



DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR EXTERNAL POLICIES OF THE UNION
POLICY DEPARTMENT

REFORM OF THE POLITICAL SYSTEM IN JORDAN: A PRUDENT FIRST STEP TOWARDS CONSTITUTIONAL MONARCHY

POLICY BRIEFING

Abstract

Following the demonstrations in the early months of 2011 and taking stock of the experience of the Arab Spring in the wider region, King Abdullah II of Jordan ordered a reform of the Jordanian political system. The National Dialogue Committee has come up with new electoral and political party laws, and the Royal Committee on Constitutional Review has delivered a proposal for an amended constitution.

The initiative taken by the King in a balancing act between the traditionalist East-Bankers and the more progressive political forces can be considered a welcome step forward on the path of opening up and democratising the political system but only as a first and rather under-ambitious move. The ongoing reforms do not address the issue of inequality of Jordanian citizens of Palestinian origin and do not establish a true constitutional monarchy with the centre of power within the elected institutions. Via enhanced political dialogue and intensified contacts under the advanced status in its partnership with Jordan, currently examined by the EP, the EU should encourage Jordan to maintain the momentum of opening up its society and building a democratic basis for a sustainable stability and to resist the lure of a "Gulf societal model" haunting behind the prospective membership in the GCC.

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ABOUT THE EDITOR

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1. PUBLIC DEMANDS FOR POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC REFORM

Jordan was faced with public demands for political, economic and social reform right at the beginning of the Arab Spring. However, unlike in most of the countries, apart from its fellow moderate Arab monarchies Oman and Morocco, demonstrations which have taken place in Jordan have fallen short of calling for a regime change but just for social and economic reform. In response to popular demands and demonstrations, King Abdullah II took prompt albeit prudent steps: he sacked his government and appointed a new one headed by Ma'rūf al-Bakhīt (مَعْرُوف الْبَاخِيْت), retired general and Jordanian ambassador to Israel, who had served as prime minister in 2005-2007. At the same time, fuel and food subsidies and salaries of public administration officials were raised in order to quell opposition.

The steps taken by the Jordanian political establishment in a balancing act between the traditionalist East-Bankers and the more progressive political forces, including Abdullah himself, can be considered a welcome step forward on the path of opening up and democratising the political system but only as a first modest step. Whilst the reforms, which have yet to be endorsed by the parliament, do increase to a certain extent the powers of the elected institutions and strengthen the notion of the division of powers, the step taken is a modest one and the King will retain disproportionately more powers than the representatives elected by the people.

The parts of the country dominated by Bedouin tribes still politically outweigh¹ the urban population of the metropolitan area of Amman, representing some 40-50% of the country's 6 million people. This is due to the historic affinity of the tribes with the monarchy. The issue of inequality of Jordanian citizens of Palestinian origin in terms of representation in the elected institutions and at all levels of the state administration has not been addressed at this stage.

2. OUTCOME OF THE NATIONAL DIALOGUE COMMITTEE

The Committee established on 14 March was securely in the hands of Tāher Nashat al-Masrī, senior politician of Palestinian origin, one of intimates of the King and the President of the Senate², and consisted of 52 representatives of political parties, professional associations, civil society, youth and women's groups.

The laws presented by the committee are currently being examined by the Government and expected to be submitted to the Parliament in October.

2.1 Political party law

The objective of the reform of the political party law is to strengthen partisan life and political pluralism in a manner that enables effective political powers to participate in the democratic process and decision-making.

The National Committee's proposed draft law on political parties would halve the number of people required to found a party from 500 to 250, who should be from a minimum of 3 districts and of whom at least 25 would have to be women. The draft law stipulates the creation of an independent entity to oversee the formation and performance of parties. Also, the number of terms of office of party

¹ To illustrate this a few weeks of small-scale protests in the southern province of at-Tafila provoked a royal visit in June, in which the king announced free health care for all residents, the recruitment of 1,000 locals for new police and security jobs, and the establishment of a new development fund.

² The 60 members of the Jordanian Senate are not elected but all appointed by the King.

secretaries would be limited, while any issues related to the political parties' affairs will be subject to supervision and scrutiny by the judicial authorities.

The political establishment close to the Diwān and opposition parties alike have hailed the new draft political party law as "an advanced step that removed many of the obstacles which previously impeded the freedom of parties."

