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# **JORDAN DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE ASSESSMENT**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The overarching challenge that Jordan faces in the D/G area is an inclusion/participation problem. Specifically, citizens from all walks of life believe that they are denied any meaningful input into the decision-making process, including on those issues that directly affect their daily lives. The team found out that this feeling of being shut out, as well as the attending and growing frustration and alienation from the political process, were pervasive feature in all sectors of society.

- Average citizens feel that they are ignored by senior decision-makers, and that their preferences on key political and economic issues do not have any significant influence on the decisions that are actually being made. Again and again, the central complaint that emerged in our interviews was “people don’t have a say” and “how we feel [about the issues of the day] doesn’t matter to those in charge.”
- Businesspersons feel that critical decisions that have a major impact on the future of their businesses are made without consulting with them. Jordan’s overarching inclusion problem thus extends to the business community, within which we detected a high level of bitterness toward what is seen as the indifference of those in government to the concerns of average businesspersons.
- Independent editors and journalists do not feel represented by those institutions (such as the Jordan Press Association) that are supposed to speak on their behalf, or by those official bodies (such as the Higher Media Council) that are mandated to shape the rules and regulations governing the media.
- At the local government level, there is also frustration with a new electoral system that allows the central government to choose and appoint the mayor, as well as up to 50 percent of all members of local government councils.

Jordan therefore suffers from the widely shared perception that there are not enough mechanisms to allow the population to participate in decision-making, and that those mechanisms that do exist are seriously flawed. This is reflected for instance in the almost universal condemnation of an electoral law that is criticized for over-representing certain constituencies at the expense of others, and, therefore, for distorting popular will as it is expressed through elections.

Mixed with significant concerns about electoral politics, one also detects frustration with a perceived lack of institutionalized mechanisms for regular dialogue between state and society. The overwhelming majority of those with whom we spoke felt there is no real effort by decision-makers to consult with those very constituencies that are being affected by their decisions. For the most part, consultation is conducted in an ad-hoc and informal manner. It does not extend much beyond a small circle within the ruling elite and its private sector allies.

This situation partially reflects the dominant outlook within a governing elite that (a) does not appear to grasp the importance of striving for broad-based public support of its decisions and of the strategic choices made by the regime; and (b) is not particularly adept or skilled at explaining its policies to the public.

In short, public policy-making in Jordan suffers from a “communication deficit” between the government and the population. This deficit partially stems from a lack of know-how by government officials, but, more significantly, it betrays an outlook that views citizen input and

government accountability as items that can be dispensed with in the quest for political and economic development. The traits of senior government officials that were most consistently denounced during our interviews were their arrogance and blatant disregard for the need to explain and justify their policies to the population.

The inclusion/participation deficit that has been described stems to a large extent from a competition problem - i.e., from a generalized lack of political space and from shrinking opportunities for autonomous political expression and organizing since the mid-1990s. Beginning in 1993-94, Jordan's reform process experienced significant backsliding, and the situation deteriorated even further between 1997 and 2001, following the opposition boycott of the 1997 parliamentary elections, several new curbs on freedom of expression and assembly, the disbanding of the lower house in June 2001 (four months before the end of its term), and successive postponements of parliamentary elections for two consecutive years.

It is this steady constriction of political space that has (a) reduced considerably channels for independent political expression, and (b) fueled the popular belief that taking part in those few remaining avenues for political participation is not meaningful and is unlikely to affect decision-making in any significant way.

That perception, in turn, largely accounts for the growing alienation from, and cynicism toward, the political process, and for the population's tendency to disengage from remaining arenas for participation. This phenomenon was exemplified in the recent parliamentary elections of June 17, 2003, when, for instance, turnout in the capital (where the greatest concentration of educated and politically-inclined voters can be found) was only 46% overall, and well below 40% if one excludes one district, where the exceptionally high turnout of about 80% was driven mostly by tribal affiliations.

The situation that has just been summarized represents a significant handicap for Jordan's political and economic development. Yet, it does not appear to have generated, both within governmental circles in Jordan and in the donor community, the degree of concern that it should have attracted. In that respect, the team detected a measure of prevailing complacency about Jordan's ability to live with the inclusion/participation problem discussed above.

The D/G strategy proposed in Part Four of this document would aim to tackle Jordan's inclusion-participation challenge by providing assistance toward the following four key objectives:

- (1) A more influential and capable legislature, as well as more productive relationships between the executive and the legislative branches of government;
- (2) Enhanced participation at the local level;
- (3) Improved transparency and the initiation of a national dynamic to tackle corruption;
- (4) More effective use of the media toward furthering D/G objectives.

The common theme running through all the recommendations suggested under each of these four pillars is to encourage a broad-based policy dialogue between government and society. This

dialogue would focus on issues of economic reform (because of their inherent importance to Jordan's future, and because those issues have been the focus of the executive branch over the past several years, and will remain at the forefront of the policy agenda) as well as on questions of education and health (because of their direct relevance to people's daily lives, and because they are major components of USAID's portfolio in Jordan, and thus provide natural linkages between the Mission's activities in the D/G area and in other sectors).

## INTRODUCTION

In 1989, Jordan embarked on an ambitious democratization experiment, which by 1993 had yielded significant advances (see the sections on consensus and competition in Part One below). Unfortunately, Jordan's efforts were derailed by its October 1994 peace treaty with Israel -- in particular by that treaty's failure to deliver on its anticipated benefits. In 1994-95, the reform process began to stall, and, in the years that followed, significant backsliding would take place in key areas, particularly freedom of expression and the press.

The November 1997 elections to Jordan's lower house took place amidst a crisis between the palace and a coalition of Islamist, leftist and pan-Arab opposition parties. That crisis was precipitated by a number of divisive issues, prominent among which was the breakdown of the Arab-Israeli "peace process" following the May 1996 Israeli elections. These historic elections had seen the return of the Likud party to power and the formation of a hard-line coalition government headed by Binyamin Netanyahu. When under that government the peace process turned sour, King Hussein was faced with growing domestic criticisms of Jordan's continued efforts to normalize relations with the Jewish state. To combat critics in the press and the legislature, the king engineered the adoption of a new, highly restrictive press law, and he ignored the opposition's call for a change in the controversial electoral law that had been adopted in 1993. As a result, both the Islamic Action Front (the political arm of the Muslim Brotherhood) and leftist political parties boycotted the November 1997 elections. The low voter turnout (56 percent of registered voters and 46 percent of all eligible voters) showed that disillusionment with the political and economic situation in the country was widespread.

Nevertheless, the elections took place as scheduled, and the confrontation between the government and the opposition remained a peaceful one. None of the political parties went so far as to criticize the legitimacy of the monarchy. Those who boycotted the election did not seek to disrupt the electoral process and behaved as a "loyal opposition." The king, for his part, did not respond to criticisms of his policies in the sensitive area of national security and foreign affairs as he might have done in the past -- that is, by canceling the elections and/or suspending the legislature. He even paid tribute to the Muslim Brotherhood's "honorable stands" in politics. These developments could be understood to indicate that, despite an increasingly tense political situation, and despite the widespread perception that the democratization process had suffered serious setbacks since 1994, Jordan's potential for further democratic gains was still real.

Because of the opposition boycott of the 1997 elections, the 1997-2001 legislature was dominated by tribal and pro-government figures which, for the most part, did not seriously question the cabinet's policies. As a result, power was further concentrated in the executive branch, and political space in general continued to diminish.

In July 1998, King Hussein left Jordan for cancer treatment in the United States. During his absence, his brother, Crown Prince Hassan served as regent. Hassan had held the title of crown prince for thirty-five years, and was widely expected to succeed King Hussein upon the latter's death. In January 1999, however, after it became clear that he had little time left to live, King Hussein returned to Jordan. In an announcement that caught Jordanians and foreign analysts

alike by surprise, he stripped Hassan of his title and announced that his eldest son, Abdallah, henceforth would be Crown Prince. He died shortly thereafter, on February 7, 1999, after a reign that had spanned forty-seven years.

Crown Prince Abdallah, then aged only thirty-seven, immediately ascended the throne in what turned out to be a smooth transition of power, and became known as King Abdallah II. One of his first decisions was to appoint his half-brother, nineteen-year old Prince Hamzeh, as crown prince.

The new reign spurred hopes that the young monarch, known for his modernist ambitions and socially progressive credentials, would revive the stalled democratization process. Those hopes, however, did not materialize. Instead, King Abdallah made it clear that his primary focus would be on economic liberalization; on bringing about tangible improvements in the standards of living of Jordanian citizens; and on addressing the pressing issues of poverty and unemployment. Significant political reforms, it was assumed, would be postponed until a later stage.

Thus, while the new king consistently called for faster progress toward economic modernization and privatization, and while he relentlessly urged the government to adopt legislation and put in place mechanisms aimed at facilitating Jordan's integration into the global economy, he did not engage in any significant attempt to modernize or open up the political system. In part, his approach stemmed from a conscious decision not to relax political controls at a time of mounting anger at Israeli and US policies. The king seemed well aware that increased political space might disrupt the regime's strategic choice in favor of maintaining peaceful relations with Israel and developing increasingly close ties to Washington.

In fact, from 2000 onward, further political backsliding took place in several key areas, including freedom of the press and freedom of assembly. The press was now routinely described as being "under siege." In September 2000, the outbreak of the second Palestinian intifada in the West Bank and Gaza prompted new curbs on dissent and public gatherings. On several occasions, police and security forces dealt in a particularly harsh and heavy-handed manner with demonstrators protesting Israeli and US policies, as well as the Jordanian government's ties to the US and Israeli governments. Against that background, the intelligence and security services, particularly the General Information Directorate (GID), seemed to be assuming a more influential and visible role in political decision-making. The increasingly intrusive role of security agencies in public affairs became a source of popular complaint.

In June 2001, the king disbanded parliament four months before the end of its term. Parliamentary elections, initially scheduled for the Fall of 2001, were postponed on two successive occasions, for fear that a public opinion inflamed by the crises to the west (the bloodshed in Palestine) and east (the run-up to the US war with Iraq) of Jordan would benefit radical voices. While parliament was in abeyance, from June 2001 to June 2003, the cabinet issued an estimated 230 "temporary laws" -- revealing a further concentration of power in the hands of the cabinet, in a country where the executive branch always has been dominant over the other two branches of government.

Compounding public anger over developments in Palestine and Iraq has been the failure of the promised economic improvements to take place. In fact, an overwhelming majority of Jordanians seem to believe that, official statistics notwithstanding (including GDP growth rates of 4.6% in 2001 and 4.9% in 2002), their standards of living have deteriorated markedly since the mid-1990s. In a poll which the Center for Strategic Studies at the University of Jordan in Amman conducted between June 21 and June 27, 2003, almost half (49.8%) of respondents stated that their economic situation had deteriorated in the previous twelve months, while 38% saw no change in their economic standing and only 10% felt they were better off. Unemployment hovers around 25%.

On June 17, 2003, the first parliamentary elections in six years were held. Knowing that it had been hurt by its boycott of the 1997 elections, the Islamic Action Front (IAF) took part in the contest, as did other opposition forces. The elections resulted in a victory for allies of King Abdallah. Tribal leaders close to the monarchy took an estimated 40 of the lower house's 110 seats, while other pro-government politicians (including former cabinet ministers) won another 22 seats. The IAF, the only real political party in Jordan, won 17 seats and independent islamists another six – making islamists the largest opposition bloc in the new parliament. On the basis of a quota introduced in February 2003, six women entered the lower house (fifty-four were running), including the only woman candidate for the IAF, Hayat al-Museimi, who was also the top-scoring female candidate in the elections. Leftists, pan-Arabists and Baathist candidates were left in the dust – with only the leftist Democratic Party managing to win two votes (one of which it won not outright, but under the quota reserved for Christians). In July 2003, Ali Abul Ragheeb, who had been Prime Minister since 2000, was reappointed by King Abdallah and formed a new cabinet.



## PART ONE:

### ASSESSING JORDAN'S PERFORMANCE IN THE D/G AREA

This section assesses Jordan's performance in the D/G area by using five criteria:

- The degree of consensus over the basic rules of the political game;
- The degree of free and fair competition in the political system;
- The extent to which that system is inclusive and gives all segments of the population an opportunity to participate in the political process;
- The extent to which the state provides for the rule of law; and
- The extent to which the state and societal institutions deliver good governance.

#### CONSENSUS

The single most important factor that made it possible for Jordan to launch its democratization experiment in 1989 was the prior crystallization of a new domestic consensus over the fundamental rules of the political game. Specifically, there was by then general agreement -- both within the political elite and in the population at large -- regarding the legitimacy of the Hashemite monarchy, as well as its central and preeminent role in the country's political system. In addition, there was also a heightened understanding, in both governing and opposition circles, of the need for, and merits of, democratic procedures as a way of addressing the political and economic challenges faced by the country. Movements and parties which in the past had been driven by ideology, uncompromising stances regarding key issues, and a zero-sum game approach to politics, were now displaying a higher degree of flexibility. In particular, they were declaring themselves willing to abide by generally accepted procedures for the resolution of political disagreements.

#### Jordan's "Foundational Consensus" in Historical Perspective

The developments discussed in the paragraph above were critical, and represented significant departures from past political trends in the country. Back in the mid-1950s an earlier attempt at opening up the political system had failed due to the inability of key political actors to agree on ground rules for solving political differences. At the time, several players questioned the legitimacy of the monarchy and the regime's basic domestic and foreign policy orientations. Some refused to accept the very borders of the country and were willing to let themselves be used by outside forces bent on destabilizing the kingdom. In such a polarized and unstable context, democratization was not really a sustainable option for the monarchy. Predictably, Jordan's first real political opening, which had begun in October 1956 with the freest parliamentary elections ever held in the country, was suspended within six months, ending with a political crackdown by King Hussein in April 1957.

Well into the 1970s, many on the left and among pan-Arab parties and movements continued to challenge the legitimacy and, in many cases, the very existence of Hashemite rule. In addition, for many years, the Palestinian resistance movement was ensconced in Jordan, where it represented not only a political challenge to the regime, but a military one as well. Throughout

the 1960s, the ubiquity of the organizational and political power of armed Palestinian groups was encapsulated by the phrase “a state within the state,” which referred to the perceived status of the Palestinian infrastructure in the kingdom. Even after King Hussein’s army crushed the Palestinian resistance in September 1970 (“Black September”), forcing the PLO out of Jordan, the regime continued to face a significant threat from those who did not recognize its legitimacy and the monarchy’s right to rule. (This history helps explain the tendency, among some older officials, to assume that all forms of political opposition carry in them the seeds of a threat to the regime’s very survival. That perception, while clear on the wane, may still be found particularly within the security-military-intelligence apparatus.)

It was from this earlier, bitter legacy that Jordan broke away in the early 1990s. Specifically, between 1990 and 1992, representatives of the major political currents in the kingdom were able to agree on what the basic parameters of political life should be in Jordan. The legitimacy of the monarchy was no longer questioned, and all key players declared themselves willing to operate within the existing constitutional framework. This consensus was displayed publicly and formalized when the so-called “National Charter” was officially ratified in June 1991, during a convention that reaffirmed the centrality of the monarchy, while expressing a commitment to democratic political practices and institutions, manifested in free and fair elections, an elected legislature, a free press, and political parties.

The National Charter had been drafted by a Royal commission, appointed by King Hussein in April 1990. Headed by a former prime minister and consisting of sixty members, that commission had represented the entire political spectrum, from the Muslim Brotherhood through the Communists. Its ranks had included tribal leaders, pan-Arabists, leftists, as well as islamists. The National Charter that was the result of its work amounted to a contract through which the country’s various political forces agreed to abide by certain ground rules of the game. In particular, it spelled out the conditions under which political parties would be legalized. They would have to commit themselves to the principles of democracy, pluralism, and respect for the constitution. They would not be allowed to receive funding from abroad, be linked to foreign groups, or seek to organize within the military and the security forces. They also would have to recognize the supremacy of the monarchy.

The signing of the National Charter by all the major political forces in the country, including the Muslim Brotherhood, paved the way for further democratization measures. In April 1992, martial law (which had been in place since the 1967 war) was abolished, and later in September the ban on political parties was lifted. The new law regulating the operation of political parties allowed any party without connections to external interests to organize and contest elections. Several parties immediately appeared, the most important of which was the Islamic Action Front, which represented the Muslim Brotherhood. With the main political actors committed to working within the system, the regime found it possible to increase political space.

### **The Impact of Political Backsliding on Consensus**

Unfortunately, as was suggested in the introduction, the process of democratization was disrupted by two inter-related developments: (a) the peace treaty which Jordan signed with Israel in October 1994, and (b) a new, widely contested law governing parliamentary elections, adopted in 1993, as well as growing restrictions on freedom of expression and association.

What must be emphasized, however, is that despite the political backsliding that Jordan has experienced since the mid-1990s, and despite the serious disagreements over key procedural aspects of political life, what has remained untouched since the early 1990s is the basic consensus over the legitimacy and centrality of the monarchy, as well as over the appropriate nature of democratic procedures as a way of resolving political and policy differences. In fact, if anything, consensus in those two critical areas has become more solidly rooted in the past decade. And that “foundational consensus,” in turn, has two related sides. On the one hand, it is Jordan’s most decisive asset in the quest for political reform and democracy. On the other hand, any significant threats to it would be the greatest dangers that the Jordanian polity could face. In other words, Jordan can make progress toward a more open political system despite the persistence of disagreements over the procedures of democracy (how elections should be conducted, what should be the scope of press freedoms and the conditions under which those freedoms are exercised, etc.). However, it cannot afford to let those disagreements reach the intensity or the level at which they would undermine the critical consensus over the very merits of democracy as a model, or over the centrality of the monarchy to the country’s political system.

### **The Contentious Issues of the Electoral Law and Electoral Districting**

Since 1993, the single most important source of disagreement over the rules of the game has revolved around the new electoral law introduced that year (when parliament was not in session). Back in 1989, the law had given voters as many votes as the number of seats allotted to their district (that number varied from two to eight). In a district with four seats, for instance, individuals could vote for four different candidates. In practice, it meant that individuals usually would cast their first vote for the candidate they felt could best defend their interests. Usually, that person was someone with a direct connection to their family or tribe. Having done so, however, they still had three more votes, which they could use to support a more ideological candidate, such as an islamist or a leftist. In short, the law enabled individuals to vote both their interest and their heart. It did not force them to choose between “service” or “tribal” candidates on the one hand, and candidates representing a party or an ideology on the other hand. This law had enabled both islamists and the secular left to do well in the 1989 elections (the Muslim Brotherhood had captured 22 seats out of 80, independent islamists another 12, and the secular left about a dozen as well).

In sharp contrast, the new law introduced in 1993 granted each person only one vote, giving a clear advantage to those candidates who could best deliver services, while creating a major hurdle for “ideological” candidates such as leftists and islamists. Politicians who were expected to do well under the new system included tribal leaders, who could fall back on family solidarities for support, as well as candidates who had access to independent resources and government patronage. In short, the new electoral law favored influential, generally conservative families that were the bedrocks of support for the monarchy.

Predictably, the Islamic Action Front (IAF, the party of the Muslim Brotherhood) and leftist groups immediately denounced both the content of the new law and the way in which it had been adopted (they argued that it should have been discussed and ratified by parliament before taking effect). The IAF threatened to boycott the 1993 elections, but chose not to do so following a royal speech that called upon all forces to take part in the contest. Leftist currents were as

reluctant as the IAF to participate, and just as in the case of the IAF, their strength in parliament was significantly reduced.

