



## Jordanian Foreign Policy And The Arab Spring

By: **Curtis R. Ryan**

### **Abstract**

The Arab Spring may have begun in Tunisia in December 2010 with mass protests that ultimately toppled the regime of Zine El Abidin Ben Ali, but that same month, protesters also gathered in Amman's streets, demanding political change. The Jordanian demonstrations were never as large as those in Tunisia and were certainly not comparable to the mass protest rallies in Egypt's Tahrir Square. They also differed in focus, calling for reform but not for regime change or revolution. Initially, they demanded the ouster of the government of Prime Minister Samir Rifai, and succeeded. But even after the shift in royally appointed governments, protesters continued to gather almost every Friday for the next several years, calling for more reform within the Hashemite kingdom.

**Ryan, C.R.** (2014), Jordanian Foreign Policy and the Arab Spring. *Middle East Policy*, 21: 144-153. doi:10.1111/mepo.12064. Publisher version of record available at: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/mepo.12064>

## JORDANIAN FOREIGN POLICY AND THE ARAB SPRING

*Curtis R. Ryan*

*Dr. Ryan is a professor of political science at Appalachian State University and author of Jordan in Transition: From Hussein to Abdullah and Inter-Arab Alliances: Regime Security and Jordanian Foreign Policy.*

The Arab Spring may have begun in Tunisia in December 2010 with mass protests that ultimately toppled the regime of Zine El Abidin Ben Ali, but that same month, protesters also gathered in Amman's streets, demanding political change. The Jordanian demonstrations were never as large as those in Tunisia and were certainly not comparable to the mass protest rallies in Egypt's Tahrir Square. They also differed in focus, calling for reform but not for regime change or revolution. Initially, they demanded the ouster of the government of Prime Minister Samir Rifai, and succeeded. But even after the shift in royally appointed governments, protesters continued to gather almost every Friday for the next several years, calling for more reform within the Hashemite kingdom.<sup>1</sup>

Jordan's domestic protest movement included traditional sources of opposition, such as the kingdom's relatively small leftist and pan-Arab nationalist political parties, as well as the much-larger Islamist movement, rooted in the Muslim Brotherhood and its affiliated political party, the Islamic Action Front. But the protests also drew strength from newer sources of opposition, including youth-based popular movements (al-Hirak), most of which were

based in "East Banker" Jordanian communities that have historically been bastions of regime support.<sup>2</sup> These protests ranged in focus from political goals (greater reform and democratization) to economic goals. The latter tended to include opposition to neoliberal economic policies, fearing that privatization has proceeded too far, entailing severe social costs from a declining state commitment to subsidies, public-sector employment and social welfare.

Jordan's post-1989 move toward privatization and neoliberalism had, in short, radically shifted the social and political bases for Hashemite rule.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, the economic and political aspects of the tremors of the Arab Spring were closely linked. This would have been a difficult situation on its own, but Jordan exists — sometimes tenuously — in a very difficult neighborhood, surrounded by more powerful states whose problems seem continually to spill over into the Hashemite kingdom.

Between 2011 and 2013, more than half a million Syrian refugees crossed into Jordan to escape the horrors of the Syrian war, joining previous waves of refugees that had fled to Jordan since its independence in 1946: Palestinians (in several waves) from the west, Iraqis from the east and now Syrians from the north. The

timing of this new wave was even more problematic than usual. Even for a poor country, Jordan was experiencing harsh economic constraints, vast budget deficits, and economic austerity measures in compliance with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The latter policies had triggered protests and riots, most extensively in November 2012.<sup>4</sup> Now, just when the kingdom was struggling to bring its own economic house in order, it found itself dealing with the additional economic, social and political costs of hosting hundreds of thousands of desperate Syrian refugees.

