Though a small state, Jordan has frequently found itself at the centre of conflict and crisis in the modern Middle East. It has been a central protagonist in the wars of the region, notably the 1948 and 1967 Arab–Israeli wars, and has also been at the forefront of peace-making, signing a separate peace with Israel in 1994. Philip Robins’ survey of Jordan’s political history begins in the early 1920s, continues through the years of the British mandate, and traces events over the next half century to the present day. Throughout the latter period the country’s fortunes were closely identified with its head of state, King Hussein, until his death in 1999. In the early days, as the author testifies, his prospects were often regarded as grim. However, both King and country survived a variety of existential challenges, from assassination attempts and internal subversion to a civil war with the Palestine Liberation Organisation. In the 1970s and 1980s the country emerged as an apparently stable and prosperous state. However, King Hussein’s death, the succession of his son, Abdullah II, and the recent upheavals in the region have plunged the country back into uncertainty. This is an incisive account, compellingly told, about one of the most important countries in the Middle East.

Philip Robins is University Lecturer in Politics with special reference to the Middle East in the Department of Politics and International Relations at the University of Oxford and a Fellow of St Antony’s College. His most recent book is Suits and Uniforms: Turkish Foreign Policy since the Cold War (2003).
For my daughter Isabel
Contents

List of illustrations ix
List of tables and maps x
Acknowledgements xi
Chronology xiii

Introduction 1

1 On the Edge of Empire 5
  Transjordan and its ‘dark ages’ 6
  The Ottoman state and its impact 8
  The post-First World War limbo 12

2 Founding State and Regime 16
  Abdullah’s consolation prize 17
  The Sharifian moment 20
  Regime politics: incorporating social groups 23
  Britain and the fate of Transjordan 27
  Towards administrative consolidation 31

3 The Long Road to Independence 35
  Creating political institutions 36
  Incorporating the tribal periphery 40
  Political affairs in the Emirate 44
  Risks and opportunities in the region 47
  The Second World War 52
  Independence, at last 56

4 Loss of Innocence 59
  The onset of strife 60
  A Hashemite dream 64
  Unity across the Jordan 70
  The death of a king 74
5 The Roaring Fifties

5.1 A second succession
5.2 New social realities
5.3 The accession of Hussein
5.4 The Baghdad Pact and the ousting of Glubb
5.5 The radical challenge from within
5.6 A coup from the palace
5.7 Rebuilding stability

6 The Road to Disaster

6.1 Wa’fi al-Tall and the rest
6.2 The drive for economic development
6.3 Conflicts across the region
6.4 The awakening of Palestinian nationalism
6.5 The 1967 war
6.6 Managing the aftermath
6.7 Bloody conflict within

7 Illusions of Progress

7.1 Two peoples, one state
7.2 The Road to Rabat
7.3 The October war
7.4 Oil wealth without oil
7.5 The temptation of Camp David
7.6 Hussein and Saddam: the odd couple
7.7 Limited domestic reform
7.8 Process, but no peace
7.9 West Bank disengagement

8 Hussein’s Choices

8.1 While Jordan burns
8.2 Liberalisation for austerity
8.3 The National Charter
8.4 The Iraq–Kuwait crisis
8.5 The ‘break’ with Iraq
8.6 Structural adjustment
8.7 Hussein’s gamble on peace
8.8 Democratisation on the backburner
8.9 Uphill struggle for normalisation
8.10 A messy succession

9 Abdullah’s First Steps

Notes
Bibliography
Index
Illustrations

1. The market place in the town of Salt, c. 1920s (JEM 6.10) page 14
2. Amir Abdullah and others in Amman, 1921 (JEM 6.209) 18
3. Jordanian peasant couple, 1933 (Stark MF 129 D3) 24
4. The Parliament House in Amman, 1933 (Stark MF 133 B6) 38
5. Members of Glubb’s Desert Patrol, 1935 (Glubb, Film 1, No. 25) 43
6. The town of Amman, 1933 (Stark MF 133 C2) 51
7. A street scene in the northern town of Ajlun, 1943 (Stark MF 133 B3) 56
8. Amir Talal, aged 13, 1922 (Philby Misc Tj 5) 76
9. Jordanian police with armed vehicle (Stark MF 133 A5) 83
10. The city of Amman, 1963 (JEM 6.2) 86
11. Palestinian refugees crossing the River Jordan to the East Bank during the 1967 war (JEM 1.1505.1) 125
12. King Hussein embraces Prince Abdullah the day after having restored him as crown prince, Amman, 26 January 1999 (Popperfoto AMM04) 194
Tables and maps

