



## JORDANIAN NATIONAL SECURITY

# 2025

# IN NEW REGIONAL GAME

**HASAN AL-MOMANI**  
Interview with JPS

**MARWAN MUASHER**  
The Jordanian Challenge  
Under Trump

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When Economy Becomes  
a Source of Instability

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Jordan's Regional Role in the Next  
Phase: Initial Approach

# JPS

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**Cover Photo:** A view shows the visit of the Jordanian delegation to the Turkish capital, Ankara. The image features Ayman Safadi, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, along with Chairman of the Jordanian Joint Chiefs of Staff Major General Yousef Al-Huneiti, and Director of the General Intelligence Department Major General Ahmad Husni. On the Turkish side, it shows Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan, Defense Minister Yasar Güler, and National Intelligence Organization Chief Ibrahim Kalın. (Source: The official account of the Jordanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates on Platform X, January 6, 2025).



# “ ABOUT JPS

There is often a significant gap between political transformations, both domestic and international, and the knowledge produced by researchers, academics, and specialists regarding social issues and phenomena. Despite the proliferation of many journals in the human and social sciences, there is a shortage of publications that provide deep, research-based knowledge and perspectives, that offer valuable alternatives and recommendations to decision-makers across various policy dimensions.

The Jordanian Politics & Society Magazine (JPS), published periodically by the Politics and Society Institute, aims to fill this gap. JPS serves as a scientific platform dedicated to fostering rigorous intellectual debate on issues related to domestic and foreign policies at regional and international levels, with a particular focus on the Jordanian political landscape. The magazine emphasizes the development of scientific and intellectual concepts to address various real-world variables and promotes the exchange of ideas and interactive efforts among specialists.

## Note

The views and opinions expressed in the magazine are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views or positions of neither PSI nor the Editors.

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# FOREWORD

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# Foreword

## *The Ability to "Build Awareness" First*

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The new issue of the Jordanian Politics and Society Magazine (JPS) coincides with the fall of the «Al-Assad regime' in Syria, the initiation of a humanitarian truce in Gaza following a devastating Israeli war that spared neither humans nor nature and the return of Donald Trump to the White House at the start of this year. It also marked the formation of a new Lebanese government and the election of a president in Lebanon. These developments collectively signal the unfolding strategic transformations in the region. However, the ongoing changes suggest further shifts and transitions, potentially forming new regional alliances and redefining power dynamics and spheres of influence to reorganise key files. On the other hand, these shifts may also manifest as conflicts and wars aimed at settling scores among international and regional players.

There is no doubt that the Al-Assad regime was fascist and dictatorial, imposing an immense cost on the dignity, freedom, and humanity of the Syrian people. Millions in Syria have every right to celebrate the end of this oppressive darkness after decades of brutal and repressive rule. Yet, the future of Syria—an essential variable in shaping the contours of the upcoming regional phase—remains unclear, bound to numerous intertwined local, regional, and global dynamics. Will the fall of the

Al-Assad regime lead to the birth of a new pluralistic Syrian state? Until then, how will the new Syrian political system align itself with the region's arrangements?

Meanwhile, numerous old and new questions emerge despite the ceasefire in Gaza. Are we genuinely witnessing the end of this tragedy in Palestine? What lies ahead for the Gaza Strip and its governance? Will Israel completely withdraw? What is the fate of Hamas leaders in Gaza? More broadly, what is the future of the Hamas movement? Has the so-called «Axis of Resistance» dissipated, with Hezbollah constrained domestically and regionally, Hamas' rule in Gaza ending, and the Syrian regime collapsing? This would inevitably weaken Iran's influence significantly after two decades of constructing networks of power, alliances, and interests. This, in turn, raises the most pressing question of the year: How will the Trump administration deal with Iran moving forward?

What developments can we expect this year regarding the Palestinian issue, which has direct and intricate strategic and security ties to Jordan's national security? Will Trump propose a new peace plan? Will it include establishing a Palestinian state, and in what form? What will the Palestinian National Authority's stance be? Could it accept a weak, limited entity while relinquishing sovereignty, land, and Jerusalem if this aligns with the Trump administration's position? How will Jordan position itself to face such significant challenges?

These are but a fraction of the essential questions surrounding regional developments, which intertwine in one way or another with the concept of Jordan's national security for 2025—a theme that headlines this issue.

Naturally, we do not expect the articles and analyses from the experts and specialists in this edition, both from Jordan, Arab countries and the world, to provide conclusive answers to all the aforementioned questions. However, at a minimum, this issue aims to contribute scientifically and practically to understanding the global and regional strategic transformations surrounding Jordanian national security. It seeks to reframe strategic interests and identify sources of threats and challenges we face this year and beyond. These scholarly contributions aim to build a «national awareness» supporting policymaking. In today's world, rational and informed political decision-making necessitates substantial analysis, study, and scientific research to comprehend developments, explore alternatives, and evaluate scenarios and options before formulating appropriate decisions or policies.

Amidst these discussions, a pivotal question arises about Jordan's regional role: How do we define and frame it? We are not discussing a fixed, static concept here but rather a dynamic one linked to international, regional, and domestic transformations. While Jordan's regional role is partly determined by its military, economic, geographical, and human resources, it is also shaped by decision-makers' perceptions of the surrounding environment, the scope of this role, and its potential. These factors, in turn, define the concept and various dimensions of Jordanian national security. This is what the young researcher Mohammad Amin Assaf discusses in his article in this issue, referring to it as the «Identity of Jordanian National Security». Understanding these transformations requires consensus among political elites and a more significant national dialogue and debate space. For instance, to what extent should Jordan intervene in the West Bank and Jerusalem? Will Jordan oppose

scenarios involving the annexation of the West Bank, or will it take steps back? What about the Hashemite custodianship over Jerusalem in the face of potentially more crucial Israeli transgressions? To what extent will Jordan engage in the Syrian file, and if substantial internal problems arise in Syria—God forbid—will Jordan merely observe, or will it play a role in protecting its strategic interests? What scenarios might unfold?

In conclusion, given these dynamics in the regional environment, shifting historical moment, and significant surrounding developments, there is a critical need for expertise centres and think tanks to conduct analysis and understanding to build awareness. As demonstrated in this issue, it is essential to establish bridges between decision-making centres and these research efforts. From this standpoint, we are pleased to offer a Jordanian national contribution to foster national awareness in understanding the regional, international, and domestic environment and building internal «awareness» to navigate it.

**Abdul Karim Al-Kabariti,**  
**Chairman of the Advisory Committee of JPS**  
**Former Prime Minister of Jordan**



# JPS interview

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# JPS interview



In the second issue of *JPS*, the magazine features an interview with Prof. Hasan Al Momani, a prominent expert in international conflicts. Al Momani is a professor at the Prince Al Hussein Bin Abdullah School of Political Science and International Studies and president of the Centre for Strategic Studies at the University of Jordan.

*This interview explores pressing questions surrounding the nation's security framework, the challenges it is set to encounter, and the prospects that may lie ahead. Editors Hasan Jaber and Abdullah Al-Taie conducted the interview, during which Al Momani examined Jordan's security priorities for 2025, discussed the main obstacles and potential advantages in the coming years, and offered strategies for navigating the complex geopolitical realities shaping Jordan in the next phase.*

## JPS

There is a sense that the national discourse on Jordan's security concept, priorities, opportunities, and strategic options - both regional and domestic - remains unclear. Let's start with our first question: What are the most significant challenges and threats Jordan may face in the next phase as the Gaza war continues and violence escalates in the West Bank, amid statements and policies from Israel's far-right government?

### **Al-Momani:**

One would easily say that uncertainties are high, particularly at the regional level as our region has been suffering from instability and chaos. This creates a gray picture which could distort our vision as well as other parties. Therefore, Jordan is not an exception within the international context, The changes and developments in the real world of international relations have influenced the realm of knowledge. Consequently, the concept of national security is no longer limited to its traditional, hard-security framework. Moreover, *realpolitik* is no longer the sole lens through which national security is understood. Any issue can now be considered a priority within the context of national security.

Jordan, as a small state with limited resources situated in a challenging regional environment

and a complex geopolitical reality bases its role, effectiveness, and status on its capabilities. Since its foundation, Jordan has exhibited elements of both strength and weakness, such as the challenges related to natural resources—energy, and water which is a well-known historical challenge. However, over time, Jordan has managed to develop and compensate for many of these deficiencies by leveraging sources of strength, particularly in terms of leadership.

Jordan's stable governance model has demonstrated the ability to navigate international relations within a geopolitical context marked by both opportunities and challenges. For example, Jordan has directly utilized its geopolitical reality to enhance its importance, such as through its involvement in the Palestinian issue, which, despite its numerous challenges, has been managed in a way that highlights Jordan's significance. The same applies to Jordan's role in the Syrian crisis.

Returning to the idea of Jordan as a small state in international relations, it is inherently exposed to risks. For any country, existential concerns are a pivotal element in building its strategies. These existential threats are no longer limited to war or military aggression because the concept of war itself has evolved; terrorism, for instance, now poses a





**We cannot separate Jordan’s national security from regional security. This interconnectedness aligns with theoretical literature, which emphasizes the interdependence between the security of the whole and the security of its constituent units.**

significant threat. Economic realities, including the state’s inability to build a strong economy, can also threaten its existence and compromise its decision-making capabilities.

Nevertheless, despite the existing challenges, Jordan has navigated these turbulent waters

effectively. It remains the most capable actor in addressing the Palestinian issue, though the dynamics of the conflict are continually evolving and presenting both challenges and opportunities for Jordan. Thus, we cannot separate Jordan’s national security from regional security. This interconnectedness aligns with theoretical literature, which emphasizes the interdependence between the security of the whole and the security of its constituent units.

All the issues in the region neighboring Jordan cast their shadow on the country, whether in

Palestine or Syria. For example, southern Syria poses a threat to Jordan—not an existential one but a threat represented by armed terrorist groups and smuggling activities, which may be linked to economic and illicit dimensions, in addition to their politicization. Regarding the Iraqi situation, instability in Iraq affects Jordan's national security.

In the Palestinian issue, the threats are diverse, encompassing the security, political, social, and economic contexts.

Jordan's regional priorities are:

1. The Palestinian issue
2. Stability in Syria
3. Stability in Iraq

These issues are pressing for Jordan in this context. Over the past 15 years, Jordan has logically and pragmatically addressed these issues, demonstrating an understanding of these challenges. Accordingly, it utilized various tools and employed its strategic network of relationships in this matter. To some extent, Jordan managed to contain and reduce threats coming from Iraq, address and mitigate dangers stemming from Syria, and up until now, manage and minimize risks resulting from developments in Palestine.

Jordan's engagement in these issues has increased and enhanced its expertise in

crisis management. Many of these events have proven Jordan's central role in these matters, particularly the Palestinian issue. The developments have stimulated Jordanian diplomacy towards greater activity and effectiveness, allowing it to capitalize on its efforts. However, real, and present risks remain, and the most pressing strategic threat for Jordan now is what is happening west of the Jordan River in the Palestinian territories. Ultimately, a strategic collision with Israel is possible.

While the Jordanian state is peace-loving, we have seen strategic behavior that could lead to such a collision with Israel. This was expressed by His Majesty the King when he stated that forced displacement is a "red line," signaling the looming specter of conflict if Israeli right-wing tendencies persist. There is also the issue of forced displacement, exacerbated by Israeli pressure.

In addition to this, the economic dimension raises a central question: To what extent does instability, particularly the war in Gaza, impact the Jordanian economy? This remains one of the risks.

Within the global environment that could present both opportunities and challenges, specifically

regarding shifts in global power dynamics and changes occurring in countries considered strategic partners, such as the United States. Societal, political, and security transformations are taking place in the U.S. and Europe, which also carry implications and consequences.

Opportunities exist for Jordan in the sense that all these issues and the way they have been addressed have proven that Jordan is part of the solution, not part of the problem. Consequently, its role is sought after, by these countries.

Jordan has taken some proactive measures to enhance relationships and strategic partnerships with the United States through defense and security agreements, as well as strengthening its strategic relationship with Europe. This plays a key role in bolstering Jordan's position.

What happened and what is happening is a kind of test of the Jordanian state's ability to adapt to situations like the Gaza situation. The Jordanian state has been able to effectively engage with what is happening in Gaza and largely contain the repercussions of what is happening in Gaza. There is still notable internal stability, and public opinion remains - to some extent - in alignment with the official position as well. This has led to playing

various humanitarian roles through Jordan's ethical approach, such as the airdrop operation.

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Trump's return is a fundamental determinant in international and regional policies, and today we see that the new American Cabinet appears to be highly devoted to Israel. Are we now closer to the Israeli projects that Jordan has always expressed concerns about and considers them as a declaration of war? Today we see statements from the Finance Minister (Bezalel) Smotrich - for example but not limited to - as well as Israeli projects and Israeli provocations in saying that it's time to impose control over the West Bank. Under Trump's presidency, might we be closer to implementing projects or steps that Jordan has always feared?

### **Al-Momani:**

Judging Trump comes within the context of his previous presidency, and there are divided opinions regarding him considering the issues at hand in the region. There are areas of agreement with Trump and others where the opposite is true. For Jordan, the major issue related to Trump is the Palestinian cause. Beyond that, the Jordanian-American ties transcends political parties. Even during Trump's first term, we did not witness any economic pressure on Jordan. The issue was

political pressure, but it was not to the extent of coercion or severe pressure to compel acceptance.

In one instance, His Majesty the King expressed this stance when then-U.S. Vice President Mike Pence visited the region. His Majesty stated that Jordan and America agreed to disagree on the Palestinian issue.



**This raises concerns because the context Trump faces now is more complex than during his first term, with complications in Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon, and the entire region.**

Naturally, Trump's first presidency could be different from his second one, as the context has changed. The key question is whether Trump of 2016, who was new to politics, is the same Trump now, who may have gained experience. Additionally, the team surrounding Trump is expected to be different. However, based on their profiles, they may be hawkish and could give an impression of pursuing Trump's earlier plans, such as annexing over 30% or 40% of the Jordan Valley, determining the future of Jerusalem, and recognizing it as

Israel's capital. This raises concerns because the context Trump faces now is more complex than during his first term, with complications in Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon, and the entire region.

There is a misunderstanding and wishful thinking that Trump's return could resolve everything. However, during his first term, Trump was unable to solve all issues, regardless of U.S. capabilities. There are structural constraints beyond the U.S., such as Israel, its internal political dynamics, and whether we will see a further strengthening of the right-wing or the beginning of its fragmentation. Additionally, the importance of U.S.-European relations comes into play.

Concerns persist, and Trump presents a challenge until the picture becomes clearer. The central question here is that during Trump's first term, Arab parties did not collectively engage with him. Now, is there a unified Arab vision on the Palestinian issue to approach Trump? This could potentially influence U.S. policy to amend previously proposed plans.

The Arab reality is now different, and there is a





consensus that the Palestinian issue must be resolved. During Trump's first term, Arab countries had different priorities, and normalization agreements and the Abraham Accords were not closely tied to the two-state solution. Now, a country like Saudi Arabia has a binding stance, emphasizing the need for a two-state solution. This is supported by the coalition of Arab foreign ministers demanding such a solution, along with the evolving nature of regional relations with other powers like China and Russia.

## JPS

Thus, the question arises: Do Arab countries have the ability to influence Trump's stance regarding Palestine? Will U.S.-European relations remain tense as before, or will they be more aligned?

Amidst the lack of clarity and uncertainty surrounding Trump's first term, Trump represents a challenge for Jordan regarding the Palestinian issue. Beyond that, the Trump administration does not pose a challenge. Jordan has no issue with strategic cooperation, given the economic ties and security partnerships in place.

### **Al-Momani:**

Jordanian political indications regarding Trump suggest a balanced approach that requires precise calibration to accommodate the administration and foster cooperation. Strategic confrontation would be harmful to both countries and would have catastrophic results for Jordan. Therefore, Jordan approaches Trump's return with a meticulously

calibrated strategy, identifying opportunities for development and ways to mitigate potential repercussions. Ultimately, it must be acknowledged that the Palestinian issue is too complex to be managed by a single country; it depends on Palestinian and Arab efforts as well.

## JPS

Are you suggesting that if Jordan wants to avoid the worst scenarios, it should pursue Arab consensus? What steps can the Jordanian decision-maker take? What do we mean by change, and you previously mentioned that Jordan's discourse at the beginning of the Gaza war was hawkish?

### **Al-Momani:**

First, Jordan must primarily rely on a strong internal front and maintain awareness of what Jordan is facing. Second, There must be a mobilization of international relations networks and engagement with America and Europe. Relations with Europe are not as challenging as the relationship with Trump. Through European friends, Jordan can also have support in case it faces various pressures.

The Jordanian-American relations are well-rooted; therefore, Jordan must play an influential role in American politics, engage with the American administration as well as other social and political forces, and try to influence these paths.



**The other reality that supports this position is the Palestinian reality. Meaning that Palestinians must move from the state of division to consensus, because it's clear that things will eventually move toward a ceasefire, and we believe that Netanyahu is stalling until Trump takes over because the agreement terms might be better in the context of Trump's support for him.**

The Arab side and the Islamic-Arab position are very important in this context, and there must be a clear Arab vision in dealing with Trump, at least from the countries active in the Palestinian issue, so that Jordan creates a reality that it is not an easy target in the face of Israeli pressures. The other reality that supports this position is the Palestinian reality. Meaning that Palestinians must move from the state of division to consensus, because it's clear that things will eventually move toward a ceasefire, and we believe that Netanyahu is stalling until Trump takes over because the agreement terms might be better in the context of Trump's support for him.

It's important to achieve a ceasefire, but the real problem is what comes after the ceasefire regarding pending issues such as the future of Gaza Strip, the future of the peace process, and the idea of Israel creating a new reality in the region like in Lebanon for example. Away from the ideal context, Jordan will certainly make concessions but it will not give its red lines up.

JPS

Can Jordan still maintain its red lines?

**Al-Momani:**

Yes, it still maintains its red lines because ultimately, what would it mean to accept a solution at the expense of Palestinians in its geographic and demographic context while leaving matters floating? The demographic reality could transform into significant pressure on Jordan.

Everything mentioned is an analytical perspective. We are trying to rebuild the picture, but the lack of clarity and state of uncertainty are much greater



than any ability to build clear perceptions. In my assessment, what complicates the scene most is the problem of the American position and the Israeli position, and this poses a challenge for Jordan and the Palestinian issue. Additionally, one of the challenges is Arab politics, and the problem with the growing polarization regarding the Palestinian cause.

## JPS

Regarding the future of relations with Israel - for Jordan as a peace-making state committed to international agreements such as Wadi Araba and its implications, Jordan has neither violated these agreements nor threatened to breach them. In contrast, we find that Israeli society, with the far-right's idea that it (does not respect) its agreements and does not look with respect toward Jordan, and there is an absence of the left and rationality in any alternative Israeli proposition. Previously, they accused Jordan of manipulation and interference in Israeli society, yet Jordan is in a dilemma about how to deal with Israel after October 7 and its consequences.

### **Al-Momani:**

Optimistic: A ceasefire and creating objective conditions that create a political process everyone engages in, and there would be no problem in Jordanian-Israeli relations in this case. It could lead

to a kind of good recalibration of the relationship according to developments in the Palestinian issue. There are structural determinants in Jordanian-Israeli relations, one of which is the matter of peace between Palestinians and Israelis, and the absence of peace between them always has negative effects on Jordanian-Israeli relations.

The Worst Case Scenario: A ceasefire and continuation of the status quo, meaning there are some symbolic steps and aid toward Gaza, but consolidating what Israel has achieved from this war. This might be accompanied by some political and diplomatic movement, and international priorities may emerge that draw attention away from the Palestinian issue. Consequently, Jordan will have to deal with a difficult and growing status quo. Now we're talking about Israeli occupation of Gaza and whether will they leave it, as well as the continuation of a torn Palestinian reality. The current situation in Palestine may produce another type of resistance, which is underground, guerilla resistance.

Additionally, the nature of regional relations being recalibrated will have an impact. What if the recalibration of Arab relations with Iran doesn't succeed? And the possibility of emergence of new priorities just like the Obama administration gave a



priority to the agreement with Iran. This poses a major challenge to the Palestinian issue. In the absence of Palestinian-Israeli peace, there will definitely remain fluctuation in Jordanian-Israeli relations.