Four years later, however, both the left and the IAF boycotted the 1997 parliamentary elections, which resulted in a largely unrepresentative parliament, dominated by tribal and pro-government candidates. When new parliamentary elections were announced for June 2003, the IAF held considerable internal deliberations and debate before publicly declaring its intention to field candidates. Analysts interpreted the IAF's decision to take part in the elections as signaling an improvement in its relations with the government. Leftists and pan-Arabists also took part in the June 2003 contest.

Still, the electoral law remains the single most criticized aspect of current political arrangements. It is widely decried as unfair and as an obstacle to the country's political development. Together with electoral districting (see below), that law was, by far, the most recurrent source of the complaints that our interviewees expressed when discussing the rules of the game.

In addition to the electoral law itself, there is also widespread discontent over the manner in which parliamentary seats are divided among the country's various electoral districts. This phenomenon is widely blamed for over-representing pro-regime, pro-government, rural and tribal constituencies, at the expense of urban interests where islamists and Jordanians of Palestinian origin are much stronger. To understand the distortions in representation that this form of electoral manipulation creates, one may consider the following figures, based on the June 2003 elections:

- Even though 38% of registered voters live in Amman, the capital is allocated only 22% of parliamentary seats (23 out of 104 elected MPs). By contrast, the Karak governorate, where only 5.4% of registered voters live, is given 9.6% of the seats (ten) in the lower house. In Tafileh, approximately 1.5% of registered voters are given 3.8% of the seats (4 seats)
- In Tafileh, a candidate who received only 365 votes was elected to parliament, whereas in Irbid a candidate receiving 2,200 votes did not make it.
- Khalil Atiyyeh, an MP elected in Amman's first district, received 19,256 votes, and was joined in parliament by Abdullah Hababbeh, who received only 1,194 votes in Ma'an.
- Overall, during the June 2003 elections, 28% of registered voters elected 55 MPs, while 72% elected only 49 MPs (the remaining six seats went to women, through the quota system).

### **Other Areas of Disagreement over the Rules of the Game**

In addition to the electoral law and electoral districting, a host of restrictive laws affecting other areas of democratic life represent a second tier of procedural contention in political life. Particularly significant in this respect are disagreements over (1) the laws and regulations that govern the press, and (2) those that affect freedom of association and assembly. The exact content of these laws will be discussed in Part Three. It is sufficient to say here that they are

widely criticized for imposing excessive curbs on freedom of expression, association, and assembly, and for leading to excessive censorship and self-censorship in the press. While the antiquated association law dates back to 1966, several of the laws that have resulted in significant curbs on public liberties were passed by the government of Prime Minister Ali Abul Ragheb between June 2001 and June 2003, when parliament was in abeyance. These laws include a thrice-amended press law, a public gatherings law, and a law controlling representation in chambers of commerce.

### **Foreign Policy Dissonances**

On the foreign policy front, Jordan's strategic decision to sign a formal peace treaty with Israel in October 1994, and to maintain good relations with the Jewish state since then, represent yet another area of national dissonance. For many Jordanians -- and not just for those of Palestinian origin -- Jordan's opening to Israel is perceived as a betrayal of the country's pan-Arab and/or Islamic commitments, which touch on multiple levels of identity in the country. But while for some opposition to Israel is a matter of ideology and principle, probably for many more -- who otherwise might have gone along with normalization of relations with the Jewish state -- it cannot be separated from two developments:

- The failure of the "peace process" to deliver what they see as minimum justice for the Palestinians, and the ill-will which they believe Israeli leaders since Benjamin Netanyahu have shown toward implementing not only the letter, but also the spirit, of the 1993 Oslo Agreement;
- The failure of the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty to produce the economic benefits anticipated from it.

In this context, opposition to "normalization" of relations with Israel cuts across Jordan's political society and society and has been a focal point of political activism in the country since the mid-to-late 1990s. Inextricably related to this phenomenon is pervasive opposition to, or great uneasiness with, the strategic alliance with the United States, at a time when the Jordanian public is incensed by US policies -- particularly by what Jordanians view as Washington's unwillingness to rein in the violence that Israel inflicts on the Palestinians, and by the US decision to go to war with Iraq in March 2003 and its occupation of Jordan's neighbor since then.

### **The Persistence of Identity Divisions**

The issue of national identity -- who qualifies as a "true Jordanian," and what the country's proper role in the regional system should be -- has posed a longstanding challenge to consensus in Jordan. Whether one is of Palestinian or East Bank origins remains important, both in practical and political terms. And while there is a general consensus on the desirable nature of the political system, the question of national identity is not fully resolved and lurks closely beneath the country's political surface.

The problem stems from Jordan's sensitive geographic location, and from its peculiar demographic history. In 1948, Jordan was flooded by Palestinian refugees following the creation

of Israel and the first Arab-Israeli war. These dramatic events set the stage for Jordan's subsequent demographic imbalance between Jordanians of Palestinian origin and Jordanians native to the East Bank of the Jordan River ("Transjordanians" or "East Bankers"). Palestinians are estimated to constitute somewhere between one-half to two-thirds of the country's population. The political sensitivity of the issue is reflected in the regime's deliberate deflation of Palestinian population figures to approximately one-third of Jordan's total population. Significantly, the government in recent years has endeavored to alter the country's demographic balance by granting citizenship to large numbers of Iraqi Bedouins

From the 1950s onward, the regime made sure to cultivate the support of East Bankers and the country's indigenous tribes, dispensing political patronage to them. Palestinians, by contrast, were regarded with suspicion – the more so since so many Palestinian-dominated organizations questioned the very legitimacy and existence of the regime. Consequently, state institutions – particularly the military and the security-intelligence apparatus -- came to be dominated overwhelmingly by East Bankers. Meanwhile, Palestinians worked in, and became the primary driving force behind, Jordan's small, but critical, private sector.

Since the onset of democratization in 1989, public debate over who is a "real" Jordanian has sharpened. Enlarged political space has allowed many East Bank Jordanians to air their deep-seated suspicions about the "true loyalty" of Palestinian Jordanians. Many Transjordanians continue to feel or fear that Jordanians of Palestinian origin are not sincere in their attachment to Jordan; that their primary source of national identity lies elsewhere (i.e., in Palestine); that they are prone to subordinate Jordan's national interest to the Palestinian cause and broader regional issues; and that this phenomenon represents a serious hindrance to Jordan's democratization prospects, since Jordanian-Palestinians are bound to use greater freedom of expression and association to raise divisive foreign policy issues.

Jordanians of Palestinian origin, meanwhile, believe that they do not enjoy equal opportunities, especially when it comes to representation in the army and the security agencies. Moreover, many of them have regarded the "Jordan first" campaign pushed by King Abdallah as provocative, largely because it promotes a view that historically has been more in line with the political vision of East Bankers – i.e., the idea that Jordanians should place their own issues and interests ahead of foreign causes (prominent among which is the Palestinian question). In short, instead of furthering national unity, as it was intended to do, the campaign has revived longstanding, unresolved issues about the very identity of the country: to what extent is Jordan an Arab nation whose foreign policies should take into account pan-Arab causes (in which case relations with Israel and ties to the US should be downgraded)? And to what extent is it, instead, a country that should take care of its own, distinct interests (which, some argue, are best served by a strong alliance with the US and normalization with Israel)?

### **The Resilience of Consensus**

Despite the persistence of identity divisions, the foreign policy dissonances, and the previously discussed disagreements over the existing rules of the game, none of the key political players has quit politics permanently, or even hinted at rejecting the foundations of the political order. While Islamist, pan-Arab, and leftist opposition forces have challenged the regime -- consistently and often bitterly -- over its foreign policy priorities and the restrictive amendments it has made

to the rules of the political game, they neither have questioned the regime's legitimacy nor rejected its right to rule. This attitude is particularly revealing considering that it has survived deliberate efforts by successive governments to constrict the influence of the opposition, as well as the regime's opting for foreign policy courses that have been anathema to both islamists and leftists.

Jordan's Islamists are particularly remarkable in this regard. For example, rather than vote against the peace treaty with Israel, Islamist MPs boycotted the parliamentary session in which it was approved. More recently, following their return to parliament in July 2003, Islamist MPs have indicated that while they are still opposed to normalization, and will fight against it, they have no intention of seeking to overturn the treaty. This reflects both a willingness to play within the political boundaries set by the regime, and, some analysts would argue, a loyalty to the monarchy and to the country that runs deeper than political preferences and calculations.

## COMPETITION

Political competition in Jordan was quite restricted until November 1989, when the freest and fairest parliamentary elections since 1956 took place. The early 1990s witnessed extensive political liberalization and incipient democratization, involving the reactivation of existing avenues for competition, and the opening of new ones. The 1992 Political Parties Law, for example, provided the legal framework for the recognition and registration of dozens of parties. In 1993, a new Press and Publications Law was adopted that was deemed fairly liberal, despite some of the restrictions it imposed. Significantly, it was followed by the appearance of several new weeklies dealing with political events.

However, as discussed previously, Jordan's peace treaty with Israel in October 1994 caused the first constriction of political space, which became even more limited from 1997 onward – with several of the greatest setbacks to political liberalization taking place after 2000. Consequently, while competition was the area in which the most noticeable advances had occurred in the early 1990s, it was one of the hardest hit by the political regression of the late 1990s. One result has been the absence of a broad public debate on the key issues and challenges facing the country, as well as a clear trend toward a further concentration of power in the Palace and the security apparatus.

1. As shown in the "Consensus" section above, the consequences of electoral competition are limited by gerrymandering. As far as parliamentary elections are concerned, candidates do compete, but, in the end, the division of parliamentary seats among the country's various districts ensures a majority to East Bank constituencies as well as pro-government and tribal candidates, while significantly under-representing the voices of Jordanians of Palestinian origin, islamists, and the opposition.

2. **Parliament has been unable to act as a check on the executive branch.** In part because of the particularly poor performance of the 1997-2001 parliament, the legislature is widely seen as an ineffective and powerless institution that is not discharging its vital, constitutionally mandated functions regarding executive branch oversight. Its members are subject to manipulation by executive branch officials. From 1997 to 2001, because of the opposition boycott of the 1997

elections, parliament was dominated by pro-government figures, and proved to be a toothless body. And between June 2001 and June 2003, the lower house was not even in session, and elections to it were postponed on two successive occasions. During that period, the executive branch legislated at will, issuing an estimated 230 temporary laws. Earlier versions of those laws had been turned down by the 1997-2001 legislature. The forced absence of parliament, therefore, provided the executive branch with the opportunity to impose an agenda about which there was often significant public reservations.

**3. Civil society is weak and fragmented**, particularly in terms of advocacy groups capable of articulating, defending, and pushing forward a reform agenda, exposing and resisting abuses by the executive branch, or acting as an effective counterweight to the powers of the state. Riddled with internal divisions and rivalries, civil society is also greatly handicapped in its efforts by a highly restrictive and antiquated associations law dating back to 1966. That law makes it extremely difficult for civil society organizations (CSOs) to engage in any activities that smack of being “political.” The state closely monitors the activities of grassroots voluntary associations.

**4.** Following a period of several years, during which it enjoyed unprecedented freedom, the **press** came under siege in the mid-to-late 1990s, as increasingly restrictive versions of the press law were promulgated. Particularly harmful to press freedoms were amendments to the Penal Code issued in October 2001. These amendments authorized the authorities to shut down publications and impose heavy fines as well as prison terms of up to three years on journalists declared guilty of a long list of often very vague offenses. That list included “inciting violence;” disseminating “false or exaggerated information that attacks state dignity;” “defaming public officials;” publishing statements “harmful to national unity” or that “sow the seeds of hatred and malice;” “inciting divisions among members of society;” “insulting the dignity of individuals or their reputation;” “committing any act considered harmful to the state’s reputation or dignity;” instigating acts of “religious and racial fanaticism;” “inciting strikes and illegal public meetings;” and “disrupting society’s basic norms by promoting deviation from what is right.”

According to the law, the State Security Court was empowered to shut down, temporarily or permanently, any publication or media outlet “guilty” of publishing or airing such statements. Verbal, written or electronic attacks against the king, the queen, and the royal family were punishable by three years in jail. In addition, the news media were prohibited from publishing “any article or information that slanders heads of state of Arab, Islamic, or friendly nations”, as well as “any news item, cartoon or comments that might harm the Jordanian Armed Forces or the security forces.”

In addition, the new law raised the capital requirements for weeklies. Newspapers and weeklies must deposit a significant sum of money at the Ministry of Trade and Industry before they can actually publish. The required capital is hard for many publications to raise. Largely as a result, the number of weeklies declined significantly in the late 1990s, plummeting to about half a dozen in 2003.

In addition to the restrictions described above, the Jordan Press Association (JPA) and the Higher Media Council (which the king established in December 1999) are widely viewed as



government-dominated bodies that do not truly represent the interests and opinions of media professionals. The Ministry of Information, which was to be abolished and replaced by the Higher Media Council, remained in place as of August 2003. Moreover, the government does not hesitate to interfere regularly in the affairs of the press, and editors and journalists complain of receiving routine phone calls aimed at deterring them from reporting on certain stories. As a result, self-censorship is rampant among journalists and, especially, editors. These dynamics are particularly pertinent to, and effective in controlling, the daily newspapers: *al-Ra'i*, *ad-Dustur*, *al-'Arab al-Yawm* and *The Jordan Times*. Through the National Social Security Corporation, the state owns a majority of the shares in the foundation that publishes the dailies *al-Ra'i* and *The Jordan Times*, and it owns a plurality of shares in the daily *ad-Dustur*. State-controlled entities also publish most of the advertisements in *al-Ra'i* and *ad-Dustur*, and these advertisements constitute the single most important source of these dailies' revenues.

The situation of *Al-'Arab al-Yawm* exemplifies the limitations placed on the media in Jordan. When it started in 1997, the newspaper was expected to push the boundaries of permissible press freedoms. In its first few years, it did publish a number of ground-breaking stories dealing with pollution in a water plant, and the botched Israeli assassination attempt on a Hamas leader in Jordan. However, the government brought a corruption case against *al-'Arab al-Yawm's* publisher, an action which eventually forced him to withdraw from the company owning the newspaper. A bank then bought up his shares in that company. Following those developments, political coverage in *al-'Arab al-Yawm* came to resemble that in its staid counterparts.

The weekly press is bolder, but often sensationalist and lacking in credibility. An increasingly constraining political environment and an extremely competitive market hinder this sector of the press's ability to serve as an avenue for meaningful debate on political issues.

Television and radio in Jordan are state-owned and managed. Despite recurrent official pronouncements regarding the desirability of increasing television's autonomy and establishing a Jordanian equivalent to the BBC, there has been no progress in this area. Jordanian television generally focuses on staid, anodyne reporting about the royal family and government activities. Entertainment and sports are emphasized at the expense of news reporting. Only a few programs openly address issues of public concern.

Still, the Jordanian press recently received some good news when on April 21, 2003 the cabinet revoked the October 2001 amendment to Article 150 of the Penal Code. That amendment had provided for many of the vague offenses described above and which could result in fines or prison sentences for journalists.

**5. In the past several years, the state has imposed further restrictions on academic freedoms and student politics.** Since 1999, the president of the University of Jordan in Amman has been empowered to appoint the chair as well as half of the eighty members of the student council. Faculty complain of direct and indirect efforts to curb freedom of expression, and of measures aimed at damaging the professional prospects of known critics of the government. The policy is generally seen as targeted primarily, though not only, at islamists.

Most Jordanians also continue to believe that there is a price to be paid for participating in even peaceful opposition activities. Fear of direct or indirect harassment by the *mukhabarat* (the

secret police) remains a concern, particularly in light of the secret police's higher profile and influence since the late 1990s, and considering that citizens applying for many jobs must submit a reference letter from the *mukhabarat*. In fact, the perception that speaking against government policies entails risks has risen significantly in recent years, as shown by a comparison of two polls which the Center for Strategic Studies conducted in, respectively, mid-1999 and June 2003. The comparison reveals that the percentage of those who fear they will be punished in one way or another for criticizing the government has risen from 69.9% of respondents in 1999 to 83.2% in 2003.

**6. Freedom of assembly**, too, has suffered, particularly in light of a temporary law adopted in August 2001, which requires that organizers of public gatherings and demonstrations request a permit from the relevant governor at least three days prior to the event (the previous law had required only that notification be given). Under the new law, failure to comply may result in jail sentences and significant fines.

**7. At the local level, too, competition has diminished sharply** in recent years. This is largely a product of an amendment to the Municipal Law introduced by the cabinet in late 2002. Before the amendment, mayors and municipal council members were all elected. Thus, during the 1999 and 1995 municipal elections, individuals cast two ballots – one for their council members and one for their mayor (prior to 1995, the mayor was chosen by the elected municipal council). Under the modified law, the central government appoints the mayor as well as up to fifty percent of the council members.

Thus, if one takes the example of Zarqa, Jordan's second largest city, the number of elected council members has fallen by half (in many other municipalities, the government has chosen to appoint fewer than half the total number of councilors; nation-wide, the government appointed 460 members, including mayors, leaving only 536 council members to be elected by the public). Moreover, because of the presence of an equal number of appointed members, the elected members of the council now wield diminished authority. Most importantly, in Zarqa as elsewhere, what used to be the "big prize" of local elections – the position of mayor – has been taken out of the race, since the government in Amman now appoints all mayors.

These developments have had a major and extremely negative impact not only on the degree of competition, but also on the level of popular participation. Knowing that their ability to choose the mayor has been taken away from them, and that they only elect a percentage of all council members, people have expressed far less interest than before in taking part in the elections. As a result, both the number of candidates running for the July 26, 2003 elections and the number of registered voters have experienced a sharp decline. According to Zarqa's former deputy mayor, there used to be 180,000 registered voters in the old system, whereas merely a week before the July 26, 2003 elections, only 40,000 had bothered to register – at a time when, to make matters worse, the government still had not made it clear that the elections were indeed going to be held, and the local authorities themselves remained unsure as to whether or not those elections would take place.

The central government has used a "technocratic governance" argument to justify its restructuring of municipal councils. Minister of Municipal Affairs Abdul Razzaq Tbeishat

summarized this line of reasoning in June 2003 when he suggested that by appointing mayors as well as a percentage of council members, the government was ensuring the presence on the council of qualified individuals capable of offering efficient municipal services. In essence, government officials have implied that, under the old system, local elections led to “too much politics and not enough good governance.” As they would have it, under the old system the electoral process at the local level spun out of control, resulting in excessive political competition and ineffective local administration. It remains unclear whether the new system indeed will improve governance – but it is already apparent it significantly has reduced both political competition and popular participation.

## **INCLUSION**

The competition problems that have just been examined have had serious, negative consequences on the level of inclusion in the polity. As avenues for competition have narrowed significantly in recent years, the population has displayed a growing tendency toward popular frustration with, apathy toward, and disengagement from political life in the country. The team concluded that this overarching inclusion problem (which cannot easily be separated from the competition issues discussed in the previous section) was the single most important D/G challenge facing Jordan. Consequently, a detailed discussion of that challenge will be postponed to Part Four, which begins by summarizing Jordan’s key D/G problems before highlighting the programmatic implications of that analysis.

