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# **Grappling with Islamism: Assessing Jordan's Evolving Approach**

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**GRAPPLING WITH ISLAMISM:  
ASSESSING JORDAN'S EVOLVING APPROACH**

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Beverley Milton-Edwards  
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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For years, decades even, analysts of Jordan have regarded the country as an “oasis of stability” in an otherwise fractious region. For this reason alone, external state actors have long viewed Jordan as pivotal to regional security calculations.

In recent years, however, Jordan has had to come to terms with neighboring states that are fragile or broken, marred by insurgency, foreign occupation, and rebellion. Such regional instability, particularly as it relates to the dynamic fortunes of Islamist groups, is recently all-too-evident in Jordan’s towns and cities. Increasing rates of terrorist attacks have given rise to concern about the security of the country.

The current instability of its neighbors makes Jordan’s lauded stability increasingly difficult to maintain. Jordan faces an increasing number of security challenges. Internally, a powerful ruling clique points to the country’s indigenous and long-standing Islamist milieu as the source of the problem. In doing so, it draws little distinction between mainstream Islamist groups that have traditionally averred from violence and terrorism, and the Salafi-jihadis who mean to do the kingdom harm. The regime perceives Islamism in all its varieties as an existential threat to a ruling order that is regularly excoriated as undemocratic and authoritarian.

Jordanian power-holders see this latest challenge and threat to their hold over the country as stemming from the mobilizing role played by Islamists leaders and groups in the Arab Spring. They largely chose to ignore that other social and political forces in Jordan participated in an outpouring of frustration at an economy in crisis and corrupt political system. In response to that wellspring of populist protest and accompanying demands for social, economic, and political reform, the Jordanian state has increasingly focused on indigenous Islamist forces as a potential fifth column seeking to overthrow the regime.

In the ensuing years, the threat of jihad and Salafi-jihadi movements in Jordan has indeed grown. Islamism in Jordan, moreover, has expanded to include those that have directly influenced and played a commanding role in the insurgent movement at home and abroad in countries like Syria. Such Islamists reflect the

powerful dynamic between al-Qaida (including its offshoots in Syria such as Jabhat al-Nusra/Jabhat Fatah al-Sham) and the Islamic State, as well as the bitter conflicts that have arisen between such elements. Jordan has had to contend with this developing and multi-faceted threat.

In meeting this threat, the ruling regime relies on its imposing General Intelligence Directorate. However, the regime's sovereign decision-making in this respect is also vulnerable in terms of Jordan's dependencies on powerful regional actors such as Saudi Arabia and international actors such as the United States. While for the most part state interests on the Salafi-jihadi threat elide, Jordan has experienced significant external pressure to apply a security dragnet approach to the whole of Islamism in the kingdom.

For Jordan, the challenge of Islamism within its own borders will continue and likely lead to more terrorist attacks at home and further entanglement in neighboring Syria. Jordan faces an uphill struggle to secure the state. Jordan's allies, including the Trump administration, need a better set of policies to help its Arab ally remain an "oasis of stability" in these challenging times. Such policies should include rethinking aid and assistance priorities that continue to favor Jordan, but which do not allow it to ignore the essential need for economic and political reforms.

# ISLAMISM: A GROWING THREAT TO JORDAN

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Islamism in Jordan continues to grow and mutate. In this context, Islamism constitutes a religio-political spectrum on which a variety of groups—including moderates and radicals—sit.<sup>1</sup> Increasingly, Jordanian security forces are not only battling terrorist attacks organized by Islamist groups outside of Jordan's borders, but also uncovering evidence of homegrown plots. Starting in the early 2000s, al-Qaida, for example, focused on targeting Jordan and growing bases of local support for the prosecution of its jihadi agenda there. This included terrorist plots and attacks on what it termed the “near enemy,” meaning the Jordanian state, as well as Western interests in the country.

Jordan's Islamist trend is historically rooted in the genesis of the state, active in its political structures, and deeply embedded in society. Since 2011, however, the state's attitude about what constitutes an Islamist threat has clearly evolved.<sup>2</sup> The state now perceives Jordanian Islamism as influencing and being influenced by the experiences of jihadi forces in Iraq and Syria, with impacts for homegrown terrorist threats. Furthermore, the fortunes of groups like the Muslim Brotherhood, particularly in Egypt where it is now designated as a terrorist threat, have had a powerful impact on the Jordanian state's actions towards its own Muslim Brotherhood organization.

It is important to understand, therefore, that although Islamism in Jordan today is multifaceted, the state increasingly portrays it as a monolithic and fundamental threat to its power and security. The Jordanian state, along with its regional and international allies, now view a variety of Jordan's Islamist groups as an ongoing security threat. The state has also identified Islamists as a threat to the socio-economic and political order it seeks to preserve. This order lacks democracy, is increasingly authoritarian, and limits the rights of its citizens. The Jordanian government presides over an openly corrupt and faulty political system. Meanwhile, Jordan's economy is weak and shored up through remittances, as well as foreign aid and assistance.

This analysis paper argues that Jordan making an enemy out of the whole of its Islamist spectrum is a fatal error for a state that needs to preserve security at home in order to play its part in regional battles abroad, particularly in Syria. It



contends that the Jordanian state needs to find ways to accommodate mainstream Islamist actors (rather than Salafi-jihadis) who are part of the fabric of society.

The very sovereignty and survival of Jordan depends on recognizing the importance of manifestations of Islam to the state's rulers and citizens, and the utilization of such manifestations in politics. Jordan and its allies need policies that counter the real threat posed by Salafi-jihadi groups. Nevertheless, such policies should include ways to allow moderate, legitimate Islamist elements to remain an active part of Jordanian society and politics. This includes finding ways to make Islamists part of a national strategic initiative to prevent and counter violent extremism (P/CVE).

This analysis paper argues that in order for Jordan to meet the security challenge of violent Islamic extremism, it must not rely on "hard" security approaches alone. To ensure its security and stability, Jordan's response must also include "soft" approaches to preventing and countering extremism and terrorism. Specifically, Jordan and its allies can work to strengthen the kingdom's resilience through the development of a security approach that makes use of Jordan's strong and inclusive social fabric, and focuses on the role communities play as well.

The paper begins by outlining the political and security challenges that Islamist groups and actors present to the state. Some of these groups, such as the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood (JMB), have a long and complex history of relations with the country's rulers. Others, such as Salafi-jihadis who have influenced and played a part in directing extreme and violent manifestations of political Islam, are a threat at home and abroad. The paper then provides the background and context in which the Islamist trend has grown and evolved before examining the responses from the Jordanian state. The paper goes on to reflect on how Jordan's security responses are proving insufficient in the face of a growing threat. It concludes by outlining how policymakers should best deal with Jordan's political and security challenges.