2.2 Electoral law

The new draft electoral law modifies the current single non-transferable vote system and introduces a mixed proportional one that allows eligible voters to have two votes—one for the governorate and the other at national level. It proposes an increase in the number of seats in Parliament from 120 to 130 as well as the establishment of an independent panel of retired judges appointed by royal decree to oversee elections, instead of the current arrangement with the Interior Ministry.

Proposed double electoral system

District level (115 seats): Twelve districts correspond to the Kingdom's governorates. Amman and Irbid are divided into three sub-districts and Zarqa into two. In addition there are three not geographically defined (Bedouin) badia regions. A voter's district ballot will have a number of lists that each comprise a group of candidates who decided to run together; ideally a list would be based on a political party but could also include anything from a union, a coalition, an association, or a tribe etc. The voter chooses only one list and then votes for candidates within that list. The district's seats are awarded based on the proportion of votes given to the different lists.

National level (15 seats): Again, groups of candidates organise themselves in lists, but the lists can include candidates from all over the Kingdom. The same process applies—there are lists, the top lists get a proportion of the seats that go to the winning lists' top candidates—but the deputies must come from one of each of the twelve national districts plus the three badia regions.

However, the proposed changes are only a modest step towards a true reform of the electoral system where the major problems are the weak representation of political parties. Firstly, only 15% of seats in the lower house would be distributed at the national level. The rest would be allocated to the governorates, in a clear contradiction of the explicit key goal of the reform to encourage unifying and nation-wide party movements rather than perpetuating currently occurring fragmented voting predicated along tribal, kinship, and service-oriented³ lines. The new election law lacks clarity and ambition and does not break the dominance of tribe-based MPs and thus fails to respond to the democratic aspirations of the increasingly educated urban electorate and opposition parties which uphold the equal rights of all Jordanians to be represented in the parliament. The current political leadership is also doing its utmost to limit the potentially growing influence of the Islamic Action Front⁴, the largest party in the country.

As things stand right now, even the measured and rather modest changes to the electoral system risk not to be ratified by the current parliament, members of which would not likely return under the new system. Many observers do not believe that the legislature will endorse these reforms even if the government appears confident.

³ There are six loosely-tied parliamentary groups (and a number of no-attached members) in the current Jordanian Parliament based on service-oriented principles rather than political manifestos.

⁴ The IAF boycotted the 2010 parliamentary elections but has one deputy in the current parliament who ran as an independent candidate outside party lists.

3. REFORM OF THE MUNICIPALITIES' LAW

In parallel, to reinforce the idea of gradual devolution of powers to the local level and to render the country's 93 municipalities financially and administratively independent, a reform of the municipalities' law is also underway⁵ in Jordan. The amended articles of the law include the appointment of "executive managers" by the municipal councils rather than by the municipal affairs minister as the government proposed. Moreover, any district with a population of 5,000 or more can request the establishment of their own municipality or disengagement from a merger with a larger municipality. It is interesting to note, however, that it is not foreseen to allow the inhabitants of Amman to elect a mayor in the foreseeable future either.

Under the new law, in an effort of ensuring more independence and funds for local administrations, municipalities will be given 8% of the fuel tax revenues instead of the 6% stipulated in the current version of the law. The current provision, which allows the Government, based on a recommendation by the municipal affairs minister, to sack mayors and municipal council members is also expected to be abolished. Under the new law, the judiciary will look into all complaints filed against elected mayors and council members within a three-month deadline.

4. OUTCOME OF THE ROYAL CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM COMMITTEE

4.1 Overview

In late April King Abdullah created a Royal Committee to review the texts⁶ of the 1952 Constitution. The committee was chaired by Ahmed al-Lozi, former Prime Minister and included Tāher Nashat al-Masrī, President of the Senate and chairman of the National Dialogue Committee; Faisal al-Fāyez, Speaker of the Council of Representatives; Fayeze Tarawneh, a former prime minister; Rateb al-Wazni, President of the Judicial Council; Rajai Muasher, a former deputy prime minister; and a further four former ministers Said al-Tal, Taher Hikmat, Marwan Dudin and Riad Shaka'a.

On 14 August the committee presented its proposed **42 amendments** to the King. The most important of them deal with the separation of powers, the establishment of a constitutional court and an independent electoral commission as well as limiting the competences of security courts, and reaffirming protections of freedom of expression. However, the reforms mostly ignore the unbalanced prevalence of the executive branch that characterises the current Jordanian political system.