Here, we may simply underscore the growing feeling that the state is out of touch on a host of domestic and regional policy issues; that people do not have a say; that “the government does not care;” that the circle of those involved in decision-making is becoming increasingly small; that the regime’s support base has shrunk significantly in recent years; and that there are fewer and fewer avenues for consultation and dialogue between state and society. The result is political resignation and cynicism mixed with growing anger at a mode of government that seems to ignore citizens.

Against this otherwise rather grim background, the parliamentary elections of June 2003 provided limited good news, from both an inclusion and a competition perspective. The lower house indeed is now far more representative of the country’s population than at any time since 1997. It includes representatives from the mainstream Islamic movement and members of other opposition parties that had boycotted the 1997 election.

Beyond the overarching inclusion problem discussed above, two specific inclusion-related issues deserve close attention: the first concerns Jordanians of Palestinian origins, and the second affects women.

### **Palestinians versus East Bankers**

As mentioned earlier, Jordanians of East Bank origin traditionally have been favored in terms of access to state resources, especially state employment. The bureaucracy, the army, the police and the intelligence services have long been strong East Bank preserves (the only partial exception to this phenomenon has been the Ministry of Education). East Bankers also are advantaged with respect to admission to public universities, through quota systems for the

dependents of military families and members of the country's main tribes. Persistent fears among East Bankers that Palestinians might "take over," and that East Bankers will become a minority in their own country, have allowed the perpetuation of these forms of institutional discrimination and exclusion.

Jordanians of Palestinian origins are markedly under-represented (relative to their share of the population) in both the executive and the legislative branches of government. Only 21 out of the 110 MPs (or 19%) elected in June 2003 are Palestinian-Jordanians, up from 11 out of 80 MPs (less than 14%) in the 1997-2001 lower house. (These figures are particularly striking when one remembers that Palestinian-Jordanians represent at least 50 percent and perhaps as much as two-thirds of the population.) As of mid-2003, Jordanians of Palestinian origin made up only six out of 28 ministers, and six out of 40 senators. None of the twelve governors were of Palestinian origin. Furthermore, as discussed earlier, the electoral law by under-representing urban areas, where Palestinians tend to be concentrated (especially in Amman, Zarqa, Irbid and around Salt), the electoral law also undermines Palestinian representation in parliament. Partially because they feel disenfranchised politically, many Palestinian Jordanians refrain from voting, and participation in that community is well below the national average.

### **Women in Politics**

Jordanian women are allowed to vote and encouraged to run for public office. However, women can barely be found in both the executive and the legislative branches of government, though the situation has improved somewhat recently insofar as parliament is concerned.

The only woman who ever won a seat in the lower house through a general election was Toujan Faisal, an outspoken feminist and former television program host, who in 1993 took one of the three seats earmarked for the Circassian and Chechen communities (she won in Amman's relatively liberal Third District). In 1997, however, Faisal was defeated, and no other woman was elected. In 2001, following the death of a sitting member, another woman, Nuha Ma`aytah, won a set through an internal parliamentary vote. But she served for only three months, before the lower house was disbanded in June 2001. There were only two women in the senate appointed in 1997.

In February 2003, an amendment to the election law provided for a quota of six women in the lower house (the number of seats in that chamber was increased accordingly, from 104 to 110). Women, therefore, were guaranteed six seats, and could hope to capture some of the 104 remaining ones. Shortly after elections were announced for June, many women declared their candidacy. By the time the election came about, 54 women were in the race – a significant increase from 17 in 1993, 3 in 1993, and 12 in 1989.

However, the electoral law is still blamed for hindering women's ability to gain access to the lower house. If, as was the case for the elections of 1989, voters could cast as many ballots as the number of seats allotted to their district, a woman candidate might be their second, third, or fourth choice. But when individuals only have one choice, their vote typically goes to a tribal candidate (who is almost always a man).

In any event, women candidates as a whole did poorly in the 2003 elections. Only six women made it into the lower house – all of them through the quota system. No woman won a seat outright. Moreover, the 54 women candidates won only a total of approximately 36,000 votes – that is, about 1.3% of the total number of cast ballots. The six women who entered parliament through the quota system received only approximately 12,000 votes -- with 52% of those votes having gone to one of them, Hayat Meiseimi., the only IAF woman candidate, who won in Zarqa, where she came in fourth amongst 90 candidates. The remaining five women MPs came from largely tribal constituencies, where East Bankers predominate. Fewer than 5% of women voted for women candidates – which demonstrates that women very rarely voted for women candidates.

The disappointing performance of women candidates was a result of several factors:

- The one-person, one-vote electoral system, which undermines the political prospects of women candidates. Men and women alike tend to vote for candidates who have access to patronage, and that is rarely the case of women candidates.
- In several districts, women competed against other women, which reduced the chance that one of them would be elected.
- Many of the women candidates were seen as insufficiently qualified, and a majority of them ran a poor campaign.
- In what is still a traditional society, the way a woman votes is often influenced by her husband's preferences.
- In many instances, even modern, educated, professional women decided it made more sense to vote for a liberal man who stood a chance of being elected, and might be able to advance women's rights in parliament, instead of voting for woman candidates who seemed headed for defeat.

Only one woman (Social Development Minister Rowaida Ma`aytah), who already held that portfolio in the outgoing cabinet -- features in the government formed by Ali Abul Ragheb following his re-appointment by the King in July 2003. This came as a disappointment for women activists, who had hoped that, following the introduction of a quota for women in the lower house, women also would see an increase in their representation within the executive branch. The fact that this did not materialize confirms that progress in the areas of women's rights and political influence will continue to be a gradual and slow process.

Before turning to an examination of rule-of-law issues, it should be noted that Jordan does not feature significant inclusion problems for religious and ethnic minorities. The country features a small Christian community estimated at between three and four percent of the total population (as a result of both emigration and lower birth rates, the relative size of that community has declined regularly over the past several decades). Christians, who divide into Catholics, Orthodox, and a very small Assyrian community estimated at about 700 persons, are guaranteed nine seats (or about 8%) in the lower house. Circassians, who represent less than one percent of the total population, are guaranteed two seats (one in Amman and one in Zarqa), and Chechens

one seat. Consequently, both of these ethnic minorities (who are Sunni Muslims), are, like Christians, represented beyond what their percentage of the population would seem to justify.

## **RULE OF LAW**

There is still no real rule of law in Jordan. The most problematic areas in this respect are as follows.

1. The judiciary lacks independence – a situation on which Part Four will elaborate, as it has important programmatic implications. Both executive branch officials and influential figures in society interfere routinely into the affairs of the judiciary, including to affect the rulings of judges or to have sentences reversed. “Telephone justice” is widely regarded as a pervasive phenomenon.
2. Within the judiciary, those who are in a position to make critical appointments often do so on the basis of tribal affiliations or political leanings. As a rule, qualifications, merit and achievement do not constitute the primary basis on which one is recruited, promoted, or assigned to professionally rewarding positions within the court system. The Minister of Justice enjoys considerable influence within the Higher Judicial Council (HJC), a nine-member body that oversees the careers of judges and decides on their assignment, promotion, disciplining, and retirement. Though legislation passed in 2001 aimed to increase its independence relative to the executive branch, the HJC is still widely viewed as highly vulnerable to pressure from the Ministry of Justice.
3. A culture of resignation and cynicism appears to have taken root among judges regarding the political constraints on their purview. One of the team’s interviewees (someone with considerable and high-level experience within the judicial system) mentioned a revealing incident in which a senior judge, after listening to a recently appointed colleague complain about the political pressure he was feeling in one particular case, casually told him that such situations were typical, and that he eventually would grow accustomed to them.
4. The security and intelligence agencies, which are deeply involved in all sensitive areas of life in Jordan, are not really bound by the law. They, particularly the General Intelligence Directorate (GID), are widely perceived as enjoying a large degree of impunity. Meanwhile, those whom the regime perceives as a threat cannot expect due process. Arbitrary arrest, abuse while in police custody, and instances of prolonged detention without charges remain frequent occurrences. Some of these practices are even permitted by the law. The latter, for instance, allows a governor to place citizens under house arrest for up to one year without formally charging them. There are still numerous allegations of torture and wrongful death while under the custody of the police or the GID.
5. To make things worse, it is hard to detect any significant momentum toward addressing the issues that have been discussed – a situation that has important and negative implications regarding popular perceptions of the judicial system. A comparison of two polls conducted by the Center for Strategic Studies in, respectively, 1999 and 2003, reveals that the number of those who believe that “Jordan is a country in which justice reigns” actually has decreased by nearly

10% in the past four years. During the same period, the number of those who believe that “there is no justice” rose from 11.6% to 15.2%.

**6.** Violence against women remains common, and ranges from domestic abuse to “honor crimes” (assaults with intent to commit murder against a women by a relative for alleged sexual misconduct). There were twenty-one reported instances of honor crimes in 2002, but the actual number is believed to have been much higher. The law still allows honor crimes not to be tried as murders. Consequently, honor crime offenders rarely spend more than two years in jail (by contrast, those found guilty of first-degree murder may receive a death sentence).

## **GOVERNANCE**

**1.** “Good governance” through administrative and public-sector reform has emerged as a major stated objective of the Jordanian government since at least 2000. In practice, however, central government institutions continue to display a lack of accountability and transparency. Many of the mechanisms and institutions required to provide for accountability and transparency are simply not in place. Those few that do exist (like the Audit Bureau) are highly defective – they lack the broad mandate, resources, and independence to perform adequately their functions.

**2.** In fact, in several important respects, the degree of accountability and transparency has decreased since the late 1990s. This has been reflected in:

- (a) the growing role of a security and intelligence apparatus that is neither transparent nor accountable to the public;
- (b) the absence of parliament -- a potentially key institution for oversight and accountability of the executive branch -- between June 2001 and June 2003; and
- (c) the practice, throughout the same period, of allowing the executive branch to legislate at will, by issuing temporary laws not easily accessible to the public, and not subjected to any significant, broad based public debate.

The lack of transparency and accountability mechanisms affects not only government institutions, but civil society organizations and the business world as well. The poor public image of “civil society” stems in part from the opacity that characterizes the functioning of many NGOs, and from the fact that their rank-and-file members typically have few means of holding the leadership accountable. Similarly, one of the key reasons why private-sector firms as well as joint public-private entities find it difficult to raise capital lies in the inability of shareholders to hold the board of directors of those companies accountable. Accountability and transparency are even scarcer in the public sector – a situation which accounts, to a large degree, for the difficult financial position in which many public-sector firms find themselves.

**3.** In a country where, for decades, the public administration was used primarily as a way of providing jobs to a rapidly expanding population, a bloated civil service also represents a major hindrance to good governance. At the central government level, salaries, pensions (particularly those of military personnel), and the expenses of the public administration absorb about 70% of government resources. Debt servicing, as well as payment on the principal of the debt, accounts

for another 12% to 15%. Little is left, therefore, for the vital capital investments needed to maintain, modernize, and expand the country's infrastructure and develop its human resources.

Trimming the size of the staff in the civil service and public-sector entities is always a politically difficult exercise. In Jordan, however, that is even more so since East Bankers (who historically have been the bedrock of support for the regime) constitute an overwhelming majority of civil servants. The regime, therefore, has been particularly hesitant to hurt the interests of constituencies that have been its major support base.

**4.** The burden of civil servants' salaries is felt equally strongly at the local level. In Zarqa, for instance, about 50 percent of the municipality's budget goes toward paying the salaries of the staff. The deputy mayor told the team that the municipality currently employs some 3,232 staff, and, by his own admission, only at the most half of that number is actually needed to run the city efficiently.

**5.** For all the talk about administrative reform, and despite the steps that have taken place in the past two years to improve the functioning of the public administration, the bureaucracy is still sluggish and unresponsive to citizens. Jordan's system of government historically has been quite centralized, and power has tended to be concentrated in the hands of senior decision-makers. Lower-level staff, and even middle-ranking officials, are not empowered, or remain hesitant, to make the decisions that really should be theirs to make if the system is to operate with greater flexibility and speed.

Besides, for decades, political imperatives were far more significant than efficiency criteria in shaping the functioning of government institutions. Divide-and-rule tactics, the use of some institutions to contain the power and ambitions of others, the careful balancing of social and political interests, as well as the reliance on state agencies to co-opt or appease certain constituencies, were far more significant considerations than productivity. That legacy, too, is proving extremely hard to transcend – especially at a time when careful political management and the juggling of often competing interests, both at the domestic and regional/international level, remain critical to ensuring long-term stability.

**6.** It is widely acknowledged that both high-level and petty corruption are systemic -- though little research has been conducted to inform policy on this matter. The issue of corruption represents a serious challenge to the country, and, because of its programmatic implications, it will be discussed at greater length in Part Four.

There is widespread public skepticism that the political will currently exists to tackle high-level corruption in any significant manner. Interviewees repeatedly complained that anti-corruption measures typically target low-level corruption (such as low- and middle-ranking government employees shown to have accepted small bribes), while high-level corruption usually goes unpunished. As one of our interviewees put it, "they eat the small fish and let the sharks go free." Moreover, there is at this time no comprehensive system – no long term strategy and no adequate mechanisms -- to combat corruption. Those few existing institutions that are charged with exposing and fighting fraud and abuses of power are very weak and/or under the influence of the executive branch.



The Audit Bureau (Diwan al-muhasabat) exemplifies this situation. Entrusted with reviewing the operations of government entities to make sure that they did not exceed their budget, or that officials in them did not engage in fraud or violation of existing laws and regulations, the Audit Bureau is an institution with real potential. It has 35 branches throughout the country, and its staff (about 550 persons, over three-quarters of whom have a university degree) is generally competent and dedicated. But it is attached to the Prime Minister's office, and lacks both administrative and financial autonomy. Its head is appointed at the suggestion of the cabinet, and is vulnerable to being dismissed if and when he antagonizes senior power-holders within the executive branch. (The king formally nominates the head of the Audit Bureau, through a royal decree, but in practice the monarch usually follows the recommendation of the cabinet.) The previous head of the Audit Bureau was forced to step down, apparently after he displayed excessive diligence in exposing wrongdoings by ministers and other well-connected officials.

## **PART TWO:**

### **KEY POLITICAL ACTORS**

This section provides an overview of the most significant players in the Jordanian political system. For the purposes of brevity, it discusses briefly six key actors, focusing on their basic interests, political preferences, strategies, and resources:

- • King Abdallah II
- • The security-intelligence-military apparatus
- • The governing elite
- • The tribes
- • Islamists
- • The professional associations

#### **KING ABDALLAH II**

1. Shortly after his appointment as heir to the throne caught the country by surprise, King Abdallah ascended the throne on February 7, 1999, following the death of his long-reigning father. Together with King Mohamed VI of Morocco, President Bashar al-Asad of Syria, and King Hamad al-Khalifa of Bahrain, King Abdallah, who is currently forty-one, belongs to the new generation of Arab rulers which has assumed the reins of power in several countries since 1999. He is deemed to be socially progressive, economically reformist and politically moderate.

2. The king remains at the heart of the political system, and is by far the most influential player within it. Though he strives not to be dragged into day-to-day politics, and to be seen as being above the political fray, he is the source of all key, strategic political and economic decisions in the country. He maintains a particularly tight grip over foreign policy choices and national security issues. He is seen both as a political referee, whose right to arbitrate among competing political and social interests in the country is widely accepted, and as Jordan's ultimate political authority. He is accountable to no one.

3. The current constitution (adopted in 1952, but amended on several occasions) endows the king with broad powers.

- He chooses and appoints the prime minister. He also formally appoints the ministers once they have been selected (with the king's blessing or at the king's request) by the prime minister. At any time, he may dismiss the prime minister or the entire cabinet.
- He can dissolve parliament and veto legislative bills. A royal veto can be overridden only by a two-thirds vote of each chamber of parliament (an unlikely event, in part because of the composition of the senate, described below). He also decides when elections to the lower house may take place, and thus can postpone the holding of elections depending on domestic and regional political circumstances. He appoints all

the members of the senate, as well as its president (the powers of the senate are extensive and may be used as a political counterweight to the lower house).

- He is Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, can declare war, and signs treaties (which, according to the constitution, must be ratified by parliament).

The king also presides over the royal court, which exists side by side with – and can be used as a counterweight to – the cabinet, but is not subject to control or oversight by any other institution. The chief of the royal court is traditionally one of the most influential figures in the political system.

#### 4. King Abdallah is engaged in several difficult balancing acts.

- (a) He must balance the requirement of strong ties with the US against the need to appease a public opinion incensed by US policies in the region, and opposed to, or uneasy with, the close alliance with Washington. On the one hand, he must cultivate US support, because Washington exercises great power in the region, can provide a vital insurance against foreign threats, and is a source of considerable economic and military assistance (particularly at a time when other external sources of patronage, such as remittances and governmental aid from the Gulf states, have dried up). On the other hand, he must be careful not to appear as a “stooge” of the US, and not to align his positions too closely on those of Washington, particularly regarding the sensitive Palestinian question. How to earn the goodwill of a White House despised by a majority of his subjects, without appearing to be beholden to the wishes of an administration that is also seen as the most pro-Israeli in American history, and the most determined to reshape the map of the Middle East to promote US interests within it, is a difficult challenge for a young king with little political experience.
- (b) He must balance the interests of East Bankers and those of Jordanians of Palestinian origins, and not appear to favor one constituency at the expense of another. His Palestinian-born wife, Queen Rania, can be an asset in appealing to the Palestinian-Jordanian component of the population.
- (c) He must reconcile the imperative of maintaining short-term political stability with those required to promote long-term stability through economic development. Economic growth requires economic liberalization, privatization, a more dynamic private sector and a leaner, more efficient civil service. However, privatization, public-sector reform, and a decrease of the size of the civil service tends to threaten the short-term interests of East Bankers, who are dominant in the public sector, while boosting the fortunes of Palestinian-Jordanians, who dominate the private sector. Consequently, the requirements of long-term economic development hold the potential to upset the sensitive balance between Jordan’s two main communities.

5. King Abdullah appears to have genuine reformist intentions to modernize and transform Jordan. In that quest, he enjoys significant assets, including:

- The legitimacy of the monarchy, which is widely accepted and no longer faces the kind of domestic challenges and immediate foreign threats that it did back in the 1950s and 1960s.
- The strong support of the armed forces, in which Abdallah spent his entire career prior to being appointed crown prince, and the existence of security and intelligence services known for their effectiveness.
- His reformist agenda enjoys a potentially wide pool of public support among the urban middle- and upper-middle classes, especially the young.

King Abdallah himself seems to remain popular. While many Jordanians openly criticize key government figures and other close advisers of the king, they generally do not appear to doubt Abdallah's sincerity and commitment to bringing about positive change. The king typically is seen as well ahead of his own government on issues of political reform – and, occasionally, he is blamed (though typically in an indirect manner) for failing to surround himself with more progressive figures. A complaint one often hears is that “the king is not receiving the sound advice that he should.” But some of our interviewees did bemoan what they saw as the king's failure to appoint genuine reformers (with Prime Minister Ali Abul Ragheeb being a particularly common source of disappointment). As one of our sources put it, “you cannot claim to be reform-minded and not appoint reform-minded individuals to key positions.”