In terms of popular culture, October 7 created a culture of resistance and a culture of unwillingness toward Israel and anti-normalization to the furthest extent. Between these two scenarios, we believe Netanyahu is betting on the second scenario and that Israel, from his perspective, has managed to "from his point of view" weaken the resistance, and that he has created for 10-20 years a strategically-safe environment for Israel and there are no strategic threats to Israel.

## JPS

During Trump's first term and afterward, we witnessed the Gulf crisis, which impacted priorities and introduced shifts. Another issue is that the normalization process proceeded smoothly. What if this path resumes? How will Jordanian relations with the Gulf countries unfold, and how will Jordan react to such an event, which will undoubtedly impose new realities on Jordan?

### **Al-Momani:**

The relations with the Gulf countries will remain strategic in its general framework. However, in detail, Jordanian relations with the Gulf Cooperation

Council countries vary. There are strategic relations with Saudi Arabia and the UAE, which differ from the relations with Kuwait and Qatar. Jordan is deeply involved in Gulf politics and seeks to influence them. With the experience of the Gulf crisis and the relocation of the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem, Jordan managed to respond to these events and leverage Arab momentum toward Jerusalem, attempting to use these relations to pressure Israel. We should not forget the water-for-energy agreement.

Therefore, Jordan will adopt a flexible strategy,



**Therefore, Jordan will adopt a flexible strategy, seeking to comprehend regional developments and capitalize on as many opportunities as possible to safeguard its interests.**

seeking to comprehend regional developments and capitalize on as many opportunities as possible to safeguard its interests. However, Jordan is unlikely to take a black-or-white stance except on fixed principles. Historically, there have been numerous attempts to impose certain visions, such as during Camp David, when some parties tried to strip



Jordan of its role and address Palestinian self-governance. Through diplomacy, Jordan managed to minimize the damage and reduce pressure in this context. Jordan posed questions to the concerned parties before deciding not to participate in Camp David. Jordan is a rational player, aware of the limits of its capabilities. It should not be portrayed as a nation with vast resources or immunity. Jordan will maneuver carefully, aiming for precise policies, seizing opportunities, and containing and mitigating risks. This defines Jordanian relations with the Gulf. Jordan does not operate with a singular interest; there are other issues tied to Jordan's national security, including internal and external challenges such as the Palestinian cause,

the Syrian border, and the strategic bet on Iraq.

## JPS

Jordan, geographically positioned between Iran and Israel, has declared its refusal to allow its airspace to be used and its sovereignty to be violated in this conflict, and it rejects being a battleground for missile exchanges. There are two prevailing perspectives on this issue within Jordan: one advocates for redefining relations with Iran to foster a friendlier or less problematic relationship, while the other opposes strengthening ties with Iran. From the perspective of Jordanian security, do you see Jordan moving in this direction, or will it maintain the current status quo?

**Al-Momani:**

Recalibrating relations with Iran is a logical step, but the key question is: who is responsible for the strained relations? Another challenge is determining how this recalibration should occur.



**The issue lies in Iran's behavior and its regional policies, which pose threats to the Arab world and, consequently, to Jordan.**

Those who place the responsibility on Jordan claim that Jordan is solely responsible for redefining the relations, but this view is somewhat unfair and overlooks the reality. Jordan manages its relations with Iran within the framework of the broader geopolitical dynamics of the Middle East. There is no inherent Jordanian hostility toward Iran; relations exist, and Jordan does not perceive Iran as an enemy. However, the issue lies in Iran's behavior and its regional policies, which pose threats to the Arab world and, consequently, to Jordan. Jordan has attempted to recalibrate its relations with Iran, especially during the tenure of reformist presidents. This places the ball in Iran's court, depending on how Iran views Jordan. Jordan is a rational actor, acknowledging Iran as a major

regional power and engaging accordingly. Several attempts have been made.

In recent months, developments have both positively and negatively impacted the relationship. The situation in southern Syria has brought Iran closer to Jordan, either through Syria or Iraq, due to its influence. Iran's behavior toward Jordan was evident in its support for militias, smuggling operations, and attempts to establish a foothold in Jordan. Other developments, such as those on October 7, have been noted by Jordan, particularly the shift in Iranian behavior. When a reformist president came to power, Jordan's approach was to engage with Iran, explore its stance, and support the Iranian president, Massoud Pezeshkian, who sought to recalibrate relations. Therefore, Jordan initiated efforts toward Iran, aiming to redefine ties based on mutual interests and principles rooted in shared understandings, far from ambitions of dominance and influence

There are other issues such as Iran's significant involvement in the Palestinian. Thus, Iran is one of the key factors to consider when discussing Jordan's national security. In Iraq as well, many analyses suggest that

Iran's influence on decision-making in Iraq has been one of the obstacles to strategic cooperation that Jordan had high hopes for. This cooperation was to be a cornerstone of Jordan's strategic plans with Iraq.

So while being geographically distant, Iran is practically close, as it is part of Jordan's neighboring region and directly impacts Jordan's regional security.

## JPS

When Mohammed Shia' Al-Sudani began his foreign visits, he started with Jordan, which served as a crucial channel for his relations with the United States. Today, could Iran **take a similar** approach through Jordan, or would it prefer the Gulf route, which might be easier and more effective for it?

Al-Momani:

When discussing Iran's priorities, its focus will naturally be on its immediate geographical surrounding. Regarding its relations with the United States, Iran already has more established Gulf channels, such as Qatar, which are more significant than Jordan.

Jordan's importance to Iran lies in its role in Iraq, and Palestine. Relations with the U.S. are

undoubtedly significant in this context. However, when Iran sets its priorities, the Gulf and Iraq come first. It's worth noting that Iran has heavily invested in Iraq and Syria, with Jordan being part of a broader context that includes Syria and Palestine. This was reinforced by the events of October 7. Additionally, the Israeli factor plays a *role* in this matter, whether positively or negatively, as any impact on Jordan also sends signals to U.S. allies and others.

## JPS

Staying within the Iraqi context, under the government led by the Coordination Framework (composed mostly of right-wing Shia forces), some believe Jordanian-Iraqi relations has stagnated. This contrasts with the progress seen at the end of Trump's term under former Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi and the further advances made during the Democrats' tenure with figures like Mustafa Al-Kadhimi. During that period, we witnessed initiatives such as the New Levant Project. Today, how would you assess Jordanian-Iraqi relations? Has Jordan **achieved** at least part of its ambitions? And could this relationship see positive or negative shifts with Trump's return?

Al-Momani:

Jordanian-Iraqi relations are stable, and their





development is influenced by various internal, regional, and international factors. From an international perspective, there is no issue, as the U.S. consistently supports strengthening Jordan-Iraq ties. The challenges lie in the regional sphere and the dynamics of Iraq's internal politics, where Iran plays a critical role. Iranian influence in Iraq's internal politics is strong, whether in the military or political context, despite everyone's desire for Iraq to have a strong, independent role.

If regional integration materializes, Iraq will not be excluded; it will be part of the integration process, potentially pressured to curb the power of armed factions.

In a more optimistic scenario, should there be an agreement between the U.S. and Iran on the nuclear deal and a broader regional détente, this would aid integration efforts. However, many issues are currently on the table, and it is unlikely that a four-year Trump term will resolve the crises in the Middle East.

There has been some exaggeration and fear regarding Trump's ability to deliver on promises and slogans. However, Trump's previous term showed he was unable to resolve issues such as Ukraine and Crimea, North Korea, or the Palestinian issue. His unilateral steps in the latter were not widely recognized, nor did he succeed in reorganizing relations with China.

Thus, it's essential to approach this with realistic projections while maintaining a forward-looking perspective to navigate uncertainty and ambiguity. Amid these complexities, Jordan is positioned naturally within a highly intricate geopolitical environment. We do not expect Jordan to act *in* absolutes but rather adopt a pragmatic, rational, and realistic approach that aligns with its priorities and interests.

## JPS

As regional tensions persist and Syria's complex political landscape continues to evolve, how does the ongoing situation after the collapse of Assad's regime impact Jordan's national security interests, particularly considering the shared border, refugee crisis, and historical geopolitical dynamics between the two nations? What role can Jordan play in **contributing to the**

stability in Syria and what shall be done for safeguarding Jordan's national interests in the new landscape?

Al-Momani:

The situation in Syria undoubtedly has significant implications for Jordan's national security. The two countries are geographically intertwined, and the impacts are felt across all levels of society. Jordan currently hosts over one million Syrian refugees, and both nations maintain substantial trade and economic relations. Consequently, any shifts in Syria's political landscape can have profound effects on Jordan.

From a historical perspective, Syria has always influenced Jordan due to the geopolitical context. Syria remains a pressing priority for Jordan, comparable to the Palestinian question. The optimistic scenario envisions Syria gradually stabilizing and initiating an inclusive political process. This could lead to consensus on a constitution and foster a peace-building process that encompasses all socio-ethnic groups and political movements. Such developments could create an active public sphere that generates positive discourse, ultimately leading to Syria's stability—which would benefit Jordan significantly.

While Syria has historically presented challenges for Jordan, the situation since 2011 has generated multiple complex issues. If Syria achieves stability and creates a comprehensive political process, Jordan will fully support such developments. However if instability, God forbid, resurfaces and creates new security challenges, Jordan should be prepared to address similar issues to those faced since 2011.

Jordan has maintained proactive diplomatic engagement with Syria. Since the collapse of Assad's regime, Jordan has pursued both bilateral and multilateral engagements, outlining with partners key principles for Syria's stability. Moving forward, Jordan must maintain diplomatic engagement while exploring various measures to support Syria's stabilization. Multiple Jordanian national interests are at stake, ranging from security in southern Syria to economic considerations and the refugee situation, which has placed significant pressure on resources. Therefore, Jordan should continue engaging with the new parties in power in Syria while maintaining regional coordination with those who share the same vision for Syria's future.

JPS

Some Iranian experts suggest that Iran might agree to significant concessions within the context of long-term political settlements. Is that possible?

**Al-Momani:**

It is possible, but the question remains: What would those major concessions entail? Would they involve recognizing Iran's regional role or securing economic interests? What would constitute the "grand bargains"?

There could be recognition of Iran's regional role, but the idea of Iran losing its influence in Iraq is implausible. While there might be a reduction in influence, it will not disappear entirely. Concessions could involve Iran's nuclear program, where it might offer compromises in exchange for regional recognition, economic openness, and the mitigation of external pressures. However, Iran will likely remain a pivotal player within the regional power structure.

## JPS

What is the nature of Jordanian relations with the European Union today? Europe has taken steps such as sending envoys to Syria, and we've seen some variance in positions. To what extent can Jordan rely on the European side to counter Israeli policies and work toward a resolution?

### **Al-Momani:**

Jordan can rely on Europe, but the challenge lies in the European Union's ability to influence U.S. policy—where the United States often shapes European positions as well.

Within the European Union, there are areas of consensus and disagreement. While there is a general European stance supporting the Palestinian cause, positions regarding Israel vary significantly.

During Trump's first term, U.S.-European relations were strained, which created apprehensions. Jordan has the capacity to navigate these dynamics effectively.

The critical question, however, is whether the United States requires a European gateway to adjust its stance on Jordan, or if the U.S. already appreciates Jordan's sensitivities and pragmatic approach, allowing for the formation of an international position.

In the European context, countries like the United Kingdom (although outside the EU) could play a role in mediating any rifts between Jordan and the U.S. The extent of this role will depend on the nature of U.S.-European relations during Trump's current tenure.

Jordan's strategic partnership with NATO provides it with influence, but the central question remains: Why would Jordan need the European Union to mediate its unique historical ties with the United States?





# ARTICLES



# The Jordanian Challenge

## Under Trump

MARWAN MUASHER

*Vice president for studies at Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and Former Foreign Minister of Jordan.*

The past year, since October 7, 2023, has been catastrophic for the Palestinians. It also poses significant challenges for Jordan. The country has always been concerned that if a two-state solution is not reached to settle the Arab-Israeli conflict, Israel might attempt to solve the conflict at Jordan's expense—either through a mass transfer of Palestinians into Jordan or through forcing Jordan to administer the Palestinians in those areas of the West Bank Israel is not interested in keeping. Jordan's peace treaty with Israel, signed thirty years ago to primarily guard against Israel's "Jordanian option," suddenly does not seem to have succeeded in that goal. Israel's war on Gaza, practically making the strip uninhabitable and killing more than 45,000 people, coupled with Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's declaration that a two-state solution is a "reward for terrorism" and Israeli Finance Minister Smotrich's public statement that 2025 will witness the annexation of all of the West Bank, has only heightened the fears within official Jordan that its treaty with Israel is not serving to protect it from Israeli designs.

The election of former President Trump to the White House again only adds to these Jordanian fears. Trump has announced several appointments regarding the Middle East that will be bringing into his administration individuals with strongly ideological views—and all on Israel’s side. His new ambassador to Israel, Mike Hackabi, is already on record saying that “the title deed (of the land of Palestine) was given by God to Abraham and his heirs,” that “there is no such thing as Palestinians,” and that the whole land from the river to the sea belongs to Israel. With U.S. and Israeli positions such as these, annexation has become a real possibility, posing serious challenges not only regarding the Palestinians but Jordan as well.

What is Jordan to do? While the country is small and cannot, nor does it need to, enter into a direct confrontation with the United States, that does not mean it has to accept its fate given these developments. In the next phase, the country should adopt several policy recommendations.

First, all forces in the country should put aside their differences and focus on this looming challenge, which affects all Jordanians, regardless of their political outlook. In situations like these, the system has successfully resorted in the past to national dialogue, leading to a national consensus on the path forward. In 1989, as a result of a fierce economic crisis, followed by a political crisis as a result of Jordan’s position during the first Gulf War, and the election of a parliament with more than 40% of its members belonging to a serious opposition, the late King Hussein asked for the formation of a national committee, which produced a highly credible “National Covenant” that achieved high consensus on the elements of political, economic, and social reform. The country’s current crisis is no less serious than the one in 1989 and demands a similar effort.



**Jordan’s peace treaty with Israel, signed thirty years ago to primarily guard against Israel’s “Jordanian option,” suddenly does not seem to have succeeded in that goal.**

Jordan is not without friends in Washington. It has wisely invested in forging excellent relations across the aisle with Democrats and Republicans. Such relationships need to be utilized. There needs to be a concerted, daily, and systematic effort to reach out to Jordan's friends—Republican and Democrat alike—to explain the dangers that an annexation of the West Bank poses to Jordan, not just to the Palestinians.

In 2004, Jordan was overly concerned by a letter that then-President George W. Bush gave to Israel, claiming that a solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict could not be based on the 1967 borders but needs to consider settlement reality in the West Bank. Jordan was concerned that Israel might interpret this position as a prelude to

absorbing significant portions of the West Bank into Israel and obstructing a serious path to a two-state solution. It made these concerns known to Washington in the most potent diplomatic ways possible, which resulted in a May 6, 2004, letter President Bush wrote to King Abdullah II. “Your Majesty, I understand that your country and your people have important interests at stake in any settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. And I know that your country has important interests in the emergence of a new Iraq. I assure you that my government views Jordan’s security,

prosperity, and territorial integrity as vital, and we will oppose any developments in the region that might endanger your interests”.



**Washington needs to be reminded of this by the assurance given by the Republican administration.**

Washington needs to be reminded of this by the assurance given by the Republican administration. The role of the Jordanian embassy in Washington needs to be enhanced, buttressed by adding diplomats who know the U.S. scene to support the efforts of His Majesty in reaching out to Washington's different quarters. The Jordanian ambassador in Washington, Dina Kawar, has worked with the first Trump administration and Biden. She knows the U.S. scene well, has extensive ties in Washington, and needs support.

Finally, Jordan needs to create an Arab axis supportive of efforts to prevent an annexation of the West Bank. While Jordan's relations with Saudi Arabia have witnessed serious tensions during the last decade, its objective remains to develop a unified stance alongside Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the U.A.E., Qatar, and others that could be collectively argued to Washington. This is no easy feat, but it should be a top priority.

The second Trump administration will offer serious challenges to Jordan, but it does not mean that Jordan is helpless in acquiescing to the abovementioned new policies. This is the time for very active Jordanian diplomacy, led by King Abdullah and involving a team operating within a clear plan of action that fully uses Jordanian diplomatic skills and Jordan's vast network of international contacts.

# Economic Challenges in Jordan: When Economy Becomes a Source of Instability

## IBRAHIM SAIF

*Former Jordanian Minister in several governments, An economist specializing in the political economy of the Middle East, his research focuses on economies in transition, international trade with an emphasis on Jordan and the Middle East, institutional governance, and labor-market economics.*

The Jordanian economy has been experiencing a decline in economic growth rates since 2007, the year of the global financial crisis. During the past decade, the growth of GDP has remained limited to 2- 3%, compared to approximately 6.5% in 2000- 2007. Over the past three years, growth rates have continued at similarly poor levels.

This stagnation has been accompanied by the creation of only a limited number of job opportunities, leading to an increase in unemployment rates, which reached unprecedented levels, exceeding approximately 23% last year. This situation has pressured the economy as the dependency ratio on the employed workforce has risen significantly. Concurrently, labor market participation levels remain low, with female participation at about 14%—one of the lowest globally—and male participation at approximately 62%. On average, the overall participation rate in Jordan in 2023 was estimated at around 39%, compared to approximately 45% in Morocco, 47% in Tunisia, 63% in the United Kingdom, 57% in Germany, and 72% in Sweden.

These numbers collectively reveal a significant imbalance in utilizing highly educated human resources, resulting in lower savings and reduced investment volumes that could stimulate economic growth. The low employment and participation rates have also negatively impacted state revenues and increased budget deficits, compelling successive governments to resort to regular borrowing. Consequently, according to the latest data, public debt has exceeded the GDP in size.

The budget deficit has, in turn, led to a decline in the quality of services provided by the state to citizens in three main sectors: education, healthcare, and transportation, as well as the quality of infrastructure. This deterioration has placed increasing social pressure on citizens, particularly among the lower and middle classes, burdened by the high costs of accessing these services through the private sector.

Over the past two years, the problem has worsened due to the continuous rise in interest rates, which has led to increased financing costs for both consumption and investment purposes. As a result, the dilemma now lies in weak GDP growth rates, rising interest rates, and escalating financing costs, all of which hinder investment. This also means that the government's ability to expand public spending to ease the social tensions resulting from these challenges is limited, as the costs of servicing government debt have also reached unprecedented levels.

A discouraging regional environment has accompanied these economic challenges. The situation in the West Bank and Gaza has exacerbated uncertainty and instability in the region. Similarly, the ongoing developments in Syria, with no political solution in sight, have further clouded the outlook and reduced the appeal for new investments.

In the Gulf countries, the focus has shifted toward implementing their own economic visions, with efforts concentrated more on domestic priorities. Countries like Saudi Arabia and the UAE are now keen on attracting investments, achieving development, and driving significant transformations in their economies as part of efforts to diversify and reduce dependency on global energy shifts and the decline in trade liberalization and globalization policies. Historically, these nations have supported Jordan in addressing its economic crises, repairing government budgets, and absorbing surplus labor. However, there has been a significant shift in the approach these countries use to provide aid. Their focus has shifted toward investment opportunities that promise high returns, prioritizing profitability and risk avoidance. Focusing on financial return is less suitable given the pressing regional pressures on Jordan and the growing tensions caused by developments in Gaza and the West Bank due to the policies of the Israeli far-right government.



**The government's ability to expand public spending to ease the social tensions resulting from these challenges is limited,**



Moreover, economic and political frustration undoubtedly creates unstable conditions, highlighting the urgent need for policies that strengthen economic resilience. Given the absence of job opportunities and the political deadlock at the regional level, efforts by extremist organizations or groups operating outside official government frameworks to recruit youth are likely to intensify.

Jordan's leadership has thus recognized the need to establish a political, economic, and administrative framework to address these challenges, which are unlikely to dissipate soon. In response, the country launched its economic, administrative, and political modernization vision, focusing on job creation and activating growth engines through a plan extending to 2030. The success of this vision is a key pillar that could help reduce social tensions and achieve social stability, contributing to mobilizing resources and achieving the desired goals.



**These numbers collectively reveal a significant imbalance in utilizing highly educated human resources.**

However, the challenge extends beyond merely creating job opportunities. Jordan faces significant sectoral challenges, particularly in being one of the most water-scarce countries in the world, necessitating substantial investments to address water shortages. The challenge could pose a serious

strategic threat to the country's stability.