At this stage the Hashemite monarchy thinks it is unwise to distance itself from the core of political power. Under the new provisions, king can no longer postpone elections indefinitely following parliamentary dissolution, but it will be his imperative alone, rather than an elected parliamentary majority, to determine the prime minister. Foreign relations remain under the tutelage of the Palace. Likewise, the pervasive but shadowy role of the controversial General Intelligence Directorate (مخابرات) is left intact.

⁵ After the Senate's endorsement, the law is due to be sent back to the Lower House to approve the amendments made before it is forwarded to the King and published in the Official Gazette. If the deputies do not approve the changes made by the senators, it is sent back to the Senate and if the Upper House insists on its amendments, a joint session is held where decisions are taken by a two-thirds majority.

⁶ Many observers noted the subtle but revealing shift within official discourse from ملكية دستورية (constitutional monarchy) to الإصلاح الدستوري (constitutional reform) during the reform process. The 1952 constitution has previously been amended 10 times but this is by far the most extensive review of the text.

The opposition has criticised changes made to the Constitution as insufficient, blaming the government for wasting a “historic opportunity” to make what they described as “genuine amendments” to the Constitution. They have called on the Lower House to practise its “constitutional right” and amend the Constitution in a way that meets the people’s expectations and demands. The proposed amendments have been referred to the Lower House of Parliament which is expected to adopt its position during the current extraordinary session. The Senate will also have to approve the amended constitution later this autumn. Contrary to Morocco, no referendum is foreseen.

4.2 Parliamentary reform but royal prerogatives untouched

In response to the young protesters asking for their voice to be heard, Article 70 is amended lowering the minimum age allowed to run for a seat in parliament from 30 to **25 years**.

An **independent electoral commission** (Art 67) is established to oversee parliamentary elections.

Regarding the organisation of Parliamentary business (Art 69) the House speakership is extended from a period of one to two years, with possibility of re-election. The ordinary session of the National Assembly is extended from four months to six months (Art 74).

The last three paragraphs of Article 73 regarding the **dissolution of the House of Deputies** are abolished. Under the new provisions the King's jurisdiction to postpone the holding of general elections and reinstate and convene the dissolved Chamber of Deputies is limited. A provision is added to Article 74 stipulating that the cabinet in office at the time that the parliament is dissolved must submit its resignation within one week. However, there is no change regarding the Senate (مجلس الاعيان) the members of which continue to be appointed by the King. The PM will also be appointed by the King as before but the newly appointed government will have to present to the Parliament a statement of its policy and request a vote of confidence on the basis of the said statement within one month of its formation. The proposed amended Article 94 limits the **scope of provisional laws** which the Council of Ministers has, with the approval of the King, the power to issue to emergencies and to cases where one cannot postpone obligatory expenditure. Such provisional laws will have to be placed before the Assembly at the beginning of its next session.

The committee recommended keeping of all articles pertaining to the prerogatives of the King, except Article 33⁷ which establishes that treaties and agreements of peace, alliance, trade, and other treaties which involve changes of state lands or prejudice on sovereignty or bear financial consequence or affect the public or private rights of Jordanians require the approval of the National Assembly.

Article 56 on impeachment of ministers is amended lowering the number of deputies needed to refer a minister to public prosecution from two-thirds majority, to an absolute majority.

Finally, under the new provisions double-nationals are barred from parliamentary and ministerial positions.

4.3 Independence of the judiciary consolidated

The amended article 27 will state: "The independent Judicial Power shall be exercised by the courts of law in their varying types and degrees." The appointment of judges, prosecutors and state attorneys will no longer belong to the Ministry of Justice but to "**Higher Judicial Council**" consisting of presidents of higher courts.

⁷ This article was amended in 1958.

A **constitutional court** is established. It will be an independent judicial institution consisting of 9 members appointed by the King for renewable 4-year terms and not dismissible from their posts during their term (Articles 58-61). It has jurisprudence and oversight on the constitutionality of laws and regulations and the right to interpret the constitution. Members of the Cabinet, the two chambers of Parliament have the right to appeal to the court.

In order to allow for an impartial and **independent judicial process for ministers**, the proposed constitution establishes that they would be tried in civil courts in Amman in accordance with the Jordanian penal code. A commission of five judges appointed by the Higher Judicial Council shall preside over the trial and issue its verdicts by a majority vote.