Still, and despite his positive image, King Abdallah presents some significant liabilities when compared with his father:

- He does not have his father's long political experience.
- Many observers believe that he lacks King Hussein's political savvy, personal charisma, and charm. While this topic usually is not discussed publicly, there is real concern in the country that he may not be able to balance Jordan's various constituencies and interests as skillfully as his father did. One particular fear is that he is not as close as his father to the tribes that have formed the Hashemites' primary social base. He is seen as more effective at addressing American audiences, or dealing with world leaders, than at cultivating the support of tribal leaders to whom, unlike his father, he cannot instinctively relate, and whose world (unlike that of military officers) he does not necessarily understand. The perception of the king as being more in touch with the corridors of power in Washington than with some of Jordan's key constituencies is reflected in the aside, heard in Amman: “Whenever I want to know what my king is thinking, I watch *Larry King Live*.” It has not helped that, particularly at the beginning of his reign, the king, who was educated in American and British schools, was seen as far more comfortable in English than in Arabic. By contrast, King Hussein's mastery of classical Arabic was both well known and a source of great public respect, particularly from among the more traditional and religious-oriented segments of Jordanian society.
- Some Jordanians are opposed to the king's globalization agenda, which they view as a threat to the country's Muslim-Arab identity. Many more, who are sympathetic to that agenda, are concerned that the king's embrace of it has not yet yielded significant

improvements in the material lives of Jordanians, while the economic costs of preparing the country for the twenty-first century have been deeply felt.

In addition to King Abdallah, key members of the royal family have been active in supporting a range of socially progressive causes. Queen Rania has assumed an increasingly visible role in supporting and promoting women's and children rights. Princess Basma, King Hussein's younger sister, has a strong leadership role in the women's movement.

## **THE MILITARY AND SECURITY-INTELLIGENCE APPARATUS**

Three key institutions that form the core of the coercive/security apparatus are analyzed here, because of the critical role that they have played, and continue to play, in shaping political affairs in Jordan. They are, respectively, the military; the General Intelligence Directorate (GID); and the Public Security Department (PSD). Of those three institutions, the first two are by far the most influential.

### **The Military**

1. The military, which is headed by the king in his capacity as Supreme Commander of the Jordan Armed Forces (JAF), has long been a pillar of the throne. Its support for King Hussein was the single most decisive factor that enabled the Jordanian monarchy to survive the turbulent period from the 1950s through the 1970s. The regime has faced only a handful of military plots (the most significant one back in 1957, and none reported since the 1970s). In all cases, the strong loyalty of the officer corps, as well as of the rank-and-file, both to the institution of the monarchy and to King Hussein personally, allowed the regime to defeat those attempts rather easily. The military also proved critical in September 1970, when it enabled King Hussein to put down the challenge to his authority posed at the time by armed Palestinian organizations in the country.

2. King Hussein was well aware that the survival of the throne was closely tied to his ability to retain the backing of the military, and he went out of his way to cultivate that support (including through very generous salaries and pensions for military officers, which now represent a major financial burden for the state). He was remarkably effective in securing military support for his rule, and truly popular with the troops, which he made a point of visiting regularly. As mentioned above, King Abdallah, too, enjoys strong support from the military, where his professional background lies.

3. Up until the 1980s, the army was entirely beduin-dominated. While in recent decades the modernization of that institution has led to a more diversified composition, Transjordanians still occupy a dominant place within the military leadership.

4. Jordan's armed forces play an important role not only as a deterrent against potential foreign military threats, but also as a force that is occasionally deployed to deal with significant internal disruptions -- for instance when rioting and public demonstrations cross a certain threshold, and when the regular police (PSD, see below) needs help to preserve law and order. They also play an important part in various social programs and public projects, which helps explain their visibility and presence in Jordanian society. Another indication that the influence of Jordan's

armed forces goes well beyond purely military matters can be seen in the fact that the heads of the GID and the PSD, both of which are civilian agencies, typically have been senior army generals (see below).

### **The General Intelligence Department (GID)**

- 1.** It is hard to overstate the General Intelligence Directorate (Da'ira al-mukhabarat)'s influence over all areas of public life in Jordan. The GID's primary mission is to pre-empt domestic and foreign threats to national security, political stability and regime survival through intelligence gathering. The GID thus keeps tabs on actual and potential sources of "subversive" activity. Beyond that role, however, the GID also intervenes directly and frequently in domestic politics, including through the distribution of directives to the press or by seeking to influence the choices of politicians (for instance, the GID may encourage a prominent personality not to run for parliament, or it may exercise pressure on a parliamentarian to vote a particular way).
- 2.** Many analysts consider the head of the GID, not the prime minister, to be the country's second most powerful man after the king. The current chief of the GID, who has held the position since November 2000, is Saad Kheir. Back in late 1998-early 1999, when King Hussein was dying, then GID leader Samih al-Battikhi played an instrumental role in orchestrating the transition of power from Hussein to Abdallah. Only those who have proven themselves as loyal allies of the king -- and typically scions of prominent Jordanian families with longstanding ties to the throne -- can aspire to the position of GID chief. According to official regulations, the GID chief reports directly to the prime minister and the king.
- 3.** The operations of the GID are understandably shrouded in secrecy, and the organization itself is both one of the most powerful institutions and one of the least accountable ones in the country. It is believed that the GID's influence over both the regime's strategic choices and day-to-day policymaking has increased significantly in recent years. The leadership of the GID, and the interests and outlook of the organization, are viewed as a significant obstacle to genuine political reforms. Many observers have interpreted the recent trial, on fraud and embezzlement charges, of former GID head Samih al-Battikhi, as an effort by King Abdallah to clear the deck of an old guard that stands in the way of the reforms he would like to implement. Others preferred to read in it an attempt on the part of the king to eliminate someone who knew too much, who had excessive political ambitions (some of which stemmed from the role he had played in Abdallah's assumption of power), and whose considerable influence the monarch had come to see as a problem.

Held behind closed doors, by a special military intelligence court, the trial itself was characterized by a remarkable lack of transparency, as well as by several violations of due process. Few in Jordan regarded the trial as a signal that senior GID officials would now be held accountable for their actions. Instead, they saw in it an effort to neutralize someone who had become a political liability, and as a way of sending the message that no matter how high one rises on the political ladder, one remains vulnerable to the removal of royal protection. Ironically, and indicative of the broad powers of the GID, while the trial allowed no appeal, the punishment could be altered by the current head of the GID, Saad Kheir. And indeed it was, when Kheir halved Battikhi's eight-year sentence.

## **The Public Security Department (PSD)**

The PSD's primary responsibility is to maintain law and order.

- The Public Security Force of the PSD (the equivalent of the police) intervenes in cases of riots and demonstrations, and is engaged in crime prevention and broader law enforcement.
- The Special Police Force within the PSD has primary responsibility for counter-terrorism operations.
- Units within the PSD also monitor individuals and behavior which, from the perspective of the organization's leadership, might pose a threat to "public security." As a result, some of the PSD's activities occasionally may duplicate or overlap with those of the GID, and there does not appear to exist a close cooperation between both agencies.

Unlike the GID, which enjoys real institutional autonomy, the PSD is attached to the Ministry of Interior, and its head, who typically is a high-ranking army officer, reports to the Minister.

The PSD's institutional roots go back to the 1920s. However, until 1958, units in charge of maintaining law and order were part of the military (called at the time the Arab Legion). In 1958, public security troops were formally separate from the Armed Forces, and in 1965 the Law on Public Security No. 38 was issued that made the security forces a distinct organization attached to the Ministry of Interior.

## **THE GOVERNING ELITE**

By "governing elite," we refer to the small circle of top decision-makers and senior policy-makers who either run Jordan on a day-to-day basis, or who have access to, and influence with, the king, who often will seek their advice before making critical decisions.

The core of the governing elite include such figures as the head of the GID (Saad Kheir), the prime minister (currently Ali Abul Ragheeb), the chief of the royal court (Faysal Fayez), the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (General Khaled Sarayreh), and, though to a lesser extent, the Director General of the PSD (Tahsin Shurdum), other high-ranking military officers, and key members of the Palace staff.

A "second tier" can be identified that consists of key individuals who do not necessarily occupy a critical position at any given time, but are former holders of such positions, have proven themselves to the king (or his father) in the past as both loyal and effective, and typically belong to some of the country's leading families (usually of East Bank origins). Their power derives from their political experience and skills, from belonging to some of the country's most established families, and for their proven loyalty and usefulness to the Palace. Current Senate president Zeid al-Rifai offers an example. A close friend of the late King Hussein, Zeid al-Rifai served as prime minister four times under the late king (including between 1985 and 1989), and is the son of Samir al-Rifai, who had been premier six times between 1944 and 1963.

In practice, there is significant overlap between this “second tier” and the “core of the governing elite” identified above, to the extent that the positions of head of the GID, prime minister, and chief of the royal court typically go to proven individuals who have served the Palace loyally and effectively for many years. And within the “core of the governing elite,” key figures are frequently moved from one key position to another over the years. For instance, Mudar Badran and Ash Sharif Zaid ibn Shakir (the latter a cousin of the late King Hussein and longtime political confidant of his) both were chief of the royal court before being appointed prime minister. Shakir was also a Field Marshal and head of the GID.

One may distinguish a “third tier” (far less significant than the other two), consisting of a few particularly influential ministers (there is a clear divide within the cabinet between a handful of “heavyweights” and ministers who are seen as relatively marginal, and exercise little, if any, influence on decision-making beyond their immediate sphere of competence). As of August 2003, that third-tier might include Foreign Minister Marwan Muasher, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Justice Faris Nabulsi, Planning Minister Bassem Awadallah, Finance Minister Michel Marto, and Water and Irrigation Minister Hazem Nasser.

For the past several years, the governing elite’s primary focus has been on designing and implementing an ambitious economic reform agenda for the country, while ignoring, containing or repressing (depending on the case) political opposition of various kinds. Several of our interviewees suggested that the governing elite’s operating code was somewhat reminiscent of the “China model,” whereby thorough economic reforms are adopted while political change is resisted in order to maintain stability. During parliament’s absence in particular, the governing elite displayed a strong tendency to modify key rules of the political game in a unilateral and often heavy handed manner – usually by administrative fiat, the introduction of temporary laws, or by disregarding existing laws and regulations.

Many analysts believe that the governing elite’s social and political base has narrowed significantly since the mid-1990s – a phenomenon that seems directly related to the trends discussed in the previous paragraph. Private sector entrepreneurs, for example, would seem to be a natural ally for a government pursuing economic liberalization and privatization. However, as a rule, that does not appear to be the case -- with the exception of those well-connected businesspersons who have reaped most of the benefits of recent economic policies. Several leading members of the Amman Chamber of Commerce told the team that the official discourse regarding a government-private sector partnership was mere rhetoric (or, as they put it, a “song”), designed primarily for foreign consumption. They also bemoaned the lack of consultation over the substance of new economic laws, as well as the manner in which those laws were adopted.

## **THE TRIBES**

A number of key tribes -- particularly in the central and southern parts of the country -- constitute the historic bedrock of support for the Hashemite family and the regime, and their continued loyalty is vital to the regime’s survival. Prominent tribes include the Beni Hassan, perhaps the largest tribe, found throughout the country and particularly in and around Mafraq



and Zarqa; the Majali, Ma`aytah, Abu Tayeh, and Tarawneh (all primarily in the south); and the al-`Udwan (in and around Amman, Salt, and the Jordan Valley).

The persistence of strong tribal identifications and loyalties in Jordan stems in part from the ability of tribal leaders to distribute patronage in the form of services, benefits, and jobs. That phenomenon, in turn, reflects the manner in which, from the moment the Hashemite Kingdom was created in 1921, tribes, and tribal leaders became woven into the country's political power structure. Tribal infiltration and control of the most sensitive state institutions -- the army and the security services -- has been at the root of both tribal influence and the power of tribal sheikhs. Access to state resources has allowed tribal leaders to maintain extensive patronage networks that provide citizens in tribal areas with channels through which they may request jobs, favors and other forms of assistance.

Historically, while the central government and its police and security agencies have controlled the country's main cities, large swaths of Jordan, particularly in the south, have remained under the influence of tribes and their leaders. It is they who have been in charge of maintaining law and order, protecting life and property, and making sure that government directives are implemented. That situation, which continues to exist though in an attenuated form, largely explains why it remains so critical for the monarchy to retain the control of tribal leaders. And while tribal loyalties to the regime remain very strong (as shown most recently by the June 2003 elections to the lower house), one should mention as a source of potential concern the previously discussed difficulties that King Abdallah apparently has experienced in establishing with tribal sheikhs and constituencies the kind of rapport and strong emotional ties that had characterized King Hussein's reign.

Despite many claims to the contrary, tribes do not necessarily represent an inherent obstacle to democratization. For one, their participation in elections is often higher than that among other segments of society. (The argument according to which genuine democratization in Jordan cannot take place as long as tribal affiliations remain strong has important programmatic implications, and therefore will be discussed at greater length in Part Four).

Still, prominent members of privileged tribes, who are veterans of the political power structure in Jordan, would likely resist, if not oppose, substantial reforms that might reduce their privileges. In addition, MPs who represent tribal areas, and who typically are tribal leaders themselves, tend to think of their job primarily in terms of providing collective and individual services to their constituents. They historically have shown little interest in broader, nation-wide policy issues -- though that need not necessarily remain the case.

## **THE ISLAMISTS**

Jordan's islamists are represented primarily by the Muslim Brothers (MB) movement and the Islamic Action Front (IAF), its political party. As mentioned earlier, the IAF remains Jordan's only true political party, and since July 2003 it forms the core of the parliamentary opposition to the government. The MB and IAF espouse a socially conservative agenda, advocating a ban on the sale of alcohol, separate education for boys/young men and girls/young women, and the imposition of shari`a law. Politically, they usually are described as a "mainstream" or

“moderate” Islamist current. They have advocated consistently support for democratic elections, an independent parliament, greater press freedoms and women’s political participation. They also have been in fairly constant opposition to sitting governments (with the partial exception of their short-lived participation in the cabinet during the first half of 1991). In fact, for over a decade, a wide gap has separated their positions and those of the government regarding all the key issues facing the country: economic reform, policies aimed at integrating the country more closely into the global economy, legislation on social and cultural affairs, and, most importantly, the peace treaty with Israel, normalization of relations with the Jewish state, US policies in the region, the US-Jordanian alliance, and what Jordan’s response should be toward such issues as the Israeli-Palestinian dispute and the US “war on terrorism.”

However, while they have opposed and criticized many government policies, including those that flow from key strategic choices by the regime, they have never challenged the regime’s legitimacy, or the basic foundations of the political system. Indeed, a distinctive feature of political Islam in Jordan has been the long history of dialogue and frequent cooperation between the Muslim Brotherhood and the regime, going all the way back to the 1940s. For several decades, the regime consistently supported the MB as a counterweight to, and in an effort to neutralize, leftist and pan-Arab currents, as well as militant Palestinian organizations. And even though the October 1994 peace treaty with Israel and increasingly close ties to the US have widened the gap between the MB and the regime, the latter has been careful not to try to marginalize or needlessly antagonize the organization as well as its political arm, the IAF. In short, mainstream Islamists in Jordan represent neither a marginal force, nor one that the regime seeks to exclude or push to the periphery of the political system. Instead, they are widely regarded as an integral and legitimate part of that system.

In recent years, newer and younger figures have assumed leadership positions within the IAF, and it is still unclear whether and how this phenomenon will affect the MB’s long history of active cooperation with the regime. Some analysts believe that it may contribute to an increasing estrangement of the organization from the regime, due to the passing of a generation of leaders who had long, proven, and personal ties to key figures in the regime, including the Palace. Others argue that recent leadership trends within the IAF actually point to the assumption of power by more moderate leaders, such as Hamzeh Mansour. Elected secretary-general of the IAF in January 2002, Mansour is seen as a moderate within the party, and his appointment was widely interpreted as a victory for like-minded Islamists, who now control 12 out of 13 seats on the IAF’s executive committee. The IAF’s decision to take part in the recent parliamentary elections may be seen as consistent with that interpretation.

Drawing on their extensive religious, social and charitable groups and activities in many parts of the country, the MB and IAF have highly organized grassroots structures. Consequently, they can mobilize large groups of supporters and sympathizers if they so choose. In practice, however, they have refrained from using this option, preferring lower-risk, less confrontational, tactics to protest government actions and policies. That approach is consistent with the MB’s historical refusal to engage in activities which the regime may see as a direct challenge or threat. In general, the MB always has refrained from flexing its political muscles too openly, realizing that in the long run it might be adversely affected by such open displays of power.

The political pragmatism of MB and IAF leaders has been one of the most distinguishing features of political Islam in Jordan. This phenomenon was displayed once again in July 2003, during the political horse-trading that led to the election of Saad Hayel Srour as Speaker of the lower house. Of all the contenders in the race, Srour was widely regarded as the government's preferred choice for speaker. And, despite the IAF's criticism of the government and its policies, the party ultimately backed Srour, who received the votes of all 17 IAF MPs. It seems clear that a deal between the parliamentary leaders of the IAF and those of other groupings formed the basis of that support: in exchange for the IAF's votes, supporters of Srour would reward the IAF with a leadership position within the lower house. Predictably, one of the IAF's key members, Ali Abul Sukkar, was elected as first assistant to the speaker during the first day of parliament's extraordinary session on July 17, 2003. Significantly, Sukkar received 60 votes – well beyond the IAF's 17 seats or the islamist bloc's 22 MPs.

On that occasion, as in so many previous ones, IAF leaders demonstrated that they are ultimate political realists and effective politicians. They understand and can excel at the give-and-take of parliamentary and democratic politics, and they usually weigh carefully their political preferences against that which is required to improve their party's influence on the political scene. Along similar lines, it is revealing that the MB and IAF are allied with a number of much smaller leftist and pan-Arab parties in a coordinating committee of opposition forces. This loose alliance with secular parties has afforded Jordan's islamists a somewhat broader-based political cover on key political issues, such as normalization with Israel, the elections law, and public freedoms more generally.

Finally, for all the organizational strength of the MB and IAF and the popular resonance of some of their most important themes, such as opposition to corruption and the normalization of relations with Israel, it is important not to exaggerate the breadth of political Islam's social base in Jordan. In the June 2003 elections to the lower house, all candidates with islamist tendencies – that is, those running under the banner of the IAF, independent islamists, as well as politicians described as “independent” or “pro-government” but known to have islamist leanings or to have been supported by the IAF – received approximately 233,000 votes. That figure represents only 8.4% of registered voters, and 17% of those who actually cast a ballot. IAF candidates, and those politicians whom the IAF supported, obtained approximately 193,000 votes, amounting to only 6.9% of registered voters and about 14% of ballots cast. IAF candidates received around 167,000 votes, or about 6% of registered voters and 12% of ballots cast.

These figures demonstrate that the electoral strength of political islam should not be over-estimated. Considering that those who have islamist leanings generally do not abstain from voting, but instead actively participate, the results described above point to the upper limits of the size of the islamist constituency in Jordan today – i.e., no more than 9% of registered voters for the islamist constituency as a whole, and no more than 6% for the IAF. These figures are even more striking when one considers that the elections took place in the wake of a highly unpopular US war against Iraq as well as against the backdrop of continued bloodshed in Palestine, and that a significant percentage of the ballots cast for Islamist candidates may have consisted of protest votes.

