

Abdullah's Jordan: America's Anxious Ally

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Since his surprise ascension to the throne in 1999, King Abdullah II has sought to reposition Jordan closer to the United States, while at the same time expand Amman's contacts and participation in multilateral international forums. Mindful of the tightrope that he walks with the Palestinian Question, the Israeli peace treaty and his country's one-time largest trading partner, Iraq, Abdullah has tried to gain leverage on these issues by forging closer ties with the United States. Yet, his active backing of Washington's war against terrorism and tacit support for the US military actions in Afghanistan and Iraq has placed Jordan at odds with many other Arab states. Concurrently, Abdullah has also raised Jordan's international profile via multilateral forums and advocated policies in those settings which are often contrary to US views. Amman has actively championed numerous initiatives from the creation of the International Criminal Court to the ban on antipersonnel landmines and joined with a dozen other small and middle powers to form the Human Security Network, which focuses on the right of people to be free from want and fear. This article will examine the domestic and international factors which contribute to Jordan's diplomatic reorientation undertaken by King Abdullah after the September 11th attacks on the United States.

September 11th and The Free Trade Agreement

Abdullah quickly assessed the changing international landscape following the September 11th strikes on New York and Washington. He was among the first prominent Muslims to roundly condemn these acts of terrorism and offer assistance to the US. These views were echoed by Jordan's then-Ambassador to the United States (now Foreign Minister) Marwan Muasher, "We feel strongly that we cannot be defensive about people who practice terrorism, whatever their origin or religion is."¹ Behind the scenes, Jordan shared valuable intelligence information with the US and publicly, Abdullah backed the Bush Administration's "war on terrorism". Two weeks after the attacks, the King was the first Arab leader welcomed at the White House, where again Jordan pledged support for US policy. The Bush Administration rewarded this high-level cooperation in a number of ways. Chief among the rewards was a final White House push to secure Senate ratification of the US-Jordanian Free Trade Agreement (FTA).

While the FTA was negotiated and signed during the Clinton years, Bush was an early advocate of the agreement and endorsed its ratification at the start of his administration. However, from its inception, the accord was caught up in congressional partisan politics. Democrats – traditionally wary of free trade agreements – hailed the Jordanian accord as a model treaty. It possessed far reaching labor and environmental provisions under which both partners promised not to weaken or fail to uphold their existing standards in order to gain an economic advantage. Ironically, it was free-trade Republicans led by Texas Senator Phil Gramm who blocked the FTA's passage. They argued that provisions on pollution standards, workplace safety and freedom to organize unions did not belong in such agreements and that ultimately their inclusion would limit international trade rather than promote it.² But with intense White House

pressure applied after September 11th, objections to the accord quickly disappeared. The Senate ratified the treaty two weeks later on September 24th by a voice vote. Gramm captured these linkages best when he declared, “From a foreign policy point of view, this was a must-do thing. From the point of view of economic policy and long-term trade policy, this was a bad agreement negotiated by another president.”³ Yet, Gramm also realized the FTA’s material and symbolic importance to Amman when he noted, “Because we have a crisis in the world, we need to reaffirm our relationship with Jordan, a critical country in a very important part of the world when we are at this very moment beginning to look toward a war with terrorism.”⁴

For the United States, the FTA with Jordan meant very little in terms of overall trade advantages. Two-way commerce between the countries was less than \$400 million in 2000 and would show only relatively small total increases after the treaty went into force. Stacked up against the more than \$2 trillion in annual US exports and imports, yearly trade with Jordan would be less than that of an average day with Canada. Ultimately, Amman would still rank 75th in terms of American trade partners.⁵ These numbers, nonetheless, mask the treaty’s real significance to Jordan.

First, is its symbolic and political value. Jordan is only the fourth country after Canada, Mexico and Israel to secure a free-trade agreement with the United States. Given the importance of the other three countries to American policy interests, to be in such company elevates Jordan’s status to a similar “special relationship.” To be the first Arab or Muslim state to have a FTA with the US – especially when countries such as Egypt and Turkey export \$1 billion and \$3 billion respectively to the US each year – gives Amman additional boasting points. For Jordanians, the FTA also represents acknowledgment of a political partnership with Washington. “The

significance,” King Abdullah explained, “transcends economic issues. It also sends a strong message about the solidarity of our partnership, now and for the future.”⁶