Article 110 limits the jurisdiction of the special State Security Court to only grand treason, espionage, and terrorism.

4.4 Clearer citizens' rights and duties

Under pressure from religious leaders, the Committee decided **not to recommend the addition of the word 'gender'** to the first paragraph of Article 6. The text remains unchanged: "Jordanians shall be equal before the law. There shall be no discrimination between them as regards to their rights and duties on grounds of race, language or religion.

The Committee justified its position by claiming that the current wording 'Jordanians' (الأردنيون) covers both male and female citizens of Jordan. Human rights groups have linked the question for the complex and widely debated demand of Jordanian women married to foreigners for eligibility to gain Jordanian citizenship for their children now considered non-Jordanian contrary to the offspring of Jordanian men married to foreigners.

Article 6 is amended in other respects: "Defence of the nation, its land, unity of its people, and preservation of social peace" are defined as "a sacred duty on every Jordanian." Moreover, the family is fixed as the basis of society, a means to protect motherhood and childhood, elderly people, and people with disabilities.

Article 7 is amended to strengthen the guarantees for **personal freedoms**. Any violation of the rights or public freedoms or the sanctity of the private life of Jordanians will be considered a crime. Article 8 is made more detailed prohibiting to the arrest, detention or imprisonment or restriction of a person's freedom/movement (except in accordance with the provisions of the law). The new text requires any arrestee to be treated with due regard to his/her dignity and he/she must not be physically or mentally harmed.

Article 15 guaranteeing **freedom of opinion** is improved: "The State shall guarantee to Jordanians the freedom of scientific research, literary, artistic, and cultural creativity in a manner that does not violate public regulations and decency." Freedom of the press, print, and publishing, media outlets shall be ensured. However, "In the event of the declaration of martial law or a state of emergency, a limited censorship on newspapers, publications, books and broadcasts and communication outlets in matters affecting public safety and national defence" continues to be permitted.

The Article 18 regarding the privacy of communication is updated and reads: "All postal, telegraphic and telephonic communications and other means of communication shall be treated as secret and as such shall not be subject to censorship or suspension [or confiscation] except by judicial order in accordance with the law."

Finally, the length of compulsory education is extended to 10 years and is guaranteed to be free of charge in Government schools (Article 20).

5. OUTLOOK FOR THE "SECOND PATH" OF THE ARAB SPRING IN JORDAN

5.1 Abdullah's balancing act between conservatives and reformists

King Abdullah seems well aware of the challenge of his subjects empowered for good by the experience of the Arab Spring. At the same time, he recognizes that he must counter the many forces actively working for the preservation of the status quo and against change—forces that often come from within the political elite and traditional constituency of the Hashemite regime. Like many other Arab monarchs, his position depends on loyalty of the traditionalist and tribally-oriented political forces, conservative by nature. By consequence, King Abdullah will be very **careful to alter the balance of power** too dramatically at his own expense and putting the gradual but steady reform process at risk.

The ongoing legal and institutional reform, whilst a welcome and important first step, should be followed by a more comprehensive, institutional, inclusive, and measurable reform process that offers a more extensive political and economic vision for Jordan's future. The process should include an approximate time frame for when governments will be formed through a parliamentary majority and for when the selection of a prime minister will be determined by who is the head of that majority. This will only happen once political parties are given a chance to get organised, define their political platforms and are represented in parliament in proportion to the number of votes in the elections. The proposed amendments to the electoral and political party laws offer a modest improvement of the current legal situation, but will not lead to the development of political-party based and parliament centred political life for the foreseeable future. However, to ensure that the first step can be considered a step to the right direction, it is important to **monitor that the proposed reforms are not watered down** in the Jordanian parliament during the next few months.

After the political reform package has been adopted, **fresh elections** should be duly organised as requested fully legitimately by several opposition figures, even if constitutionally speaking, new parliamentary elections⁸ are not due before 2014.

5.2 Real problems require tangible solutions

The gap between the regime and the people is widening due to pressing issues: a perceived increase in the level of **corruption** and the lack of seriousness in dealing with it; the need for the rule of law to be applied fairly and equitably; the continued interference by the intelligence services in the non-security aspects of political life in the country and their resistance to reform efforts; and the need for a different mechanism to choose prime ministers and governments that have more credibility until that choice can be made through elected representatives. In international comparison, the ranking of Jordan has been stable over the past few years and is at the same level as Saudi-Arabia but improvement in this respect would have not only political but also economic benefits by facilitating business operations and economic development.