Additionally, ongoing regional tensions continue to threaten Jordan with a steady influx of refugees, whose proportion of the population is one of the highest globally. The recent wave of Syrian refugees, preceded by waves of Iraqi refugees, underscores how regional events can jeopardize Jordan's economic and social stability, particularly amidst a strained labor market and slow economic growth.

Jordan's trade with neighboring countries suffering from instability—historically the primary destination for Jordanian exports—has experienced a significant decline. This has further dampened opportunities for regional expansion and the desired leap in economic growth.

Due to institutional weaknesses, a narrow production base, and difficulties in accessing financing, the informal sector has expanded. Approximately 1.2 million workers are estimated to be employed in the informal economy. This means that more than 30% of Jordan's workforce lacks any form of social protection or health insurance, leaving this substantial segment of society vulnerable to shocks and external changes beyond their control. When combined with the unemployed population, the percentage of vulnerable and disadvantaged individuals in the workforce rises to about 50%, which undeniably constitutes a significant threat to Jordan's stability.

Furthermore, the heavy reliance on foreign aid—primarily from the United States, Europe, and some Arab countries—also increases Jordan's economic and political exposure. This reliance often restricts the formulation of public policies, particularly if such aid comes with conditions, such as the strict austerity measures imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) under its reform programs in Jordan. This underscores the need to reduce such dependence and expand the scope for public policymaking in order to achieve the desired economic transformations.

Closely related to this is Jordan's heavy reliance on remittances from workers abroad, which results from the efforts of Jordanian expatriates. However, these remittances are also tied to the political approval of the countries employing Jordanians, making them sometimes a source of pressure on Jordan.

Additionally, Jordan's significant dependence on imported energy raises production costs. This does not necessarily mean avoiding energy-intensive sectors for manufacturing and service provision, but rather, such heavy reliance on imported energy exposes Jordan's economy to external fluctuations, which increase local production costs and negatively affect the competitiveness of specific sectors.

The combination of slow growth, limited resources, and an unstable regional environment has repercussions on the domestic situation. Addressing these challenges requires prioritizing efforts to stimulate growth, expand the production base, and focus on leveraging comparative advantages to attract investment. This involves providing all necessary guarantees for investors, establishing a suitable governance framework, and enhancing transparency to create a new environment that can drive economic revival despite local and regional pressures.

# The Post-Assad Syria:

## Challenges and Opportunities

**FADIL HANCI**

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Twelve days were enough to open a new chapter for Syria. December 8th will be remembered and celebrated for decades as a turning point that marked the end of one of the most brutal regimes in modern history. Although the Assad regime is now part of the past, the destruction it left behind, the remnants of the regime, and, most importantly, the challenges of peacebuilding and state building in Syria remain pressing concerns for the Syrian people, regional powers, and the international community.

Following its leadership in the twelve-day military operation that toppled the Assad regime, Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) established itself as a pivotal actor for all stakeholders. On one hand, diplomatic missions resumed operations in Syria, with foreign ministers and security delegations visiting Damascus and meeting HTS leader Ahmad al-Sharaa. On the other hand, al-Sharaa has launched a public diplomacy campaign, holding meetings with leaders of various armed groups, including former adversaries such as Jaysh al-Islam, as well as urban and tribal notables from across Syria.

The current diplomatic momentum gained by the new Syrian government highlights its notable success in achieving both internal and external recognition. However, significant challenges and risks persist, fostering a simultaneous sense of hope and uncertainty about the country's future and its implication for regional security.

### **The New Era and the Challenges Ahead**

Regime change has become a reality, leaving little room for continuity in the future. The security sector, governance structures, and political culture in Syria are all set to be defined by entirely new characteristics. While it is too early to predict the ultimate nature of these domains, it is essential to recognize that the current transitional period will have strategic implications in shaping them.

First, HTS's efforts to restructure the security sector hold great significance. While many of its allies have expressed willingness to integrate into the newly established defense ministry, the process is unlikely to be smooth or straightforward. Achieving their ultimate objective – the overthrow of the Assad regime – does not necessarily guarantee the automatic dissolution of these armed groups. Similar to the case in Libya, many of these groups have strong social constituencies, a critical factor that must be carefully considered when planning and implementing demobilization and reintegration programs. The extent of success in stabilizing and reforming the security sector will have a defining impact on Syria's overall stability.

Second, the notion of the Syrian revolution has become dominant in the political narrative. HTS would never have achieved its current power, formed a broader coalition, or gained local acceptance without embracing Syrian revolutionary nationalism. Consequently, this revolutionary nationalism is set to become central to the newly emerging political culture, replacing the Pan-Arab nationalism that once defined the Syrian state's official ideology. While the collapse of Baathist ideology in Syria is largely welcomed, HTS's Islamist background continues to raise concerns, particularly among Arab countries, which fear the potential resurgence of 'political Islam' in the region - this issue is likely to remain debatable.

Third, the question of governance revolves around state-society relations. Establishing a locally endorsed governance model in Syria requires more than eliminating corruption and ensuring efficiency; inclusiveness and participation are equally critical. As HTS seeks to adapt its Salvation Government model to the rest of Syria, the challenges it faces are not merely technocratic but also cultural. Tensions are inevitable. The key question is how the new administration will navigate these tensions and adapt to Syria's diverse social mosaic, particularly in areas likely to encounter significant resistance, such as the ministries of justice and endowments.

Indeed, HTS has extensive experience in building alliances with other armed groups, asserting dominance when necessary and dismantling them when possible. It also has significant experience governing millions of people in Idlib over the years. In essence, it functioned as a de-facto state in Idlib, understanding the dynamic interaction between the ruler and the ruled, securing modest support, and maintaining mass obedience, even during challenging circumstances . <sup>(2)</sup>

However, new, and different challenges loom on the horizon. With the Assad regime now a part of the past, local people are no longer constrained by a choice between the bad and the worse. Their expectations and demands from the ruling authority will grow over time. How the new administration addresses these demands will play a crucial role in either advancing or undermining the reform of state-society relations.

### **Syria is Essential in Rehabilitating Regional Security**

The new administration in Damascus has been signaling positive messages to Syria's neighbors and regional countries, seeking to secure support for gaining recognition and initiating the reconstruction process. It recognizes that holding the country together and moving forward is unattainable without direct regional support and investment, which explains its major efforts to project itself as rational actor capable of restoring the state institutions and principles. Moreover, the new administration recognizes that the Assad regime's failure to engage meaningfully with regional countries proved to be self-destructive, leaving meaningful regional engagement as the only viable path forward.

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(2) Fadi Hanci, *Maintaining Mass Obedience: HTS's Response to the Protests in Idlib*, Omran for Strategic Studies, 09 September 2024, <https://omranstudies.org/index.php/publications/articles/maintaining-mass-obedience-hts%E299%80%80s-response-to-the-protests-in-idlib.html>

Jordan's Foreign Minister, Ayman Safadi, was the first Arab official to visit Damascus and meet with Ahmed al-Sharaa, the leader of the new administration, underscoring Jordan's interest in actively engaging with Syria. Driven by concerns over the potential collapse of state institutions, the resurgence of jihadist groups, the persistent threat of drug trafficking networks, and Israeli expansion in southern Syria, Amman viewed the engagement with the new administration as vital to addressing its security concerns. These current security concerns seem to have relegated HTS's past luggage to a secondary issue, shifting the focus to testing the group's transformation and how its rational rhetoric translates into actions on the ground.

Establishing a stable status quo in southern Syria remains one of Amman's primary national security objectives, however, it should be considered within the context of Syria's broader security architecture. At this stage, Amman should collaborate closely with Cairo to spearhead diplomatic efforts aimed at curbing Israel's violations of its 1974 disengagement agreement with Damascus, a critical security concern for Syria, Jordan, and Egypt.

In terms of regional security, the fall of the regime presents a historic opportunity for regional cooperation to achieve strategic objectives, including permanently ending Iranian influence in Syria, developing an effective strategy to combat terrorism and security threats such as ISIS, al-Qaeda, the PKK, and Captagon networks, and facilitating the return of refugees alongside reconstruction efforts. Achieving these objectives will require close cooperation between Arab countries and Türkiye; such collaboration would not only ensure stability in Syria but also contribute to rehabilitating the regional security order in a manner that benefits all parties involved.



**Achieving these objectives will require close cooperation between Arab countries and Türkiye; such collaboration would not only ensure stability in Syria but also contribute to rehabilitating the regional security order in a manner that benefits all parties involved.**

# Food Security in Jordan:

## Between Resources, Agriculture and Management

### AKEF ZU'BI

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Food security is an eternal concern for humanity. The development of life has led to the crystallization of this security concept in a clearer way, giving it its broad and clear definition due to the profound lessons imposed by wars and pandemic outbreaks. Contemporary interest in food security emerged after the world witnessed two world wars within 25 years in the past century, in light of the problems of drought and desertification that plagued some developing countries, the increase in population, and the improvement in individual income in most countries.

Today, we face climate change and its negative impacts on food. With the establishment of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) after 1945, interest in food security entered the international arena, witnessing a pivotal turning point that enriched the experience and opened the world's eyes to the importance of providing food for all communities, especially during times of emergency crises. The concept of food security has evolved to include not only providing food but also the health aspect of food, its availability in line with the purchasing power of the majority of social groups, and even its free distribution to the poor and most impoverished when necessary.



In Jordan, food security is one of the major challenges facing the country in an environment of limited natural resources and a growing population, which raises questions about how sustainability in food production can be achieved under these circumstances? And what policies are needed to meet food needs in the country?

### **The concept of food security: the administrative pillars for activating the national strategy**

The concept of food security encompasses three basic pillars: first, providing food either locally or through imports; second, ensuring food safety from a health perspective, which is the responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture, the Food and Drug Administration, the Standards and Metrology Organization, and local governance represented by municipalities; third, making food accessible spatially and economically, meaning making it available in places close to consumers and at prices appropriate to their purchasing power.

To ensure the success of food security management plans, there are fundamental conditions that must be met: first, the existence of a strong political will to support food security; second, adopting a national strategy for food security that includes an effective executive plan; third, the necessity of having an institutional and efficient governmental administration managing these plans effectively.

The national food security strategy relies on several main pillars, including the implementation of a package of general and agricultural policies that pave the way for the strategy's implementation. In addition, it requires integrating the food security strategy with resource security strategies such as water, land, and energy. This also includes scientific research, technology transfer, and its localization to ration resource use and increase productivity. Finally, regional and international cooperation is one of the essential factors in strengthening food security, as it contributes to exchanging experiences and technical support.

## **Resource Security and Food Security**

Resource scarcity is a major issue facing nations throughout all times, and resource waste is no less significant than scarcity. When scarcity is coupled with waste, a nation faces an existential challenge, as is the case for many developing countries with dry environments and climates.

Addressing the challenge of resource scarcity and waste requires an unconventional political will that emphasizes full integration between the strategy for food security and strategies for resources such as water, land, and energy. The absence of integration between resource security and food security causes a disruption in development efforts. This absence has always been one of the main reasons for economic growth's failure to enhance food security. If the integration of resource security and food security strategies is essential and necessary, its first lever is the cultivation of a societal culture that is aware of the importance of preserving resources, maintaining their sources, and avoiding waste. Not only that, but investment in scientific research and its alignment with developmental needs, localizing technology, and utilizing the results of scientific research and innovations to enhance resource and food security are also indispensable.

All of the above will not make a tangible difference in the level of success required in terms of resources and food in developing countries without regional and international cooperation and assistance from international institutions in financing and technical support. It is impossible for a developing country like Jordan, which has limited resources and wastes them, with a semi-arid climate, to achieve self-sufficiency in its resources and food alone. Jordan still imports over 40% of its food.

Regional and international cooperation and assistance from international institutions are critical for Jordan and other countries with similar or more difficult conditions, especially as they face a critical juncture with the increasingly apparent effects of climate change. The world is taking rapid steps to address resource and food challenges on multiple fronts, whether through water desalination, soil-free agriculture, expanding the use of solar energy, or pioneering genetically modified foods. Agriculture and food security considering internal and external challenges

Food shortages represent a significant challenge to human societies and nations, especially during wars, refugee crises, and pandemics, when food becomes unavailable, or production and marketing chains are disrupted. For these combined reasons, the concept of “food security” emerged in the second half of the last century and quickly became a focus for most countries. Food security regained prominence with the emergence of climate change, which increased the risks to food production. This has raised global concerns about declining food production, leading advanced nations to turn to genetically modified crops to feed the growing number of hungry mouths worldwide. Equally concerning for global food security is the issue of food politicization, adopted and maintained by major food-producing countries. Added to this are the challenges posed by speculative behavior in international food markets, which threaten food security.

As nations compete for food in international markets amid shortages in food supply, there is an increasing likelihood that some countries may find themselves unable to secure food for purchase, despite having the financial means to do so. Following the global food crisis of 2008, there has been heightened global interest in food security. International institutions (such as the World Bank and IMF) and donor institutions in developed countries, particularly USAID, have softened their opposition to agriculture in developing countries, which they had justified on the basis of resource shortages, especially water.

The world was once again awakened to greater concerns about food shortages due to the conditions brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. Internationally, many countries showed readiness to withhold their traditional exports of certain food products to keep them for domestic use. Nationally, the restriction of labor movement and the need to adhere to social distancing measures made the linkage between the stages of food production and marketing chains nearly impossible, disrupting the delivery of food to markets.

### **The Future of Food Security from the Perspective of Agricultural Resource Management**

No country can achieve self-sufficiency in agricultural food products, not even in the essential and strategic ones (wheat, forage, barley, yellow and white corn, soybeans, green fodder, rice, sugar, vegetable oils, red meat, white meat, fish, table eggs, dairy). Therefore, food security is no longer a

purely national issue, although priority must always be given to national production. This ensures that a country produces as much as possible of food products in which it has a comparative advantage, either in lower production costs, higher quality, or both. Such products can then compete in the local market against imported equivalents and in export markets against competing products.

This concept has led to the emergence of the term “self-reliance in food production,” which means maximizing the production of cost-effective and high-quality food products to meet local consumption needs and for export, generating vital returns for the national economy, including much-needed foreign currency to purchase imported food.

To mitigate the risks of food shortages in international markets, price fluctuations, and supply chain disruptions, a country must store as many strategic food commodities as possible for extended periods—what is referred to as the strategic reserve. This may also require adopting a hedging strategy by increasing reserves during periods of low prices. Additionally, food processing plays a vital role in preserving food and keeping it consumable for long periods.

Another critical aspect is maintaining a social safety net to ensure food availability for the poor and vulnerable groups within the local community. This may require providing food free of charge to the poorest and most fragile populations, including non-citizens living within the country’s borders. Jordan faces significant challenges in this regard due to successive waves of refugees from neighboring Arab countries, such as the large influx from Syria.

## **The most significant challenge to self-reliance in agriculture lies in the scarcity of resources:**

### **1. Water:**

Jordan is one of the world’s most water-scarce countries, with low rainfall as it lies in a semi-arid climatic zone. Water harvesting in concrete dams has not been sufficient to meet the capacity of these dams, while water harvesting in earthen dams remains weak. There are ongoing disputes

over shared external water sources with neighboring countries. Israel diverted the Jordan River's waters in the 1960s, and Syria has claimed 70% of Jordan's share of the Yarmouk River's waters.

Jordan also lacks a clear policy or strategic vision regarding shared groundwater resources with Syria and Saudi Arabia. Consequently, Jordan has continued to rely on groundwater, depleting most of its aquifers, with groundwater accounting for about 65% of its total water needs. This over-reliance has led to overextraction, exceeding 400 million cubic meters annually.

Despite this, Jordan has not taken serious steps toward desalinating Red Sea water—a project overdue by 40 years. It has also been slow to explore deep-water resources, which are more economically viable than transporting desalinated water over 400 kilometers.

## 2. Land:

The availability of land for agriculture is heavily constrained by the lack of water resources. Although all of Jordan's land is suitable for cultivating various crops, the scarcity of water prevents the full utilization of this resource for agricultural purposes.

## Conclusion

Food security poses a significant challenge for all nations, especially those with limited natural resources like Jordan. While global interest in food security continues to grow, the issue of resource scarcity—particularly water and arable land—remains one of the most significant obstacles to achieving food security in the country.

Effective management of these resources requires regional and international cooperation, in addition to governmental policies that focus on improving agricultural production, ensuring food security for the most impoverished segments of society, and guaranteeing the sustainability of resources in the long term.

Therefore, agriculture must remain at the core of Jordanian governmental priorities, with strengthened strategies aimed at developing agricultural resources and achieving sustainable self-reliance.

# Toward Energy Security:

## Strategies for Jordan's Sustainable Future

AHMED AL-SALAYMEH

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Energy consumption is directly linked to access to healthcare, longevity, and education, which are important factors in determining the quality of life. Strong and rapid efforts are required to increase access to modern energy facilities in developing nations. Access to energy is essential for promoting social and economic growth, reducing poverty, and advancing global security.

Jordan is a Middle Eastern country that has encountered several energy-related challenges, such as increasing energy demand, reliance on fossil fuels, and the need to develop sustainable energy sources. The Jordanian government has implemented various initiatives to tackle these challenges and promote energy sustainability. Jordan is attempting its energy challenges through strong political commitment and policy initiatives. The Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources focuses on promoting renewable energy resources and usage to improve efficiency. By implementing strategic frameworks, Jordan aims to enhance energy security and reduce reliance on fossil fuels for sustainable economic growth.

Jordan's energy sector has traditionally relied heavily on imported fossil fuels, making it vulnerable to fluctuating global prices and regional political instability. However, the country is actively pursuing energy diversification, investing substantially in renewable energy sources like solar and wind energy and exploring domestic unconventional gas and liquified natural gas (LNG) imports. This transition presents significant challenges, including removing energy subsidies, integrating intermittent renewable energy sources into the electricity grid, and guaranteeing reliable energy access for a growing population.

Jordan was significantly dependent on Iraqi oil during the mid-20th century. Iraqi oil likely offered a relatively affordable and accessible energy source compared to other options available to Jordan then. The dependence continued until the 1990s and 2000s, with a major shift occurring due to the Arab Gas Pipeline. While Jordan continued to import some Iraqi crude oil, the arrival of natural gas from Egypt significantly altered its energy import profile. The 2003 Iraq War and subsequent instability caused further disruption to this energy supply route. After 2003, Jordan started to import oil from the international market at the market price, which led to the shift towards a more significant reliance on market-priced international oil imports.

The Ongoing regional conflicts and political instability in the Middle East affected the reliability of pipeline gas supplies from Egypt and other traditional sources. The explosions and damage to the Arab Gas Pipeline, which supplied natural gas from Egypt to Jordan, were significant events that severely impacted Jordan's energy sector and the broader economy. It wasn't one massive explosion, but there were multiple attacks and incidents of sabotage over time, culminating in a substantial reduction and eventual near cessation of gas flow to Jordan. This led to the dependence of thermal power plants on more expensive imported oil and heavy fuel to generate electricity instead



of natural gas. This immediately affected electricity costs and the national budget and substantially raised its energy import bill. The losses of the National Electric Power Company (NEPCO) increased by more than 7 billion USD.

The Arab Gas Pipeline explosions and subsequent supply disruptions were a major shock to Jordan's energy and economic systems. It forced a costly and accelerated transition toward greater energy diversification and highlighted the importance of enhancing energy security through reliable and varied sources. The higher fuel costs for electricity generation increased electricity prices for consumers and businesses, impacting various sectors and contributing to inflation. This also affected the competitiveness of industries and overall economic activity.



**Given the country's limited domestic energy resources, Jordan should focus on expanding its renewable energy capacity, particularly solar and wind, to reduce dependence on imported fossil fuels and enhance energy independence.**

The crisis accelerated Jordan's efforts to diversify its energy sources by rapidly investing in renewable energy technologies and exploring alternative gas import options. The higher energy costs resulting from reliance on oil and increased electricity prices directly negatively impacted household budgets and the profitability of industries and businesses, reducing overall economic growth. Also, the increased energy prices contributed significantly to overall inflation.

