

Polity IV Country Report 2010: Jordan

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| <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 15%;">Score:</td> <td style="width: 15%;">2009</td> <td style="width: 15%;">2010</td> <td style="width: 15%;">Change</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Polity:</td> <td>-3</td> <td>-3</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Democ:</td> <td>2</td> <td>2</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Autoc:</td> <td>5</td> <td>5</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Durable:</td> <td colspan="3">21</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tentative:</td> <td colspan="3">No</td> </tr> </table> | Score: | 2009 | 2010 | Change | Polity: | -3 | -3 | 0 | Democ: | 2 | 2 | 0 | Autoc: | 5 | 5 | 0 | Durable: | 21 | | | Tentative: | No | | | |
| Score: | 2009 | 2010 | Change | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Polity: | -3 | -3 | 0 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Democ: | 2 | 2 | 0 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Autoc: | 5 | 5 | 0 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Durable: | 21 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Tentative: | No | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| SCODE | JOR | CCODE | 663 | Date of Report | 1 June 2011 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Polity IV Component Variables | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| XRREG | XRCOMP | XROPEN | XCONST | PARREG | PARCOMP | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 4 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Date of Most Recent Polity Transition (3 or more point change) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| End Date | | 8 November 1989 | | Begin Date | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | 9 November 1989 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Polity Fragmentation: No | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Constitution | 1952 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Executive(s) | King Abdullah Bin Al Hussein II Prime Minister Awn Shawkat Al-Khasawneh (independent), appointed by the King, 24 October 2011 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Legislature | Bicameral: Chamber of Deputies (120 seats; proportionally elected; 12 seats allocated to top vote-getting women and 12 reserved for Christian or Ciscassian candidates; most recent elections, 9 November 2010, boycotted by IAF) Independents: 120 Senate (60 seats; appointed by the King) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Judiciary | Court of Cassation, Supreme Court | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Narrative Description:¹

Executive Recruitment: Dual Executive: Ascription + Designation (2)

Jordan is a hereditary monarchy with a designated prime minister. Jordan was ruled by King Hussein bin Talal from 1952 until his death in 1999. One of the last acts of the dying King was to replace his brother, Prince Hassan, with his eldest son, Prince Abdullah, as crown prince. Prince Abdullah bin Hussein ascended to the throne in February 1999. The post of prime minister is appointed by the king. Following two weeks of public demonstrations against the government in early 2011, on 1 February 2011, King Abdullah demised the government and appointed a former prime minister, Marouf al-Bakhit, to head a new government on 9 February 2011. This move did not appease popular discontent and the King once again

¹ The research described in this report was sponsored by the Political Instability Task Force (PITF). The PITF is funded by the Central Intelligence Agency. The views expressed herein are the authors' alone and do not represent the views of the US Government.

dismissed the government on 17 October 2011, naming Awn Shawkat Al-Khasawneh to the post of prime minister on 24 October 2011.

Executive Constraints: Slight to Moderate Limitations (3)

The parliament consists of the fifty-five member Senate and the 104-member Chamber of Deputies. While the King appoints the upper house, the lower house is popularly elected every four years. In a new election law promulgated in July 2001, the size of the lower house was increased from 80 to 104 seats. In 2003, the King dissolved the Senate and appointed a new body with fifty-five members, including seven women, the largest number of women yet represented in Jordan's legislature.

Despite the functioning of an elected assembly, the extent of horizontal accountability in Jordan remains limited. The King has long been the center of political authority in this country. While the parliament is empowered to reject and amend legislation proposed by the executive branch, the Council of Deputies has asserted itself only intermittently over the past decade. All evidence suggests that the transfer of power from King Hussein to King Abdullah has not marked a fundamental break with this centralized form of rule. The King dissolved the Chamber of Deputies in June 2001 and postponed elections scheduled for later in the year until June 2003. In these elections "independent" candidates loyal to the King won a convincing victory, controlling two-thirds of the 110 seats. In general, independents represent the country's major tribes and clans that are close to the royal family and serve as the bedrock of Jordanian society. Given the dominance of these independents in the parliament, they did not serve as a significant brake on executive branch initiatives. However, the election of seventeen Islamist seats did ensure that all executive branch initiatives were subjected to an open debate. The legislature continued to become an open forum for opposition opinions to be voiced, although the power of the legislature to act independently of the monarch remained limited. The judiciary shows a significant degree of independence but remains susceptible to the influence of the executive branch.