Secondly, while US exports to Jordan would not increase dramatically, the FTA allowed Jordanian imports unfettered access to the world’s largest market. Quotas on Jordanian products were lifted immediately and tariffs on industrial goods, agriculture products and services would be eliminated over a ten year period. In 2000, the US exported \$313 million in goods to Jordan, but return trade was only \$78 million.⁷ During 2002, the FTA’s first full year of operation, the US received \$400 million in Jordanian goods.⁸ Jordan might only rank 75 in terms of American partners, but for Amman, the US was its largest trading partner.⁹ Also of importance, the FTA removed provisions requiring that at least 8% of the final product exported to the US be comprised of Israeli components. In 1997, Congress mandated such requirements for items shipped from the ten duty-free industrial parks operating in Jordan known as Qualified Industrial Zones (QIZ). These zones were established to encourage foreign investment in Jordan through free currency transactions, full repatriation of profits and salaries and the elimination of quota and tariff restrictions on goods exported to the US. The QIZs were also meant to act as a “peace dividend” and foster regional cooperation. But with the outbreak of the second Palestinian intifada in 2000, Jordanian ties with Israel became very unpopular. In the short-term, the QIZs will remain economically important for Amman, since full tariff elimination will not take place under the FTA until 2012. Still with the FTA eliminating the need for an Israeli connection to Jordan’s US exports, the treaty played well with popular sentiment.

Thirdly, the treaty was also a major advancement for Abdullah’s campaign to reform Jordan’s economy. He stated, “The FTA is a vote of confidence in Jordan’s success as a model of achievement and excellence. It both reflects and contributes to the strength and success of our

model of democracy, peace and equal opportunity”¹⁰ Since taking office, the King has placed economic liberalization high on his agenda, including launching an ambitious “Socio-Economic Transformation Plan” which seeks to reduce poverty and raise the standard of living in Jordan. Many of the laws enacted since 1999 (and especially the “temporary” laws proclaimed after parliament was dissolved in 2001) dealt with the economy.¹¹ Abdullah has worked hard to integrate his country into the international economy and in the process encourage foreign investment and create jobs. For example, following an overhaul of statutes on intellectual property protection and the like, Jordan joined the World Trade Organization in 1999. Amman became the first Mashreqi country to sign an Association Agreement with the European Union (EU) which took effect in May 2002. The King also sought to attract additional foreign investment through participation in international associations such as the World Economic Forum (WEF). In June 2003, for the first time in its 32 year history, the WEF held an extraordinary session (outside of its annual January meetings) and away from its traditional home of Davos, Switzerland. The meeting was held at a Jordanian Dead Sea resort.¹²

“The War on Terror,” Afghanistan and Iraq

Jordan’s public support and intelligence sharing were not the only tangible signs of its role in US-led efforts after September 11th. While Amman subscribed to Washington’s view that the war on terrorism and military strikes against the al-Qaeda network were justifiable US self-defense, Jordan expressed concerns that these military operations not be a “war on the Islamic world” nor be used as a pretext to target Arab countries such as Iraq. The King would offer concrete material assistance to US efforts in a post-Taliban Afghanistan, yet also attempt to use his “insider” position to persuade the Bush Administration not to expand military operations into Iraq.

Regarding Afghanistan, Jordan was the only Arab country involved with the International Security Assistance Force deployed there. Although Jordan maintained in 2001 – and reiterated as recently as June 2003 – that it would not send military troops to Afghanistan absent approval from the United Nations Security Council, it did dispatch much needed humanitarian personnel. As Prime Minister Ali Abul Ragheb explained, “Jordan must have a role as an Arab and Muslim country in bringing positive support to the Afghan people.”¹³ The Bush Administration might have preferred actual combat troops for the security force, but it was grateful for any involvement of a Middle Eastern state and would help financially underwrite Jordan’s participation. In early January 2002, some 350 Jordanian army medics launched a field hospital in the northern, war-torn city of Mazar-e-Sharif. Later, the Kingdom would expand its role to include guarding food and medical supply routes and by contributing de-mining experts. The latter were needed to help clear the millions of antipersonnel landmines which litter Afghanistan after 25 years of multiple armed conflicts. Even though Jordanian participation was couched in humanitarian terms and was perfectly keeping with the new international role Amman had assumed in the late 1990’s (see below), the presence of military personnel in Afghanistan sparked controversy. Opposition figures charged that the government was “entangling the armed forces in a war led by the Americans against the Muslim people of Afghanistan” and raised questions as to the legality of Jordanian troops serving abroad.¹⁴ A new temporary law was issued by the King. This amendment to the 1964 Armed Forces Law specifically allows Jordanian troops to serve with UN or other international forces.

