kostiner, *Middle East Monarchies*, pp.1-3.

having the opportunity to determine the type of relationship that would be of greatest benefit to their own development. This too, had made the tasks of governance more difficult.¹⁰

In eight countries- Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates- monarchs remain in power. These monarchs not only reign but rule as well. In contrast, monarchs in the neighbouring West Asian countries of Egypt, Iraq, Yemen, Libya, and Iran fell from power. What characterizes the nature of state in these countries is a matter of debate. Under traditional international legal theory, an entity aspiring to be recognised as a new state had to have a defined territory; a permanent population; an effective government; and the capacity to enter into relations with other states, and did not expressly include the existence of democratic institutions within the entity, or the consent of the population to the creation of the state.¹¹

However, Chehabi and Linz define a sultanistic regime as a regime characterized by personal rule unchecked by restraints, norms or ideology. "Corruption reigns supreme at all levels of society" under a sultanistic ruler; the distinction between the state and the regime becomes "blurred". In a sultanistic regime, thus, the ruler has an enormous degree of discretionary power, despite the narrow social base of the regime.¹² In contrast, Linz defines an authoritarian regime as political systems with limited, not responsible, political pluralism: without elaborate and guiding ideology; without intensive or extensive political mobilization; and in which a leader exercises power within formally ill-defined limits but actually quite predictable ones.¹³ Meanwhile, Tetreault's discussion of politics in Kuwait demonstrates that the West Asian monarchies are a subtype of authoritarian rule rather than examples of sultanistic regimes. Citizens in Kuwait are in conflict with the regime to expand political pluralism while limiting the rulers'

¹⁰ Deborah J. Gerner (2004), "Middle Eastern Politics" in Deborah J. Gerner & Jillian Schweider (eds.) *Understanding the Contemporary Middle East*, Boulder London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, p.96.

¹¹ Sean D. Murphy, (July,1999), "Democratic Legitimacy and the Recognition of States and Governments", *International and Comparative Law Quarterly*, 48: 545-581, p.546.

¹² H. E. Chehabi and Juan J. Linz (eds.) (1998), *Sultanistic Regimes*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, p.7-10.

¹³ Juan J. Linz (1970), "An Authoritarian Regime: Spain" in Erik Allardt and Stein Rokkan (eds.) *Mass Politics: Studies in Political Sociology*, New York: Free Press, p.255.

prerogatives. It is not a fight to control a lone dictator- the amirs of Kuwait are thus not “sultans”.¹⁴

While trying to categorise West Asian monarchy to an appropriate regime type, it is important to note the processes of regime building, state formation, and nation crafting. In contrast to European states, the regime generally pre-dates the state and the nation in West Asian monarchy. In Jordan and Iraq, the British introduced members of Hashemite family to rule previously non-existent states. Imperial powers recruited and manipulated the ruling families of Egypt, Kuwait, and Morocco to provide local administration for colonial rule. In Saudi Arabia, a tribal alliance conquered territory and began building a state with British and U.S. assistance. In all of these cases, the monarchy appeared before the apparatus of the modern state. Western powers generally supplied the machinery of the state as well as borders of these new countries. Moreover, the national identity and group feeling associated with these states is an even more recent phenomenon. This pattern of regime-led state building is present not only in West Asian monarchy, but also in most of the West Asia. The monarchical regime, however, built a new state around itself rather than deconstructing an already existing state into the toy of a sultanistic ruler.¹⁵

Infact, the prevalence of monarchy in the West Asia is best understood as a reflection of the vagaries of historical accident- particularly British imperial policy and the imperatives of historical process- notably the formation of new states and the building of new nations in the realms until recently ruled by the Ottoman Empire and its neighbours. That is to say, the monarchies of the region were initially instruments of European imperial policy. These monarchy took root not because of such putative precedents, however, but because there is an affinity between monarchy as a regime type and the projects of nation building and state formation. It is well to remember that almost all the monarchies of the West Asia are creations of the twentieth century. Only the Moroccan and Omani dynasties can claim a genuine centuries-long pedigree in power, and they reflect the imposition of foreign, largely European, political templates. By and

¹⁴ Mary Ann Tetreault (2000), *Stories of Democracy: Politics and Society in Contemporary Kuwait*, New York: Columbia University Press, p.2.

¹⁵ Russell E. Lucas (2004), “Monarchical Authoritarianism: Survival and Political Liberalization in a Middle Eastern Regime Type”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 36: 103-119, p.106.

large, both the existence and the character of the monarchy of the West Asia reflect British imperial policy in the region.¹⁶

A further complication has been “the blurred boundaries between the state and the collective, supra-state identity inspired by common Arab-Islamic culture, history and vision”.¹⁷ As a result, there is a significant tension between the utopian dream of a united pan-Arab nation with a shared history, culture, and sense of common identity stretching from the strait of Hormuz to the Atlantic and the practical dictates of more than twenty politically sovereign Arab states. In a different world, a single Arab nation-state might have emerged. The region is at least as ethnically cohesive as India, Russia or Indonesia and is comparable in size. However, European colonial involvement and competing interests of both indigenous and international elites prevented this outcome. Nonetheless, some Arabs view the existing political divisions as illegitimate and reject, for instance, the separation of Lebanon from Syria. In this context, they believe it perfectly appropriate for one state to intervene in the internal affairs of another, since all are part of the greater Arab nation. From the Arab perspective, the contemporary nation-state model may always be a shoe that doesn't fit quite right, creating a blister or shoe in one place or another.¹⁸

However, the monarchy showed a higher survival rate than the presumably more modern parliamentary systems. In general, absolutist monarchy lasted longer than constitutional monarchy, such as those bequeathed Egypt and Iraq. The relative strength of monarchy in the West Asia is not due to its evocation of regional traditions- hereditary monarchy as understood today is not a traditional regime type in the West Asia- but to its affinity with the projects of nation building and state formation, which consume the attention of all the rulers of the West Asia. Huntington may be right that monarchy is ultimately-too brittle and restrictive a regime to accommodate the political demands of new social groups. In the less than long run, however, monarchy is particularly well suited to the requirements of state formation, especially in its early stages. As Perry Anderson has shown, centralisation of authority, destruction of old intermediate groups,

¹⁶ Lisa Anderson (1991), “Absolutism and the Resilience of Monarchy in the Middle East”, *Political Science Quarterly*, 105(1): 1-15, pp.3-4.

¹⁷ Avaraham Sela (1998), *The Decline of the Arab-Israeli Conflict: Middle East Politics and the Quest for Regional Order*, Albany: State University of New York Press, p.4.

¹⁸ Gerner, “Middle Eastern Politics”, p.96.

establishment of nationwide conscription, taxation, and market relations can be effectively accomplished by absolutist monarchs ostensibly acting to preserve the historical prerogatives of the wealthy and powerful.¹⁹

Sources of Regime Legitimacy

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Arab leaders attempted to gain legitimacy in a variety of ways and with considerable ideological innovation, e.g. Bathism, balancing state-based claims with the aspirations of the Arab nation as a whole. By the early 1970s, two forms of governance- conservative monarchy and military or single-party revolutionary republics- dominated the political landscape. The traditional monarchy, such as those of the Arabian Peninsula, were strongly patriarchal, while the Constitutional monarchy like those of Jordan, Morocco, and Iran, maintained the monarch as the ultimate political authority but also established elected legislatures with modest amounts of authority and developed significant governmental bureaucracies. In contrast, some of the revolutionary states functioned under authoritarian personalistic leadership most notably Libya, Syria and Iraq. Whereas others, e.g., Algeria, Egypt, Mauritania, and Tunisia, relied on the strength of a dominant political ideology, as expressed through a single political party, to provide support and legitimacy for the state leadership. While the Israeli and Turkish regimes are based on secular and formally democratic norms- although without the political integration of ethnic or religious minorities- and accepted the principle of public accountability for the political leadership.²⁰

Most of the monarchies of the West Asia are endowed with deeper historical roots or greater traditional legitimacy than their avowedly liberal or socialist republican counterparts. Indeed, the region is rife with "Presidential monarchy," regimes in which a strongman dominates a state with relatively few stable political institutions. From Algeria's Houari Boumediene, Tunisia's Habib Bourguiba, Libya's Muammar el-Qaddafi, Egypt's Gamal Abdel Nasser and Anwar Sadat, Syria's Hafiz el-Asad to Iraq's Saddam Hussein, post-independence politics in the Arab world has been typified by

¹⁹ Perry Anderson (1974), *Lineages of the Absolutist State*, London: Vergo, pp.17-18.

²⁰ Gerner, "Middle Eastern Politics", p.96-98.

highly centralized and personalized regimes.²¹ King Farouk of Egypt is said to have remarked, "My good Pasha, the will of the people emanates from my will!"²² Tunisia's President, Bourguiba is said to have answered an American researcher's query, "What system? I am the system!"²³

As in the formal monarchy, in almost all of these governments, the family of the ruler has been prominent in the ruling circles: Bourguiba's son, Qaddafi's cousins, Asad's brother, Saddam's in-laws have all played important roles in the policy-making and security establishments. Moreover, in recent years and after several decades of instability in the 1950s and 1960s, particularly in the Fertile Crescent, the President's designated successor has usually assumed power upon the death or disability of the ruler. In Algeria, where Boumedienne appeared to have had no favorite, his successor was selected by the elite of the ruling party and the army. By and large, ratification of the ruler's selection by his predecessor- or at most his election by a small elite- constitutes the procedure for succession, one little different in substance from King Hussein's designation of his brother, or King Hassan's of his son, or the Saud family princes' agreement on an order of succession.²⁴

Monarchy in the West Asia also tended to require and utilise religious legitimacy to a higher degree. Monarchy and religion in general seem to have a strong universal relationship, but in the case of the Arab world, the necessary to find a relationship with religious legacies is evident in several states, perhaps as part of the quest for authenticity. This may take the form of claiming descent from the family of the Prophet, or of being guardian of holy places, or of defending the faith, or of purifying it from the corruption of external as well as domestic impurities. Furthermore, Monarchical establishments in the region, due to intermarry with the ruling families of powerful tribal and other notable families' groups as a basis for cooperation and loyalty such as in Jordan and Saudi Arabia further enhanced its legitimacy.²⁵

²¹ Anderson, "Absolutism and the Resilience of Monarchy", p.11.

²² P. J. Vatikiotis (1961), *The Egyptian Army in Politics*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, p.39.

²³ see Clement Henry Moore (1965), *Tunisia since Independence*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

²⁴ Anderson, "Absolutism and the Resilience of Monarchy", p.12.

²⁵ Gabriel Ben-Dor, "Patterns of Monarchy in the Middle East", p.76.

Political Islam

The political patterns established in the West Asia in the initial years of independence continue to exist even today, although with some modifications in response to pressures for increased political liberalization. At the same time, in recent decades, a new model- the Islamic Republic- has mounted an increasingly significant challenge to the secular, nationalist ideologies used to legitimize both existing regimes and opposition movements in the revolutionary states. It stems particularly from two causes. Firstly, when people believe that the government is not responding to their concerns, often turn to religion as a source of tradition & stability, and religious expression thus becomes a way to articulate frustration with the existing political structure. Secondly, individuals often focus on the political dimensions of religion when they perceive themselves as oppressed by the existing secular government. Both elements were present in Iran under the rule of Pahlavi leader Mohammad Reza Shah, which were responsible to the Iranian revolution that culminated in the establishment of the Islamic Republic.²⁶

In order to understand the relevance of political Islam in today's world, let us first try to analyze the meaning of Islamist in a broad framework. An Islamist is anyone who believes that the Koran and the Hadith (traditions of the Prophet's life, actions, and words) contain important principles about Muslim governance and society, and who tries to implement these principles in some way. This definition embraces a broad spectrum that includes both radical and moderate, violent and peaceful, traditional and modern, democratic and anti-democratic principles. At one extreme, it includes Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda; on the other, the ruling moderate Justice and Development Party (AKP) in Turkey, which seeks membership in the European Union and cooperates with Washington on key aspects of regional politics. The moderate side of the spectrum vastly outweighs the more dangerous, violent and radical segment, yet it is these latter radical forces that constitute the focus of most governments and the media. Islamism also includes fundamentalist views (literalist, narrow, intolerant) but does not equate with it.²⁷

²⁶ Richard Bulleit (1999), "Twenty Years of Islamic Politics", *Middle East Journal*, 53(2): 189-200, p.192.

²⁷ Graham E. Fuller (Sep., 2004), "Islamists in the Arab World: The Dance around Democracy", *Carnegie Papers*, 49: 1-15, p.3.

The term 'Islamism', however, refers to a wide variety of political activity undertaken in the name of Islam. While the extremists, for instance, seek to impose change from above through holy wars, many others pursue a bottom-up approach, what Gilles Kepel calls "Islamisation from below".²⁸ Under military and political pressures, Islamic extremism- particularly the extremist variety- may peter out, but Islamism as a movement will not easily succumb to external blows, thanks to the impressive social infrastructure it has developed in the Arab world. In the past three decades, as autocratic regimes abdicated social responsibility, Islamist groups built up a large, organized social base through independent works of charitable societies, consumer cooperatives, educational institutions, social welfare and medical services.²⁹

Drawing on the charismatic leadership and its extensive network of social activity, Islamism "provides political responses to societal changes by imagining a future, the foundations for which rest on re-appropriated, reinvented concepts borrowed from Islamic tradition".³⁰ It either takes the form of a violent protest movement, or an anti-state ideology challenging the legitimacy and coherence of the state. What has conduced to the emergence of Islamism as the natural counterpart to the authoritarian regimes in the Arab world is the latter's failure to cope with the wilting forces of globalization. The fact that Islamism flourished during the 1980s when Arab states were undergoing a rapid shift from state-led to market-led development points to the casual connection.³¹

The current Islamic resurgence is a broad-based grassroots response to multiple crises. It is a struggle for both cultural authenticity and self-determination.³² Some have described it as "civil society striking back" at incompetent and inefficient yet authoritarian and dictatorial states.³³ In many places, it plays role similar to that of a state

²⁸ see Gilles Kepel (1985), *Muslim extremism in Egypt: The Prophet and the Pharaoh*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

²⁹ Aswini K. Mahapatra (July-Sep., 2007), "Arab and Turkish Responses to Globalisation", *India Quarterly Journal*, LXIII(3): 1-26, p.7.

³⁰ Guilain Denoeux (June, 2002), "The Forgotten Swamp: Navigating Political Islam", *Middle East Policy*, 9, p.65.

³¹ Mahapatra, "Arab and Turkish Responses to Globalisation", p.8.

³² see Nazih Ayubi (1991), *Political Islam: Religion and Politics in the Arab World*, London: Routledge.

³³ see Emmanuel Sivan (1990), "The Islamic Resurgence: Civil Society Strikes Back" in Lawrence Kaplan (eds.) *Religious Radicalism and Politics in the Middle East*, New York: State University of New York Press, pp.96-108.

by providing health care, education, and economic assistance. Some see modern Islamic movements as not just institution of civil society but as the authentic impulse of the masses to democratize Muslim polities. Others in the West as well as in the Muslim world fear that democratization will facilitate Islamisation in the West Asia, destroying regimes, threatening access to oil, and undermining the Arab-Israeli peace process.³⁴

Although the first and most successful contemporary implementation of political Islam occurred at the edge of the Arab world, in Iran, the Islamic model has subsequently been applied in Sudan and Mauritania, presents a major challenge in Algeria, and had influenced political dynamics across the entire region, including among Palestinians, in Egypt, and in previously Christian-dominated Lebanon. While it may not dominate at the national level, political Islam's impact at the local level has been profound in many countries.³⁵ Its emphasis on the socio-economic equity and justice promised but not achieved by the nationalist revolutionary ideologies, its comprehensive belief system, which gives guidance on virtually all aspects of life, and its extensive critique of Western goals and values are all crucial to understanding Islam's success as an instrument of political action.

According to contemporary Islamist thought, it is not so much the form of government that matters but its ethico-legal foundation and its function. Government and governance are perceived as techniques to see essential things implemented, and those values are Islamic ones- or simply Islam itself³⁶. Put differently, it matters not so much whether the head of state be called amir, sultan, or king, or even whether he descended from the Prophet and the Quraysh; what matters is that he fulfills his duties as an Islamic ruler, defending the faith, implementing the sharia, and guaranteed order. Most of the Islamists inside Morocco, Jordan and Saudi Arabia do not question the institution of the monarchy as such but call for basic reform and renewal of the state and society.³⁷

³⁴ see Judith Miller (1993), "The Challenge of Radical Islam", *Foreign Affairs* 72(2): 43-56.

³⁵ see Salwa Ismail (Winter, 2001), "The Paradox of Islamist Politics", *Middle East Report*, 221: 34-39.

³⁶ see Gudrun Kramer (1997), "Islamist Notions of Democracy" in Joel Benin and Joe Stark (eds.) *Political Islam: Essays from Middle East Report*, Berkeley: University of California Press, pp.71-82.

³⁷ Gudrun Kramer, "Good Counsel to the King: The Islamist Opposition in Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Morocco", p.280.

Regime Typology in West Asia

Governments in the West Asia on the basis of their ideology can be roughly classified into four groups: nationalist revolutionary republics, monarchy, Islamic states, and conditional democracies. Nationalist revolutionary republics such as Algeria, Libya, Egypt, Syria and Iraq are generally characterized by single-party rule with a strong institutionalized state structure. Monarchy, whether traditional or parliamentary, include Jordan, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and a number of small Gulf states. Turkey, Israel and Lebanon are generally classified as democratic states, although each has elements that may call this into question; whereas, Iran, Mauritania, and Sudan have labeled themselves as Islamic republics.³⁸

Nationalist Revolutionary Republics

Very few countries in the West Asia have genuine multi-party political systems. Instead, many have a single “government” party that dominates landscape and a set of ineffectual often restricted, opposition parties that have little ability to influence the political direction of the country. In this sense, Egypt is the quintessential model of a single-party bureaucratized state. The highly bureaucratized nature of the state, the combination of co-optation and control of opposition parties, extremely limited moves toward political liberalization and economic liberalization have kept the government system established by Nasser essentially intact, even though Nasserism as an ideology has faded.³⁹ Tunisia provides another example of a formally multiparty state in which a single party completely dominates politics. Thus, Tunisia like Egypt, remains de facto a single party state, despite its formal multiparty label. Whereas countries like Syria, Libya and Iraq under Saddam Hussein comes under personalistic systems, all with strong leaders who govern as dictators despite the formal presence of legislative bodies.

Traditional and Parliamentary Monarchy

West Asia is perhaps the only area of the world where traditional monarchies have persisted in a number of states. Drawing on a variety of traditional sources of

³⁸ Gerner, “Middle Eastern Politics”, p.99.

³⁹ see Bahgat Korany (1998), “Restricted Democratization from Above: Egypt” in Bahgat Korany, Rex Brynen, and Paul Noble (eds.) *Political Liberalization and Democratization in the Arab World, vol.2: Comparative Experiences*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner, pp.39-69.

legitimacy such as custom, a history of family governance, ancestral ties to the Prophet Muhammad, a leader's personal attributes, and the royal family's role as a symbol of nationalism, the current Arab monarchy have proved remarkably resilient. A closer look suggests that the monarchical regimes might be better characterized as an adaptation of established forms of patrimonial leadership to the contemporary nation-state system.⁴⁰ This persistence is particularly striking when in the 1950s and 1960s, six monarchies were unable to survive the critical post-colonial period and were removed from power; Egypt, 1952; Tunisia, 1956; Iraq, 1958; Yemen, 1962; South Arabia, 1967; and Libya, 1969. Yet since 1969, only a single additional monarchy- the Pahlavis of Iran has been overthrown, suggesting that the remaining royal rulers have found ways to repress democratic sentiment, co-opt opposition movements or otherwise adopt their rule to address at least minimally, popular pressures for political reform.

Democracies and Conditional Democracies

A few states in the West Asia- Israel, Lebanon, Turkey and perhaps Iran- can be considered at least nominally democratic. These countries developed political arrangements along the lines of the European powers, with parliamentary systems of governance. Yet even these countries are not fully "liberal". Instead, due to the emphasis on religion and ethnicity that is inherent in their political structures, all four might better be labeled "constitutional" democracies. But because of the institutional distinctions that exist between groups of citizens, there are important differences between the democracy found in these states and the liberal democratic tradition of Europe and North America. Neither Turkey nor Iran, is a fully consolidated democracy. In both cases, sovereignty is divided, with an elected President and Legislature constrained by either the military (in Turkey) or religious authorities (in Iran). Whereas Israel and Lebanon face a different set of challenges having to do less with divided sovereignty and more with attempting to maintain certain positions of privilege for a portion of the population based on religion.⁴¹

⁴⁰ see Max Weber (1947), *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, New York: Oxford University Press.

⁴¹ Gerner, "Middle Eastern Politics", pp.117-118.

