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The Odd Couple: Ending the Jordanian-Syrian "Cold War"

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ABSTRACT

Of all the bilateral relationships between Arab states, the Jordanian-Syrian relationship has been among the most tumultuous. Jordanian-Syrian relations have, more often than not, been marked by varying degrees of mutual hostility and even violence. These periods of animosity have been so frequent that they amounted to a local 'Cold War' even in the midst of the many other conflicts in the region. But with regime changes in both Amman and Damascus, a marked thaw has emerged in Jordanian-Syrian relations, seemingly ending another long period of acrimony. But this type of event has happened once before: in the late 1970s when Jordan and Syria shifted from antagonism to alliance. This article examines both the historic and current attempts to end the Jordanian-Syrian Cold War, so that the earlier episode may shed some light on the present and future of Jordanian-Syrian relations.

ARTICLE

Throughout their histories as independent states, Jordan and Syria have had a tenuous relationship at best, marked by temporary military alliances during wars with Israel, but more often by varying degrees of mutual hostility. These long periods of hostility were so extensive, in fact, that they amounted to a local "Cold War" in the midst of the many other conflicts already operating in the region. Today, however, a marked thaw has emerged in Jordanian-Syrian relations. The thaw began only in 1999, but within two years it had shifted already from a cold war, to a cold peace, and then even to more meaningful cooperation and coordination. By 2001, some officials were even talking of the potential for a full Jordanian-Syrian alliance.¹

The successful ending of the Jordanian-Syrian Cold War certainly marks a new chapter in the history of these two states' bilateral relations. But despite the long history of acrimony between Amman and Damascus, this type of event has actually happened once before: in the late 1970s when Jordan and Syria shifted from antagonism to full-scale alliance. This article examines both the historic and current attempts at bringing the Jordanian-Syrian Cold War to an end, providing an empirical

analysis of both episodes with the hope that the earlier case may shed light on the present and future of the Jordanian-Syrian relationship. This change in Jordanian-Syrian relations marks a critical but largely unnoticed shift in the international relations of the modern Middle East. The change is especially important in the context of renewed violence in the region — from the second Intifada to the insurgency in Iraq — and given the atmosphere in Washington, DC, of hostility, threats, and economic sanctions against Syria, even as the US-Jordanian alliance seems closer than ever. In the analysis that follows, I will first provide an overview of the history of tensions between Jordan and Syria, before moving on to examine in turn the origins of the 1975-79 Jordanian-Syrian alliance and finally, the current warming in Jordanian-Syrian relations since 1999.

THE JORDANIAN-SYRIAN COLD WAR

In the 1950s and 1960s inter-Arab relations were characterized by an "Arab Cold War." ² The Arab Cold War, usually associated with the era of Egyptian President Gamal 'Abd al-Nasir, featured an inter-Arab struggle for power and influence between Nasir and his Ba'thist rivals. But it also pitted conservative, pro-Western monarchies (such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Jordan) against more radical, revolutionary republics (such as Egypt, Iraq, Libya, and Syria). But even within that broad regional dynamic, Jordan and Syria remained in many respects a classic study in opposites, as well as in rivalry. ³

Jordan under King Husayn became the classic conservative monarchy with a foreign policy that was virulently anti-communist, moderate in its policies toward Israel, and an ally of Western powers. Syria, in contrast, remained fiercely anti-colonial and became virtually the archetype of the revolutionary republic, led by various colonels and generals following a succession of coups d'etat, until the 1970 coup brought Hafiz al-Asad to power. Asad changed the country's image as a coup factory, establishing his own Ba'thist authoritarian regime and ruling until his death in 2000. While Jordan allied itself closely with the US, Syria allied itself with the Soviet Union.

At both the global and regional levels, both countries had constructed identities that stood in contrast to one another.' ⁴ The Hashimite Kingdom was, of course, decidedly royalist, moderate in its foreign policy, cautious, and conservative. Syria was anti-monarchist, more militant in its foreign policy, revolutionary, and radical. These socially-constructed images are held even today by many participants and observers of Middle East politics. But these remain constructs from as early as the 1950s, and are today only partly accurate, and partly national stereotype. While still different from one another in many significant ways, Jordan and Syria are no longer the stark pair of opposites they once were. With major regime changes in both countries, their policies toward one another have changed dramatically. But for most of their modern histories, the two countries more often than not had maintained a cold war of their own. Recriminations between the two were particularly harsh after the 1967 War, given the sheer magnitude of the loss. Israel had launched a surprise attack (in its view a preemptive strike) and within six days it had destroyed the air forces and later defeated the armies of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan. For Syria, the 1967 defeat included the loss of the strategic Golan Heights to Israel. For Jordan, the disaster had cost the Hashimites all of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, while thousands of Palestinian

refugees fled across the border into the Jordanian Kingdom.

In 1970, tensions exploded within Jordan in the form of the Jordanian Civil War between the Hashimite armies of King Husayn and the guerrilla forces of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). This bloody affair, known to Palestinian nationalists as "Black September" and to some Jordanian nationalists as "White September," was not limited to Palestinian-Jordanian fighting alone. Indeed, in September 1970, Syrian military forces crossed the Jordanian border, launching an unsuccessful invasion of northern Jordan in support of PLO forces. The Syrian forces were eventually defeated and turned back, but thereafter any Syrian military build-up on the border had to be regarded in Jordan as more than a hypothetical threat.

Yet, by October 1973, Egypt and Syria had colluded in launching an attack on Israel, later supported by the Saudi-led oil embargo, in a conflict known alternatively as the October, Ramadan, or Yom Kippur War. Jordanian forces refused to open a third front against Israel, but did send minimal forces to defend Syria on the Golan. According to one of Jordan's top generals at the time, war was not an option for Jordan, still recovering from the debacle of the 1967 War and the disastrous 1970-71 Civil War:

We lacked air defense, and sufficient numbers of troops. And in addition to that, they [Egypt and Syria] did not choose to inform Jordan in the first place [about the planned attack]. And they then tried to drag Jordan in, with inevitable catastrophic effects. I asked [Syrian President] Asad, why do you *now* ask us? Asad argued that there were political advantages to be reaped. But I responded that there will be no Jordan left to reap the advantages. If Syria liberates the Golan, Egypt liberates the Sinai, then you've got a point ... We convinced them, that if Jordan joined the battle, it would become the main target of the Israelis. We were dragged into the 1967 War and we lost the West Bank. We couldn't afford to lose the East Bank ... Asad seemed to understand our position, but he still disagreed. But what they were facing in the Golan and Sinai still left the vast majority of Israeli forces facing Jordan ... Anyway, we did compromise. We did send units to the Golan. But this did not involve direct confrontation with Israel through our lines. ⁵

The gesture may have seemed small, but it was in the aftermath of that campaign, between 1975 and 1979, that Jordan and Syria would finally shift from hostility to alliance.

By the end of the decade, however, the more familiar pattern of animosity had returned. Thus by 1980, Jordan and Syria had de-aligned once again with extensive saber-rattling on their mutual border. The Jordanian-Syrian Cold War had indeed returned in full force. Throughout the 1980s, Jordan supported Iraq, while Syria supported Iran in the eight-year long Iran-Iraq War. But beyond throwing their support behind opposite powers in the 1990-91 Gulf War, the tensions between Jordan and Syria also had profound domestic consequences as each intervened in the domestic politics and stability of the other.' ⁶

It remains unclear how direct a role either government played in the destabilization that followed, but suffice it to say that each blamed the other, in particular for subverting domestic security. The Syrian government specifically charged the Jordanians

with providing aid, support, and sanctuary to Syrian Islamists. ⁷ Even Jordan's own prime ministers do not agree on this point. Former Prime Minister Ahmad 'Ubaydat (1984-85), for example, vehemently denied that any such subversion ever took place with support from the Jordanian government. ⁸ One of his rivals, also a former prime minister, suggested that Jordan did indeed support the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria, but that this policy (a mistake in his view) was carried out without the knowledge of King Husayn.⁹ Another former prime minister argued that Jordanian-Syrian problems remained broader still, and were rooted in disregard for the other's sovereignty and security:¹⁰

They [the Syrians] have even at times claimed us as southern Syrians. Then again, we Hashimites have at times seen them as our northern inheritance. But Syria likes to be the power. It likes its hegemony. But Jordan could never accept this. Syria works through Lebanon or through Jordan to irritate Israel. But we resent this. It also affects our own security."

