



Jordan — Va-PoReg Country Report

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08/24/1516 Start Part of Other Country [of Ottoman Empire]: From 1516 until 1918, the territory of what constitutes Jordan today (known as Transjordan) was under Ottoman rule from the 16th century until early 20th century. The Ottoman-Mamluk War was decisive for Ottoman rule in the region. The battle of Marj Dabiq on 08/24/1516 was leading the Ottoman success against the Mamluk.¹ The region of Transjordan was included under the jurisdiction of Ottoman Syrian provinces.² However, Turkish control ended during World War I when the Hashemite Army of the Great Arab Revolt, took over and secured present-day Jordan with the help and support of the region's local Bedouin tribes, Circassians, and Christians. The revolt was supported by the Allies of World War I, including Britain and France.³

10/23/1917 End Part of Other Country [of Ottoman Empire, Autocratic Monarchy]/Start Direct Rule Occupation Regime [by United Kingdom, (Monarchical) Electoral Oligarchy, French, Electoral Democracy and Arab forces]: Following the Arab Revolt of World War I, the region of Transjordan as a Levantine province of the former Ottoman Empire came under joint military administration of British, French and Arab forces called Occupied Enemy Territory Administration (OETA).⁴ The administration was officially declared by the 1918 Anglo-French Modus Vivendi signed on 09/30/1918.⁵ In practical terms, the agreement led to the establishment of three OETA territories: the South (Palestine) under British administration, the West (covering the northern Mediterranean coast including Lebanon) under French administration, and the East (inland Syria including Transjordan) under Arab administration.⁶

11/26/1919 End Direct Rule Occupation Regime [by British, Electoral Democracy, French, Electoral Democracy and Arab forces]/Start Part of Other Country [of Syria, Autocratic Monarchy]: After Ottoman withdrawal, the Transjordan region remained part of Syria in the newly established Kingdom of Syria ruled by Faysal ibn al-Husayn, with its capital in Damascus (Rogan 1996). In OETA East, British administration ended following the withdrawal of British forces from the territory in November 1919, and the subsequent declaration of the Arab Kingdom of Syria over the same area.⁷ The OETA administration ended, and this region gained de facto recognition as part of the Hashemite-ruled Arab Kingdom of Syria, administering an area broadly comprising the areas of the modern countries of Syria and Jordan.⁸ Therefore, this period is coded as autocratic monarchy starting from the date of British withdrawal in 1919 and not from the official proclamation of the King 1920. After Faysal's official proclamation in March 1920, a League of Nations Mandate was imposed on the territory of Syria which became a French mandate. The San Remo resolution solidified France's territorial claims in Syria, internationally legitimizing its dominion and ensuring that its interactions with Faisal were now heavily influenced by French military and economic agendas. This development considerably weakened Great Britain's capacity to constrain French activities in the region.

07/25/1920 End Part of Other Country [of Syria, Autocratic Monarchy]/Start No Central Authority: The existence of the Kingdom of Syria was brief. In July 1920, France escalated its involvement by issuing a decisive ultimatum, followed by military intervention in the Battle of Maysalun. This intervention led to the overthrow of the Arab government and the ousting of King Faisal from Damascus in August.⁹ We code this regime change event as a foreign intervention. The area situated east of the Jordan River was incorporated into the British mandate over Palestine, while the Faysali state was supplanted by the French mandate in Syria in

October, thereby isolating Transjordan from Damascus (Rogan 1996). As such, southern part of what constituted Transjordan became „a no man’s land”.¹⁰ Since there was no established ruler or occupying power the period is coded as no central authority. Both LIED and V-Dem do not treat Jordan before 1922.

04/11/1921 End No Central Authority/Start Autocratic Monarchy [as Emirate of Transjordan under International Mandate]: Following a brief interregnum period in which Transjordan was not controlled by a central authority nor occupied by any power, the future of the territory of the Transjordan became an issue between competing interests during the Cairo Conference held from 03/12 to 03/30/1921. At that conference, Churchill suggested establishing Transjordan as an Arab province with an Arab Governor, who would acknowledge British oversight of his administration and be answerable to the High Commissioners for Palestine and Transjordan.¹¹ Following the outcomes of further meetings and negotiations between British officials and representatives of Transjordan it was agreed to entrust Abdullah bin Hussein with the administration of the territory, operating within the framework of the British Mandate for Palestine while maintaining a fully self-governing system.”¹² Britain had already received a mandate over Palestine and now administered that east part of Jordan as part of that mandate. Abdullah established his government on 04/11/1921. For example, Golan speaks of a protectorate already in 1922. Following World War I, the Ottoman Empire (1299-1922) was dismantled, and its territories were partitioned between Britain and France. The League of Nations (precursor to the UN) granted Britain a mandate over Palestine, and in 1922, Britain allocated a portion of it, the eastern bank of the Jordan River, to its protectorate, the Emirate of Transjordan (Golan 2018). In contrast to other sources, this period is coded as under international mandate and not as a protectorate because nominal independence for Transjordan and the creation of the post of High Commissioner occurred only later by the first Transjordan Treaty in 1928.¹³ According to LIED no multiparty executive or legislative elections were held during this period. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem’s JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were moderate, while V-Dem’s LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were robust.