Moreover, several islamist candidates benefited from significant support from their tribes. By the same token, many IAF candidates were of Palestinian origins, and part of the support for them reflected voting along ethnic lines. In Amman's sixth district, for instance, many Palestinians voted for Abu Fares not because he was an islamist, but because he was perceived as the only viable Palestinian candidate. In short, a presumably significant percentage of the votes received by islamist candidates did not stem primarily from their being islamist, but from their being Palestinian or the candidate supported by a given tribe. Overall, therefore, not all the votes for islamist candidates necessarily reflect an embrace of an islamist agenda.

The figures above also suggest that, in several important respects, islamists are disproportionately represented in the lower house. For instance, even though the IAF obtained the support of only about 12% of those who voted, it secured 17 seats, or about 15.5% of all the members of the lower house. Consequently, while it is probably true that the electoral performance of the IAF and of islamists candidates more generally would be significantly enhanced by a return to the electoral law under which the 1989 elections were conducted, one should not necessarily accept at face value the contention by spokespersons for the islamist movement that they are inherently discriminated against under existing electoral arrangements (if by discriminated against one means that the law does not do justice to the size of the constituency they represent).

## **THE PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS**

There are more than a dozen large and politically oriented professional associations in Jordan. Prior to the onset of political liberalization in 1989, the associations were among the few venues in which political trends could compete for elected offices. Since 1989, the professional associations have played an increasingly active role in politics, in large part because of the continuing absence of well-organized political parties with genuine grassroots support.

Because of the organizational structure they provide and their significant memberships (by law, a professional must belong to his/her relevant association), professional associations have offered ready-made vehicles for the mobilization of key constituencies behind controversial domestic political and foreign policy issues. For one, they have been at the forefront of the opposition to Jordan's normalization of relations with Israel, and have played the leading role in the so-called Anti-Normalization Committee, which brings together the professional associations, a number of small opposition parties, and independent political figures. During the second half of the 1990s, the committee circulated a "blacklist" of Jordanians known to have business or other contacts with Israelis. Such behavior has drawn the ire of the Jordanian government, which in late 2002 even arrested the head of the committee, Ali Abul Sukkar (the very same person who was elected first assistant to the speaker of the lower house in July 2003), on charges of belonging to an "illegal organization." More recently, in the run-up to the war with Iraq, the committee called upon Jordanians to refrain from offering any assistance, food, or services to US troops in Jordan.

Many association members who are not politically inclined or disagree with their association's stance on critical political issues have complained that some associations devote too much attention to divisive political questions, and not enough to providing their members with services and leadership on matters related to the profession itself. But it is successive governments that

have been most critical of the associations' involvement in politics. At times, they even have threatened the associations with legal sanctions. On several occasions in the past year alone, Prime Minister Ali Abul Ragheeb has urged publicly the associations to stick to professional issues and stay clear of politics. Significantly as well, the call for a "depoliticization" of the professional associations featured prominently in the recommendations submitted in December 2002 by the special committee that King Abdallah had appointed to suggest ways of implementing the principles contained in his "Jordan First" initiative. The committee underscored that associations should limit themselves to "raising professional standards, safeguarding the rights of their members, and serving the community."

## **PART THREE:**

### **INSTITUTIONAL RULES AND ARENAS**

Many of the key rules governing the political game in Jordan have been examined in Part One and Part Two above, and therefore will not be discussed again here. Others bear little relevance to the recommendations proposed in Part Four, and consequently need not be explored at this time. However, in light of the programmatic suggestions contained in Part Four, additional information is provided below regarding Parliament's prerogatives and internal procedures.

The Jordanian parliament consists of two chambers. The elected lower house is currently composed of 110 members. Under the quota system for women established in 2003, six of the 110 seats are reserved for women (not those six women who received the largest number of votes on a nation-wide basis, but those that received the highest percentage of votes in their respective districts). Nine seats are reserved for Christians, nine for Bedouins, two for Circassians, and one for Chechens. The upper house – the membership of which was expected in the summer of 2003 to be raised to 55 members – is appointed by the king.

The lower house is known as the Chamber of Deputies, and the upper house as the Senate. Parliament as a whole must ratify treaties, and it can override (through a two-thirds majority in each chamber) royal vetoes of particular legislation.

#### **The Chamber of Deputies: Prerogatives and Mode of Operation**

##### *Prerogatives*

One of the lower house's most important prerogatives is the power to invest a newly appointed cabinet with the mandate it requires to assume its functions. In other words, once the prime minister has been chosen and appointed by the king, and once he or she has formed his/her cabinet, he/she must present that cabinet and its program to the lower house, and secure from it a vote of confidence.

This is usually a formality – but not always. The 1989-1993 legislature was particularly significant in this respect. When following the 1989 election the late King Hussein appointed Mudar Badran as prime minister, it soon became clear that parliamentary endorsement for Badran and his cabinet would not be easy. Badran once had been in charge of the GID, and the enemies he had made at the time included many of those who had just been elected to parliament. Badran also had been prime minister for most of the period between 1976 and 1984, and many new MPs blamed his policies then for the country's economic woes in the late 1980s.

To secure the lower house's endorsement, Badran was forced to engage in difficult negotiations with the Islamist bloc. During these, he made several concessions to the Muslim Brotherhood's demands, including a commitment to tighten the laws regulating the distribution and public consumption of alcohol. Even then, his cabinet received the necessary vote of confidence only

after a grueling parliamentary debate that lasted three days and undermined his personal prestige and authority.

The lower house also can force the cabinet to resign through a vote of no-confidence, which requires a two-thirds majority. In addition, it can impeach ministers.

To become law, a bill that originates in the executive branch must be approved by the lower house (and then by the Senate). The Chamber of Deputies has the power to amend or reject the cabinet's bills. Legislation drafted by the executive branch is submitted first to the lower house. There, it is considered pro forma by the whole body and immediately referred to one of the subject matter committees for consideration. The committee then reviews and debates the bill. Experts, as well as ministers or their representatives, may testify before the committee and respond to the questions of its members. The committee's report on the bill ultimately is submitted to the whole chamber for approval. The bill can be debated again during the plenary session, and the sponsoring minister may again be called to justify or explain the proposed legislation. Once the bill has been passed by the Chamber of Deputies (in its original form or with amendments), it is sent to the Senate (see below).

### *The Role of Parliamentary Blocs*

Because there are no real political parties in Jordan except for the IAF, parliamentary politics is driven by shifting personality-based alliances. Typically, once the lower house has been elected, blocs built around a prominent politician form, sometimes to support that person's candidacy for speaker, sometimes to act as king-makers or power brokers. Blocs can put forward their own candidate for speaker, support one of the candidates in the race, or leave it up to their members to decide whom they want to support.

Until now, parliamentary blocs have rarely withstood the test of time, and have tended to disintegrate once the lower house has chosen a speaker. None ever has developed into a lasting political party. It is precisely because the battle for house speaker is the driving force behind the formation of blocs that, once the outcome of that battle has been determined, blocs often break up as quickly as they had emerged.

To provide a recent example of this process, prior to the election of Saad Hayel Srour as lower house speaker during the opening session of Parliament on July 17, 2003, three major blocs had formed (in addition to that represented by the 17 IAF MPs):

- The National Parliamentary Action Front (NPAF) bloc, led by Abdul Hadi Majali, a former prime minister and member of the influential Majali tribe in Karak. About 30 MPs were believed to be affiliated with that bloc.
- The Democratic bloc, grouping 13 independent MPs with liberal leanings, including former Amman Mayor Mamdouh Abbadi.
- The al-Watan bloc, believed to consist of about 23 MPs.

Also vying for the position of speaker were former Lower House Speaker Saad Hayel Srour (who had held the position on four earlier occasions, including from 1993 until 1997), and, until he withdrew from the race, incumbent Deputy Speaker Abdul Karim Dughmi, both from Mafraq. Majali was the only candidate to run through a bloc. (Ultimately, Srour won easily, securing 65 votes against Majali's 40).

As these blocs crystallized, and following a well-established pattern, MPs not affiliated with any of the existing blocs were tapped by leaders of those blocs to discuss the conditions under which these MPs might join one of the blocs, or support its candidate for speaker.

### Committees

The Chamber of Deputies has 14 permanent committees, which, according to house rules, are supposed to be elected the same day as the speaker, at the very beginning of parliament's term. Committees are charged with reviewing proposed legislations, suggesting changes and amendments, and forwarding their recommendations for a vote on the house's floor. The Legal Affairs Committee (to which all draft legislation is sent first to make sure that it does not contradict existing laws and regulations) and the Finance and Economic Affairs Committee (which is responsible for reviewing the budget, as well as laws related to financial matters, banking, and investment) are usually considered the two most important committees. Other committees include Foreign Affairs, Public Freedom (which reviews laws related to citizen rights and freedoms), Agriculture and Water, and Energy,

The composition of committees is determined at the beginning of each ordinary session of parliament. Under Article 50 of the House's internal law, each committee consists of 11 MPs. Deputies register their names for those committees that they are interested in joining. If more than 11 deputies are interested in being part of the committee, elections are required for the members of that committee. Each MP is allowed to belong to no more than two committees. The house speaker and his deputies cannot be a part of any committee. The law also provides for the formation of temporary, ad hoc committees, to be dissolved after their agenda is completed.

### **The Senate: Composition and Prerogatives**

According to the constitution, the number of seats in the upper house is set by the king, but may not exceed half the number of seats in the lower chamber. Historically, the membership ratio between the two chambers always has been one-to-two (ten senators to the lower house's twenty MPs from 1947 until 1950, twenty to the lower house's 40 MPs from 1950 until 1989, 40 to the lower house's 80 MPs from 1989 until 2001, and expected to become 55 since the membership of the lower house was raised to 110 in 2003).

As is traditionally the case in other countries with bicameral systems, the appointed upper house is designed to act as a check on the lower house. In Jordan's case, the upper house wields considerable influence. For one, its power in the area of law making is identical to that of the lower chamber. However, the Senate lacks two key prerogatives of the lower house: the vote of investiture of the cabinet, and the ability to force the cabinet to resign through a vote of no-confidence.



Most of the members of the upper house are former ministers and prime ministers, former military officers and heads of the GID, leaders of prominent families and tribes, and other confidants of the king. A smaller number of Senators than one might expect (only about half-a-dozen in 2003) are individuals whose careers have been spent primarily in the private sector.

The Senate is headed by a president (currently former Prime Minister Zeid Rifai). When parliament re-convened on July 17, 2003, Senator Fayez Tarawneh (of the prominent Tarawmeh tribe) was elected as Rifai's deputy.

Once the Chamber of Deputies has approved a bill, the latter is forwarded to the Senate, where it goes through a process identical to that within the lower house (referral to the appropriate committee, floor discussion and vote, etc.) If the bill, as submitted by the lower house, is approved by the Senate, it is then sent to the prime minister for review and, ultimately, for promulgation by the king. If, however, the Senate's version of the bill is different from the lower house's, then the bill is sent back to the lower house, which either may approve the Senate's version, or refuse it. In the latter case, the president of the Senate and the speaker of the lower house may meet to bridge the gap between the two chambers. The lower house then may propose an alternative form of the bill – ideally a compromise between its original version and the Senate's. If no agreement is possible, the legislation in question does not pass and the bill may not be examined again throughout the remainder of parliament's term.

## PART FOUR:

### PROGRAMMATIC IMPLICATIONS

This final section of the document proceeds in two stages:

- **First, Jordan’s overarching challenge in the D/G area will be summarized.** It will be suggested that Jordan’s ability to meet that challenge is critical to the country’s political and economic future. Jordanian perceptions of the role of the donor community in addressing -- or failing to address -- Jordan’s central problem from a D/G perspective also will be discussed.
- **The document then will delve into the programmatic implications of the analysis conducted in the previous sections.** It will be shown why some potential areas for intervention, such as civil society strengthening and civic education, do not emerge as suggested foci for the Mission’s D/G portfolio. After articulating the rationale for ruling out or downplaying certain types of programs, the document will turn to the more critical task of highlighting the four pillars on which the Mission may wish to consider building its D/G strategy:
  - (1) Legislative strengthening,
  - (2) Local participation,
  - (3) Transparency/Anti-Corruption, and
  - (4) Media support.

The kinds of activities that might be carried out under each of these pillars also will be presented.

### SUMMARIZING JORDAN’S STRATEGIC CHALLENGE IN THE D/G AREA

**1.** The overarching challenge that Jordan faces in the D/G area is an inclusion/participation problem. Specifically, citizens from all walks of life believe that they are denied any meaningful input into the decision-making process, including on those issues that directly affect their daily lives.

The team found out that this feeling of being shut out, as well as the attending and growing frustration and alienation from the political process, were pervasive feature in all sectors of society. They were recurrent complaints among highly educated professionals as well as among individuals with little if any formal education, among businesspersons as well as among civil servants, and within the capital (where nearly half of Jordan’s total population lives) as much as beyond it.

- Average citizens feel that they are being ignored by senior decision-makers, and that their preferences on key political and economic issues do not have any significant influence on

the decisions that are actually being made. Again and again, the central complaint that emerged in our interviews was “people don’t have a say” and “how we feel [about the issues of the day] doesn’t matter to those in charge.”

- Businesspersons feel that critical decisions that have a major impact on the future of their businesses are made without consulting with them. As was shown earlier, Jordan’s overarching inclusion problem thus extends to the business community, within which we detected a high level of bitterness toward what is seen as the indifference of those in government to the concerns of average businesspersons. The dominant feeling in the business community is that, in sharp contrast with the government’s rhetoric, consultation of the private sector is only pro-forma; that those who are consulted consist of only a small group of businesspersons with ties to governing circles; that small- and medium-sized businesses have no real ways of making their concerns heard; that the government has deliberately endeavored to manipulate and marginalize the Amman Chamber of Commerce; and that the government’s much vaunted “alliance” between the state and the business world is merely a slogan.
- Independent editors and journalists do not feel represented by those institutions (such as the Jordan Press Association) that are supposed to speak on their behalf, or by those official bodies (such as the Higher Media Council) that are mandated to shape the rules and regulations governing the media. Both the Jordan Press Association and the Higher Media Council are seen as government-controlled bodies that do not represent the views of independent journalists and editors. One finds among media professionals a high and apparently growing level of frustration and even anger at governmental efforts to manipulate and control the media. Journalists and editors resent heavy-handed governmental efforts to shape the content of reporting, and they are increasingly frustrated with being forced to self-censor and toe the government’s line.
- At the local government level, there is also frustration with a new electoral system that allows the central government to choose and appoint the mayor, as well as up to 50 percent of all members of local government councils. The appointment of the mayor is particularly significant, since it means that the ability to choose who will be the single most important local government official has been taken away from the population.

**2. Jordan therefore suffers from the widely shared perception that there are not enough mechanisms to allow the population to participate in decision-making, and that those mechanisms that do exist are seriously flawed.** This is reflected for instance in the almost universal condemnation of an electoral law that is criticized for over-representing certain constituencies at the expense of others, and, therefore, for distorting popular will as it is expressed through elections. The defective nature of existing mechanisms for integrating popular input into decision-making was also reflected in the absence of an elected lower house for two years (June 2001-June 2003), during which the executive branch issued an estimated 230 temporary laws and governed with only occasional and pro-forma consultation of the appointed members of the upper house.

**3. Mixed with significant concerns about electoral politics, one also detects frustration with a perceived lack of institutionalized mechanisms for regular dialogue between state and**

**society.** The overwhelming majority of those with whom we spoke felt there is no real effort by decision-makers to consult with those very constituencies that are being affected by their decisions. For the most part, consultation is conducted in an ad-hoc and informal manner. It does not extend much beyond a small circle within the ruling elite and its private sector allies. The depth of consultation - and the identity of those who are consulted - is left at the discretion of individual decision-makers. It is mostly a function of whom those decision-makers know and whom they feel inclined to reach out to in a manner almost reminiscent of the « politics of notables » arrangement characteristic of urban politics in the late Ottoman period.

4. This situation partially reflects the dominant outlook within a governing elite that:

- (a) does not appear to grasp the importance of striving for broad-based public support of its decisions and of the strategic choices made by the regime; and
- (b) is not particularly adept or skilled at explaining its policies to the public.

In short, **public policy-making in Jordan suffers from a “communication deficit” between the government and the population. This deficit partially stems from a lack of know-how by government officials, but, more significantly, it betrays an outlook that views citizen input and government accountability as items that can be dispensed with in the quest for political and economic development.** The traits of senior government officials that were most consistently denounced during our interviews were their arrogance and blatant disregard for the need to explain and justify their policies to the population. On numerous occasions, we were told that the outbreaks of popular anger that have rocked the kingdom’s political life in the past several years could easily have been avoided had it not been for the ruling elite’s “we know best” attitude, and its “we decide, you comply” approach to government. According to this view, it is not so much poverty by itself that has driven rioting in southern towns such as Ma`an and Karak, but poverty exacerbated by the feeling of being neglected and ignored by decision-makers impervious to the population’s needs.

One of our interviewees, capturing the opinion of many others, described the attitude of government officials as one that betrays a “culture of notification” -- i.e., a tendency to believe that it is enough to notify the population of government decisions, without feeling the need to make the case for them. This attitude, she added, “is driving people to the brink,” leading them to oppose policies that they might otherwise support, just because they are increasingly resentful of the lack of consultation, dialogue, and two-way communication.

5. **The inclusion/participation deficit that has been described thus far stems to a large extent from a competition problem - i.e., from a generalized lack of political space and from shrinking opportunities for autonomous political expression and organizing since the mid-1990s.** As was shown earlier, beginning in 1993-94, Jordan’s reform process experienced significant backsliding, and the situation deteriorated even further between 1997 and 2001, following the opposition boycott of the 1997 parliamentary elections, several new curbs on freedom of expression and assembly, the disbanding of the lower house in June 2001 (four months before the end of its term), and successive postponements of parliamentary elections for two consecutive years.

It is this steady constriction of political space that has:

- (a) reduced considerably channels for independent political expression, and
- (b) fueled the popular belief that taking part in those few remaining avenues for political participation is not meaningful and is unlikely to affect decision-making in any significant way.

That perception, in turn, largely accounts for the growing alienation from, and cynicism toward, the political process, and for the population's tendency to disengage from remaining arenas for participation. This phenomenon was exemplified in the recent parliamentary elections of June 17, 2003, when, for instance, turnout in the capital (where the greatest concentration of educated and politically-inclined voters can be found) was only 46% overall, and well below 40% if one excludes one district, where the exceptionally high turnout of about 80% was driven mostly by tribal affiliations.

## 6. Why Does it Matter ?

The situation that has been described represents a significant handicap for Jordan's political and economic development. Yet, it does not appear to have generated, both within governmental circles in Jordan and in the donor community, the degree of concern that it should have attracted. In that respect, **the team detected a measure of prevailing complacency about Jordan's ability to live with the inclusion/participation problem discussed above.** After all, the economic policies of the Jordanian government have been praised by international organizations, and there is a consensus among donors that the reform agenda that is being implemented -- from above, and with minimal consultation -- is good for Jordan, and that it might be endangered if a real public debate about the government's policies were to take place.

Yet the risks of such an approach are evident. The Jordanian public has been growing increasingly impatient with the lack of popular input into decision-making. Even constituencies well disposed toward the government and its reform agenda are becoming increasingly frustrated with a mode of governance that reduces them to the role of passive spectators. In our view, the lack of dialogue and the communication deficit discussed above is taking a real and under-appreciated toll on state-society relations in the country. Tackling this phenomenon should become a more explicit priority of the donor community, which thus far has concentrated on public sector reform and governance issues (as opposed to democracy-related ones).