# THE CHALLENGE OF ISLAMISM IN JORDAN

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**M**any policymakers consider Jordan “an oasis of moderation and stability in a tumultuous region.”<sup>3</sup> Yet, since the Arab Spring broke out in 2011, that sense of stability and security has become increasingly shaky.<sup>4</sup>

A number of factors, including socio-economic, demographic, political, and regional security issues, explain this shakiness. For example, the structural weaknesses of Jordan’s economy, including high levels of unemployment, especially among young people, has security implications. Jordan’s political system has also been constrained, and the absence of meaningful reforms to the constitution have allowed the monarch an increasing monopoly on power. There is also the issue of the breakdown of the hitherto unassailable demographic divide between native Jordanians, often called East Bankers, and the more numerous Palestinian Jordanians, who are refugees and their descendants. East Bankers are considered the primary base of loyalty to the regime, which has traditionally drawn on tribal support. Meanwhile, various Islamist movements in Jordan have relied on and continue to appeal to the Palestinian Jordanian population, but this constituency is not homogenous. There are Palestinian Jordanians who are de facto royalists, especially in the business community and among the wealthier classes and Christian minority. In more recent times, however, poverty, corruption, a lack of freedom, and the symbolism of Islamism have driven some East Banker and Palestinian Jordanians to transcend their historic divides in opposition to the ruling regime.

Such factors have resulted in the rising number of instances since 2011 when the hitherto quiescent population of Jordan has become restive and rebellious.<sup>5</sup> State actors have frequently identified the presence and participation of Islamists in such unrest and protests as a common factor. Jordan’s state security forces classify Islamist groups and leaders as key players in societal mobilization against the regime. One such Islamist group is the Muslim Brotherhood (JMB).

Historically, Islamists have played a fundamental role in Jordan’s politics. The JMB’s long history in the country, for example, includes a symbiotic relationship with the state and being a key part of the “loyal opposition.”<sup>6</sup> The JMB has sought and gained power through parliamentary representation, most recently in

2016. The group had boycotted elections for nine years after the state changed electoral laws to curb opportunities for Islamists. However, in 2016, the JMB contested legislative elections in a new alliance that included Christians and independents. “Despite our reservations about [gerrymandered elections] and the pressure applied to our movement by the government since the regional events, we decided to run for the poll,” commented Murad Adayleh, spokesperson for the Islamic Action Front (IAF), the JMB-affiliated political party.<sup>7</sup> The alliance won only 15 out of the 130 parliamentary seats. Adayleh complains, however, that they are still “blocked and stopped. Up until now the regime does not allow parliament to be the gateway to any kind of reform or change in politics or government. ... Even the Cabinet doesn’t have a prominent role in shaping this country.” In a thinly veiled reference to the power of state security establishment, he remarked, “This task is in the hands of others who are not elected by the people for the people, nor who are appointed to govern or legislate.”<sup>8</sup>

As the following sections of this paper make clear, Jordan’s security establishment views the multiple groups and actors within the spectrum of Islamism as constituting a growing security threat. Jordanian security and intelligence officials and their allies abroad look at the constituent elements of Islamism in Jordan and choose to see one increasingly unitary danger. Such officials are concerned that Islamists in Jordan are conspiring to acquire weapons, cooperate with terrorist groups, and attack domestic targets.

As Jordan faces this myriad of new threats, a variety of foreign actors has provided assistance to its security sector. Increasingly, this support has led to deeper and stronger security-based relations with global players such as the United States.<sup>9</sup> Some of this support also comes from regional states, including Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Egypt, with whom Jordan has long-standing if fractious relationships.<sup>10</sup>

In the wake of the Arab Spring, Islamists like Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood initially rose to power. It soon became apparent that there had also been a reconfiguration of jihadi elements across the region.<sup>11</sup> These developments alerted Jordan’s Hashemite monarchy to new challenges, as the kingdom contended with homegrown manifestations of both trends.

King Abdullah II of Jordan and his palace aides responded by recalculating his political and socio-economic reform agendas. He also ordered his security apparatus to recalibrate for regime resilience against the tide of social and political protests that had broken out in the country.<sup>12</sup> The protests were considered unprecedented in some ways because they involved not only elements of Jordan’s Islamist spectrum, but also other social groups, classes, and sectors of society that

are usually loyal to the monarchy, such as tribal leaders and military veterans. In addition to calls for reform, protesting of corruption, and demands for more rights, there was also outright criticism of the monarchy.

Events in countries that border Jordan have contributed further to the rise of national security concerns in the kingdom. The outbreak of the war in Syria exacerbated the concerns of policymakers in Jordan. It destabilized Jordan's borders and led to a major flow of Syrian refugees into the kingdom. The conflict has not only created the fear that Islamist terrorists would infiltrate the country but also that it would encourage homegrown extremism and terrorism. The collapse of state authority in Sunni territories in neighboring Iraq and the ascendance of the Islamic State also threatened Jordan. Indeed, the manifestation of violent jihadism and the attempt by radical Islamist groups such as al-Qaida and ISIS to challenge Jordan's borders from Iraq and Syria has given rise to alarm among the ruling elite.<sup>13</sup>

This alarm has led to a number of government policies that have increasingly presented Islamists as an existential threat to the state and definitions of Jordanian national identity and character. These policies included security crackdowns as well as legislative and judicial approaches that increasingly criminalize Islamist expression. Such presentations upend the intrinsic place of Islamism in Jordanian society and deliberately ignore the deeply rooted nature of the Islamist trend in supporting the Jordanian state project.

Many Islamists, especially the JMB as part of the political opposition, have often worked in tandem with the regime, particularly during the reign of King Hussein. Hence, particular norms and assessments were developed in terms of regime-opposition understandings and the protection of the state project from threats. The present approach by the government is ultimately self-defeating, as it seems to violate these norms, not just to the detriment of groups like the JMB, but also to the regime itself.

# GAME CHANGER: JORDAN'S ISLAMISTS AND THE ARAB SPRING

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The Arab Spring was a momentous event in the Middle East. Unprecedented people power was apparent, leading to winds of change across the region. In Jordan, the moment of popular mobilization manifested in a swath of protests that broke out across the country. The underlying causes lay in high rates of youth unemployment, corruption, and the socio-economic and political marginalization of Jordan's mostly young population. Opinion polls consistently found that issues like poverty and corruption were among Jordanians' main issues of concern or dissatisfaction with their governing regime.<sup>14</sup> King Abdullah II and his government responded with a promise to institute reforms, but these were slow in materializing.

The Arab Spring, and the resulting political turmoil within Jordan and neighboring states, also led to the kingdom's emergent reordering of alliances and strategic relationships that left it deeply embroiled in regional politics. This was unprecedented, particularly as it relates to the challenge of political Islam, but for Jordan's ruler, the ascendance of Islamist parties elsewhere in the region had deeply concerning symbolism for his own claims to power and legitimacy.

One other dimension of the Arab Spring in Jordan was the regime-inspired fear that Islamists would use the unrest as an opportunity to mount a serious challenge to the king's dominance. This was a convenient trope to mask the regime's unwillingness or inability to tackle seriously the real socio-economic and political grievances of the majority of Jordan's population. Independent journalists allege that state media report of protests as being Islamist-inspired "to cover the fact that such demonstrations are actually directed at regime policies."<sup>15</sup>

One major JMB figure reported, however, that overturning the government was never the intention of the group's leadership. The senior leadership of the JMB endorsed support for a reform agenda, rather than revolution. In a secret poll among 120 of them, JMB leaders voted overwhelmingly for a call for reform of the government. Only five voted for a call to dismiss it.<sup>16</sup> The JMB was at the forefront of calls for reform and in marshalling the community to protest, but it was alongside an array of other diverse social forces.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, the JMB attempted to organize its supporters under the symbols of the Jordanian nation and state.