Over the years, Jordan has faced significant energy challenges because of the lack of energy resources. Moreover, Jordan relies on imports for over 97% of its energy needs, with energy costs accounting for more than 21% of its GDP. The country's energy demand increased over the past 20 years, primarily fueled by fossil sources, while renewable energy consumption remained inactive at around 1% until 2015. However, the share of renewables began to rise in the last ten years, along with the government's strategic frameworks and regulations of the energy market in 2012,

which eliminated fossil fuel subsidies and aligned fuel prices with international markets. The Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Law (REEEL) was passed in 2012. This law was an important step toward promoting renewable energy in Jordan. It provided tax incentives, feed-in tariffs, and facilities for investment in renewable energy, particularly solar and wind energy. In 2024, a new law was issued, and the net metering scheme was replaced with net billing, feed-in tariffs, and other schemes. This shift aimed to promote renewable energy usage, supported by Jordan's rich solar, wind, and oil shale resources. In 2024, approximately 27% of electricity generation came from renewables, underscoring the importance of developing renewable energy sources to achieve energy security in the nation. Currently, Jordan imports around 76% of its energy resources from outside. The local energy resources represent around 24% (14% renewable energy, 8% oil shale, and 2% natural gas), and the cost of energy consumed represents 7.8% of the national GDP.

Jordan can potentially rely on its internal resources to reduce energy imports. With its renewable energy potential, particularly solar and wind power, and substantial oil shale reserves, the country can develop its energy infrastructure. By investing in these resources, Jordan can enhance energy security and promote sustainable economic growth, making the transition toward greater energy independence feasible through government initiatives that support renewable energy development.

The Hamza and Risha gas fields are significant natural gas investments in Jordan and are crucial to the country's energy development. The Hamza gas field in northeastern Jordan aims to enhance local gas production to improve energy security. Meanwhile, the Risha gas field, located near the Jordan-Syria border, is one of the oldest gas fields in the country and has been producing natural gas for several years, supplying local energy needs and supporting electricity generation.

Recent assessments and discoveries in the Hamza and Risha gas fields, along with the growing potential in renewable energy, indicate that Jordan may soon be able to eliminate its energy balance shortage. By employing these hydrocarbon resources and

advancing its renewable energy initiatives, Jordan could enhance its energy production capacity and work towards achieving energy self-sufficiency. This dual approach aims to reduce reliance on energy imports, strengthen the nation's energy security, and support sustainable economic growth.

In 2025, a top policy priority for Jordan regarding energy security should be the diversification of energy sources. Given the country's limited domestic energy resources, Jordan should focus on expanding its renewable energy capacity, particularly solar and wind, to reduce dependence on imported fossil fuels and enhance energy independence. This includes promoting investment in renewable technologies, improving infrastructure, and creating favorable regulatory frameworks to attract investors. Jordan should start with energy storage projects and implement hydropower energy storage in Mujib Dam, which is necessary for the electricity grid's stability and increasing the penetration of renewable energy into the electricity grid. Also, the strategy for Green Hydrogen production in Jordan should be issued so that a road map for green hydrogen projects can be drafted. This will help the country diversify its energy resources and lead to more dependence on the local resources. The promotion of electric mobility should continue, and currently, Jordan leads the Middle East in electric vehicle sales, with over 45% of all vehicles sold being electric in 2023. In the last quarter of 2024, the government of Jordan made sudden amendments to the special tax regulations, including a reduction in the special tax on gasoline vehicles and the imposition of a special tax on electric vehicles, which might lead to a slow in spreading of the electric cars in Jordan.

Additionally, Jordan could prioritize strengthening regional energy cooperation to seek options for gas imports and collaborate on energy projects with neighboring countries. Developing local natural gas resources, such as those in the Hamza and

Risha gas fields, should also be emphasized to utilize domestic assets effectively. Also, looking to the future, Jordan aims for a more significant share of renewable energy in its mix, improved energy efficiency measures across all sectors, and strengthened regional energy cooperation to enhance its energy security and achieve its sustainable development goals. The success of this transition will depend on continued policy support, technological innovation, and effective resource management. By focusing on these strategies, Jordan can improve its energy resilience, promote sustainable development, and support economic growth while addressing environmental concerns.

# Climate Security in Jordan:

## A Strategic Path to Resilience and Regional Leadership

OMAR SHOSHAN

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As Jordan faces a multitude of security challenges, climate change has emerged as a key issue, influencing its long-term stability and national security. From water scarcity to food insecurity, the impact of climate change is not solely environmental but also socio-economic, threatening the livelihoods of millions of Jordanians and exacerbating regional tensions. However, these challenges also present unique opportunities for Jordan to take proactive steps towards building resilience, advancing regional cooperation, and establishing itself as a leader in climate action in the Middle East.

### **The Climate Security Challenge in Jordan**

Jordan, one of the most water-scarce countries in the world, is already grappling with severe environmental challenges. With a per capita water availability of less than 100 cubic meters annually, far below the threshold of 500 cubic meters deemed necessary for sustainability, Jordan's water crisis is acute. Climate change exacerbates this by altering precipitation patterns, causing prolonged droughts, and increasing evaporation

rates. This intensifies the pressure on the country's limited water resources, thus making agriculture, food security, and public health vulnerable.

Moreover, the agricultural sector, which is crucial for rural livelihoods and food security, faces reduced crop yields due to unpredictable weather patterns, rising temperatures, and water scarcity. Extreme weather events, such as heatwaves and flash floods, are becoming more frequent, further destabilizing rural communities that rely on agriculture for survival.

Jordan also faces significant energy security challenges. While the country has made progress in diversifying its energy sources, it remains heavily dependent on fossil fuel imports, making it vulnerable to global market fluctuations. As temperatures rise and extreme weather events increase in frequency, the demand for energy—especially for cooling and irrigation—will only grow, adding further strain to the country's already fragile energy infrastructure.



**The intersection of climate change and displacement has created what Jordan refers to as the “refugee-climate nexus,” a concept that recognizes the intertwined nature of environmental and migration crises.**

However, Jordan's climate vulnerabilities are compounded by its role as a host country to over 1.4 million Syrian refugees who have fled conflict and instability in neighboring Syria. The intersection of climate change and displacement has created what Jordan refers to as the “refugee-climate nexus,” a concept that recognizes the intertwined nature of environmental and migration crises.

### **The Refugee-Climate Nexus: A Jordanian Initiative**

In response to the dual threats of climate change and refugee displacement, Crown Prince Hussein of Jordan has taken the lead in advocating for the recognition of the refugee-climate nexus on the global stage. Head of the Jordanian delegation at

COP29 in Baku, the Crown Prince highlighted the critical need to address the growing convergence of these challenges, both in the MENA region and globally.

During his remarks at COP29, Crown Prince Hussein stated, “Climate change and displacement are no longer future concerns; they are present realities. As a nation with limited resources and a significant refugee population, Jordan faces a unique set of challenges. Our response must be integrated and multi-dimensional, addressing both climate impacts and the needs of displaced populations.”

This initiative calls for greater international cooperation to address the compounded challenges that countries like Jordan face, where climate change exacerbates the existing vulnerabilities of the local population and the strain caused by hosting large numbers of refugees. The Crown Prince’s advocacy has drawn attention to the need for enhanced climate adaptation measures to protect local populations and ensure that refugees can live with dignity and resilience despite environmental stresses.

The refugee-climate nexus underscores the necessity of integrating climate action with refugee support. For Jordan, this means creating solutions that address the needs of both Jordanians and refugees—especially regarding water access, food security, and energy—while mitigating the environmental impacts of displacement.

### **Opportunities for Climate Security in Jordan**

Despite the significant challenges, Jordan has made remarkable strides in developing solutions to enhance its climate resilience and security. These efforts present opportunities not only for domestic sustainability but also for regional leadership.

### **Renewable Energy: A Path to Greater Security**

Jordan has made impressive progress in expanding renewable energy sources, particularly solar and wind energy. With abundant sunlight and favorable wind conditions, the country is well-positioned to harness these resources to meet its



energy demands and reduce its reliance on imported fossil fuels. As Crown Prince Hussein emphasized in Baku, “By transitioning to renewable energy, Jordan is not only securing its energy future but also contributing to regional cooperation and global climate goals.”

These investments in clean energy provide economic opportunities, create jobs, and improve energy security, all while reducing the environmental impact of fossil fuel consumption. Moreover, Jordan has the potential to become a key player in the regional energy market, exporting clean energy to neighboring countries.

### **Water Management and Regional Cooperation**

Given Jordan’s critical water shortage, the country has been pioneering innovative water management techniques. Jordan is a global leader in wastewater reuse, which helps alleviate some of the pressure on its already strained water resources. The country is also working on improving agricultural water efficiency through drip irrigation technologies and water-saving crops. Additionally, Jordan is involved in transboundary water management projects, such as the Red Sea-Dead Sea Water Conveyance Project, which aims to provide drinkable water while preserving the environmental health of the Dead Sea.



**Jordan’s leadership on this front has already begun to influence international policies and funding mechanisms, with an emphasis on sustainable solutions that address both the needs of refugees and the local populations that host them.**

Jordan’s emphasis on regional cooperation in water management is vital for ensuring long-term sustainability. Climate change is expected to exacerbate regional water scarcity, making joint solutions even more critical. By fostering cooperation with neighboring countries on shared water resources, Jordan can play a leading role in advancing climate resilience in the region.

## **Integrating Refugee Needs into Climate Strategies**

The refugee-climate nexus represents both a challenge and an opportunity for Jordan. By integrating climate adaptation measures into refugee management, Jordan demonstrates how climate action can be part of humanitarian solutions. Refugee camps and settlements are vulnerable to climate impacts. Yet, they also provide opportunities to build resilience by implementing green technologies, such as solar-powered energy systems, sustainable water management, and climate-resilient housing.

The refugee-climate nexus calls for an integrated approach to refugee policy, which includes climate adaptation as part of refugee support and resettlement strategies. Jordan's leadership on this front has already begun to influence international policies and funding mechanisms, with an emphasis on sustainable solutions that address both the needs of refugees and the local populations that host them.

## **International Climate Finance and Cooperation**

Jordan's climate security goals are tied to international climate finance. As an emerging economy in the MENA region with limited resources, Jordan relies on financial support from international partners to fund its climate adaptation and mitigation projects. This includes funding for renewable energy projects, water infrastructure, and climate-resilient agriculture.

During his address at COP29, Crown Prince Hussein underscored the importance of global solidarity, stating, "Jordan's challenges are shared by many nations in the region. To effectively address these issues, we need the support of the international community. Climate finance is crucial to ensuring that countries like Jordan can adapt to climate change, build resilience, and foster sustainable development."

Jordan is positioning itself as a leader in climate action and international diplomacy by advocating for increased climate finance and regional cooperation.

## Conclusion

Climate change poses a direct and escalating threat to Jordan's national security, particularly in terms of water scarcity, food security, energy, and the ongoing refugee crisis. However, Jordan is taking proactive steps to address these challenges by embracing renewable energy, improving water management, and integrating climate resilience into its refugee policies. The concept of the refugee-climate nexus championed by Crown Prince Hussein at COP29 in Baku provides a roadmap for how Jordan and other nations can simultaneously address the interconnected challenges of climate change and forced migration.

Through continued international cooperation, innovation, and leadership, Jordan has the opportunity not only to mitigate the impacts of climate change but also to lead the region in creating sustainable solutions for the future. As Crown Prince Hussein stated in Baku, "We must recognize that climate change and displacement are challenges we all face, and we must work together to create a sustainable future for all."

# Shifting Sands:

## Israel's Security Challenges Amidst the Turmoil in the Levant

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The Middle East has long been a region of geopolitical instability, with numerous conflicts and shifting alliances that have direct and indirect consequences for Israel's national security. In recent years, the ongoing war in Gaza, the instability in Lebanon, and the regime change in Syria have all posed significant challenges to Israel's security landscape. These conflicts not only affect Israel's immediate security but also influence its broader regional strategy and its relationships with neighboring countries and international powers.

The security landscape of Israel has been shaped by the actions and movements of various militant groups and the political dynamics of its neighboring states, particularly in Gaza, Lebanon, and Syria. Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon are among the primary threats to Israeli security, with their close ties to Iran further complicating matters. Additionally, the ongoing regime change in Syria has created new challenges and risks for Israel, both immediate and long-term. This essay explores how the potential defeat of Hamas and Hezbollah, alongside the political transformation of Syria, might

affect Israel's national security, considering both opportunities and challenges.

## 1. The Threats Posed by Hamas and Hezbollah

Before delving into the consequences of their defeat, it is essential to understand the threats posed by Hamas and Hezbollah to Israel. Since 2007, Hamas has been the main actor in the conflict with Israel in Gaza. It is deeply committed to its quest for liberation and has launched numerous attacks, including rocket barrages and suicide bombings. Hamas also maintains a robust network of tunnels used for smuggling weapons. In the same vein, Hezbollah, backed by Iran, operates in southern Lebanon with one declared objective: deterring Israel. Since its formation in the 1980s, Hezbollah has been engaged in frequent skirmishes with Israel, particularly along the Lebanese border. It possesses a vast arsenal of rockets and missiles, some of which are capable of striking deep into Israeli territory. Its military strength, enhanced by Iranian support, has grown significantly over the past decade, with a focus on creating a potent threat to Israel's northern border.



**the defeat of Hamas could also create a dangerous political vacuum. Gaza could fall into chaos or be seized by another extremist group, possibly an even more radical faction than Hamas**

Both groups are considered by Israel to be “existential” threats, capable of initiating multi-front conflicts that could significantly harm Israel's infrastructure, military, and civilian populations. The defeat of these groups, however, could alter the strategic calculations for Israeli defense policy and regional relations.

## 2. The Potential Defeat of Hamas: Strategic Implications for Israel

The defeat of Hamas, whether through military action or political transformation, would likely have profound implications for Israeli national security. In the short term, it would reduce the immediate threat posed by rockets, border infiltrations, and terrorist activities emanating from Gaza. This might allow Israel to refocus its military resources and

attention on other strategic threats, particularly from Iran.

Not surprisingly, If Hamas were decisively defeated, Israel could potentially achieve a more stable and secure southern border. This would allow Israel to redirect its security focus from frequent military operations and responses to Gaza-based attacks toward addressing more pressing threats in Syria and Lebanon. It would also enable the Israeli army to reduce the strain on its resources and improve its strategic flexibility.

And yet, the defeat of Hamas could also create a dangerous political vacuum. Gaza could fall into chaos or be seized by another extremist group, possibly an even more radical faction than Hamas, which could further destabilize the region. A failure to establish a stable and moderate Palestinian governance structure could lead to continued violence and militant resurgence, potentially even drawing in external actors like Iran, who might look to exploit the situation to expand their influence.

On a broader level, Hamas' defeat might change the dynamics of Israeli-Palestinian relations. While it could reduce violence from Gaza, it might also undermine the potential for a two-state solution, as the Palestinian territories of the West Bank and Gaza could become even more divided. This division could impede efforts toward peace and further entrench political fragmentation within Palestinian society.

### **3. The Potential Defeat of Hezbollah: Implications for Israel's Northern**

#### **Border**

Hezbollah's defeat, particularly in Lebanon, would likely have a significant impact on Israel's national security. As the most powerful non-state actor in the region, Hezbollah's military capabilities have grown to rival those of regular state armies, thanks to its close alliance with Iran and its access to sophisticated weaponry. Should Hezbollah be defeated, several key changes would likely occur:

First, a weakened or defeated Hezbollah would significantly reduce the immediate threat to Israel's northern border, where Hezbollah has long posed a risk of launching rockets or initiating guerrilla warfare. This would allow Israel to ease some of the defense burdens on its northern cities and military outposts. The Israeli Air Force could focus its efforts on other potential threats in the region, particularly in other fronts.

Second, a regional power shifts may follow. Hezbollah's defeat would not necessarily guarantee long-term peace along Israel's northern border. It is possible that other extremist groups could rise to fill the power vacuum, particularly if Lebanon's government remains weak or fragmented. Further, Hezbollah's defeat could have ripple effects throughout the region, potentially emboldening Israeli adversaries like Iran, who may seek to expand their influence in Iraq, or other parts of the region. This could lead to further instability rather than a peaceful settlement.

Third, Hezbollah's defeat would be a blow to Iran's strategic interests in Lebanon. Hezbollah serves as Iran's primary proxy in the region, facilitating Tehran's ability to project power across the Levant. Losing this proxy could force Iran to look for alternative methods to exert its influence in the region, potentially through other proxies or by further bolstering its military presence in Syria. For Israel, this means that while Hezbollah's defeat might reduce the immediate threat from Lebanon, it could exacerbate the broader challenge of Iran's growing power across the region.

#### **4. The Regime Change in Syria: A Shifting Threat Landscape**

Syria has long been a source of tension for Israel. Syria has been an adversary of Israel since the 1967 Six-Day War. While Syria's civil war has weakened Assad's hold on power and resulted in a fractured state, the shifting balance of power in Syria remains a key concern for Israeli security. One of the most significant threats to Israel's security in Syria is the Iranian military presence. Since the outbreak of the Syrian civil war, Iran has established a strategic foothold in Syria, deploying military advisors, troops, and



even building military bases in the country. These forces have been primarily focused on supporting Assad's regime, but they also represent a direct threat to Israel, which views Iran's presence in Syria as a significant security risk. Iranian entrenchment in Syria could allow Tehran to open new fronts against Israel, including the possibility of using Syrian territory to transfer weapons to Hezbollah or launch direct attacks.

That is being said, the recent fall of Assad's regime may be a game changer for Israel security calculations. Israel views the recent fall of Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria with a mix of caution and strategic calculation. While the Assad regime has long been an adversary, its collapse could create a power vacuum, increasing instability along Israel's northern border. This may allow for the rise of more radical groups or further Iranian influence in Syria, which poses a direct security threat. However, Israel also sees potential opportunities in weakening Iran's foothold in the region. Israel's primary concern remains preventing hostile forces from gaining a stronger presence in Syria, which could escalate tensions and trigger conflict.

## **5. Strategic Responses and Conclusion**

Israel's national security in the face of potential defeats of Hamas and Hezbollah, and the continued uncertainty in Syria, requires careful balancing between military preparedness, intelligence capabilities, and diplomatic engagement. Israel has made significant investments in missile defense systems, such as the Iron Dome and David's Sling, which have mitigated the effects of missile threats from Gaza and Lebanon. Similarly, Israel's intelligence services play a key role in monitoring and neutralizing threats before they escalate into full-blown conflicts.

However, while the defeat of Hamas and Hezbollah might reduce some immediate threats, it is likely that Israel would still face a volatile security environment, particularly

with the ongoing Iranian involvement in the region. The regime change in Syria further complicates Israel's security calculations, as instability in Syria could exacerbate regional threats or open new avenues for proxy warfare against Israel. Ultimately, the defeat of these adversaries would certainly alter the dynamics of Israeli national security, but Israel's future security will depend on its ability to adapt to the changing strategic landscape, whether through enhanced military capabilities, strategic alliances, or diplomatic initiatives to manage the broader regional challenges.



# REPORTS

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# A New Dawn: What Trump and the new Cabinet means for the Middle East and Jordan

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The reelection of President Donald J. Trump back to the White House reenters the U.S. and the world into a rerun of the late 2010s. In harkening back to his first term, the reelection of Trump promises volatility and change for the world, especially in the Middle East. Trump's new cabinet aligns with him in this manner, and their positions indicate that a change in policy towards the Middle East is coming, particularly in relation to Israel and the Palestinian Question. For Jordan, the return of Trump and a new cabinet raises questions pertaining to the compatibility of Jordan and the new Trump Administration, as well as the nature of U.S.-Jordan relations going forward. <sup>(2)</sup>

## **The Republican Trifecta**

President Donald Trump's return to the White House comes under unique and drastic conditions; the Republican party has a trifecta, as it has power over

the Presidency and both upper and lower houses of Congress. In addition, the incoming president also enjoys alignment with six of the nine Supreme Court Justices. The trifecta gives Trump a mandate of power, which is to say that a majority of the electorate supports him and his party concurrently. This is important because it gives Trump the political leeway to prioritize his agenda without worrying about political roadblocks until the midterm elections in 2026. And as Trump assembles his cabinet, this is a factor that has undoubtedly weighed in his decision-making.

## **Cabinet Overview**

The overall doctrine behind the new Trump cabinet is a desire for disruptors and a shift from the current status quo. Many new appointees would not traditionally be considered previously under both Democratic and Republican administrations. However, the picks are all congruent with Trump's foreign policy goals. While each appointee may vary in experience and stature, they support nearly

(2)Quilliam, Neil. 2024. "The return of Donald Trump is bad news for Jordan." Chatham House. <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2024/11/return-donald-trump-bad-news-jordan>.

identical policy priorities in the Middle East. The new vice president-elect, JD Vance, will play a lesser but crucial role in terms of Middle East foreign policy. To ambassadors and advisors, he will serve as a translator of Trump's agenda but put it in more palatable policy items rather than broader populist platitudes. Vance's policies generally follow Trump's, which is to say that they are generally pro-Israel and anti-interventionist in other cases.