An Islamic Quasi-Democracy

With the success of the Islamic revolution, a new era of political Islam was born in Iran. Khomeini's "Islamic Republic" was a radical departure from the earlier revolutionary movements in the West Asia. In contrast to Nasserism and Bathism, which combined a variety of anti-colonial, western and Arab ideas, Khomeini and his followers implemented a conservative political agenda that derived almost exclusively from traditional Islamic thought and practice. Although the details of the nature of "Islamic" governance are complex and hotly debated, three characteristics distinguish it. The first is the use of Islamic law- sharia- in place of various systems of civil law. Secondly, the Islamic Republic of Iran placed the supreme authority of the state in the hands of religious councils. Finally, Khomeini followed an approach to Islam that placed a high priority on missionary efforts. Consequently, the Islamic Republic saw itself in the vanguard of an international revolution and immediately sought to export its model of conservative political Islam to other states. Iran has had only limited success in its effort to promote political Islam, but the concept of a conservative Islamic state following sharia has had tremendous influence throughout the West Asia.⁴²

Monarchical Failure

Several monarchical regimes that came into existence in West Asia after the First World War such as Egypt, Iraq, Yemen and Libya that existed by the mid-twentieth century have since collapsed. Several factors account for it.

For instance, it seems that some of the monarchical institutions "aristocratized" themselves. The monarchical dynasties in Egypt and Iraq lashed out to enrich themselves by obtaining land and thereby formed alliances with landowners and merchants and ruling dynasties thus became part of the wealthy landowning class. It also becomes evident that these monarchies had difficulties in accommodating the rise of an educated "new middle class", consisting mainly of government officials as well as professionals. They were, therefore, quite beyond the government's manipulative reach. Secondly, these groups exposed new anti-government perceptions, mainly concerning the neglect (e.g., Yemen and Egypt) of lower-class groups and inability to obtain full independence

⁴² see Ali Rezaei (Spring, 2003), "Last Efforts of Iran's Reformists", *Middle East Report*, 226: 40-46.

from colonial powers. Thirdly, middle-class elements occupied in the 1950s and 1960s the positions of middle-ranking army officers, ready to use the military power in their hands to topple their regimes. This problem was evident in Egypt and Iraq, as well as, in the less developed, societies of Yemen and Libya.⁴³

This process marked these monarchies' counterproductive attempts to establish their legitimacy. Egypt and Iraq failed to establish their legitimacy among their "people" as they did form parliaments and parties, and a formal constitutional regime, but avoided and failed to actually fulfill this pretension and did not transform authorities from "Kings to people".⁴⁴ Moreover, by transforming themselves into landowning aristocracies, these monarchies failed not only to establish popular legitimacy but also uproot themselves from the monarchical codes that had earlier rendered them legitimacy. In addition, these states as well as Yemen and Libya, failed to find legitimacy with surging modernizing elements such as army officers. It also becomes evident that these monarchies failed to align themselves to a foreign major power or superpower, which could possibly have intervened to save their existence. Without this kind of assistance their destiny could have been doomed.⁴⁵

Structural changes and dislocations had given rise to oppositional-revolutionary politics in all four countries; regional and international environments grievously exacerbated the domestic political order throughout the Arab world; rulers were woefully lacking in leadership skills; and the dominant social groups underpinning monarchical rule had hardly a clue about how to reform the existing system in order to forestall upheaval. None of the countries in question had yet become efficiently "modernized" states, i.e., they had developed neither the efficient capacity to address the growing grievances of their increasingly political populations nor the means of efficient repression familiar to Arab politics during more recent decades. In the face of strong radical-rationalist currents, monarchy had not fashioned themselves as the repositories of

⁴³ Kostiner, *Middle East Monarchies*, p.6.

⁴⁴ see Reinhard Bendix (1978), *King or People: Power and the Mandate Rule*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

⁴⁵ see F. Gregory Gause (1993), *The Oil Monarchies*, New York: Council on Foreign Relations.

the national will and the nation's hopes. Consequently, their ability to creatively manipulate diverse political forces was fatally diminished.⁴⁶

By the time of the actual coups, the monarchical regimes had squandered most, if not all, of their symbolic capital. They were thus utterly bereft of support when "Nasir and his generation" executed their coup d'état in Egypt in July 1952, when Colonels Arif and Qasim carried out their coup de grace against the Iraqi Hashmites in July 1958, the coup of Yemeni imam in September 1962, and when the young Colonel Gaddafi emulated his idol, Abd al-Nasir in Libya in September 1969.

However, the fall of the shah of Iran in 1979 stands in striking contrast to the manner in which other West Asian monarchy have been toppled. Most were new regimes toppled mainly by army officers who sought popular support for themselves and their new ideology after seizing power. By contrast, the Iranian Revolution was a mass movement led primarily by clerics who enjoyed popular support after 'seizing power. Moreover, the "new" ideology of the Islamic Revolution was in many ways the return to the glorious heritage of the past and to the ideology- Islam- most familiar to Iranians, which also prescribe their attitudes toward the monarchy and political system.⁴⁷

Thus, the monarchy failed to survive in Egypt, Iraq, Yemen and Libya since they unable to establish popular legitimacy as they did form parties and a formal constitutional regime, but did not transform authority from "Kings to people". Moreover, they failed in accommodating the rise of an educated "new middle class", notably the army officials as well as failed to align themselves to a foreign major power or superpower, which could possibly have intervened to save their existence. As in the case of Iran, the monarchy collapses against the reactionary policies of king and the resurgence of "Political Islam".

Monarchy Resilience

Unlike the coups that had overpowered several monarchies and threatened others, mostly in the 1950s and 1960s, the last three decades of the twentieth century witnessed resilience in the activities and success of the institution. For instance, monarchy in

⁴⁶ Bruce Maddy-Weitzman, "Why did Arab Monarchies Fall? An Analysis of Old and New Explanations", pp.48-49.

⁴⁷ David Menashri, "The Persian Monarchy and the Islamic Republic", p.213.

Jordan, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates are still surviving. This development can be attributed to some important regional and global process. The enthusiasm of West Asian societies for nationalist-socialist revolutions subsided following their limited success in achieving socio-economic development.

There were other factors that contributed to the upsurge of monarchs. Among these were accumulation of oil wealth in the hands of Persian Gulf monarchs and their ability to use that wealth to evoke both internal development and international influence. The decline of the Soviet Union in the 1980s further weakened the challenge to the monarchy from revolutionary groups. Some monarchy even succeeded in obtaining a superpower's defense for their survival. Moreover, monarchs had taken initiatives to modernize namely, the promotion of technological development, the raising of living standards, better education, and the activation of the economy in order to reinforce their rule. Furthermore, the king's ability in coping with hurdles of state building by establishing valid institutions, social integration etc. helped in gaining legitimacy.⁴⁸

A most significant process in monarchy's resilience was the reinforcement of the monarchical institution, notably of the monarchs themselves as ex-machina leaders, standing above the political system and reinstating the monarchical code in their relations vis-à-vis their societies. The monarchs thus learned to rule while rising above ethnic or other intergroup rivalries, acting as their mediators and as self-styled patrons of all groups and defenders of minorities. The Moroccan King's action as a modern marabut (religious saint) and defender of the Berbers, the Jordanian king as the adjudicator or defender of the Palestinian-East Jordanian tension and champion of tribes, and the Saudi and Persian Gulf monarchs as balancing agents among Shiite and Sunni groups and tribal and regional segments present several examples. Monarchs were thus able to exercise the two fundamentals of monarchical rule: generating state development and exercising patrimonial segmentary social control.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Kostiner, *Middle East Monarchies*, p.7-8.

⁴⁹ Nazih Ayubi (1995), *Overstating the Arab State: Politics and Society in the Middle East*, London: I. B. Tauris, pp.224-255.

In contrast, the monarchy has survived in the West Asia because it is a regime type that is well suited to the demands of state and nation building.⁵⁰ Moreover, members of the ruling family are allowed, by the constitution, to occupy high posts but do not monopolize them. In addition, the king established strong ruling institutions in terms of bureaucracy and control able to utilize finances to promote the societies they had envisaged. No practice of constitutional government was allowed to interfere with this development. Moreover, the monarchy's ability to use the oil finances to develop a distributional welfare state, or a "rentier state" notably the Gulf monarchy, to boost the inhabitants' living standards, further proved remarkable. Monarchy thus did not provide incentives for democratisation but rather preferable substitutes for it. Also the new middle class groups, which endangered some West Asian monarchy in the middle of the century integrated themselves into the rentier-state societies and patriarchal systems.⁵¹

Finally, monarchy's strength was evident in several innovative courses and their balancing means. The monarchs were in favour of technological development but balances the subsequent social change both by allowing traditional, tribal and Islamic practices to govern society, and by allowing the welfare system to support any unfortunate failures of the changes. Also, the monarchy did not encourage the evolution of a uniform, assimilated and organic "nation" in their states: such a development would have just emulated the endeavours of the rival revolutionary states and would have eliminated the structural basis of the various segments of society. Thus, the patriarchal ascriptive loyalties and the monarch's cultivation of segmenting divisions mark a strong stabilizing factor for the monarchy. Infact, West Asian monarchism in the late twentieth century evolved into a system that was politically balanced, economically developmental, yet traditional and socio-culturally integrative.⁵²

Thus, the success of the institution can be attributed to some important regional and global processes. For instance, the limited success of the revolutionary groups in achieving socio-economic development. The accumulation of oil wealth in the hands of the Gulf monarchs enabled them to use it effectively both for internal development and

⁵⁰ Lisa Anderson, "Dynasts and Nationalists: Why Monarchies survive", p.55.

⁵¹ see Michael Hudson (1968), *Arab Politics: The Search for Legitimacy*, New Haven: Yale University Press.

⁵² see Hisham Sharabi (1988), *Neopatriarchy: A Theory of Distorted Change in Arab Society*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

international prestige. Some of them even succeeded in obtaining a superpower's defense for their survival. Internally, the kings established strong bureaucratic institution and promoted welfare system through technological development without altering the existing traditional, tribal and Islamic practices. Besides, the new middle class, which endangered some West Asian monarchy in the middle of the century, was integrated into the rentier-state.

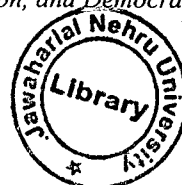
Prospects for Democratisation

In contrast to many areas of the world that have successfully adopted Western liberal democratic structures and norms to local conditions, democratisation poses several problems in the West Asia. Perhaps the most fundamental challenge lies in the pre-existence of many democratic- but not liberal democratic- institutions in the region. The successful monarchies have maintained and expanded extensive traditional, consultative structures and Jordan, Kuwait, and Morocco have even established liberal democratic institutions albeit with highly constrained powers. The survival of monarchy is not necessarily a postponement of revolution, but instead offers the prospect of a gradual transition to a more liberal political order.⁵³

While addressing the prevalence and durability of authoritarian government in the West Asia, most scholars tend to emphasize the political economy of the state to show why many modern West Asian governments are peculiarly resistant to democratization. In particular, Giacomo Luciani presents a lucid analysis of the political economy of the West Asian state and argues that especially in those states with deep pockets due to significant oil rents, the prospects for democratisation are slim so long as the rents keep rolling in. As Ghassan Salame argues, democracy is not a goal, but a solution-in itself, and he shows that some of the smaller states of the Arab world adopted democratic principles (albeit selectively) in order to reduce internal dissension along tribal or confessional lines, and thereby eliminate the vulnerabilities that dissension breeds. These democratic experiments are now imperilled, by the changed circumstances

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⁵³ Michael Herb (1999), *All in the Family: Absolutism, Revolution, and Democracy in the Middle Eastern Monarchies*, Albany: State University of New York Press, p.1.



of the post-Cold War world, and the regional hegemons' intolerance of democratic exemplars in the neighbourhood.⁵⁴

In the Arab world, the democratisation process was best manifested as a process of political liberalisation, limited by its dependence upon the agreements of ruling groups to extend certain civil and political rights that had hitherto been denied. Concessions mostly involved freedom of speech and of professional and political organization. Even this modest dose of liberalisation did not take place in many Arab countries. Instead, rulers codified decades old practices of government, including consultation with traditional dignitaries, while maintaining political structures that do not allow political parties or trade unions. Consequently while democratisation in other parts of the world led to fundamental political changes, changes in Arab countries were very limited, mostly political liberalisation initiated and controlled from above.⁵⁵ Thus, most Arab countries faced severe domestic crisis that cast powerful doubts on their legitimacy. Finally, confrontations with Islamist militants and public protests caused by harsh economic measures were the triggering events that led governments in Egypt (1981), Tunisia (1987), Algeria (1988), and Jordan (1989) to take steps toward political liberalization.⁵⁶

Thus, the strains in the rentier economy of West Asian countries have prompted some states in the region to embark on liberalisation processes. Whereas the decline in rent revenues have affected non-oil exporting countries in the West Asia almost uniformly (Egypt, Syria, Tunisia, Jordan and Morocco), structural limitations have compelled Jordan and Morocco to go further along the path of liberalisation than Egypt, Syria and Tunisia, whose states rely on fundamentally different institutional and structural arrangements. Given their vast oil reserves and a stronger sense of 'naturalness' in relation to their societies, the oil monarchy has been better able to withstand the economically induced imperatives of liberalisation. Other states in the region, few of whom have escaped the pressures of declining rents, have managed to remain

⁵⁴ see Augustus Richard Norton (1995), "Democracy without Democrats? The Renewal of Politics in the Muslim World by Ghassam Salame", *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 22(1/2): 155-157.

⁵⁵ see Muhammad Muslih and Augustus Richard Norton (Summer, 1991), "The Need for Arab Democracy", *Foreign Policy*, 83: 3-19.

⁵⁶ Mustapha K. El Sayyid (1994), "The Third Wave of Democratization in the Arab World" in Don Tschirgi (eds.) *The Arab World Today*, Boulder London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, p.181.

authoritarian either through establishing populist, inclusionary institutions and policies (Iran, Iraq and Libya) or through continued resort to repressive tactics (Egypt, Syria, Tunisia, Algeria and the Sudan).⁵⁷

Consequently, much of the West Asia, although not liberal democratic is not totally devoid of structures for political participation. The claim of a regionally constrained “Arab democracy” has some credibility. Nevertheless, the existing West Asian models for liberal democracy have significant flaws. The extreme secularism of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk’s constitution for Turkey is not acceptable in the current environment of Islamic revivalism and is challenged even in Turkey itself. Lebanon’s initial attempts at confessional democracy- a system that assures religious affiliation is the primary factor in how society is organized politically and constitutionally ensures the power of various groups- led to a devastating civil war. As a non-Islamic state, and in the eyes of much of the region an illegitimate one, Israel does not appeal as a model. Moreover, the major liberal democratic powers have done little to encourage democracy in the region, notwithstanding U.S. rhetoric in the wake of the 2003 military campaign against Iraq. The United States has consistently tolerated undemocratic policies in its allies, including the monarchy of Saudi Arabia and Oman, the police state of Reza Pahlavi (the shah of Iran), and the single party rule of Egypt.⁵⁸

Under such circumstances, how cum one expect that democratisation would even be an issue in the West Asia? At least three factors suggest that it will be. Firstly the creation of a literate, urbanized middle class has consistently in a variety of cultures, led to pre-democratic political movements. Secondly, the most dynamic economies of the region- Turkey, Israel, and pre-civil war Lebanon- have been democratic, a fact that has not gone unnoticed. Thirdly, many of the conditions that supported and legitimized non-democratic regimes including- post colonial politics, the Cold War competition, and oil wealth- are declining in importance. Nonetheless, there will be challenges. Any liberal democratic movement will need to accommodate Islam explicitly in some form. It also have to deal with the issue of ethno-national and religious minorities, an unresolved issue in Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Israel and elsewhere.

⁵⁷ Mehran Kamrava (Mar.,1998), “Non-Democratic states and Political Liberalisation in the Middle East: A Structural Analysis”, *Third World Quarterly*, 19(1): 63-85, p.63-64.

⁵⁸ Gerner, “Middle Eastern Politics”, p.90-91.

West Asia is perhaps the most problem-torn area in the world now. This state of instability is the product of the convergence of several factors, such as the Arab humiliation in the Palestine war, the recrudescence of Arab nationalism, the emergence of new social forces, the crystallization of fresh political ideas, the collapse of traditional leadership and the extension of the Power Blocks' scramble for sphere of influence in this strategically located part of the globe. It appears that a new order is struggling for a breakthrough and the Arabs are experiencing a necessary phase of transition. From this broad standpoint, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has a significant place in the development of the modern Arab world.

This state presents an excellent case study of the multifarious and diverse trends that have pervaded the West Asian politics. Following the violent overthrow of monarchy in Egypt, Iraq, Yemen, Libya and Iran, Jordan along with others such as Saudi Arabia, Morocco, etc. remains the last bastion of that institution. But unlike others, Jordan has passed through a quick succession of internal and external vicissitudes. It is a state wherein all the crosscurrents prevalent in the modern Arab world can be seen. The present study is an attempt towards understanding the course of political development in the monarchy of Jordan and analyzing the myth behind its stability.

CHAPTER - II
EVOLUTION OF MONARCHY
IN JORDAN

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EVOLUTION OF MONARCHY IN JORDAN

As a nation state, Jordan was an artificial creation to accommodate the interests of a foreign power and an ambitious warrior in search of a throne. For Britain, the principality (Amirate) of Transjordan was a fulfillment of wartime obligations to the Arab people; for Abdullah, a satisfaction of dynastic ambition.¹

The Historical Background

The area of modern Jordan was involved in most of the major historical movements in the West Asia owing to its central position, bordering or lying close to, Egypt, Palestine, Syria and Arabia. Since ancient times, its geographical position exposed it to various conquerors, who occupied it for various reasons from security of their empire to protection of their trade routes. Lastly, the Ottomans, having built up their empire in Asia Minor and Europe over a couple of centuries turned their active attention to the Arab world and easily gained control of much of the West Asia including Jordan in the sixteenth century.² During the Ottoman conquest, the territory of Transjordan was a neglected governorate (mutasarrifiya) under the Vilayet of Syria.³ The Ottoman rulers were never able to establish effective control in the area, whose Bedouin inhabitants refused to pay taxes to the treasury and resisted military service in the Ottoman army.

But the Ottoman Empire collapsed at the end of World War I, and the Levant was eventually divided into mandates of Britain and France. The people of Jordan had fought on both sides during the war. On the one hand, most settled people and town-dwellers sided with the Ottomans, some joining the regular army and others providing irregular horsemen for Ottoman battles against the Bedouin. On the other hand, the Bedouin, especially the Huwaytat, provided the main fighters in Jordan for the Huwaytat, provided the main fighters in Jordan for the Arab revolt against the Ottomans. This revolt which

¹ Naseer H. Aruri (1972), *Jordan: A Study in Political Development 1921-1965*, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, p.3.

² Peter Gubser (1983), *Jordan, Crossroads of Middle Eastern Events*, Boulder: Westview Cross Helm, pp.74-75.

³ The Vilayat was the largest administrative unit headed by a Vali appointed by the central government in Istanbul. The Vilayat was divided into sanjaqs headed by a Mutasarref responsible to the Vali.

was led in an overall sense by Sharif Hussein of Mecca (King Hussein's great grandfather) and on the ground by one of his sons, Amir Faisal, was coordinated with the efforts of the British army and given a subsidy and some technical assistance by British officers.⁴

Earlier, Sharif Hussein ibn Ali, the ruler of Hejaz and Keeper of the Holy Places of Mecca, established contact with the British in Egypt through his son Abdullah (later King of Jordan) in hope of obtaining British support against Turkey and recognition of Arab empire ruled by his dynasty. Britain declined to give any kind of military assistance to the Hashemites against Turkey. In the meantime, the British were negotiating with exiled Arab nationalists from the young Arab society and the Covenant Society concerning an Arab revolt against Ottoman Turkey in Syria.⁵ Britain was reluctant to offer the nationalists satisfactory guarantees of Arab independence after the war. When Turkey entered the war, Sharif Hussein announced that he would not respond to the Ottoman Caliph's call for a holy war. This passive attitude by the Sharif did not please Britain, which hoped that Arab forces could be drawn to fight against Turkey. By the middle of 1915, Hussein entered into diplomatic talks with Sir Henry McMahon to enlist Arab support to the allied cause if Britain declared herself in favor of Arab aspirations. Although the correspondence was couched in vague terms and no agreements were signed between the Hashemites and the British, the Arab Revolt was proclaimed on 5 June, 1916. During 1917 and 1918, the forces of both Sharif Hussein and the British General Allenby succeeded in conquering Palestine, East Jordan and Syria.⁶

Following the breakup of the Ottoman Empire, the various factions continued their maneuvering and claims and counterclaims. Initially the Levant was divided into three basic sectors: Palestine under Britain; Syria (including East Jordan) under Amir Faisal; and Lebanon under France. All three territory fell under the authority of General Allenby. The claim of Syria and Transjordan quickly came under dispute. In mid-1919, the last of the British forces were withdrawn from Damascus, leaving effective control to

⁴ see T. E. Lawrence (1935), *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, Garden City, New York: Doubleday.

⁵ H. B. Sharabi (1962), *Government and Politics of the Middle East in the Twentieth Century*, Princeton, N. J.: Van Nostrand, p.111.

⁶ see Alec Seath Kirkbride (1956), *A Crackle of Thorns: Experiences in the Middle East*, London: John Murray; Asher Susser and Aryeh Shmuelevitz (eds.) (1995), *The Hashemites in the Modern Arab World*, London: Frank Cass.