Iraq, on the other hand, posed a far more complicated problem for Abdullah. If Washington linked Baghdad to its “war on terrorism,” then military operations could occur in an adjacent country with all the residual problems of political turmoil, economic disruption and

refugees for Jordan. Additionally, family history – on the US and Jordanian sides – would weigh heavily on policy as both the King and George W. Bush hoped to avoid many of the mistakes associated with their fathers in dealing with Iraq during the previous Gulf War of 1990-91. In particular, Abdullah knew that his country could ill afford the type of economic and political isolation it experienced in the 1990s. Even as Bush declared Iraq to be part of the “Axis of Evil” and spoke of “regime change” in early 2002, Abdullah started with the position that war could be avoided through diplomatic means, international weapons inspections and pressure on Saddam Hussein’s government. Throughout 2002, he used various political channels to find a consensus which would dissuade Washington from the war option. Jordan urged Iraq to fully accept UN Security Council Resolution 1441. “Not because doing so will necessarily avert a strike,” claimed Muasher, “but because not doing so will necessarily cause a strike.”¹⁵ In February 2003, literally at the eleventh hour, Jordan even sought US support for a “regime change” plan which would give Saddam Hussein and perhaps 50 other top officials safe haven outside of Iraq in a bid to forestall war.¹⁶ By then however, war seemed inevitable. Abdullah begrudgingly had already reached that conclusion the previous July following conversations with Bush. The King pointedly asked the President “Is there any way I can talk you out of this?”¹⁷ Seeing that the American administration was wedded to such a course of action, while Abdullah continued to hope for the best, he set about preparing Jordan for fallout associated with Washington’s policy. Muasher summed up Jordan’s dilemma when he stated, “If the situation comes to military confrontation, we will not participate in a war...At the same time; we will not jeopardize our close and warm relations with the US. You can appreciate the tightrope that we are walking.”¹⁸

Economically, Iraq remained (as it had been for two decades) a major trading partner and (since 1991) Jordan’s sole supplier of oil. Baghdad not only satisfied the country’s daily

petroleum needs (in barter exchange for Jordanian products) but it also provided extra oil at discounted prices which Jordan resold for a profit. The Kingdom received an estimated \$500 million per year from this favorable arrangement with Iraq. To shore up its petroleum supply, Jordan struck deals with Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). They agreed to sell oil to the Kingdom. The very fact that the Saudis and Kuwaitis, in particular, were willing to work with the Jordanians showed how much even regional political dynamics had changed under Abdullah. Relations between the countries were strained for more than a decade because of King Hussein's policies during the previous war. Jordan also managed to stockpile a two and a half-month supply of oil in strategic reserves prior to the March 2003 start of hostilities. Two of these storage areas were large tonnage oil tankers docked in Aqaba. In addition, Amman received sizable pledges of financial support or debt rescheduling from the US, EU and Japan to offset its loss of trade revenue with Iraq. In May 2003, Washington added \$700 million in supplemental funds on top of its 2002 annual aid package of \$460 million, thus elevating Jordan as the fourth largest recipient of American foreign assistance after Israel, Egypt and Colombia.¹⁹ When Abdullah assumed the throne in 1999, Washington was only sending \$30 million to Amman.²⁰

Refugees – from both Iraq and the Israeli-occupied West Bank – were also a major concern for Jordan. During the 1990-91 crisis, more than 1.5 million internationally displaced persons transgressed its territory. Largely on its own, Amman provided food and shelter for these refugees before they moved onto third countries. This placed a tremendous logistical and financial burden on the kingdom. An even greater onus involved the nearly 200,000 Palestinians uprooted or expelled from the Gulf States during the crisis because of the PLO's quasi-backing of Saddam Hussein. Jordan felt duty-bound to allow them to permanently remain since many

could legally claim residency or no other country would accept them. In 1991 – as in 2003 – Amman also feared that a right-wing Likud Government in Israel would use the crisis to “transfer” large numbers of Palestinians to the kingdom.²¹ This nightmare scenario did not occur in 1991 and Abdullah worked hard behind the scenes through intermediaries, US pressure and direct contacts to pre-empt such actions from taking place in 2003. There were even numerous media reports of a secret face-to-face meeting between the King and Prime Minister Ariel Sharon over the issue. Foreign Minister Muasher addressed these concerns in a January interview:

We are very aware of the ‘transfer’ issue and the possibility that the Israeli Government might take advantage of this war. We have contacted all parties including the United States and have obtained pledges that this issue would not take place. The United States has said it sent a strong message to the Israeli Government to prompt it not to think of such an issue.²²

As to the other refugee worry on the Iraqi side, Jordan secured prior assistance and funding from the UN to construct two receiving areas near the common border.²³ One camp was for displaced Iraqis who presumably would go back home after the war and the second site was for all other non-Jordanians using it as a way station before departing for their own countries. Amman was clear before the start of hostilities that refugees would not be granted permanent status. These camps were set up in March 2003 in anticipation of a humanitarian emergency which luckily never materialized. Only a few thousand people were temporarily housed in these structures.