The JMB attended and organized rallies calling for constitutional reforms to curb the powers of the king, including his rights to dismiss parliament and to appoint the prime minister and the Upper House of Representatives.<sup>18</sup>

As the Arab Spring progressed and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt rose and was toppled from power, an influential constellation of regional forces began to pressure Jordan's monarch to curb the JMB. Allies such as Egypt under President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates encouraged the Jordanian state to pursue an internal squeeze against the JMB.<sup>19</sup> As a result, by early 2015, state security responses—alongside growing divisions within the organization—had succeeded in weakening the JMB to the point of breakup.

The state actively intervened by encouraging a rival movement to the JMB. Specifically, the government encouraged the Muslim Brotherhood Society (MBS)—led by former JMB Comptroller-General Abdel Majid Thunaibat—to emerge as a moderate pro-regime force. As Thunaibat acknowledges, it was a political case of push or be pushed: “We knew it was only a matter of time before a clampdown on us because the JMB had received some signals from the regime in this regard. Pressure was building; we saw this from the Jordanian authorities in the number of arrests of the JMB members, [and] the general tightening up on us.”<sup>20</sup> The state allowed the MBS to be registered and thereby effectively replace the JMB in March 2015.

The MBS can certainly be considered more amenable to state-inspired definitions of national interest.<sup>21</sup> As Thunaibat declared, “We are licensed and legal [by the state] and we are now a part of the political system and social system in the country. And we have a considerable number of approvals. ... What do you think? Isn't it better to be under the law in your country than not? Any other party is outlawed if they do not subjugate themselves. ... We only oppose the government on certain policies but we agree if there are policies. There is no such thing as absolute opposition for us in Jordan as a political group or party (sic).”<sup>22</sup>

Meanwhile, matters had worsened for the JMB. The state prosecuted and jailed one of its most important leaders, Zaki Bani Ersheid, in February 2015. It also heavily circumscribed and effectively prohibited links between the JMB and the Palestinian Hamas movement. In April 2016, state forces closed the JMB's headquarters and regional offices because it was no longer considered a legal entity.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, the state seized JMB assets, estimated to be in the tens of millions of Jordanian dinars, pledging to divert them to the MBS.<sup>24</sup>

Nevertheless, as some former JMB members claim, the JMB was also partly to blame. They argue that the Arab Spring exposed intergenerational fractures in

the movement, undue bias towards Hamas, and a failure to issue messages that resonated with national Jordanian sentiment. The former members concluded, for example, that it had been a mistake for the JMB to boycott government-inspired national charter processes. They also claimed that in the wake of the Arab Spring the JMB failed to engage in the necessary internal reform processes that would have helped the movement endure.<sup>25</sup>

## THREAT OF JIHAD

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In contrast to the JMB, prior to the Arab Spring, Jordan's jihadis were relatively small in number and somewhat diffuse. However, their leaders—including ideologues such as Abu Mohammed al-Maqdisi (Essam Muhammed Tahir al-Barqawi), Abu Sayyaf (Mohammed al-Shalabi), Saad al-Hunaiti, and Abu Qatada (Omar Othman)—were influential. Even when imprisoned, they would animate the debate both in the local Jordanian arena as well as in Syria, where a popular uprising had spiraled into a vicious civil war that was rapidly drawing in outside forces.<sup>26</sup> The Salafi-jihadis soon exploited the popular mobilization that characterized the Arab uprisings. Abu Qatada, for example, contends that society-wide “mobilization” was explicable because of the ways in which people were “affected by the policies of such regimes.” This was a mobilization, he claims, with which the “whole jihadi world and cause” have engaged.<sup>27</sup>

The extent to which jihadis in Jordan then adjusted to the unfolding shifts within the region has become somewhat of an open-ended development that is not subject to a simple conclusion. What is apparent is that Jordanian state authorities believe that Jordanian jihadis have played a contentious and enduring part in the security challenges that the state has been facing, both internally and externally.

Nonetheless, the Jordanian state saw the Islamist threat as manageable until the events of the summer of 2014, when ISIS took control of large portions of neighboring Syria and Iraq. This was the point at which the government's perceptions of an external and homegrown Islamist axis led to a reappraisal and a strategic security decision to opt for increasingly repressive counterterrorism approaches. The limits of this approach were revealed in 2015–16 by a number of security incidents, allegedly perpetrated by ISIS and other elements, and apparent intelligence failings both within the kingdom and at its borders.<sup>28</sup>

Jordan and its allies now viewed its Islamists as either a fundamental part of violent extremist threats or as vulnerable to being radicalized by the influence of other regional actors. The state's crackdowns, arrests, detentions, and high rates of security court prosecutions attest to this.<sup>29</sup> The state also began to see Islamists as a worrying challenge in terms of their influence in Syria, Iraq, Palestine, and



further afield.<sup>30</sup> With respect to such regional theaters, this was nothing new. Jordan's Salafi-jihadi leaders have long affected, shaped, and influenced other jihadi causes and vice versa.<sup>31</sup> It was no surprise, then, that the jihadi current in Syria would fall under their purview.

At the same time, there have been rare occasions when some jihadi elements have, perhaps confusingly, tolerated or even allied with particular state security objectives and agendas. For example, when ISIS captured Jordanian pilot Moath al-Kasasbeh, the state used leading Jordanian jihadis such as al-Maqdisi and Abu Qatada to play a fundamental role in the negotiations to gain his freedom.<sup>32</sup> In return, the state released leaders like al-Maqdisi from prison, and appeared to permit their activities. Their negotiations with ISIS, however, not only failed but also led to a significant rise in hostility within jihadi circles.

There also emerged within jihadi circles an internal debate about the Arab Spring, the Jordanian state, and the unfolding situation in Syria with its wider implications for the Salafi-jihadi universe. At home in Jordan, young people, some of whom in the past had been supporters of the moderate JMB, now identified with the jihad in Syria.<sup>33</sup> One explanation for this may have been that inside the kingdom, the state was increasingly curbing the space for Islamic activism, even of the mildest variety. Other explanations focus on youth marginalization and alienation from the Jordanian state.