Amir Faisal, who in March 1920 was declared king by a congress of notables from Syria, East Jordan and parts of Lebanon. France, however, objected to Amir Faisal's presence and control and, on the basis of agreements struck with Britain, succeeded in having the Allied powers at April 1920 San Remo Conference officially assigned it the mandate over Syria and Lebanon, but not East Jordan. Britain was assigned Palestine and Iraq. Following this international move, France drove King Faisal out of Damascus on 25 July, 1920. The international status of East Jordan then fell into limbo. In August 1920, the High Commissioner of Palestine, Sir Herbert Samuel, however, declared that, with the fall of King Faisal, East Jordan came under British mandate and that he would send a few political officers but would not administer East Jordan directly.⁷

Shortly after this, Amir Abdullah ibn Hussein (brother of Faisal and grand father of King Hussein) arrived on the scene. In the fall of 1920, with a group of armed supporters, he stopped in Ma'an, which at the time, was not part of the British mandate but under Sharif Hussein of Mecca. There, he declared that he had come to put his brother back on the throne in Damascus. Although this call was not positively answered, he moved up to Karak, in the British mandate, in January 1921 and continued to tour the East Jordan towns during the winter. As Amir Abdullah was touring, the British were adjusting their policies to the new realities on the ground. To the ousted King Faisal, they offered the Kingship of their Iraqi mandate, paying off one debt to the Hashemite family. As to East Jordan, they decided to offer it to Amir Abdullah, who was then present in the region, in exchange for his promise to renounce his claims on Syria.⁸

Moreover, Britain was reluctant to take over its direct administration because of three reasons. Firstly, they wished to keep the area out of the Jewish National Home. Secondly, the cost of maintaining army battalions in Transjordan was considered prohibitory. Finally, it was apprehended that the British rule would intensify local resettlement. Hence, a shrewd scheme of exercising control through the indigenous governments was envisaged.⁹ In a 27 March, 1921, meeting with the then Colonial Secretary, Winston Churchill at Jerusalem, Amir Abdullah accepted these conditions as well as a British subsidy and British mandatory presence.

⁷ Gubser, *Jordan, Crossroads of Middle Eastern Events*, pp.77-78.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p.78.

⁹ A.H.H. Abidi (1965), *Jordan: A Political Study, 1948 – 1957*, London: Asia Publishing House, p.4.

The Churchill-Abdullah accord seemed to have been mutually satisfactory. For the British, it offered at least two advantages: firstly, the creation of a central government to replace the so-called local governments, which had failed in establishing law and order within their respective spheres of control; secondly, the installation of Hashemite ruler in Transjordan and Iraq in 1921 was considered as a fulfillment of Britain indebtedness to Sharif Hussein for his participation in the war against Turkey. For Abdullah, the agreement afforded British recognition and protection of a Hashemite government in Transjordan during a period when the Hashemites were in great need of such protection. Hashemite prestige had been on the decline since Faisal's failure to reach a negotiated settlement with the powers in the autumn of 1919 and his subsequent departure from Syria and refusal to resist French forces there. In addition, the rising power of Ibn Saud in the Arabia Peninsula deprived the Hashemites of their influence in Hejaz, especially after the latter's defeat by Saudi forces of Khurma¹⁰. Thus, Abdullah, like his brother Faisal, pursued a policy of compromise and negotiations based on the status quo, which characterized his relations with the British until Jordan's independence in 1946.

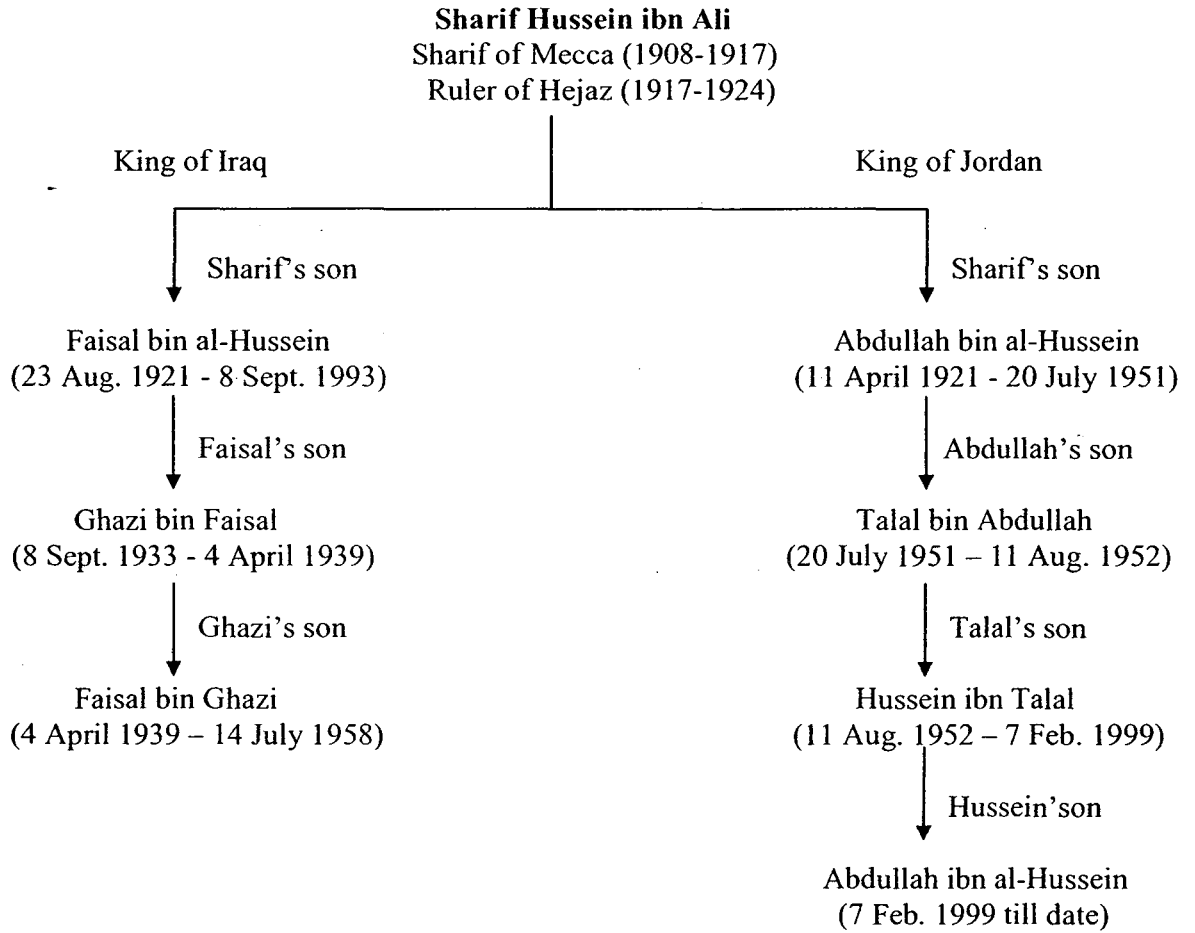
It is thus clear that Transjordan's creation under Amir Abdullah's leadership in 1921 was the result of an opportunity seized by the British to prevent French expansion in the region. It was not rooted in any national identity. Transjordan was never a separate political entity. It was rather an artificial creation to suit the interests of a foreign power and an ambitious warrior in search of a throne. Abdullah thus became an instrument of British colonial policy and adopted the role of a British sharif. (See Table 2.1)

Amir Abdullah's Transjordan

With Britain's acceptance of his stewardship of Transjordan, Amir Abdullah proceeded to establish his state. The political life of the country during the early days of Abdullah's government was dominated by four main forces: the palace, the bureaucracy, the British and the tribes. To exercise control over the behaviour of such heterogeneous groups was no easy task for the Amir. He attempted to play the role of an arbiter and maintain a balance between them so that he could stay in power. Three major themes became obvious in this effort: the attempt to maintain security, both internal and

¹⁰ Aruri, *Jordan: A Study in Political Development*, pp.22-23.

Table.2.1. Chronology of Hashemite Kingdom



external; the creation of the trappings of a state, namely a parliament, government and governmental functions; and the search for Arab unity.

Relations with Britain

The compromise settlement between Churchill and Abdullah had set up the Amirate (an administrative unit under the mandate). As a mandatory state, Britain owned an obligation to the League of Nations for encouraging self governing institutions and local autonomy in Transjordan. The creation of the Amirate was a step in that direction. In effect, the territory of Transjordan was administered indirectly through the British Resident and the Amir. The Resident represented the British Crown and looked after the general affairs of the mandate. The Amir administered the territory on the advice of the Resident. An essential point in the Jerusalem Agreement between Churchill and Abdullah had been that the British Government agreed to provide aid to the latter, which was immediately extended in the form of financial subsidies for specific purposes such as the privy purse of the Amir and the raising of an adequate militia.

By an agreement signed on 20 February 1928, the powers of legislation and administration in Transjordan were to be exercised by the Amir on behalf of the British Emperor and on the advice of the Resident. The Amir could neither appoint any non-Transjordanian as official nor could he legislate laws which were repugnant to Britain's mandatory obligations. The Amir agreed to be guided by British advice on vital matter like foreign affairs, budget, financial administration, exploitation of mineral resources and jurisdiction over foreign resident. He also undertook not to raise or maintain in Transjordan or allow to be raised or maintained any military forces without the consent of the British Government. These restrictions greatly circumscribed the powers of the Amir. Britain relaxed them to a certain extent through the agreement of 19 July 1941.¹¹ This liberalization was a part of Britain's policy of winning the Arab public opinion and retrieving her military position in the region in the face of the impending war in Europe.

The next adjustment in Anglo-Jordanian relationship came after the war and was greatly conditioned by external factors. Firstly, Transjordan's participation in the war effort along with the Allied Powers. Secondly, the Arab League had come into being and

¹¹ Abidi, *Jordan: A Political Study*, pp.10-11.

it was advisable that Transjordan should enter this regional organization with appearances of an autonomous state. Furthermore, if the mandate continued, there lurked the undesirable probability of a United Nations Trusteeship over Transjordan. With these considerations, the treaty of 22 March 1946 was signed, which terminated the mandate, ended the Amirate and proclaimed Transjordan as an independent kingdom.¹² Although this treaty put an end to the administrative relationship that existed before, the financial and military connections continued undisturbed. Britain continued her financial subventions and her troops remained stationed in Transjordan and could be deployed anywhere for reasons of defense. Political relation between the two became subtle and indirect now.

The notable aspect of Anglo-Jordanian relationship was its essence rather than the form. It had originated at a personal level between Abdullah and Churchill. The basic fact about it was the mutual necessity of one to the other. In dealing with Abdullah, the British Government pursued a clear and consistent policy, aimed at consolidating Britain's long-term interests in West Asia behind the façade of the mandate and through an indigenous government. In pursuance of this policy, the British allowed considerable powers to the Amir in the internal affairs of the state; but he was rendered subservient to the superintendence, direction and control of the British Resident and the High Commissioner. The position was such that although an autocrat vis-à-vis the local people, the Amir was only a cog in the machinery of the mandate. Yet Abdullah, throughout, carried his notions about the independence of his country. What the British had conceded until the termination of the mandate was little more than recognition of the independent status of the government rather than the state of Transjordan.¹³

An analysis of various agreements and treaties between the two countries reveals the existence of a relationship of inequality. For most of the period, Transjordan did not possess the element of sovereignty, so essential for a state to enter into equal agreements or treaties. Britain wielded her influence first by virtue of her being the mandatory state, responsible for the development of Transjordan; secondly, on the strength of her

¹² John Bagot Glubb (1946), *Story of the Arab Legion*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, p.366.

¹³ Abidi, *Jordan: A Political Study*, p.12.

substantial financial subsidies which were indispensable for the sustenance of Transjordan and finally, through her control over the Arab Legion.

The pattern of Anglo-Transjordanian relationship inevitably made an imprint upon the nature of government in Transjordan. It reflected as much the personal nature of Abdullah as the circumstances in which he was made the Amir. If the interests of Britain had to be protected in the unstable political situation of Transjordan, the need for an autocratic government was urgent. Abdullah had never ruled before; but his inherent nature and upbringing made him eminently suitable for the role of an autocrat. Hence, although Transjordan possessed all the paraphernalia such as the Advisory and Legislative Councils, Cabinet and the Parliament, Organic Law and the Constitution, yet till the last, Abdullah loved to have the last word.

The Co-optation of the Tribes

When Abdullah established himself in Transjordan in 1921, the country was no more than the peripheral backwater of Syria to the north and Palestine to the west. The entire population was only about 280,000, about half being nomadic or semi-nomadic Bedouin tribes. Abdullah was especially well received by the Circassian and Christian minorities who were living under the constant threat of Bedouin raids. This was not true of other segments of the population particularly Arab nationalists among the urban Muslim population led by Syrian *istiqlalis*, who were strongly opposed to him. Perhaps the most significant of all Abdullah's achievements was the pacification, incorporation and cooptation of the tribes into the machinery of the state. This was obtained by the skillful wielding of a combination of force and favor. Tribal rebellions against the Amir's authority during the first few years of his rule were effectively suppressed by his own forces, assisted on occasion by the Royal Air Force.¹⁴

Tribal loyalty was also bought with offers of land, government positions, and tax exemptions. Abdullah's rule "began to take on all the hallmarks of neo-patrimonialism. He used the power he had to direct the flow of government resources to increase the stature of those who supported him and to isolate and undermine those who did not."

¹⁴ Asher Susser (2000), "The Jordanian Monarchy: The Hashemite Success Story" in Joseph Kostiner (eds) *Middle East Monarchies: The Challenge of Modernity*, Boulder London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, pp.89-92.

Generally Abdullah tended to direct his patronage toward the more powerful tribes to facilitate the retention of their pre-eminence and thereby win their support. However, the most effective and comprehensive vehicle of tribal integration and co-optation was through recruitment to the Arab legion. In a revolutionary turn of events, those whose traditional lifestyle had been antithetical and ever hostile to any form of centralized governmental control or to state-inspired law and order, were transformed into the backbone of the state.¹⁵ To this day, the Bedouin remain the core of the armed forces, predominantly represented in all the frontline formations, especially in the armored corps and the elite infantry units, officers and enlisted personnel alike.

A British subsidy helped Abdullah to set up a civil administration and raise a military force under the command of a British officer, Major F.G. Peake, who laid the foundation of the Arab legion to counter security threats. Threats to security were to take three forms: Bedouin raiding, tax revolts among sedentary people, and threats from across the southern border. Major Peake, perceived the Bedouin to be the primary threat, therefore, he established a policy of recruiting from the sedentary population “to check the Bedouin and allow an Arab government to rule the country without fear or interference from tribal chiefs.” Whether by design or mistake, this policy led to recruitment from the very segment of the population that had neither supported the Arab revolt led by Abdullah’s brother and father nor helped the British against the Ottomans and it was directed against that segment of the population, namely the Bedouin, who had been actively supportive of the Hashemites and the British. Peake’s force was used to contain Bedouin raiding, but significantly it also put down major revolts in the various towns. The revolts were largely against tax collection and the state’s attempt to extend his rule outside the capital; the use of the Arab Legion and the British Royal Air force in subsidizing the revolts went far in establishing the authority of the state.¹⁶

The next stage was for Amir Abdullah’s forces to protect the young state against outside encroachment. The Saudi incursion in 1922 under the leadership of king Abd al-Aziz ibn Sa’ud provided the first opportunity and a second, much larger attempted raid in

¹⁵ Riccardo Bocco and Tariq Tell (1994), “Pax Britannica in the Steppe: British Policy and the Transjordan Bedouin” in Rogan and Tell (eds.) *Village, Steppe, and State: The Social Origins of Modern Jordan*, London: British Academic Press, p.108.

¹⁶ C. S. Jarvis (1943), *Arab Command: The Biography of F. G. Peake Pasha*, London: Hutchinson, p.61.

1924 provided the second. The latter produced a resounding victory for the Arab legion and the Royal Air force, demonstrating to the people the necessity of having these forces for their own security. With major external threats finally settled, the authorities turned to the more mundane instability caused by Bedouin raiding. In 1926-1927, the Palestine mandate authorities created the Transjordan Frontier Force, recruited from Palestine, to guard the frontiers and attempt to stop cross-border raiding. The Arab Legion was to handle internal raiding, which continued to grow until it became an acute problem. To address this, Major J. B. Glubb was assigned to the Arab Legion in 1930. Reversing Peake's policy, he promptly recruited Bedouin into the Arab legion, precisely to patrol the Bedouin region. His philosophy, unlike Peake's was that the Bedouin should be included in the state if the state wished them to "behave", and recruiting them into the army realized this goal. The legacy of this new policy has been felt throughout the history of Jordan as the Bedouin became strongly loyal supporters and defenders of the Hashemite regime in the country. And by 1933, Bedouin raiding had ceased.¹⁷

Service in the Arab legion contributed decisively to the transformation of tribal allegiance into loyalty to the commanding officer and ultimately to the monarch. It was the king who now assumed the mantle of the "Shaikh of Shaikhs"—the supratribal leader. Moreover, the Hashemite kings of Jordan—Abdullah and Hussein—tracing their lineage to the Prophet, could double as religious leaders or bearers of the religious heritage, thereby further enhancing their appeal to tribal soldiers. Preferential enlistment of the Bedouin consolidated the legitimacy of the monarchy through a patron-client relationship superbly characterized as the "quintessential monarchical/tribal military axis".¹⁸

Thus, the monarchical tribal symbiosis has come to full fruition as a relationship whereby the monarchy or the state ensured the preferential status, prestige, and economic well-being of the tribes, who in turn were to serve the regime with unswerving loyalty. Moreover, the state itself has consciously highlighted the extraordinary role of the Bedouin tribes in the development of the state and has deliberately promoted Jordan's tribal heritage as a "symbol of Jordan's distinctive national identity". Yet at the same time, it is the tribes who have in their own self-perception and in the perception of

¹⁷ Gubser, *Jordan, Crossroads of Middle Eastern Events*, pp.79-80.

¹⁸ Laurie Brand (1995), "The Quest for Civil Society in Jordan" in Augustus R. Norton (eds.) *Civil Society in the Middle East*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, pp.153-154.

others, become the standard-bearers of the Jordanian identity, or Jordanianism intimately interwoven with the monarchical institution.

Political Structure

Perhaps the most important institution of Amir Abdullah was his broad contacts with the people of Transjordan. To assure accessibility, throughout his life, he opened his palace on Fridays to those who wished to discuss issues or register complaints. Abdullah carefully cultivated leading families in both the sedentary and Bedouin tribes. In a country of a few people, the Amir could effectively reach large segments of the total population. Structurally, Amir Abdullah ruled through an executive council drawn from notables of Transjordan as well as expatriates from Hijaz and Palestine. A British resident as well as various technical advisers were in place, at times dominating certain decisions. The question of some form of parliament was constantly raised. During 1923-1924, under the authority of Amir Abdullah, a basic law of elections was drafted, but the British resident caused it to be abandoned in favor of a much weaker legislative council that would approve executive council decisions. In 1928, the Organic Law was signed, which included provisions for an indirectly elected representative body with weak powers, and was essentially imposed on Amir Abdullah by British.¹⁹

Opposition to the lack of representation and British oversight did not come from the Bedouin or even the sedentary people in the villages, but rather from a small group of nationalists and anti-regime elements in the urban areas. They provided the popular pressure for a parliament in the 1920s and were part of the 1926 Assembly of Notables delegated to write an electoral law. In the late 1920s, they held a series of meetings called National Conferences, advocating elected representation, opposing the British presence, and pushing for liberal reform. Actually, the first Legislative Council under the 1928 Law carried on in the same tradition and was critical of the authorities. When it refused to pass a bill funding part of the army, Amir Abdullah dissolved it. These actions were harbingers of the quite troubled relationship, the Jordanian Hashemite monarchs have had with elected institutions. Future councils contained a different set of men who

¹⁹ al-Mady, Munib and Sulayman Musa (1959), *History of Jordan in the Twentieth Century*, Amman, pp.279-280.

were more complaint.²⁰ In short, Amir Abdullah was a true aristocrat and favored the patriarchal system of power, never intended to set a genuine parliamentary democracy, which was the dream of the nationalists.

A related aspect of the political development in Transjordan was the organization and growth of public opinion. It was mainly the work of political parties which were of two types: ideological and instrumental. The ideological parties were al-Istiqlal and the Communist. Those who served as instruments of the regime were represented by ash-Sha'b and a host of others which emerged out of the various Congresses. The Amir's attitude towards the political parties was one of discrimination. Parties with an ideology were despised and suppressed because they constituted a challenge to Abdullah's political beliefs and approach. Others were patronized as instruments in pursuance of the Amir's desire to make the political system appear constitutional, free and governed by party competition.²¹

Although the Hashemite Kingdom is a constitutional monarchy, the Jordanian system has been variously described as a form of "controlled constitutionalism" or as "monarchical absolutism" since the constitutional balance of power is heavily weighed in the monarchy's favour. The cabinet was more of an executive arm of the palace than a policy making body, through central figures in the cabinet were members of the King's informal inner council. Thus, the key to the capacity of the King and the elite to maintain the domestic status quo rests with the military and the internal security organs and their loyalty to the monarchy.²²

Following World War II, Transjordan became the "independent" Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. On 22 March, 1946, Transjordan and Britain signed a new treaty that laid the basis for this change, and on 25 May, 1946, Amir Abdullah officially became King of Jordan. During this period, Jordan promulgated a new Constitution to replace the 1928 Organic Law that had been operative to that date. Even though the mandate had ended, Britain continue to exercise its influence in the internal affairs of Jordan. Due to this reason, Jordan's application for membership in the United Nations

²⁰ see Kamel S. Abu Jaber (July-Oct., 1969), "The Legislature of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan: A Study in Political Development", *Muslim World*, 59(3&4): 220-250.