Political Participation: Political Liberalization: Persistent Overt Coercion (8)

King Hussein ended martial law in 1989 and legalized political parties in 1992. While organized political activity is actively encouraged in Jordan, the government continues to use its institutional powers, as well as sporadic instances of fraud and intimidation, to weaken opposition to the King and his policies. The 1997 legislative elections, for example, were marred by credible claims of electoral irregularities and restrictions on press freedoms. Moreover, the electoral laws of Jordan disproportionately favor those regions with pro-Hashemite views. However, since ascending to the throne in 1999, King Abdullah has made some minor progress in liberalizing the media, reforming the judiciary and improving human rights (although this is still a major concern). In October 2003 the King said that political reform was among his top priorities and urged the new cabinet to draft "an advanced political parties law and a democratic election law."

The traditional factional tension in Jordan between the East Bank Bedouin tribes (who constitute the backbone of the Hashemite monarchy) and Palestinians (who constitute roughly fifty percent of the population) has manifested itself in recent years by a growing division between pro-government secularists and anti-government Islamic fundamentalists. This factional division has resulted in terrorist activities and state repression. Violence between Islamists and the government erupted seriously in 2002, and violence between emerging opposition groups and government forces remained sporadic through 2006. Given the increase in general discord in the region, and particularly in Iraq, Lebanon, and the Palestinian territories, democratic reforms in Jordan have slowed in the fear that the Islamic Brotherhood and/or the ethnic-Palestinian majority could gain control of the government in general elections. With the unexpected 2006 electoral victory by the armed Islamic movement Hamas in the Palestinian territories and the ongoing warfare in Iraq, the Jordanian government has slowed or reversed many of its democratic reforms as the Hashemite monarchy manipulates the system in 2007 elections to favor its Bedouin supporters and limit the influence of the Islamic Action Front (IAF), which boycotted summer 2007 municipal elections due to allegations of vote-buying and other fraud.

The IAF, which is the political arm of the Muslim Brotherhood, has played an active role in Jordanian politics in recent years. While Jordan is the only country in the Middle East to give this Islamist group an official role in the political order, nonetheless, its representation in government has declined over the past decade. In the 1990s the IAF held nearly 50% of the seats in parliament but was only able to

command six seats in the 2007 poll. The IAF, which has historically promoted a moderate form of political Islam, has begun to fracture in recent years between moderate and hardline political factions.

In January 2011 Jordan's main Islamist opposition, the Islamic Action Front (IAF), publically stated their desire to reform the 1952 constitution which allows the king to select the prime minister. The IAF wants the nomination of the prime minister to be the prerogative of the winning party in the legislature rather than the king. However, the IAF also acknowledged that without serious efforts to reform the electoral system and crack down on electoral malpractice that the will of the people in Jordan will continue to go unheeded. The IAF has also demanded the dissolution of the current legislature, elected in November 2010, and the removal of Prime Minister Rifai's government on the grounds that their electoral victory was the byproduct of government fraud. The IAF boycotted the November poll in protest over the electoral law's underrepresentation of the urban areas of Jordan where its base of support is the strongest. A small number of Islamists stood as independents in defiance of the boycott.

In an electoral contest marked by violence and a boycott by the IAF, pro-Government candidates garnered an overwhelming victory. The vast majority of seats were won either by loyalists to King Abdullah or tribal-linked rural candidates who are generally supportive of the King's policies. While international monitoring groups claimed the vote itself was credible, nonetheless, they conceded that the rural-bias of the electoral system (and the boycott of the IAF) made the results a foregone conclusion. The election followed a year of direct royal rule. King Abdullah disbanded the legislature in November 2009 on the grounds that the body was dysfunctional and unable to govern the society in an efficient manner. He delayed the convening of a new legislature until a new electoral law was drafted. The IAF claimed that the new electoral code did not significantly alter the underlying problems of popular representation in Jordan. Popular demonstrations led to the dismissal of the Rifai government and the appointment of a new government led by a former prime minister, Marouf al-Bakhit, on 9 February 2011. A 53-member National Dialogue Committee was set up on 13 March 2011 to discuss how the government could address public concerns but the IAF refused to participate. The committee tendered its recommendations to the King in August 2011; this triggered a new round of demonstrations by the opposition and led to the dismissal of the Bakhit government on 17 October 2011.