It should be noted, in this respect, that **many of those Jordanians with whom we spoke saw the donor community as basically complicit in a mode of government that gives the population only a subordinate and marginal role in decision-making.** Several of our interviewees urged donors to assume a more pro-active and assertive role in helping create the conditions needed for greater popular participation. For Jordan's own sake, they suggested, more pressure should be exercised on the Jordanian authorities to broaden participation. And when they were told that this might be construed as unacceptable interference in the country's internal affairs, the response was almost always along the following lines: "But donors already interfere - by providing assistance to, and therefore by empowering, a government that engages

in only pro-forma consultation, or by providing technical expertise in the drafting of temporary laws that are designed without significant input from the population.”

In short, right or wrong, donors are often seen as partly if only indirectly responsible for the inclusion-participation problem highlighted in this document. Where donors often see close cooperation with the Jordanian authorities as an asset in the assistance process, many Jordanians see it as, at best, guilt by association, and, at worst, as direct endorsement of an approach to political and economic reform that treats the population as an obstacle, not as a partner.

What seems clear is that, unless greater progress takes place toward political reform, King Abdallah’s ambitious economic reform agenda may be compromised:

- It is hard to see how a genuine market-driven economy may be built when so many businesspersons feel alienated from a government that only engages in pro-forma consultation with them, and when they believe that those with political connections are bound to reap most of the benefits of economic liberalization.
- Absent a clearer separation between the political and the economic spheres, decisive steps toward curbing high-level corruption, and progress toward sheltering the judiciary from what appears to be blatant and regular interference by influential political figures, it is difficult to imagine that Jordan will be able to attract the level of domestic and foreign investment it needs to create jobs for its still growing population.
- For the policy reforms that have been implemented in the past few years to take root in society and survive the test of time, it is important that they be seen not as having been imposed on a reluctant population, but as reflecting a broad-based consensus in the population. That, in turn, requires greater dialogue between state and society, more consultation by the government, as well as a greater degree of input into the policy reform process by those most affected by policy reforms.
- Confidence in the kingdom’s political stability, which is required for economic growth to take place, could be undermined by the frustration that has built up as a result of the closing of avenues for participation and dissent. On several occasions in the past decade already, resentment over the government’s perceived indifference to popular concerns has degenerated into outbreaks of anger that the authorities quickly have blamed on “subversives,” “troublemakers,” and “extremists” tied to foreign countries or forces – even when discontent generated by purely indigenous causes has appeared as a far more plausible explanation.
- Most importantly perhaps, if the population is to accept to pay the costs of economic reforms -- particularly in the form of higher prices for basic commodities -- it must be given reason to believe that these costs will not be born exclusively by those deprived of political connections and influence, while many among the politically and economically powerful continue to reap the benefits of unequal access to economic opportunities. To create that perception, in turn, requires greater freedom to expose abuses of power and authority, the progressive dismantling of vested interests, and, more generally, greater political space to organize and express oneself without fearing retribution.

Back in 1989, the onset of the democratization process was largely the result of an implicit bargain between the regime and the population: in exchange for society's willingness to accept painful but needed economic austerity measures, the regime was willing to grant it greater opportunities for political organizing and expression. As discussed earlier, that bargain progressively dissolved after the 1994 peace treaty with Israel. When in 1999 King Abdallah ascended the throne, he implicitly offered another type of bargain to the population: the country would postpone political reforms for the time being, as it would concentrate instead on implementing economic reforms likely to bring about an improvement in daily living conditions. Four years later, however, the promised improvements have not yet materialized. In fact, many Jordanians believe that poverty and unemployment have worsened, and that there has been an overall deterioration in living standards. As we were told on several occasions, the dominant perception is that the poor have grown poorer and the rich richer, while a shrinking middle class finds it harder to make ends meet.

In this context, Jordanians are increasingly unwilling to tolerate the regression that has taken place in the past decade in the areas of political freedoms and civil liberties. Instead, faced with the likely prospect that economic conditions will remain precarious in the short- to medium-term at least, they are yearning for greater political freedoms. Unless the regime can respond to this appetite for genuine political reforms, the population's readiness to accept further economic reforms is doubtful.

## **PROGRAMMATIC IMPLICATIONS**

The analysis conducted in the document points donors toward certain types of D/G assistance programs, while suggesting that other kinds of programs do not offer the most effective way of tackling the overarching participation/inclusion challenge that has been identified. The discussion below consequently begins by explaining why demand-driven programs such as civic-education and civil-society strengthening are not those that are most urgently called for in Jordan, and it then moves on to outline a potential D/G assistance program built on four pillars: (1) Legislative strengthening, (2) Local governance, (3) Transparency/Anti-Corruption, and (4) Media support.

### **The Limitations of Demand-Driven Assistance Strategies for Jordan**

Jordan's central problem from a D/G perspective is not insufficient demands for political participation. In fact, as argued above, the Jordanian public already yearns for greater opportunities to participate in the political process, and there is consequently little need to stimulate demands for democracy. What instead is most urgently needed in the kingdom is greater political space. If political liberalization were to resume in earnest, Jordanian citizens could be trusted to take advantage of that situation. To put it differently, if the Jordanian regime were to concede greater space for autonomous political action, that space would be quickly filled by Jordanians eager to make their voice heard.

Also underscoring the limitations of demand-centered assistance strategies was one of the most consistent messages given to the team during the interview process: **in Jordan, we were told repeatedly, "reform can only come from above."** According to this perspective, on which there seemed to be a wide consensus, prospects for democratization are mostly a function of the

extent of political will to reform within the governing elite, those prospects depend primarily on the “supply of democracy,” not grassroots demand for it.

As one of our interviewees put it, reform requires the presence of reformers within the narrow circle of those who make key decisions. Another seasoned Jordanian insider suggested that “change requires power and will” -- by which he meant that only those who wield real political influence can deliver on a political reform agenda, provided they have the will to do so. Revealingly, when they were asked which steps would go the furthest in reviving the country’s moribund democratization process, our interviewees most consistently answered: “the King should appoint a new Prime Minister.” (There was widespread skepticism that real democratization can take place as long as Ali Abul Ragheeb remains in office.) In general, the King is seen as sincere in his desire for political reforms, but it is widely believed that he has not appointed in the cabinet the kinds of individuals who are inclined to steer the country through a real political opening.

Having outlined the general limitations of approaches to promoting political reform in Jordan that might rely primarily on the nurturing of demands for democracy, it becomes possibly to zero in on the shortcomings of civic education- and civil-society programs in that context. For the reasons outlined below, we believe that neither civic education nor civil society should represent a significant component of USAID’s D/G portfolio in Jordan, particularly in light of the limited resources that can be allocated to the D/G sector.

### **Civic Education**

Although the transparency/anti-corruption program suggested below does include a civic education component, we do not recommend that the Mission develop a stand-alone civic education program. This conclusion is informed by our understanding of the key obstacles to political reform in the region, as well as by empirical considerations drawn from Jordan’s own recent political experience.

One argument we sometimes heard -- revealingly, usually by those among our interviewees who did not seem to be inclined to push for political reform in Jordan -- was the claim that as long as tribal affiliations continue to play a decisive role in shaping Jordanian politics, real democratization will remain impossible. We reject such a perspective, which, if it were compelling, might indeed offer a powerful rationale for a civic education program. In our view, the “tribal argument” can all-too-easily be invoked (a) as a justification for the political status quo; (b) as a way of hiding the more decisive obstacles (such as the resistance of powerful constituencies whose vested interests would be significantly hurt by expanded political participation and greater accountability) that stand in the way of political reform; and (c) as an excuse for not being a more forceful advocate of democratization in Jordan - which is a real option, the strength of tribal affiliations notwithstanding.

One anecdote may help illustrate how easily the “tribal argument” can degenerate into fallacy. One of the persons we interviewed (someone with a leftist past) seemed to have become so disillusioned and cynical toward the political process that he suggested to us, in a nutshell, that it was the population that was primarily responsible for the lack of progress toward political reform in Jordan. The proof, in his view, was that in June 2003 the electorate had been given an



opportunity to express itself in a free and fair election, and that in most instances it had let its voting be guided by tribal considerations. It remained unclear to us why that is so inherently “un-democratic,” considering for instance that ethnic affiliations still shape many votes in the United States, or keeping in mind that those Jordanians who voted along tribal lines usually did so because they felt that a tribal candidate would be better positioned to serve their interests. It seemed as if our interviewee had concluded that, in Jordan, democracy could only be promoted by dismissing the people - i.e., by sending all registered voters a pink slip revoking their right to show up at the polls.

That “tribalism” or “tradition” do not represent the key obstacles to Jordan’s ability to move toward a more open, pluralistic political system is suggested by the following:

- Jordan’s own recent history - in particular the significant political opening that took place between 1989 and 1993 -- demonstrates that “tribalism” does not constitute an insurmountable obstacle toward real democratic progress.
- Our interviews made it clear that tribal affiliations do not prevent the Jordanian public from being eager for greater opportunities to participate in public life and make its voice heard. “Tribalism” (as least in its 2003 Jordanian variant) does not appear to be incompatible with a real yearning for democratic reforms.
- We did not come across any evidence to suggest that Jordanian citizens behave in the political sphere any differently from the citizens of other countries: they respond, in a rational manner, to incentives and disincentives for political participation. Consequently, programming for democracy in Jordan should not aim to alter the “outlook” of Jordanians - for instance by seeking to make them more “civic-minded,” by trying to lessen the importance of tribal affiliations, or by aiming to make them more “knowledgeable” about what democracy entails and how democracies operate. Instead, the central rationale driving a democracy assistance program should be to affect the political environment within which Jordanians operate. Specifically, such a program should aim to address the core inclusion-competition challenge identified earlier by broadening avenues for participation and popular input into decision-making.
- Pushed to its ultimate logic, the argument according to which there can be no real progress toward democracy in Jordan until tribal affiliations have been significantly undermined would postpone any hope for democratic breakthrough to a very remote date, since in the short-to-medium term at least, tribes in Jordan cannot be wished away. Unfortunately, Jordan does not have the luxury of being able to wait that long for meaningful democratic progress.

### **Civil Society**

**Civil society in Jordan -- particularly advocacy groups that could be critical to progress in the D/G area -- suffer from serious structural weaknesses that cannot easily be overcome through donor intervention:**

- They operate in a very restrictive regulatory environment that sharply limits their effectiveness;
- Existing NGOs rarely coordinate their efforts, and tend to operate in isolation from one another. The large numbers of associations found in the same sectors are indicative of civil society's often duplicative and divided nature.
- The support base of existing NGOs is often very limited, and many advocacy groups are highly personalistic, frequently revolving around one individual.
- Civil society is rife with personal and ideological rivalries, both among and within NGOs. The field of human rights organizations is particularly politicized and fragmented. Within that community, the country's main political currents -- independents, liberals, pan-Arabists, secular leftists, Islamists and others -- have competed for leadership and preeminence, with often debilitating effects on the ability of the human rights movement to achieve concrete results.
- In their current state, those few advocacy groups that exist are not in the position to act as levers for reform. They are too weak, too narrow-based, and too constrained in their margin of maneuver to be effective vectors for political change. They thus far have been unable to drive the political debate, place key, sensitive issues on the public agenda, and force significant changes in public policy.
- The most dynamic NGOs are often "royal NGOs" (RONGOs), i.e., NGOs under the direct sponsorship of members of the royal family, which neither need nor solicit external support.

In addition, civil society in Jordan tends to be donor-driven and dependent. Many donors already are heavily invested in supporting civil society, and it is not clear that that sector can absorb the resources that already are being directed toward it. Certain civil-society sectors, such as those of human rights and women's rights, and particular organizations within those sectors, have been and will continue to be funded by other Western donors, making potential USAID funding purely additive. There is too high a risk that investments in such sectors would be dissipated over a wide range of activities and groups whose activities would duplicate each other and yield only minimal results.

For those reasons, and because of the previously highlighted limits of demand-centered assistance programs considering Jordan's current political environment, civil society should not represent a primary focus of, or a stand-alone program within, the Mission's D/G portfolio. Still, as will be shown in the recommendations section below, all four programs we propose do include a civil society component. Sectors of civil society that are directly relevant to program priorities, and capable of making a meaningful contribution to them, are integrated into suggested activities. The general approach is to incorporate relevant civil society actors as implementers of, or participants in, proposed activities, primarily in order to provide opportunities for them as interlocutors with elected officials. This approach is intended to impart civil society organizations (CSOs) with policy-relevant skills, as well as with the political

visibility and experiences that will strengthen their long-term viability and relevance to the policy process.

We believe that this approach is far less costly, and is likely to yield higher pay-offs, than providing extra-funding to already well-endowed CSOs, or investing in weak and often highly personalized and fractious NGOs that are subject to a strict, heavy-handed and antiquated legal and regulatory environment. In this way, those few CSOs and think tanks that can truly contribute to key policy dialogues will be given an opportunity to build up their credentials and sharpen the skills of their members. Over time, these organizations even may be able to go beyond the role of mere interlocutors of government officials, and emerge as true advocates and lobbyists in public life. Such a scenario not only would help promote further democratic advances, but it also would provide the Mission with stronger CSOs and an environment more conducive to investing future resources into civil society development.

## **Comments on other Potential Sectors for Assistance**

### **Rule of Law**

**The interviews we conducted underscored repeatedly the lack of independence of Jordan's judiciary.** In that context, the team concluded that training and other types of capacity-building activities in the rule of law area do not represent a fruitful investment. This conclusion seemed all the more justified in light of the Mission's limited D/G resources, and considering that administration of justice activities require significant resources to yield even modest results. Furthermore, it should be noted that whenever interviewees were asked which key obstacles they believed hindered Jordan's progress in the D/G area, insufficient capacity in the judicial area was never (directly or indirectly) one of the answers offered by respondents.

This is not to say that there are no judicial capacity needs in Jordan -- in fact, quite the opposite. Judges reportedly do not have adequate physical infrastructure and staff support. They may have to try cases and do administrative work in the same rooms. They often are overburdened with playing the extra roles of clerk and court administrator. Cases consequently become increasingly backlogged as judges spend inordinate amounts of time completing case-related paperwork.

Across society, the court system thus appears to be perceived as extremely slow and inefficient. For instance, local leaders in both Karak and Zarqa mentioned that the chief citizen complaint about the justice system is that court cases take inordinately long to adjudicate. The team heard the same message in Amman. An official at the Amman Chamber of Commerce told the team of a bankruptcy case in which he was involved that was in its third year of adjudication - even though, he claimed, the law stipulates that judicial deliberations for this kind of case should take no more than one month. In fact, in light of the magnitude of the infrastructure, personnel and management needs of the judicial system in Jordan, only a prohibitively expensive USAID program could hope to make a dent in those problems. Other donors, with more extensive resources, may be better positioned to take on this burden, and several appear inclined to do so. Besides, the Ministry of Justice already has begun to address current physical infrastructure limitations by building new "Palaces of justice," the first of which already is located in Amman.

But no matter how significant capacity issues are, they are not the judicial system's primary flaw, which resides in its lack of independence. As was shown in Part One, the independence of the judiciary in Jordan is severely compromised - both by direct intervention from within the executive branch, and by blatant interference into judicial decision-making processes by other prominent figures (members of parliament and tribal leaders for instance). The team heard repeated examples of successful, high-level efforts not only to influence judicial rulings, but also to reverse verdicts after they had been rendered. In one of many typical examples, the State Security Court condemned the son of a parliamentarian and leader of one of the country's most prominent tribes to a seven-year jail sentence on drug-possession charges. Even though the evidence was abundant and unquestioned, and the individual in question confessed, the verdict was reversed by the high court, and the individual pardoned, after political connections were activated. As a former head of the High Court himself concluded, "there is no independence of the judiciary whatsoever."

Unfortunately, there is little, if anything, that the Mission can do to enhance judicial independence. Structural political constraints on the recipient side sharply limit donor effectiveness in this area. The only factor that might have a decisive impact in this regard is a conscious choice at the highest level of the Jordanian regime to make judicial independence a policy priority. In that area once again, and as we were told so often by our interviewees, "real change can only come from the top."

Regrettably, as we repeatedly were told by practitioners and analysts familiar with the workings of the judicial system, there is currently skepticism that there exists today among senior Jordanian decision-makers the concerted political will and clear strategy that would be required to "unblock" the Jordanian judiciary. When asked what donors could do to improve the functioning of the judicial system in Jordan, a long-time, prominent judge was quick to respond "Taking up the issue directly with the King, to impress on him that real development cannot take place until the judiciary has been made more independent." (In this area as well, King Abdallah is widely perceived as far more reform-minded than many around him and in the executive branch.)

**Given the absence of clear political will to make the judiciary more independent, judicial training unfortunately represents a substantial investment that would yield, at best, only limited returns.** Judges operate within a system of incentives that discourage independent decision-making based on evidence, the law, and one's knowledge of it and ability to apply it. "Telephone justice" is prevalent, and judges' professional prospects may be significantly damaged if in their rulings they do not heed pressures from the executive branch or prominent figures. Some have quit because of that environment, and many more reportedly have become cynical toward the entire system, accepting to work within its flawed logic. As for those who are given the privilege to enjoy donor-funded training, they are rarely the most qualified. Instead, they often are selected according to clientelistic considerations.

In these circumstances, the fruits of judicial training cannot come to bear. Past and on-going donor-funded, judicial-training activities may have increased the legal expertise of many judges, but the team consistently heard evidence that judges operate in an environment that by and large prevents them from discharging their proper functions.

In short, and in light of the evidence summarized in this section, **the team strongly counsels the Mission not to invest its precious, few D/G resources in a sector where significant returns appear an unlikely prospect, and which seems poised to continue receiving attention from several other donors.**

### Gender Issues

Women's issues have become increasingly high profile in Jordan since the early 1990s. Promoting women's political participation has been a longstanding focus of the women's movement and external donors. More recently, there has been a gradual expansion of the movement's agenda to include women's legal rights. A royally sponsored and funded organizational infrastructure provides the movement with added legitimacy, resources and impetus. Both King Abdallah and Queen Rania are personally and politically invested in progress on women's issues.

Jordan therefore offers an environment conducive to advances for women's rights. It is important that the Mission take advantage of that situation, while recognizing that in Jordan the issue of women's rights is a sensitive one - and, therefore, that too pro-active and visible a US commitment in that area could easily end up backfiring and discrediting those in Jordan, including the highest decision-makers in the country, who have shown real political will in that area.

In light of both these opportunities and constraints, we do not suggest a stand-alone gender-based program, but instead advocate subtly incorporating women and women's issues into our proposed interventions. Consequently, as will be shown in the recommendations section below, both our legislative strengthening and local participation programs include components geared to the political needs of women in Jordan.

### **Recommendations**

The D/G strategy we propose would provide assistance toward the following four key objectives:

- (1) A more influential and capable legislature, as well as more productive relationships between the executive and the legislative branches of government;
- (2) Enhanced participation at the local level;
- (3) Improved transparency and the initiation of a national dynamic to tackle corruption;
- (4) More effective use of the media toward furthering D/G objectives.