²¹ Abidi, *Jordan: A Political Study*, pp.17-18.

²² Robert Satloff (1994), *From Abdullah to Hussein: Jordan in Transition*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.168.

was rejected. In March 1948, Britain and Jordan renegotiated the 1946 treaty. The new terms were somewhat milder but still restrictive with respect to independence.

The Palestinian Problem

The British Government, announced its decision to quit Palestine by 14 May 1948, and handed over the matter to the United Nations, which decreed the partition of Palestine. The Arab States objected to the partition and establishment of a Jewish state on what they regarded to be the Arab land. Meanwhile, the Jews and the Arabs closed their respective ranks for action: the former to set up the cherished state of Israel and the latter to thwart it. The Arab kings and leaders failed to assess properly the realities of the situation. Their minds were occupied by mutual suspicion and considerations of personal ambitions. Nevertheless, the partition resolution was too serious a challenge not to evoke at least a formal decision to resist. The Arab league, in its meeting on 12 April 1948, decided that in the event of partition, the Arabs would enter Palestine to prevent it and restore the country to its inhabitants who possessed the inviolable right of self-determination.²³

Of all the Arab states, however, Jordan alone had a long standing interest in Palestine. King Abdullah's approach to the partition resolution had been determined by three considerations: his ambition for territorial expansion, the evasiveness of the British Government towards settlement and finally, the attitude of Abdullah's antagonists towards his ambitious project for Arab leadership. From the day partition was voted Abdullah accepted it, though not openly. The twin problem confronting Abdullah was to make his views intelligible and clear to the Jews and to maintain his position vis-à-vis the Arabs without an open rupture. A shrewd politician, Abdullah set out to tackle his problem from various directions: through secret negotiations with the Jews, participating in the war against Israel and annexation of a part of Palestine.²⁴

Following the cessation of the mandate on 14 May, 1948, the Arab Legion occupied parts of Palestine, which was to become the West Bank as well as some adjacent areas assigned to the Arabs under the 1947 UN resolution. Other Arab armies

²³ see Yaakov Shimoni (1962), "The Arabs and the Approaching War with Israel: 1945-1948", *Ha-Mizrah He-Hadshah*, 12, pp.189-211.

²⁴ see Jon and David Kimche (1960), *Both sides of the Hill: Britain and the Palestine War*, London.

also entered the war with Israel, but were soon defeated. With the exception of the Arab Legion, the Arab troops were ill-trained and ill-equipped and lacked a constructive plan of action or a common minimal objective. In fact the eyes of the Arabs were more on one another than on the Jews. Moreover, it was King Abdullah's efforts which saved the old city of Jerusalem for the Arabs despite Britain's opposition to this idea. The formal signing of armistice between Israel and Jordan at Rhodes on 3 April, 1949, left the latter in occupation of what is known as the West Bank. It was formally incorporated into the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan on 24 April 1950.²⁵

Although contrary to the prior agreements and detrimental to the pervading cause of Arab unity, Abdullah's decision to annex West Bank can be explained in the context of his curious circumstances. Abdullah was ambitious and took advantage of the fact that the Palestinian Arab leaders had crumbled and there prevailed serious differences among the Arab governments which were scarcely competent to win the war especially when the Big Powers were behind Israel. In the circumstances, it could at least be said for Abdullah that he saved a portion of Palestine from falling into Israel's hands.

The influx of the Palestinian population in the aftermath of the union had a tremendous impact on the political, social and economic structure of Jordan. The Palestinians, mainly due to their perennial struggle, were more politically conscious. Living in the competition with the Jews, they were economically better. They had a high percentage of education. In all these respects, they differed from the mass of Transjordanians. In addition, the Palestinians, in general, were not accustomed to the loyalty to monarchy. Besides, even before the union, Abdullah's Transjordan was hardly an economic proposition. She could barely subsist on her meager resources and the British subsidy. Now, the sudden and continuous spate of refugees presented a very complex problem for Abdullah and economic factors complicated his political problems.²⁶

In the aftermath of unity- which partially realized King Abdullah's Greater Syria ambitions- the government settled down to establish a new set of working relationships. Notable Palestinians from the West Bank were always included in the cabinet, especially

²⁵ John Bagot Glubb (1957), *A Soldier with the Arabs*, New York: Harper & Brothers, pp. 155-166.

²⁶ Daniel Lerner (1958), *The Passing of Traditional Society*, New York: Free Press, p.306-310.

those who had supported the king prior to 1948. In East Jordan, King Abdullah continued his paternalistic rule, his close contacts with the settled tribes and the Bedouin, and his constant and crucial cultivation of the Arab legion. In the West Bank, he was building up a network to legitimize his role further, but by no means did he eschew the strengthening of his security forces for ultimate political control. It should also be underlined that all West bankers as well all Palestinian refugees were given Jordanian citizenship.²⁷

However, King Abdullah encountered a series of challenges emanating from a multitude of factors, particularly, his relationship with Britain, attitude towards Israel, the general economic situation in the country, and above all, his disinclination to share power with the Parliament. Whereas Abdullah regarded Britain as 'very friendly', the Palestinians considered that country to be the main creator of their troubles and adversities. The secret deal of Abdullah with Israel, through which he surrendered the Rutenberg region, led to widespread public agitation. Economic difficulties further added to the discontent. There were two basic facts about Jordan's economy. It largely depended upon British subsidies and secondly, its stability depended upon peace with Israel. Hostility to Israel meant a virtual economic blockade for Jordan. Due to economic pressure, Abdullah revived his peace plans with Israel. While economic dictates made Abdullah dependent upon Britain and docile to Israel, this very attitude evoked loud political agitation at home.²⁸

Till the annexation, Abdullah had been mainly a king unaware of problems such as constitutional reforms, fundamental rights and parliamentary sovereignty which Palestinians now began to raise. Abdullah believed in patriarchal rule and appeared determined not to part with his paternal rule and essential royal prerogatives. When Palestinians publicly criticized his tribal system of government, Abdullah took it as a menace not only to the system of government, but also to the separate existence of the state itself. He declared this political opposition as open treason and treated it accordingly. On a different level, he took advantage of the divisions among Palestinian

²⁷ International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (1957), *The Economic Development of Jordan*, Baltimore, p.3.

²⁸ Shaul Mishal (1978), *West Bank / East Bank, the Palestinians in Jordan, 1949-1967*, New Haven: Yale University Press, Chs.2.

leaders. Most of the appointments of Palestinians to senior and important posts were based more on considerations of loyalty to Abdullah than on merit. In essence, the government remained highly centralized and not responsible to the Parliament.²⁹

Moreover, the cabinet was responsible to the king, not to the Parliament, and the Parliament had little control over fiscal matters. Many members objected to this, as they did to the continuing British presence. The dissent became so strong that the king felt compelled to dismiss Parliament on May 1951 and called for new elections. King Abdullah was assassinated on 20 July, 1951, however, before the elections were held. It was said that the assassin was part of a larger plot conducted by Palestinians concerned about the king's motives in the West Bank and especially about his secret negotiations with the Israelis.

Relations with Neighbouring Arab States

Abdullah's attempts to formalise peace with Israel and the annexation of the West Bank led to widespread criticism by other Arab states. To counteract the criticism of his opponents, Abdullah suspended his negotiations with Israel. He attempted to engage the attention of his Arab antagonists away from his immediate plan of legalization of the union and to forestall any difficulties likely to be created by some Arab states. Accordingly, he denied his government's efforts for signing a separate peace treaty with Israel. This was followed by Jordan's voting, along with 'All-Palestine Government' on a Lebanese resolution providing for the automatic expulsion of any member-state which signed a separate peace treaty with Israel.³⁰

After achieving a part success in his plan for Greater Syria, Abdullah attempted to revive the scheme. He opened talks directly with the Syrian Prime Minister and adduced three reasons for it. In the first place, he recounted the glories of the Arabs under the Hashemite Prophet, his father's conspicuous role in the Arab Revolt and the historic unity of Syria. Secondly, he reminded the threat of the Jews across the border, and the union of Syria, Lebanon and Jordan can easily thwart it. Thirdly he argued that a united Syria would be able to ward off the danger of communism. But Abdullah's

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Benjamin Shwadran (1959), *Jordan: A State of Tension*, New York: Council for Middle Eastern affairs Press, p.294.

proposals were firmly snubbed by the Syrian Prime Minister. Moreover, the plan failed to command public support because it was involved in the personal ambitions of King Abdullah, an autocrat ruler and a tool in the hands of Great Britain.³¹

Another scheme of Abdullah, in the field of foreign affairs, was the proposal for a union of Iraq with Jordan. It appears that in this scheme, Abdullah was partly motivated by the problem of succession to his throne which worried him a great deal. Towards the end of his rule, Abdullah began taking active interest in world affairs in the context of communist and democracy. Viewed in this context and that of the Cold War scenario, Abdullah's visits to Turkey and treaties with Afghanistan and Iran appear significant. These meetings led to political cooperation in the international field, and peace, security and stability in the region. It might be said that these were the forerunners of the subsequent defense pacts against communism in the region.³²

In sum, Abdullah's determination to hold his own and his unpopular efforts to make peace with Israel and bring about Jordan's union with Syria and Lebanon, precipitated the catastrophe. On 20 July, 1951, as he was stepping into Masjid al-Aqsa in Jerusalem for Friday prayers, he was shot dead by a Palestinian.³³ Abdullah was 69 at the time of his death. He had a very eventful career. He remained an ally of the British throughout his life. As a statesman, he was ambitious but a realist. In politics, he believed in personal rule. He had shaped the destiny of the country on his own. He also played a unique role in the Palestine War and its aftermaths.

The Talal Interlude

King Abdullah's assassination was a bolt from the blue to the government of Amman. Since Crown Prince Talal ibn Abdullah was not in the country, Amir Naif, the younger son of King Abdullah, was appointed Regent, and a Cabinet under Tawfiq Abul Huda had taken shape. The appointment of his brother, Amir Naif as Regent by the Cabinet without proclaiming Talal King evoked rumours that Jordan would be united with Iraq under a common Hashemite crown; for many people in Jordan looked upon the

³¹ Israel Gershuni (1977), "King Abdullah's Concept of a Greater Syria" in Ann Sinai and Allen Pollack (eds.) *The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the West Bank: A Handbook*, New York: American Academic Association for Peace in the Middle East, pp.139-147.

³² see Walter Z. Laqueur (March, 1956), "Communism in Jordan", *The World Today*, 12:109-119.

³³ Kirkbride, *A Crackle of Thorns: Experiences in the Middle East*, p.167.

Regent as pro-Iraq and pro-Britain, whereas Talal symbolized anti-British feeling in the country. To quell rumours and satisfy public opinion, Abul Huda arranged for an early return of Talal who was crowned King on 4 September, 1951. An atmosphere of optimism began to take shape in Jordan as the new Monarch and his Premier appeared to be seeking closer relations with the Saudi-Egyptian "camp" and moving away from Baghdad and Whitehall.³⁴

During this period, the Palestinians had called for constitutional revision to allow the legislature a voice in decision making. The constitutional revision, promised half-heartedly by Abdullah after the annexation of Palestine, was accelerated by the new Palace group. Thus, the most important and notable event of Talal's reign was the grant of a new Constitution, which was promulgated on 2 January, 1952. It had many striking features. Its principle innovation was the transformation of the hitherto non-responsible government into a responsible one, making the Prime Minister and his cabinet collectively accountable to the House of Representatives. Considerable authority in financial and foreign affairs was also granted to the legislative branch. The Constitution also recognized certain basic fundamental rights and vested responsibility in the state to provide work opportunities to the citizens, and to protect them against exploitation. Despite the legislative gains as a result of the new Constitution, the Cabinet still proposed all legislation and the Monarch retained his right to dissolve parliament without causing resignation of the Cabinet.³⁵

On the whole, the Constitution changed the basic assumption of the old patriarchal order. For the first time, it allowed the people and their representatives to participate in the political system and to exercise restraint on the hitherto unchallenged executive authority. The credit for this rather hasty democratization goes largely to the merger of the two banks, the disappearance of Abdullah from the political scene and the initiative of a group of young, educated, urban deputies, who discovered the appropriate circumstances for exerting pressure to obtain constitutional change.

However, the series of successive reforms, carried out under Talal, were not to be the taste of some of the interested foreign powers. Nor were they liked by the local

³⁴ see Mamduh Rida (1962), *Memoirs of King Talal*, Cairo: Roze El Yousif.

³⁵ M. Khalil (1962), *The Arab States and the Arab League*, vol. I, Beirut: Khayats, pp.55-75.

oligarchs, who saw in them a menace to their vital interests and position. King Talal had left for Europe in May 1952 for rest and convalescence'. During his absence, there was widespread rumour that Talal's illness was an "invention of political intrigues", but the events of those fateful days are not entirely clear. Upon his return in July, Talal was examined by a team of Egyptian and Jordanian doctors, who reported that the king was suffering from Schizophrenia. The Parliament in a secret session, thereupon, decided to terminate the kingship of Talal on 11 August 1952, who abdicated peacefully in favor of his son, Prince Hussein, who was barely seventeen years old at that time.³⁶

The dethronement of Talal was a turning point and an unprecedented even in the history of Jordan. During his short term of rule, significant advances were made in the political and constitutional fields. A striking development was that the king willingly abdicated his autocratic powers and prerogatives and was content to make the Constitution and Parliament supreme. After his deposition, these powers passed into the hands of a small oligarchy. The Bedouin had been brought into the national stream and developed loyalty to the Hashemites through their participation in the Arab Legion. The West Bank and the refugees became part of the kingdom, adding new dimensions to the country. Abdullah's Personal system of power seems to have been replaced by Palace system of power, the term Palace referring to the monarchy and its political allies. Earlier, the authority was exercised by the Amir and his subordinates, but with the coming of the Palestinians, the Palace politicians seem to have achieved prominence independent of the monarchy.

³⁶ Parliament's proclamation of Talal's dethronement in *Majmu'at al-Qawanin wa al-Anthima*, (Collection of the Statutes), vol. I, Amman, p.48.

CHAPTER – III
CONSOLIDATION OF
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Jordan that King Hussein ibn Talal inherited in May, 1953 was marked by a series of nation-shaking crises and higher degree of political instability. Infact Jordan was a very different place in the 1950s from what it had been before 1948. The West Bank had been added and more importantly, almost overnight the population came to be dominated by the Palestinians, a group of people with more sophistication, education and wealth than the Jordanians of the East Bank. These fundamental alterations entailed not only basic economic and social changes, but they also substantially contributed to a rapid evolution of the political situation.¹

In essence, King Hussein attempted to continue his grandfather's policies. On the West Bank and among the Palestinians, he sought to eliminate the old leadership, which was opposed to the Hashemites, and to build up a new, alternative Palestinian leadership. As this process continued- not without considerable problems and setbacks- he maintained his reliance on steadfast East Bank support. Key cabinet posts were almost always in the hands of men known for their loyalty and often originating from rural tribal areas and certain loyal minorities. Finally, although the army was being rapidly expanded and Palestinians did join it, its backbone remained with the ever loyal Bedouin and tribal members from rural areas.²

Political crisis in the 1950s

The conditions that promoted the crisis of the 1950s were many. The most obvious was the addition of the Palestinians. On a political level, they bitterly criticize Great Britain for the loss of most of their homeland in Palestine. The Hashemite, they considered, to be very friendly to the British, and thus culpable. King Abdullah's negotiations with the new Israeli state for a peace treaty was unacceptable to many Palestinians. Furthermore, the Palestinians did not easily accept- infact strongly

¹ James Lunt (1989), *Hussein of Jordan: A Political Biography*, London: Macmillan, p.19.

² Peter Gubser (1983), *Jordan, Crossroads of Middle Eastern Events*, Boulder: Westview Croom Helm, p.89.

resented- the dominant role in the government and army of the East Jordanians, whom they viewed as less educated and less sophisticated. As the differences between the two groups diminished and interconnections including considerable intermarriage increased, this source of resentment became less important. Despite their opposition to or even outright rejection of the Hashemite regime, Palestinians increasingly came to participate in the state system and thus, at least tacitly, to accept it. By virtue of its very existence, the power it possessed in the form of a loyal army, and the material benefits it controlled and disbursed, the state was able to assert its claim as the ruler of its territory and cause the people to interact with it.³

A second set of conditions contributing to the crisis atmosphere was the strength of the Arab national movement and the rise of Arab nationalist and Islamic political parties. Arab nationalism has been variously described as the overall predominant force that shapes the destiny of the Arab world and provides certain legitimacy to the involvement of Arab states, at various levels and in various sectors, in the affairs of other Arab states. Thus, Transjordan interfered in the affairs of its neighbouring states when Amir and later King Abdullah promoted his Greater Syria plan. Equally, at the time, other countries, including Egypt, directly involved themselves in Jordanian politics and even attempted to keep King Abdullah from acquiring the West Bank. In the 1950s, this outside Arab influence on Jordan took various forms. The best known were the actions of President Gamel Abdal Nasser of Egypt.⁴ The second form of outside interference consisted of the pan-Arab and pan-Islamic parties in which the Bath party, the Communist Party, the Muslim Brotherhood, and the Islamic Party of Liberation acquires significance. Party membership in these extra-Jordanian and usually anti-Hashemite parties were broadly spread throughout the country on both banks of river Jordan. The poverty-stricken Palestinian refugees were as easy to recruit as were the more settled West Bank Palestinians, and East Jordanians were also converted to the pan-Arab or pan-Islamic revivalist causes, although to a lesser extent.

³ see Avi Shlaim (1988), *Collusion Across the Jordan: King Abdullah, the Zionist Movement and the Partition of Palestine*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.386-433.

⁴ see Israeli Gershoni (1981), *The Emergence of Pan-Arabism in Egypt*, Tel Aviv: Shiloah Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies.

The only significant Jordanian group seemingly immune to the tune of these parties was the Bedouin.⁵

A third set of conditions contributing to crisis was the decline of British influence in the region, the rise of the U.S. role as British influence waned, and the growing Soviet influence. A fourth condition was the existence of the new Israeli state and Jordan's relationship to it. Jordan's policy, realizing her inherent weakness vis-à-vis Israel was to avoid clashes and armed conflict. The Israelis, sometimes spontaneously and sometimes in response to actions by Palestinian refugees undertaking raids or attempting to form their former lands on the Israeli side of the border, undertook severe border raids against West Bank villages. The Arab Legion's inability to respond and its attempts to prevent Palestinians from crossing the border created increasing Palestinian bitterness toward it and the Hashemite regime. Basically this constant perceived or real Israeli threat and occasional use of military force served to destabilize the country, often at crucial times.⁶

The period between 1954 and 1957 was a time of unrest in Jordan due to frequent confrontations between the monarchy, with the support of the conservatives, and the nationalists, led by the Baath, Communist, and National Socialist parties. It began with the Baghdad Pact crisis, which became the target for anti-Western, and anti-monarchical sentiments. The nationalists became increasingly powerful during this period, when they actually controlled the government for five months in late 1956 and early 1957. But King Hussein, fearing that he might be overthrown, gathered the support of the conservative groups in the country, his fellow Arab monarchs, and the United States. He reimposed his authority, restoring to greater suppression than ever before. In the struggle, the army proved to be a most powerful force in the country, and the United States replaced Britain as the main external influence.⁷

King Hussein, however, refused to irrevocably commit himself to the traditional politicians who served as the backbone of the patriarchal system under his grandfather.

⁵ Peter Gubser (1973), *Politics and Change in Al-karak, Jordan*, London: Oxford University Press, pp.135-139.

⁶ Ilan Pappé (1988), *Britain and the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1948-1951*, London: Oxford University Press, pp.162-185.

⁷ The Mutual Cooperation Pact, commonly known as the Baghdad Pact called for political and military measures against "Soviet Aggression". See Noble Frankland ed. (1958) Royal Institute of International Affairs, *Documents on International Affairs*, 1955, pp.287-289.

He held these politicians in reserve and called upon them whenever the new forces expressed their impatience with his method of reform. The king did not block change, but attempted to compromise between those who desired it and those who favored the status-quo. His attempts, however, were not successful during this period. Whenever change threatened the very existence of the monarchy, the forces of reaction were unleashed. With the blessings of the Palace, the traditional elite supported by loyal troops, tribal leaders and a variety of right wing elements reasserted royal authority.⁸

In Jordan, the Palace system of power, through gradually modified, has survived longer than elsewhere in the Arab world, with the possible exception of Saudi Arabia and Morocco. This is due to the loyalty of the army, to Western military and economic aid, and to the role of Israel in the politics of the region. The presence and policies of Israel remain as one of the major factors in the ability of King Hussein to remain on the throne. Israel has always threatened to take over in case of a change in the status-quo in Jordan. This has in turn, forced the Palestinians, to tolerate the status-quo and thus contribute to the stability of Jordan. Neither the Palestinians nor the Nasserist system desired a total break in relations with the monarchy.