Regardless of whether opponents of either regime received external support or not, in many respects the 1980s version of the Jordanian-Syrian Cold War appeared to have become a *mukhabarat v. muiciabarat* struggle, in a sort of localized version of the global US-Soviet Cold War and its associated espionage campaigns.

In 1990, after Iraq invaded Kuwait, Jordan and Syria took almost opposite stands once again — but in each case, surprising many observers. Syria elected to join the US-led coalition against Iraq, while Jordan attempted to mediate between the antagonists (unsuccessfully) while calling for an inter-Arab solution rather than foreign intervention. ¹¹ Jordanian policy-makers argued that Jordan's position was the definition of balance: neither sending troops to defend Iraq, nor joining the US-led military coalition. ¹² Three years after the Gulf War, in 1994, Jordan signed its peace treaty with Israel, but more than a decade later, Israeli-Syrian relations remained coldly hostile. Throughout these decades of policy differences and animosity, the Jordanian and Syrian regimes differed not only on relations with Israel, but also on relations with the PLO. One Syrian policy-maker, and sometime advisor to President Hafiz al-Asad, emphasized this as a central factor in inter-Arab politics, but particularly so in Jordanian-Syrian relations and rivalry. Regarding this time period, he argued that:

The most important factor in inter-Arab relations is each country's relationship with the PLO. Jordan and Syria are the only two Arab states adjacent to Israel who are eligible — after [Egyptian President] Sadat's visit to Jerusalem — to "control" the PLO, let's say. So the question is who will exercise more control over the PLO, Amman or Damascus? ¹³

Beyond even the causal factors, however, the Jordanian-Syrian Cold War seemed to have developed its own tragic inertia. Indeed, beyond even policy differences, the level of mutual suspicion and distrust between the two regimes also became deeply personally entrenched in the persons of President Hafiz al-Asad and King Husayn.

With the passing of these two powerful antagonists, and the emergence of a new generation of leaders, Jordan and Syria were able to make a second attempt at ending their longstanding cold war. Thus, for decades, the prevailing trends in Jordanian-Syrian relations amounted simply to varying degrees of hostility — from diplomatic

riffs, to political threats, to actual acts of military and civil violence. But both in the 1970s and again today, the Jordanian-Syrian Cold War was brought to an end. The question, of course, is whether the current warming will — like the 1975-79 version — prove to be temporary.

These major shifts from animosity to friendship and cooperation have implications for scholars of international relations. Neorealists, for example, argue that patterns of inter-state relations and especially of conflict and realignment are predicated on major external security shifts. Such shifts in the regional balance of power, or balance of threats, trigger alignment and realignment among states. ¹⁴ But as the empirical evidence in this analysis will show, the Jordanian-Syrian relationship suggests that domestic politics and political economy are more important causal factors than those found in external systemic or structural changes. To explain fully Jordanian-Syrian relations, therefore, we must look beyond simply external structural changes, and focus on factors emphasized by many of the critics of Neorealism — factors such as the political economy of regime security and attempts by regimes to balance between domestic and international threats to their survival. ¹⁵ In the sections that follow, I will turn first to an examination of the 1975-79 Jordanian-Syrian alliance, then to the current ending of the Jordanian-Syrian Cold War, and finally — in comparing the two episodes — I will discuss the implications of current Jordanian-Syrian relations for regional politics.

ENDING THE JORDANIAN-SYRIAN COLD WAR, PART I: 1975-79

In the aftermath of the 1973 October War, Jordan sought to capitalize on its (albeit limited) participation in that conflict as a means to re-enter the mainstream of Arab regional politics. Jordan was then still vilified for its 1970-71 Civil War and suppression of the PLO, and even for its limited commitment to the 1973 Arab-Israeli War. Syria proved to be especially receptive to Jordan's attempt at inter-Arab reconciliation. Given the frequent bouts of hostility emanating from Damascus, which the Hashimite regime had come to regard as virtually routine, this seemed rather surprising. Very quickly, however, Jordan's period of inter-Arab isolation, from 1970 to 1973, had shifted in the post-war period to a steadily warming relationship with Syria. In the 1970s, as in the late 1990s, regime change proved to be a key causal factor. Following the failed Syrian military intervention in the Jordanian Civil War, Syria's Defense Minister Hafiz al-Asad seized power in a military coup and launched his "corrective movement" (*al-haraka al-tashihyya*). According to Jordan's Prime Minister at the time, Ahmad al-Lawzi, this abrupt regime change in Damascus helped spur rapprochement between Jordan and Syria surprisingly quickly, particularly as Asad consolidated his rule in 1971. ¹⁶ These exchanges helped normalize Jordanian-Syrian relations, merely months after Jordanian and Syrian forces had clashed during Jordan's Civil War. By 1975, the relationship had shifted from hostility to entente, and from entente to alliance.

The Jordanian-Syrian alignment began with a flurry of meetings and diplomatic exchanges, which resulted first in a series of economic agreements and later evolved to include cooperation in security affairs as well. Jordanian Prime Minister Zayd al-Rifa'i first broached the subject of closer Jordanian-Syrian relations in a visit to Damascus, in March of 1975, where he met with President Asad. The very fact that Rifa'i had been appointed Prime Minister at this time, given his known Syrian connections,

made clear the Hashimite regime's determination to develop stronger bilateral ties. The March 1975 meeting in Damascus produced a favorable and substantive response to Jordan's overtures as both countries agreed to establish a joint committee to help coordinate the strengthening of their relationship.¹⁷

The Prime Minister's successful trip to Damascus was quickly followed by an official state visit to the Syrian capital by King Husayn in April 1975. Once again, substantial progress was made, and the development of a Jordanian-Syrian alignment was well under way as the two heads of state signed a bilateral trade agreement. The momentum accelerated with a reciprocal visit by President Asad to Amman — his first trip there — in June 1975. This time the level of ties was elevated by the creation of a Joint Higher Committee, which moved beyond the economic issues covered by the earlier committee to include political and diplomatic coordination as well. And this time, underscoring the increasing seriousness and depth of the bilateral ties, the co-chairs of the committee were to be the Jordanian and Syrian prime ministers themselves.¹⁸

In short, the new alignment spanned the range of low and high politics issues, and to a large extent was consciously constructed "from the bottom up."¹⁹ The Jordanians, in particular, were eager to build a solid basis for the alignment, in order to create substantive bilateral linkages — and thereby firm roots — across a range of issue areas, from trade and manufacturing to communications and education. These goals did indeed succeed for a time. This earlier attempt to end the Jordanian-Syrian Cold War and to create an alliance was rooted, I argue, mainly in domestic concerns for the political economy of regime security. But it was also influenced, if to a lesser extent, by changes in external regional politics.