During the first three years of the Arab Spring, when Jordan's economy remained dismal and the political reform process incomplete and highly contested, the Syrian civil war threatened to drag the kingdom into a conflict it was desperately trying to avoid.<sup>5</sup> Jordan may not have endured a revolution during the Arab Spring of 2011-13, but it did see political instability in the form of five different prime ministers and six different governments in that time span. The Hashemite regime has historically maintained stability by using a strategy of coopting elites by bringing them into the ruling system. Prime ministers and governments (all royal appointees) are reshuffled periodically, effectively rearranging ruling coalitions, so that many share a sense of having a deep stake in the status quo.

The kingdom has also relied on external sources of economic aid, as well as trade and investment relationships with more well-to-do states. As such, Jordanian foreign relations are as vital to the kingdom's domestic stability as they are to its regional and external security. When the Arab revolutions and uprisings began, the regime viewed them as a contagion that could nonetheless be limited through care-

ful domestic and foreign policy. This did not mean, however, that top policy makers, including the king himself, took the Arab uprisings lightly. To the contrary, the regime responded by launching a series of domestic political reforms: amending the constitution, establishing a constitutional court, revising electoral and party laws, and holding new rounds of national parliamentary and municipal elections.<sup>6</sup> King Abdullah emphasized the depth of reform in the kingdom, arguing that Jordan was unique: an Arab regime that was, in effect, reforming itself while the fires of unrest burned elsewhere.<sup>7</sup> For many reform activists, however, the reforms remained limited at best; far deeper change was needed to truly transform and democratize Jordan.<sup>8</sup>

Even as internal debates over the depth and breadth of reform continued to rage, the regime actively marketed its reform efforts to powerful Western allies, emphasizing what it saw as Jordan's exceptionalism. Defusing potentially revolutionary pressures from within was part of the regime's strategy, but equally important was using foreign policy to ensure that the kingdom would have powerful backers to help it survive. These strategies are linked; key Western allies have placed only minimal pressure on the kingdom to pursue greater domestic political reform. Internal reform efforts are designed in part to secure continued and even deepening support for the Hashemite regime, both inside and outside the kingdom, including from the United States and the European Union. Thus even as the regime tried, through domestic political reform, to create a "third way" between authoritarian rule and revolution, it also relied heavily on foreign policy and external allies to ensure its own security and that of the nation.

## FOREIGN RELATIONS

Jordan's alliance patterns offer a sharp contrast. Within the region, its foreign relations (especially in inter-Arab politics) have been characterized by shifting alignments. Globally, however, it has maintained close ties with the world's most powerful Western states, including the United States, the United Kingdom (the former mandatory power that drew Jordan's borders and even chose the Hashemites as rulers) and, collectively, the European Union (EU). In terms of non-Arab regional powers, Jordan has maintained a peace treaty with the state of Israel since 1994 and proper, if cold and mutually suspicious, relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran since the 1979 revolution. The kingdom had closer relations with Iran during the reign of the last shah, when both states positioned themselves as conservative, anti-communist and pro-Western monarchies. With Turkey, Jordan has historically had good relations, although these have been strained during the tenure of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his Islamist Justice and Development Party (AKP). The Jordanian regime seemed to regard them effectively as a Turkish version of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Prior to the outbreak of the Arab uprisings, Jordan had developed such strong relations with Egypt and Saudi Arabia that former Foreign Minister Marwan Muasher had coined the phrase "the Arab center" to describe their moderate foreign policies (even as their regimes and domestic politics remained starkly different).<sup>9</sup> During the Arab Spring, however, inter-Arab alliances and alignments across the region shifted several times, as regimes fell in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia, while others remained roiled by varying degrees of in-

ternal opposition, as in Bahrain, in Yemen and, most dramatically, in Syria.

For Jordan, the Arab uprisings, revolutions and civil wars triggered multiple policy shifts as the kingdom responded to ever-changing situations in Egypt and Syria, while renewing its attempt to join the stronghold of Arab monarchies: the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). As always, Jordanian foreign policy also emphasized shoring up alliances with global powers.