In such circumstances, the first major crisis faced by King Hussein was the maneuverings around the Baghdad Pact, which Turkey, Iraq, and Iran signed with Britain in 1955 and was designed to contain Soviet influence in the West Asia. High level British and Turkish delegations visited Jordan in December 1955 and attempted to persuade the young king to adhere to the pact, which provided inducements of very considerable financial aid for the army and defense guarantees. At the time, however, King Hussein seemed to accept the concept of the pact, but dropped it at a last minute. He did not promptly join the pact because of adverse public opinion and the sharp criticism of Iraq in the Arab League. He was in no mood to accept further involvement in Western military pacts. Moreover, the Palestinian majority which made up of two-thirds of the population of Jordan, considered Israel rather than the Soviet Union as the aggressor in the West Asia.⁹

⁸ Naseer H. Aruri (1972), *Jordan: A Study in Political Development 1921-1965*, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, p.119.

⁹ Macmillan (1969), *Tides of Fortune: An Autobiography 1945-1955*, London: Macmillan, p.653-655.

In the atmosphere of very strong Arab nationalism, King Hussein was most vulnerable, both internally and externally, because of the continued presence of the British. Not only were British troops stationed on Jordanian soil under the auspices of the Anglo-Jordanian treaty, but also the command of Arab Legion was in British hands. The very fact of the British presence undermined the King, but perhaps more important, it had the potential of undermining the legitimacy of the Arab Legion as a national force and one must remember that the Legion was and is the ultimate protector of the Hashemite throne. As a result, King Hussein almost overnight dismissed General John Bagon Glubb as commander of the army in March 1956, and after a two-month interim appointment, placed his protégé General Ali Abu Nuwar in the post. Other British officers were replaced by Jordanians in the subsequent months to complete the process of Arabization. To complete the change, the name of the army was officially changed from the Arab Legion to the Jordanian Arab Army. Britain was officially offended by these moves but did not undertake to sever ties or other relationships, at the time.¹⁰

Each of the next three years— 1956, 1957, and 1958— was more momentous than the last one. Government instability chronic since 1954, continued unabated, with a rotation of prime ministers apparently unable to cope up with the myriad of forces. In this atmosphere, Parliament was dissolved and new elections were called for 21 October, 1956, the first truly free elections to be held in the country. The winner, the National Socialist party of Sulayman Nabulsi, was a Jordanian party with mass membership that, although it did not advocate the demise of the Hashemites, did oppose most policies put forth by the king. Soon afterward, Nabulsi formed a government made of the left-wing members of Parliament, including a Communist, which promptly started taking positions challenging King Hussein on basic issues.¹¹

The Israeli-Franco-British invasion of Egypt in late October and early November once again changed the West Asian situation. The British invasion of a sister Arab country virtually demanded that Jordan break off treaty relations with Britain. The Nabulsi government promptly initiated negotiations for this purpose that were completed in late winter 1957. The Nabulsi government also struck an agreement with

¹⁰ see King Hussein (1962), *Uneasy Lies the Head*, London, Heinemann.

¹¹ Peter Snow (1972), *Hussein*, London: Barrie & Jenkins, p.100.

Egypt, Syria, and Saudi Arabia whereby they would replace the British subsidy (this never occurred in actuality) and requested the removal of Iraqi troops, which had earlier entered Jordan to protect the country against Israel. King Hussein, however, did not agree with this new direction. His first moves centered on establishing a relationship with the United States, which, he hoped, would be an alternative powerful friend for his Hashemite throne and Jordan. Meanwhile, on 5 January, 1957, President Eisenhower issued the Eisenhower Doctrine, whereby the United States pledged to aid West Asian countries against Soviet aggression and subversion. Since the government's earlier initiative to get aid from three Arab countries was not forthcoming, King Hussein succeeded in initiating a relationship with the United States that endures, despite ups and downs, to this day. Appropriately, in March 1957, the Anglo-Jordanian treaty was terminated and the first U.S. aid started flowing during April.¹²

A much greater immediate threat to the young king's throne was an attempted coup d'état in the early days of April 1957. This threat to the throne seemed to be from two, somewhat connected sources: the cabinet of Sulaymen Nabulsi and a small but influential group in the Arab Legion headed by General Ali Abu Nuwar, the commander of the army. The king courageously faced both the challenges, firstly by dismissing the Cabinet of Nabulsi on 8 April, and then on 13 April, he himself went to see his loyal troops at the army camp for Zerqa, who upon fearing his death were demanding to see him. In the ensuing minutes, the king was highly feted by his loyal troops, and Ali Abu Nuwar's life was being saved due to his intervention. Even though there had been a major threat to the Hashemite regime, there was also a positive side. Because of his visible courageous actions, King Hussein became the true leader of the army. The army's ultimate loyalty, despite a few unsympathetic officers and units, was proved in a tangible manner. His earlier actions to Arabize the military, contributing strongly to the army's loyalty and the king's legitimacy within its ranks and among some civilian sectors. Thus, King Hussein no longer had to rely directly on foreigners to secure his throne from internal threats.¹³

¹² John C. Campbell (1958), *Defense of the Middle East*, New York: Harper, p.131.

¹³ P. J. Vatikiotis (1967), *Politics and the Military in Jordan: A Study of the Arab Legion, 1921-1957*, New York: Praeger Publishers, pp.127-131.

Palestinian Dimension

The distinction between the Palestinians and the East Jordanians constitutes the most serious and at times, nation threatening cleavage in Jordan. Prior to the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, there were solely East Jordanians in the amirate of Jordan. One of the major consequences of this war, however, was the incorporation of the West Bank into Jordan and the granting of citizenship to all residents of the West Bank as well as to the Palestinian-refugees who found themselves in the East and West banks after the war. Although not all Palestinians can be characterized in this manner, it may be said that a high proportion of the Palestinian Jordanians have fundamentally different national aims from those of the East Jordanians. The latter focus on the East bank and wish to see its economic and social development; regaining the West Bank or even all of Palestine is perhaps desired but is not very high on their priority list. On the other hand, the Palestinians primary national aim is to regain part or all of Palestine; this is especially true for those in the camps and those who came to Jordan during or after the 1967 war. These Palestinians fundamentally see Jordanian citizenship as a convenience rather than an identity or a loyalty. In addition, social, educational, and cultural differences also existed between them.¹⁴

Moreover, the political aspirations of the two contending camps were diametrically opposite. The primary aspirations of the Palestinian nationalists was to see Israel destroyed so that they, themselves, could establish an Arab government in the whole of Palestine and enable the Palestinian refugees to return to their former homes. To them, Jordan's strategic position along Israel's eastern border obliged it to play a central role in the realization of these aspirations. The extent to which Jordan assumed that role would determine the degree to which the very survival of the Hashemite regime was justified in Palestinian eyes. The primary aspiration of the Hashemite regime, on the other hand, was simply to rule and, in his eyes, the country's *raison d'être* on both banks of Jordan was to provide the territorial basis for that rule.¹⁵

These respective aspirations of ruling, on the one hand, and "regaining" Palestine, on the other, proved impossible to reconcile, for what was beneficial to the

¹⁴ Daniel Lerner (1958), *The Passing of Traditional Society*, New York: Free Press, p.306-310.

¹⁵ Bailey Clinton (1984), *Jordan's Palestinian Challenge 1948-1983: A Political History*, Boulder: Westview Press, pp. 2-3.

one was detrimental to the other. For example, in order to finance its rule, the regime was dependent on grants from Great Britain and the United States, the only two powers sufficiently interested in the independent existence of the Hashemite monarchy to subsidize it. The Palestinian nationalists, however, objected to this financial dependence, believing that it enabled the two powers to influence Jordan's foreign and defense policies. They felt, in particular, that dependence on the West impelled Jordan to acquiesce with respect to the question of Israel's existence and to maintain quiet along the Israel-Jordan border. To Palestinian nationalists, the continual harassment of Israel over this border was essential in keeping this cause alive.¹⁶

Whether or not the regime had an obligation to the powers that subsidized it, Jordan indeed adopted a policy of minimum confrontation with Israel designed to ensure that its rule would not be shaken by Israeli reprisal raids or by occupation, as eventually happened in the West Bank in 1967. Due to this conflicting attitude on border policy, the regime sought to ensure that Jordan's army was loyal and free from pro-Palestinian nationalist sympathies. It therefore recruited its important combat units mainly from dependable East bank sections of the population particularly from the Bedouin and Circassians. Furthermore, to prevent the Palestinian majority from imposing their political aspirations on the country, the rulers limited Palestinian participation in the major national decision making bodies, where Palestinians were never allowed to enjoy representation commensurate with their two-thirds majority.¹⁷ East bankers have also outnumbered Palestinians in almost all of the Jordanian cabinets since 1950, and the largest of the three cabinets in which Palestinians actually constituted a majority served less than four months. Moreover, only four of Jordan's nineteen Prime Ministers have been Palestinians, serving terms of eight days, nine days, one month and fifty-five days respectively.¹⁸

In their struggle to control the political direction of Jordan, both sides have exhibited strengths and weaknesses. The regime has enjoyed the practical advantages of

¹⁶ Ibid., p.3.

¹⁷ Bailey Clinton (1966), "The Participation of the Palestinians in the Politics of Jordan", Ph.D. Thesis, Columbia University, pp.108-124.

¹⁸ Bailey Clinton (1977), "Cabinet Formation in Jordan" in Ann Sinai and Allen Pollack (eds.) *The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the West Bank: A Handbook*, New York: American Academic Association for Peace in the Middle East, p.102-113.

military power with which to coerce the Palestinian nationalists if they became otherwise uncontrollable as well as the means to affect the average Palestinians standard of living. The “weakness” of the Hashemite regime, on the other hand has been its desire for recognition by its Palestinian subjects as a legitimate government, without which its rule would never be secure. It is this aspiration of the regime that has been the Palestinian nationalists’ main source of strength, giving them the ability to restrain government policies. These policies were also restrained by the regime’s desire not to appear to violate the inter-Arab consensus, which generally pronounced in support of Palestinian nationalist goals.¹⁹

Until 1971, the prevailing pattern of regime-Palestinian relations was such that the Palestinian nationalist leadership would expose and publicize government policies considered detrimental to their cause— policies involving the curbing of armed infiltration into Israel, the maintenance of secret contacts with the Jewish state, or the adherence to Western political initiatives that sought to end the Arab-Israel conflict. The nationalist leaders would then organize Palestinian crowds to demonstrate that the regime was not representing Palestinian aspirations and therefore was not legitimate. Fearful of leaving yet another scar on regime-Palestinian relations, the regime was always wary of situations that might provoke it to use force against Palestinians. Between 1950s and 1970s, the regime thus withdrew many unpopular policies before they could strain these relations so far.²⁰

In order to further its dual aspirations of ruling and being considered legitimate, the Hashemite regime, from 1949 to 1971, pursued a policy of moderate hostility toward Israel- moderate as a precaution against being destroyed by its western neighbor, but hostile as a precaution against being overthrown by the Palestinians. The history of the regime in this period may be seen primarily as a constant struggle to strike a balance between these tendencies, as the Hashemites and the Palestinian nationalists each looked forward to some decisively favorable turn of events. The nationalists, while constantly preoccupied with trying to prevent the regime from coming to terms with the existence of Israel, looked forward to a time when the regime would fall. The

¹⁹ Shaul Mishal (1978), *West Bank / East Bank, the Palestinians in Jordan, 1949-1967*, New Haven: Yale University Press, Chs.2-3.

²⁰ Ibid.

Hashemites, while trying to prevent the complete disaffection of the Palestinians, looked forward to a time when these same Palestinians would have to accept the regime as the best they could get- and this would only happen after they realized that they would neither destroy Israel nor attain independent state of their own.

Meanwhile, the creation of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1964 Arab summit and the establishment of Fatah, a Palestinian guerrilla organization in December 1964 under the leadership of Yassir Arafat dramatically changed the political scenario of Jordan. Both the organizations initiated various kinds of raids into Israel, mostly from Lebanon and Jordan, which in turn, created a serious military threat from Israel. Their policies were diametrically opposed to King Hussein's policy, who attempted to avoid border incidents by preventing villagers from infiltrating across the Israeli border. From mid-1965, the border incidents became persistent enough due to their activities that resulted in frequent and heavy counterattacks and preemptive attacks from Israeli side. In order to curtail these, the Jordanian government finally banned the PLO in the summer of 1966.²¹

Following the 1967 war, the growth of the Palestinian guerrilla movement, i.e., fedayeen movement naturally altered the course of history in Jordan. The guerilla organizations and their attacks on Israel, although often thwarted, caught the imagination and often support of many people throughout the West Asia, including Jordan. The movement grew and virtually developed into a state within a state, with a considerable following in the Palestinian refugee camps and among some of the poor quarters of Amman. At first, King Hussein did not attempt to control or stop it in a systematic way, most probably because of its larger public support. But as the guerrillas' power grew, they became more arrogant and ostentatiously challenged the state and the army. As fundamental institution came under attack, the king slowly changed his position. In June 1970, a major clash between the army and the guerrillas occurred, but subsequently a new agreement was struck somewhat favorable to the Palestinian guerrilla organizations. Fatah was the strongest guerrilla group in the PLO and in Jordan, but it was George Habash's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine

²¹ Bailey Clinton (1973), "Changing Attitudes Toward Jordan in the West Bank", *Middle East Journal*, 32(2), p.155-156.

(PFLP) that precipitated the civil war between Jordanians and Palestinians in 1970-71. Finally, King Hussein initiated military action against the PLOs on 16 September, 1970 often known in history as the “Black September” and as a result, the PLOs ceased to exist by 19 July, 1971 in Jordan.²²

Finally, the loss of West Bank in the 1967 Arab-Israel war and recognition of the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people in the 1974 Rabat summit accelerated the coalescence and consolidation of the divergent group identities of Jordanians and Palestinians alike. At the time, it was argued by some conservative East Bank Jordanians that the Hashemite should settle for the East Bank. The king, however, did not accept this drastic position, but steps were temporarily taken that tended to call into question the future role of the Palestinian Jordanians in Jordanian national life. In February 1976, Parliament was recalled and indefinitely suspended elections, which had been scheduled for the following month so that the question of excluding or including the West Bank in such elections could not be resolved. In adhering to the Rabat resolution, the king had only said that the PLO represents the Palestinians, he did not disclaim sovereignty over the West Bank.²³

King Hussein developed an ambivalent approach to these phenomena. On the one hand, he made a deliberate effort to promote and reinforce the particularist Jordanian loyalty, identity and statehood. His former slogan– “Jordan is Palestine and Palestine is Jordan”– which was intended to preserve and nurture the union between Jordanians and Palestinians on both sides of the river was gradually superseded by a new formula: “Jordan is Jordan and Palestine is Palestine”. Hussein thus promoted the East Bank as the separate inviolate political patrimony of the Jordanians and recognized the Palestinians’ right to self-determination and statehood on the other side of the river. On the contrary, Hussein consistently upheld the essential national unity of all Jordanians, from whatever origin, and repeatedly warned, against any attempt to sow dissension between the members of the “one family” of Jordanians. However, from mid-1970s to the mid-1980s, during the decade of prosperity, these tensions, for the

²² see William B. Quandt et al. (1973), *The Politics of Palestinian Nationalism*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

²³ Robert Day (1986), *East Bank / West Bank, Jordan and the Prospects for Peace*, Washington: Council of Foreign Relations, p.61.

most part, receded. Ironically, at a time when the Palestinians in Jordan are more willing than ever to integrate into the Jordanian state, they are being spurred by a significant segment of their East bank compatriots.²⁴

In the meantime, the Palestinian intifada (uprising), erupted in the West Bank and Gaza strip in December 1987, in protest against the continued Israeli occupation and the seemingly indifferent attitude of Arab League states to the Palestinians' plight. The intifada, and the increasingly violent Israeli response, increased international support for the PLO and Palestinian national rights. At an extraordinary meeting of the Arab League held in the Algerian capital, Algiers, in June 1988, King Hussein gave the intifada his unconditional support and insisted that the PLO must represent the Palestinians at any future peace conference. Furthermore, in accordance with agreements reached at the meeting on 31 July, Jordan cancelled the West Bank development plan and severed its legal and administrative links with the territory. By 15 November 1988, the Palestine National Council (PNC) meeting in Algiers, finally proclaimed the establishment of an independent state of Palestine and Jordan immediately recognized the new state. In 1991 Madrid Peace Conference sponsored by U.S.A. and Russia, Jordan agreed to participate in direct peace negotiation with Israel to put an end to their hostilities by signing "Washington Declaration" to that effect on 25 July, 1994.²⁵

Political Development

After the crisis of 1957, the king banned all political parties and dissolved the Parliament. Martial law was imposed which continued to be in force except for small intervals till 1989. Nonetheless the representative processes continued in Jordan and more than one ensuing elections can be considered relatively free such as the 1962 and 1984 elections. However, internal as well as external factors prompted these liberal phases to be relatively short-lived and were followed by periods of managed elections and docile government-oriented representatives.

²⁴ Asher Susser (2000), "The Jordanian Monarchy: The Hashemite Success Story" in Joseph Kostiner (eds) *Middle East Monarchies: The Challenge of Modernity*, Boulder London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, pp.Ibid., p.110-111.

²⁵ The Washington Declaration: Israel-Jordan-The United States (1994), [Online: web] Accessed 19 July 2008, URL: http://www.knesset.gov.il/process/docs/washington_eng.htm.

There has been little political development at the national level in Jordan basically because of the Palestinian issue, in contrast to the much more rapid economic and social development. For one, Jordan now lacks an elected Parliament. After the 1967 Parliament was dismissed in 1974 and redissolved in 1976, no national body existed for two years, until the National Consultative Council of sixty members was appointed by the king in the summer of 1978. This body is drawn from the East Bank population but includes many Palestinians who originated from the West Bank. Although the council has no official legislative functions, there is a gentleman's agreement that the king and cabinet will not promulgate any new law not approved by the council. Political parties continued to be outlawed in the early 1980s, with the exception of the Muslim Brotherhood. The king allowed this fundamentalist religious party to remain active because of its past support for him and its role as a safety valve for fervent Muslims.²⁶

With the lack of a true Parliament, the cabinet has been relatively stable, with only occasional reshuffles. The composition of the cabinet basically reflected the sustained predominance of East Jordanians, but also a continued representation of people of West Bank origin. In addition, both regional and salient professional economic interests are consistently represented in the cabinet. In January 1984, the Jordanian Cabinet resigned, and a new one containing a higher proportion of Palestinians and with Ahmad Ubeidat as Prime Minister, took office with a view to recovering something from the West Bank before Jewish settlement there produced a de facto extension of Israel. King Hussein dissolved the National Consultative Council on 5 January and reconvened the National Assembly for its first session since 1967. In fact Hussein appeared to be effectively creating the kind of Palestinian forum that was detailed in the Reagan peace plan, involving the creation of an autonomous Palestinian authority on the West Bank in association with Jordan. However, the forum revealed strong opposition among Jordanian Palestinians to the plan.²⁷

Meanwhile Israel allowed the surviving West Bank deputies to attend the reconvened House of Representatives (the Lower House), which unanimously approved

²⁶ Gubser, *Jordan, Crossroads of Middle Eastern Events*, p.111.

²⁷ The Middle East and North Africa (2007), *Europa Regional Surveys of the World*, vol. 53, Routledge, p.583.

constitutional amendments enabling elections to the House to be held in the East Bank alone, but giving itself the right to elect deputies from the West Bank, without whom the House has been inquorate. Hence, the first elections in Jordan for 17 years took place on 12 March 1984 and a new cabinet was formed. However, even this cabinet was short-lived and resigned in April 1985. On 5 April, a new cabinet was sworn in under the premiership of Zaid ar-Rifai and this lasted for nearly four years until it was forced to resign under popular demand after the riots of 1989.²⁸ Thus, Jordan's political history was marred by continuous upheavals and repeated changes in government structure.

Jordan in the Arab World

A small, somewhat vulnerable country, Jordan is not a maker and shaker in regional or international affairs. Yet King Hussein had managed to acquire the status of an international statesman respected both in the West and by Arab leaders. Jordan plays a key role in Arab diplomacy and is the only country to enjoy good relations with almost all Arab regimes, irrespective of their political leanings. The king's policy towards the Arab states stems from a deep conviction that a stable and developing Jordan cannot continue without the existence of a healthy Arab atmosphere. Thus, the king and his advisers have continuously attempted to seek out patrons while avoiding any dangerous commitments in the changing patterns of associations and alliances among countries in the West Asia.