Tables

2.1 British grant-in-aid allocated to Transjordan (£)  page 29
5.1 Distribution of refugees in Jordan, February 1952  84
5.2 Urban growth in major cities of Jordan, 1952–1962  85
7.1 Foreign grants and government revenues, 1967–1982  143
8.1 Jordan’s deteriorating government budget (JD million)  167

Maps

1 Present-day Jordan  xviii
2 Jordan and the West Bank (pre-1967)  xix
3 Jordan and the Middle East  xx
It is well over two decades since I first went to Jordan, initially to live and work as a journalist and then to return to undertake doctoral research under the supervision of the redoubtable Tim Niblock. Since 1986, when I ceased to reside in the country, I have been a frequent visitor, most recently to conduct my current research into the field of illegal drugs. During this long association with the country I have talked with several hundreds of people, Jordanians, Palestinians and expatriates, many of them numerous times over. With hardly an exception, they have been kind and generous with their time, hospitality and insights. My thanks are due to each one of them. While to mention any by name is hard on the others, there are certain people whose assistance compels special mention. Nigel Denby, Paul and Jane Dracott, Keith and Janet Fraser-Smith, Tony and Alison Harpur, Declan and Liz Mannion, Alastair MacNeil, Dina Matar, Hana Muasher, Peter and Fenella Raftery, Mike and Maureen Ryan, and Alison Woods were all pivotal figures in my life at different times during my various stints in Jordan, and many remain close and valued friends. Debts of gratitude are particularly owed to Nasser Abu Nab, Lamis Andoni, Jalal Azzeh, Ian Chandler, Hiyam Fakhoury, Yusuf al-Khadra, Rami and Ellen Khouri, David Oston and Sheila Oston, Rana Sabbagh, Jamal and Mary Sha’ir, Murawid and Ruth Tell, Ara Voskian, P. V. Vivekenand and Nidal Zayaddin for providing me with humour, sanctuary and good company. During the early days I learnt a lot about Jordan from associates who became more than just good contacts, and whose conversation was especially valuable and rich in insight, particularly Asad Abdul Rahman, Alan Charlton, Fahd al-Fanek, Abdullah Hasanat, George Hawatmeh, Saji Salamah Khalil, Ahmad Mango, Marwan Muasher, Isam al-Tal and Tariq al-Tell. More recently Bassam Asfour, Ibrahim Izzedin, Musa Keilani, Sir John Moberly, Salameh Ne’matt, Amal Sabbagh, Asher Susser and Suhail al-Twal have continued to remind me how much understanding there is still to be done.

Acknowledgements
Of course, romance and Jordan is not a new thing. I am pleased to say, though, that, unlike for some others, romance in Jordan for me found a personal rather than political fulfilment, as it was while working there that I met my wife, Helen. For that reason alone, this book would have been a labour of love.

Though in many ways a product of more than 20 years of working on Jordan, the book was written after I joined the Middle East Centre (MEC) at St Antony’s College in the mid-1990s. I would like to thank Eugene Rogan, Avi Shlaim and the other fellows and members of the Centre for their stimulation and support, not least in the field of Jordan studies. Graduate students, both past and present, have helped turn the MEC into a centre of excellence as far as the study of Jordan is concerned. I should like in particular to thank Yoav Alon, Paul Kingston, Paul Lalor, Robert Satloff, Lawrence Tal, Tariq al-Tell and Basma Talal for convening and taking part in the numerous discussions of Jordan, past and present, in which I have been involved at the Centre. Lastly, I would also like to thank the staff of the MEC, not least the librarian, Mostan Ebtihaj, for her cheerful help in providing the necessary research sources to support my work, and the archivist, Debbie Usher, who was especially helpful in securing the bulk of the photos contained within this work.