Jordanian territory being used as a battleground between Israeli and Iraqi forces was a third major anxiety for the King. Baghdad’s Scud missile strikes against Israeli cities in 1991 raised the real possibility of air warfare taking place over Jordan. To prevent such developments from occurring in 2003, Abdullah agreed to host three US Patriot anti-missile batteries close to

the Iraqi border. These weapons systems were positioned to shoot down Iraqi projectiles before entering Jordanian airspace – thus protecting the kingdom, but Israel as well. This decision was very controversial and the government sought to downplay its significance. Prime Minister Abul Ragheb acknowledged the presence of “hundreds” of US troops on Jordanian soil and maintained that they were there simply to train Jordanians how to operate the Patriots. He asserted, “We are not participating in any military campaign and will not be a launching pad for any attack against Iraq.”²⁴ However, US media reports and regional press coverage put the actual number of American forces at least 3,000. Reuters, quoting “diplomatic sources,” also noted that Jordan agreed to allow US planes free passage in its airspace and granted American forces the right to conduct search and rescue missions.²⁵ During the war, the King felt it necessary to rebut some of these news stories himself:

Civil aviation is still open to all airline companies. This refutes the allegations that Jordanian airspace is being used for military purposes in this war. Frankly, we have been asked to open our airspace to military planes moving on Iraq but we have firmly rejected this request.²⁶

Whatever the nature of US military involvement, the American presence there – as well as Washington’s eventual decision to attack Iraq -- were very unpopular in Jordan. The anti-war sentiment could be seen in calls for a boycott of US products and in the numerous large-scale demonstrations held throughout the country. Interestingly, the government allowed these demonstrations to take place by lifting a two-year ban on such gatherings imposed with the outbreak of the second Palestinian intifada. The demonstrations were perhaps seen as a safety valve to preclude more serious opposition to the government. And despite the official close cooperation taking place between Amman and Washington, Abul Ragheb took the unprecedented move of publicly summoning the US Ambassador to see him after Iraqi civilians

were killed. The Prime Minister warned, “Jordan condemns the killings and destruction caused by the invasion of Iraq, and holds the United States, Britain and any other country taking part...responsible for protecting innocent civilians.”²⁷ Following the fall of Saddam Hussein’s regime, Abul Ragheb was quick to announce the phased withdrawal of US troops from Jordan.²⁸

Post-Saddam Iraq

If the US-led campaign lived up at all to its pre-war hype of “shock and awe,” it was not necessarily associated with overwhelming American fire power, but in how quickly the seemingly entrenched dictatorship of Saddam Hussein crumbled. The relatively short war was good news for Jordan. Its territory was not used as a battleground. The refugees did not materialize. The political and economic chaos was kept to a minimum. Yet Amman was deeply apprehensive about US occupation intentions and about what type of new regime would emerge in Iraq. Abdullah expressed this worry when he told a journalist, “I have said it in previous interviews that winning the war is not as important as winning the peace. I hope the Americans have planned and worked for peace in Iraq.”²⁹

Just like it had done with Afghanistan, Jordan agreed to send medical specialists and mobile field hospitals to Rutbah (the closest Iraqi town to Jordan) and to Baghdad, but it would not dispatch military troops to assist the occupation and linked any peacekeeping involvement to a UN presence. Abdullah did agree to provide police to train a new Iraqi constabulary and perhaps even conduct joint patrols in some areas of the country.³⁰ Jordan joined Iraq’s other five neighboring states in calling for a quick stabilization of the country and a swift withdrawal of foreign forces.³¹ Post-Saddam political planning also troubled Jordan. In particular, any role for Ahmed Chalabi in the new Iraqi government presented problems and the kingdom made it known that it would not deal with him. Chalabi, leader of the Iraqi National Congress, was a

long-time opponent of Saddam Hussein and a neo-conservative favorite in both the US Congress and among executive branch officials such as Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld.³² Chalabi has a long history of American financial and moral support and was highly touted by Washington insiders as a possible successor to Saddam. The Pentagon even provided military transportation back to Iraq for Chalabi and hundreds of his followers in April. In Jordan however, Chalabi is seen as an embezzler who faces a 22-year prison sentence after being convicted in absentia in 1992. Amman blames him for the collapse of the country's third-largest financial institution, Petra Bank, and the disappearance of \$300 million. Jordanian officials also note that he is wanted on charges of financial irregularities in Lebanon and Switzerland. Additionally, the King has focused on the fact that Chalabi left Iraq in 1958 as a child and returned for the first time 45 years later:

I think that the Iraqi opposition can play a role in Iraq. But I do not actually think they can play a major role because the ordinary Iraqi citizen would want to see the leadership symbol from among Iraqis who suffered with him and not in persons who lived abroad.³³