The main external and regional changes affecting the development of the new alignment concerned the results of the October 1973 War. While not a clear victory for the Arab forces, neither was it the decisive defeat that the 1967 War had been. While Egypt and Syria were still technically allied to one another, their relationship had soured in the immediate aftermath of the war, with the Asad regime believing that Sadat had essentially abandoned Syria during the war itself.²⁰ Furthermore, Asad mistrusted Sadat's motives, found him to be an unreliable ally, and suspected him of planning a separate peace with Israel. As the distance grew between the Egyptian and Syrian positions, so did the rift between Egypt and Jordan. As noted above, this had been triggered in particular by Sadat's anger at Jordan's failure to open up a third front against Israel. The Jordanian regime, in contrast, felt that it had fulfilled its obligations exactly as it had promised before the war. Sadat, the Jordanians charged, had changed his mind in the midst of the war itself only when the tide of battle had turned against him, and simply wanted a Jordanian offensive to allow him a better chance at maintaining his military position in Sinai. While Sadat had publicly and bitterly denounced Jordan after the war, policy-makers within the Hashimite regime argued that Sadat's high-sounding intentions were not really for the good of the broader Arab cause, but were characterized rather by a willingness to fight "to the last Jordanian" in order to liberate Egyptian territory.²¹

As these exchanges continued, however, it became clear to the regimes in both Damascus and Amman that they had in common a similar type of rift between themselves and the Sadat regime in Cairo. Indeed, even in interviews 20 years after the war, both Jordanian and Syrian officials grew visibly angry in recalling their grievances against Sadat in particular.²² Jordan and Syria also shared a strong economic

incentive to assuage Saudi Arabia, with a view to gaining greater access to financial aid from the Saudi regime. This, however, suggests that economic factors were already outweighing external security concerns. For all their differences as political regimes, Syria's radical republic and Jordan's conservative monarchy both presided over fairly poor countries, and both remained economically dependent on wealthy allies. ²³

This developing dynamic within the regional political economy of oil and aid led in part to the opening between Jordan and Syria, and while Jordan's role in the defense of the Golan Heights was minor, it was nonetheless appreciated in Damascus at the time. The wartime act of solidarity thus became a useful symbol of cooperation between the two regimes, and may have eased the process of rapprochement between them by providing a historical bridge between the unfortunate 1970 episode of armed conflict and the 1975 emergence of a full-fledged alignment.

The Syrian-Jordanian alignment, while concerned mainly with economic and political cooperation, did evolve to include some external security and defense issues. Syrian military planners began to adjust their strategic plans to include defense of the Irbid Heights in northwest Jordan, as a link to the Golan Heights and as a possible way to outflank Israeli forces in a future conflict. Coordination along these lines developed to include joint military maneuvers and exercises. ²⁴

In more active policy terms, Jordan signaled its willingness to support Syria in its 1976 intervention in the Lebanese Civil War. While the Lebanese crisis was not itself an external cause leading to the initial alignment, it did help to reinforce it, particularly when King Husayn immediately made clear his support for Syrian intervention. ²⁵ A second crisis in regional affairs contributed still further to Jordanian-Syrian solidarity: the growing hostility between the regimes in Damascus and Baghdad. ²⁶ The Lebanese crisis, in fact, helped to trigger a renewed political conflict between Syria and Iraq. As Iraqi statements became more belligerent toward Syria (including in regard to the latter's role in Lebanon), Jordanian forces were redeployed to Jordan's eastern border with Iraq, and the Hashimite regime made clear that it would support Syria against any Iraqi invasion. While the actual threat of such an invasion had been slight at best, the Jordanian action nonetheless rendered it virtually impossible. ²⁷

In addition to the broad strategic considerations noted above, domestic political factors also influenced the development of the Jordanian-Syrian alignment, including the presence of a core constituency within Jordan, led by the Prime Minister, which saw closer alignment with Syria as a necessary measure to ensure more lasting stability and security for the Kingdom. Yet, particularly at the start of the rapprochement, there remained many elites within the Hashimite regime who were highly cynical about Syrian intentions. The 1970 invasion remained vivid in the memories of all Jordanian policy-makers. Pro-Syrian factions in Jordan, however, argued that the present regime in Damascus was different from the more hostile ones that had preceded it, and that President Asad, in particular, had refused to support the Jadid regime's 1970 invasion of Jordan. ²⁸ But the issue that led to the development of an increasingly strong pro-alliance constituency, among both public and private sector elites, concerned the economic opportunities of closer alignment.

The most influential player amongst the pro-Syrian elites in the Jordanian regime

was Prime Minister Zayd al-Rifa'i himself. Rifa'i, a member of a key regime family, had close ties to Syria and was long noted for his pro-Syrian sympathies. For Rifa'i, the *natural* state of Jordanian relations was unity with Syria. It was the absence of this unity that was the aberration, not the reverse. In his words:

On any priority list [in inter-Arab relations], Syria would have to be at the top. This is due to a host of factors, including the shared historical heritage of the two states. Damascus is closer to Amman than Aqaba. And close ties exist regardless of the diplomatic climate at any given time. There are close trade, education, and family links ... Close relations with Syria are the natural state of affairs, not just normal friendly relations as with other Arab states⁻²⁹

But as Laurie Brand has argued, beyond both the regional-strategic and domestic political factors discussed above, economic incentives appear to have been the overriding imperative in the Jordanian-Syrian rapprochement and the development of close relations.³⁰ Jordanian elites in the private sector had long maintained links to Syria, given the overland transport route from Jordan's port on the Red Sea, Aqaba, across Syria toward Turkey and Europe. In addition, the close proximity of Damascus and Amman in particular led to numerous business linkages between the two capitals despite the periods of hostility that had characterized their political relations. Not surprisingly, any hint of warming relations between Jordan and Syria found immediate and active support from private- and public-sector business elites in both countries.

By serving on the joint committees and subcommittees set up to foster greater Jordanian-Syrian cooperation, these elites pressed for agreements between the two states aimed at lowering economic barriers between them, and thereby facilitating cooperation in profit-making ventures. In a bid to strengthen the economic components of the alignment, Jordan and Syria signed a series of agreements designed to remove all tariff barriers between them, to coordinate customs charges and restrictions, and to cooperate on tourism. In addition, several joint economic projects were established, including companies involved in food production and textile manufacturing, as well as land and sea transportation.³¹

In addition to the motives of private business elites, however, there were also strong economic incentives for closer alignment with Syria from the perspective of public sector revenue. This is the causal factor that Brand has described as "budget security." One of the revenue motivations behind the alignment, therefore, involved the desire by Jordan and Syria to coordinate as key front line states in appealing for aid to the wealthier Gulf states. Both Jordan and Syria had been promised considerable Arab aid at the 1974 Rabat Summit of the Arab League. By cooperating in the form of a "united front" it was hoped that together they would be able to pressure the Gulf states to follow through with their financial pledges.³²

Another consideration in this economic vein concerned the desire to prevent, in the future, the economic costs that had often characterized the assorted Jordanian-Syrian rifts of the past. In short, Jordanian officials wanted the economic dimensions of the Jordanian-Syrian alignment developed not only for short term profitability, but also to create more solid *political* relations through a foundation of increasingly irrevocable *economic* ties. During the repeated crises between the two states in the past, Syria had frequently closed off its border, with immediate economic repercussions for Jordan. The border closures had invariably carried with them economic costs, due to the reliance of much of Jordanian trade and transport on Syrian routes northward to

Turkey and Europe 33

Close economic integration within the new alliance was therefore intended not only to provide a firmer basis for political coordination in the alignment, but was also "strategic insurance" against any future deterioration of political relations by preventing the possibility of any more costly border closures.³⁴ By solidifying the economic basis of the alignment, or its "low politics" foundation, the Jordanians in particular hoped that the economic dimensions of the bilateral relationship would be insulated from future disagreements, even in military and security affairs. And conversely, they hoped that the solid and mutually beneficial economic basis of the alignment would serve to temper any disagreements in the realm of high politics.