### The United States and the EU

In March 2013, U.S. President Barack Obama visited the Middle East to meet with the leaders of Israel, the Palestinian National Authority and Jordan. The presidential visit to Jordan helped underscore the U.S. role in supporting Jordan — and the Hashemite monarchy — politically, economically and militarily. Jordan has been a strong ally of the United States since the earliest days of the Cold War. During the long reign of King Hussein, Jordan positioned itself as a conservative anti-communist bulwark in the region, making itself a key recipient of U.S. foreign aid. This aid has been vital to the kingdom, as it is not blessed with oil or other lucrative natural resources. With neighbors including Israel, Syria, Iraq and Saudi Arabia, the kingdom is at all times deeply vulnerable, but it is also geopolitically vital to any hopes for peace and stability in the region. This chronic insecurity, combined with the lack of natural resources, has led the regime to place a premium on retaining powerful allies. Maintaining and deepening its relationship with the United States remains a top foreign policy goal. Today, Jordan remains dependent on foreign aid, both economic and military.<sup>10</sup> For King Abdullah II, who has pursued a series of neoliberal economic policies that have endeared the

regime still further to Washington, the U.S. relationship provides the economic underpinnings of both the state and the regime. These include not only extensive foreign aid, but also U.S. investment in the development of the kingdom, as well as trade relations (which have increased, particularly since the establishment of the U.S.-Jordan Free Trade Agreement in 2002).<sup>11</sup>

Perhaps ironically, given the depth of the U.S.-Jordanian alliance, it has at times been a mixed blessing for the Hashemite regime. The Jordanian monarchy has benefitted immensely from extensive U.S. aid, to be sure. But Jordan's close relations with the U.S. government also link the Hashemite kingdom to the many very unpopular American policies toward the Middle East and are something of a liability, in terms of domestic and regional legitimacy. But for the regime itself, the benefits far outweigh any costs and are, in fact, essential to the economic development as well as the national security of the state.

Jordan has long had close ties to the former colonial power Britain, but has also steadily increased its ties to the European Union. Today, the EU is Jordan's largest trading partner. The kingdom is also a member of the EU Union for the Mediterranean and a participant in the European Neighborhood Policy. As part of the Action Plan for the Neighborhood Policy, the EU has pressed (and also provided financial support) for Jordan to move further on three areas of special concern to the EU: rule of law, good governance and human rights.<sup>12</sup> It is not accidental that Jordan's recent reform efforts have emphasized changes to the constitution and the creation of a constitutional court, an independent electoral commission, new laws for parties and elections, and at least initial discussions regarding eventual

parliamentary government and a constitutional monarchy.<sup>13</sup>

As for the economic aspects of Jordanian-EU relations, Jordan signed an Association Agreement with the EU in 1997. This became official in 2002, initiating a kind of 12-year probationary period. That period has now come to a successful end, marking the start of Jordanian-EU negotiations to move toward the next step: an EU-Jordan free-trade agreement (FTA). The Jordanian government views a potential FTA with the EU as another clear marker of its own status, deeply imbedded in a web of Western or Western-led economic institutions, from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to the World Bank and World Trade Organization (WTO). This international position is perhaps made even clearer by the choice of Jordan to host multiple annual meetings of the World Economic Forum (WEF) at the Dead Sea. But the linchpin to all these key economic relationships remains close alignment with the United States and the EU.

### **The Gulf Cooperation Council**

In terms of local alliances, Jordan (along with Morocco) had received an invitation to join the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), an alliance of Arab oil monarchies: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. The initiative appeared to have come from a worried Saudi regime, in particular, at the height of the uprisings that toppled Saudi allies in Tunisia and Egypt. After the fall of Hosni Mubarak, the Saudis were angered that the United States hadn't backed up the Egyptian regime. Saudi policy appeared to be marked by reactionary and sectarian concerns about the impact of the Arab Spring on both monarchies in general and Sunni-led regimes in the region.