## JORDANIAN JIHADIS IN SYRIA

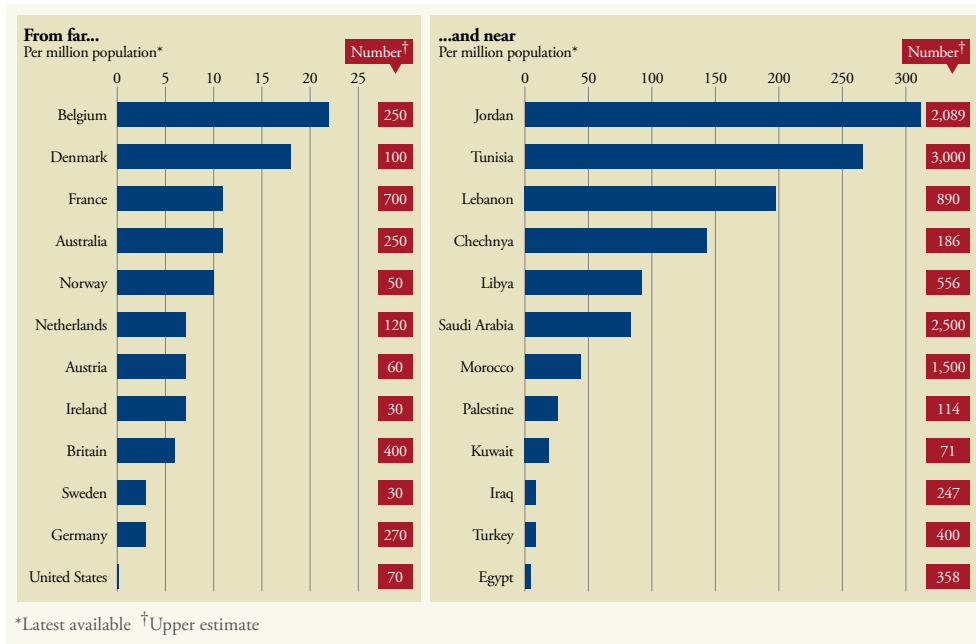
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Beyond the kingdom's borders, Jordanian Salafi-jihadis have emerged to play a major role in the Syrian conflict.<sup>34</sup> As asserted above, in one sense they are perpetuating the legacy of Jordanian jihadis in such arenas. However, the new generation of Jordanian jihadis has also had an impact on how the Jordanian state manages the security threat at home.

The flow of Jordanian jihadis to Syria commenced soon after the violence there began. From 2011, Jordanian jihadis joined a variety of anti-Assad rebel and jihadi groups. By mid-2012, news reports and state charge sheets indicated the extent to which young people with a “jihadi cause” and well-established leaders of the jihadi trend had taken up the fight, or rallied others to do so.<sup>35</sup> Jordanian Salafi-jihadis including al-Maqdisi, Abu Qatada, and Sami al-Aridi were providing leadership, inspiration, and impulse to their followers and acolytes in support of the Syrian opposition. In part, this accounts for the numbers which then left Jordan to join Islamist rebel groups like Jabhat al-Nusra, Jaysh al-Islam, Ahrar al-Sham, and ISIS. In 2013, Arabic press reports highlighted Jordanian jihadis' routes across the Jordan-Syria border, their joining of such groups, and their illegal weapons purchases.<sup>36</sup> The Syrian jihadi current's allure and sectarian rallying effect in Jordan was epitomized by the mourning tent and eulogy offered for Al-Harith Abu Irhayyim in the Jordanian city of Zarqa after he died while fighting for Jabhat al-Nusra.<sup>37</sup>

Various estimates have put the number of Jordanians that have gone to fight in Syria at between 1,000 and 4,000.<sup>38</sup> As a percentage of population, that is the highest rate of foreign fighters coming from any country in the world (see Figure I). This flow of Jordanians has provided foot soldiers for a variety of Islamist rebel groups. More significantly, many Jordanians have risen into positions of leadership and command, most notably within al-Qaida's affiliate in Syria, Jabhat al-Nusra (which rebranded as Jabhat Fatah al-Sham in 2016 and now heads the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham alliance).

**FIGURE 1: FOREIGN FIGHTERS IN SYRIA**



Source: “It Ain’t Half Hot Here, Mum,” *Economist*, September 1, 2014, <https://www.economist.com/news/middle-east-and-africa/21614226-why-and-how-westerners-go-fight-syria-and-iraq-it-aint-half-hot-here-mum>.

### JABHAT AL-NUSRA AND THE JORDANIAN FACTOR

Jihadis from Jordan have played an important role in Jabhat al-Nusra (JN), both in terms of strategy and operations. Although led by a Syrian—Abu Mohammed al-Joulani—Jordanian jihadis such as Mustafa Saleh Abdel Latif (Abu Anas al-Sahaba) and Iyad al-Toubasi (Abu Julaibib) were also among the founders of JN. They led and commanded JN, especially in Syria’s southern regions where it borders Jordan, including in towns like Daraa.<sup>39</sup> For the most part, the Jordanian current within, and support for, JN was a result of residual ideological belief and attachment to al-Qaida, symbolized by leaders such as al-Maqdisi and, following his return to Jordan in 2013, Abu Qatada.

By 2012–13, JN was effectively spiritually inspired by Jordanians such as Sami al-Aridi and commanded by leaders such as Abu Al-Miqdad al-Urdani, Abu Samir al-Urdani, and Abu Shamaa al-Urdani (Urdani is Arabic for Jordanian).<sup>40</sup> Anjarini contends that for all intents and purposes, JN was Jordanian-controlled with Joulani being a symbolic Syrian leader.<sup>41</sup> Jordan’s leading jihadis and al-Qaida had preserved the links between them. Additionally, such figures contributed to the evolving split and conflict between JN and ISIS.<sup>42</sup>

## ISIS AND JORDAN

The evolution of Salafi-jihadism in Syria, including its increasingly factional and fractious dynamic, has affected Jordan and the security challenges it faces. That ISIS was not content to allow JN to flex its muscles alone in the Syrian arena led to an increasingly hostile relationship between the two elements (and other jihadi forces in Syria) by 2014–15.<sup>43</sup> This ideological and battlefield rivalry has had a significant impact on Jordan's Salafi-jihadi movement, drawing its leaders and ideologues, including al-Maqdisi and Abu Qatada, as well as Saad al-Hunaiti, Jaafar al-Shami, and Abu Sayyaf, into dispute and conflict.<sup>44</sup> Abu Qatada has acknowledged this, stating that these tensions also affected the formation of alliances among jihadis locally, regionally, and globally. In late 2016, Abu Qatada stated that the jihadi movement was witnessing an "internal revolution taking place among the Islamic opposition that includes an important recalibration, regrouping, and realignment."<sup>45</sup>

Disputes have centered on claims of authority within the jihadi movement. In 2014, ISIS leader and self-declared Caliph Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi controversially demanded that supporters of the jihadi trend in Syria offer bay'a, or allegiance, to him. Previously, bay'a had been extended to al-Qaida and its leadership. Those within the Jordanian Salafi-jihadi trend such as al-Maqdisi and Abu Qatada pushed back and argued against Baghdadi's claims of legitimacy. In turn, this drew out dispute and conflict among other Salafi-jihadi elements in Jordan, as well as among Jordanians within Islamist rebel groups and elements in Syria.