In sum, unlike the temporary wartime pacts that had emerged between Jordan and Syria in 1948 and 1967, the alignment of the late 1970s had a more solid basis in economic motivations and in successful economic cooperation. According to Jordan's Prime Minister Rifa'i:

All previous [inter-Arab] mergers, however, were on the basis of mergers from the top down. We wanted to build both up. Top and bottom. On the basis of what we called "complementarity." This began with joint economic and agricultural projects. Then proceeded by unifying curricula in schools. And then moved on to political coordination, regarding the movement of peoples, policy coordination, and internal security cooperation. • 35

The two states had abandoned their cold war in favor of coordination in trade, investment, tourism, joint ventures, and collective lobbying for aid from the oil wealthy Gulf states. And unlike the many unsuccessful acts of "unification" that had emerged as a part of inter-Arab relations in the 1950s and 1960s, the less-heralded Jordanian-Syrian alignment of 1975-79 had involved far greater economic integration, political cooperation, and security coordination. It was, in short, a much more substantial alignment than its more ideologically charged predecessors from the Nasir era . 36

THE COLLAPSE OF THE ALLIANCE AND THE RETURN OF THE JORDANIAN-SYRIAN COLD WAR

Political unity, security cooperation, and even economic integration were all fast becoming a reality for Jordanian-Syrian relations in the mid-1970s, but after only four years these qualities would give way to mutual suspicion, mistrust, and hostility by the close of the decade. One of the main issues that undermined the Jordanian-Syrian alignment was the intensive lobbying effort toward Jordan by the Iraqi regime. The emergence of the Jordanian-Iraqi alignment is a topic for yet another article, but suffice it to say that the warming of Jordanian-Iraqi relations was viewed with hostility from Damascus, and came in a context of severe domestic and regional insecurity for the Asad regime. Syria had become mired in the bloody war in Lebanon, was faced with major bouts of domestic unrest and even urban terrorism, and had just experienced the rapid rise and fall of its own brief flirtation with Iraq. Aware of Syrian misgivings regarding the emerging Jordanian-Iraqi alliance, Jordan's new Prime Minister, 'Abd al-Hamid Sharaf, had taken pains to stress to Syrian officials that the new alignment did not in any way constitute an anti-Syrian bloc.³⁷ His colleagues in Damascus, however, did not share his optimistic views of the new alignment. 38

Yet Syrian hostility to Jordan's increasingly warm relations with the regime in Baghdad did not emerge from a vacuum, but rather came in the wake of Syria's own failed "unification" project with Iraq in 1978. The project was short-lived, however, as Iraqi authorities claimed to have found evidence of a "plot" by Syrian Ba'thists to overthrow their counterparts in Baghdad. Despite Iraqi claims, it seems likely that the brief warmth between the two countries was primarily intended as a device to consolidate Saddam Husayn's own regime as he emerged in 1979 from his ten-year position as the "strong man" behind the regime, assumed the presidency for himself, and conducted an extensive purge within the Iraqi Ba'thist state. ³⁹ For their part, the Syrians felt that they had been duped, and had been used as a reluctant pawn in a Machiavellian ploy within Iraqi domestic politics.⁴⁰ Almost overnight, the unification project deteriorated into hostility and polemics between the two regimes. ⁴¹

The Jordanian regime, meanwhile, had not been enthusiastic about the prospect of such a powerful union emerging and looming over it, particularly if that union had any future desire to absorb Jordan as well. While not happy with the idea of Iraqi-Syrian union, Jordanian policy-makers had nonetheless hoped to increase their links to Iraq while also preserving their alignment with Syria. When Iraqi-Syrian relations plummeted back to their more familiar hostility, however, it became clear that Jordan would soon be faced with a choice: either Syria or Iraq, but not both. Jordan gravitated steadily closer toward Iraq, hastening the final collapse of the Jordanian-Syrian alignment.

The Arab League Summit held in Amman on November 25, 1980, made abundantly clear that the once close Jordanian-Syrian alignment was indeed over. While laying bare the depth of the Jordanian-Syrian rift, the summit also underscored the broader political divisions within the Arab world. Syria not only refused to attend the Jordan-based meeting, but also organized a boycott which came to include Algeria, Lebanon, Libya, the PLO, and South Yemen.

Arab positions regarding the outbreak of war between Iran and Iraq marked the line of demarcation in this inter-Arab polarization, and fed into an atmosphere of recriminations and accusations between the Arab regimes. This new conflict in the Persian Gulf had come on the heels of the earlier inter-Arab rift over Egypt's separate peace with Israel. Jordanian King Husayn's intentions, in particular, as host of the 1980 summit, were focused on rallying an Arab world divided over Sadat's treaty with Israel, in order to provide a united front against revolutionary Iran. A Syrian-led boycott of the summit, however, only served to underscore the disunity of Arab ranks.

Making the Jordanian position clear. King Husayn was unreserved in his criticisms during a speech at the summit. He roundly condemned Syria and Libya, in particular, for supporting Iran in its war against Iraq. The Hashimite regime had in fact played an extremely active role throughout the summit as the key lobbyist rallying pan-Arab support for the Iraqi war effort. ⁴² Given the level of hostility that existed between Damascus and Baghdad, the Asad regime viewed the Hashimite actions as nothing less than a betrayal. In addition, this challenge from its former ally came at a particularly vulnerable time for the regime in Damascus, as it attempted to meet not only regional challenges to its security, but also even more severe domestic threats from Islamist militancy throughout Syria. ⁴³

The Asad regime, therefore, responded to the King's comments with more than words. Immediately after the summit meeting had ended, 247,000 Syrian troops and more than 800 tanks were deployed along the Jordanian border. Jordan responded with 57,000 troops of its own, setting the stage for a major confrontation.⁴⁴ According to one of President Asad's advisors:

[When] the Syrian-Iraqi crisis, the most important one, broke out, Jordan acted first as an intermediary, then sided whole-heartedly with Iraq. And this made Syria exercise her military strength vis-a-vis Jordan in both covert and overt ways.⁴⁵

Active mediation by Saudi Arabia was instrumental in defusing the military confrontation and pulling the two countries back from the brink of war. The high level of political hostility, however, would remain between the two countries with implications not only for their regional security, but also for their domestic stability, as each attempted to subvert the other in the 1980s.

In sum, the 1975-79 alignment between Jordan and Syria, while very real, nonetheless ultimately collapsed and heralded the return of the cold war between the two states. As the above discussion makes clear, the earlier 1975-79 episode of Jordanian-Syrian amity had its earliest roots in regime change in Damascus, followed by changes in the external strategic environment. But even more importantly, it was also rooted in changes in the economic bases of each regime's own domestic security. It would take 20 years before the two regimes once again began aligning toward one another, in an attempt to end their cold war once and for all.

DEJA WALL OVER AGAINENDING THE JORDANIAN-SYRIAN COLD WAR, 1999-?

In February 1999, King Husayn of Jordan died after a long battle with cancer. Merely weeks before his death, however, Husayn had abruptly left his medical treatment in the United States, returned to Jordan, and changed the order of succession from his long-serving brother, Crown Prince Hasan, to his eldest son 'Abdullah.⁴⁶ The change was nothing short of shocking, since Hasan had served as Crown Prince and presumed successor, and indeed had been groomed to be king, for 34 years. Yet the succession took place smoothly, with 'Abdullah II crowned King. Just over a year later, in June 2000, President Hafiz al-Asad died in Damascus, having ruled for 30 years as head of the Ba'thist regime in Syria. Unlike Jordan, however, Syria was a republic, and an avowedly radical one at that. Yet here, too, a son — Bashar al-Asad — had been appointed successor to his long-serving father.

King Husayn and President Hafiz al-Asad had remained rivals throughout most of their respective tenures. In addition to their personal dislike for one another, they had been influenced by the local and global cold wars and had frequently taken opposite positions in regard to the Arab-Israeli conflict and peace process. Asad passed from the scene still steadfast in his stalled peace talks with Israel, while Husayn had in 1994 rapidly pushed through a full and formal peace treaty with the state of Israel. When King Husayn passed away in 1999, he and President Asad had never really reconciled. Yet Asad surprised Jordanians and, indeed, the world, by arriving with a large entourage, including most top Syrian officials, to march in King Husayn's funeral

procession and to pay his respects to the late King's son and heir, 'Abdullah. Jordanian-Syrian rapprochement, in short, began to some extent that very day.

President Bashar al-Asad and King 'Abdullah II were similar in several ways: both were in their mid-thirties, both were interested in computers and communications and changing their societies, and both succeeded a leader that served so long that most citizens remembered no other. But the thaw in Jordanian-Syrian relations began more directly as the result of the Jordanian, rather than the Syrian, succession. King Husayn died more than a year before Hafiz al-Asad also passed away. Asad had made clear his desire for warmer relations through his good-will gesture of travelling to Jordan for Husayn's funeral. And shortly after the mourning period was over. King 'Abdullah wasted no time in attempting to shore up a new relationship not only with Syria, but also with other key Arab states from Morocco to Egypt to the Gulf monarchies. Following the succession in Damascus, President Bashar al-Asad also seemed to embrace the idea of active rapprochement and even of emerging alignment between Jordan and Syria.