The most influential pick, and one that will represent American foreign policy abroad, is Senator Marco Rubio of Florida. Rubio has been known in the past for being a staunch supporter of Israel and has been on record supporting Israel's policy towards Gaza and Hamas. However, while Rubio's ascension to the Secretary of State role is significant, it is part of a broader foreign policy realignment in the new Trump administration. Rubio is still a holdover from the old GOP days, and although he has been historically a war hawk and neoconservative, in recent times, he has revamped his ideological stances to be more compatible with the party of Trump.

Trump's new appointee to the United Nations, Elise Stefanik, follows that same anti-interventionist trend. Besides being extremely pro-Israel, she has repeatedly slammed the UN for being a biased and inefficient organization. In Trump's first term,

he leveraged that the US provides 22% of the UN budget to promote US interests. Expect Stefanik to pursue more of the same, including cuts to specific programs with which the US disagrees.

The appointment of Mike Huckabee as the US Ambassador to Israel is another selection relevant to the Middle East and the one of most interest. Huckabee's appointment to represent the US to Israel should be a matter of great concern for Arab leaders, as well as those affected by instability in the region. Huckabee has been a vocal supporter of Israel and, more importantly, does not believe in Palestinian existence, let alone statehood or rights. He said: "There is no such thing as a West Bank - it's Judea and Samaria. There's no such thing as a settlement. They're communities. They're neighborhoods. They're cities. There's no such thing as an occupation. Reading into the context of Huckabee's statements, it should be obvious that he aims to expand and further support Israel and has no plans to include Palestinians in his political calculus.

### **Trump's Middle East Priorities**

Where does the broader Arab world fall into this context, and what is likely to change with the new administration? For starters, expect a shuffling of the deck regarding relations with the U.S. Arab countries have gotten accustomed to the status quo during

Biden's presidency, even through turbulent times. Expect that not to be the case anymore.

Additionally, the main priority for the Trump administration will be a repeat of the Abraham Accords effort, but on a much larger scale. Saudi Arabia is the next target for a normalization deal and arguably the most important thus far. The kingdom may be enticed into using normalization with Israel as a bargaining chip in an economic deal elsewhere. While Mohammed Bin Salman, at least publicly, has denied reports of such normalization, Trump's return will, at the very least, allow MBS to re-evaluate his current stances at least. At the moment, Saudi Arabia is against normalization until assurances of a Palestinian state are given. But if Trump's cabinet puts its support behind Israel, which it seems likely to do, the complaints of the Saudis may be moot.

Furthermore, another key issue to watch is the relationship between President-elect Trump and President Abdel-Fattah Al-Sisi of Egypt. Egypt seems poised to capitalize on Trump's return, given that relations between Al-Sisi and Biden were strained due to Gaza and their relatively tense personal relationship. Trump, on the other hand, views Al-Sisi as a "very tough man, and he is also a good man, and he's done a fantastic job in Egypt". Given Egypt's role as an intermediary between the Palestinians and

Israelis, Egypt has become an important ally for the United States in the region. In the next four years, Al-Sisi is expected to be particularly close to the new Secretary of State, Rubio, especially regarding diplomatic negotiations around Gaza. Rubio may lean on Al-Sisi's broader Arab connections to push for more significant normalization with Israel, but to what extent that will be successful remains to be seen.

### **Impact on Jordan**

What does all of this chaos and turbulence mean for Jordan? More specifically, what does it mean for relations with its western neighbor, Israel, and the occupied West Bank territories? How will Jordan manage internal dissent while playing the game of international relations with Israel, and its main backer, the U.S.?

First and foremost, the most important matter, and the one that should worry the Hashemite Kingdom the most, is the fate of the West Bank. Rubio, Stefanik, and Huckabee have all expressed their support for the resettlement of the West Bank, irrespective of international law or the fate of the Palestinians. If we assume for a second that those circumstances come to pass, where will West Bank Palestinians go? The answer, according to pro-Israel members of Trump's cabinet, is Jordan. While the idea of relocating Palestinians to Jordan is not a new one, the



chances of it becoming a political reality are higher than ever. Israel has no intention of stopping its aims of incorporating the West Bank and Gaza into its territory, and the new Trump cabinet seems likely to support them in that endeavor.

The current relationship is not likely to change in terms of military support. Jordan remains an important geopolitical ally for the US in the Middle East, and if current conditions continue, it remains in both the US and Jordan's respective interests to keep the status quo. While Trump's first term did bring some changes to the Middle East, the rise of interventionist figures in his cabinet may bode well for the US-Jordan military partnership.

For Jordan, it has been a longstanding red line that Palestinians will not be relocated to Jordan, either temporarily or permanently<sup>(3)</sup>. While the Biden administration seems to concur with that analysis, the same dynamics will not last in the Trump administration<sup>(4)</sup>. Trump is a transactional president,

and regard for "good feelings" or "mutual cooperation" will be discarded. In the future, Jordan must prepare itself to enforce that redline independently, without outside assistance. If Jordan is serious about not admitting Palestinians under any circumstances, then it needs to be ready to pay a diplomatic and political price for that stance. Loss of foreign aid, deterioration of U.S.-Jordan relations, and internal opposition are all possible events for the Kingdom in the future.

## Conclusion

In summary, the new cabinet appointments made by President-elect Trump signal a renewed commitment to Israel and essentially give it a blank check to do as they see fit.

Trump will try to negotiate normalization and peace deals, but only to serve his own personal aim of being seen as a peacemaker. Outside of that, he will be happy to throw the weight of U.S. interests around, irrespective of the consequences for itself or other parties. Palestine is at a crossroads - the events of the next 10 years will determine whether there is a state for the Palestinian people - or not. Trump's cabinet sends a clear message to the Arab world, Israel, and the rest of the globe - there will be change in the Middle East.



**In the future, Jordan must prepare itself to enforce that redline independently, without outside assistance.**

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(3) Muasher, Marwan. 2023. "Jordan's Redline on Admitting Palestinians Is Unlikely to Change." Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. <https://carnegieendowment.org/posts/202311/jordans-redline-on-admitting-palestinians-is-unlikely-to-change?lang=en>.

(4) The US Secretary of State, trans. 2023. "Secretary Antony J. Blinken With Randa Abul Azm of Al-Arabiya," Interview in Cairo, Egypt. <https://www.state.gov/secretary-antony-j-blinken-with-randa-abul-azm-of-al-arabiya/>.

# Balancing Jordanian Interests under Republican Dominance in U.S. Politics

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With January fast approaching, the month will not only usher in the new year but also a new United States government and a significant redirection of U.S. foreign policy with far-reaching implications for Jordan and the Middle East. Emboldened by majorities in both the House of Representatives and the Senate as well as a 63- conservative majority in the Supreme Court, President-elect Donald Trump is already looking to mold Middle East foreign policy to his America First agenda, nominating loyalists to key positions that will affect Jordanian national interests in the process. Trump's reelection comes at a pivotal moment in the region's history given the ongoing war in the Gaza Strip in addition to simmering tensions with Iran. In this contentious space, room remains for Jordan to navigate key concerns, such as regional stability, military support, and

refugee assistance. Thus, Jordan must be careful in navigating egos, interests, and systems of power within the American executive and legislative branches over the next four years in favor of a more peaceful and prosperous region.

## **The War in Gaza**

As Israel continues its war in Gaza with U.S. support, Jordanian security and humanitarian concerns persist. The United States<sup>(2)</sup>' recent November veto of a United Nations (UN) ceasefire deal underscored this fact as King Abdullah II and UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed met in the UAE to discuss further ceasefire efforts to ensure "full protection for civilians in

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(2) "United States vetoes Gaza ceasefire resolution at Security Council," UN News, November 20, 2024, <https://news.un.org/en/story/20241157216/11/>;

"Jordanian king and UAE president discuss ceasefire efforts in Gaza and Lebanon," Arab News, November 20, 2024, <https://arab.news/6s5zj>.

accordance with international humanitarian law.” However, any efforts to secure U.S. support for a ceasefire plan seem futile considering Trump’s nominee for UN ambassador, Congresswoman Elise Stefanik, who has condemned the UN for what she labeled “a disgraceful antisemitic resolution to demand that Israel surrender to barbaric terrorists who seek the destruction of both Israel and America<sup>(3)</sup>.” The president-elect’s choice for ambassador to Israel, former Governor of Arkansas Mike Huckabee, is also an inauspicious sign for the conflict’s tempered resolution. A self-proclaimed Zionist and opponent of the two-state solution, Huckabee has said “there’s really no such thing as a Palestinian” while repeatedly referring to the West Bank as “Judea and Samaria.” <sup>(4)</sup>

Nevertheless, much of Trump’s base remains isolationist, and Trump himself

has changed stances on the conflict before, potentially providing an opening for Jordan and other Arab states in a bid for stability. Chatham House Associate Fellow Dr. Neil Quilliam believes the opportunity could come from Saudi Arabia in the form of a bargain, exchanging steps toward Palestinian statehood for Israel-Saudi normalization under Trump’s Abraham Accords<sup>(5)</sup>. From this perspective, it would be better for Jordan to downplay rhetoric around international norms and institutions, which Trump often rejects, and instead emphasize the positive transactional value of such a deal and the president’s role in shaping it. Though such a move may garner criticism from Jordanians due to the conflict’s overwhelming humanitarian concerns, the maneuver may be necessary to quell concerns over Israeli presence in Gaza.

## Regional Stability and Iran

While Israel’s treatment of Palestinians has threatened Jordanian security interests through geopolitical implications,

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(3) Elise Stefanik, “Stefanik Statement on UN’s Disgraceful Antisemitic Resolution Against Israel,” Elise Stefanik Serving New York’s 21st District, September 23, 2024, <https://stefanik.house.gov/20249/stefanik-statement-on-un-s-disgraceful-antisemitic-resolution-against-israel>.

(4) “Mike Huckabee once said that ‘there’s really no such thing as a Palestinian,’” CNN, November 12, 2024, <https://www.cnn.com/2024/11/politics/mike-huckabee-palestinian-comments-trump-israel-ambassador/index.html>.

(5) Neil Quilliam, “The return of Donald Trump is bad news for Jordan,” Chatham House, November 21, 2024, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2024/11/return-donald-trump-bad-news-jordan>.

Iran has long posed a direct threat to Jordanian security interests, but the future Trump administration's approach to the regional power is cause for alarm. The president-elect's nominees suggest a more confrontational stance toward the Islamic Republic. Secretary of Defense nominee Pete Hegseth has taken Hawkish positions toward Iran, calling the country's regime "evil" after the Trump-ordered assassination of Iranian Quds Force General Qassem Soleimani.<sup>(6)</sup> Likewise, Secretary of State nominee Senator Marco Rubio has expressed belief in "Israel's right to respond disproportionately to stop [Iran]," pledging U.S. support in such actions. "Iran hawks" in such powerful positions, especially given Trump's escalatory assassination of Gen. Soleimani, pose serious challenges to Jordanian priorities of stability and prosperity in the region.

On this point, however, Jordan may be able to underscore the cost of war and leverage Jordan's partnership with the United States

to try to dissuade the president-elect from further escalation. Jordan has historically worked in close cooperation with the United States on issues of regional security and stability, joining the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, sharing intelligence and strategic facilities with the United States, and even downing Iranian drones to protect Jordan's security interests and to maintain sovereignty over Jordanian airspace. This history of cooperation toward stability may not mean much to Trump, but the track record at the very least bolsters Jordanian credibility in discussions of Iran. With this credibility, Jordanian leaders should again consider appealing to isolationist instincts within the Trump coalition to discourage direct confrontation with the Islamic Republic. Such confrontation would invariably affect Jordan's geopolitical standing, so a non-interventionist approach is necessary to protect Jordanian interests in regional stability.

### **Support for the Jordanian Military**

These isolationist tendencies may prove an obstacle to Jordan's financial needs, however, as the United States annually provides large sums of aid for the country's

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(6) AP and TOI Staff, "Trump taps Fox News host who said US must 'stand by strong ally' Israel to head Pentagon," *The Times of Israel*, November 13, 2024, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/trump-taps-fox-news-host-who-said-us-must-stand-by-strong-ally-israel-to-head-pentagon>.

economy, including military and refugee assistance. For instance, the Jordanian government spent around \$2.45 billion on 2023 military expenditures with the United States providing around \$439.2 million in military and related aid<sup>(7)</sup>. At the same time, Jordan has steadily increased military expenditures since 2013 due to heightened security concerns while the United States' overall contribution to these expenditures has decreased. President-elect Trump has historically criticized military partners, such as NATO allies, over funding and reciprocity. Thus, stressing Jordan's increased budgetary self-reliance and the potential for U.S. return on investment could be vital in securing continued U.S. military support for Jordan.

More difficult may be navigating Jordan's relationship with the presumptive Secretary of State Marco Rubio. The secretary of state oversees and coordinates a majority of U.S. foreign assistance, including military aid. With an Iran hawk at the helm of the

U.S. State Department, Jordanian officials will be tasked with a difficult balancing act between securing foreign assistance and encouraging temperance in dealing with Iran. High-level engagement with ranking members of the House Foreign Affairs and Senate Foreign Relations Committees could help drive this balance, as the committees exercise primary jurisdiction over bilateral assistance.

### **Support for Refugees in Jordan**

Similar economic questions arise over U.S. assistance for Jordan's refugee population. The UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which services many of the 2.39 million registered Palestinians living in Jordan, came under fire after allegations of 12 UNRWA employees' involvement in the October 7 Hamas attack on Israel.<sup>(8)</sup> In 2022, the United States provided 29.28 % of UNRWA's annual budget but has since paused aid to the agency.<sup>(9)</sup> The subsequent

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(7) "Jordan Military Expenditure," Trading Economics, November 24, 2024, <https://tradingeconomics.com/jordan/military-expenditure>; Congressional Research Service, Jordan: Background and U.S. Relations, July 1, 2024, 17, <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/mideast/RL33546.pdf>.

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(8) United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, Where We Work, <https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/jordan>.

(9) Congressional Research Service, The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA): Overview and U.S. Funding

Republican opposition to resuming aid and President-elect Trump's previous decision to defund the agency cast doubt on future U.S. support for UNRWA.

However, a 2022 Memorandum of Understanding on Strategic Partnership between the United States and Jordan established \$1.45 billion per year in U.S. support for the Jordanian economy through 2029.<sup>(10)</sup> Intended to aid King Abdullah II's economic reform program, the funding could prove a boon to Jordanian economic development and refugee capacity so long as Trump continues to abide by the agreement. On this issue, the kingdom can leverage its position as a critical host to many of the region's refugees to garner support in both Congress and the White House, playing to Republican immigration priorities and Trump's track record of Islamophobic migration policies, like the

so-called "Muslim ban."

While the aforementioned approach would certainly aid all refugees in Jordan, the kingdom is also home to nearly 620,000 Syrian refugees.<sup>(11)</sup> Though tenuous, an opportunity exists to rectify the underlying cause of Syrian displacement affecting the country. After Syrian opposition forces' rapid advance throughout regime-controlled territory, Bashar al-Assad's government has fallen, but the ramifications remain uncertain. Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), lead organization of the opposition forces, has already addressed some of the potential benefits for Jordan, offering an end to the illicit Captagon trade from Syria and the repatriation of Syrian refugees.

Assessing HTS's sincerity and longevity will take time, but on the issue of Syria, the United States and Jordan are closely aligned. Both countries wish to see the safe return of Syrian refugees to Syria and the amelioration of the resource drain and humanitarian crisis that has been Assad's administration.

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Prohibition, June 14, 2024, 3, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IN/IN12316>.

(10) U.S. Embassy in Jordan, Joint Statement on the Signing of the Bilateral Memorandum of Understanding on Strategic Partnership between the United States and Jordan, September 16, 2022, <https://jo.usembassy.gov/joint-statement-on-the-signing-of-the-bilateral-memorandum-of-understanding-between-the-united-states-jordan>.

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(11) United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Jordan: Operational Data Portal, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/country/jor>.

Furthermore, the fall of the Iranian ally is a blow to Tehran's agenda throughout the region. Jordan should therefore work with Trump administration to share resources, intelligence, and diplomatic influence conducive to promoting regional stability, humane governance, and humanitarian support. Such alignment is rare, and such opportunities are rarer. The kingdom and its allies must not squander this chance for regional peace and stability.

### **Conclusion**

Navigating U.S. politics and the various personalities and priorities at play in the upcoming Republican administration will be crucial to secure Jordanian national

interests. Resolving the current conflict in the region, maintaining stability with Iran, and fulfilling the country's immediate economic priorities all hinge on Jordanian leadership's ability to address emerging American isolationism and anti-immigrant sentiment. While most outcomes for the region look bleak, Jordan maintains a strategic advantage in dealing with the United States, given a long history of shared interests and bilateral cooperation. If engaged adeptly, the United States could prove an asset to the kingdom yet as it continues to chart a path toward peace and stability throughout the region.





# ANALYSIS



# Jordan's Regional Role in the Next Phase: Initial Approach

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The concept of a national or regional role in analysing a country's foreign policy is mated with other key central concepts, such as the concept of "status" and "sources of power," general orientations of foreign policy, concepts of national interests, national security, sources of threat, alliances, and conflicts. Therefore, it is necessary to approach the definition of the "regional role" concept for Jordan based on a broader analytical framework that considers many factors and variables from one angle and international and regional transformations from a second angle. This task requires more than one article but rather an individual effort. It pushes for research and discussion seminars at the level of academics and experts that go beyond media debates and impressionistic discussions to build a broad analytical framework that helps the decision-maker develop different variables and factors and distinguish between them in explicit

matrices—specifically, based on the distinction between causes, contexts, objectives, sources of power and capabilities possessed by the state.

This article does not claim to develop or build the desired analytical framework. However, it is a preliminary contribution to trying to approach scientifically and analytically the definition of the concept of the Jordanian regional role, its determinants, transformations, and historical turns in order to define the possibilities, areas, and spaces that could be a field for this role during the next stage, specifically in 2025, which represents a new stage at the level of "regional policies," due to the fundamental changes witnessed by the last two years in the region, whether concerning the war on Gaza, or The collapse of the Syrian regime, the change of the US administration and the return of Donald Trump to the White House with a new team described as Zionist-right-wing

tendencies and carrying an agenda of goals and policies that may constitute a factor of change in the regime or the regional situation in general and its future.

### Regional role theory. Analytical framework

Kal Holsti (1970) is one of the most prominent theorists of the concept of the national or regional role in the analysis of foreign policy, and presented in a famous article his in-depth perceptions of the factors and variables that represent the source of this role, and the questions posed to define this role, and what interests us here is that he described the national role as the repeated patterns of positions, policies, and commitments made by the government at the level of foreign policy, and distinguished between the perception or perception of the role on the one hand and the performance of the role on the other. There are two critical issues in understanding and analysing the role. The first is related to the perceptions and perceptions held by decision-makers of the state's status, role, and tasks in foreign policy and the status and roles of other countries. The second is the expectations or prescriptions other powers hold towards the state, its role, importance, and place on the regional or international stage.

Such self-perceptions of the decision-maker or the

"external prescriptions" of other actors of this state are necessarily not based on a vacuum or without a strong basis in defining the sources of state power and capabilities, known in international relations, such as natural and technical resources, the size of the state, its geographical location, its military and economic capacity, and the position of social and political forces towards foreign policy. This matrix of variables and factors affecting the delineation and framing of the territorial role of the state can be summarized according to the following scheme (developed by Holsti):

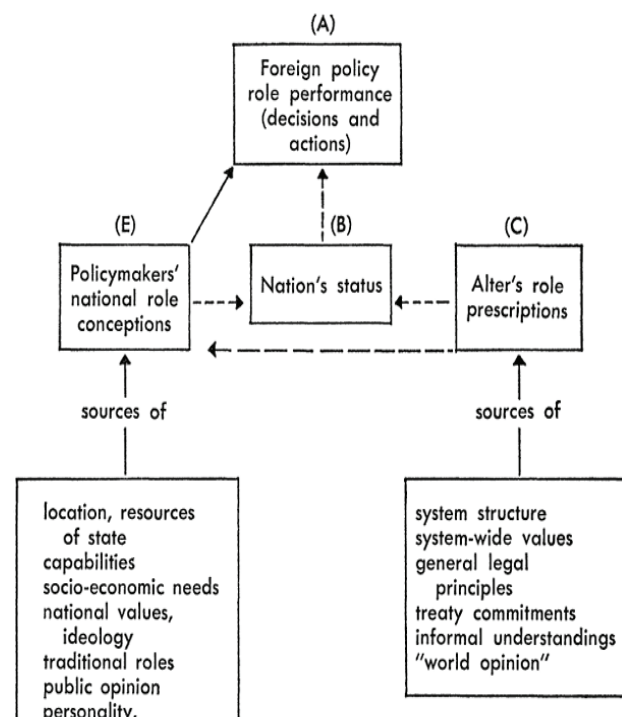


Figure 1: Role Theory and Foreign Policy: National Role Conceptions and Prescriptions as Independent Variable<sup>(2)</sup>.

