

## A HISTORY OF JORDAN

Though a small state, Jordan has frequently found itself at the centre of conflict and crisis in the modern Middle East. It has been a central protagonist in the wars of the region, notably the 1948 and 1967 Arab–Israeli wars, and has also been at the forefront of peace-making, signing a separate peace with Israel in 1994. Philip Robins’ survey of Jordan’s political history begins in the early 1920s, continues through the years of the British mandate, and traces events over the next half century to the present day. Throughout the latter period the country’s fortunes were closely identified with its head of state, King Hussein, until his death in 1999. In the early days, as the author testifies, his prospects were often regarded as grim. However, both King and country survived a variety of existential challenges, from assassination attempts and internal subversion to a civil war with the Palestine Liberation Organisation. In the 1970s and 1980s the country emerged as an apparently stable and prosperous state. However, King Hussein’s death, the succession of his son, Abdullah II, and the recent upheavals in the region have plunged the country back into uncertainty. This is an incisive account, compellingly told, about one of the most important countries in the Middle East.

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# A HISTORY OF JORDAN

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*For my daughter Isabel*

## Contents

|  |                |
|--|----------------|
| <i>List of illustrations</i>                 | <i>page</i> ix |
| <i>List of tables and maps</i>               | x              |
| <i>Acknowledgements</i>                      | xi             |
| <i>Chronology</i>                            | xiii           |
| <br>   |                |
| Introduction                                 | I              |
| 1 On the Edge of Empire                      | 5              |
| Transjordan and its 'dark ages'              | 6              |
| The Ottoman state and its impact             | 8              |
| The post-First World War limbo               | 12             |
| 2 Founding State and Regime                  | 16             |
| Abdullah's consolation prize                 | 17             |
| The Sharifian moment                         | 20             |
| Regime politics: incorporating social groups | 23             |
| Britain and the fate of Transjordan          | 27             |
| Towards administrative consolidation         | 31             |
| 3 The Long Road to Independence              | 35             |
| Creating political institutions              | 36             |
| Incorporating the tribal periphery           | 40             |
| Political affairs in the Emirate             | 44             |
| Risks and opportunities in the region        | 47             |
| The Second World War                         | 52             |
| Independence, at last                        | 56             |
| 4 Loss of Innocence                          | 59             |
| The onset of strife                          | 60             |
| A Hashemite dream                            | 64             |
| Unity across the Jordan                      | 70             |
| The death of a king                          | 74             |

|   |   |     |
|---|---|-----|
| 5 | The Roaring Fifties                       | 79  |
|   | A second succession                       | 80  |
|   | New social realities                      | 82  |
|   | The accession of Hussein                  | 87  |
|   | The Baghdad Pact and the ousting of Glubb | 91  |
|   | The radical challenge from within         | 94  |
|   | A coup from the palace                    | 99  |
|   | Rebuilding stability                      | 102 |
| 6 | The Road to Disaster                      | 105 |
|   | Wasfi al-Tall and the rest                | 106 |
|   | The drive for economic development        | 111 |
|   | Conflicts across the region               | 114 |
|   | The awakening of Palestinian nationalism  | 117 |
|   | The 1967 war                              | 120 |
|   | Managing the aftermath                    | 124 |
|   | Bloody conflict within                    | 129 |
| 7 | Illusions of Progress                     | 133 |
|   | Two peoples, one state                    | 134 |
|   | The Road to Rabat                         | 136 |
|   | The October war                           | 140 |
|   | Oil wealth without oil                    | 141 |
|   | The temptation of Camp David              | 146 |
|   | Hussein and Saddam: the odd couple        | 149 |
|   | Limited domestic reform                   | 154 |
|   | Process, but no peace                     | 158 |
|   | West Bank disengagement                   | 163 |
| 8 | Hussein's Choices                         | 165 |
|   | While Jordan burns                        | 166 |
|   | Liberalisation for austerity              | 170 |
|   | The National Charter                      | 174 |
|   | The Iraq–Kuwait crisis                    | 176 |
|   | The 'break' with Iraq                     | 180 |
|   | Structural adjustment                     | 181 |
|   | Hussein's gamble on peace                 | 184 |
|   | Democratisation on the backburner         | 187 |
|   | Uphill struggle for normalisation         | 190 |
|   | A messy succession                        | 193 |
| 9 | Abdullah's First Steps                    | 198 |
|   | <i>Notes</i>                              | 205 |
|   | <i>Bibliography</i>                       | 224 |
|   | <i>Index</i>                              | 233 |