The reasons for the rapprochement lay not only in the presence of the new leaders, but also in the absence of the old ones. One of Jordan's former prime ministers, in pondering this issue, suggested that "for our relations with Syria, it's natural it would get better because the two old pillars have disappeared and with that came two new leaders, but without the same inhibitions. And they are the same age and generation.⁴⁷ He continued:

The major issue that isn't noticed enough in our relations with other Arab countries was, well. King Husayn was an ambitious man. He inherited the philosophy of the Arab revolt, the ancestry of the Prophet Muhammad, and his grandfather's vision [which] he shared of uniting the Arabs with Jordanian leadership and with the Hashimite family. King 'Abdullah does not claim to be the king of all the Arabs. Just the King of Jordan. So these people — Syria, Palestinians, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia — are not as edgy as they were with King Husayn. They are not threatened by 'Abdullah. ⁴⁸

In a similar vein, one of Jordan's former foreign ministers stressed the leadership transition and the end of an earlier more ideological era in explaining the Jordanian-Syrian shift:

With our changed relations with Syria, you had the deaths of two characters: King Husayn and Hafiz al-Asad. They were from a different generation and a different ideology. King Husayn was an Arab nationalist. He believed in the vision of Arab unity and the vision of the Great Arab Revolt. Other leaders therefore saw him as a danger to their separate interests. Asad too was the same only from the Ba'thist perspective. The new generation of leaders understands the power of the West, and the terrible power of what Israel can do. These people are no danger to each other. Asad knows that 'Abdullah is not trying to unite Syria, and vice versa. 'Abdullah knows Bashar is not pushing for greater Syria. They are pragmatic. They are both Western educated. Both are not ideological as in the past sense. 'Abdullah's ideology, what he wants, is development of Jordan mainly. Not ideology. Plus they have a personal relationship. They knew each other before either took power. ⁴⁹

This underscores key reasons for the ending of the Cold War between Jordan and Syria; but it also suggests that both states — in the absence of the longstanding ideological and personal baggage — had, at the time, more regional alignment options in general ⁵⁰ For Jordan in particular, this means that relations with Syria no longer hold instant implications for other inter-Arab relationships. Indeed, in the absence of the personal rivalries and the opposite stances that had characterized the Jordanian-Syrian Cold War and the Iran-Iraq War, Jordan no longer seems to have to choose between aligning with either Syria or Iraq. And while the Jordanian-Iraqi relationship did suffer in the mid- and late 1990s, that was not attributable to warming Jordanian-Syrian ties. ⁵¹

The great majority of agreements signed between the two states to mark the beginning of their rapidly increasing cooperation were explicitly about economic concerns, in August 1999, Jordan and Syria signed a trade agreement eliminating tariffs on selected products in bilateral trade. More than two years later, in October 2001, the two countries pushed this process much further by formalizing a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between them. The Jordanian-Syrian FTA entered into force in 2002 and lifted tariffs on most goods exported from either country to the other. Some items such as clothing and shoes were allowed a temporary tariff exemption, leaving tariffs as high as 60%, but with the intention of eventually eliminating these too, in a series of reductions. ⁵² Both countries have been undergoing processes of economic restructuring and adjustment in recent years, albeit in varying degrees. In the Jordanian case, adjustment began in 1989 when the Kingdom was forced to turn to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for economic aid when Jordan was unable to meet its debt obligations. Since that time, the Jordanian government has implemented a series of IMF programs, each time triggering political upheavals. ⁵³ Thus Jordan's economic and political liberalization has been tumultuous at times, and has since the late 1990s shown signs of an increasing disconnect between the political and economic sides of the project. Political liberalization has often stalled or slid backwards, precisely because economic adjustment has proceeded apace with corresponding political discontent.

For all its limitations, however, the Jordanian reform process has gone much further than that in Syria. And this fact led to a series of meetings between Jordanian and Syrian officials specifically to explore paths toward reform. Jordan's former Foreign Minister, 'Abd al-Ilah al-Khatib, noted:

Bashar started though on a very positive note in relations with Jordan. But maybe the power centers in Syria constrain him from moving too much. In the year 2001 we had several meetings at the Dead Sea, meetings about reform and so on. The Syrian delegation was very impressed with the changes in Jordan, but after that, they were pulled back and contacts were strictly limited. Maybe more powerful figures in the regime limited these contacts. They feared too much influence for similar changes in Syria. Especially with two younger leaders who know the world. The ingredients of rapprochement were there. Other factors limited how close we could actually get, though. I think Bashar was pulled back, away from the progressive stance of Jordan. ⁵⁴

Despite very high expectations for political liberalization upon the accession of Bashar to the presidency, the Syrian state has seemed to conduct business as usual in its

essentially authoritarian fashion. Economic liberalization in Syria has been slow and limited, but it has made inroads since the early 1990s, and it is certainly more visible than any political liberalization. ⁵⁵ It is in this context of privatization, liberalization, and freer flow of goods that business elites in both countries are increasing transnational links across the Jordanian-Syrian border. Should this economic process continue, it may provide an increasingly vocal constituency in favor of deeper Jordanian-Syrian relations at other levels as well.

Jordan, for its part, has seemed to be virtually obsessive about achieving economic agreements. While Syria has been more reluctant, the Jordanian government has embraced entirely the Bretton Woods institutions (the IMF, World Bank, and the World Trade Organization), while also actively pressing for a free trade agreement with the United States. King 'Abdullah, in particular, was intent on securing the US Jordanian FTA, as a key economic factor solidifying Jordan's political and military alliance with the United States. The agreement might have received greater scrutiny or criticism within the United States at some other time, but in the immediate aftermath of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States, Congress quickly approved and ratified the deal.

Jordan may have cemented its image as the virtual poster-country for embracing globalization, when it hosted a special meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF) in June 2003, and later in 2004 and 2005 as well. ⁵⁶ The WEF, gathering together the world's most powerful government and business elites (including the world's main creditors) meets in Davos, Switzerland, every winter. Bringing the WEF to Jordan's Dead Sea resort for what were becoming annual meetings was something of a diplomatic and perhaps economic coup for King 'Abdullah. But even before the WEF began meeting regularly in Jordan, the Jordanians had strongly encouraged the new Syrian President to follow their economic lead, including in discussions shortly after the succession. Jordanian Prime Minister Fayiz Tarawneh accompanied King 'Abdullah on his condolence visit to Damascus in 2000, but came away convinced that there were limits to how fast Bashar could move:

We met for lunch on the fortieth day of the mourning period. Bashar asked many questions. He asked King 'Abdullah specific questions about privatization, investment, opening the economy. He clearly wanted to open up Syria. King 'Abdullah was very enthusiastic about this. He offered any and all experience and help Jordan could offer. He even encouraged Bashar to go to Davos to the World Economic Forum possibly even as part of a joint Jordanian-Syrian delegation. He encouraged Bashar to introduce himself. He said they would be interested because they don't know Syria or your father. The failures are not because of Bashar but because of structures ... the old guard still surrounded him. All the president's men were still there. ⁵⁷

With Jordanian prodding, Syria sent its own representatives to the Jordan WEF meeting in 2003 and had earlier applied for membership in the World Trade Organization. Syria's WEF delegation, however, was made up of private business people, rather than government and party officials, underscoring the regime's still tentative approach to such global capitalist institutions.