On the Syrian battlefield, the disputes between the leadership of ISIS, the Jordanian Salafi-jihadis, and JN were starkly apparent. For example, in the latter part of 2014, on the Syrian front and back home in Jordan, there were a series of defections of JN fighters and figures to ISIS, including leaders such as Saad al-Hunaiti, who later served as a judge in Raqqa but was subsequently executed by ISIS on charges of collaboration.<sup>46</sup> In Jordanian towns considered to be repositories of support for JN, public displays of support for ISIS became increasingly apparent in the summer of 2014, with some evidence that public security forces were at least aware of such backing.<sup>47</sup>

Such defections then slowed and by 2015, there were reports of Jordanian elements defecting from ISIS back to JN as well as other jihadi factions in Syria. There were also armed clashes between the two groups on the ground in Syria, much of which was an outworking of the vociferous and increasingly hostile war of words taking place in the ideological sphere between the elements of ISIS, JN, and the Jordanian Salafi-jihadi leadership. In the spring of 2015 and 2016, for example, JN joined other rebel forces to oust ISIS from positions in Qalamoun,

north of Damascus, and areas in Syria's Daraa governorate, including Busra al-Sham, close to the Jordanian border.<sup>48</sup> Attempts to communicate, mediate, and reach agreements between the Jordanian jihadi-Salafis, led by al-Maqqdisi and Abu Qatada, and JN and ISIS have failed to hold or have ended in further embittered and hostile relations between the elements. Abu Qatada, for example, referring to ISIS as "Daesh," calls it "an arrow to the Muslim people which has wounded them."<sup>49</sup>

More broadly, al-Qaida has rejected Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's claims to authority and some of ISIS's stances and tactics. As the war in Syria has drawn Jordan in, this positioning, in part, led to the creation of common ground between Jordanian jihadis and the government. This was tellingly apparent in February 2015, following ISIS's immolation of captured Jordanian pilot Moath al-Kasasbeh.<sup>50</sup>

In the wake of al-Kasasbeh's murder and the resulting widespread public revulsion, it emerged that Jordan's jihadi leaders had not only attempted to negotiate the release of Kasasbeh and other hostages, but that they also joined the government and other religious leaders in statements of outright condemnation. In response, ISIS not only reiterated its rejection of the Jordanian state as apostate, but also kept the country in its target sights. Furthermore, it nurtured and disseminated a sustained discourse that singled out individual Jordanian Salafi-jihadi leaders such as al-Maqqdisi, Abu Qatada, and Abu Sayyaf in vitriolic attacks. ISIS censured such leaders as idolatrous, or taghut, and called Abu Sayyaf an outright "liar."<sup>51</sup> Additionally, the Jordanian jihadi trend experienced strains and stresses in Syria as elements of JN defected to ISIS and turned against their former colleagues. The defections included high-profile Jordanians such as Abu Samir al-Urdani (who some jihadis claim is the aforementioned Mustafa Saleh Abdel Latif /Abu Anas al Sahaba), who had been JN's "emir" of Syria's Daraa region.<sup>52</sup>

More recently, jihadi leaders like Abu Qatada refuse to discuss the past disputes with ISIS and instead argue, "Their time has come. They are weak and their ideas are bankrupt. They have gone (sic). Militarily they are in a hard place and have been weakened. And their ideas, their ideology, for sure they are finished. Their ideology is superficial. They were all on the surface and there was nothing deep about them. They did not come from a place of knowledge, deep understanding, or explanation."<sup>53</sup> As the next section demonstrates, the import of these developments for Jordan's national security agenda is significant.

## THE STATE STRIKES BACK: SECURITY RESPONSES

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“The danger is that after ISIS is fought out of Mosul, they will turn to al-Raqqah and Deir Ezzor, and from there, to the Jordanian border. ... The only hope [of the IS fighters] will be to turn toward the Jordanian border. ... This poses a danger to the Jordanian border, but Allah be praised, we are completely prepared to face this anticipated threat.”

—Lt. Gen. Mahmoud Freihat, Chairman of the  
Joint Chiefs-of-Staff, Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan<sup>54</sup>

**T**he prominence of jihadi groups in the Syrian conflict, and Jordanians’ extensive participation in them, has posed new security challenges to the kingdom. In 2016, one analyst described the migration of Jordanian jihadis to join such groups as “a generational plague to peace and stability, whether they stay in Syria or return home.”<sup>55</sup> Some contend, moreover, that this generation of jihadis is different from their predecessors. This new generation does not profess belief in a global jihad. Instead, as one jihadi leader claimed, “Their commitment in Syria delineates their goals as local, not global.”<sup>56</sup> This local focus raises concerns about Jordan’s security. Some government figures have reasoned that if Jordanian jihadis are fighting to topple the Assad regime in Syria, they would also target the regime in Jordan.

Furthermore, the Jordanian state has its own engagements in the Syrian arena, particularly on the kingdom’s northern and eastern borders.<sup>57</sup> Jordan’s intelligence networks, establishment of command and control rooms, and support for rebels have directly inserted it into southern Syria. At and around these borders is where Jordan’s role in the Syrian conflict is most acute.<sup>58</sup>

In determining and combatting security threats, the Jordanian state has developed a variety of tools. Jordan possesses a robust internal security architecture and the king generally controls the levers of power in its institutions. Indeed, King Abdullah II has relied heavily on the following key institutions to ensure Jordan’s security: the intelligence services (or mukhabarat, primarily the GID), the national police (known as the Public Security Directorate), state security courts, and the armed forces.

Jordan's regime has used these institutions to put Islamism under unprecedented pressure. The state has increasingly identified Jordan's Islamists as forms of a threat and deployed significant resources against them. New legislation, including penal law reforms of 2005, the 2006 anti-terrorism law, and the amendments made to that law in 2014, has broadened the actions the state interprets as hostile to it, including those under the Islamist banner.<sup>59</sup> The state has used these and other legislative amendments to inhibit the freedoms of its citizens, including those involved in the country's Islamist movements.<sup>60</sup> This is evident not only in the extent to which the state regularly scrutinizes such elements, but also in terms of counterterrorism raids, arrests, detentions without trial, and increased prosecution rates in Jordanian security courts against people associated with or accused of involvement in the movements.<sup>61</sup>

The state has also employed control measures to repress and contain opposition elements and others within the country.<sup>62</sup> Today, journalists, activists, civil society actors, and former government officials opine that the country has become a "police state" where a "climate of fear" prevails. Jordan has become a highly restrictive environment with critics of the regime being surveilled, harassed, charged in security courts, and imprisoned by the state. An activist remarked that "while it is true that there is peace in Jordan, there is no freedom."<sup>63</sup>

#### STATE OF INTELLIGENCE?

Since the Arab Spring, the Jordanian state views Islamists from across the spectrum as an existential threat. Ever strengthening security cooperation agreements with states like the U.S. also color these views. As a result, the types of responses mentioned above enjoy primacy. This approach also privileges certain actors and institutions within the state, and has important consequences for rule of law, accountability, and forms of democratic civil control.

The most powerful institutional actor in determining Jordan's position on Islamism is the General Intelligence Directorate.<sup>64</sup> The GID defines and drives the kingdom's counterterrorism and P/CVE agendas over and above civil and other institutional actors. Dominant figures in the organization have shaped the state's stance that Islamists represent a growing national security threat.<sup>65</sup> For example, the GID was central to the state increasingly identifying the JMB as a hostile internal force, and spearheaded the aforementioned efforts to dismantle the group.

Jordan's security partners tend to view the GID favorably. In Washington, there is acknowledgement that "outside of Israel, Jordan's intelligence service is widely seen as the most competent and the closest to U.S. intelligence organizations.