As for the book itself, I would like to thank Marigold Acland for commissioning it, for her patience in its preparation, and for her well-judged promptings during its writing. I would also like to thank Amanda Pinches and Karen Hildebrandt for their help in bringing the book to publication, and to Roger Bourke for his editing. With respect to the manuscript, Mary Wilson was kind enough to read it in its entirety. I am especially grateful to her, both for her detailed specific comments and her general observations. Helen also read the manuscript and made many judicious comments and suggestions based on her knowledge of the country. I am also especially grateful to Ahmad Khalidi and Tony Reeve who read and commented on specific chapters. As is usual on these occasions, I am happy to own up to responsibility for the final version.
### Chronology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1867</td>
<td>Ottoman control is reimposed upon the lands of Transjordan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>The Hijaz Railway reaches Amman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>April: The San Remo conference establishes the mandate system, of which Transjordan is to be part. August: British High Commissioner Sir Herbert Samuel announces the creation of autonomous administrations in Transjordan. November: the future ruler, Amir Abdullah bin Hussein, arrives in Maan in the south.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>Cairo conference under Churchill gives Abdullah jurisdiction over Transjordan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>September: The Adwan 'revolt'.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>August: Abdullah accepts the Ultimatum on British administrative supervision. October: Hijaz falls to the Saudis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>November (2nd): Hadda Agreement signed with the Saudis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925–7</td>
<td>Druze Rebellion in southern Syria.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>November: Major John Glubb establishes the Desert Patrol.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>March: Legislative Council passes a consolidated land tax.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936–39</td>
<td>Revolt by the Arab population in Palestine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>Glubb replaces Peake as commander of the Arab Legion. Alec Kirkbride replaces Cox as British Resident.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>Middle East Supply Centre established.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>April: Rashid Ali al-Kailani coup in Iraq; Arab Legion participates in its suppression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>Arab League established, with Transjordan as a founding member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>May (25th): Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan proclaimed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>August: Secret meetings begin between Abdullah and the Jewish Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>November (29th): UN General Assembly passes partition plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>May: Britain terminates Palestine mandate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>July: Second phase of the war: Jordan forfeits Lydda and Ramle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>October–January (1949): Third phase of the war: Israel attacks Egypt rather than Jordan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>April (3rd): Israeli–Jordanian armistice concluded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>April (25th): Jordanian parliament passes unification resolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>July (20th): King Abdullah assassinated in Jerusalem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>September (6th): Prince Talal proclaimed king</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>January (1st): New, liberal constitution ratified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>July (23rd): Nasser leads Free Officers’ coup in Egypt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>May (2nd): King Hussein formally accedes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>October (16th): General election subject to gross interference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>New municipal law adopted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>December: After sustained rioting, Jordan decides not to join Baghdad Pact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>March (1st): Glubb Pasha dismissed as head of the Arab Legion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>October: General election results in largely radical parliament; leader of National Socialists, Suleiman Nabulsi, invited to form government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>July–November: The Suez crisis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chronology

1957
January (19th): Arab Solidarity Agreement struck, whereby Arab states would replace Britain as Jordan’s paymaster
January: Eisenhower Doctrine against Communism unveiled
March (14th): Anglo-Jordanian treaty abrogated
April: Following reports of army unrest, the king sacks the Nabulsi government and faces down the disturbances at the Zarqa army camp

1958
February (1st): Egypt and Syria unite to form the United Arab Republic
February (14th): Iraq and Jordan respond by establishing the Arab Federation
July (14th): Revolution in Baghdad brings down the Hashemite monarchy in Iraq
Hussein invites in British troops to stabilise Jordan