Besides economic interests in boosting bilateral trade and encouraging foreign investment, another key concern of both Jordan and Syria is the issue of water. Both

countries experienced several years of droughts in the late 1990s. The problem was more severe for Jordan, with seven consecutive summer droughts and considerably less water than Syria. Jordan had already had to turn to Syria to supplement its water supply in 1999 and 2000. By 2001, the two countries concluded a new water agreement that increased the flow of Yarmuk river water to Jordan. In addition, the new agreement revived an earlier 1987 plan between Jordan and Syria to work jointly on the creation of the al-Wihdah dam, which is to create a reservoir along the Yarmuk river basin. In the meantime Syria continued to divert water to help alleviate Jordan's chronic drought problem. ⁵⁸ Jordanian economist Riad al-Khouri has suggested that a certain symbiosis may develop here in which Syria helps Jordan with its water supply, while Jordan helps reform Syria's cumbersome and antiquated banking system amounting, in his words, to "liquidity" of two very different types.' ⁵⁹

But besides the economic incentives for, and results of, greater Jordanian-Syrian cooperation, some of the most interesting results of the rapprochement have been more strictly political. Syrian opposition exiles, especially those affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood, had been welcome in Jordan for decades. But since President Bashar al-Asad assumed power in 2000, and in the context of warming Jordanian-Syrian relations, the Kingdom has deported a series of leading members of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood. ⁶⁰ It was against the Muslim Brotherhood in 1982 that the Syrian state had used its most extreme force ever in crushing domestic opposition. Unlike the adversarial roles played by the Jordanian and Syrian *mukhabarat* during their decades of cold war, now the two states seem to be edging toward intelligence cooperation. Jordan's director of the *mukhabarat*, in fact, has become a regular participant in most major bilateral meetings and agreements. While Jordan moved to expel select Syrian dissidents, the Syrian state conversely agreed to a modicum of media pluralism by allowing Jordanian newspapers to begin circulating in Syria for the first time in 20 years.⁶¹

Having apparently abandoned support for each other's opposition movements, and having instead concluded a series of political and economic agreements, the Jordanian-Syrian Cold War had clearly come to an end. But the rapprochement and even emergent alignment between the two states was challenged almost immediately by regional and global crises: first, in the form of the second Intifada in the Palestinian territories; second, in the form of the September 11, 2001 attacks on the US and the resultant US military campaign in Afghanistan and its global campaign against terrorism; and third, in the form of the 2003 US invasion of Iraq. Jordanian and Syrian responses to these events are addressed in the sections that follow.

JORDANIAN-SYRIAN RELATIONS AFTER THEIR "COLD WAR"

Given the rising intensity of regional crises, one might expect differences over high politics issues to drive a wedge between Jordan and Syria once again, especially in terms of the Arab-Israeli conflict and peace process or in terms of relations with Gulf states. But here too, the regimes are actually in sync for the most part. Jordan had re-achieved its pre-Gulf War relations with all of the Arab Gulf monarchies, while Syria became even more formally aligned with these states through the Damascus Declaration alignment. ⁶² Despite differences regarding relations with Israel, both states support the Palestinian Intifada, both oppose Israel's violent suppression of that uprising, especially under the Sharon government, and both even agree on

broader security issues throughout the region.

A key point, then, is that these are not the days of the old Arab Cold War, as described by Malcolm Kerr, with states being distinguished as radical republics versus conservative monarchies. In some respects, Syria and Jordan might even still fit these categories, but the radical republic and the conservative monarchy are now closely linked and have shown no sign of concern regarding the other's political system. More importantly, the distinctions drawn by US policy-makers between radical and moderate Arab states also seem to apply less than perhaps they ever did. For example, Syria has made clear on countless occasions its opposition to terrorist attacks on the United States, while also condemning US and European double standards regarding Palestinian rights. But this is not just the position of a "radical Syria." Rather, it is the position of Syria and of Jordan, Egypt, the Gulf states, and indeed of most Arab countries. Jordan and Syria agreed further that the sanctions on Iraq (before the fall of Saddam Husayn) punished the Iraqi people and not the regime, and that they should have been lifted.

When the United States created its military buildup for an attack on Iraq, Jordan and Syria both opposed the invasion. President Bashar al-Asad was, admittedly, far more vocal and one of the strongest opponents of the invasion. But Jordan's acquiescence to the deployment of US troops to man *Patriot* missile batteries within the Kingdom was seen by the government in Amman as purely defensive, and by no means an endorsement of invasion. Even on the thorny issue of terrorism, it is not just Syria that objects to the US and the United Nations condemning terrorism without distinguishing between al-Qa'ida and national liberation movements. The latter term is seen by both Syria and Jordan as potentially including Hizbullah in Lebanon as well as Palestinian resistance groups from Hamas to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PELP). The Jordanian government maintained this viewpoint even as it closed down Hamas offices in the Kingdom; Hamas could continue to operate, but not in Jordan.

As threats continued to emanate from the Bush Administration against Syria in particular, Jordan and once again most Arab countries insisted that this must stop. Indeed, unlike Iraq, Syria is directly allied not only to states that the US government opposes (such as Iran) but also to major US allies (such as Egypt and all six Arab Gulf monarchies). Yet Syria's regional position has without question deteriorated steadily in the early 21st century. The US invasion of Iraq has led to an extensive insurgency and the rise of routine terrorism within Iraq. Foreign Islamist fighters, some of them Syrian, crossed into Iraq to join the fight against the US occupation. While such fighters crossed into Iraq from several countries, presumably including Jordan, the Bush Administration focused on Syria specifically, alleging Syrian support in facilitating such crossings and in supporting the Iraqi insurgency. The Syrian government strongly denied these allegations, but US military attacks began to focus on towns on the Syrian-Iraqi border, while the Administration continued to threaten the use of force against Syria. Since the Bush Administration had already invaded and occupied two countries in the region, such threats had to be taken very seriously indeed.

Tensions grew stronger still when Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri was assassinated by a car bomb in Beirut on February 14, 2005. Suspicion within Lebanon immediately focused on Syria. The resulting outrage in Lebanon led to vast street demonstrations calling for justice and for the ouster of Syrian forces from Lebanon.

As the demonstrations and international condemnation of alleged Syrian complicity in the assassination developed into a crescendo, Syria was obliged finally to withdraw its remaining military forces from Lebanon. In October 2005, the first of a series of UN investigative reports charged Lebanese and Syrian intelligence agencies with complicity in Hariri's murder, leading the US Administration to call for action from the UN Security Council.

The Jordanian regime, meanwhile, had supported UN calls for full Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon. Jordan maintained its post-Cold War relations with Syria, but given the overwhelming series of crises and of Syrian missteps, the damage was sufficient to prevent any real Jordanian-Syrian alignment or alliance from forming after all. Yet just as importantly, there was also no sign that Jordan and Syria were returning to their earlier hostility. Jordanian policy-makers and policy advisors seemed to have reached a kind of consensus: that Bashar still held real possibilities, that the problem in Syria (and hence on Jordanian-Syrian relations warming still further) was rooted in old guard Ba'thists, and that the various policy mistakes were leading to a showdown within Syria — if US threats didn't in the meantime strengthen the hands of regime hardliners. In the view of Jordan's former Foreign Minister Kamal Abu Jaber, "Today, despite Bashar, the old guard is still in power in Syria, but Jordanian-Syrian relations are at least on an even keel, somewhere between warm and tepid."⁶³ Jordanian Senator Layla Sharaf, Chair of the Senate's Foreign Relations Committee, emphasized that "Jordan and Syria have settled our minor border questions, our minor little tiffs; and Bashar is a much better person than his regime."⁶⁴ Similarly, a former prime minister stated flatly that "the old man has died. His son is more progressive. A reformer. But I don't know if he will be able to change the powerful people around him."⁶⁵ Another former prime minister agreed, but also expressed the disappointment that many Jordanian officials felt, while also continuing to offer Jordan as a bridge between Syria and its US detractors:

Syria could have leaned on us, but maybe they still don't think we are a country. Just Southern Syrians maybe. But still our relations are not hostile. We have regular meetings. There is the higher committee on Jordanian-Syrian relations, which meets regularly. I would say luke warm relations, but no hostility. Jordan remains ready with its good offices for Syria.⁶⁶

One of Jordan's key foreign policy advisors argued, however, that even Syria's debacles might actually provide the means for Bashar to truly create his own regime, rather than struggle with the one he inherited from his father:

I have a hunch that a struggle for power is beginning in Syria. The Bashar school versus his brother-in-law [in charge of military intelligence] and others who are more conservative. Bashar may be able to use their debacle in Lebanon to take policy into his own hands. Withdrawal may even strengthen his hand in domestic politics.⁶⁷

At the 2005 Ba'th Party Conference, minor changes did indeed appear, leading to the retirement of long-time hardliner 'Abd al-Halim al-Khaddam. But as has been the case with reform in Syria in general, the various changes were, so far, minor and incremental. ⁶⁸

CONCLUSIONS

As this article has made clear, much of the history of modern Jordanian-Syrian relations has consisted of political and at times even military confrontation. The mutual animosity between the two countries increased with changes in the regional system over time, especially in terms of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The animosity was also affected, however, by changes in their respective domestic systems. Since at least the early 1950s, with the onset of the Husayn regime in Amman, and a series of ideological military "strongmen" in Damascus, bilateral relations were for years marked by rivalries of radicalism versus conservatism, Arabism versus country-nationalism, and revolutionary republicanism versus traditional monarchism. The two states had also maintained vastly different approaches to the Palestinian-Israeli issue. While Jordan secured a peace treaty with Israel in 1994, Syria and Israel remained officially in a state of war well into the 21st century. Jordan and Syria took nearly opposite stances toward the 1980-88 and 1991 Gulf Wars, while also picking opposite sides during the US-Soviet global Cold War. Yet since independence the two states have, on merely two occasions, succeeded in ending their acrimonious relationship — their localized cold war — and achieved rapprochement.

From 1975 to 1979, Jordan and Syria built a fairly strong (if temporary) alliance based on changing strategic, domestic, and economic factors. That alliance, however, ultimately collapsed. The real question for the present, then, is whether the current rapprochement will also amount to a full alliance in the near future, and more importantly, whether the warming of bilateral relations will last at all. The circumstances, I would argue, are significantly different this time around, especially under new leaderships with scant linkages to the headier ideological rifts that long characterized inter-Arab relations. The Jordanian and Syrian regimes are both run, for now, by leaders with somewhat similar goals and interests — at least in terms of economic development, access to foreign aid, and debt relief.

The new Jordanian-Syrian relationship, like the earlier rapprochement, is built on functional transnational ties and agreements in "low politics" — from cultural exchange through economic agreements. In both episodes, the main causal factors were rooted heavily in domestic politics and political economy, and only slightly in external security concerns or changes in the regional balance of power, contrary to Neorealist expectations. In both cases, regime change in one or both capitals provided the opening for rapprochement, but the drive in each case came from broader concerns with shoring up the political economy of domestic regime security.⁶⁹ With major political transitions within both countries in the post-Hafiz al-Asad and post-King Husayn eras, both countries have also undergone a transition in their very state identities. While many outside of Jordan and Syria persist in seeing these countries as the virtual embodiment of their late leaders, and hence view them as the binary and eternally opposite social constructs alluded to above, the reality is indeed far different and perhaps more mundane. For all their many differences, the regimes of Bashar al-Asad and King 'Abdullah II are not as ideological as those of their predecessors, and they agree on many issues. A key question, however, is whether — this time — the Jordanian-Syrian Cold War is over for good.

Despite the emerging US-Syrian crisis, the Jordanian-Syrian rapprochement (if

not alliance) did manage to hold. In sum, as noted above, in addition to their many shared economic interests — from trade, to water access, to joint aid lobbying toward the Gulf monarchies — Jordan and Syria also agreed even on some of the most contentious regional security issues of the day. And these lines of agreement are reinforced by frequent direct contacts between regime officials, including bilateral summitry between President Asad and King 'Abdullah. It is therefore probable at least that this rapprochement will lead to a more lasting positive relationship between Jordan and Syria than has heretofore been possible since the late 1970s. And even if bilateral relations are no longer likely to lead to a deeper level of alignment, alliance, or integration, one thing at least is clear: the Jordanian-Syrian Cold War is — once again — over.

Footnotes:

1. Author's interviews with officials in Amman, June 2001 and May 2005.
2. Malcolm Kerr, *The Arab Cold War: Gamal 'Abd al-Nasir and His Rivals, 1958-70* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970). See also Patrick Seale, *The Struggle for Syria: A Study of Post-War Arab Politics 1945-1958* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965) and Bruce Maddy-Weitzman, *The Crystalization of the Arab State System 1945-1954* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1993).
3. On Syrian foreign policy, see Bishar al-Ja'fari, *al-Siyasa al-Kharjiyya al-Suriyya 1942-1982 [Syrian Foreign Policy 1942-1982]* (Damascus: Tlas, 1987); Raymond A. Hinnebusch, "Revisionist Dreams, Realist Strategies: The Foreign Policy of Syria," in Bahgat Korany and Ali E. Hilal Dessouki, eds., *The Foreign Policies of Arab States: The Challenge of Change* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), pp. 374-409; Raymond Hinnebusch, "The Foreign Policy of Syria," in Raymond Hinnebusch and Anoushiravan Ehteshami, eds., *The Foreign Policies of Middle East States* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2002), pp. 141-165; and Fred H. Lawson, *Why Syria Goes to War: Thirty Years of Confrontation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996). On Jordanian foreign policy, see Laurie A. Brand, *Jordan's Inter-Arab Relations: The Political Economy of Alliance Making* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994); Marc Lynch, *State Interests and Public Spheres: The International Politics of Jordan's Identity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); and Curtis R. Ryan, "Jordan: The Politics of Alliance and Foreign Policy," in Jeanne A.K. Hey, ed., *Small States in World Politics: Explaining Foreign Policy Behavior* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2003), pp. 135-155.
4. On the political development of Jordan and its national identity, see Joseph A. Massad, *Colonial Effects: The Making of National Identity in Jordan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001) and Lynch, *State Interests and Public Spheres*. On Syria, see Malik Mufti, *Sovereign Creations: Pan-Arabism and Political Order in Syria and Iraq* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996).
5. Author interview with one of Jordan's generals and key military advisors to King Husayn. Amman, March 1993.
6. Joseph Nevo, "Syria and Jordan: The Politics of Subversion," in Moshe Ma'oz and Avner Yaniv, eds., *Syria Under Assad* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), pp. 140-156.

7. Author interviews with Syrian government officials. Damascus, April 1993.
8. Author interview with Ahmad 'Ubaydat. Amman, 1993.
9. Author interview. Amman, 1993.
10. Author interview. Amman, May 2005.
11. "Al-Husayn: Hal al-Niza 'afi al-Itaar al- 'Arabi Faqaf ["Husayn: Solution to the Dispute in an Arab Framework Only"] *Al-Dustur*, (Amman) August 5, 1990. For a broader discussion of the entire crisis and Arab politics, see *Azmat al-Khalij* [Gulf Crisis] (Beirut: *Markaz Dirasat al- Wahda al- 'Arabiyya*, 1991). For the Jordanian government's explanation of its own position during the crisis, see Government of the Hashimite Kingdom of Jordan, *White Paper: Jordan and the Gulf Crisis, August 1990 - March 1991* (Amman, 1991).
12. Author's interview with former Foreign Minister Marwan al-Qasim, Amman, April 6, 1993 and with former Ambassador to the United Nations Adnan Abu 'Awda, Amman, February 28, 1993.
13. Author interview. Damascus, April 1993.
14. One of the classic statements of Neorealism can be found in Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: Random House, 1979). On the balance of threats argument and its specific application to the Middle East, see Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987).
15. The classic argument regarding "budget security" and alliance politics is from Brand, *Jordan's Inter-Arab Relations*. On "omnibalancing" between domestic and international threats to regime survival, and its impact on alliances, see Stephen R. David, *Choosing Sides: Alignment and Realignment in the Third World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991).
16. Author's interview with Prime Minister Ahmad al-Lawzi. Amman, April 20, 1993.
17. The Joint Committee was to alternate its meetings between Amman and Damascus, and included specialized subcommittees focusing on trade, electrical power, industry, transportation and communications, and water (specifically cooperation regarding the Yarmuk River basin). See Taylor, *The Arab Balance of Power* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1982), p. 70 and Laurie A. Brand, "Economics and Shifting Alliances: Jordan's Relations with Syria and Iraq," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 26, No.3 (1994), p. 396.
18. Brand, "Economics and Shifting," pp. 398-99 and Taylor, *The Arab Balance of Power*, p. 70.
19. Author's interview with Zayd al-Rifa'i, Jordanian Prime Minister from 1973-76 and 1985-89. Amman, March 29, 1993.
20. See the discussion by Patrick Seale, *Asad: The Struggle for the Middle East* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 185-225.
21. Author's interviews with Jordanian military officers and political officials. Amman, February

1993.