Moreover Abdullah asserted, "The Iraqi people are the only people that have the right to choose their leadership...we cannot imagine that people would accept the outside imposition of a leadership against their will."³⁴ Interestingly, Jordan has been relatively silent about the possible restoration of the Iraqi monarchy. Iraq's last kings before the monarchy's overthrow in 1958 were Hashemites, the same as Jordan's ruling family. A distant relative of Abdullah, Sharif Ali Ben Hussein is the current pretender to the Iraqi throne. Sharif Ali returned in June 2003 to gauge support for his Constitutional Monarchy Movement. By the time of this writing in late June 2003, the US seems to have distanced itself from Chalabi and other outside contenders. This is a policy shift certainly appreciated in Amman. Under the new American Administrator in

Iraq, L. Paul Bremer, Chalabi and other exiles are being marginalized in favor of a broader council of Iraqi advisers who will assist Bremer in governing Iraq. While the transition to some form of Iraqi political control has been exceedingly slow, Jordan has endorsed US calls for democratization in Iraq and throughout the Middle East, touting its own 14-year experiment with political liberalization. A functioning parliament with an actual opposition, political parties and reforms such as guaranteeing women at least 5% of parliamentary seats in the recent June 2003 elections are all examples of what Jordan views as a model for the region.³⁵ As Muasher explains:

Jordan has been implementing integrated reforms in the political and economic fields for some time now. We support the US declaration regarding democracy because we are carrying out...everything that has to do with enhancing political life in the country...We believe a democratic process in the Arab world cannot take place without an end to the Israeli occupation and the establishment of an independent state of Palestine.³⁶

“Road Map” to an independent Palestine

For Jordanians the “Palestinian Question” is both a domestic and a foreign policy concern. The Kingdom’s hosting of 1.7 million registered refugees, its demographic makeup of a majority population with some form of Palestinian origin, its former control of the West Bank, the historical Hashemite connection to Jerusalem and its 1994 peace treaty with Israel are all factors making a resolution of the Palestinian Question paramount for Jordan. As Abdullah notes, “democratic reforms, economic and social reforms in Jordan will never go the way we want until we solve that problem.”³⁷ To that end, the King has attempted to use his special access with the Bush Administration to engage the US more vigorously in resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Since assuming office, Bush was very reluctant to play a direct role in

Middle East peace efforts. Here the King has been somewhat more successful in reorienting US policy than he was in regards to avoiding war with Iraq. Jordan finds itself echoing many of the same arguments as other close US allies such as Spain and the UK. As a moderate Arab voice and as a country which gave the US key support in its war on terrorism, Abdullah's ideas found a willing ear in the White House.

During a series of mid-2002 meetings with Bush, the King tried shaping the President's declared support for an independent Palestinian state – the first such statement by any US leader – into some concrete plan. As Muasher recounts, “Bush asked, ‘what do you want?’ The King said ‘we want a mechanism that guarantees the fulfillment of this promise.’ This is how the Road Map plan materialized.”³⁸ Muasher himself would be nicknamed “Mr. Roadmap” by his colleagues because of his heavy behind-the-scenes involvement with the plan.³⁹ More formally, the US working with the EU, UN and Russia (“The Quartet”) would push the Road Map along. Its details emerged by Fall 2002, but the initiative would not be formally announced until April 2003. The US lifted its hold on the agreement following the swift conclusion of the Iraqi war and Mahmoud Abbas' appointment as Palestinian Prime Minister.

Once the Quartet finalized the content, Jordan campaigned zealously for either full acceptance or full rejection by Israel and the Palestinian Authority. Amman did not want either party to be allowed to “accept” the Road Map with reservations which would render its acceptance meaningless. The key aspects of the plan included an Israeli cessation of attacks on Palestinian civilians, a freeze on settlement activity, the dismantling of 70 “outposts” and a military withdrawal from areas occupied since September 2000. In return there would be a full and unconditional Palestinian ceasefire and the disbanding of “terrorist organizations” and a weapons confiscation process. These provisions needed to be embraced in totality. After both

Israel and the Palestinian Authority reluctantly endorsed the plan, Jordan agreed to a US request to host the gathering in Aqaba. This was a major commitment for Abdullah, in large part because of the presence of Ariel Sharon in Jordan. Despite the peace treaty and the maintenance of diplomatic ties, the King had not publicly met with Sharon since the outbreak of the second intifada.⁴⁰ While Jordan had used its good offices to move the Road Map to the acceptance stage, hosting Sharon, Abbas and Bush, would now be risking considerable political capital at home to make sure that the plan succeeded. Abdullah accepted the challenge. Not only did Jordan hold the June 4th gathering between Abbas and Sharon, but also a meeting of the Quartet principals three weeks later to force the plan back on track. Speaking at the Aqaba summit, the king captured the moment's importance for Jordan:

Over the past few years, the road of confrontation has shone its consequences: Loss of innocent lives, destruction and fear. Most costly, however, was the loss of hope. The most precious gift that you can present to your people...is renewed hope born out of tangible progress on the ground. And it is not only your people who will be watching and waiting...The nature of our new borderless world means that we all have a stake at what happens here today.⁴¹