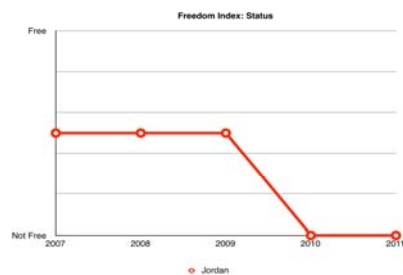
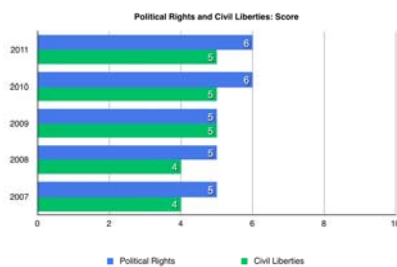
⁸ For an account of the 2010 parliamentary elections in Jordan see: http://www.expo.ep.parl.union.eu/expo/webdav/site/myjahiasite/shared/podp/documents/Regions_and_countries/Euromed_and_Middle_East/jordan_qpi_2010.pdf



source: http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2010/results

The ongoing case of *Casinogate* will be a test case for the seriousness of the authorities to make adequate enquiries into allegations of corruption at the highest levels of political power. According to documents obtained by al-Jazeera⁹ PM Ma'rūf al-Bakhīt personally authorised a 2007 casino deal between the Jordanian government and Oasis Holding Investment which he has denied at a parliamentary hearing knowing the details of, putting the entire blame of the then-tourism minister Osama Dabbas. According to the information revealed, PM Ma'rūf al-Bakhīt would have approved the deal despite a warning from the justice minister that it would violate Jordanian law, which explicitly forbids gambling. The terms of the deal also require it be kept confidential, violating a Jordanian law which demands that real estate deals be disclosed to the public.

The international ranking of Jordan in terms of political freedoms and civil liberties fell in 2010 from "partly free" to "not free" due to the suppression of the parliamentary processes and a lengthy period when the country was ruled by royal decree. As far as the freedom of the press is concerned Jordan's ranking is constantly "not free" over the past few years¹⁰.



source: <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&year=2011&country=8064>

Until fully accountable governments emerge, much of the load in leading the process of opening of political system and promotion of fundamental freedoms falls on King Abdullah. He needs to help

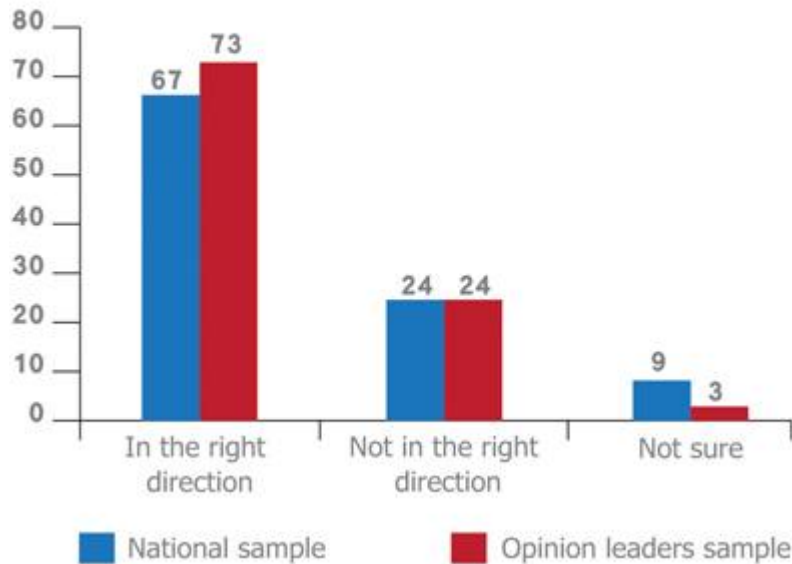
⁹ <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2011/07/2011724125647625781.html>

¹⁰ <http://www.freedomhouse.org/>

restore the credibility gap that exists today and he appears to be the only person in the country who retains broad support from the opposition and loyalists alike.

A recent poll carried out by the University of Jordan's Centre for Strategic Studies (CSS) found that around $\frac{2}{3}$ of Jordanians agree that the country is on the right track in terms of reform.