## *Illustrations*

|    |  |                |
|----|--|----------------|
| 1  | The market place in the town of Salt, c. 1920s (JEM 6.10)  | <i>page</i> 14 |
| 2  | Amir Abdullah and others in Amman, 1921 (JEM 6.209)  | 18             |
| 3  | Jordanian peasant couple, 1933 (Stark MF 129 D5)   | 24             |
| 4  | The Parliament House in Amman, 1933 (Stark MF 133 B6)  | 38             |
| 5  | Members of Glubb's Desert Patrol, 1935 (Glubb, Film 1, No. 25)   | 43             |
| 6  | The town of Amman, 1933 (Stark MF 133 C2)  | 51             |
| 7  | A street scene in the northern town of Ajlun, 1943 (Stark MF 133 B3)   | 56             |
| 8  | Amir Talal, aged 13, 1922 (Philby Misc Tj 5)   | 76             |
| 9  | Jordanian police with armed vehicle (Stark MF 133 A5)  | 83             |
| 10 | The city of Amman, 1963 (JEM 6.2)  | 86             |
| 11 | Palestinian refugees crossing the River Jordan to the East Bank during the 1967 war (JEM 1.1505.1)                                 | 125            |
| 12 | King Hussein embraces Prince Abdullah the day after having restored him as crown prince, Amman, 26 January 1999 (Popperfoto AMMO4) | 194            |

## *Tables and maps*

### TABLES

|   |                |
|---|----------------|
| 2.1 British grant-in-aid allocated to Transjordan (£)     | <i>page</i> 29 |
| 5.1 Distribution of refugees in Jordan, February 1952     | 84             |
| 5.2 Urban growth in major cities of Jordan, 1952–1962     | 85             |
| 7.1 Foreign grants and government revenues, 1967–1982     | 143            |
| 8.1 Jordan's deteriorating government budget (JD million) | 167            |

### MAPS

|                                       |       |
|---------------------------------------|-------|
| 1 Present-day Jordan                  | xviii |
| 2 Jordan and the West Bank (pre-1967) | xix   |
| 3 Jordan and the Middle East          | xx    |



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It is well over two decades since I first went to Jordan, initially to live and work as a journalist and then to return to undertake doctoral research under the supervision of the redoubtable Tim Niblock. Since 1986, when I ceased to reside in the country, I have been a frequent visitor, most recently to conduct my current research into the field of illegal drugs. During this long association with the country I have talked with several hundreds of people, Jordanians, Palestinians and expatriates, many of them numerous times over. With hardly an exception, they have been kind and generous with their time, hospitality and insights. My thanks are due to each one of them. While to mention any by name is hard on the others, there are certain people whose assistance compels special mention. Nigel Denby, Paul and Jane Dracott, Keith and Janet Fraser-Smith, Tony and Alison Harpur, Declan and Liz Mannion, Alastair MacNeil, Dina Matar, Hana Muasher, Peter and Fenella Raftery, Mike and Maureen Ryan, and Alison Woods were all pivotal figures in my life at different times during my various stints in Jordan, and many remain close and valued friends. Debts of gratitude are particularly owed to Nasser Abu Nab, Lamis Andoni, Jalal Azzeh, Ian Chandler, Hiyyam Fakhoury, Yusuf al-Khadra, Rami and Ellen Khouri, David Oston and Sheila Oston, Rana Sabbagh, Jamal and Mary Sha'ir, Muraiwid and Ruth Tell, Ara Voskian, P. V. Vivekenand and Nidal Zayaddin for providing me with humour, sanctuary and good company. During the early days I learnt a lot about Jordan from associates who became more than just good contacts, and whose conversation was especially valuable and rich in insight, particularly Asad Abdul Rahman, Bill Burns, Alan Charlton, Fahd al-Fanek, Abdullah Hasanat, George Hawatmeh, Saji Salamah Khalil, Ahmad Mango, Marwan Muasher, Isam al-Tal and Tariq al-Tell. More recently Bassam Asfour, Ibrahim Izzedin, Musa Keilani, Sir John Moberly, Salameh Ne'matt, Amal Sabbagh, Asher Susser and Suhail al-Twal have continued to remind me how much understanding there is still to be done.

Of course, romance and Jordan is not a new thing. I am pleased to say, though, that, unlike for some others, romance in Jordan for me found a personal rather than political fulfilment, as it was while working there that I met my wife, Helen. For that reason alone, this book would have been a labour of love.