Jordan as “International Citizen”

On one level, Jordan's involvement with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and humanitarian participation in Afghanistan and Iraq can be viewed within the context of its relationship with the United States. However, these activities are part of a broader strategy which often puts Jordan at odds with policy emanating from Washington. Abdullah has expanded his country's participation in UN peacekeeping missions, new avenues of international law and multinational organizations. Amman's dedication to multilateral approaches to international problems contrasts sharply with the Bush Administration's penchant for unilateral moves. By positioning Jordan as a good

“international citizen,” the kingdom has forged deeper relations with other like-minded countries which allows it to balance the close ties it maintains with the world’s only superpower.

The kingdom started contributing to UN peacekeeping operations in 1989. Since that time, some 25,000 Jordanian troops have served in more than a dozen of the world’s trouble zones such as the Congo, East Timor, Eritrea, Kosovo and Somalia. Jordanian involvement increased substantially since Abdullah became king. In 2001, it was the third largest contributor after Bangladesh and Nigeria, due in large part to its substantial role in the Sierra Leone mission. Today Jordan ranks in eighth place with 1,583 military observers, civilian police and troops in the field. By comparison, the US is in the 20th spot, contributing mostly civilian police to these operations.⁴² Jordan’s involvement was part of a concerted effort to raise the country’s reputation in peacekeeping circles. Furthermore, “participation in UN operations is part of Jordan’s defense and security policy,” notes Brigadier Ahmad Asoufi of the Jordan Armed Forces.⁴³ Soldiers receive additional training and are exposed to combat situations. The UN also pays an allowance for each Jordanian participant.

In terms of new avenues of international law, Jordan has been at the forefront of these developments since the 1990s. While the US steadfastly opposed the treaty, the kingdom was the only Arab country to ratify the Ottawa Convention to Ban Antipersonnel Landmines, which prohibits the stockpiling, production and/or transfer of these devices. Jordan took a prominent role in developing this convention and Queen Noor was one of the major international actors highlighting the catastrophic impact of landmines. In April 2003, Jordan destroyed the last of its 92,000 stockpiled mines. It is about a third of the way through removing some 300,000 landmines located along its borders which are remnants from the 1967 war.⁴⁴

Perhaps even more significant than Amman's connection to the landmines issue is its association with the International Criminal Court (ICC). Again, Jordan is the only Arab state to ratify the Rome Convention which establishes a permanent tribunal to prosecute individuals for crimes against humanity, genocide and war crimes. To date ninety countries have ratified the Rome Convention, and again, the US is not a party. The Bush Administration actually removed the US signature on the treaty placed there by its predecessor, claiming the court treaded on American sovereignty. Since the Court began operations in July 2002, Washington has aggressively sought agreements with individual countries and the UN which would preclude any American from coming under the ICC's jurisdiction. Jordan was among a handful of countries which opposed these exemptions claiming they undermine the work of the court.⁴⁵ Amman's stance could cost it US military aid because of a new congressional law that terminates all such assistance to states that have not agreed to these exemptions.

Jordan's active involvement in the humanitarian law field is also evidenced in the election of its citizens to key positions. Prince Zeid Raad, the kingdom's UN ambassador, is President of the Assembly of States Parties, the governing body of the ICC which is responsible for the court's operations. In relation to another court, The UN International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, Taghrid Hikmat is the first Arab judge to serve on the UN's ad-hoc tribunals. Hikmat viewed her election as a testament to her country's "participation in international criminal law and in fighting against international crime and defending human rights."⁴⁶

Whether they are issues of peacekeeping or land mines or international tribunals, Jordan increasingly found itself siding with a like-minded grouping of small and middle powers such as Canada, Norway and Switzerland. This informal group of a dozen states formally codified itself in May 1999 with the establishment of the "Human Security Network (HSN)."⁴⁷ The HSN's

foundation is a commitment to human rights and humanitarian law. Its focus is on people-centered development and threats to their security (“new diplomacy”) rather than issues related to states’ rights and sovereignty (“old diplomacy”). The kingdom has played host to numerous HSN meetings. The “Petra Declaration on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons” and the “Amman Declaration on the Use of Child Soldiers” are two examples of the group’s work, which incidentally Washington sought to dilute with exemptions when these declarations were presented to the UN. In 2001 Canada funded a Regional Human Security Center in Amman as a permanent venue to tackle these humanitarian concerns. Ottawa also underwrites much of Jordan’s demining efforts. In addition, Amman views the HSN as a vehicle to keep matters important to it such as Palestine and more recently the situation in post-war Iraq on the global agenda. Through the network, Jordan has encouraged members such as Ireland, Austria and Slovenia to become more involved in regional Middle East issues. The fact that four of the Network’s members (and five with Slovenia in 2004) are part of the EU allows Jordan easier access to decision makers in Brussels as well.