(2) Holsti, K. J., 'National Role Conceptions in the Study of Foreign Policy', *International Studies Quarterly* 14, no. 3 (September 1970): fig. 2, <https://doi.org/10.23073013584/>.

Holsti distinguished between the eight main roles the state can play at the external level. In contrast, Sofiane Sekhri<sup>(2)</sup> distinguished between 13 types of external roles of the state, including (supporter of freedom, regional leader, independent actor, anti-imperialist, mediator, defender of faith, model, peacemaker, security man, loyal ally, fighter of terrorism, etc.). Perhaps one of the most prominent factors that can be important in defining the regional role in the Jordanian case is the size of the state (large or small) and the state's neighbourhood (stable/turbulent, friend/foe, conflict/cooperation).

Based on the above, several key questions can be included here that help frame and analyse the transformations of Jordan's external-regional role over the past decades and define the parameters of the next stage.

- What are the perceptions of the decision-maker in Jordan (from King Abdullah I to King Abdullah II) of Jordan's strategic position and the parameters of the required external role? Is it the role of a regional leader, an international-regional ally, a mediator, or a neutral role, and is it an expansionist or

defensive role? Is military force the basis of diplomacy? Etc?

- How have international and regional contexts affected Jordan's changing role from the perspective of political decision-makers?
- What are the sources of Jordan's regional role, economic or military power, geostrategic location, political traditions, domestic public opinion, and international or regional alliances?
- What priorities have dominated Jordanian foreign policy over the past decades?

### **Jordan's Regional Role in the Cold War Era**

Going back a little during the Cold War and the rule of King Hussein bin clear policies framed Talal, Jordan's role in the Cold War phase, alliance with the Western world and the United States globally, in the face of the communist pole, which was reflected in the failed attempt to enter (in the Baghdad Pact in 1955), and the collapse of a single party government in the history of the Kingdom from 1956 to 1957 (partly due to differences between the perceptions of King Hussein and the prime minister at the time on international and regional alliances).

At the regional level, the Jordanian role was

(2)Sofiane Sekhri, "The Role Approach as a Theoretical Framework for the Analysis of Foreign Policy in Third World Countries", *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations* 3, no. 10 (2009): 423.

more complex, and here four main dimensions can be interrogated about it: the first is to position itself within the so-called "ring countries" in the military and strategic conflict with Israel and to enter into military conflicts with it (for example, the '67 war, in which Jordan lost a significant part of the Kingdom), and the second is an (unofficial) membership in the club of "Arab conservative kingdoms" on the other hand, within a process of regional polarization, which in some of its dangerous parts moved to domestic politics, and led to Cases of political instability and attempts at regime change in many cases (for example, the attempted military coup in 1957, and the regional dimensions of the September events in 1970), the third dimension is the competition with the Palestinian factions, represented by the Palestine Liberation Organization, for the representation of the West Bank, which is an internal regional issue at the same time, given the nature of the Jordanian demographic composition, and the fourth dimension is the concept of the "peace-seeking state", a role in which secret and public diplomacy was intertwined during previous eras. It reflects a different perception of the Jordanian decision-maker (King Abdullah I and King Hussein bin Talal) of Arab and many local powers during that period.

In the "regional role" theory, many foreign policy theorists, led by K.J. Holsti, assert that the state may not have a single role in the international system. Still, it can play multiple roles, which applies to the "Jordanian model," in which previous regional roles changed



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according to the political stage and the nature of the moment with which Jordan interacted. Still, we can observe a more significant shift since 1978: Egypt signed peace treaties with Israel and formed a Middle Eastern system. New, as Martin Indyk sees (in his important book *The Master of the Game: Henry Kissinger and the Art of Diplomacy in the*

Middle East<sup>(3)</sup>), as the idea of war with Israel no longer exists, as was the case previously, and the attitudes of the surrounding regional countries have changed, and Jordan's alliances have changed significantly, so that "Iraq - Saddam Hussein's regime" during the decade of the eighties became a significant ally, and Jordan entered into a new temporary and limited regional alliance, in 1988, with both Iraq and Egypt (which had just returned from the freeze on Arab relations). with it) and Yemen, but the regional winds soon changed and Jordan paid a heavy price for its position in the first Gulf War (1990-1991), and returned to engage in peace efforts to reach the signing of the peace agreement with Israel in 1994, after the Palestine Liberation Organization signed the Oslo Accords, and after King Hussein signed the decision to disengage from the West Bank in 1988, a decision that officially meant Jordan's abandonment of the West Bank as part of its Kingdom (since the unification decision in year 1950).

The author assumes that the signing of the peace agreement with Israel is a significant shift in

Jordan's perception of its regional role-shifting, which was married in the nineties with the end of bipolarity at the global level, and Iraq's exit from the space of rival regional powers, by intermarrying with a significant change in Jordan's relationship with Iraq, and an implicit end to the concept of "ring countries" and the concept of "strategic depth", which are concepts that formed during the era of the Arab-Israeli conflict important sources in understanding the Jordanian regional role, and this was reflected in Jordan's national economy and strategic position in the region, whether in terms of the relationship with the great powers and the global conflict, as a member of the Western world, or in terms of the tremendous financial support that Jordan received from Iraq and the Gulf states for a double reason, the first is Jordan's geographical location in the Arab-Israeli conflict, and on the northern borders of the Arab Gulf states, and the second is as a "friendly regime" of the Arabian Gulf and a source of trained labour and regional stability from the perspective of those countries.

### **Role Transformations in the Fourth Kingdom**

If we go beyond that stage to the reign of King Abdullah II at the beginning of the new millennium, key concepts, as the author of

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(3) Martin Indyk, *Master of the Game: Henry Kissinger and the Art of Middle East Diplomacy* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2021).

these lines sees them, contributed to shaping the Jordanian decision-makers' perception of the national role regionally and internationally.

**The first concept is "Jordan First" launched** by the new young king, who articulated his vision of a break with his father and grandfather's legacy of thinking about expanding the geography of the Kingdom (King Abdullah I was thinking before his assassination of unity with Syria, King Hussein entered into union with Iraq in 1958, and remained attached for a long time to the West Bank despite the many internal and regional crises associated with this relationship) as an extension of the Hashemite legacy and dreams since the Great Arab Revolt, in contrast to that was a speech The King is clear by focusing on internal and economic files, and on redefining Jordan's strategic interests in the position of establishing a Palestinian state as a Jordanian strategic interest, and the danger is in not establishing it, contrary to his father's perceptions of that, and it can be said that the disengagement from the West Bank was for King Hussein as a dose of bitter medicine that he does not want, and does not reflect his convictions and perceptions, while King Abdullah II has such a decision with a firm strategic and mental conviction.

**The second concept is "combating terrorism,"**

as the king's accession to the throne coincided with the emergence of jihadist organisations in the international, regional, and even Jordanian internal arena, which was reflected in Jordan's involvement in a vital and active role in global and regional efforts to combat terrorism. Jordan redefined its role as a "warrior of terrorism" state. This task has become close (until today) to the Jordanian role, whether in terms of exporting Jordanian security expertise or strengthening the relationship with Western powers in the global war against al-Qaeda and ISIS later, or This was manifested by focusing on Jordan's role as a model in coexistence and religious dialogue. Many internal and external political orientations emerged from these perceptions and perceptions



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of decision-makers (the 2004 Amman Message represented a dedication to this mission as a significant milestone in the Jordanian national role).

**Jordan's** relationship with the United States of America, the European Union, and many Western countries has strengthened. Its role has become a bridge between the Arab world, Islam, and the West, and it has good relations with the various parties. The peace settlement has become a significant pillar of Jordanian diplomacy. Jordan's position in the box of peace-making, settlement, and regional stability, pushing for a peaceful settlement and confronting Israeli and radical policies in the region alike, which seek to shatter hopes. As a reliable ally in the West, Jordan began to see its role as capable of countering the Israeli narrative and promoting Arab-Israeli peace based on the Arab Peace Initiative (launched by Saudi Arabia in 2002, in which Jordan contributed significantly to its formulation and export).

Since 2006, Jordan has been part of the moderate Arab alliance (an informal but practical alliance based on coordination between moderate Arab states: Jordan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Bahrain) in the face of what has become known as

the Iran-led Resistance Alliance (which included Tehran, Damascus, Hezbollah, Shiite forces in the region, and Hamas in the West Bank), and this alliance has been an important source of understanding of the regional role. Jordan is a supporter and friend of Arab countries allied with them vis-à-vis other regional states and meets globally with Western policies, in general, in the region.

Since the Arab Spring 2011, Jordan's relationship with this alliance has become more solid. However, in the face of another new coalition that has emerged on the regional scene, represented by the Turkish-Qatari axis in support of political Islam movements, which means a source of internal and external challenges for the realisation of "decision-making circles" in Amman, and this regional alliance represents a significant milestone of Jordan's regional role until 2018, that is the stage of Donald Trump's arrival to the White House in his first term, which witnessed new transformations at the international and regional levels. As the author assumes, both represent another turning point in defining Jordan's regional role.

Since 2018, several international and regional transformations have combined to represent an

essential and influential variable in Jordanian decision-makers' perceptions of the regional role.

The first variable is the growing conviction of Jordanian decision-makers to move away from the option of the "two-state solution" and the entitlements that this imposes on the definition of Jordanian national security and to get closer to pressing outstanding questions regarding the Jordanian role in the Palestinian issue and the return of the American and Israeli right to talk in closed rooms about the "Jordanian option," on the one hand, and the questions that this imposes on the Jordanian internal equation on the other hand.

Egypt is preoccupied with its internal economic crises, and Iraq and Syria are in the crosshairs of internal crises and at the mercy of regional and international influence, while Saudi Arabia's power has begun to rise significantly with the new Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, which is unusual behaviour by Jordan's southern neighbour, and carries with it the question of redesigning and demarcating the relationship between the two countries on new rules, based on granting larger countries to Saudi Arabia in Leadership of Arab allied countries, which means – On the other hand, the decline

of Jordan's "strategic position" in the ladder of international politics on the one hand, and in the Palestinian file on the other hand, and in an initial attempt (for the writer) to define the perspective of the Jordanian decision of the escalating Saudi role as a complex and complex perspective, on the one hand, Jordan wants a strong regional state that takes the Arab position to the stage of action and sitting at the table, and its vision in many files is compatible with the Jordanian position, and on the other hand, Jordan does not accept – Historically – by accepting the hegemony of an Arab country or its attempt to impose its vision on other countries, Jordan has always viewed its role and strategic position as a model of a moderate and critical state in the region with distinctive policies in alliance with Western countries, a mediator in a peaceful settlement and an actor in regional peace making, and such advantages can decline and wither in light of this new equation with Saudi Arabia.

### **Al-Aqsa flood. New Zigzag Milestones**

The year 2023 and beyond constituted another turning point in regional and even international policies in the region, as for the first time, Iran and the forces of the "resistance alliance" entered a direct war with Israel. The Syrian regime, which represented a prominent geostrategic link in this

alliance, collapsed. The ceasefire in Lebanon is taking place based on Security Council resolution 1701, which includes a significant limitation of Hezbollah's military activity on the northern border. There are Israeli and American intentions supporting it to strike the Axis of resistance. The statements made by the adviser to the Iraqi Prime Minister, Ibrahim al-Sumaidaie, indicate that there are secret negotiations to end the military role of the armed militias at the request of the United States and Israeli threats to target them, in conjunction with Israeli military operations against the Houthis.

These regional developments coincide with Trump's return to the White House and expectations (linked to the nature of his new team) of a more biased American agenda towards Israel and even the Israeli right. There are more significant concerns about an Israeli project to expand settlements further in the West Bank, to restore momentum to the concept of "regional peace" that is based on the integration of Israel into the region and its regional alliances, and push for Saudi Arabia to sign normalisation and cooperation agreements with Israel.

These shifts in Jordan's regional role in 2025 are significant and serious because they affect several international and regional policies.

First of all, at the level of the Palestinian cause, as it represents one of the most important pillars of the Jordanian regional role because of the historical and strategic dimensions of this issue related to the Jordanian geostrategic location, and it is also in contact with a set of basic issues and values, such as refugees and the right of return, the issue of Jerusalem and the Hashemite patronage and the symbolism and burden that this carries at the same time, borders and geography, the Jordanian internal equation, the question of political identity and social components, and finally Jordan's regional position, of which the Palestinian cause has historically been a part.

At the level of regional policies, it is noted that Jordan adheres to its Arab alliances and plays a major role in coordinating the Arab position. – At the same time, it takes a secondary role in many files on the "political stage" and steps aside, leaving room for other Arab positions to be at the forefront, as is the case in the file of the war on Gaza, despite the active role of Jordanian diplomacy in the face of Israeli aggression, Jordan was not a party to the initiatives of settlement and mediation between Hamas and Israel. It can be said here that Jordan prefers the role of "loyal ally" to the role of mediation in many foreign

files.

Jordan's regional role will be at stake in engaging in regional peace projects and the Abraham Economic Agreements, which will often be one of the keys to the new regional order, with the administration of US President Donald Trump, if Jordan's choice is to adhere to its conservative position on these projects and regional consensus, this means "marginalizing Jordan" and weakening its regional presence, and perhaps being subjected to economic and political pressure, but from another angle, agreeing to engage in these projects will marginalize and weaken the status of the Palestinian cause, and perhaps The deterioration of the situation in the West Bank, whether due to settlement or annexation of areas of the West Bank, and the fear of the Israeli right's agenda in Jerusalem and its Judaization, all of which creates severe internal political pressure on the political system from one angle, and limits the importance of Jordan and its regional status from a second angle, because of the significance of the Palestinian cause in the value of Jordanian diplomacy and Jordan's regional position.

Regarding relations with Syria and Iraq, Jordan will have clear choices: either settle for a secondary role as part of a regional axis or take the initiative to move closer economically and

politically and take diplomatic and political steps that give Jordan a greater role in the relationship with these governments.

On the other hand, Jordan's enjoyment of a state of political stability amid a turbulent regional environment gives it an important advantage at the regional level: it has become a regional centre for many international and regional institutions. It has military cooperation and military bases



**These shifts in Jordan's regional role in 2025 are significant and serious because they affect several international and regional policies.**

for many Western countries. There are ideas and plans to develop some industries and military logistics services to serve these institutions and bases, including the features of a new regional role and the various economic opportunities it provides.

### **Conclusion: future questions**

Returning to the patterns of Jordanian foreign policy, it is noted that expansionist ideas, in their multiple forms, have declined among the

Jordanian decision-makers since the stage of the emirate to the fourth Kingdom. There is apparent stability in the definition of political geography and framing of attempts to unite with other Arab countries; in the stage of Prince Abdullah I, the ambition of geopolitical expansion was evident in his perceptions of the Jordanian regional role, then during the reign of King Hussein, he retreated towards the dialectic of the relationship with the West Bank, and then in the political withdrawal from the file of the relationship with the West Bank. During the reign of King Abdullah II, the Jordan First slogan was an important framework for expressing his ideas and projects.

During the Syrian war from one angle, and the American offers of a Jordanian role in the West Bank from a second angle, it was clear that there was a conservative tendency towards expansion among the Jordanian "decision-maker", and Jordan clearly defined its strategic interests within its current national-geographical borders, but this does not negate that there are new conditions in a turbulent regional environment that may push the decision-maker to review this concept again, if we impose a state of chaos and division in Syria, if the peaceful transition process fails, or occurs Jordan, due to its reputation for political stability and its network of international and regional alliances,

can have roles related to what is happening in the neighbourhood, and such a scenario is necessarily linked to regional scenarios.

Jordan's regional role is organically linked to Jordan's international alliances. It is clear that since the establishment of the Kingdom, Jordan has chosen to align itself with the Western camp, whether the relationship with Britain in the emirate stage or the United States since the Cold War until today. A remarkable development can be observed that strengthened Jordan's relationship with many European countries. It invests in these relations with countries such as Germany, Britain, Scandinavia, Spain, Japan, etc. Jordan can be a regional centre for many international and regional institutions.

Based on the above, one of Jordan's important roles in the coming period is the logistical, service, and technological aspects at the level of the geographical neighbourhood, especially in the field of reconstruction in Syria and economic relations with Iraq, and engagement in the field of relief and charitable work at the regional level.

This may lead us to an important question related to Jordanian soft power. Soft Power is one of the pillars of this model, historically represented by the famous phrase launched by King Hussein,

"People are our most precious asset," and it is based on investment in education and human resources. Moreover, some Arab politicians called Jordan the "Harvard of the Arab East," and although skilled Jordanian labour is still a registered mark of Jordan, especially in the Gulf countries, the development that occurs there and the tendency of governments there to develop university education and human development pushes Jordan to one of these critical trends is Jordan's reputation in the field of regional stability, tolerance, pluralism, experience in the field of refugees, geographical location in the field of reconstruction, and the provision of services to neighbouring countries, such as electrical interconnection, land and maritime transport sector, and medical services. Etc.

One of the main questions in the coming stage is the formulation of Jordan's relationship with Saudi Arabia, which, as we said, is characterized by a complex and complex nature, and there seems to be great American and European interest in the role of Saudi Arabia as a regional power in the next stage, and Jordan must determine its position in this field; the role of a close ally with

Saudi Arabia, or the neutral or the balancer in its relationship with other regional powers, but it is necessary to note that the Jordanian regional role has historically been associated with a network of alliances and the concept of "big brother", whether with Gamal Abdel Nasser, despite the stages of discord and conflict with him, and with Saddam Hussein, which is the question posed in the nature of the relationship and its features with Saudi Arabia in the coming stage, which in turn changed its vision of itself and the world and its role as a hegemonic regional power and not only an Arab country supporting other Arab countries.

# Debating Jordan's Strategy Approach: Documenting Security or Embracing Flexibility?

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***“Historically ‘strategy’ has been a reality, if not an articulated concept” Beatrice Heuser.***

A vigorous debate is currently unfolding among Jordan's security researchers and political circles regarding the pressing need for a comprehensive national strategic document. This proposed document seeks to redefine and enhance the concept of Jordan's national security in a cohesive manner. It will identify the threats and challenges facing Jordan, prioritise national concerns, and organise these issues by their significance. Furthermore, it will outline appropriate defence mechanisms and strategies to address these challenges using the state's available resources effectively. Advocates of this strategic document suggest that it should be drafted and published periodically, potentially every two years, with its content incorporated into a feedback process for ongoing strategy evaluation.

However, these calls may resonate with Jordanian intellectuals and political elites, as they offer a more explicit framework for understanding security, facilitate the tracking and evaluation of Jordan's security priorities, and enhance research and policy analysis. However, while this perspective is compelling, it tends to present a reductionist view of Jordan's security dynamics, foreign policy, and the notable absence of a written national security



**This absence does not suggest that strategic planning is lacking in Jordan; instead, it indicates that these strategies often manifest as practical measures, some of which are articulated in official discourse as national constants.**



strategy document. This absence does not suggest that strategic planning is lacking in Jordan; instead, it indicates that these strategies often manifest as practical measures, some of which are articulated in official discourse as national constants. Therefore, this article explores the existence of a national strategic document for Jordan, its relevance to the current context, and the central dynamic features of Jordan's security and foreign policy strategy.

### **From Written Plans to Practical Strategies**

It is essential to underscore that Jordan has carefully considered security issues since its inception rather than acting randomly in shaping its foreign policy. Although a formal written document outlining a national strategy does not exist, the effective execution of this strategy is evident in Jordan's foreign policy and defence planning. For much of the country's century-long history, these practices have enabled Jordan to navigate many of the complexities associated with the Middle East and its surrounding environment in the modern era.