While neither Morocco nor Jordan were Gulf states, both were hereditary Sunni monarchies, like most of the GCC states. The Hashemite king shared the fears of GCC monarchs that a more powerful Iran would meddle in the domestic affairs and internal stability of the Arab monarchies. Jordan had so often turned to the wealthy GCC states to bail it out of difficult economic situations, that it had a vested interest in the stability and survival of its sometime-allies in the GCC. Jordan's concerns with Iranian power and influence date back to the Iranian revolution itself and King Hussein's decision to back Saddam Hussein's Iraq in its eight-year war with Khomeini's Iran. In the years of the Abdullah II regime, Jordanian officials have feared that Iranian power has seemed to be marching steadily closer to Jordan. In 2003, after the U.S. invasion of Iraq, the new Shia-led government in Baghdad enjoyed close relations with Iran, already the main backer of Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Assad regime in Syria. For the Jordanians, this suggested a rising Iranian threat not only across the Gulf, but also across Jordan's eastern and northern borders.

Given its dire economic straits and strategic and security concerns regarding Syria, Iraq and Iran, Jordan gratefully grasped the possibility of joining the GCC. Despite the general regional ridicule that accompanied this proposal for expanding it to become an even larger club of Sunni Arab monarchies, the Jordanians took the offer seriously. Jordan's foreign ministry worked extensively on the issue, even as the GCC later seemed to cool on the idea. For Jordan, the GCC offered the potential of oil at more concessionary prices, aid, investment and trade.<sup>14</sup> GCC membership might revive the moribund Jordanian economy and help secure both state and regime.

Just as important, the Jordanians felt that they had something significant to offer in return. As one of only two Arab states holding a peace treaty with Israel and as a close ally of the United States and Britain, Jordan was in a position to talk to just about anybody. It could credibly act as a mediator in regional disputes. And while it might be poor in capital and resources, it was rich in a highly educated workforce. The kingdom also had one of the region's most sophisticated intelligence services, the General Intelligence Directorate (GID). And while its armed forces were small, they were among the best-trained in the Arab world, so adept in fact, that they had developed the regional specialty of training other countries' police and special forces.

The Jordanians flatly rejected the idea that a seat at the GCC table would amount to charity. While the Jordanians did indeed desire the many economic benefits of joining such a rich bloc, they felt that in return they could offer a talented workforce, as well as extensive security support to the GCC. Some Jordanian officials even complained that Jordan was already helping the GCC states in these security areas, with little reward, and that full GCC membership would simply codify an already existing relationship.<sup>15</sup> Yet after the initial urgency seemed to wear off, the GCC offer noticeably cooled, becoming mired in committees and subcommittees and various forms of bureaucracy designed to slow the accession process.

The initial GCC offer seemed to have been pushed by a nervous Saudi Arabia in the early days of the Arab uprisings; other states had been cool to the idea all along, including Qatar. Jordanian-Qatari relations had been problematic for years, oscillating between periods of rapprochement and recrimination. Since Qatar maintained strong

ties to Jordan's large Muslim Brotherhood organization, and hence ties to the single largest opposition group in the kingdom, Jordanian-Qatari relations were at all times tenuous, with Jordan by far the more vulnerable party.

## Syria

Even as the Jordanians continued their push to maintain rapprochement with Qatar, and hence to keep their GCC membership bid alive, Syria descended into years of brutal civil war.<sup>16</sup> The Jordanians urged a negotiated settlement, suggesting that Assad should leave power, but that a gradual negotiated transition would be best for Syrians and their neighbors. A lengthy civil war, they warned, risked turning Syria into another Afghanistan, Iraq or even Somalia, where years of unrest, instability and terrorism followed war. The Jordanians were particularly worried, as Damascus was so close to Amman, and thousands of Syrian refugees were pouring across the border to flee the violence in their country. By the end of 2013, Jordan — a country of 7 million — was already hosting more than 600,000 Syrian refugees. The Zaatari refugee camp had become the fourth-largest "city" in Jordan.