Conclusion

Abdullah has crafted a foreign policy which gives his small country access to major powers in the international system and the type of economic and political security only they can provide. By lending support, both as an Arab and a Muslim voice, to American efforts in the war on terrorism, Jordan gained financial rewards and cemented a closer relationship with the Bush Administration. Amman attempted to use this insider status to stave off war with Iraq and place the Palestinian issue back on Washington’s radar. The King was more successful on the latter front, becoming instrumental in shaping the US position on the Middle East Road Map and securing a seat at the table in terms of the plan’s implementation. At the same time, Jordan’s

commitment to humanitarian concerns and multilateralism put it in continual contact with other key actors such as Canada, Norway and the EU. Through peacekeeping and other initiatives, Jordan has assumed a much more prominent global position than its size or power would seem to allow.

In the end however it is Amman's ties with Washington which prove most essential to the Kingdom. The US is now its largest trading partner as well as its chief donor of aid. American troops are occupying an adjacent country and arguably it is only the US that has any leverage with Israel over the all important Palestinian issue. Abdullah said it best: "We agree on many things and we many differ on certain issues. But, our ties with the United States will remain strong and solid. On the political level, we must admit the United States' important role and world political status. If we ignore this role, we would not be able to achieve peace in our region because many of the cards to the solution are in US hands."⁴⁸

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Notes

¹ Quoted in Nora Boustany, "Jordanian Envoy Still 'Talking Straight' With a Smile," Washington Post, 14 December 2001, A39.

² Richard Stevenson, "Senate Approves Bill to Lift Barriers to Trade With Jordan," New York Times, 25 September 2001, C1. C6.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Paul Blustein, "Senate Backs Free-Trade Agreement with Jordan," Washington Post, 25 September 2002, E12.

⁵ Saad Hattar, "US House Approves Jordan FTA Bill," Jordan Times, 1 August 2001 found at www.jordantimes.com.

⁶ Sahar Alul, "King Abdullah Says Jordan-US FTA Vote of Confidence in Investment Climate," Jordan Times, 12 December 2002 found at www.jordantimes.com.

⁷ Hattar, 1 August 2001.

⁸ Alul, 12 December 2002.

⁹ According to the Jordan Times, for the first third of 2003, the US was Jordan's largest trading partner, followed by Iraq, Saudi Arabia, India, Syria, Israel and the UAE. 22 June 2003 found at www.jordantimes.com

¹⁰ Alul, 12 December 2002.

¹¹ Jordan's 13th parliament was dissolved in June 2001 in anticipation of elections scheduled for November. However, as it is the King's constitutional right to do, Abdullah postponed the elections at least three times before they were held on 17 June 2003. During such times when parliament is not sitting, the King constitutionally also has legislative power to issue "temporary laws."

¹² Jordan has had measured success under these new economic programs. Its economy expanded 4.8% in 2002, however with an official unemployment rate of 15% and a labor force growing annually at 4 to 5 percent, it will have to expand further just to keep pace with unemployment. [World Bank figures quoted in Paul Blustein, "Bush's Trade Carrot Brings High Hopes, Hearty Skepticism," Washington Post, 10 May 2003, A16.]

¹³ Saad Hattar, "Jordan to Send Troops to Afghanistan," Jordan Times, 16 November 2001 found at www.jordantimes.com.

¹⁴ Quoted in Al-Sabil, 20 November 2001, 3 translated by the British Broadcasting Corporation Worldwide Monitoring found at web.lexis-nexis.com.

¹⁵ Quoted in Francesca Sawalha, "Kingdom working to ensure 'road map' protects its interests," Jordan Times, 25 November 2002 found at www.jordantimes.com.

¹⁶ John Burns, "Jordan Pressing US to Offer Exile to Hussein and His Aides," New York Times, 12 February 2003, A14.

¹⁷ Quoted in an interview with David Ignatius, "What We Have Today is Better," Washington Post, 22 June 2003, B7.

¹⁸ Quoted in Sawalha, "Kingdom working..."

¹⁹ "US Grants \$84.8m to Kingdom," Jordan Times, 11 June 2003 found at www.jordantimes.com.

²⁰ See Abdullah's interview in Al-Ra'y, 29 June 2002, translated by the National Technical Information Service (hereafter NTIS) and found at wnc.fedworld.gov.