22. Author's interviews with policy-makers in Damascus and Amman, 1992, 1993, and 2001.

23. In her study. Brand argues that "the key to understanding the role of economics in this case lies in focusing not only on what the bilateral economic relationship is, but also — because of the absence of aid in the bilateral equation — on what it is *not*. In the case of Syrian-Jordanian ties, the aid dependence of the two on third party states, not on each other, best explains or accounts for the role of economic factors." Brand, *Jordan's Inter-Arab Relations*, p. 195.

24. Paul A. Jureidini and R. D. McLaurin, "The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan," in P. Edward Haley and Lewis W. Snider, eds., *Lebanon in Crisis: Participants and Issues* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1979), p. xv.

25. Nevo, "Syria and Jordan," p. 145 and Taylor, *The Arab Balance of Power*, p. 70.

26. On the specific rivalry between the two Ba'thist regimes in Damascus and Baghdad, see Eberhard Kienle, *Ba'th v Ba'th: The Conflict Between Syria and Iraq, 1968-1989* (London: I. B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 1990) and also Malik Mufti, *Sovereign Creations: Pan-Arabism and Political Order in Syria and Iraq* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996).

27. Paul Jureidini and R. D. McLaurin, *Beyond Camp David: Emerging Alignments and Leaders in the Middle East* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1979).

28. Others have since argued that Asad actually had a key role in the botched invasion. On Asad's role as Defense Minister and Commander of the Air Force during the invasion, and his later seizure of power, see Patrick Seale, *Asad*, pp. 154-165.

29. Interview with Zayd al-Rifa'i. Amman, March 29, 1993.

30. Laurie A. Brand, *Jordan's Inter-Arab Relations: The Political Economy of Alliance Making* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), pp. 188-195.

31. Brand, "Economics and Shifting Alliances," pp. 398-99.

32. Author's interviews with Jordanian and Syrian foreign ministry officials. Amman, March 1993, and Damascus, April 1993. See also Brand, "Economics and Shifting Alliances," p. 397.

33. Nevo, "Syria and Jordan," p. 149.

34. Author's interview with Dr. Jawad 'Anani, former Deputy Prime Minister of Jordan. Amman, April 10, 1993.

35. Author's interview with Zayd al-Rifa'i. Amman, March 29, 1993.

36. On inter-Arab politics during this era, classic discussions include Malcolm Kerr's *The Arab Cold War: Gamal 'Abd al-Nasir and his Rivals, 1958-70* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971) and Patrick Seale, *The Struggle for Syria: A Study of Post-War Arab Politics 1945-1958* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965).

37. Taylor, *The Arab Balance of Power*, p. 86.

38. Author's interviews with Syrian policy-makers. Damascus, April 1993.
39. See the detailed discussion of the failed Syrian-Iraqi union in Mufti, *Sovereign Creations*, pp. 209-220. On Syrian-Iraqi relations see also Eberhard Kienle, *Ba 'th v. Ba 'th: The Conflict Between Syria and Iraq 1968-1989* (London: I.B. Taurus, 1990).
40. Author's interviews with Syrian government officials. Damascus, March, and April 1993.
41. Taylor, *The Arab Balance of Power*, p. 88.
42. Author's interviews with Jordanian foreign ministry officials. Amman, March, and April 1993.
43. Author's interviews with Syrian government officials. Damascus, March, and April 1993.
44. Arthur R. Day, *East Bank/West Bank: Jordan and the Prospects for Peace* (Washington, DC: Council on Foreign Relations, 1986), p. 85 and Taylor, *The Arab Balance of Power*, pp. 93-94.
45. Author's interview in Damascus, April 1993.
46. On the succession and the Kingdom's other political and economic transitions, see Curtis R. Ryan, *Jordan in Transition: From Hussein to Abdullah* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2002).
47. Author's interview in Amman, July 2001.
48. Author's interview in Amman, July 2001.
49. Author's interview with Kamel Abu Jaber, former Foreign Minister of Jordan. Amman, July 13, 2001.
50. Jordan, in particular, had more realignment options. In the years that followed, however, Syria's options rapidly dwindled and its isolation increased following the assassination of Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri in 2005 and the ensuing Mehlis investigation on behalf of the UN Security Council.
51. See, for example, Curtis R. Ryan, "Between Iraq and a Hard Place: Jordanian-Iraqi Relations," *Middle East Report* (Summer 2000), pp. 40-42, or Ryan, "Jordan's Changing Relations," *Middle East/nig/ir* (November-December 2000), pp. 83-87.
52. Rana Awad, "Jordan, Syria sign FTA," *Jordan Times*, October 9, 2001.
53. Lamis Andoni and Jillian Schwedler, "Bread Riots in Jordan," *Middle East Report*, 201 (October- December 1996): pp. 40-42; Curtis R. Ryan, "Peace, Bread, and Riots: Jordan and the International Monetary Fund," *Middle East Policy*, Vol.6, No. 2 (1998), pp. 54-66.
54. Author interview with 'Abd al-Ilah al-Khatib. Amman, Jordan. May 14, 2005. In the government shake-up that followed the al-Qa'ida terrorist bombings in Amman in November 2005, al-Khatib was in December 2005 once again appointed Jordan's Minister for Foreign Affairs.

55. On questions of liberalization under Bashar and Hafiz al-Asad, see Najib Ghadbian, "The New Asad: Dynamics of Continuity and Change in Syria," *The Middle East Journal*, Vol. 55, No. 4 (Autumn 2001), pp. 624-641; Eberhard Kienle, ed., *Contemporary Syria: Liberalization Between Cold War and Cold Peace* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994); and Volker Perthes, *The Political Economy of Syria Under Asad* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1995).
56. Pete W. Moore, "The Newest Jordan: Free Trade, Peace, and an Ace in the Hole," *Middle East Report Online*, June 26, 2003.
57. Author interview with Fayiz Tarawnah. Amman, May 16, 2005.
58. Saad G. Hattar and Dana Charkasi, "Jordan asks Syria to Hike Flow of Yarmouk," *Jordan Times*, April 19, 2001.
59. Riad al-Khoury, "Syria and Jordan Both Look for Liquidity, but of a Different Kind," *The Daily Star*, (Beirut) August 28, 2001.
60. *Al-Majd*, (Jordanian newsweekiy) July 23, 2001. BBC World Monitoring, July 23, 2001.
61. *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, August 28, 2001.
62. The Damascus Declaration emerged in 1991 in the aftermath of the second Gulf War, and consists of the "Six plus two" framework linking Syria and Egypt to the six states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates).
63. Author's interview with Kamal Abu Jaber. Amman, May 15, 2005.
64. Author's interview with Senator Layla Sharaf. Amman, May 17, 2005.
65. Author interview. Amman, May 2005.
66. Author interview. Amman, May 2005.
67. Author interview. Amman, May 2005.
68. For an insightful analysis of constancy and change in contemporary Syrian politics, see Bassam Haddad, "Syria's Curious Dilemma," *Middle East Report*, No. 236, (Fall 2005.) Available online at <http://www.merip.org/mer/mer236/haddad.html>.
69. Scott Greenwood, "Jordan's 'New Bargain': The Political Economy of Regime Security," *The Middle East Journal*, Vol. 57, No. 2 (Spring 2003); and Ryan, "Jordan: The Politics of Alliance and Foreign Policy."