**The common theme running through all the recommendations suggested under each of these four pillars is to encourage a broad-based policy dialogue between government and society.** This dialogue would focus on issues of economic reform (because of their inherent importance to Jordan's future, and because those issues have been the focus of the executive branch over the past several years, and will remain at the forefront of the policy agenda) as well as on questions of education and health (because of their direct relevance to people's daily lives, and because they are major components of USAID's portfolio in Jordan, and thus provide natural linkages between the Mission's activities in the D/G area and in other sectors.

The recommendations below also have been formulated to meet a few simple criteria:

- (a) They are explicitly meant to address the central inclusion-participation challenge identified earlier;
- (b) They are intended to be modest in ambition, as well as relatively inexpensive and easy to implement. Priority has been given to activities that can be implemented in phases, with the transition from one phase to another being contingent upon satisfactory completion of the initial objectives. One aim has been to make sure that that Mission would not find itself “locked into” implementing an expensive, staff-intensive program from which it could not easily disengage. Conversely, each program could easily be expanded if the initial pay-offs are deemed to be encouraging.
- (c) The overall program is built around mutually reinforcing activities and is designed to be as integrated as possible. In other words, one of the guiding principles for the recommendations has been complementarity of the D/G activities both with each other and with other components of the Mission’s strategy.
- (d) It is specifically intended to avoid sectors or types of activities that already are a focus of other donors, and to address issues that may not receive the attention they deserve from the donor community.

## **1. Legislative Strengthening**

### *1. A. The Case for Legislative Strengthening*

Though assistance to legislative development in Jordan is an area fraught with dangers and difficulties, it is hard to envision significant and sustainable progress toward democracy in that country absent a stronger and more effective parliament. After all, which other institution in society can perform as effectively as a legislature the vital functions of executive branch oversight? Which other institution will enable the law-making and budget review processes to incorporate and reflect popular input? And which other institution can provide a relatively safe venue for a broad-based discussion of key public policy issues, and for the airing of a variety of viewpoints on the central issues facing the country?

Fears that a more influential legislature might reverse the policy reforms adopted through temporary laws between 2001 and 2003 should not be exaggerated. After all, it was when the previous legislature was in session that Jordan successfully implemented many of the regulatory and policy changes required for WTO accession. The legislature at the time did not represent a significant obstacle to those reforms. Besides, the current lower house is dominated by pro-government and tribal figures that are unlikely to stand in the way of measures which the executive branch, to say nothing of the Palace, believes are critical to Jordan’s future. In addition, the upper house - which is controlled by establishment politicians - provides a powerful counterweight to the lower house. Finally, as demonstrated most recently by the election of Saad Hayel Srour as Speaker of the lower house, it is important not to downplay the executive branch’s ability to influence key decisions by the legislature (of all the leading figures in the race

for Speaker, Srour was clearly the executive branch's preferred choice, and that situation was certainly not irrelevant to the outcome of the race for Speaker).

Consequently, instead of worrying excessively about the lower house reversing the policy reforms adopted between 2001 and 2003, one must realize that those reforms will be more solidly grounded if they are seen as reflecting a broad-based national consensus - that is, among other features, if they are endorsed by the elected chamber, after the government has made its case successfully in front of that body. It is easy to appreciate the concern of those, among western-oriented Jordanians as well as in the donor community, who fear that public debates of critical economic reforms might thwart or delay urgently needed structural changes in Jordan's economy. One understands why such analysts prefer an environment - similar to that which prevailed in Jordan between 2001 and 2003 -- in which critical policy reforms are drafted (often with foreign assistance) by experts who operate with little or no public scrutiny, and who see their reforms carried out despite the absence of any significant political debate about them. These analysts, however, must realize that - when reforms are adopted in a way that dispenses with popular input and/or endorsement -- they lack the solid foundations that are the only guarantee of their sustainability. Reforms are far more solidly established when they are implemented after the government has been forced to explain them and justify them to the broader public. Parliament's potential contribution to that process may well be one of its major contributions to Jordan's economic future.

For these and other reasons discussed below, the 2003-2007 legislature cannot be allowed to fail. If it does, political alienation and disengagement from the political process will increase even further, with potentially very destabilizing consequences for Jordan. In this context, even a modest legislative development assistance program by the US would be a valuable step. The symbolism of such assistance would be as critical as the assistance itself. It would be a way for Washington to convey the message that the USG regards a strengthening of the independence and capacity of parliament as an important goal for Jordan's reform process, and that the US is ready and willing to help in that endeavor.

Unfortunately, the lower house elected in June 2003 is beginning its tenure with serious handicaps, one of which is the very poor public image of parliament and its lack of credibility as an institution. This image problem, which reflects the fact that the two previous elected houses (1993-1997 and 1997-2001) were seen as largely ineffective, was underscored by the results of a poll carried out between June 21 and June 29, 2003 (in the immediate aftermath of the elections) by the Center for Strategic Studies (CSS) at the University of Jordan:

- The majority of those interviewed identified poverty and unemployment as the primary challenges facing the country, but, among them, only 46.3% expressed any confidence that the new parliament would be able to address those challenges successfully.
- Skepticism was even more pronounced for those who saw corruption as the main problem confronting Jordan. Among them, only 39.7% believed parliament would be able to tackle the issue effectively.
- 64% of respondents believed that the absence of parliament between June 2001 and July 2003 was irrelevant (though 25% stated it affected them negatively).

- More than half of those interviewed (52.6%) believed that the new MPs would be concerned primarily with using their position in the lower house to advance their own, as well as their families', personal and business interests. Only 26.5% anticipated that MPs would focus on advancing the national interest or promoting the well being of their community.
- More than 42% of respondents agreed with the statement that “nothing will change with or without a Lower House of Parliament” - though, 50.7% disagreed with this view, which suggests that a majority has not yet given up regarding parliament’s potential for playing a meaningful role in the political process.

Thus, Jordan’s new MPs face an uphill battle to convince the public that they can play a useful, constructive role in helping the country deal effectively with the challenges it faces. Compounding this problem is the sheer magnitude of the task ahead of a parliament that will have to review, and then adopt, amend or reject, the 230 or so temporary laws that were adopted in its absence, between mid-2001 and mid-2003. This represents even more of a daunting challenge considering that almost two-thirds of MPs are newcomers to legislative work. Besides, most MPs appear ill-prepared for their job in the following respects:

- They do not have clear programs to solve Jordan’s most pressing internal problems.
- They see their role as interceding for special favors for their constituents, not as addressing the long-term challenges faced by the country as a whole.
- They often are prone to grandstanding, empty rhetoric and sloganeering. They typically are less inclined to look for concrete solutions to Jordan’s pressing domestic issues than to making bombastic statements about the Israeli-Palestinian issue or the US occupation of Iraq. In this respect, there appears to be a clear gap between MPs and the Jordanian public they are supposed to represent: the former tend to be far more preoccupied with regional issues than the population at large, which instead believes, as several polls recently have indicated, that policy-makers should concentrate on the domestic issues of unemployment, poverty, and corruption.

Still, for all the reasons to be concerned about the new parliament’s ability to play a more meaningful and effective role than its predecessors, there are also reasons for cautious optimism in that area:

- If one leaves aside the very problematic issue of the electoral law, the conditions under which this parliament was elected were widely seen as positive, both in Jordan and abroad. While there were reports of vote buying, electoral fraud and administrative interference were not seen as having played a significant role. The June 2003 poll by the CSS revealed that 42.1% of respondents believed the elections had been fair « to a great extent, » while 27.9% described them as fair « to a medium extent. » Thus, 70% of all respondents felt the elections had been either fair or reasonably fair.
- In terms of their educational and professional backgrounds, the members of this legislature are better equipped to discharge their functions than their predecessors.



Most encouraging were the many signs that governing circles sent, following the inauguration of the new parliament on July 17, 2003, to indicate respect for the new legislature, and to suggest that they are ready to see parliament play a more visible and influential role:

- Abiding by custom, once parliament was inaugurated, Prime Minister Ali Abul Ragheeb offered the resignation of his cabinet to the King. This was widely interpreted as a gesture of respect toward the new legislature. It was a way of acknowledging that the presence of a new parliament creates a new situation, and that a new cabinet would have to be formed that would need to present its program to the legislature and secure from it a formal vote of confidence before assuming its functions.
- Following his reappointment by King Abdallah, Ali Abul Ragheeb did not announce the composition of his new cabinet and its program until after holding talks about them with the newly elected Speaker of the Lower House, Saad Hayel Srou, as well as with leaders of the parliamentary blocs and other deputies. Before presenting his new team to the King, he also met with Senate President Zeid Rifa`i.
- The new cabinet includes a Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs, Tawfiq Kreishan (a former Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs with experience in parliament, since he served as an MP in the 1993-97 legislature). Several analysts also interpreted the appointment of Mohammad Halaiqa as Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs (and Minister of Administrative Development) as indicating the government's awareness of the new opportunities and constraints created by the resumption of parliamentary life in Jordan. It was widely believed that Halaiqa, who enjoys a reputation as a strong and capable negotiator, and as a seasoned, smooth and articulate politician, was chosen because his skills might be very much needed to help the government make its case when defending before the lower house the economic reforms enacted through temporary laws between 2001 and 2003.
- In the Letter of Designation through which he re-appointed Ali Abul Ragheeb, King Abdallah specifically underlined the importance he attaches to "the Lower House resum[ing] its active participation in our democratic life." The king also underscored the need for the "utmost cooperation between the three branches of authority" - a way of making it clear to all the parties concerned that productive interaction between the cabinet and the legislature is seen as a priority by the Palace.

The significance of these various signals should not be exaggerated. But when seen as a whole, they do suggest that those in governing circles understand that a more active and productive parliamentary life is critical to Jordan's political and economic development. This situation represents an opportunity that donors should seek to take advantage of.

### *1. B. Suggestions for Legislative Assistance*

In the wake of the recent legislative elections, parliament is likely to emerge as a focus of other donors. Consequently, one should consider implementing any of the activities suggested below only after information has been secured about the content of other donors' parliamentary assistance programs. The office of the Secretary General of the lower house, as well as the

UNDP (which plays a coordinating role within the donor community), would be natural places where this information might be obtained.

With this caveat in mind, the following legislative assistance activities seem particularly appropriate to Jordan's needs in the D/G area. As will be apparent, these activities are relatively modest in scope. Even if most of them were to be carried out, they would not amount to a heavy investment. Neither would they "lock" the Mission into an expensive parliamentary development effort that would be hard to implement, or to disengage from (if the program were not to yield the anticipated benefits).

### *Parliamentary orientation*

To be meaningful, this activity or series of activities (in which the Secretary General of the lower house expressed strong interest to the team) should be implemented rapidly. It might consist of two separate endeavors (the first being more time-sensitive than the second):

- Familiarizing new MPs with the premises, resources, and institutional history of the Jordanian legislature, as well as with its procedures and practices. This effort should involve Jordanian analysts and practitioners from the worlds of the media, think tanks, and politics, who are conversant with the legislature and can offer a variety of perspectives on it.
- Helping newly elected MPs understand the variety of roles that parliament play, and how legislatures typically discharge the critical functions of law-making, budget analysis and review, executive branch oversight, conflict regulation, and the translation of societal demands into public policy. The focus would be on helping MPs understand that their role is not only to offer services to their constituents, friends, and relatives, or to intercede on their behalf with government officials, but that it also includes such critical, policy-related functions as examining and suggesting amendments to draft legislation introduced by the executive branch, strengthening government accountability through oversight of the executive branch, educating the public about policy issues, enabling the population to understand better the policy process, and allowing for societal input into that process. The entire effort would aim to provide newly elected MPs with the kind of broad comparative perspective that they would find helpful in discharging their new responsibilities and approaching their new work environment. It might be carried out by US-based legislative development professionals, as long as those professionals are familiar with the distinctive features of Arab legislatures, so as to be able to speak to the distinctive concerns of Jordanian MPs.

### *Review of Internal Rules and Procedures*

Several of our interviewees with longstanding experience either in the legislature or dealing with it identified the lower house's internal rules as a frequent source of inefficiency and delay. Since then, the newly elected Speaker of that chamber, too, has suggested that those rules need improvement, and that he would make that goal one of his priorities.

In this context, it might be possible for USAID to fund a comprehensive review of parliament's internal rules and procedures, with a view to identifying recommendations for improvements that could be presented to the Secretary General and Speaker of the lower house. This effort might include familiarizing the political and administrative leaderships of the lower house with how other chambers around the world organize their agenda in order to maximize effectiveness - which in turn might point those in charge of the Jordanian legislature toward potential institutional reforms.

Much also could be done to improve the manner in which the lower and upper houses relate to each other. For instance, there seems to be little coordination between the committees of both houses, even those that work on the same issues. Exposure to how other legislatures have tackled this coordination challenge may prove of great interest to Jordanian legislators. This kind of activity would be relatively easy and inexpensive to undertake, should the leadership of both houses indicate interest in it.

### *Committee Strengthening*

Much can be done to improve the quality of the work that goes on within committees, so as to enable them to submit better, more detailed reports to the entire parliament. The following committees should be targeted: Legal Affairs (because that committee is the first point of entry for all draft legislation); Finance (because that is where the key economic policy reforms are examined); Health (because of that sector's importance to the Mission's portfolio); and Education (for the same reason). For consistency purposes, and in order not to appear to favor one house at the expense of another, assistance should be provided to the same committees within the upper house. Facilitating communications and building bridges between the targeted committees of both houses should receive special attention.

### *Parliamentary Outreach through Policy Workshops*

The Mission might consider providing support for the convening of a series of policy workshops that would enable key parliamentarians from both the House and the Senate to interact with media professionals, think tanks experts, and NGO leaders. To complement and reinforce the other D/G activities suggested in this report, the issues discussed in those workshops should revolve around economic reform, education, health and water. MPs involved in the workshops would include chamber leaders as well as chairs, rapporteurs and influential members of relevant committees of both chambers. It also might be important to include committee members who are politically prominent and/or who represent parliamentary blocs or general political trends.

These policy workshops would contribute to the following goals:

- They would enable MPs to tap the significant issue-specific expertise that often exists within civil society and the media, thereby empowering MPs to make better informed decisions.
- They would reduce the isolation of parliament. One of the reasons for the legislature's poor image is the fact that it is seen as disconnected from its societal environment. Policy workshops would enable MPs to establish valuable ties to policy-oriented think

tanks (such as the CSS), civil society leaders, and those in the media who follow certain issues very closely, and therefore accumulate significant expertise about them. In addition, by focusing on issues of economic reform, education, health and water - which are those that matter the most to the Jordanian public - these workshops would allow parliament to enhance its institutional credibility by demonstrating its relevance to the daily concerns of Jordanian citizens. It also might help detract some MPs from their otherwise likely grandstanding over regional issues (i.e., Palestine and post-war Iraq).

- The involvement of media professionals could help give those workshops the public exposure that would create yet another incentive for MP participation in them. Media coverage of workshops would increase the visibility of parliament, as well as its perceived relevance to the public policy debate. This situation, in turn, might help enhance the overall credibility of the legislature.
- The involvement of think tanks and civil society groups in the workshops would provide visibility to, and valuable experience and access to decision-makers for, those institutions, thereby enhancing their influence and long-term sustainability. This particular aspect of the activity envisioned can be conceptualized as an indirect, but significant, way of strengthening civil-society.
- Workshops would be designed with the explicit objective of contributing to the institutionalization of linkages and channels of communication between parliamentarians and those in civil society and the media who can provide legislators with relevant and needed information and expertise.

These policy workshops could be organized relatively quickly and easily. Their number and scope could be expanded or reduced, or the activity itself terminated, depending on the results they yield. In short, this is a flexible, low-cost and (provided the condition described in the paragraph below is met) low-risk activity, with potentially high pay-offs.

Because of the general hostility to US policies in the region, the troubled situation in Israel/Palestine, and the US occupation of Iraq, Jordanian implementers should be responsible for organizing and running these workshops, in close collaboration with the political and administrative leadership of parliament. The US Mission as a whole should refrain from any direct involvement. It should make it clear to its Jordanian partners that it understands the sensitivity associated with any US involvement in democracy-related activities in Jordan, and that it is content with merely providing a helping hand.

Some of the policy workshops proposed in this section should deal with issues that bear directly on women. Those workshops naturally would seek to involve the six recently elected women representatives, as well as other key MPs. Because gender is a cross-cutting theme, multiple parliamentary committees may need to be targeted, depending on the scope of the particular workshop.

As for those workshops dealing with broader policy themes -- economic reform, education and health, for instance - they, too, should integrate explicitly women's concerns. One advantage of this approach is that women's issues may be given greater legitimacy when presented in the

context of problems affecting all Jordanians - though one potential danger one should seek to pre-empt is that gender may not receive the degree of attention it is due. In any event, the two formats suggested here should be seen as complementary - with some policy workshops dealing with women-specific issues, while others examine women's concerns against the background of broader policy themes.

Women's issues should be tackled in a sequenced way, depending on their level of sociopolitical sensitivity. For example, workshops should not begin with more controversial questions such as "honor killings." Implementers also should stay clear from potential amendments to shari'a law, as it is currently written and applied in Jordan. As one prominent woman activist told the team, anything directly related to the shari'a is politically "untouchable." This advice mirrors the very approach the women's movement has adopted over the last decade or more. Prominent women's NGOs could be consulted and asked to participate in workshops related to Jordanian women.

Finally, one should bear in mind that the new women MPs likely will be the target of multiple donor interventions. The US, therefore, should make sure that activities involving them will not duplicate on-going or planned endeavors by other donors. There is a real risk of over-engaging women representatives, which could lead to unproductive use of resources and a backlash from other MPs.

### *Parliamentary Research Capacity*

This initiative would be more costly and labor intensive. It also would involve a higher level of risk, and would produce results only over a longer period of time. It would consist of developing the capacity of the staff to conduct policy-relevant research - including through the provision of English language skills and familiarization with the internet as a research tool. The objective would be to provide MPs with more extensive, detailed and technical information and analysis, in order to allow them to make more informed decisions when they cast their votes.

The information and analysis would have to be made available to all MPs who express an interest in them, regardless of political orientation. It also would be critical to make sure that no one is allowed to establish personal control over this enhanced research capacity, so that it is not turned into a tool to further narrow political and personal interests.

Before embarking on such an activity, if it is interested in doing so, the Mission would have to approach the administrative and political leadership of parliament (i.e., the Secretary General and the Speaker) and develop reasonable confidence that both share a commitment to turning the current research unit (which is ineffective in providing the level and quality of analysis needed) into a capable and independent institution.

## **2. Enhanced Local Participation**

The second pillar of the strategy we propose is to enhance popular participation at the local level. Specifically, and in order to address the inclusion/participation deficit identified earlier, we suggest that the Mission consider funding the following three types of activities.

**1. Provide support for a series of town-hall meetings that would bring together officials on the municipal council (both elected and appointed), members of the local community, as well as representatives of local NGOs.** These gatherings would provide venues through which local government officials can engage in regular consultations with the population, and through which the latter can be drawn into a meaningful debate on issues that are of particular importance at the local level. They also would create opportunities for increasing both citizen input into decision-making process and the accountability of local officials. Enhancing responsiveness of local officials has become even more important than before, since under the new system many of those local officials are now appointed and not elected.