02/20/1928 Continuation Autocratic Monarchy [as Protectorate by United Kingdom, (Monarchical) Electoral Democracy]: A Treaty signed in February 1928 between Transjordan and Britain recognized the existence of an independent government in Transjordan and established the post of a British High Commissioner for Transjordan. Although the status of the international mandate over Transjordan was not altered by this agreement, this period is coded as a protectorate because while Transjordan nominally became independent, the British still retained their military presence and control of foreign affairs.¹⁴ On 04/02/1929 the first general elections in the country’s history were held.¹⁵ According to LIED only legislative elections, which weren’t multiparty, were held during this period. Moreover, LIED codes political liberties as absent since 1922. V-Dem’s PCLI indicates a not real presence for this time. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem’s JCE and LCE are both interpreted by us as indicating moderate constraints on the executive.

05/25/1946 Continuation Autocratic Monarchy [as independent country]: Through a treaty inked in London on 03/22/1946, Britain officially acknowledged Transjordan as a fully sovereign independent state. Subsequently, on 05/25/1946, Amir Abdullah adopted the title of King, and upon the ratification of the treaty on 06/17/1946, the territory was renamed The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (Paxton 1980). The monarchy was founded by King Abdullah, who was the son of the Ottoman emir of Mecca. He played a prominent role in the Arab nationalist movement, opposing Ottoman rule, and aligned with the British during both World Wars I and II (Lewis 1991, Geddes/Wright/Frantz 2014: 71-72). For a brief time between 02/14/1958 and 07/14/1958 Jordan was in federation with the Iraq part of the Hashemite Arab Federation (Paxton 1980). In 1947 universal male suffrage was introduced and in 1974 female suffrage.¹⁶ According to the 1952 Constitution, the government is a hereditary monarchy with a bicameral parliament, consisting of the Senate and the House of Representatives. The king holds extensive executive powers. He has the authority to appoint and dismiss the prime minister and the cabinet. Additionally, he can dissolve the parliament Assembly at his direction. According to LIED only legislative elections, which weren’t multiparty, were held until 1950, from 1951 to 1953 no multiparty executive and legislative elections were held, from 1954 to 1956 only multiparty