Beginning from the Arab-Israeli wars to the polarisation of the Nasser era, through the ramifications of the Arab Spring and the rise of terrorism and extremism during the Gulf crisis from 2017 to 2021, and extending to the transformations of the war on Gaza in 2023. Thus, Jordan has

consistently employed a practical approach that reflects an advanced level of rationality in the decision-making process and has been effective in addressing the challenges faced by the region, fostering a sense of security and stability. In this context, rationality refers to a political model that relies on logical calculations to maximise gains while minimising or avoiding losses. Central to this approach is the notion that profit is essential for advancing national interests, particularly concerning national security, which reflects the application of the Rational Actor Mode.<sup>(2)</sup>

In this respect, the experiences of other states demonstrate that they often develop strategic documents through various approaches. These can range from comprehensive written strategies published consistently to partially published strategies or even those that remain confidential. It is noteworthy that the definition of security commonly appears in strategic documents issued by defence institutions worldwide, including the United States<sup>(3)</sup> and others. Creating such documents has become a bureaucratic norm and is underpinned by multiple justifications in countries that engage in this

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(2) Allison, Graham T. *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*. 2nd ed. New York: Longman, 1999.

(3) The White House. 2022. *National Security Strategy*, October 2022. Washington, DC: The White House. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/202210//Biden-Harris-Administrations-National-Security-Strategy-10.2022.pdf>.



type of security-related framework.

On the other hand, some states adopted a model of partial publication for their strategic documents, exemplified by the French "White Paper" from 2008 and 2012, which is hidden due to its articulated use of military force as a strategic tool.<sup>(4)</sup> Conversely, some nations draft national security strategic documents and develop them without public disclosure, keeping the information relatively secret and limited in scope, such as the "Red Book" issued by the Turkish National Security Council.<sup>(5)</sup> Overall, there is significant variation among countries regarding the formulation of these national strategic documents, with approaches ranging from complete publication to partial or non-disclosure.

Thus, the historical tracking concluded that a few decision-makers articulated abstract strategies before the sixteenth century; decisions about ends, means, and ways can be documented since Antiquity.<sup>(6)</sup>

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(4) de Durand, Étienne. 2015. «Planification de défense : la belle Arlésienne ?» In *Guerre et stratégie: Approches, concepts*, edited by Stéphane Taillat, Joseph Henrotin, and Olivier Schmitt, 479–498. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

(5) Daily Sabah, «'Red Book,' Türkiye's Top-Secret Policy Document, Set to Get Update,' Daily Sabah, February 28, 2024, <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/red-book-turkiyes-top-secret-policy-document-set-to-get-update/news>.

(6) Heuser, Beatrice. «The History of the Practice of Strategy from Antiquity to Napoleon.» In *Strategy in the Contemporary World*. 6th ed, edited by John Baylis, James

The Jordanian strategy can be described as practical and unwritten, functioning more as a series of practices than as a formal document. This approach is executed by key decision-making institutions, most notably the National Security Council, which was established in 2022. The Council is tasked with addressing critical issues related to security, defence, and foreign policy. Chaired by the King, it comprises the Prime Minister, the Minister of Defence, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of the Interior, the Military Chief, the Director of the General Intelligence Department, and the Director of Public Security. Additionally, two members are appointed by the King in accordance with the Jordanian Constitution<sup>(7)</sup> The leadership framework established within Jordan, along with its proven historical strategies, enhances confidence in the nation's capability to address and manage security challenges effectively. This duality of structure and past success reinforces trust in Jordan's resilience and adaptive capacities in the face of evolving threats.

Therefore, the King, or his representative, convenes the National Security Council, making decisions for

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J. Wirtz, and Jeannie L. Johnson. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019. doi:10.1093/hepl/9780192845719.003.0002.

(7) The Jordan Times, «Cabinet Approves 2022 Bylaw of National Security Council,' April 10, 2022, <https://jordantimes.com/news/local/cabinet-approves-2022-bylaw-national-security-council>.

most of its members. This Council is structured to incorporate all the key figures in the state involved in security affairs and the overarching policies of the state, both domestically and internationally. Since its inception, the Council has closely monitored significant developments, with its first session formed in August 2024. Where the latest session occurred following the fall of Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria in December 2024, demonstrating a commitment to staying abreast of significant events.

This raises the question: Is this Council sufficient to produce a Jordanian strategic document? The answer requires an examination of the activities preceding this Council, particularly before 2022. As previously stated, strategic practice in Jordan has strong roots and encompasses strategic planning that typically remains unpublished. Therefore, the Jordanian strategy cannot be solely defined by this Council; it also reflects a deep-seated practice with its origins dating back to 1921.

### **Amidst Appealing Rhetoric and Practical Realities**

The discussion surrounding the Jordanian National Security Strategy encompasses a range of perspectives from political, intellectual, and research communities. Proponents argue for the necessity of a comprehensive national strategic document,

which they believe would align Jordan's institutions and society toward shared goals that prioritise the state's security and interests, as follows:

1. **Defining the National Vision and Objectives:** A strategic document offers a structured framework for articulating a future vision of national security, outlining core objectives that guide policy and resource allocation. This clarity enhances the effectiveness of initiatives aimed at achieving these goals.
2. **Responding to Challenges and Threats:** Given the evolving regional and international landscape characterised by security challenges, a strategic document serves as a tool for identifying and assessing risks. These risks may include geopolitical changes, organised crime, terrorism, economic



**Jordan has consistently employed a practical approach that reflects an advanced level of rationality in the decision-making process.**

struggles, and natural disasters. Consequently, it facilitates the development of proactive plans that align with overarching strategies to mitigate these threats.

3. **Coordination Among National Institutions:** A unified strategic framework fosters coordination among various security agencies and governmental bodies, promoting coherence and synergy in their roles. This minimises redundancies and optimises the use of resources.

4. **Enhancing Legitimacy and Transparency:** An official document fortifies institutional legitimacy by informing citizens of national priorities and plans. This transparency can foster trust between the government and the populace, which is crucial for effective governance.

5. **Ensuring Sustainability and Continuity:** A formal written strategy is vital in maintaining the consistency of security policies, irrespective of shifts in government or leadership. This consistency upholds stability and ensures that strategic security priorities are preserved over time.

6. **Decision Support:** The strategic document acts as a vital reference point for decision-making, grounding choices in thorough research and analysis. This reliance helps to prevent hasty or ill-considered responses to security issues.

Collectively, these arguments underpin the calls

for the creation and dissemination of a Jordanian National Security Strategy, highlighting its potential to bolster national cohesion and resilience in the face of contemporary challenges.

### **Practical Realities in Jordan's National Strategy**

Conversely, the practical realities of foreign policy and security in Jordan indicate that the publication of such a document imposes considerable restrictions on Jordan's ability to manoeuvre. This is particularly evident when considering the complexities of the regional and international landscape in which Jordan operates,<sup>(8)</sup> which can impede the grand strategies of even the most powerful states.

However, many security theorists critique the strategic documents published by states, claiming that they often contain exaggerated narratives. These documents frequently reflect particular



**The Jordanian strategy can be described as practical and unwritten, functioning more as a series of practices than as a formal document.**

(8) Brands, Hal. *What Good Is Grand Strategy? Power and Purpose in American Statecraft from Harry S. Truman to George W. Bush*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014. p. 14.

political discourse patterns and may lack security measures and intellectual rigour.

Typically, states that periodically issue such strategic documents exhibit specific characteristics, most notably:

(1) Political power dynamics often involve a rotation of leadership and a continuous evaluation of how well each government implements its strategic objectives. This process is particularly evident in countries like the United States, where strategies may also be utilised as electoral propaganda. The formulation of these strategies typically culminates in a doctrine that is presented to the President-elect,<sup>(9)</sup> outlining the key priorities and approaches for the incoming administration. This structured framework not only guides governance but also influences public perception and voter support during electoral cycles

(2) The dissemination of strategic threat messages<sup>(10)</sup> to the parties specified in the documents, which is

(9) Brands, H. W. "Presidential Doctrines: An Introduction." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (2006): 1–4. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27552741>.

(10) See, for example, China's inclusion in the NATO document for 2022 (Strategic Concept), NATO. NATO 2022 Strategic Concept. Brussels: North Atlantic Treaty Organization, June 29, 2022. <https://www.act.nato.int/wp-content/uploads/2023290622-/05/strategic->

particularly critical when addressing other nations identified within these strategic frameworks as potential threats or strategic challenges.

(3) Developing a significant strategy depends on establishing sustainable national capabilities over extended periods. While substantial strategies are generally linked to larger countries, strategic theorists continue to debate the feasibility of effective strategies for smaller states. Geopolitical constraints and resource limitations primarily drive this discussion.

(4) Attracting allies and identifying collective strategies are crucial for success, which can be accomplished through clear alliances and coalitions. A prime example is the U.S. National Security Strategy, referred to as the Biden Doctrine (2022),<sup>(11)</sup> which details the administration's plans for advancing national interests. It underscores the significance of alliances and partnerships in addressing global challenges.

(5) Justifying military or defence spending is often done through government reports, such as the UK

(11) United States Government. «National Security Strategy». Washington, D.C.: The White House, October 2022. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/202210//Biden-Harris-Administrations-National-Security-Strategy-10.2022.pdf>. And, McCallion, Christopher. "Grand Strategy: Alliances." *Defense Priorities*, September 17, 2024. <https://www.defensepriorities.org/explainers/grand-strategy-alliances>.

Defence and Security Strategic Review (SDSR) 2015.<sup>(12)</sup>

This document outlines the UK's defence strategy by assessing potential threats and detailing the necessary capabilities to address them. It emphasises the importance of investing in equipment and support, with planned expenditures totalling up to £178 billion through 2025, to ensure national security is maintained.

In this context, practical analysis reveals that none of the above characteristics accurately define the Jordanian situation. Where Jordan is not a large state with a comprehensive long-term strategy; instead, it is a small country situated<sup>(13)</sup> in a complex region with limited resources. The authority primarily directs the key policies of the state, and the government typically does not play a significant role in strategic decision-making. Regarding alliances and collective policies, Jordan lacks the necessary Arab depth to pursue complementary strategies with its allies, particularly as their

priorities evolve and the regional dynamics shift. Lastly, Jordan's defence spending and militarisation index reflect the regional tension and instability surrounding the country. Amman responds to these challenges by enhancing its capabilities through a strategy of self-reliance,<sup>(14)</sup> which includes defensive measures and political initiatives marked by positive diplomatic engagement and openness to various parties, alongside effectively managing Jordan's geopolitical position.

Discussing the Jordanian situation in some detail, the most essential features of Jordan's practical strategy are as follows:

### **1-Short-term strategy:**

For a small state<sup>(15)</sup> like Jordan, developing a comprehensive long-term strategy is complex and often considered nearly impossible. Instead, Jordan is adopting an innovative approach that combines effective management of its geopolitical position with practical, flexible diplomacy and soft power.

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(12) United Kingdom. "National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015: A Secure and Prosperous United Kingdom". London: HM Government, November 2015.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-security-strategy-and-strategic-defence-and-security-review-2015> .

(13) Ortmann, Stefanie, and Nick Whittaker. «Geopolitics and Grand Strategy.» In *Strategy in the Contemporary World*. 6th ed, edited by John Baylis, James J. Wirtz, and Jeannie L. Johnson. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019. Politics Trove, 2019. p.321322-.

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(14) Waltz, Kenneth N. *Theory of International Politics*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979. pp. 9193-. And: Mearsheimer, John J. *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2001. pp. 5054-.

(15) Wivel, Anders, "The Grand Strategies of Small States", in Thierry Balzacq, and Ronald R. Krebs (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Grand Strategy* (2021; online edn, Oxford Academic, 8 Sept. 2021), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198840299.013.32>.



**The publication of such a document imposes considerable restrictions on Jordan's ability to manoeuvre.**

This approach aims to create a vision of a politically rational state while formulating defence strategies to secure Jordan's borders.

Thus, Jordan practically adheres to a strategy that can be classified as an "event-by-event" strategy, which involves independently determining the positioning, role, and response to each event without intertwining different strategic files in foreign policy or security matters. A notable example of this hybrid strategy is Jordan's response to illicit drug networks in Syria, as highlighted in a recent study for the author published by the Policy and Society Institute.<sup>(16)</sup> This research emphasises the importance of employing diplomatic options alongside Jordan's security measures to address a significant threat that has posed considerable challenges to the country since 2020.

## 2- Strategic Flexibility:

This concept is best illustrated through agile manoeuvres. In this regard, it is crucial to monitor Jordan's foreign actions, particularly within what is often termed the "grey zone" of the Middle East. A key example of this is the introduction of the "Trump peace deal" during the 2018-2019<sup>(17)</sup> period. However, Jordan underscores the significance of national priorities, concentrating on specific and well-defined issues. Chief among these is the Palestinian question,<sup>(18)</sup> considered a vital national interest. Furthermore, Jordan is committed to the establishment of a Palestinian state along the June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem designated as its capital. However, there is currently no formal document that articulates this stance. Eventually, it is essential to recognise that developing a national security strategy document categorises security threats and delineates foreign policy priorities. This shift imposes more significant constraints on the latitude of foreign policy, particularly in light of the region's volatility and ever-changing dynamics.

(17) Al Sharif, Osama. «Why Jordan Was So Quick to Reject Trump's Peace Plan.» Middle East Institute, February 3, 2020. Accessed January 2, 2025. <https://www.mei.edu/publications/why-jordan-was-so-quick-reject-trumps-peace-plan>.

(18) Sawalha, Abdullah. «Jordan's Balancing Act: Overcoming the Challenges Posed by Trump's 'Deal of the Century'.» The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, February 12, 2020. <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/jordans-balancing-act-overcoming-challenges-posed-trumps-deal-century>.

(16) Jaber, Hasan, "The Northern War: Drug Networks in Syria, Jordan's Response and Regional Options", Politics and Society Institute & Omran Centre for Strategic Studies, 18. Dec. 2024, link: <https://wp.me/pdStuF-2KS>



**Jordan practically adheres to a strategy that can be classified as an "event-by-event" strategy.**

### **3- Absence of external alliances and strategic depth:**

Regarding collective security and international alliances, Jordan maintains strategic relationships with key players in the Middle East and the broader international political landscape. However, these relationships do not equate to formal inclusion in alliances or coalitions. Jordan's participation in temporary collaborations, such as the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS<sup>(19)</sup> or operations like Decisive Storm<sup>(20)</sup> underscores this point. Thus, Jordan's prevailing pattern of international cooperation revolves around strong partnerships, likely due to differing

(19) U.S. Department of State. «Members – The Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS». <https://www.state.gov/the-global-coalition-to-defeat-isis-partners/#nea>.

(20) Al Arabiya News. «Your Guide to 'Operation Decisive Storm.'» March 26, 2015. <https://english.alarabiya.net/perspective/features/201526/03//Allies-back-Saudi-led-Decisive-Storm-op-in-Yemen-with-fighter-jets>.

priorities between Jordan and other involved parties. For instance, the centrality of the Palestinian issue in Jordan's strategic planning and national interests sets it apart from other Arab or regional states, which do not prioritise the Palestinian issue to the same extent. This discrepancy complicates the establishment of deep alliances, which, if formed, could provide Jordan with vital strategic depth.

### **4- Constructive Ambiguity:**

Jordan employs a strategy of constructive ambiguity with regional parties to further its national interests. For instance, in its intricate relationship with Israel and Iran, Jordan's deliberate strategic ambiguity allows for greater flexibility for decision-makers, particularly in avoiding political confrontations with other parties. While Jordan opposes Iran and its regional ambitions, it refrains from direct hostility. Instead, Jordan maintains open channels for communication and exploration of potential understandings. Notably, the Jordanian foreign minister engaged with his Iranian counterpart more than three times in 2024, including a significant visit to Tehran.<sup>(21)</sup>

(21) The Jordan Times, «Safadi Concludes Official Visit to Iran, Delivers Message from King to President Pezeshkian», August 4, 2024, <https://jordantimes.com/news/local/safadi-concludes-official-visit-iran-delivers-message-king-president-pezeshkian>.



**5- Adaptability:** Adjusting to the regional dynamics surrounding Jordan is crucial for safeguarding and advancing Jordanian national interests. The ability to exhibit a high degree of flexibility is particularly evident in the context of the Syrian situation and its developments following the fall of the Syrian regime on December 8, 2024. Key players in the evolving Syrian crisis convened in the Jordanian city of Aqaba, which was soon followed by a visit from the Jordanian Foreign Minister to Damascus—the first visit by an Arab official to meet with the leadership of the transitional administration in Syria.<sup>(22)</sup> This swift response from Jordan, occurring just 15 days after the regime's collapse, underscores an impressive capacity to adapt and engage with unfolding events, thereby reinforcing Jordan's role in the emerging Syrian landscape.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the growing calls for creating and issuing a Jordanian national security document reflect a genuine desire to frame and define national security and political priorities more clearly. However, the Jordan state's practical and strategic realities demonstrate a more flexible and agile approach to

addressing challenges and threats. Jordan's strategy is shaped by realistic and rational practices and traditions that navigate foreign policy and determine national security, relying heavily on the effectiveness of diplomatic manoeuvres and the capacity for swift responses to regional developments in the Middle East and international politics.

While some may view the lack of a written strategic document as a drawback, Jordan has adeptly utilised practical strategies to confront threats and navigate constant change. Activating strategic institutions like the National Security Council also plays a key role in coordinating security entities and implementing the state's overarching policies. In this context, Jordan's national priorities remain adaptable, allowing for responses that align with the unpredictable regional landscape.

The crucial question that lingers is: Are these practical strategies for Jordan's national security sufficient to ensure security, stability, and sustainability? The answer hinges on Jordan's ability to balance established national constants with strategic flexibility amid rapid geopolitical shifts. Regardless, Jordan is on a strategic path that seeks to harmonise domestic and international challenges while enhancing its capacity to preserve national security and its vital interests.

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(22) The Jordan Times. «Safadi Holds Talks with Syria's New Leader, Reaffirms Support to Rebuilding 'Free, Sovereign' Syria.» December 23, 2024. <https://jordantimes.com/news/local/safadi-holds-talks-syrias-new-leader-reaffirms-support-rebuilding-free-sovereign-syria>.



# Jordanian National Security and Identity: Between Regional Chaos and Internal Complexities

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Jordan has never been able to craft its policies without dealing with the mix of opportunities and risks imposed by its geography. At the region's crossroads, Jordan's location offers significant opportunities to play a pivotal role in shaping regional balances and capitalize economically by positioning itself as a hub for trade and land transport. However, in times of upheaval and competing expansionist ambitions in its vicinity, this geography can quickly turn into a political and security curse.

One of the most striking recent manifestations of this geographical curse is the past five-plus years, during which Iran and its armed factions expanded their

influence from Iraq to central Syria and Jordan's northern borders. Simultaneously, far-right elements have risen to dominance within Israel's government, posing challenges along Jordan's western border. Amid the region's widespread chaos, Jordan managed to navigate the refugee crisis and sometimes even turn it into an advantage. Yet, the challenges stemming from its turbulent surroundings have gone far beyond the influx of refugees. The wars that displaced hundreds of thousands of Syrians and Iraqis to Jordan over the past two decades not only disrupted major trade routes and import-export markets but also evolved into a security crisis. This began with drug-smuggling militias along the northern borders and was later followed by

political-military groups that viewed Jordan as an obstacle to their “jihad” against the Israeli occupation.

Meanwhile, the challenges posed by the Israeli occupation have been no less intense, demonstrating Israel’s longstanding expertise in creating pressure on Jordan’s political system. Calls for the expulsion of Palestinians from the West Bank and the annexation of its lands through expanded settlement activity have not ceased since U.S. President-Elect Donald Trump came to power in 2016 for his first term. This threatens to dismantle the Palestinian project entirely and trigger a new wave of displacement, potentially pushing nearly three million Palestinians toward Jordan. Furthermore, extremist Israeli ministers have openly expressed, in various ways, their expansionist aspirations for territories east of the Jordan River, escalating the level of danger and threat to unprecedented heights.

This crisis has intensified today in the wake of the events of October 7. With the expansion of the occupation’s genocidal war in Gaza and the growing concerns about the potential displacement of Gazans, the

question—and its associated fears—has extended to the West Bank. Additionally, the crisis of Palestinian political representation continues to deepen between the Palestinian Authority and factions like Hamas, which refuse to engage with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) without Israeli recognition of a Palestinian state based on the pre-June 1967 borders. Meanwhile, Iran-linked armed Islamist factions in Iraq insist that their only route to reach Palestine passes through Jordan, advancing this narrative with inflammatory rhetoric backed by military provocations along Jordan’s borders.