The Jordanian dilemma about Syria was certainly rooted deeply in the refugee crisis.<sup>17</sup> But the regime was also worried about potential Islamist ascendancy in Damascus after the war, even suggesting that a Muslim Brotherhood axis, of new Islamist-led regimes, might be emerging in the region. The same regime that had earlier feared a Shia axis including Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Iran was now visualizing a potential Sunni axis, but not one marked by Jordanian-style moderation.<sup>18</sup> The Jordanians also feared rising Islamist militancy in Syria, and the return of Jorda-

nian salafi jihadists once the war was over. The Jordanian regime was concerned that unrest would, in effect, be imported into the kingdom through either Islamist militancy or Baathist sleeper agents, activated by a Damascus regime angered by Jordan's alleged support for the rebels.<sup>19</sup>

The Jordanian government insisted that it was neutral in the Syrian civil war, though media reports suggested that GCC countries — especially Saudi Arabia and Qatar — were purchasing arms for the Syrian rebels and funneling them into Syria from both Turkey and Jordan.<sup>20</sup> Media reports in the West continually discussed CIA training in Jordan of Syrian rebel fighters, despite Jordanian government denials. Syria's President Assad complained that Jordan was meddling in Syrian affairs, warning that this was playing with fire. His comment followed joint military exercises conducted in Jordan, near the border with Syria, that involved the armed forces of 18 other countries, including the United States. Jordanian officials noted, correctly, that these were the third-annual "Eager Lion" exercises, planned before Syria's war began. Nonetheless, they drew notice and anger in Damascus.

Even when the exercises ended, the Jordanian government asked the United States to leave behind Patriot Missile Defense batteries and F-16 jet fighters to bolster the Jordanian-Syrian border. Washington did so and left several hundred troops as well, nominally to maintain the missile batteries and planes. These were sensitive matters within Jordanian domestic politics, however, and both pro-regime and opposition figures condemned any continued U.S. or other foreign deployment on Jordanian soil. The regime found itself continually denying that Jordan would serve as a "launchpad" for any U.S. or Western attack on Syria. Yet,

as fighting raged in and near Daraa, just across the border, Syrian missiles and artillery shells landed in Jordan several times.

Jordan's defensive moves to shore up its border also increased its internal and external security dilemmas in two ways. First, how to increase defenses without unintentionally provoking Syria; and second, how to ensure external security without raising the ire of internal opposition.<sup>21</sup> Conservative nationalists were sensitive to any slights to Jordanian sovereignty and continually rejected any internationally brokered deal that would make Jordan the "alternative homeland" (*al-watan al-badeel*) for the Palestinian people, or for Syrian or Iraqi refugees, for that matter. Islamists, leftists and pan-Arab nationalists just as routinely criticized Jordanian policy for being too close to Western powers, reactionary Arab states and especially Israel; and they too warned of alleged conspiracies about an alternative homeland.

When King Abdullah returned from Washington in April 2013, having worked to shore up U.S. support, he was met by a third major "manifesto" from a set of one thousand opposition figures.<sup>22</sup> Previous manifestos, from tribal leaders and retired army officers (both traditionally pro-Hashemite constituencies), had harshly criticized the regime's domestic economic and political agenda. The new one, whose signatories included leftists, nationalists, Hirak representatives and trade unionists, as well as tribal leaders and retired army officers, decried plots to undermine Jordanian sovereignty, condemned the neoliberal economic policies of the state and once again rejected any plans for Israel to solve the Palestinian issue at Jordanian expense ("the Jordanian option").

On many of these issues, left- and right-wing opposition within Jordan were

sounding increasingly alike. On Syria, however, the lengthy civil war had become something of a wedge issue, sharply dividing even the traditional sources of opposition. Many secular leftists backed Assad, arguing that the crisis was a Western-led conspiracy against the leading state in the "resistance" to Israeli and Western imperial ambitions. Yet Jordan's large Islamist movements, ranging from the long-established Muslim Brotherhood to a smaller but resurgent salafi movement, called for the ouster of the Assad regime. Other Jordanian Islamists called for direct support for the rebel movement in Syria. In private capacities, some salafi fighters crossed over from Jordan to fight Assad.