How Jordanians view the course of events in the country



Source: The Jordan Times, 7 September 2011

The survey also found that the majority of the general public believes the current government is doing its job in a satisfactory manner, reflecting almost the same responses of a previous poll held 100 days earlier. However, the poll also showed that there are important regional differences in the public perception; citizens of the southern governorates (Tafileh, Ma'an and al-Karak) considered the country is not moving in the right direction in general, unlike those living in the metropolitan area of Amman and in the Northern and Central parts of the country.

According to the study, young Jordanians between the ages of 18 and 34 are slightly more optimistic (70%) about the state of affairs than Jordanians between the ages of 45 and 54 (64%).

Economic difficulties came on top of national priorities for Jordanians, according to the poll. Citizens rated unemployment, high prices, national economic difficulties and poverty as major concerns. Political reform was cited as a national priority by the elite sample. The national sample considered corruption as a main concern that the government should deal with immediately, while opinion leaders viewed political reform on top of other political issues, according to the poll. The "considerable" economic challenges facing the government and the low rating for its performance in some southern governorates reflects that this government remains under pressure from many angles.

King Abdullah's reforms are likely to be implemented and demonstrations will only grow larger if economic conditions deteriorate. Despite the Ministry of Planning's somewhat inflated optimism, the Jordanian economy as it stands now is not in a position to generate enough viable private-sector jobs,

leaving young Jordanians three times more likely to be unemployed¹¹ than an average citizen - a problem especially prevalent in rural areas.

Higher energy prices and lower income from tourism (down 31% in July 2011 compared to 2010), diminishes remittances and investment have hit the budget. Saudi Arabia, anxious to bolster Arab allies against the uprisings, has provided US\$1.4 billion in aid to Jordan (to prevent a record budgetary deficit this year estimated to widen from 10.7% in 2009/10 to 11.4% in 2011/12) and invited it to join the Gulf Cooperation Council - with the prospect of a large inflow of Gulf funds on which Jordan is heavily reliant. Jordan has already been a popular tourist destination for many Arab countries and a particularly good piece of news in the declining tourism sector this summer has been the growing number of Saudi tourists (a 21% increase compared to 2010).

5.3 Gulf-oriented future for Jordan?

Jordan already applied for membership in the Gulf Cooperation Council on a previous occasion¹². It hopes a membership in the club of wealthy Gulf monarchies could bring considerable benefits in terms of access of Jordanians to the labour markets of the GCC countries, stronger trade ties and reinforced direct financial aid. GCC meeting of foreign ministers in Jeddah held on 11 September agreed to form specialized committees to study the memberships of Jordan and Morocco and submit a comprehensive membership plan to the council. The meeting, however, unveiled a five-year economic development assistance programme to help Jordan and Morocco. The programme will be submitted to the heads of GCC states for approval.

In recent years, the importance of the GCC countries as Jordan's first trading partner has grown. In terms of export market for Jordanian products, the volume of the GCC countries is four times that of EU27 and imports from the GCC are 25% above the value of imports from the EU.



source: IMF (DoTS)

In Jordan there are **many critical voices**¹³ who hesitate over the future retarding effects on the reform process and the risks of Jordanian military getting directly implicated in conflicts serving the interest of Saudi Arabia even if already now Jordan has strong links with the GCC, in particular through the Jordanian officers frequently recruited to senior ranks of the Bahraini security forces. The

¹¹ Official figures indicate unemployment rate at 14% but unofficial estimates are much higher.

¹² The first Jordanian candidature in the GCC 15 years ago was turned down. Economically speaking Jordan would represent a small asset to the GCC economies with roughly the size of Bahrain's GDP, the smallest of the GCC economies. Per capita, it is far below the current GCC standards, at a level of 1/5 of the Saudi standard, the lowest within the GCC.

¹³ Public opinion is not formally consulted, the parliament is not implicated in foreign policy decisions and Jordan's relations with the mighty southern neighbour are considered a taboo-subject in the Jordanian media.

reformist current in Jordan¹⁴ also fears certain negative consequences as a result of Jordan joining the GCC: human rights regarding women, minorities and freedom of opinion and expression could be infringed and the future steps on the path of political reform and democratisation in the country could be delayed. Placing Jordan more firmly under a “Saudi umbrella” could have a social, cultural and even religious (Wahhabite) impact. At the pragmatic level, the process of joining the GCC may take quite many years (given the initial reservations expressed by Kuwait and Qatar), and the positive returns of increased economic links in terms of increased trade and investment and facilitated access of Jordanians into the Gulf labour markets could be delayed. Meanwhile, Jordan may risk having to provide security and military services without delay. Thus, GCC membership may rather turn out, at least initially, a burden on Jordan’s security and stability rather than a solution to its financial and economic crisis.