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## *Chronology*

- 1867 Ottoman control is reimposed upon the lands of Transjordan  
 1906 The Hijaz Railway reaches Amman  
 1920 April: The San Remo conference establishes the mandate system, of which Transjordan is to be part  
 August: British High Commissioner Sir Herbert Samuel announces the creation of autonomous administrations in Transjordan  
 November: the future ruler, Amir Abdullah bin Hussein, arrives in Maan in the south  
 1921 Cairo conference under Churchill gives Abdullah jurisdiction over Transjordan  
 1923 September: The Adwan 'revolt'  
 1924 August: Abdullah accepts the Ultimatum on British administrative supervision  
 October: Hijaz falls to the Saudis  
 1925 November (2nd): Hadda Agreement signed with the Saudis  
 1925–7 Druze Rebellion in southern Syria  
 1928 February: Agreement signed between Britain and Abdullah recognises the Amir as head of Transjordan  
 April: Organic Law, effectively a constitution, passed, establishing a Legislative Council  
 July: First meeting of the oppositionist Transjordan National Congress  
 1930 November: Major John Glubb establishes the Desert Patrol  
 1933 March: Legislative Council passes a consolidated land tax  
 1936–39 Revolt by the Arab population in Palestine  
 1939 Glubb replaces Peake as commander of the Arab Legion  
 Alec Kirkbride replaces Cox as British Resident  
 1941 Middle East Supply Centre established

- April: Rashid Ali al-Kailani coup in Iraq; Arab Legion participates in its suppression
- 1945 Arab League established, with Transjordan as a founding member
- 1946 May (25th): Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan proclaimed  
 August: Secret meetings begin between Abdullah and the Jewish Agency
- 1947 November (29th): UN General Assembly passes partition plan
- 1948 March (15th): Anglo-Jordanian treaty signed  
 May: Britain terminates Palestine mandate  
 May–June: First phase of the war: Jordan holds Arab Jerusalem  
 July: Second phase of the war: Jordan forfeits Lydda and Ramle  
 October–January (1949): Third phase of the war: Israel attacks Egypt rather than Jordan  
 October: First National Palestine Congress convened in Amman prepares the way for annexation  
 December: Jericho Congress opts for unity of the West Bank with Jordan
- 1949 April (3rd): Israeli–Jordanian armistice concluded
- 1950 April (25th): Jordanian parliament passes unification resolution
- 1951 July (20th): King Abdullah assassinated in Jerusalem  
 September (6th): Prince Talal proclaimed king
- 1952 January (1st): New, liberal constitution ratified  
 July (23rd): Nasser leads Free Officers' coup in Egypt  
 August (11th): King Talal abdicates on the grounds of ill-health
- 1953 May (2nd): King Hussein formally accedes
- 1954 October (16th): General election subject to gross interference  
 New municipal law adopted
- 1955 December: After sustained rioting, Jordan decides not to join Baghdad Pact
- 1956 March (1st): Glubb Pasha dismissed as head of the Arab Legion  
 October: General election results in largely radical parliament; leader of National Socialists, Suleiman Nabulsi, invited to form government  
 July–November: The Suez crisis

*Chronology*

xv

- 1957 January (19th): Arab Solidarity Agreement struck, whereby Arab states would replace Britain as Jordan's paymaster  
 January: Eisenhower Doctrine against Communism unveiled  
 March (14th): Anglo-Jordanian treaty abrogated  
 April: Following reports of army unrest, the king sacks the Nabulsi government and faces down the disturbances at the Zarqa army camp  
 Martial law follows the convening of the 'Patriotic Congress', an attempt to rally the opposition
- 1958 February (1st): Egypt and Syria unite to form the United Arab Republic  
 February (14th): Iraq and Jordan respond by establishing the Arab Federation  
 July (14th): Revolution in Baghdad brings down the Hashemite monarchy in Iraq  
 Hussein invites in British troops to stabilise Jordan
- 1960 August (29th): Prime minister Hazza al-Majali assassinated by Syrian agents
- 1962 January: First premiership of technocratic, reformist Wasfi al-Tall  
 September: Start of Yemeni civil war
- 1963 February and March: Nationalist revolutions in Baghdad and Damascus respectively
- 1964 January: First Arab summit creates the Palestine liberation movement  
 September: Arab summit establishes unified Arab military command
- 1966 November (13th): Israel undertakes devastating raid on Samu
- 1967 May (30th): King Hussein flies to Cairo; signs Joint Defence Agreement with Egypt  
 June (5th–10th): Six day war results in devastation of Jordanian military; loss of the West Bank  
 August–September: Khartoum Arab summit adopts peaceful strategy for rectifying Arab–Israeli problems  
 November (22nd): UN Security Council adopts Resolution 242, based on principle of land for peace
- 1968 March (21st): Jordanian and Palestinian fighters face down the Israeli army at the Battle of Karamah
- 1970 September: PFLP's Dawson's Field hijackings precipitate Jordanian–Palestinian clashes