²¹ Currently, Israeli Tourism Minister Benyamin Elon, of the far right National Union Party, is a vocal advocate of the "Jordan is Palestine" scenario. He reasons that historically Jordan was part of Palestinian territory, that demographically the country is more than 50% of Palestinian origin and thus Jordan is actually the Palestinian state. "Residents" of Judea and Samaria (the West Bank) should be expelled or "transferred" to their rightful home in Jordan. In years past Prime Minister Sharon and Finance Minister Benyamin Netanyahu were also closely associated with this idea. [See for example Sharon's "Jordan is the Palestinian State," Jerusalem Post International, 13 April 1991, 8.] However since the 1994 Israeli-Jordanian Peace treaty neither Sharon nor Netanyahu have publicly expressed these views.

²² Interview with Al-Majallah, 12-18 January 2003, 30-1 translated by NTIS and found at wnc.fedworld.gov.

²³ Jordan was also concerned about the 90,000 Palestinian refugees living in Iraq. The Palestinians had enjoyed protection under Saddam Hussein's regime, but Amman feared that changing political dynamics in Iraq might create an exodus of these Palestinians into Jordan. See Adnan Khan, "A Long Journey Ahead," MacLean's, 1 July 2003, 62-3.

²⁴ Suleiman al-Khalidi, "Jordan Says US Troops Deployed to Boost Defenses," Reuters, 24 February 2003 found at abcnews.com.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Text of an interview with King Abdullah, Jordan Times, 3 April 2003 found at www.jordantimes.com.

²⁷ Francesca Sawalha, "PM summons US envoy to condemn Iraqi civilian deaths," Jordan Times, 4-5 April 2003 found at www.jordantimes.com.

²⁸ Suleiman al-Khalidi, "Jordan Says US Withdrawing Troops After Iraq War," Reuters, 29 April 2003 found at abcnews.com.

²⁹ Quoted in "Roadmap will be carried out eventually – King," Jordan Times, 25 June 2003 found at www.jordantimes.com.

³⁰ Ignatius, B7.

³¹ Sarah Kershaw, "Iraq's Neighbors Issue Declaration Criticizing US Over Syria," New York Times, 19 April 2003, B6.

³² It should be noted that many US officials in the State Department and CIA are not as enamored with Chalabi as is The Defense Department.

³³ Quoted in Al-Ra'y, 23 April 2003, 1 translated by NTIS and found at wnc.fedworld.gov.

³⁴ Text of an interview with King Abdullah, Jordan Times, 3 April 2003 found at www.jordantimes.com.

³⁵ Almost 59% of registered voters cast ballots in the June 2003 parliamentary elections. Only 25% of the 110 seats were captured by deputies representing political parties. The rest of the seats are held by tribal representatives who are seen as more friendly to the government. The largest opposition party, the Islamic Action Front, has 17 seats.

³⁶ Interview with Al-Majallah, 12-18 January 2003, 30-1 translated by NTIS and found at wnc.fedworld.gov.

³⁷ Quoted in Alan Sipress, "Jordan Breathes Sigh of Relief After Iraq War," Washington Post, 6 May 2003, A13.

³⁸ Quoted in Al-Quds al Arabi, 30 December 2002, 8 translated by NTIS and found at wnc.fedworld.gov. This account of the Road Map's origins was also retold citing American sources in Molly Moore and John Ward Anderson, "Mideast Plan is Formally Launched," Washington Post, 1 May 2003, A1, A21.

³⁹ Sipress.

⁴⁰ Jordan appointed a new Ambassador to Israel in mid-2000, but following the start of the intifada in September did not dispatch him to Tel Aviv. Amman maintained diplomatic ties with Israel, but Jordan is diplomatically represented at the chargé d'affaires level at its embassy.

⁴¹ Text of speech in Jordan Times, 5 June 2003 found at www.jordantimes.com.

⁴² See "Monthly Summary of Contributions" May 31, 2003 at www.un.org. Outside of North Africa, Jordan is the only Arab state contributing peacekeepers and its contingent is more than the contributions of Algeria, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia combined.

⁴³ Francesca Sawalha, “A blue beret’s job – more than just peacekeeping,” Jordan Times, 8 July 2001 found at www.jordanantimes.com.

⁴⁴ Dalya Dajani, “Kingdom detonates 5,790 mines in last stockpile clearing effort,” Jordan Times, 24 April 2003 found at www.jordantimes.com.

⁴⁵ Colum Lynch, “US Presses UN to extend War Crimes Court Exemption,” Washington Post, 7 June 2003 A16.

⁴⁶ Rana Hussein, “Judge Hikmat becomes 1st Arab appointed to international tribunal,” Jordan Times, 29 June 2003 found at www.jordantimes.com.

⁴⁷ The members of the Human Security Network are Austria, Canada, Chile, Greece, Ireland, Jordan, Mali, The Netherlands, Norway, Slovenia, Switzerland and Thailand. South Africa is an observer member.

⁴⁸ See Abdullah’s interview in Al-Ra’y, 29 June 2002 translated by NTIS and found at wnc.fedworld.gov.