Many of its senior staff members were trained by the CIA.”<sup>66</sup> But senior and former government officials both inside and outside of Jordan have issued a note of caution. They have been concerned that in the wake of the Arab Spring and amid the rising so-called Islamist threat, the balance of power between the king and the head of the GID has not always tilted toward the monarch. “It’s a classic case of the tail wagging the dog,” asserted one former Western intelligence official.<sup>67</sup> While King Abdullah II has worked to reclaim authority, another former Jordanian government official argued, “The king is not always in charge of the GID. There have been occasions when power has swung decisively away from him; and this has been the outworking of the dominance of the agenda of other intelligence actors and states.”<sup>68</sup>

The price levied for this level of dominance, and close intelligence and security cooperation with the United States, is significant in terms of fundamental issues of accountability, protection of human rights, transparency, rule of law, and the perpetuation of a culture of impunity in Jordan. Jordan has struggled to improve its record on human rights chiefly because of the persistence of allegations against security agencies like the GID. Accountability for abuses, for example, remains woefully inadequate.<sup>69</sup> Despite the announcement of a constitutional amendment expanding prohibitions on unlawful detention and the abuse of detainees in September 2011, human rights organizations and foreign governments such as that of the United States report that accountability mechanisms continue to fail.<sup>70</sup> As a result, the GID can act with impunity.

Another key institution, the State Security Court, is structurally dependent on the GID by virtue of its prosecutors and the investigators that provide the evidence upon which it adjudicates. The international community has repeatedly censured the court.<sup>71</sup> It not only remains, but also continues to try civilians for matters far beyond its security remit.<sup>72</sup>

However, the broader problem is the extent of the GID’s reach in Jordan and the challenges that the Palace faces in reining that power in. Take as a simple example what occurred following demonstrations on March 24, 2011. After the demonstrators expressly called, in public, for action in relation to the overreach of the regime’s security apparatus, King Abdullah II announced a constitutional review.<sup>73</sup> Yet the regime has taken no formal action to render any of Jordan’s security or intelligence agencies more accountable or to scale back their capacity to control what goes on in the country. Instead, Jordan continues to avoid dealing with matters such as torture, despite incorporating the U.N. Convention Against Torture directly into domestic law in 2006.<sup>74</sup> It is a basic tenant of international human rights protection that the prohibition of torture



in its own right is insufficient without concomitant monitoring and investigative obligations. Jordan has yet to embrace such obligations, or prosecute any member of the GID for torture.

The GID's outsized role also narrows the space for other contributions to the management of Jordan's security challenges. Even powerful foreign donors involved in security cooperation acknowledge that they are constrained because of "GID dominance" of approaches to managing, countering, and preventing terrorism or other manifestations of extremism in the kingdom.<sup>75</sup>

Indeed, allowing the GID to set the tone in changing the kingdom's strategy from the co-optation of Islamist elements to attempting to degrade and destroy them has led to a significant extension of its reach within Jordan, at Jordan's borders, in intelligence cooperation efforts, and in involving Jordan in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, for example, the GID's role in counter-insurgency efforts against ISIS in Darra province has long been the subject of jihadi propaganda and blogs. There is also a regional calculus in play on such matters. For at least a decade, Jordanian and other Arab security forces have engaged in cooperative activities. The United States and other Western partners have supported such efforts.<sup>76</sup> As one Islamist leader stated, "There are moderates in the region who seek to work within the system for its reform, for party politics and against the extremism of the takfirist and jihadi agendas, but the GID and other regional intelligence agencies have decided we are one and the same thing. We are not."<sup>77</sup>

## DEPENDENCIES

Because of Jordan's dependence on outside powers, particular external actors can influence and even shape its security agenda.<sup>78</sup> This has led to more complex forms of reliance, apparent in securitizing discourses within Jordan as it pertains to local Islamist currents. Concerns over Salafi-jihadi groups in Syria and Iraq, the Saudi-led security axis's preoccupation with the "Shia Crescent," and even the ongoing rift within the GCC, have compounded, exacerbating latent threats for Jordan. For example, sectarian discourses have emerged in an unprecedented fashion in Jordan, and some critics have accused the government of allowing them. Parallel to this security dependence, Jordan's economic dependence severely circumscribes its decision-making and role in such new coalitions.<sup>79</sup>

U.S.-Jordanian interdependencies have subsumed Jordan's historically dependent security relationship with Britain. One result of U.S. positioning in the region and its counterterrorism approach of building the capacity of local elements has been a deeper reliance on Jordan. This is evident in increased levels of American aid, topping out at a promise in 2015 of \$1 billion, with monies designated for

core military and security assistance.<sup>80</sup> It was notable that the first Arab leader received in Washington by President Donald Trump was King Abdullah II in February 2017.

For Jordan, U.S. patronage is something of a double-edged sword, as it draws the kingdom deeper into neighboring states' conflicts. These conflicts are not of Jordan's own making, but it has been in the United States' interest to have Jordan engaged in them. To this end, Jordan has served as a laboratory for U.S. security assistance and training models for armed state and non-state actors from neighboring countries, including Iraq and Syria.<sup>81</sup> The American presence in Jordan has not gone unnoticed, and increasingly, terror attacks have targeted U.S. security personnel and facilities. This has contributed to rising fears of homegrown terror and blowback.

The success and failure of such cooperative efforts have serious consequences for Jordanian sovereignty and national security.<sup>82</sup> Despite the many uncertainties of President Trump's approach to the Middle East, Jordan and the United States' security relationship appears solid.<sup>83</sup> Most of the Jordanian political and security establishment is unruffled by the Trump presidency. They believe in a "business as usual" approach with the Trump administration. This is also sustained by King Abdullah II's personal appeal to a figure like Donald Trump, and further bolstered by his strong relationship with the U.S. Congress. This will go a long way to ensure that there will be little change in levels of support for the security project in Jordan and its role as "America's number one Arab intelligence agency."<sup>84</sup>

Nonetheless, there are potential complications on the horizon. For instance, some in the Jordanian establishment have qualms that if President Trump allows Israel to take the two-state solution off the agenda, it may create "unprecedented and untenable pressure on Jordan to become the second state for Palestinians."<sup>85</sup> There were also the effects of President Trump's decision to announce a move of the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. King Abdullah II cautioned that doing so "will have a negative impact on the region's security and stability," citing Jerusalem's key importance for Arab and Muslim peoples. Such a move, according to the king, "will feed into the anger and despair among Arabs and Muslims, enabling extremists to further spread their dark ideologies and agendas."<sup>86</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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Jordan's security responses to the challenges of Islamism should present policymakers, especially those in Jordan, the United States, and the European Union, with concern. Jordan has increasingly struggled to preserve its security and inure itself against the threat posed by homegrown extremists. Additionally, the regime's policies at home, combined with its positioning regionally, have led to its own citizens and intelligence and security forces being pulled into a quagmire in Syria's southern territories, as well as in Iraq.

Jordan's vulnerabilities have only been partially ameliorated by its present security approach to Islamism. In addition, the relationships and dependencies that have fostered it down the current path are at best a mixed blessing. Incidents of terrorist violence are growing, not declining. The terrorists are increasingly homegrown and targeting Jordan, as well as its allies such as the United States. The following measures should be borne in mind with respect to Jordan's evolving policies to meet the Islamist challenge.