- 'Black September' defeat for Palestinian guerrillas in a civil war
- 1971 July: Remainder of Palestinian guerrillas driven out of Jordan  
 The Allon Plan symbolises Israel's preference for the 'Jordanian option' with regard to the future of the West Bank
- 1972 March (15th): Hussein unveils his United Arab Kingdom vision for East Bank–West Bank relations
- 1973 September: Jordan warns Israel of imminent Arab attack  
 October: Jordan participates belatedly in October (6th–26th) War on the Syrian front
- 1974 Army unrest over food prices results in establishment of the ministry of supply  
 October: Rabat Arab summit recognises the PLO as representative of the Palestinians, at Jordan's expense  
 November: Parliament suspended in light of Rabat resolution
- 1976 Arafat and Hussein meet at Cairo Arab summit, marking the start of a post-civil war, post-Rabat thaw
- 1977 PLO body reverses policy on regime change in Amman
- 1978 April: National Consultative Council established while parliament in abeyance  
 September (17th): Camp David Accords signed, envisaging role for Jordan  
 November: Baghdad Arab summit pledges \$1.25 billion a year to Jordan in return for steadfastness
- 1979 December: Sharif Abdul Hamid Sharaf appointed prime minister
- 1982 June: Israeli invasion of Lebanon  
 September (1st): Reagan peace plan is unveiled
- 1983 Jordanian Central Bank provides revolving credit line to maintain trade with Iraq  
 March: Parliament restored; Islamist successes in by-elections
- 1984 November: PLO's national council meets in Amman
- 1985 February (11th): Peace process coordinating agreement forged with PLO
- 1986 February: Peace process agreement collapses in recrimination  
 August: Jordan unveils still-born development plan for the West Bank
- 1987 April: King Hussein and Shimon Peres conclude London Agreement on peace process  
 December: First uprising begins in Palestinian territories

*Chronology*

xvii

- 1988 July (31st): King Hussein cuts administrative and legal ties with the West Bank
- 1989 February: Jordan is a founder member of four-state Arab Cooperation Council  
 February: Jordan's foreign debt default becomes public  
 April: Jordanian government begins to implement IMF programme  
 April: Riots break out in Maan, spreading to a number of towns  
 November (8th): Jordan holds free and fair elections; Islamists the winners
- 1990 August (2nd): Iraq invades Kuwait; King Hussein embarks on controversial 'mediatory' role
- 1991 January: Muslim Brotherhood join coalition government  
 June: National Charter adopted  
 October: Jordan takes part in Arab–Israeli peace summit in Madrid
- 1993 November: Jordan holds its first multi-party election since 1956
- 1994 October (26th): Israel and Jordan sign peace treaty
- 1995 August: King Hussein initially supports Saddam Hussein's defecting sons-in-law  
 October: Jordan hosts second of four regional economic conferences as part of its effort at normalisation
- 1997 September: Israeli agents bungle assassination of Hamas leader in Amman
- 1999 January: Month of high drama ends with King Hussein changing the succession from his brother Hasan to his eldest son Abdullah  
 February (7th): King Hussein dies; King Abdullah II succeeds; Hussein's second-youngest son, Hamzah, declared to be crown prince
- 2000 September: Second Palestinian uprising begins
- 2003 March–April: A US-dominated coalition precipitates regime change in Baghdad through war

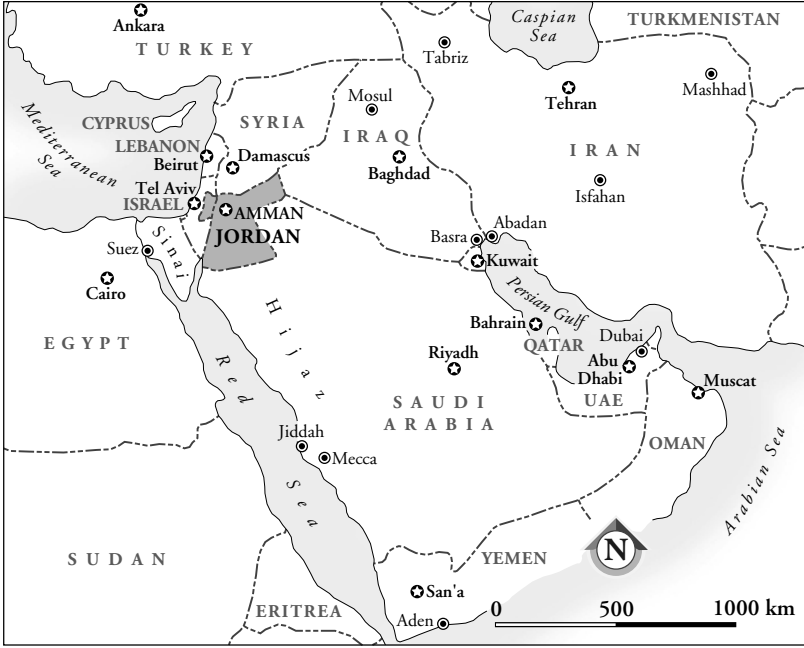


Map 1. Present-day Jordan





Map 2. Jordan and the West Bank (pre-1967)



Map 3. Jordan and the Middle East