legislative elections were held, from 1957 to 1960 no multiparty executive and legislative elections were held, in 1961 only legislative elections, which weren't multiparty were held, from 1962 to 1965 only multiparty legislative elections were held and in 1966 no multiparty executive and legislative elections were held. Although constitutionally independent, the judiciary's autonomy is effectively limited in practice. The King appoints the Constitutional Court and the chair of the Judicial Council, responsible for nominating civil court judges. Judges of both civil and Sharia courts are formally appointed by royal decree.¹⁷ From 1946 to 1951, as per Polity5's classification, the executive wielded unrestricted authority without any formal limitations. Between 1952 and 1955, based on Polity5's assessment, the executive faced slight limitations on power during this period. In 1956, according to the Polity5 indicator, during this period, the executive faced substantial limitations on decision-making power. Since 1957, the executive faced weak constraints, classified as Intermediate Category 1 between unlimited authority and slight limitations. On 06/05/1967 martial law was introduced in Jordan, coinciding with the outbreak of the Six-Day War. The imposition of martial law led to the suspension of parliamentary elections and significant restrictions on political activities. During this period Jordan operated more like an absolute monarchy in practice, despite being formally a constitutional monarchy, hence, in our classification it is a case of an autocratic monarchy. The imposition of martial law significantly increased the powers of the king and the executive branch. Crucial for our categorization is the absence of a popularly elected parliament. According to LIED only multiparty legislative elections were held until 1971, in 1972 and 1973 only legislative elections, which weren't multiparty were held, from 1974 to 1983 no multiparty executive and legislative elections were held, in 1984 only multiparty legislative elections were held, and from 1985 onward only legislative elections, which weren't multiparty were held. From 1967 to 1973, based on Polity5's evaluation, the executive faced weak constraints, classified as Intermediate Category 1 between unlimited authority and slight limitations. Between 1974 and 1983, the executive wielded unrestricted authority without any formal limitations. Since 1984, based on Polity5's evaluation, during this period, the executive faced weak constraints, classified as Intermediate Category 1 between unlimited authority and slight limitations. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE and LCE are both interpreted by us as indicating moderate constraints on the executive with the exception of 1956 where LCE briefly increased to indicating robust constraints. Moreover, political liberties are still coded as absent by LIED. V-Dem's PCLI states them as not really present. According to FH's classification for 1972-1982, a score between 11 and 14 makes the country not free, which we also place in the not free category. Between 1984 and 1990 the country fluctuates between 10 and 11, which FH classifies as not free. On 08/11/1989 martial law in Jordan officially ended. This lifting of martial law was part of broader political reforms initiated by King Hussein in response to domestic and regional pressures. The end of martial law paved the way for the first parliamentary elections in over two decades, which were held on 08/11/1989. These elections marked a step toward political liberalization and the reintroduction of a multiparty system in Jordan in 1992. Since the reintroduction of the multiparty system in 1992, Jordan has seen a variety of political parties. However, these parties often operate under strict state controls and limitations. While there are numerous political parties, they often lack strong grassroots support and are generally weak in terms of organizational structure. Major parties include the Islamic Action Front (IAF), the political wing of the Muslim Brotherhood, which is one of the most prominent and organized opposition groups. The electoral system in Jordan is designed in a way that tends to favour pro-government candidates and tribal affiliations over political party representation. The system includes a combination of proportional representation and majoritarian elements, with reserved seats for women, Christians, and Circassians. Political activities are closely monitored by the government, and there are significant restrictions on political expression and organization. Political parties must navigate a regulatory environment that includes requirements for licensing and limits on foreign funding. In recent years, there have been efforts to reform the political system to allow for greater political participation and strengthen political parties. However, these reforms have been gradual and face resistance from entrenched interests. Constitutional amendments in 2022 granted the King sole authority to appoint chief judge of the religious courts and the president of the overseeing council. However, instances of judicial independence in practice and citizens successfully challenging state actors in court cases occur. In 2016 the electoral-law reform

implemented a multi-vote proportional representation system for parliamentary elections, replacing the former system of single nontransferable voting.¹⁸ According to LIED only, multiparty legislative elections were held until 2000, in 2001 and 2002 no multiparty executive and legislative elections were held, from 2003 to 2008 only multiparty legislative elections were held, in 2009 no multiparty executive and legislative elections were held. From 2010 onward, only multiparty legislative elections were held. Political liberties were still coded as absent following LIED. V-Dem's PCLI increased into a range which we interpret as an ambiguous state. According to Polity5, during this period, the executive encountered slight limitations on decision-making power imposed by other institutions. For the period 1989-1999, V-Dem's JCE and LCE are both interpreted by us as indicating moderate constraints on the executive. Until 2016 V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were moderate, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were robust. From 2016 onwards, both are interpreted by us as indicating robust constraints. Only in 1992 did Jordan achieve an FH score of 6, which we categorize as rather free. From 1993 to 2024, the score fluctuated between 8 and 11, which we categorize as rather not free. Since 08/11/1989 Jordan is a borderline case between an autocratic and a constitutional monarchy.

Autocratic Monarchy as of 07/01/2025 continued.

Additional Sources (Bank 2004, Lust-Okar 2006, Shyroch 2000)

Notes

- ¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Marj_Dabiq
- ² [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transjordan_\(region\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transjordan_(region))
- ³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Jordan#Establishment
- ⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Occupied_Enemy_Territory_Administration
- ⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Occupied_Enemy_Territory_Administration
- ⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1918_Anglo-French_Modus_Vivendi
- ⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Occupied_Enemy_Territory_Administration
- ⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emirate_of_Transjordan
- ⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/San_Remoo_conference
- ¹⁰ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Interregnum_\(Transjordan\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Interregnum_(Transjordan))
- ¹¹ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cairo_Conference_\(1921\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cairo_Conference_(1921))
- ¹² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emirate_of_Transjordan
- ¹³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emirate_of_Transjordan
- ¹⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emirate_of_Transjordan
- ¹⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1929_Transjordanian_general_election
- ¹⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women%27s_suffrage
- ¹⁷ https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Jordan_2016
- ¹⁸ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/jordan/freedom-world/2024>

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