Might is not right: Firstly, the Islamist threat in Jordan cannot be defeated through hard security approaches alone. The current reliance on the security-first approach, while failing to enact serious socio-economic, political, and rights-based reforms, is not working. The Jordanian state remains resilient—compared to its neighbors to the east and north—but it also remains deeply vulnerable to extremism and the key socio-economic and political drivers that radicalize citizens and attract them to violent discourses of Islamism.

Reform: King Abdullah II and his government must devote greater resources and effort to a substantive socio-economic and political reform process. A truly representative legislature and government must emerge. Jordan's current political structures, for example, dispossess its citizens, severely straining the social compact. Furthermore, the absence of a functioning democracy undermines the rule of law and provides little transparency.<sup>87</sup> This in turn encourages apathy, alienation, and marginalization, and diminishes feelings of ownership in the national project, particularly among the country's youth.

National strategy for preventing violent extremism: Jordan's government has worked with the U.N. Development Programme to advance a long-awaited national strategy to prevent violent extremism. Jordan's allies should welcome and support such an effort, particularly if it reflects a holistic approach. The concern, voiced by some European security actors, is that the strategy formation process did not consult with Islamist or moderate reformist representatives and is unlikely to incorporate their views on PVE. Jordan needs to enhance its anti-extremism approaches by avoiding reductive binaries of simply Islamist versus non-Islamist in determining a consensus approach to such strategies. External stakeholders should actively encourage Jordanian policymakers to include civil society actors such as Islamic organizations, faith leaders, and others in consultation and programs for P/CVE, rather than ignoring them entirely or soliciting last-minute, lip-service contributions. Perpetuation of the false and damaging Islamist/non-Islamist binary has strong policy implications for the P/CVE agenda. It is time to avoid lumping all Jordan's Islamists together and portraying them as being against everyone else, including the governing powers.

Healthy dependence: As Jordan's government and ruler attempt to meet the challenges of political Islam, they reflect and struggle with the weakening effects of their dependence on external actors and their agendas. Mostly, King Abdullah II attempts to project an image that aligns with the determination of regional and international coalitions to totally defeat, rather than accommodate, the Islamist challenge. This is easier for Jordan to undertake as an external Western- and regional-facing projection than a local one. Jordan, however, is not Egypt, Saudi Arabia, or the UAE, where the Muslim Brotherhood is illegal and labeled as a terrorist entity. Jordan's allies must allow the state to calibrate its own assessment of and response to the security threats it faces and avoid affecting this process by exploiting their deeply dependent security and aid relationships.

Security and respect: Jordan's allies in the West must persuade it that building and achieving security has to be done through respect for—rather than abuse of—human rights norms and the rule of law. Furthermore, the West has to make its aid and assistance to Jordan conditional on a demand that the state end the culture of impunity that pervades its security institutions. It is entirely possible for Jordan to execute effective and robust security and intelligence agendas without the embarrassment of a poor human rights record.

All cats look gray in the dark: The Jordanian state and its allies do not have limitless resources to fight terrorism. This means that counterterrorism efforts must be smart and efficient. While in the short term, it may be expedient to assume the majority of Jordan's Islamists constitute a threat, it will prove costly in the end.

It is also unlikely to diminish the threat from terrorists. In the past, Jordan's rulers were able to draw intelligence-informed and politically astute distinctions between the constituent elements of the country's Islamist movements. Rather than stretching the intelligence community even further, the state should allocate resources to the development of calibrated approaches to Islamism and an array of measures which are not solely dependent on hard-security approaches. This means investing in security cooperation that relies on an assumption that Islamism is part of the fabric of Jordanian society and politics. The answer to this issue lies in government-supported approaches that start with community resilience and work up from there.

Threat of blowback: Ever since a variety of actors began targeting ISIS-held territories in Iraq and Syria militarily in 2015, there has been a growing fear in Jordan of blowback. Jordan must contend with the prospect that blowback is a consequence of policies at home as well as its role in the region, including its peace partnership with Israel, its part in the international alliance against ISIS, and its role in Syria. ISIS calls for, and encourages, attacks on and in Jordan. As this paper has demonstrated, this has already sparked a rise in terrorist attacks that the Jordanian state has failed to prevent.

Finally, Jordan's American and European allies must support and protect the kingdom's sovereignty from a variety of national and regional Islamist threats, but not at the expense of policies and approaches which recognize the rooted nature of Islamism in the country. Islamism retains enduring populist appeal and strengthens the legitimacy of Hashemite claims to power. It is time for the international community to recognize the differences within Jordan's ever growing and diverse Islamist scene, to acknowledge valid criticism of government policy, and to encourage Islamist alignment with other social forces for reform and change. The very sovereignty and survival of the Jordanian state still depends on finding ways to accommodate political Islam.

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Beverley Milton-Edwards, *Islamic Fundamentalism since 1945* (London: Routledge, 2013).

<sup>2</sup> This process of defining and redefining an Islamist threat tends to reduce Islamism to being primarily a radical phenomenon of seeking to impose change on politics and society, including through violent means.

<sup>3</sup> “Jordan Country Development Cooperation Strategy,” U.S. Agency for International Development, amended March 2015, <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1883/Amended-Jordan-Country-Development-Strategy-March-2015.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Shadi Hamid and Courtney Freer, “How Stable Is Jordan? King Abdullah’s Half-hearted Reforms and the Challenge of the Arab Spring,” Brookings Doha Center, Policy Briefing, November 2011, <https://www.brookings.edu/research/how-stable-is-jordan-king-abdullahs-half-hearted-reforms-and-the-challenge-of-the-arab-spring/>.

<sup>5</sup> “Jordan Forever on the Brink,” Project on Middle East Political Science, POMEPS Briefing 11, May 2012, <https://pomeps.org/2012/05/09/arab-uprisings-jordan-forever-on-the-brink/>.

<sup>6</sup> Beverley Milton-Edwards, *The Muslim Brotherhood: The Arab Spring and its Future Face* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016); Marion Boulby, *The Muslim Brotherhood and the Kings of Jordan, 1945–1993* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), 54–55; Mohammed Abu Rumman, Hassan Abu Hanieh, and Banan Malkawi, *The “Islamic Solution” in Jordan: Islamists, the State, and the Ventures of Democracy and Security* (Amman: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2013), 13; Ma’an Abu Nowar, *The History of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan*, vol. 1, *The Creation and Development of Transjordan: 1920–29* (Oxford: Ithaca Press, 1989), 207.

<sup>7</sup> Murad Adayleh (IAF spokesman), interview with the author, Amman, Jordan, 7 December 2016.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> U.S. assistance was to increase from \$660 million to \$1 billion per year. See U.S. Department of State, “The United States and Jordan Sign a Memorandum of Understanding on U.S. Assistance,” press release, February 3, 2015, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2015/02/237128.htm>. For broader context, see William M. Arkin, “Keeping Secrets in Jordan,” *Washington Post*, November 16, 2005; Scott B. Lasensky, “Coming to Terms with Jordan’s Embrace of Post-Saddam Iraq,” in *Iraq, its Neighbors, and the United States*, eds. Henri J. Barkey, Scott B. Lasensky, and Phebe Marr (Washington: United States Institute of Peace, 2011).