1959
August (29th): Prime minister Hazza al-Majali assassinated by Syrian agents

1960
January: First premiership of technocratic, reformist Wasfi al-Tall
September: Start of Yemeni civil war

1961
February and March: Nationalist revolutions in Baghdad and Damascus respectively

1962
January: First Arab summit creates the Palestine liberation movement
September: Arab summit establishes unified Arab military command

1964
November (13th): Israel undertakes devastating raid on Samu

1967
May (30th): King Hussein flies to Cairo; signs Joint Defence Agreement with Egypt
June (3th–10th): Six day war results in devastation of Jordanian military; loss of the West Bank
August–September: Khartoum Arab summit adopts peaceful strategy for rectifying Arab–Israeli problems
November (22nd): UN Security Council adopts Resolution 242, based on principle of land for peace

1968
March (21st): Jordanian and Palestinian fighters face down the Israeli army at the Battle of Karamah

1970
September: PFLP’s Dawson’s Field hijackings precipitate Jordanian–Palestinian clashes
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>‘Black September’ defeat for Palestinian guerrillas in a civil war</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>July: Remainder of Palestinian guerrillas driven out of Jordan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Allon Plan symbolises Israel’s preference for the ‘Jordanian option’ with regard to the future of the West Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>March (15th): Hussein unveils his United Arab Kingdom vision for East Bank–West Bank relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>September: Jordan warns Israel of imminent Arab attack in October. Jordan participates belatedly in October (6th–26th) War on the Syrian front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>Army unrest over food prices results in establishment of the ministry of supply</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>October: Rabat Arab summit recognises the PLO as representative of the Palestinians, at Jordan’s expense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>November: Parliament suspended in light of Rabat resolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>Arafat and Hussein meet at Cairo Arab summit, marking the start of a post-civil war, post-Rabat thaw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>PLO body reverses policy on regime change in Amman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>April: National Consultative Council established while parliament in abeyance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>September (17th): Camp David Accords signed, envisaging role for Jordan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>November: Baghdad Arab summit pledges $1.25 billion a year to Jordan in return for steadfastness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>December: Sharif Abdul Hamid Sharaf appointed prime minister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>June: Israeli invasion of Lebanon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>September (1st): Reagan peace plan is unveiled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>Jordanian Central Bank provides revolving credit line to maintain trade with Iraq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>March: Parliament restored; Islamist successes in by-elections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>November: PLO’s national council meets in Amman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>February (11th): Peace process coordinating agreement forged with PLO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>February: Peace process agreement collapses in recrimination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>August: Jordan unveils still-born development plan for the West Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>April: King Hussein and Shimon Peres conclude London Agreement on peace process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>December: First uprising begins in Palestinian territories</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chronology

1988
July (31st): King Hussein cuts administrative and legal ties with the West Bank

1989
February: Jordan is a founder member of four-state Arab Cooperation Council
February: Jordan’s foreign debt default becomes public
April: Jordanian government begins to implement IMF programme
April: Riots break out in Maan, spreading to a number of towns
November (8th): Jordan holds free and fair elections; Islamists the winners

1990
August (2nd): Iraq invades Kuwait; King Hussein embarks on controversial ‘mediatory’ role

1991
January: Muslim Brotherhood join coalition government
June: National Charter adopted
October: Jordan takes part in Arab–Israeli peace summit in Madrid

1993
November: Jordan holds its first multi-party election since 1956

1994
October (26th): Israel and Jordan sign peace treaty

1995
August: King Hussein initially supports Saddam Hussein’s defecting sons-in-law
October: Jordan hosts second of four regional economic conferences as part of its effort at normalisation

1997
September: Israeli agents bungle assassination of Hamas leader in Amman

1999
January: Month of high drama ends with King Hussein changing the succession from his brother Hasan to his eldest son Abdullah
February (7th): King Hussein dies; King Abdullah II succeeds; Hussein’s second-youngest son, Hamzah, declared to be crown prince

2000
September: Second Palestinian uprising begins

2003
March–April: A US-dominated coalition precipitates regime change in Baghdad through war
Map 1. Present-day Jordan
Map 2. Jordan and the West Bank (pre-1967)
Map 3. Jordan and the Middle East