5.4 Essential EU support to Jordan's reformist path

The EU is deeply committed to and involved in supporting the domestically-led reform in Jordan. The four strategic objectives of the CSP 2007-2013 are:

- 1) supporting Jordan’s political and security reform in the areas of democracy, human rights, good governance, justice and the fight against extremism;
- 2) trade and investment development;
- 3) sustainability of the development process;
- 4) institution-building, financial stability and support to regulatory approximation.

For the period 2011-2013, the EU has allocated €223 million under the ENPI bilateral envelope¹⁵. This is an average of €74.33 million a year, which represents an increase of over 12% from the ENPI for the period 2007-2010.

At political level, The EU has developed a close partnership with Jordan, with the EU regards as a force of stability, moderation and reform in a region in political turmoil. It is the EU’s objective to support Jordan in this endeavour. Jordan is the first ENP Mediterranean partner country with whom the European Union concluded in 2010 the technical negotiations for a new joint ENP Action Plan which gives concrete substance to the **“advanced status” partnership** to consolidate the association agreement in force since 2002. The matter is currently being examined by the European Parliament. The sooner the procedure is finalised the earlier the innovations of the new status can be implemented.

The “advanced status” partnership will expand the areas of cooperation between Jordan and the EU opening up new opportunities in economic and trade relations via a progressive liberalisation in services and the right of establishment, facilitation of market access, progressive regulatory convergence and preparations of future negotiations on a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement, as well as reinforced cooperation with certain European agencies and programmes.

Reacting to the ongoing political reform process, Catherine Ashton, on behalf of the European Union has welcomed constitutional amendments in Jordan¹⁶. Strengthening citizens' rights and the

¹⁴ <http://www.albawaba.com/gcc-membership-may-be-burden-jordan%E2%80%99s-security-383535>

¹⁵ At the level of Member States, France is the front-runner of financial assistance to Jordan and has this year pledged €600 million in grants and soft loans over the period 2011-13 to water systems, energy, sanitation, transport and environment as well SME development projects.

¹⁶ http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/124390.pdf

independence of the judiciary are positive steps in the reform process. The European Union looks forward to the parliament's adoption of the constitutional amendment within the stated timeframe. Building on our strong political and economic partnership, the European Union stands ready to support Jordan on its reform path to meet the aspirations of the Jordanian people. "

The future implementation of the superior level of partnership will allow the EU to have a wider range of contacts and cooperation with Jordan. These closer relations should also be used to encourage Jordan to keep on the track of sustained reform and opening up of its society. Jordan is for the time being the "best pupil in the Eastern Mediterranean class" and the EU is well advised to pay close attention to its relations with it. Jordan can ideally become a case to apply the "more for more" approach of the reformed European Neighbourhood Policy.

Europe needs a **reliable and serious partner** in the volatile region and a good example showing that stability and reform are indeed compatible and that in the medium and long term stability can only be sustained by a democratic political system and accountable governance. Channels of political dialogue should be used to remind Jordan of its interests from a common perspective and of our expectations from it as a privileged partner. The EU should of course also listen attentively to its Jordanian partners' concerns and wishes regarding wider market access and mobility partnership.

The enhanced EU-Jordanian political dialogue should not only be carried out with the government but increasingly with the **Jordanian civil society**. They should be empowered by all available means using the new Civil Society Facility and European Endowment for Democracy foreseen in the reformed European Neighbourhood Policy. The objective should be that the general public is made aware of the advantages of the more democratic, just and open political and socio-economic model.

To respond to the economic concerns of Jordanians and given the modest prospects of expanding exports from Jordan to the EU market in the short run, alternative ways of **enhanced economic cooperation** should be identified: European investment could be attracted to participate in developing Jordanian infrastructures in the field of tourism, transport and beyond, tourism to Jordan could be promoted learning from the example of Morocco where an "open skies" agreement with the EU has increased budget tourism, and politically stable and business-friendly Jordan could be developed as a business hub in the wider Middle East. Last but not least, sectoral cooperation in the fields of climate change and energy also included in the ENP prospects offer interesting perspectives for more intensive cooperation between Jordan and the European Union.

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