<sup>10</sup> Neil Patrick, *Saudi Arabia and Jordan: Friends in Adversity* (London: London School of Economics, 2013); Samuel Helfont and Tally Helfont, “Jordan: Between the Arab Spring and the Gulf Cooperation Council,” *Orbis* 56, no. 1 (2012): 82–95; Mehran Kamrava, “The Arab Spring and the Saudi-led Counterrevolution,” *Orbis* 56, no.1 (2012): 96–104; Suleiman al-Khalidi, “Arab Dynasties Lure Jordan, Morocco into Anti-Iran Bloc,” Reuters, May 13, 2011, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/05/13/gulf-alliance-idAFLDE74A0HM20110513>.

<sup>11</sup> Milton-Edwards, *The Muslim Brotherhood*.

<sup>12</sup> Jeffrey Goldberg, “The Modern King in the Arab Spring,” *The Atlantic*, April 2013, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2013/04/monarch-in-the-middle/309270/>; Sean L. Yom, and F. Gregory Gause, III, “Resilient Royals: How Arab Monarchies Hang On,” *Journal of Democracy* 23, no. 4 (2012): 74–88.

<sup>13</sup> Foud al-Batayneh, “Al-Urdan bayna al-harb al-wiqa’iyya wa al-mantaqa al-amina” [Jordan between the preventive war and the safe zone], *Rai al-Youm*, January 31, 2017, <http://www.raialyoum.com/?p=613273>.

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, International Republican Institute, “IRI Poll: Jordanians Split over Direction of the Country, Economy and Corruption Cited as Top Concerns,” September 24, 2012, <http://www.iri.org/resource/iri-poll-jordanians-split-over-direction-country-economy-and-corruption-cited-top-concerns>.

<sup>15</sup> Jordanian journalist, interview with the author, Jordan, 7 December 2016.

<sup>16</sup> JMB leader, interview with the author, Amman, Jordan, 7 December 2016.

<sup>17</sup> David Siddhartha Patel, “The More Things Change, the More They Stay the Same: Jordanian Islamist Responses in Spring and Fall,” Brookings Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World, Working Paper, August 2015, [https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Jordan\\_Patel-FINALE.pdf](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Jordan_Patel-FINALE.pdf).

<sup>18</sup> Joel Greenberg, “Jordan’s King Abdullah II Ousts Prime Minister, Cabinet in Wake of Mass Protests,” *Washington Post*, February 1, 2011, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/01/31/AR2011013103692.html>.

<sup>19</sup> “Jordan Pressured to Restrict Muslim Brotherhood,” *Al-Monitor*, February 3, 2015, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/02/jordan-muslim-brotherhood-gulf-aid.html>.

<sup>20</sup> Sheikh Abdel Majed al-Thunaibat (former Comptroller-General of the JMB, leader of the MBS), interview with the author, Amman, Jordan, 7 December 2016.

<sup>21</sup> Milton-Edwards, *The Muslim Brotherhood*; Taylor Luck, “Opportunistic Move against Muslim Brotherhood Exposes Jordan to Risks,” *Christian Science Monitor*, March 19, 2015, <https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2015/0319/Opportunistic-move-against-Muslim-Brotherhood-exposes-Jordan-to-risks>.

<sup>22</sup> Thunaibat, interview.

<sup>23</sup> Suleiman Al-Khalidi, “Jordanian Police Shut Muslim Brotherhood Headquarters: Senior Brotherhood Figure,” Reuters, April 13, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-jordan-politics-opposition-idUSKCN0XA0TX>.

<sup>24</sup> Thunaibat, interview.

<sup>25</sup> Senior JMB leader, interview with the author, Amman, Jordan, 5 December 2016; Neven Bondokji, “The Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan: Time to Reform,” Brookings Doha Center, Policy Briefing, April 2015, <https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-muslim-brotherhood-in-jordan-time-to-reform/>.

<sup>26</sup> Omar Assaf, “Hal yakun Urdaniyu ‘Jabhat al-Nusra’ nuwat dawlat al-Urdan al-Islamiyya?” [Are “Jabhat al-Nusra’s” Jordanians the nucleus of Jordan’s Islamic state?] *an-Nahar*, April 13, 2013, <http://ar.ammannet.net/news/193596>.

<sup>27</sup> Omar Othman (Abu Qatada), interview with the author, Jordan, 5 December 2016.

<sup>28</sup> Examples of incidents in 2016 include a March shoot-out between Jordanian security forces and a suspected homegrown ISIS cell in Irbid; a gun attack at the Baqaa refugee camp that killed 5 Jordanian officers in June; a November attack on al-Jafr airbase; ISIS’s attack in Kerak in December that left 11 dead; and multiple attacks on Jordan’s borders claimed by ISIS.

<sup>29</sup> For examples of crackdowns, see Palash Ghosh, Islamic Radicals Clash in Jordan with Government Loyalists, *IB Times*, April 15, 2011, <http://www.ibtimes.com/islamic-radicals-clash-jordan-government-loyalists-280213>; Mohammed al-Nijar, “Muwajiha Urdaniyya ma’ al-Salafiyya al-jihadiyya” [A Jordanian confrontation with jihadi Salafism], *Al-Jazeera*, April 17, 2011, <http://www.aljazeera.net/news/reportsandinterviews/2011/4/17/%D9%85%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%AC%D9%87%D8%A9-%D8%A3%D8%B1%D8%AF%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%85%D8%B9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%84%D9%81%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AC%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%A9>. Since 2011, State Security Court prosecutors have issued arrest warrants for hundreds of Islamists in Jordan. The state employs normal arrest or “governor’s detention” provisions for such purposes. In 2011, “according to the official Jordan National Centre for Human Rights, around 11,300 people were held under the 1954 Law on Crime Prevention. This gives provincial governors the power to detain people indefinitely without charge if they are suspected of committing a crime or deemed a ‘danger to society.’” See Amnesty International, “Amnesty International Report 2012,” 2012, 197–98. By 2017, Amnesty International was reporting that “tens of thousands” of Jordanians were being detained. See Amnesty International, “Annual Report: Jordan 2016/2017,” 2017, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/middle-east-and-north-africa/jordan/report-jordan/>.

<sup>30</sup> Osama Sharif, “Jordanians Question Timing, Messages of Top Military Brass,” *Al-Monitor*, 9 January 2017, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/01/jordan-interview-military-official-syria-isis-iran-lebanon.html>.

<sup>31</sup> Beverley Milton-Edwards, “A Temporary Alliance with the Crown: The Islamic Response in Jordan,” in *Islamic fundamentalisms and the Gulf Crisis*, ed. James Piscatori (Chicago: American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1991); Nir Rosen, “Iraq’s Jordanian Jihadists,” *New York Times Magazine*, February 19, 2006, <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/02/19/magazine/iraqs-jordanian-jihadis.html>; Raphael Lefevre, *Ashes of Hama: The Muslim Brotherhood in Syria* (London: Hurst and Co, 2013).

<sup>32</sup> “Jordan Pilot Hostage Moaz al-Kasasbeh ‘Burned Alive,’” BBC News, February 3, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-31121160>.

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