The Hashemite regime itself, meanwhile, saw all potential outcomes in Syria as problematic in varying degrees. A hostile Assad would be a danger to Jordan, but so would an unstable post-Assad Syria, especially if it became another Islamist regime or perhaps a failed state wracked by sectarian violence. As it tried to deal with the internal and external pressures generated in part by the Syrian civil war and the Arab uprisings, the Jordanian regime attempted, as usual, simply to weather the storm. But it faced intense pressure from Assad to stay out and from its own allies (especially Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United States) to do more.

It would be difficult to exaggerate the security challenges to Jordan today, yet many liberal and progressive reformists fear that the regime's security concerns will derail Jordan's own already limited and incomplete political reform process.<sup>23</sup> But even as the regime and its opponents worried about the different impacts of regional crises on their internal politics, the very tangible challenge of the refugee crisis continued to increase. The strains on Jordan's

economy, social services, water resources and political stability were severe, especially in the context of an economic recession in a deeply indebted country.

### **Egypt**

In July 2013, domestic attention in Jordan shifted dramatically from the Syrian war to yet another regime change in Egypt, when a military coup d'état forced out the Muslim Brotherhood and Egypt's Islamist President Mohamed Morsi. The military move, led by Defense Minister el-Sissi, had followed a massive public-protest campaign against the Brotherhood government in Cairo. The "Tamarod" campaign had mobilized millions, including even more demonstrators in Tahrir Square than the protests that generated the January 25, 2011, revolution in the first place. Yet many secular activists would quickly find that secular military authoritarians were just as dangerous to their democratic goals as the Muslim Brotherhood seemed to have been.

For Jordanian foreign policy, however, there was no wavering whatsoever in reacting to regime change in Egypt. King Abdullah made a personal visit to Cairo immediately after the ouster of President Morsi, endorsing the new secular regime and the ouster of the Brotherhood and cementing a renewed close relationship between Jordan and Egypt. In October 2013, Egypt's "interim president," Adly Mansour, paid a state visit to four key Arab allies — Jordan, Kuwait, Saud Arabia and the UAE — to shore up support for the new Egyptian regime. In Jordan, this simply reinforced the warming of relations after the ouster of President Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood.

The kingdom's own Islamist movement reacted with alarm and even horror to

these developments. If anything, Jordan's Muslim Brotherhood had been biding its time, expecting an eventual Islamist victory in Syria to consolidate with the Islamist success in Egypt. Many Jordanian Islamists felt that their patience since Jordanian independence in 1946 would soon pay off. They had strenuously avoided participating in the regime-led reform process, boycotting both national and local elections and rejecting the entire project as a sham. The eventual collapse of Assad and the rise of successful Islamist regimes in both Cairo and Damascus, however, might have empowered the Brotherhood against the Hashemite monarchy, forcing more dramatic change. But now, with the ouster of the Brotherhood in Egypt and the Hashemite regime's active endorsement of the move, Jordan's Islamist movement was once again in disarray. This deepened the split between the dovish and hawkish wings of the movement and, to some extent, splits along lines of identity.

If the Jordanian regime felt insecure during the early months of the Arab uprisings in 2011— and perhaps especially so during the November 2012 riots triggered by economic austerity measures — it was noticeably more confident in 2013 and 2014. Jordan had managed to survive, as usual, without a revolution of its own. But domestic and regional tensions persisted. Despite Jordan's attempts to avoid the Syrian conflict, the kingdom remained under considerable pressure from both its Gulf and Western allies to play a larger role. Jordanian foreign policy is predicated on maintaining multiple economic, political and military allies at the regional and global levels; yet these were allies who were difficult to ignore and were vital as guarantors of Jordanian economic viability, political stability and security.

## CONCLUSIONS

The Jordanian regime continues to view itself as a bastion of moderation, stability, political reform (including limited liberalization) and especially of neoliberal economic policies such as privatization, free trade and openness to foreign investment. Despite its misgivings regarding U.S. priorities (such as launching the Iraq War and neglecting the Israeli-Palestinian peace process), the Hashemite regime regards its alliance with the United States and its burgeoning relations with the European Union as key strategic interests and sees itself as in sync with both on most foreign policy issues. Jordan even views itself as a model for the region regarding policy areas of deepest concern to Western governments and Western-led global institutions: supporting neoliberal economic politics, pursuing domestic political reform, combating militant Islamism and terrorism, stabilizing Iraq, bringing an end to the Syrian civil war, and restoring the Arab-Israeli peace process.