King Hussein upon taking charge first faced the challenge from the forces of Arab nationalism and the desire for Arab unity. These movements had gained exceptional strength in the aftermath of the 1956 Israeli-Franco-British invasion of the Egypt and Egyptian President Nasser's subsequent and dramatic rise in popularity. Subsequently, Egypt and Syria announced the formation of United Arab Republic on 1 February 1958, in response to which Jordan and Iraq concluded a federation agreement on 14 February 1958. Until 1958, with occasional lapses, Jordan's closest Arab friend was Iraq, which was then ruled by a brother Hashemite family. After the latter's overthrow, Jordan was essentially isolated until good relations with its once bitter

²⁸ Ibid., p.583-584.

dynastic foe, Saudi Arabia, developed in the 1960s. Although Saudi Arabia's support in terms of military defense might be weak, it is of considerable importance in terms of diplomacy and finances. Thus, after the 1970-1971 civil war, Saudi Arabia helped keep the country from being totally isolated in the Arab world and was the only Arab country to continue the important subsidies awarded at the 1967 Arab Summit in Khartoum.²⁹

The overwhelming defeat and loss of territory and people at the hands of the Israeli military in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war greatly undermined the prestige of Jordan. Its loss of the West Bank, which included one-third of its people, its richest agricultural land, the focus of its tourism, and the religious symbol of Jerusalem can hardly be fulfilled. In addition, three hundred thousand refugees flowed into East Jordan which created the problem for rehabilitation. And the Palestinians, considering that reliance on Arab states to regain their homeland has proved to be a bankrupt policy, turned their own resources and quickly built up their guerrilla organizations, which beginning to challenge King Hussein's authority.³⁰ Despite these great difficulties, but with crucial help from friends in the Arab world and the West, the country and the regime were able to weather these problems.

In the 1970s, Jordan built its relation with the Arab world in a three-pronged manner. Firstly, in the pre-Camp David era, Jordan attempted to retain positive relations with Egypt, the largest and most powerful of the Arab states. Since Jordan shares no border with Egypt and President Sadat's policies were relatively pragmatic, this was relatively easily achieved. After Camp David, however, relations soured, although in keeping with its normal practice, Jordan did not generally attack Egypt as many other Arab countries did. Secondly, King Hussein assiduously cultivated the oil-producing countries of the Arabian Gulf and Saudi Arabia. Jordan supplies many of these countries with highly skilled manpower for their security services. For the most part, their interests overlap, i.e., they jointly perceive a mutual need to preserve the stability of the conservative and moderate regimes of the region. Their immediate national interests might differ somewhat; for Jordan, its western border with Israel and

²⁹ see Uriel Dann (1989), *King Hussein and the Challenge of Arab Radicalism: Jordan, 1955-1967*, New York: Oxford University Press.

³⁰ see Samir A. Mutawi (1987), *Jordan in the 1967 War*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

the various aspects of the Palestinian question are the most salient, while the others see internal stability and threats from Iran, at times Iraq, and other radical states as their most immediate concern. All worry about larger Soviet aspirations, but they certainly do not consider them to be behind all or many of the problems they face. It should also be noted that in the 1970s when the shah of Iran was still on his throne, King Hussein sought out his patronage, received aid from Iran, and cooperated with the shah in such ventures as defending the sultan of Oman's regime against the Dhofar rebellion.³¹

Thirdly, throughout the 1960s and early 1970s, Iraq and Syria were basically hostile to Jordan's Hashemite monarchy. After the 1973 Arab-Israeli war, King Hussein attempted to change this negative pattern with mixed success. In 1975, the two countries signed accords to cooperate in and coordinate defense, foreign affairs, economic policy, information, education and cultural programs. On December 8, 1976, in accordance with the spirit of Arab unity, the two countries announced their intention to form a union, however, little ever came of this agreement. At the same time, Jordan's relations with "radical" Iraq were generally poor. Criticism and hostile words were occasionally exchanged, and Jordanian university students in Iraqi universities at times harassed. However, the countries were developing a lively economic relationship. Iraq was giving substantial aid to develop the port of Aqaba and the country's road system. Iraq was interested in access to Jordan's port as an alternative to its vulnerable and poor ports on the Gulf and to transporting imports across Syria, with which it was often at serious odds. Jordan, on the other hand, wanted to receive development aid and to have an alternative friend in case relations with Syria soured.³²

By 1980s, Jordan's relationships with Syria and Iraq had virtually reversed themselves. Jordan was materially and politically supporting Iraq in its war against Iran, but relations with Syria had become hostile, perhaps largely due to the activities of Muslim Brotherhood from the Jordanian soil which conducted a series of attacks against Syrian state institutions. A less important factor contributing to these tensions is the fundamentally different orientations of the two countries. Syria is vocally pro-PLO, conducts occasional air battles with Israel, and avows radically at times socialist

³¹ see Dann, *King Hussein and the Challenge of Arab Radicalism*.

³² see Laurie A. Brand (Aug., 1994), "Economics and Shifting Alliances: Jordan's Relations with Syria and Iraq, 1975-1981", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 26(3), p.93-113.

positions. Jordan, on the other hand, is close to the conservative and moderate Arab regimes, competes with the PLO at certain times, maintains a peaceful border with Israel, and is basically pro-western. The strife between the two countries escalated when in September 1980, Jordan threw its strong support behind Iraq in the latter's war against Iran. This Jordanian action was especially provoking to Syria because of strong Iraqi-Syrian enmity. However, economic relations had been maintained throughout the standoff.³³

King Hussein's reasons for overtly backing Iraq in its war with Iran and for taking the lead in persuading others to lend their support are varied. One is definitely Iraqi aid, which was raised considerably to a level of almost \$1 billion a year. Secondly, Syria's increasingly vitriolic treatment of Jordan has driven the king to seek an alternative patron in the region. Thirdly, Iraq had some form of guaranteed access to the Aqaba port, especially in crucial times such as war. Fourthly, King Hussein's sense of Arab duty played a role. Finally, the king stands to benefit from the fruits of the war. In 1980-1981, Iraq has turned over around fifty US built 760 tanks it captured from Iran, allowing Jordan to postpone the purchase of these tanks from the United States.³⁴

Thus, King Hussein had always tried to maintain positive relations with all Arab states. When the Arabs boycotted Egypt after the Camp David Accords of 1978, Jordan was keen to maintain informal relations and avoided hostility. Jordan renewed its ties with Egypt in 1984, then it renewed its ties with Syria in 1985. While at the same time, it clearly and solidly supported Iraq in its war with Iran, and maintained close economic ties with Saudi Arabia as well. Under its moderate policy, Jordan was thus able to have dialogues with all conflicting Arab factions and to contribute along with other countries, to establish a unified Arab view of the dangers threatening the Arab world.

Jordan, the United States and the Gulf Crisis

Among all the Western countries, Jordan had very close ties with Britain because of its historical associations. However, the situation changed after 1957. Due to

³³ see Moshe Ma'oz (1994), "Jordan in Asad's Greater Syria Strategy" in Joseph Nevo and Ilan Pappé' (eds.) *Jordan in the Middle East: 1948-1988, The Making of a Pivotal State*, London: Frank Cass, pp.95-102.

³⁴ see Amatzia Baram, "No New Fertile Crescent: Iraqi-Jordanian Relations, 1968-92", pp.119-160.

internal and external pressures, the king abrogated the Anglo-Jordanian treaty in 1957 and also terminated the British subsidy. Britain's place was taken over by the United States as a major aiding state, which made it possible for the king to hold things together from the time the British faded from the scene in 1957 until the Arab states began picking up the tab after the 1967 war and more generously after the Camp David in 1978. The United States under its Military Assistance Programme (MAP) provided a few fighter aircrafts and some missiles to Jordan in the 1960s. But in the 1970s and 1980s, the U.S. was unwilling to sell sophisticated weapons to Jordan, so as not to tilt the favorable balance of power in the West Asia in favor of the Arabs. The U.S. has been and continues to be the strongest supporter of Israel and is not willing to jeopardize its relations with Israel or the security of Israel at any cost. Also, the United States is not showing any serious initiative to solve the Palestinian problem or rather taking steps to prolong the issue.³⁵

Meanwhile, King Hussein frustrated by the unwillingness of the USA to use its influence with Israel to freeze Jewish settlement of the West Bank and unable to buy arms from the USA began to look to the USSR for diplomatic backing in solving the problem of Palestinian autonomy and for ornaments with which to defend the country. In January 1985, Jordan purchased an air defense system from the USSR, having already made an agreement to buy French anti-aircraft missiles in September 1984. In June 1985, following President Reagan's administration's repeated failure to secure approval to supply Jordan with arms, US secretary of State Shultz offered King Hussein extra economic aid of US\$250 m. as a token of US support for his efforts to achieve a peace settlement between the Arabs and Israel.³⁶

Jordan's relations with the United States have not always been smooth. The continued paupering of Israel irks King Hussein and very often he joins the other Arab states in their intransigence over a solution to the Palestinian problem. This is because he realizes that his place resides predominantly with the Arabs and the need to present a unified face to the U.S., Israel and their allies is very important. Even though the U.S.

³⁵ see Adam Garfinkle, "Jordan in World Politics", p.285-302.

³⁶ Ibid.

aid is useful, but it is not critical any more especially after the commitment shown by the regional donors in bolstering Jordanian economy.

The Gulf crisis appears to have altered American-Jordanian relations swiftly and dramatically. Immediately after Iraq invaded and occupied Kuwait on 2 August 1990, King Hussein sought to mediate the confrontation and to bring about an "Arab solution" to the crisis. However, U.S. President George W. Bush sought to undermine the Arab option by pushing a resolution through the U.N. Security Council to place an embargo on Iraq and by convincing Riyadh of an imminent Iraqi invasion of Saudi Arabia that could be stopped only by landing American troops in that kingdom. To salvage the Arab option, King Hussein sought support from the countries of the Maghreb who were instrumental in solving inter-Arab conflicts before. But the U.S. already had decided to prevent an Iraqi withdrawal with its military forces intact. Moreover, the Saudi leadership refused to use the services of Maghreb as an intermediary with the Iraqis. Thus, King Hussein's efforts to secure an Arab option were doomed.³⁷

Following the Kuwait crisis, Jordan suffered the most in relative economic terms and received the least compensation from the allied countries. Moreover, Jordan was left almost alone to cope with the massive influx of Arabs and Asians fleeing Iraq and Kuwait while facing the brunt of the embargo. Since Iraq was Jordan's biggest trading partner, UN sanctions against Iraq left the Jordanian economy in a state of disarray. Also, Jordan had to settle those Jordanians and Palestinians who lost jobs in Kuwait, by finding jobs and housing as well as schools for their children. The impact of these returnees is expected to add another 10% to the already high rate of unemployment, estimated at 35% prior to the crisis.³⁸

Politically, Jordan appears to have been isolated from her former allies, the United States and Saudi Arabia. King Hussein, in order to break his isolation, had visited several European countries to engage them in the peace process and to ensure that Europe would be represented at an International Peace Conference. The European participation is considered to be a counter-balancing influence to the Israeli and

³⁷ Jreisat, Jamil E., Freij, Hanna Y. (Winter/ Spring, 1991), "Jordan, the United States, and the Gulf Crisis", *Arab Studies Quarterly*, 13(1-2): 101-116, pp.110-111.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.112.

American pressures for a regional conference in which further talks could be carried out on bilateral basis. The king also visited Syria in April 1991 and reached an agreement with President Assad on two fundamental points. Firstly, Iraq's territorial integrity must be maintained as a strategic necessity for Jordan, Syria and the Arab world. Secondly, Assad pledged not to make unilateral concessions to the Americans and Israelis, thus leaving the door open for Jordan to be included in any dialogue about the Arab-Israeli conflict. Furthermore, Assad is expected to try to bridge the gap between Jordan and Egypt, and improved the strained relations between King Hussein and Husni Mubarak.³⁹

Although the country has felt the burden of the Gulf Crisis, both politically and economically, the king has been able to establish some facts. Firstly, he secured the legitimacy of his rule in Jordan both among the Jordanians and Palestinians in his kingdom, thus undermining the competition between him and the PLO for the loyalty of the Palestinians in Jordan. Secondly, his stance against foreign intervention in the region and his opposition to the destruction of Iraq gained him the respect of both nationalist and modern Islamists in the Arab and Islamic worlds. Thirdly, the destruction of Iraq has brought home to the Syrian leadership the need for a coordinated position with Jordan and the PLO, something the king worked for at the Arab Summit in Baghdad. Finally, Americans and Europeans have come to the realization that even though Jordan took a stance contrary to their Gulf policy, the king and his country have a serious role to play in any dialogue in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

³⁹ see Ma'oz, "Jordan in Asad's Greater Syria Strategy".

CHAPTER – IV
CHALLENGES TO
MONARCHY

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The 1990s brought about a completely different set of conditions both in the regional and international scenario and the whole of West Asia appeared to be passing through state of transition. Although Jordan seemed to have detached itself from the West Bank successfully, domestic tensions were rising and the demand for political reforms had gained momentums. The end of the Cold War, the collapse of Communist regimes in Eastern Europe, and the global economic crisis- all gave rise to the popular perception that democracy is the best option in a unipolar new world order. In evaluating the prospects of survival of Jordanian monarchy, Joseph Nevo and Ilan Pappé² have identified three major challenges: the rise of Islamic fundamentalism, economic decline and the Palestinian challenge, which would pose a serious threat to the stability of the monarchy.²

King Hussein's decision to go for democratisation was in fact precipitated by a severe economic crisis alongwith a combination of internal and external factors, notably the mounting external pressures in the aftermath of the Kuwaiti crisis, the protracted socio-economic crisis and linked with it, the concerns about political stability especially in the face of the growing Islamist challenge. In addition, the failure of other political strategies such as reformist, populist or socialist projects as well as reactionary authoritarian projects and current threats to his rule have impelled the king to undertake reforms. Finally, the pressure on the monarchy was momentous since the late 1980s with the growing popularity of the Islamic movement. By adopting a course of democratization, the Islamic bloc would hopefully be co-opted into the mainstream of the political system and thus neutralised.³

Democratisation in Jordan has, however, not followed the same path as other democratic transitions in East Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe. The regime has skillfully managed and directed a process that has throughout protected the four pillars of

² Joseph Nevo and Ilan Pappé (eds.) (1994), *Jordan in the Middle East: 1948-1988, The Making of a Pivotal State*, London: Frank Cass, p.3.

³ Beverley Milton-Edwards (1993), "Facade Democracy and Jordan", *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 20(2): 191-203, p.194.

power in Jordan: the monarchy and its coterie, the army and security services, wealthy business elites, and East Bank tribal leaders. It has simultaneously sought to undermine the only social force capable of disrupting key regime policies, the Islamic Muslim Brotherhood, and its political party, the Islamic Action Front (IAF), without altering the core power structures in Jordan through “defensive democratization.”⁴

In the past decade, the potent challenge to the Hashemite rule came from the rise of Islamic fundamentalism, economic decline, and the Palestinian issue. Although the fundamentalist threat was substantial most of the time and there were always economic difficulties, the Palestinian question and external threats seemed to have overshadowed the other issues. It was not until 1988 that the economic problems and fundamentalism moved to the forefront as the major threat to the survival of the monarchy. What seemed to be so distinctive about the latter threat was that they also attracted non-Palestinians, namely the Bedouins, into the anti-Hashemite camp, who had been very supportive to the monarchy in the past.⁵

Economic Crisis

Economically speaking, Jordan is a poor land with very limited resources and is far from being self-sufficient. Jordan has variously been characterized as a semi-rentier state which derives a substantial part of its revenue from external sources in the form of workers’ remittances, Intra-Arab Petrodollar aid and economic assistance from Britain earlier and later U.S.A. Access to external oil-related financial resources long represented a critical aspect of its regime stability. Infact, the decline of these revenues in the late 1980s spurred the eventual collapse of the foundations upon which the old economic and political order had been built. With this, the need arose for the regime to negotiate a new social structure with society, resulting in a far-reaching process of political liberalisation and partial democratisation after April 1989.⁶ The period also coincided with the declaration of the Palestine state as well as the end of the Iran-Iraq war with Iran’s

⁴ Glenn E. Robinson (Aug., 1998), “Defensive Democratization in Jordan”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 30 (3): 387-410, p.387.

⁵ Nevo and Pappé, *Jordan in the Middle East*, p.3.

⁶ Rex Brynen (March, 1992), “Economic Crisis and Post-Rentier Democratization in the Arab World: The Case of Jordan”, *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 25(1): 69-98, p.70.

acceptance of ceasefire resolution in 1988, which had domestic implications for Jordan, with Palestinian problem receiving a setback and economic crisis coming on the surface.

Jordan has been characterized by aspects of rentierism from the very beginning. In the pre-oil boom phase, it received foreign subsidies from Britain, U.S., and other Arab countries. Between 1973 and 1983, Jordan's GNP increased sixfold due to increase in world oil prices, and real growth in the economy took place at the rate of almost 10 percent per year. Moreover, the expatriate earnings of Palestinians and Jordanians working in the petroleum-exporting countries stimulated with workers' remittances grew dramatically, reaching a peak of around JD475 million (US\$1.2 billion) by 1984, an amount equivalent to more than a quarter of GDP. At the same time, foreign assistance largely from petrodollar sources fueled continued expansion of the public sector. In 1978, Arab League meeting in Baghdad promised a 10-year period of financial support to the frontline states, including US\$1.25 billion per year for Jordan. Between 1973 and 1980, foreign assistance accounted for almost 55 percent of government revenue, while government expenditure in turn represented more than 68 per cent of GDP.⁷

Such economic resources were proving to be of central importance to the political dynamics of the regime. State expenditures allowed the state in general and the king in particular to distribute significant political and economic rewards to loyal- or at least, the quiescent- constituencies. Since resources were only partially extracted from the domestic economy, the state was able to provide net benefits to large segments of the population without bowing to their political demands.⁸ State benefits were distributed in a number of different ways. At the elite level, tribal leaders often received direct material rewards from the crown or the state, which served to reinforce the bases of the king's social power at home, whilst rendering him increasingly dependent on state resources. East bank landowners, meanwhile, enjoyed significant encouragement from state agriculture investment programmes. Jordan's business class enjoyed an atmosphere of "fundamentally free-enterprise philosophy shaped by a government attitude of benevolent paternalism". As a result, a whole array of predominantly Palestinian entrepreneurs

⁷ Robert E. Looney (1990), "Worker Remittances in the Arab World: Blessing or Burden?", *Jerusalem Journal of International Relations*, 12, p.29.

⁸ Hossein Askari et al. (1982), *Taxation and Tax Policies in the Middle East*, London: Butterworth, p.148-151.

flourished in the trade, service and manufacturing sectors with the passive or active encouragement of the state.⁹

At the mass level, the Jordanian state became a central supplier of both social services and employment. Extensive health and education programmes were developed and some basic consumer goods were subsidized by the state. Although public sector wages were generally significantly lower than in the private sector, by 1986 almost half of the entire labour force worked for the state, largely due to additional perquisites such as greater job security and access to lower-priced goods. Rentierism also played a key role in national integration, knitting together an otherwise deeply divided population (Palestinians versus East Bankers; Bedouin, rural and urban populations; tribal rivalries) around the central core of the Hashemite monarchy. However, state resources were primarily directed at the East Bank elites and population that have so long been the regime's key bases of support.¹⁰

Redistributional demands were muted amid a generally expansionary economy and a steady increase in almost everyone's standard of living. State expropriation through taxation paled in comparison to state distribution through employment and social welfare programmes, enhancing regime's legitimacy and undercutting representational demands. At the same time, collective political or economic action was associated with few incentives and significant disincentives by discouraging political gathering and encouraging quiet lobbying of the king. In both respects, political quietism became an implicit precondition to the enjoyment of many state benefits.¹¹

The Hashemite monarchy has faced multiple challenges in the past three decades; the rising regional tide of pan-Arab in the late 1950s, the loss of the West Bank in 1967 and the emergence of the modern Palestinian national movement culminating in the 1970 civil war. Despite these, Jordanian polity has remained for the most part remarkably stable. In the wake of April 1989, however, it would undergo a startling transformation as

⁹ Robert B. Cunningham (1988), *The Bank and the Bureau: Organizational Development in the Middle East*, New York: Praeger, pp.123-124.

¹⁰ Jordan's 1986-1990 development plan, for example, called for JD951,964 (35 percent of regional investment spending) to be spent in predominantly Transjordanian governorates of Tafilah, Karak and Ma'an, which together represent only 10 percent of the population (Ministry of Planning, *Five Year Plan, 1986-90*, Table 12).

¹¹ Adeb Haddad (1990), "Jordan's Income Distribution in Retrospect" in Kamel Abu Jaber et. al (eds.) *Income Distribution in Jordan*, Boulder: Westview Press, p.26.

the political system was first liberalised, and then, with the November 1989 elections, began a complex process of democratisation. Both the nature and timing of this process was fundamentally shaped by the political economy of the regime, in particular by a crisis of Jordanian neo-patrimonialism engendered by the decline of Jordan's traditional semi-rentier economy.