- To be consistent with, and reinforce, the other D/G activities suggested in this report as well as the Mission's overall portfolio, these meetings should concentrate on education, health and water issues. Some of the meetings also should address concerns specific to women, or examine how broader issues bear on women. Particularly at the local level, economic development, health and education not only are issue areas that directly concern women, but they also are domains in which women may be inordinately active through service-oriented NGOs.
- To facilitate implementation, the localities chosen should be small- or medium-sized, politically moderate communities, relatively close to Amman. Larger urban centers with reputations as center of opposition should be avoided. The Mission might consider initiating this set of activities with al-Salt, Madaba and al-Karak. These are smaller cities with some diversity in populations (i.e., Transjordanians as well as Palestinians, and Christians as well as Muslims, especially in the case of Madaba).

Should it decide to engage in this type of effort, the Mission should remember that any direct, visible US involvement in democracy-promotion activities in Jordan would be unwise at this particular historical juncture. It most probably would backfire and deter participation from the very individuals for whom the activities are intended. Consequently, the Mission should rely on Jordanian facilitators to organize and conduct the meetings -- though those facilitators would be called upon to operate under the overall guidance and supervision of the Mission and/or a US-based implementer.

Before designing and implementing town-hall meetings, the Mission would need to familiarize itself with pre-existing local practices and mechanisms for citizen consultation in the localities where those meetings are being considered. In both Zarqa and Karak, the team found precedents for the kind of activity suggested here. In Karak, for example, past municipal councils have consulted with the local community regarding specific development projects, and there is a consultative council (majlis istishari) of prominent community members with which the previous municipal council consulted on an ad hoc basis. Other cities and towns in Jordan may have similar venues for local participation.

Depending on their substance, such past or on-going practices might help shape future town-hall gatherings, while legitimizing them by making them seem like a continuation of previous endeavors. At the very least, however, new mechanisms for community participation should not

duplicate or be perceived as competing with on-going ones. Recognition of, and sensitivity to, community institutions should facilitate buy-in for Mission-sponsored activities.

**2. Facilitate regular public meetings during which prominent local figures likely to be candidates for future parliamentary elections are invited to present their views on issues of national significance to the local community.** Such meetings, which might follow the format of short presentations followed by a longer questions-and-answers segment, would perform two key functions:

- (a) They would provide another avenue through which the local population can express its concerns and opinions to individuals likely to hold public office, and through which these future officials are made to listen to the opinions of those they would have to serve.
- (b) They would nudge future candidates to parliament toward formulating more specific views and real platforms on key questions. As a way of helping Jordan move toward a more program-driven and issue-oriented political dynamic, this approach would seem to be potentially far more effective than a standard “party-development program.” Being forced to articulate and defend their opinions in front of a local audience that might determine their political future would sensitize potential candidates to the importance of developing platforms, while directly creating the incentives to develop such platforms.

As with respect to the town meetings-like gatherings suggested above, and for the same reasons, this activity (or series of activities) would need to rely on Jordanian facilitators. As with many of the suggestions contained in this report, the activity should not be viewed as an occasion to showcase American ideas or financial support. In addition, town hall events would include a media component, since one of their objectives would be to use maximum national coverage of them in order to create a demonstration effect and prompt other towns and cities to organize similar meetings. Finally, particular attention should be given to potential women candidates for parliamentary elections.

### **3. Enhance Local-Regional Consultation**

In addition to purely local activities, the Mission also might consider expanding existing consultative mechanisms at the governorate level. This initiative would interlock with, and build on, efforts to increase local popular participation. It might be introduced once town-hall meetings have been launched, publicized and deemed a success in one or more of the municipalities of a particular governorate.

Each governorate seems to have a consultative council (*majlis istishari*) that includes the governor, the presidents of the municipalities within that governorate, and the heads of the field offices of various ministries. The existence and workings of that institution across governorates would have to be verified and further examined, but the Karak and Zarqa governorates do feature such a council. Relevant details could easily be obtained by speaking with mayors and governors in geographical areas of potential interest.

If they do not already, consultative councils could meet periodically with elected and appointed municipal councilors and representatives of local NGOs to discuss the same issues covered in the town-hall meetings. Local leaders would have benefited from previous participation in community meetings and could thus engage with regional interlocutors based on popular input.

Historically, the primary mandate of governors has been to deal with law-and-order issues. In the past several years, however, King ‘Abdullah has given governors new responsibilities in promoting regional economic development. The expanded portfolio of Jordanian governors, coupled with the existence of consultative councils, provides an opportunity eventually to scale up the impact of the town-hall program, and to create the additional channels of popular participation that many Jordanians seek.

Local leaders presumably would welcome the opportunity to interact with regional decision-makers. If they have grown accustomed to town-hall meetings, they should be ready for their own direct, greater involvement at the governorate level. Meanwhile, strengthening local-regional linkages would facilitate the transmission of local concerns and input to higher-level policy-making arenas, thus increasing overall government responsiveness.

The buy-in of particular governors of course would be crucial, and the potential for it likely would increase as town-hall meetings (a) are increasingly implemented, (b) receive favorable press coverage, and (c) become part of the life of major localities within particular governorates. Because regional consultation would remain at an essentially elite level, the governors involved likely would find the format more familiar than threatening. As administrative figures, Jordanian governors are accustomed to meeting with local leaders in both ceremonial and substantive settings. Also boding well for their consent is the fact that governors may view such new consultation avenues as yet another opportunity to promote an image of direct involvement with, and concern for, the communities with which they are entrusted.

### **3. Transparency/ Anti-corruption**

#### *3. A. The Case for Transparency and Anti-Corruption Activities*

The overarching participation challenge identified by the team is related, in part, to the pervasive issue of corruption, and to the perceived lack of transparency and accountability in government operations. Those two factors indeed go a long way toward explaining why people refrain from political participation through existing channels, and why they believe that such participation does not really enable them to affect decision-making. To put it differently, political disengagement reflects to a significant extent the feeling that key decision-makers cannot truly be held accountable for their actions, which in turn stems from the lack of transparency surrounding how those decision-makers discharge their official responsibilities. In this context, tackling the corruption issue may increase prospects for accountability, thereby helping address the participation problem.

Particularly striking in this respect are the results of the previously mentioned poll conducted in June 2003 by the Center for Strategic Studies at the University of Amman. That poll confirmed that the two questions that are of greatest immediate concern to Jordanians are those of poverty



and unemployment. But it also revealed that corruption comes immediately after those two issues, and far ahead of regional problems such as Palestine and Iraq. Thus, when they were asked to identify which issue represents the main challenge facing the country, those polled answered according to the following ranking:

Issue	Percentage of Responses
The fight against poverty and unemployment	58%
Corruption	24.6%
The Palestinian issue	13.7%
Iraq	2%

Our interviews were fully consistent with the result of that poll. They, too, suggested that as far as political issues are concerned, corruption is (a) a dominant source of complaint and cause of alienation from the political system; and (b) an issue about which there is great skepticism regarding the willingness of the powers-that-be to address the problem. In fact, there might be greater government readiness to address the issue than is typically assumed, in part, as two of our interviewees suggested, because the pervasive nature of corruption has become a burden on the government itself. There is now a heightened realization in some government circles at least that the issue must be addressed for Jordan’s “globalization gamble” to succeed. Significantly perhaps, the Letter of Designation through which King Abdallah re-appointed Ali Abul Ragheb in July 2003 underscored that justice “demands cracking down on all forms of corruption, favoritism and abuse of power for personal, sectarian or factional gains.”

*3. B. Suggestions for a Transparency/Anti-Corruption Program*

To secure a basic degree of government cooperation, which is needed for any anti-corruption effort to succeed, the issue must be framed and addressed in a non-confrontational manner that emphasizes problem-solving. In the early stages at least, it might be preferable to talk about “ethics” and “unethical behavior” than about corruption per se. From the outset, it should be made clear that the purpose of an anti-corruption strategy is not to open the door to witch-hunts, or to allow the issue of corruption to be used to settle political scores, but:

- (a) to raise public awareness of the costs of corruption, so as to enhance Jordan’s prospects for economic success;
- (b) to concentrate on identifying the specific mechanisms through which corruption may be curbed; and
- (c) to encourage joint efforts between selected government institutions, civil society actors, experts, and the media in order to facilitate a sharing of expertise and knowledge regarding corruption, and to initiate pilot projects designed to reduce it.

With this approach in mind, we propose that a transparency/anti-corruption program for Jordan might involve the following components.

### *Knowledge-Building and Sensitization Activities*

The Mission might consider funding activities that aim to educate the public about the mechanisms and costs of corruption, and seek to broaden the national debate over this problem. By way of example, the kinds of activities that might be involved include the following:

- Facilitating the emergence within civil society of a network of associations concerned with the issue of corruption. The fight against corruption could serve as a unifying theme for civil society -- one that might bring together both advocacy and service-delivery groups, as well as business associations (in particular the Amman Chamber of Commerce). The media should be harnessed to provide maximum exposure to that effort. Regional and international linkages also should be encouraged to stimulate the emergence and consolidation of that network.
- Providing support for specialized surveys and studies that increase public knowledge of the specific forms that corruption takes in Jordan. Currently, while the issue of “corruption” features prominently on the public’s mind, little is known about the exact roots and manifestations of corruption in Jordan. This lack of knowledge stands in the way of any meaningful effort to put in place specific mechanisms to address the problem. Relevant activities might involve joint efforts by such institutions as the Center for Strategic Studies, the Arab Archives Institute, the al-Quds Center, as well as media outlets (the latter would be critical to publicizing the results of studies and survey to as large an audience as possible). The objective would be to provide a more detailed picture of the prevailing forms of corruption in Jordan, and to enhance public understanding of their costs, so as both to nurture political will for reform and to enable decision-makers to make more informed decisions once the political will to tackle this issue materializes. A yearly report might be issued on “The State of Corruption in Jordan” - summarizing the year’s main publicized cases of corruption as well as the various initiatives launched by different institutions to fight it and create greater transparency. Publicizing the results of that report through the internet, roundtables, conference, and seminars, and ensuring broad media coverage of those activities, would be an important objective.
- Organizing a conference (and, if it is successful, others that build on it) to familiarize Jordanian actors with the specific institutions and procedures that other countries have put in place to combat corruption and create greater accountability and transparency in government operations. The general theme of that conference might be “lessons learned from other countries’ experiences in fighting corruption.” The focus would be on what works, what does not work, and why, using case studies, and seeking to identify what Jordan can learn from foreign experiences in areas ranging from how to make privatization as transparent a process as possible, how to improve public procurements legislation, and how to make the public administration more ethical. Foreign experts would be invited to share their knowledge, as long as it is made directly relevant to Jordan’s situation, and other donors (including the World Bank) might be invited to participate. Once again, the activity would include a media component aimed at maximizing exposure for the event(s).

## *Curriculum Development and Teacher Training*

- (a) Perhaps by using the Fulbright program as a vehicle, it might be possible to introduce the teaching of business ethics at the university level, particularly in economics and business-related departments. This is an area in which the United States has considerable experience and retains some credibility (which unfortunately no longer can be said about such areas as human rights and civil freedoms). Because a potential mechanism (the Fulbright program) already is in place, the activity would be relatively easy to implement. A Fulbright scholar could be teaching the same course at several universities (say, Amman, Yarmouk and Irbid) during the week.
- (b) Using the model which Transparency Maroc (the Moroccan branch of Transparency International) developed in Morocco, the Mission might support a project to sensitize school children to the damages of corruption. Primary-, secondary-, and high schools would be targeted. A focus on children offers several advantages. For one, they represent the future of Jordan, and if from an early age they are made aware of the damages of corruption, the scope of that phenomenon in Jordan might diminish over time. Besides, children often can be powerful educators of parents: what they learn in school, and the knowledge to which they are exposed, often makes its way back to the household, particularly when parents have not enjoyed the benefits of a similar education.

This operation would require the cooperation of the Ministry of Education. Prior discussions therefore would need to be initiated with the Minister and the Secretary General. Initially, the project might be implemented in the schools of only one or two governorates, and (as was the case in Morocco) it could be expanded subsequently if it meets with success. Significant media coverage of the entire initiative would be called for.

While the Ministry of Education (MOE) would be a necessary partner in this effort, the required training of school teachers would be carried out by an independent, specialized organization or team of consultants. A teaching manual might be developed to integrate permanently corruption-related knowledge into the curriculum. That manual would include standard exercises through which school children can be made to understand the nature of corruption, the forms it takes, the environments in which it prevails, and the toll it exacts on a country's development prospects. One theme running through that manual would be to undermine the idea that corruption is acceptable or inevitable. The manual might also include suggestions for independent projects through which children on their own might explore further the phenomenon of corruption (conducting small-scale surveys, preparing and presenting reports, putting together plays that deal with the phenomenon of corruption, or drawing sketches that illustrate it). The experience of Morocco, which is a regional leader in organizing such activities, should be tapped.

This educational component of our transparency-related activities presents three clear political advantages. First, it is fully consistent with, and takes advantage of, the kingdom's reform efforts in educational modernization. Second, it is also in line with the principles of equality of opportunity and government responsiveness to the people that King Abdullah has stressed repeatedly, which provides royal legitimacy for the effort. Finally, through media coverage of

these educational activities, the approach introduces the issue into the public discourse in a low-profile, politically non-threatening way.

### *Pilot Programs*

Relying on Jordanian implementers, the Mission might wish to support specific, ad hoc efforts to make certain institutions more transparent and “corruption free.”

- It might assist in civil society efforts to create such “islands of transparency” within Jordan.
- It could fund studies of the means through which corruption might be fought within selected schools, hospitals, or government offices. (As an example of productive institutional cooperation between the business world and civil society, one of Morocco’s leading conglomerates, the *Office Chérifien des Phosphates*, once requested the assistance of Transparency Maroc to carry out such a study. Shortly thereafter, Transparency Maroc was tapped by the Ministry of Public Works and the Ministry of Education to carry out activities designed at improving transparency within those institutions. In this respect again, Jordan may have much to gain from seeking to emulate the Moroccan example).
- It might provide support for institutionalizing the practice of internal audits within selected Jordanian ministries (to reinforce other components of the Mission’s overall portfolio, the ministries of education, health, water, and the economy would be natural targets).

### *Seek to Empower the Audit Bureau (Diwan al-Muhasabat)*

As discussed earlier, the Audit Bureau (AB) is an institution with real though currently unfulfilled potential. Providing technical assistance to it would send a powerful signal that the USG believes real progress on transparency issues within the executive branch and public-sector agencies is important. With this in mind, the Mission might consider the following efforts:

- Activities that familiarize the Jordanian public with the critical role that institutions such as the AB have played in other countries as vehicles for government accountability and transparency. Media coverage of those activities would greatly increase their intended impact.
- Publicizing the annual report that the AB submits to parliament. This activity would provide a natural linkage with the parliamentary development program outlined above. One of the problems that the AB has encountered historically has been the unwillingness of parliament to follow up on the AB’s annual report, which provides detailed evidence of irregularities by government entities (from spending over their allotted budgets and violating existing financial procedures to even more serious wrongdoings). As a former head of the AB put it to the team, parliament has treated the AB’s uncovering of irregularities as being the AB’s “own battle to wage.” Deprived of vital support by the parliamentary institution, the AB repeatedly has found itself powerless when confronted

with the wrath of executive branch officials determined to punish the institution for having dared to expose their illicit behavior. Working with the Finance Committee of the lower house to publicize the content of the AB's annual report might help empower the AB. It might provide it with the broader societal support it needs during its battles with executive branch officials, and might also create additional incentives for some parliamentarians to back it up.

- AB staff should become more familiar with the tools used for performance auditing and evaluation, as well as to the techniques needed to conduct an integrated audit (i.e., one that assesses both performance and integrity). More generally, the expertise of the AB staff should be expanded, including through exposure to US approaches to auditing and evaluation. One natural vehicle for such assistance would be to work through the US Association of Inspectors General (AIG), which has conducted similar work in Morocco, and may increase its activities there.
- The AB also would benefit from an independent evaluation of its own performance. This activity could be carried out by a team of US-based experts, with the explicit purpose of making suggestions for increasing the effectiveness of the AB and empowering it.

#### *Public Finance Training for MPs and their Staff*

Side by side with publicizing the annual report the AB submits to parliament, public finance training for MPs and their staff represents yet another activity that could fall under either the parliamentary development program described above, or the transparency/anti-corruption program outlined in this section. MPs hardly can be expected to discharge their responsibilities in the area of public finance oversight as long as they and their support staff lack the skills required to analyze complex, technical public finance issues. Their capacity in that area, therefore, must be enhanced. Familiarizing them with techniques of modern public accounting, auditing and monitoring, as well as strengthening the institutional capacity of the Finance Committees of both houses of parliament, would enhance the legislature's ability to provide for greater accountability and transparency within the executive branch.

#### **4. Media Support**

The media has a critical role to play in fostering greater political participation and accountability in Jordan. Yet this potential role is currently unfulfilled. Jordan's media needs to recapture and eventually expand the margin of freedom it had enjoyed during the early 1990s, which receded in the mid-1990s, only to narrow even further from the late 1990s onward.

As is apparent from the sections above, the media activities we suggest are interwoven through the other three program areas proposed - legislative development, local participation, and transparency/anti-corruption. The basic principle at work is to harness the media to publicize key activities undertaken under each of those three programs, with a view to generating a broader dynamic of change by (a) creating demonstration effects; (b) providing public recognition to those who address the need for greater political participation, and (c) nurturing political will among key decision-makers.

Thus, as was shown, at the national level the media can promote the visibility, credibility and ultimately accountability of parliament as an institution through its coverage of parliamentary proceedings as well as the proposed parliamentary policy workshops. At the local level, similar coverage of town-hall meetings can promote the format as a successful practice to be replicated elsewhere in the country. The media can also publicize Mission-supported transparency activities and perhaps report on pro-transparency institutional actors, such as the Accounting Bureau. In the past several years, corruption has surfaced as an issue in several daily newspapers. While hardly a continuous topic of investigative reporting, there is some journalistic precedent on which to build. This should not be discounted considering official political sensitivities over the issue.

The media program might involve selected training activities for journalists. In that case, using our guiding principle of complementarity of D/G activities with each other and with other components the Mission's portfolio, the training should focus on improving coverage of parliamentary activities, as well as reporting skills on issues of local participation, corruption and transparency, education, and health.

With respect to the delivery of training assistance, the Mission might consider whether or not the Higher Media Council (HMC) -- a quasi-governmental body at least nominally charged with coordinating media policy -- provides a reliable partner.

- On the one hand, that institution is currently headed by a credible figure - a genuinely reform-minded ex-Information Minister -- who indicated to the team that he would be receptive to cooperating with USAID in training activities (which is an important component of the HMC's mandate), but only after his vision for the HMC, and the kinds of objectives he is considering for that institution, have secured both high-level and broad-based endorsements.
- On the other hand, there is currently widespread skepticism, particularly among media professionals, about the HMC's ability to develop into an institution endowed with the minimum level of independence required to discharge its intended functions.

Consequently, before deciding to engage the HMC, the Mission should monitor its performance and the evolution of its credibility among media professionals. In the meantime, it might be advisable to establish initial lines of communication with it. If the HMC is given real latitude to expand media professionalization and freedom (which its president sees as the Jordanian media's twin challenges), that institution could become a partner in an expanded media program centered on formal journalist training regarding the issues and institutions central to the team's core recommendations.