Jordan played on its own reputation for moderation when, in late 2013, it became a surprise candidate for membership on the UN Security Council (UNSC). The General Assembly had actually elected Saudi Arabia to the seat, but even as congratulations were being sent to Riyadh, the Saudis refused to accept their own election, decrying the ineffectiveness of the UNSC, especially in regard to the Syrian civil war and the plight of the Palestinian people. The Jordanians quickly seized the opportunity, as a very active member of the United Nations (including in global peacekeeping operations) and ran for the seat themselves. This took deft diplomacy; Jordanian officials carefully made sure that the kingdom would have the support of Saudi Arabia and other Arab states, as well as all five permanent mem-

bers of the Security Council. In December 2013, Jordan was elected to the UNSC for 2014-16, marking yet another key foreign-policy move to ensure the survival of the kingdom even amidst a particularly tumultuous time in regional politics.<sup>24</sup>

The Arab Spring had shaken Jordan at a time when the kingdom already had its hands full with its own struggles over domestic political reform and an economic crisis. The arrival of the regional upheavals exacerbated both dilemmas, while adding intensely to external-security constraints. While supporters of the Hashemite regime heralded the regime-led reform process and its various achievements, its opponents decried the reforms as minor and cosmetic at best. Many activists charged, further, that the kingdom's own allies were a major source of concern, arguing that the United States and the EU were satisfied with small procedural reforms rather than democratization, while local allies — such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the other GCC monarchies — might exercise a reactionary influence on Jordan's reform program.<sup>25</sup> Regardless of which of these interpretations one accepts, it seems clear that much more needs to be done.

The regime and, indeed, the country itself are by no means able to rest on the domestic status quo. To ensure greater security for both regime and society, deeper political and economic reform is needed; even deft use of foreign policy as a tool to ensure domestic security will not be enough in the long term. Yet, as the Arab uprisings continue to rock the Middle East, the Hashemite regime will attempt to use its foreign-policy ties to regional and global powers to solidify both the monarchy and the state in order to survive yet another series of internal and external threats to Jordan's security and survival.

<sup>1</sup> An earlier draft of this paper was presented at the annual meeting of the Middle East Studies Association, New Orleans, Louisiana, October 10-13, 2013.

<sup>2</sup> Sean L. Yom and Wael al-Khatib, "Jordan's New Politics of Tribal Dissent," *Foreign Policy*, August 7, 2012, [http://mideastafrica.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/08/07/jordans\\_new\\_politics\\_of\\_tribal\\_dissent](http://mideastafrica.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/08/07/jordans_new_politics_of_tribal_dissent); and Curtis R. Ryan, "Political Opposition and Reform Coalitions in Jordan," *British Journal of Middle East Studies* 38, no. 3 (2011): 367-390.

<sup>3</sup> Curtis R. Ryan, *Jordan in Transition: From Hussein to Abdullah* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2002).

<sup>4</sup> Jordan's IMF austerity measures and the resultant riots were reminiscent of earlier episodes in both 1989 and 1996, detailed in the pages of this journal. See Curtis R. Ryan, "Peace, Bread, and Riots: Jordan and the International Monetary Fund," *Middle East Policy* 6, no. 2 (Fall 1998): 54-66.

<sup>5</sup> Expanding on an earlier essay: "Jordan's Security Dilemmas," *Foreign Policy*, May 7, 2013, [http://mideastafrica.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2013/05/01/jordans\\_security\\_dilemmas#sthash.92FfWeWZ.dpbs](http://mideastafrica.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2013/05/01/jordans_security_dilemmas#sthash.92FfWeWZ.dpbs).