The economic crisis of 1989 was perpetuated by many factors. In the early 1980s, the "seven fat years" of the Arab petroleum economy that had followed the 1973-1974 increase in OPEC energy prices came to an end. World oil prices began a sustained period of decline from their peak of US\$ 36/ barrel to below US\$ 15/ barrel in 1986. The impact of this on Jordan was significant. The two primary pillars of Jordan's rentier economy- workers' remittances and petrodollar aid- peaked in 1981, and thereafter began a period of steady decline from around JD 735 million (US\$ 2.3 billion) to JD 518 million (US\$ 1.5 billion), in 1987. Jordan soon began to face mounting balance-of-payments problems as its current account balance, which had been relatively stable increasingly began to dip. As economic growth slowed and growing number of expatriate workers returned from the Gulf, unemployment began to rise. External grants fell from more than one-third of state expenditures to less than one-sixth. State expenditure, however, continued to grow at an average rate of over 6 per cent per year. As a result of such pressures, the state budget began to experience a chronic and slowly growing deficit.¹²

Meanwhile, Jordan's economic crisis continued to deepen because of both the continued regional petroleum slump and the expiry of foreign-aid commitments made by Arab oil states at the 1978 Baghdad Arab summit conference. The condition of the economy in general and the deficit in the state budget was further aggravated by the growing size of Jordan's debt service. Despite this, the Rifai government remained reluctant for political reasons to reduce government expenditures. Instead, it continued to find recourse in external borrowing, at increasingly disadvantageous terms. By 1989, Jordan's real external debt stood at as much as US\$ 8.3 billion, an amount representing more than twice the country's total GDP.¹³

¹² Brynen, "Economic Crisis and Post-Rentier Democratization", pp.84-85.

¹³ Ibid., pp.87-88.

Nonetheless, there were increasing signals that the government's efforts to preserve the core of the rentier system were failing. Deteriorating economic conditions aggravated growing levels of dissatisfaction throughout society. The government of Prime Minister Rifai seemed particularly concerned with growing political dissatisfaction among Palestinians, spurred not only by the declining remittances, and a worsening business climate, but also by opposition to Jordanian foreign policy following the eruption of the Palestinian intifada uprising in the Israeli-occupied territories in December 1987. Grumbling was also heard, however, among non-Palestinians. Because of their predominance in the public sector and their reliance on public expenditures, ordinary East Bankers were disproportionately affected by government austerity measures. At the elite level, many East Bank political notables and tribal leaders- the cornerstones of the Hashemite regime- complained that they felt increasingly "isolated" from the present government due to their growing inability to extract jobs, development funds, subsidies and other economic resources that were, in turn, critical elements in the neo-patrimonial maintenance of their own positions and constituencies at home.¹⁴

It was in this context that the government was finally forced to seek \$275 million in standby credits from the International Monetary Fund and assistance in rescheduling its foreign debts in 1989. As part of the deal, the government agreed to adopt more prudent borrowing policies, strengthen foreign reserves, reduce inflation through tight credit policies and improve the current account balance. As a result, the government announced the price hikes and cut subsidies on essential commodities like bread, sugar, rice, milk, beverages, cigarettes, cooking gas, gasoline, diesel fuel and kerosene. These new austerity measures provoked widespread protest and rioting erupted on 18 April, 1989 in and around the southern Transjordanian towns of Ma'an, al-Karak and al-Tafilah. Eight persons were killed and hundreds detained before public order was restored. Two features made these riots very significant. Firstly, the riots took place in basically Jordanian areas, towns and villages; and secondly, the Palestinian citizens refrained completely from taking part in this unrest.¹⁵

¹⁴ Lamis Andoni (1991), "Jordan" in Rex Brynen (eds.) *Echoes of the Intifada: Regional Repercussions of the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict*, Boulder: Westview Press, p.176.

¹⁵ Abu Jaber et al. (March,1990), "The 1989 Jordanian Parliamentary Elections", *Orient*, 31(1): 67-86, p.69.

The protesters had called for a reversal of the price hikes and support for smaller farmers and others affected by the economic recession. While pledging loyalty to the king, they had also denounced economic inequalities and corruption, and demanded the resignation of the Rifai government.¹⁶ The regime was very quick to respond to the changing circumstances, economic as well as political and ideological. King Hussein once again proved his phenomenal pragmatism, extreme maneuverability and political acumen. Unlike the expected reaction, the king did not resort to more repression and curtailment of liberties in the face of crisis, but opened the ranks in the hope that the economic and political burden could be shared. Firstly, the king accepted the resignation of the Rifai government on 24 April, 1989, and in his place, the transitional government of Sharif Zaid ibn Shaker took office. Finally, the king announced his decision on 5 July, 1989 to hold elections.

Islamist Challenge

Historically, the Islamist movement in Jordan perhaps has been the most integrated, establishment-oriented Islamic movement in the West Asia. First legalized by King Abdullah, the Muslim Brotherhood was the only tolerated public political group in Jordan for decades, even in the long interregnum of martial law, the Brotherhood remained politically active, often through its disproportionate representation in the Ministry of Education. The Brotherhood had long been the regime's counterweight to more feared Leftist and Nasserist groups, in addition to more radical fundamentalist groups, such as the Islamic Liberation Party. Moreover, the leadership of the Muslim Brotherhood had tended to come from well-established political families in Jordan, hardly revolutionary elements.¹⁷

The Muslim Brotherhood was the only socio-political organization tolerated in the country that also enjoyed the privilege of being able to receive funds from abroad, notably Saudi Arabia and other Gulf States, and was not affected by the dissolution of political parties in 1957. Its main objective were to render Jordanian society fully Islamic and to liberate Islamic Palestine. Attention was directed towards education and the media,

¹⁶ Lamis Andoni (28 April, 1989), "The Five Days That Shook Jordan", *Middle East International*, pp.3-4.

¹⁷ Robinson, "Defensive Democratization in Jordan", p.401.

and gradualism, cooperation, and participation in the official political framework were adopted as the strategic option. Prominent Muslim Brothers had joined parliament and cabinet as deputies and ministers in the 1950s and 1960s in their personal capacity only.¹⁸

By the time, political liberalisation was initiated in the mid-1980s, the Islamic movement in general and the Muslim Brotherhood in particular had already attracted a sizeable following among virtually all groups and strata of Jordanian society, particularly, Palestinian youth and university students as well as the urban middle class. Yet when in April 1989, riots erupted in southern Jordan- hitherto considered strongholds of East Jordanian sentiment and royal support- neither the Islamists nor the Palestinians seem to have been strongly involved. Although originally provoked by sharp price hikes, the protesters also raised political issues such as corruption in high places and lack of political issues and participation.¹⁹

In spite of the relatively complaint nature of Jordan's Islamic movement, the regime has taken significant steps- legal and illegal- to contain and even undermine the Islamist movement during the democratisation process. Indeed, one of the consequences of political liberalisation has been the significant weakening of the traditionally strong relations between the monarch and the Brotherhood. Weakening the Brotherhood was not done because the Islamist movement represents a threat to the survival of the regime. Rather, the Islamist movement has been the only significant power in Jordan that has strongly opposed the two most significant policies driving the democratisation campaign: the IMF-mandated austerity measures and the normalisation of relations with Israel. Although it had supported political liberalisation, the Muslim Brotherhood had not supported its defining features; only the Islamist movement could have conceivably defeated or seriously weakened these policies. Thus, while the inclusion of the Islamist movement in the liberalisation process has been politically necessary, the monarchy and government have consistently acted to contain the movement's power.²⁰

¹⁸ see Wahid Abdel Meguid (1995), "The Islamic Movement in Jordan and Palestine: The Case of the Muslim Brothers" in Ola A. AbouZeid (eds.) *Islamic Movements in a Changing World*, Cairo: Center for Political Research and Studies, pp.63-116.

¹⁹ Laurie Brand (1991), "Liberalization and Changing Political Conditions: The Bases of Jordan's 1990-1991 Gulf Crisis Policy", *Jerusalem Journal of International Relations*, 13, pp.15-18.

²⁰ Robinson, "Defensive Democratization in Jordan", pp.401-402.

The Parliamentary elections of November 1989, demonstrated the strength of the Islamists, who proved to be the best organized force of opposition. Islamist candidates obtained thirty-two out of eighty seats, among them, twenty Muslim Brothers and twelve independents, some of whom had links to the militant Islamic resistance groups in the West Bank and Gaza. Islamists continued to do well in municipal elections that were held in May and June 1990 in Zarqa and Rusayfa. Their successes did not tempt the king to interrupt the liberalisation process. On the contrary, he intensified his efforts to co-opt them, appointing prominent Islamists to the commission created in April 1990 to formulate a national charter. In October 1990, at the height of the Gulf crisis, Abd al-Latif Arabiyyat, a lawyer and leading Muslim Brother was elected speaker of Parliament, and on 1 January 1991, five Muslim Brothers joined the cabinet, thereby making their definite inclusion in the Jordanian political establishment.²¹ In order to contain the Islamic movement by creating counterweights among the non-religious opposition, restrictions on individual liberties were further reduced, martial law “frozen”, press censorship relaxed, and the ban on political parties lifted through the ratification of national charter in June 1991 and sanction of multiparty system in August 1992. It also confirmed loyalty to the king and the Hashemite dynasty, obliging the signatories to solemnly endorse the monarchical system.²²

It also became apparent that through the continued policy of democratisation, the king was trying to weaken the hold of Islamic groups on political life by offering secular movements a chance to organize, While public sympathy for the Islamic movements remained strong, it was tempered by disappointment that the Parliamentary representatives of the Islamic movement had not helped the economic situation since they gained power. There was also annoyance that the group had contributed to aid and trading sanctions through their stance during the Gulf crisis. People felt that they had been left down- they had listened and gone along with the Islamic movement and suffered further economically as well. This may have been reason why the Islamic movement polled so badly in the Irbid municipal elections in 1992.²³

²¹ Abla Amawi (1992), “Democracy Dilemmas in Jordan”, *Middle East Report* 174, p.26-29.

²² see George Hawatmeh (1994), *The Role of the Media in a Democracy: The Case of Jordan*, Amman: Centre for Strategic Studies.

²³ Lamis Andoni (7July,1992), “Jordan Legalises Political Parties”, *Financial Times*, p.9.

In 1992, certain changes were effected in the political system that hampered the growth of the Islamist movement. In particular, the changes- which included the arrest and trial of parliamentary deputies charged with seeking to overthrow the state- affected the potency of the Islamist movement. Secondly, the authorization for the formation of political parties for the first time since 1957 is supposed to encourage the secularist movement, i.e., the Left and progressives in their task and threatened the power of the Islamist movement through breaking the thirty-six year old monopoly enjoyed by the Muslim brotherhood. Finally, the political parties will be subject to scrutiny from the security services and prohibited from receiving any funding from abroad, had serious implications for the Muslim Brotherhood, who have been largely depended on funding from Gulf sources.²⁴

In late 1992, the Muslim Brothers and Independent Islamists including the widely respected Layth Shubaylat, an engineer from Amman, very active in the civil rights movement and the fight against corruption, established their own political party, the Islamic Action Front (IAF). The Parliamentary elections of November 1993, the first multiparty elections since 1957, were held in due time but arranged in such a way as to reduce Islamist representation in Parliament. Although the Islamists share of the vote increased by some 3 per cent over 1989, their number of mandates was greatly reduced from thirty-two to sixteen deputies from the IAF plus a few independents. In the heavily manipulated local elections of June 1995, Islamists won a mere nine out of more than 200 municipalities, though that included some of the most important towns and urban districts.²⁵ Islamic representation in subsequent elections till the last parliamentary election in November 2007, where IAF got only six seats, had subsequently reduced thus severely undermining the prestige of Islamic forces inside Jordan.

In Jordan, the main area of potential conflict between the king and the Islamic opposition did not so much concern domestic affairs but foreign policies, or to be more precise, relations with Israel and the United States. In Jordan, like everywhere in the West Asia, the Muslim Brothers demanded a return to pristine Islamic values, symbolized in the call for the strict and integral application of the sharia. They advocated the fight

²⁴ Milton-Edwards, "Facade Democracy and Jordan", p.199.

²⁵ Hanna Freij et al. (1996), "Liberalization, the Islamists, and the Stability of the Arab State: Jordan as a Case Study", *Muslim World*, 86, pp.22-24.

against corruption, political repression, and for political freedom. Unlike many of their fellow Islamists, they acknowledged the existence of political diversity and pluralism, and during times of heightened crisis, such as the second Gulf war, they even cooperated with the powerless and therefore harmless Communist party. Yet on all issues of domestic policies, accommodation and compromise between the Islamists, the government and the non-religious opposition seemed possible. It is foreign policy where the basic understanding between King Hussein and the Muslims Brothers was at risk. There had been tension when, during the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988), the Muslim brothers criticized the king's support for Iraq against the Islamic Republic of Iran, which especially in its initial years, enjoyed considerable support in Jordan, Gaza, and the West Bank.²⁶ But the crucial issue was, of course, policy toward Israel and the Palestinian entity. Despite the strong commitment to the liberation of Palestine conflicting with the king's policy of de facto existence with Israel, mutual interest in cooperation had always been strong enough to overcome latent tension.

In 1991, when the Allied victory over Iraq paved the way to the Madrid conference, conflict between King Hussein and the Islamist opposition seemed impossible to avoid. During and after the elections of 1989, the Muslim Brothers had again declared their rejection of all UN resolutions on Palestine, their refusal to recognize Israel, and their support for the Intifadah and Hamas- their sister organization on Palestinian soil. They had called for Jihad to liberate all of Palestine and condemned negotiations with the Zionist enemy as unacceptable under Islamic law. Yet their words were not followed by deeds, at least on Jordanian territory. Restraint was also used on the other side. In a situation similar to the one faced by government and opposition in Egypt during the Camp David peace process, King Hussein might have been tempted to reverse the liberalization process in order to continue his policy of rapprochement with the United States and his conservative neighbors in the Gulf and of normalization with Israel. He did not do so, choosing more subtle ways of intimidation, manipulation and control.²⁷

²⁶ Elie Rekhess (1990), "The Iranian Impact on the Islamic Jihad Movement in the Gaza Strip", in David Menashri (eds.) *The Iranian Revolution and the Muslim World*, Boulder, Westview Press, pp.189-206.

²⁷ Hanna Freij et al., "Liberalization, the Islamists, and the Stability of the Arab State: Jordan as a Case Study", p.20.

The Muslim Brothers, made little progress in their domestic agenda, failing to “impose the sharia”, through Parliamentary legislation on public life. They suffered grave setbacks on the electoral front. They were unable to change official policy regarding the United States and Israel. Yet even the peace treaty with Israel, signed in October 1994, apparently could not shake their conviction that, for the time being, there were no better options available either within Jordan or in the wider region. Although there were reports of internal debate and dissent, the Muslim brotherhood and the Islamic Front continued to advocate a policy of “democratic”, “civilized,” non-violent protest against normalisation and peace with Israel.²⁸ It was not so much King Hussein’s charisma or legitimisation-religious or dynastic, rather it was his policies and function and a perceived communality of interests that persuaded the Muslim Brothers to continue their policy of peaceful opposition.

Political Reforms

Since its establishment in 1921, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has attempted to establish and maintain a framework of legitimacy through the establishment of a constitutional Parliamentary system of government. This constitutional development of the past few decades has witnessed much success as well as several reverses. The 1950s, a period of initial experiments in democratically elected Parliaments, their dissolutions and reinstatements, are a case in point. The developments culminated in 1957 with the dissolution of Parliament, the banning of all political parties and the curtailment of other liberties. Since then, truly free elections were not permitted by the regime up until 1989. Nonetheless, representative processes continued in Jordan and more than one ensuing elections can be considered as relatively free, such as, for example, the 1962 election to the seventh Parliament, barring of course candidates known to be extremists. However, internal as well as external factors prompted these liberal phases to be relatively short-lived and to be followed by periods of managed elections and docile government-oriented representatives. Over all, Jordan’s short history has been marred by many upheavals and repeated changes in the governmental structure.

²⁸ Lisa Taraki (1996), “Jordanian Islamists and the Agenda for Women: Between Discourse and Practice”, *Middle Eastern Studies*, 32, pp.144-158.

However, both leaders of Jordan- Abdullah and Hussein- have attempted to maintain the promise to work within a constitutional system of government. Amir Abdullah, though formally committed to some sort of representative elective assembly, mostly achieved his aim of public representation by means of regular meetings and consultations with Jordanian notables and members of the elite, while his grandson has tried to fulfill his commitment- in both form and substance- to the 1952 Constitution which makes the government responsible to Parliament. The promise is unique in itself and the regime was often made accountable against the background of that promise, which was especially important in periods of crisis. When Parliament was reduced, political parties banned and certain freedoms curtailed in the 1950s, early 1970s and later in the 1980s, the regime never resorted to either abolishing the constitutional framework or the establishment and maintenance of a police state. Although such a prospect was almost always present, and sometimes perhaps tempting, especially in view of an atmosphere of crisis within the country as well as abroad and in view of the repressive nature of some of the surrounding regimes. But such periods of constitutional decline and lack of a participating system were always mild in comparison to other Arab states, giving Jordan its unique feature.²⁹

There is no doubt that the 1989 Parliamentary election of Jordan was a unique happening in the context of West Asian politics, against the background of an intensely ideological region with the fundamentalist revolution of Iran to its east and their intensely ideological politics of Likudist Israel to its west, Jordan's attempt to fulfill its constitutional promise to adhering to a participatory system of government is nothing short of amazing. By the mid-1980s, Jordan was undergoing three levels of crisis at once: the first which it shares with all other Arab- indeed perhaps Islamic- states is an ideological crisis i.e., the nature of the regime, its orientation, its tactics, its strategy. The other two crises are the political, culminating in the disengagement decision which came as a result of the frustrating efforts to reach a peaceful settlement, and the second is a severe economic crisis for both, local and regional reasons at the same time. It is against this background that the April 1989 unrest and riots should be viewed.³⁰

²⁹ Abu Jaber et al. (March,1990), "The 1989 Jordanian Parliamentary Elections", pp.67-68.

³⁰ Ibid., pp-68-69.

Thus, the decision to hold elections at this time should be linked to a host of factors: some, indirect aftershocks to events dating as far back as, for example, the fall of the Nabulsi government in 1957 and the consequential outlawing of political parties, or the 1967 loss of the West Bank which brought in its wake the suspension of Parliament and the application of extraordinary measures establishing *de jure* martial law. However, directly accountable are other, more immediate causes like the economic downturn since the mid-1980s, the disengagement from the West Bank and lastly the “food riots” in Ma’an in April 1989 which spread to other areas of the kingdom and might have served as catalyst that made the decision for elections and liberalisation all the more imminent.

The king’s decision to institute what might be termed peripheral democratisation was auspicious, and for many signaled a new era in Jordan’s political system. Nevertheless, there can be little doubt that these motives were influenced by at least three major factors pertaining to the stability of the political system at the time. The first factor was the fact that external pressure was being exerted on the king and was linking financial assistance with political stability. Western and global funding sources were applying pressure on the ruler of Jordan to pay back debt and solve the economic chaos. Further grants were linked to the political as well as the economic health of the nation. The second factor emphasized the argument put forward by Huntington who asserts that the oligarchy will choose democratization over other options “as a means to other goals, such as prolonging their own rule, achieving international legitimacy, and minimizing domestic opposition.”³¹

The Parliamentary elections of November 1989, where parties were not admitted and the duration of the official campaign was very brief, demonstrated the strength of the Islamists, who proved to be the best organized group. Islamist candidates won thirty-two out of eight seats, twenty Muslim Brotherhood and twelve independent Islamists. Various tribal representatives and centrists won thirty-five seats and Leftists took the remaining thirteen seats. Thus, the election gave a decisive victory to Jordan’s Islamist movement and especially the Muslim Brotherhood even though it spent most of its term outside of government. Nevertheless, the success of the entire democratisation process and the

³¹ S. P. Huntington (Summer, 1984), “Will More Countries Become Democratic”, *Political Science Quarterly*, p.212.

victories brought about by the election were still entirely dependent on a vital lynchpin—the king’s authority. The king’s power was barely affected by the first full election for twenty-two years. He was under pressure from forces outside his own kingdom for political change and he responded with some sort of facade democracy. The king still retained his former powers, successfully co-opted his largest opponents and passed the burden of resolving the kingdom’s economic crisis into the hands of those duly-elected representatives of the citizenry. In addition, the king still managed to exercise his considerable power over the government through his privilege to form and dissolve cabinets and appoints Prime Ministers at will. The election did little to resolve the issue of what democracy in Jordan really meant and whether the old facade was melting away.³²

In 1992, the National Charter which allows for a multi-party system, political pluralism, political parties and increased rights for women and the press was passed. The Charter is a product of a large working force (Royal Commission) representing all sectors of Jordanian society rather than just the palace aides. The Charter is a genuine attempt to address the need for political reform in the kingdom and goes to great lengths to prescribe a solution to some of the country’s political, economic and social issues. The Charter also reflects the king’s political agenda, including a policy to curtail the power of the kingdom’s Islamists. The potential of the Islamic movement to derail the Charter, limit pluralism and maintain their political monopoly, was limited through the palace’s instructions or participation in the working party: of sixty, only six were Islamic deputies. It also became apparent that through the continued policy of democratisation, the king was “trying to weaken the hold of Islamic groups on political life by offering secular political movements a chance to organize.”³³

The first multi-party elections in Jordan since 1956 took place on 8 November, 1993. The election campaign that allowed the twenty registered parties to promote their political platforms and agendas was describes as ‘lackluster’ and was overshadowed by the regional implications of the Declaration of Principles signed by the Israelis and PLO Chairman Yaseer Arafát in September. New parties did not find enough time for

³² Lamis Andoni (17 Nov., 1989), “King Hussein leads Jordan into a new era”, *Middle East International*, 363, pp.3-4.

³³ Lamis Andoni, “Jordan Legalises Political Parties”, p.9.

campaigning. The king was also wavering over the election date and considering a postponement of the poll. This factor gave the election campaign an air of uncertainty and dented the enthusiasm of party workers and supporters. The ability of the king to affect the campaign in this manner, although the election did go ahead as scheduled, reflected the power of the monarchy over the election process. The issue of “one-person, one-vote” which in theory was a positive aspect of democratisation was, however, in practice designed to benefit tribal loyalties in the kingdom and hinder the chances of the newly-formed political parties.³⁴

The election results, however, changed the balance of power in the Jordanian Parliament and severely circumscribed the influence of the Islamic block, consisting of the Muslim Brotherhood and Islamic independents. Islamists lost the most seats going from thirty-two to twenty-two representatives. Of those twenty-two, sixteen were IAF candidates and six were independent Islamists. In all, fifty-six of the eighty Parliamentarians were solidly pro-Hashemite, falling under categories of “conservatives” (34), “centrists” (13) and East bank nationalists (9). The Left, virtually extinct in Jordan, won only two seats. One female was also elected to the Parliament.³⁵ The character of the new Parliament dominated by loyal tribal leaders, reflected the king’s “stamp”. Democratisation has ensured conservative Parliament rather than a pluralistic chamber drawing the fruits of the multi-party system and “one-person, one-vote” legislation.

Thus, the facade of democracy remains intact, bolstered by a conservative victory for tribal leaders and a marginalized Islamic movement. Legislation for reform has not been translated into meaningful political change. Although this process could in any event not be achieved overnight, a lack for change is likely is to be reflected in a disinterested electorate. Participation figures for the 1993 election were down in comparison to 1989 poll, and may well slide in future elections- thus strengthening the power of traditional political elites and closing the door to a new, younger generation of pluralistic political actors seeking real change in the system of government and power.

In July 1997, the IAF announced its intention to boycott the forthcoming Parliamentary elections scheduled to be held on 4 November, in protest against the

³⁴ Milton-Edwards, “Facade Democracy and Jordan”, p.202.

³⁵ Robinson, “Defensive Democratization in Jordan”, p.398.

government's overly concessionary policies towards Israel and at its restrictive amendments to press legislation. Several other parties also boycotted the polls. Many of the candidates were independents or tribal leaders campaigning on local issues. In all, 62 of the 80 seats in the new House of Representatives were won by pro-government candidates; 10 seats were secured by nationalists and left-wing candidates, and eight by independent Islamists. It was declared by the government to be as endorsement of the country's electoral system and of the policies of King Hussein. However, it was reported that the majority of Jordan's Palestinians had not voted.³⁶

On 23 April 2001, King Abdullah II exercised his constitutional right to extend the current term of the House of Representatives by two years, in an attempt to prevent Islamist opposition parties, which were highly critical of the government's policies towards Israel, from presenting a serious challenge to his leadership. The king also set the government the task of drafting amendments to the electoral law within one month. On 22 July 2001, the king approved the new electoral legislation, which provided for redrawing of electoral boundaries, in order to increase the number of seats in the House of Representatives from 80 to 104, and a reduction of the age of eligibility to vote from 19 years to 18. The Muslim Brotherhood threatened to boycott the forthcoming Parliamentary elections, in view of the government's failure to meet its demand for the reintroduction of an 'electoral list' system. Critics also complained that they failed to address the issue of under-representation in the legislature of Jordanians of Palestinian origin. Nevertheless, the law did provide for the formation of special committees whose task would be to monitor to the electoral process. At the end of August 2001, legislation was enacted imposing a ban on public gatherings and demonstrations. In early October 2001, following the suicide attacks on the USA, King Abdullah issued a royal decree amending Jordan's penal code in order to strengthen counter-terrorism measures; he also imposed tougher penalties on those found guilty of 'publication crimes'.³⁷

At the Parliamentary elections held on 17 June 2003, tribal representatives and Hashemite loyalties won 80 of the 110 seats to the House of Representatives, while the

³⁶ Rageh Omar (5 Dec., 1997), "A Changed Landscape", *Middle East International*, 564, pp.12-13; AEW (2003), "Jordan, Elections and Parliament", [Online: web] Accessed 18 July 2008 URL: <http://www.intekhabat.org/look/en-article.tpl?IdLanguage=1&NrArticle=2758&NrIssue=2&NrSection=5>.

³⁷ Sana Kamal (31 Aug., 2001), "In the Doldrums", *Middle East International*, 657, p.17; *The Europa World Year Book* (2006), vol. 47, (A-J), Routledge, p.2456.

IAF, the largest opposition party, won 17 seats. Under the legislation approved in February, six seats were reserved for female candidates. Therefore, the new Parliament was regarded as largely pro-government, with some representation for Islamists and those opposed to Jordan's peace treaty with Israel.³⁸ However the 2007 Parliamentary elections which held on 20 November, proved more disastrous for the Islamist candidates. Out of 110 seats, 6 seats were reserved for women, Independents largely tribal representatives and pro-regime captured 98 seats, while IAF won only 6 seats, which is viewed as a major setback to the influence of IAF inside Jordan. Thus, the election results further enhanced the prestige of the Hashemites and largely confirmed its legitimacy, while largely undermined the Islamist forces.³⁹

By closely examining Jordan's program of political liberalisation since 1989, one can argue that the process is best understood as a series of pre-emptive measures designed to maintain elite privilege in Jordan while limiting the appeal of more fundamental political change. Indeed the regime, uncertain about its ability to survive a deepening crisis, undertook sufficient reform to assure its political longevity, in the face of facade democracy.

Future Prospects

Abdullah ibn al-Hussein became ruler on 7 February, 1994 upon the death of his father King Hussein. King Hussein had recently made him Crown Prince on 24 January, replacing his brother, Hassan, who had served many years in the position, over his manhandling of Jordanian affairs during his absence, in particular his attempts to intervene in military matters. From the outset, King Abdullah tried to distinguish himself as a new breed of modern Arab leader, free from the constraints of pan-Arab nationalism and the Arab-Israeli conflict. With the exception of his opposition to the embargo on Iraq for clear geopolitical and economic reasons, he continues to display uncritical support of U.S. policies and an unquestioning belief in globalization and the free market economy. Thus, instead of involving himself in the details of the West Asian peace process,

³⁸ Sana Abdallah (27 June, 2003), "The Status Quo", *Middle East International*, 703, pp.12-14; Jordan: Parliamentary Elections Majlis Al-Umma (2003), [Online: web] Accessed 18 July 2008 URL: http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/arc/2163_03.htm.

³⁹ SHIFAA (2007), "Jordan's Parliament Election: Lessons and Implications", [Online: web] Accessed 18 July 2008 URL: <http://shifaa.blogspot.com/2007/11/jordans-parliament-election-lessons-and.html>,p.

Abdullah has focused his energy on modernizing Jordan's economy. His redefining of Jordan's priorities also reflected unequivocal support for American political and military dominance. For Abdullah, support for American interests has replaced Arab nationalism as a source of legitimacy in an age of U.S.-led globalization.⁴⁰

Despite all its contradictions, the system which King Abdullah put in place has allowed him to follow a solidly pro-Western agenda that combined speeding up market reforms and undercutting dissent, particularly among the Islamists and Palestinians. To implement the wider framework of this agenda for making Jordan a regional trade center and a leader in an America-led Arab coalition, the king pursued a new regional policy of conciliation with Arab neighbors and further distances the regime from Baghdad. The quest for regime continuity based not on popular participation, but on preserving or establishing hereditary rights, emerged as a leading factor in inter-Arab relations. The forces of globalization were equally helpful in easing the way for Jordan's reconciliation with Gulf rulers, who rushed to declare political and financial support for the kingdom. Abdullah's moves, however, had adverse effects on Jordan's ties with Egypt and Iraq. The king has also trying to revive joint projects and have resumed security coordination and shown its eagerness to develop bilateral trade and partnerships with Israel.⁴¹

When Abdullah became king, the economy had been stagnant and was faced with the tremendous task of rejuvenating a nepotism-ridden economy while proving that his pro-Western policies and the treaty with Israel could deliver the promised dividends. Motivated by international pressures and his own declared faith in the free market economy, Abdullah accelerated the deregulation and privatization of the economy, with the aim to turn Jordan into a regional trade centre. The establishment of the qualified Industrial Zones (GIZS) in Jordan is the centerpiece of the Jordanian-American-Israeli market strategy, whose products enjoyed free trade status in the U.S. market and are jointly manufactured by Israeli and Jordanian firms are the first such zones designated by the United States in any country in the world, which largely changed the economic status of Jordan. Largely as a result of Abdullah's efforts, Jordan attained its much-coveted membership in the World Trade Organization, prompting the king to set up his campaign

⁴⁰ Lamis Andoni (Spring, 2000), "King Abdullah: Is his Father's Footsteps?", *Journal of Palestine Studies* 29(3): 77-89, p.80-81.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp.83-84.

to attract foreign investment. Abdullah formed an Economic Consultative Council dominated by young wealthy entrepreneurs to give the private sector a larger role in determining economic policies while underscoring the absence of wider representation of public interest in policy-making- a serious failure considering the potentially high socio-economic costs of “market reform” on the majority of working Jordanians.⁴²

Meanwhile, the “deregulation” of the Jordanian economy was not accompanied by an anticipated reform of the political system. Although censorship officially ended for the Arab and foreign press and some repressive articles of the Press and Publication Law were removed, the government can still use draconian penal codes to punish journalists. Infact, the gap between official slogans and the reality stems from at least three factors. Firstly, the eighteen-year-old democratisation process did not fundamentally alter the nature of the state apparatus, with its heavy reliance on security. Secondly, as the final status talks over Arab-Israel issue draw closer, the government wants to stop opposition, particularly to the peace process. Thirdly, Jordan supports a pro-America agenda that involves a worldwide pursuit of the ‘Islamic threat’. Though the Brotherhood no longer dominates the Parliament, the convergence of interests of the traditionalists and the Islamists was prompted largely by the fact that both groups felt undermined by King Abdullah’s modernization drive.

By eagerly pushing a pro-western political and economic agenda, combined with a social modernization campaign, Abdullah is risking a collision with broad sectors of Jordanian society, both inside and outside the establishment. At the same time, however, it will be difficult for the diversified opposition to form a broad, effective coalition with a unified agenda. While the Left, the Arab nationalists, and some liberal nationalist trends object to his pro-America agenda, they are alarmed by the Islamists’ attempt to impose sharia. Moreover, if the Brotherhood does make a deal with the Palace, such an arrangement would further weaken the secular opposition parties, which would have to confront both the government and a co-opted Muslim Brotherhood. At the same time, a

⁴² King Abdullah II: King of the Hashemite Kingdom (2008), [Online: web] Accessed 18 July 2008, URL: http://www.kingabdullah.jo/main.php?main_page=o&lang-hmka1=1.

Brotherhood accommodation would further radicalize disgruntled Islamists and the Muslim Brotherhood's own rank and file.⁴³

Abdullah will also have to face the consequences of placing himself and the royal family on the frontline of the current conflict between "modernizers" and "traditionalists". It is, however, the fate of the peace process and the economy that will be the most decisive factors influencing the ongoing power struggle. People have yet to see any economic dividends from the peace process and the globalization era. Furthermore, a negotiated solution that proves dissatisfactory to the Palestinians would antagonize not only the refugees, but also the segments of Jordanian society alarmed by a perceived Israeli domination, the permanent settlement of Palestinian refugees in Jordan, or an influx of more refugees from the West Bank.

⁴³ see Anne Marie Baylouny (Spring, 2008), "Militarizing Welfare: Neo-liberalism and Jordanian Policy", *The Middle East Journal*, 62(2): 277-303.

CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

Being a strategically important region West Asia has always been a focal point in the international relations, particularly since the First World War after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, which led to the creation of modern Arab world and the formation of several new states. Majority of them opted for a monarchical order of one brand or another. West Asia is perhaps the only area of world where traditional monarchies have persisted in a number of states. At times, this has been used to label the domestic politics of the region “medieval” or even “primitive”. A closer look suggests that the monarchical regimes might be better characterized as an adaptation of established forms of patrimonial leadership to the contemporary nation-state system. Drawing on a variety of traditional sources of legitimacy such as custom, a history of family governance, ancestral ties to the Prophet Muhammad, a leader’s personal attributes, and the royal family’s role as a symbol of nationalism, the current West Asian monarchy has proved remarkably resilient.

This persistence is particularly striking when we recall that in the 1950s and 1960s, some monarchy were unable to survive the critical post-colonial period and were removed from power: Egypt (1952), Iraq (1958), Yemen (1962) and Libya (1969). Yet since 1969, only a single additional monarchy– the Pahlavis of Iran– has been overthrown, suggesting that the remaining royal rulers have found ways to repress democratic sentiment, co-opt opposition movements, or otherwise adapt their rule to address, at least minimally, popular pressures for political reform. Several factors account for their eventual collapse. For instance, they failed to establish popular legitimacy as they did form Parliaments and parties and a formal constitutional regime, but did not transform authority from “Kings to people”.¹ Moreover, they failed in accommodating the rise of an educated “new middle class”, notably the army officials as well as failed to align themselves to a foreign major power or superpower, which could possibly have

¹ see Reinhard Bendix (1978), *King or People: Power and the Mandate Rule*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

intervened to save their existence.² As in the case of Iran, the monarchy collapses against the reactionary policies of king and the resurgence of “Political Islam”.³

Unlike the coups that had overthrown several monarchies and threatened others, mostly in the 1950s and 1960s, the last three decades of the twentieth century witnessed resilience of the institution. For instance, monarchy in Jordan, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates are still surviving. Their success can be attributed to some important regional and global processes. The accumulation of oil wealth in the hands of the Gulf monarchs, for instance, enabled them to use it effectively both for interval development and international prestige.⁴ Some of them even succeeded in obtaining a superpower’s defense for their survival. Internally, the kings established strong bureaucratic institution and promoted welfare system through technological development without altering the existing traditional, tribal and Islamic practices.⁵ Besides, the new middle class, which endangered some West Asian monarchy in the middle of the century, was integrated into the rentier-state.⁶

West Asia is perhaps the most unstable area in the world now. This state of instability is the product of the convergence of several factors such as the Arab-Israel conflict, the resurgence of Arab nationalism, the emergence of new social forces, and the crystallization of fresh political ideas, the collapse of traditional leadership and the extension of power blocks influence in this region. Jordan is a state where all the crosscurrents prevalent in the Arab world can be found. It presents an excellent case study of the multifarious and diverse trends that have pervaded West Asian politics even though it has the rarest of modern political forms, i.e., the Absolute monarchy. The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, previously called Transjordan, which officially came into existence in 1946, was a British protectorate under the mandate of League of Nations since 1920. It is difficult to think of Jordan without thinking of its king to whom the country owes its existence and its recognition all over the world, Abdullah I, the founder

² see F. Gregory Gause (1993), *The Oil Monarchies*, New York: Council on Foreign Relations.

³ see Ali Rezaei (Spring, 2003), “Last Efforts of Iran’s Reformists”, *Middle East Report*, 226: 40-46.

⁴ see Aswini K. Mahapatra (April, 2007), “The Sultanate of Oman- A Liberalised Autocracy”, *Journal of Indian Ocean Studies*, 15(1): 79-95.

⁵ For a comprehensive discussion, See Michael Herb (1999), *All in the Family: Absolutism, Revolution, and Democracy in the Middle Eastern Monarchies*, Albany: State University of New York Press.

⁶ see Jill Crystal (1995), *Oil and Politics in the Gulf: Rulers and Merchants in Kuwait and Qatar*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Chs.4-5.

of the kingdom, and Hussein, the architect of modern Jordan. The role of Abdullah and Hussein in providing leadership and in maintaining elite cohesion by serving as the 'unifying essence' of the political order were of immeasurable importance at critical junctures.

Transjordan's creation under Amir Abdullah's leadership in 1921 was the result of an opportunity seized by the British to prevent French expansion in the region. It was not rooted in any national identity. Transjordan was never a separate political entity. It was rather an artificial creation to suit the interests of a foreign power and an ambitious warrior in search of a throne. Abdullah thus became an instrument of British colonial policy and adopted the role of a British sharif. Nevertheless, Abdullah entrenched himself in forging the task of state building, establishment of political institutions, strengthening of bureaucracy, cultivating a spirit of loyalty among the army officials, integration of the tribes into the machinery of the state, and most importantly forging the task of Jordanian national identity, under the shadow of British domination. Abdullah gave Transjordan a Constitution, a Parliament, an administrative machinery and an efficient army. But there was no corresponding advance towards responsible government. Perhaps his most important contribution was the incorporation of the predominantly nomadic and semi-nomadic people into the mainstream of society and creating a base for them in the government and army, which turn out to be the most potent factor behind the survival of the monarchy. However, the addition of West Bank and the influx of a large number of Palestinians following the Arab-Israel war of 1948, created a different set of problems.

The dichotomy between Palestinians and East bankers or Transjordanians had remained the bone of contention almost throughout the history of Jordan. However, the positive effect of this dichotomy was the binding of East bank population more firmly to the monarchy, because of their fear of being overshadowed by the much more numerous and economically well-placed Palestinians. King Hussein's efforts to integrate these two identities were largely unsuccessfully because of the two rival notions of nationalism proliferating among them. Neither the Palestinians ready to accept Jordanian identity, nor the Jordanians agree to transform their state into Palestine. The showdown between the king and the PLO in 1970-71 resulted in the final resolution of the question of legitimacy of the monarchy and thus Palestinians ceased to be an active threat to the throne's

stability and security. The 1988 disengagement of Jordan from the West Bank, which finally confirmed by the 1994 Washington Declaration, further reinforced a separate Jordanian entity and signaled the king's willingness to relinquish his claims over West Bank in accordance with the wishes of both Palestinians and East Jordanians. Indeed the influx of Palestinian population under King Hussein, set the stage not only for domestic strain and increasing opposition to the regime, but also for rapid economic, bureaucratic and institutional development of the state, which was a major factor besides its survival.

Despite many vicissitudes, the monarchy have exhibited a remarkable ability to stay in power and rule their rapidly changing people- changing not only with respect to origin, but also in socio-economic composition as well as to survive the pressures and forces exerted from outside the kingdom, from the region and from the broader world. In order to retain power, both Abdullah and Hussein, relied on varying levels of repression and occasionally of their strong connections with Britain and the United States. The king has maintained strong ties with the Western powers not just for financial support, but rather Western support has been essential at times for the regime's survival and stability and for the king to be able to maintain a separate identity of Jordan. Equally important has been development of their personal legitimacy based on the Hashemites' leading role in the Arab nationalist movement; their family's claim of direct descent from the Prophet Muhammad and their regime's active pursuit of material development of their people. The king has made strenuous efforts to have good relations with the Arab world, always being active in Arab regional bodies and played an equally successful mediatory role in several conflicts amongst the neighbouring countries, besides offering security and military assistance to several Gulf countries. Moreover, the conducive economic climate in the early 1980s for nearly a decade, led to significant development in all spheres of Jordan, especially reducing political tensions within the kingdom.

The Hashemite monarchy has achieved a fair measure of legitimacy since it commands the support of the East Bank political elite, the army and the Western powers, but processes and especially institutions for the people's political expression and participation are either weak or nonexistent. With the rapid social and economic progress, this disparity and the internal perception of it has become more serious. What has complicated the crisis is the regime's inability to perform the welfare functions

effectively due to the faltering economy of the recent years and mounting external debt. Although the Hashemite kingdom is a constitutional monarchy, the Jordanian system has been variously described as a form of “controlled constitutionalism” or as “monarchical absolutism” since the constitutional balance of power is heavily weighed in the monarchy’s favour. The cabinet is more of an executive arm of the palace than a policy making body, though central figures in the cabinet are members of the king’s informal inner council. Thus, the key to the capacity of the king and the elite to maintain the domestic status quo rests with the military and the internal security organs and their loyalty to the monarchy.⁷

The superficial nature of participation and contestation in Jordan since the late 1980s, however, suggests that the reforms are meant only to serve as regime survival mechanism in the face of economic crisis that had set off widespread rioting in 1989 and 1996. Consequently, the process of democratisation has not just stagnated, but shows signs of reversal as King Abdullah II struggles to contain the Islamist challenge by cracking down on the opposition parties critical of Jordan’s accommodative approach towards Israel. Thus, while the resilience of the institution of monarchy in Jordan has defied the predictions of Arab revolutionaries and political theorists, challenges to its stability and adaptability are no less formidable.

Perhaps the most potent factor behind the survival of the monarchy is the support, it commands of the East Bank tribal loyalty through their employment in the army and government offices as well as in the political arena. Whether it is the question of the Hashemites’ legitimacy or the Palestinian destiny, the East Bankers have always stood behind the decision of the king. However the faltering economy of the recent decades has raised the voice of dissent among their most loyal supporters. How the monarchy will be able to survive the deepening crisis, depends on an interplay of variety of endogenous and exogenous factors, which include the structural changes at macro-global political level, progress in Arab-Israel peace process, fissures in the regime and vibrancy of civil society through street politics.

⁷ see Robert Satloff (1994), *From Abdullah to Hussein: Jordan in Transition*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

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