<sup>6</sup> Curtis R. Ryan, "Jordan's Unfinished Journey: Parliamentary Elections and the State of Reform," in the Project on Middle East Democracy's Policy Briefing, March 2013, <http://pomed.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/POMED-Policy-Brief-Ryan.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> King Abdullah II, interview by Curtis R. Ryan, Amman, Jordan, May 21, 2012.

<sup>8</sup> Julien Barnes-Dacey, "Jordanian Tremors: Elusive Consensus, Deepening Discontent," in the European Council on Foreign Relations's Policy Memo no. 68, November 2012.

<sup>9</sup> Marwan Muasher, *The Arab Center: The Promise of Moderation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).

<sup>10</sup> Robert Satloff and David Schenker write on Jordanian stability and U.S. policy options in "Political Instability in Jordan," Contingency Planning Memorandum no. 19, Council on Foreign Relations, October 2013, <http://www.cfr.org/jordan/political-instability-jordan/p30698>.

<sup>11</sup> The classic study of economic determinants in Jordanian foreign policy is that of Laurie A. Brand, *Jordan's Inter-Arab Relations: The Political Economy of Alliance-making* (Columbia University Press, 1994).

<sup>12</sup> Peter Seeberg, "European Neighborhood Policy, Post-Normativity and Legitimacy. EU Policies towards Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria," Centre for Contemporary Middle East Studies, Working Paper Series no. 14, November 2008. See also, European Commission Memo, "EU's Response to the 'Arab Spring': The State-of-Play after Two Years," February 8, 2013.

<sup>13</sup> On both the extent and limitations of the reform process, see Ryan, "Jordan's Unfinished Journey."

<sup>14</sup> Officials at the Foreign Ministry of Jordan, interviews by Curtis R. Ryan, Amman, Jordan, May 2012.

<sup>15</sup> Former and present policy makers, interviews by Curtis R. Ryan, Amman, Jordan, May 2011.

<sup>16</sup> On the international relations dynamics of the Syrian war and why it is reminiscent of the old Arab Cold War, see Curtis R. Ryan, "The New Arab Cold War and the Struggle for Syria," *Middle East Report*, no. 262 (Spring 2012): 28-31.

<sup>17</sup> King Abdullah II, interview by Curtis R. Ryan, Amman, Jordan, December 18, 2012.

<sup>18</sup> In interviews in 2012 and 2013, some Jordanian officials noted specifically the rise of Islamist regimes including an-Nahda in Tunisia, a semi-Islamist coalition in Libya, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, and even the AKP in Turkey.

<sup>19</sup> As the Jordanians predicted when they argued against a U.S. invasion of Iraq, political violence and terrorism followed the invasion and occupation, eventually spilling over into Jordan itself. Al-Qaeda in Iraq emerged as a force (led for a time by a militant Jordanian national, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi) and struck the country in what Jordanians consider their "9/11." On November 9, 2005, suicide bombers struck three luxury hotels in Amman, killing more than 60 people.

<sup>20</sup> Dale Gavlak and Jamal Halabi, "Officials: Arms Shipments Rise to Syrian Rebels," Associated Press, March 27, 2013.

<sup>21</sup> Ryan, "Jordan's Security Dilemmas."

<sup>22</sup> Saraya News, April 30, 2013, <http://www.sarayanews.com/index.php?page=article&id=196518#UX-fw1fvjaY.facebook>.

<sup>23</sup> Osama al-Sharif, "Jordan's Reform Agenda on Hold," al-Monitor, October 28, 2013, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/10/jordan-focus-economic-security-reform-syrian-crisis.html>.

<sup>24</sup> Curtis R. Ryan, "Jordan's U.N. Security Council Debate," *Foreign Policy*, November 20, 2013, [http://mideastafrica.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2013/11/12/jordans\\_excellent\\_un\\_adventure#sthash.RAb5taLm.dpbs](http://mideastafrica.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2013/11/12/jordans_excellent_un_adventure#sthash.RAb5taLm.dpbs).

<sup>25</sup> I have heard such arguments consistently from diverse reform activists.