### **Between Two Threats: Jordanian Public Opinion and the Grip of Geopolitics**

Jordan’s geography places it between two expansionist nationalist projects, each driven by deeply entrenched ideological, religious, and historical narratives. The first belongs to a traditional regional component—Persia (Iran), while the second is an artificial and foreign element—the Israeli occupation. The hostility between the Jordanian state project and the Israeli occupation is stark, evident both in the current reality and throughout history. As for Iran, experts on Iranian affairs note that Iranian literature classifies

its foreign relations into tiers of hostility and alliance. Jordan occupies a lower level on the "hostility" scale compared to the U.S. and Israel. Still, it remains within the adversarial category, reflected in Iran's political and military behavior toward Jordan.

This dual-threat reality—differing in its roots and nature but competing in the magnitude of its danger to Jordan—has impacted Jordan's public sphere across its various layers. From grassroots levels to intellectual and political elites, both official and unofficial, these components are engaged in a clash of opinions. Each perspective reflects a concern for national security, though this concern manifests in differing—and at times conflicting—views on addressing these threats. These debates extend to questions of external relations with regional states and factions, including those in Palestine, as well as domestic policies on managing political movements and social bases.

The most notable aspect of this scene is that this dynamic often manifests as a "reactionary" behavior between two fears. The first fear is linked to the Iranian threat and the concern that Iran, through its rhetoric—

which at certain points intersects with the discourse of armed resistance against the Israeli occupation—could establish a sympathetic base for its militias in the region. Alternatively, there is apprehension that Iran might influence or capitalize on the Jordanian public's sympathy for various Palestinian factions, particularly Hamas. This has led to criticism and suspicion of Hamas's calls for public mobilization in defense of Gaza, with accusations that Hamas is, in partnership with Iran, seeking to undermine Jordan's security and stability.

The second fear revolves around the threat posed by the Israeli occupation to Jordan's security and stability, particularly the persistent risks of displacement and territorial expansion. There is ongoing concern about the plans and tools Israel



**Jordan regarding issues such as displacement, economic concerns, and resource management. Most critically, this undermines Jordan's goals of enhancing stability and laying the foundations for sustainable development.**

employs to achieve these objectives, whether through actions on Palestinian land, diplomatic pressure on Jordan, exploitation of resources to impede its stability or development, or attempts to influence Jordanian public opinion. Such efforts seemingly aim to condition public sentiment to be less resistant to displacement and less supportive of Palestinian resistance.

Caught between these two fears, responses often lack a coherent foundation grounded in a distinctly "Jordanian" assessment of what constitutes a real threat to national security. Instead, they appear to be reactions to emerging risks and developments. For instance, in moments of sudden escalation—when Israeli crimes intensify—public discourse may shift towards heightened support for Palestinian resistance and people. This support can sometimes go beyond solidarity with the Palestinian cause or its factions, extending to anyone who supports it, regardless of their identity or methods. Such rhetoric, albeit unintentionally, may align with narratives that bolster Iran's influence in Jordan, laying the groundwork for psychological conditions that facilitate Iranian penetration into Jordanian society, whether through soft cultural or

intellectual tools or even military ones.

Conversely, other social or political currents—often overlapping with the previously mentioned ones—may shift direction during periods of heightened Iranian threats on the northern border or fears of Iranian exploitation of Jordanian solidarity with the resistance. This shift may involve confrontations with the public, political movements, or even social components that are perceived, often without substantial evidence, as more likely to engage with Iranian influence or enable it. This reaction, over time, creates deep social tensions that align with a key Israeli objective: fostering internal discord within Jordan. Such discord provides Israel with greater leverage to exert pressure on Jordan regarding issues such as displacement, economic concerns, and resource management. Most critically, this undermines Jordan's goals of enhancing stability and laying the foundations for sustainable development.

### **From the Absence of National Security Literature to a Citizenship Crisis: How the Mutual Vision of National Security is Fragmenting**

The division—or, at times, confusion—over how to confront these threats reflects a broader crisis affecting many Arab nations, including Jordan. This crisis lacks clear literature and a solid foundation for a national security model. While Jordan has implemented numerous policies and security measures, it lacks deeply ingrained literature within the state and societal structure—literature that transcends governments and generations. This critical absence underscores the urgent need to develop a framework that establishes a clear, structured model of national security to protect Jordan and empower its society and state to safeguard its interests and defend its Arab and Islamic causes. Importantly, such a model must enable Jordan to take positions rooted in its national identity and interests without unwittingly aligning with the agendas of elements that threaten its security.

Developing this security framework requires in-depth studies by institutions specializing in security and defense. These studies

should investigate the roots of threats and security enablers, both domestically and internationally, to understand Jordan's geography, regional dynamics, and the interactions shaping its surroundings. They must also outline necessary boundaries, permissible zones, and barred spaces and create political, security, and economic classifications.

Equally essential is the involvement of institutions responsible for resource security, such as food, water, and energy security, to examine strategic influences and develop plans to address challenges and enhance independence in each domain. This process should not merely focus on institutional strategic plans or operational indicators



**. These moments have shaped Jordan's geographic identity, demographic composition, political positioning with neighbors and the world, and the relationship between its political system and internal components**

but should also incorporate geopolitical

and social studies. These elements must be framed within broader contexts, becoming part of the identity of both institutions and society.

The above is crucial for establishing clarity in defining national security and fostering reconciliation and stability when addressing pivotal issues for Jordan, such as the Palestinian cause. However, the most vital aspect of solidifying a coherent national security vision is addressing pressing issues that could reinforce or undermine this stability. Topics such as the demographic and geographic identity of the nation must be included in these reviews. A more stable definition of citizenship is necessary to address the current status, which, despite legal recognition, remains unsettled in terms of political practice and collective sentiment.

It is impossible to discuss a unified national security vision when social bases can be excluded or removed from the national framework during challenging moments by political factions or societal groups. Similarly, it is unsustainable to allow the denial of the national identity of the entire country and its society, treating it

as a metaphysical entity emerging from nothingness. A collective sense of identity cannot be built without resolving the contradictions between rural and urban areas, the periphery, and the center. The most complex of all challenges is addressing tensions between the “peripheries of the center” and “the centers of the periphery,” where conflicts are often more pronounced. Addressing this crisis requires decisive engagement with history and firm, explicit decisions about key historical moments. These moments have shaped Jordan’s geographic identity, demographic composition, political positioning with neighbors and the world, and the relationship between its political system and internal components.

It is untenable for Jordanians, more than a century after the founding of the state and eight decades since independence, to continue trying to assert the “Jordanian-ness” of Jordan or for any Jordanian citizen to feel compelled to prove their identity. Resolving this issue involves a blend of cultural and political solutions. In one way or another, the focus must shift from wrestling with history and its political contexts and constraints—which produced divided geography and

diverse demographics—to dealing with the outcomes of history and building upon them to solidify a cohesive national identity.

This century-old political geography, apart from the contexts of its production, forms today a part of both institutional and societal identity and the demographic identity whose variations have developed throughout the past century. It is necessary to work on strengthening the relationship of future generations with the state's geographical and social identity in a more defined and enduring manner. This raises difficult questions across the state's educational and cultural institutions and platforms. Answering these questions enhances the stability of the nation's internal structures. It strengthens the connection of generations to the state's identity regarding institutions, geography, and society, resolving this disturbance that is often overlooked only to explode in times of crisis.

This state of reconciliation between society's variations, with different lifestyles from north to south and diverse origins, cannot be achieved without political reinforcement. Citizens in all

kingdom regions must feel an equal share of development, and development here doesn't just mean infrastructure development but economic and cultural development. Everyone must feel an equal shared right in state institutions, benefiting from them and contributing to their building. Fair political representation for all these components must exist to build a diverse yet unified society.

Emphasizing the nation's identity, including its geography, society, and institutions, leading to a solid national political project identity and pursuing developmental and representational justice would strengthen the existence of a comprehensive national security model that can be collectively defended, both popularly and institutionally. This is because working on this alone can create a shared social imagination that can read and see threats and interests in a unified way - an image that neither withdraws nor becomes confused during disturbances. This allows society and state institutions to move within clear lines toward securing internal structures and protecting external security and interests.



## Conclusion

The preceding discussion underscores that achieving national security and establishing a foundation for its defense begins internally before extending outward. It is inherently tied to the capacity to first build a unified vision of the nation in the eyes of all its citizens and, from there, to develop a cohesive understanding of its security, stability, and interests. This necessitates honest and transparent efforts to address lingering questions and provide definitive answers, breaking the taboos surrounding topics that, when unpacked and addressed by specialized institutions in collaboration with society and its representatives, will likely lead to greater national unity and societal cohesion. This process paves the way for realizing a national Jordanian

project rooted in the identity of its people and land, aligning it more closely with its aspirations, imagination, and identity while fostering a deeper connection and willingness to sacrifice for it.

Strengthening the nation's identity—encompassing its history, geography, society, and institutions—when combined with efforts in the realm of resource security (water, food, energy), regional and international alliances, and the creation of clear classifications for these aspects, will serve as a foundation for fulfilling these security strategies. This approach will fortify the state and its developmental aspirations, transforming this volatile geography from a perpetual source of concern into a strategic asset and source of strength.



# Jordanian Regional Role:

## Necessary Shifts

### ANAS AL-DABBAS

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The concept of a regional role is one of the key frameworks for analysing any state's foreign policy. It encompasses the values and principles shaping its foreign policy formulation, decision-makers' perceptions of this role across different eras, and the internal (domestic) and external (international and regional) expectations. It also examines how this role is expressed through the patterns of decisions, positions, alliances, and conflicts that define the state's foreign policy.

While Jordan's "regional role" has been widely discussed in political and media circles, there is a noticeable lack of theoretical framing and historical contextualisation of this concept. Considering these considerations, this article aims to establish

a theoretical foundation for a regional role. It will then briefly analyse the characteristics of Jordan's regional role, its transformations, and the reasons behind these changes over a century of Jordanian statehood, encompassing its key phases: the Emirate and the first, second, third, and fourth Kingdoms.

### Theoretical Framework

In this article, I use Thies' decision tree model to understand the decision-making sequence that led to Jordan's current regional role and the decisions that would lead to specific future roles.

Like Thies, we understand the fulfilment of a role based on the socialisation of the

states. In the case of Jordan, which is a socialised state rather than an emergent state, the understanding would be focused on the resocialisation of the state. In other words, the evolving nature of the Jordanian role would require a re-examination and reassessment of how the role is socialised within the current context.

In keeping with Thies, we further understand that changes in the international system may push Minor Members and Members to resocialise their roles. When adjusting to the scale of this article, these changes can include major crises or shifts in international and regional politics.

To elaborate further on Thies' method, we consider the variables and definitions introduced by Holsti in his seminal work *Role Conception, Expectations, Constraints, and Enactments*. A national role can be understood as the set of patterns of behaviours, decisions, attitudes, and functions that governments act under when interacting with other states.

Role conception refers to the policymaker's understanding of the national role or how

the policymaker views it. A policymaker's understanding is influenced by two sets of factors: material and ideational factors. A rational actor model, for example, can thoroughly analyse material factors but neglect ideational factors, such as religion, culture, and ideology.

Role expectations are any conceptions of national roles held by non-policymakers. They could be categorised into domestic, international, individual, and institutional. On the other hand, role enactment "refers to the behaviour of an actor when performing a role."



**Within the theoretical framework of this study, the aggressive clash between the role conception and expectations by many actors eventually led to the assassination of the King in 1951.**

Lastly, Role constraints can be divided into two main categories: system stability and decision-maker flexibility. System stability increases with the number of actors involved in a decision, system inertia, and satisfaction with the system. The degree of stability provides a range within which the decision-maker can operate. However, the decision-makers' flexibility dictates their willingness to challenge the status quo and try something different .

The theoretical framework I use emerges from these definitions: Decision-makers function within a system, but the system's stability limits their options; a more stable system narrows the range of options from which a decision-maker can choose. Their willingness to select outside the regular policy largely depends on their flexibility. Price pointed out that if the decision-maker is too flexible, they are viewed as unreliable. At the same time, if they are too rigid, they cannot adapt.

The perception of the state's role depends on the lens from which it is viewed. The term conception refers to the role that decision-makers ascribe to the state. In contrast, expectations refer to the role those other

international and domestic actors ascribe to that state. Finally, role enactment refers to the state's actions in fulfilling the role, regardless of specific perceptions.

Utilising these definitions, we understand the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan's changing role as a process of state resocialisation or an attempt to adapt to a changing regional and international order that dictates the different roles a state must play. Specifically, these changes influence role expectations and affect role enactment. A flexible decision maker could adjust their role conception to accommodate these newer situations.

### **Jordanian Roles Through the Last Century**

In this section, we discuss the previous roles that the state of Jordan has played throughout its history. The sitting monarch divides the section to accommodate the key decision-maker in Jordanian foreign policy. The article does not consider the pre-independence years from 1921 to 1946, as the Emirate of Transjordan was not fully independent, and foreign policy was under British control.

### The Era of King Abdullah I

The first king of Jordan, King Abdullah I, had clear ambitions for the emirate and, later, the kingdom. His expansionist aims and local and British observers noted his goal of establishing a unified state in greater Syria. His conception of Jordan's role as an expansionist regional power was met unfavourably by the role expectations of both domestic and international actors, mainly the British, Israel, and the Arab countries.

Considering the recent establishment of the regime, the constraints were rather external, manifesting primarily in being accepted as the legitimate ruler over the West Bank. These constraints and expectations were what cut Abdullah I's reign short eventually, as the forceable role enactment exacerbated existing rifts in the region, which led to the assassination of the Lebanese Ex-PM Riad Al Solh in Amman by three members of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party, one whom was a Sergeant in the Arab Legion's Criminal Investigation Division .

Within the theoretical framework of this study, the aggressive clash between the role conception and expectations by many actors eventually led to the assassination of the King in 1951.

### The Era of King Talal

During his short reign, King Talal made significant strides in modernisation and political reform on the domestic front, mainly through the 1952 constitution. However, due to the remarkably short duration of his role as head of state and thus his inability to enact extensive foreign policy decisions, we use his domestic policy to interpolate his role conceptions of Jordan.

Firstly, his role enactment was rather conservative, and he did not take any actions that would indicate a flexible leader. Instead, he focused on consolidating Jordan's place in the region as an Arab state and its sovereignty over the West Bank. His stress on the socialisation of Jordan within the broader region is evident in his attempt to distance Jordan from the Hashemite Iraqi dynasty .



**The international and regional systems were not remarkably stable, as regional regimes changed during the start of the Cold War. This gave the pragmatic monarch the freedom to change policies.**

King Talal's conception of Jordan's role can thus be explained to be passive. Using some of the roles outlined by Holsti, conceptions are primarily Internal Development and independence. King Talal's largely constrained foreign policy thus could be explained as an attempt at consolidation rather than an attempt at engagement. It faced no constraints due to making peace with the regional and international systems and being affected by stability due to not changing foreign policies.

King Talal's era's inertia for Jordanian foreign policy introduced more system stability, which his father had previously challenged and undermined. This allowed integration within the broader system. However, his reign was cut short due to health issues.



**Clinging to the mediator role in a region that no longer requires one puts Jordan at odds with the international system. Instead, the Jordanian role conception needs to shift under the current material factors while maintaining its ideational.**

### **The Era of King Hussein**

Jordan's role on the regional level transformed several times during King Hussein's reign, most importantly concerning the Arab-Israeli wars. As such, this era is further divided into three sections based on two significant events: the 1967 war and the Jordan-Israel Peace Treaty.

#### ***Ascension to the Throne***

During King Hussein's early years, the key decision-makers shifted from Queen Zein Al-Sharaf to the King. However, role conceptions remained similar: they perceived Jordan as an international bloc member aligned with the Western bloc, regionally as a member, and nationally as sovereign over the West Bank. Role expectations shifted as the Cold War went on.

Internationally, the British began to view Jordan as less of a satellite state following the Arabisation of the Jordanian armed forces in 1956. The Western Bloc's role expectations for Jordan shifted towards a bridge with Arab countries. On the regional level, Jordan was expected to act as a member of the Arab bloc against the Israeli occupation.

The international and regional systems were not remarkably stable, as regional regimes changed during the start of the Cold War. This gave the pragmatic monarch the freedom to change policies. His pragmatism also increased his flexibility, which allowed him to try different role enactments.

The primary role enactments in this stage were neutral regional actors and a military front against Israel. This enactment bolstered Jordan's soft power within the Arab League and maintained its presence internationally.

### ***A Lost West Bank***

The ideational factors that affected King Hussein remained constant after 1967, which consisted of the role of the Hashemite monarchy in Jerusalem and the West Bank and the importance of regional cooperation. The material factors, however, changed significantly with Israel's occupation of the Jordanian West Bank and the heightening tensions with Soviet-aligned states in the region.

The new material conditions highlighted the importance of maintaining domestic stability and protecting the western Jordanian border.

As such, the conception of the role shifted from a regional mediator to a protective role. At this stage, the role conception highlighted Jordan's prioritisation of national security and turned towards a maintenance state.

Internationally, expectations remained similar. However, domestically, the accelerating events, from the clashes between the Jordanian and armed Palestinian factions to the occupation of the West Bank, increased polarisation within the Jordanian society, and expectations varied from aligning with the King's conception to opposing it altogether.

The stable system King Hussein created in the previous decades limited his range of possible choices. However, the pragmatic flexibility remained constant. This contrast created a challenging environment for decision-making, and enactment shifted towards maintaining the status quo. At the same time, Jordan is trying to achieve peaceful political settlements to ensure its regional security.

### ***The Peacemaker Years***

In the latter part of the King's rule, Jordan disengaged with the West Bank, signed

a peace treaty with Israel, and attempted to maintain regional peace. The role conception of these years, interpolated from the late King's actions and statements, appears to align with the role of a regional peacemaker and a mediator in different regional crises.

Expectations, internationally and domestically, primarily aligned with that role, especially through the Duwal al-Tawq understanding of the Jordanian role. However, in limited instances, such as the Gulf War and immediately following the peace treaty with Israel, regional role expectations were utterly opposed.

The international and domestic changes significantly reduced the system's stability. They allowed the pragmatically flexible King to pursue previously impossible policies, including peace with Israel and lifting martial law domestically.

The alignment of role conception and expectations, the limited constraints in this period, and the King's flexibility allowed for a more liberal role enactment, and the King could implement the roles he had conceived. However, the occasional

contrast between the conception and expectations led to negative consequences in the role enactment and presented challenges that damaged Jordan economically.

### **The Era of King Abdullah II**

Jordan's role had two drastic stages during King Abdullah's reign: before and after the Arab Uprising. However, what spanned both eras was the stability of the system that the King inherited from his father. The king stabilised the system significantly during his 47-year reign through consistent policies, which gave Jordanian foreign policy inertia, secured domestic and international satisfaction, though not regional, and maintained the number of actors.

### ***A New Era for a New King***

The first 12 years of King Abdullah's rule faced several disruptive events that affected foreign policy; regional affairs varied greatly from the second intifada to the Iraq war. Additionally, Jordanian-Syrian relations improved early in the King's rule, as regime changes in both countries facilitated a renewed diplomatic



stage.

Lessons from prior role conflicts, especially during the First Gulf War, became major ideational factors. The King adopted his policy conception, which still advocated for peaceful conflict resolution, to the role expectations imposed internationally and by the US specifically—shifting from his father's hardline position on non-Arab military intervention towards more of a bloc-member understanding while maintaining the peacekeeper/peacebuilder conception.

Role expectations during these years fluctuated significantly, but they remained focused on Jordan's strategic position in West Asia's heart. As a Dawlat Tawq or a bloc member, Jordan's role expectations during these years differed significantly during different events, especially with the involvement of more actors in regional wars and the Palestine-Israel peace process, which led to wildly different expectations.

The resulting constraints greatly limited the King's policy choices. However, flexible decision-makers and drawing from

historical experiences allowed Jordan to adopt a reserved, non-interventionist role. Essentially, Jordan's role was passed as an arbitrator.

### ***Instability in the Neighbourhood***

The Arab Uprisings made the previous roles Jordan took internationally as an arbitrator and peacemaker impossible to implement. Radical Islamist groups to the north and south had the explicit goal of expanding into the country; international coalitions intervened and bombarded Libya and Syria, and Middle Eastern people, including Jordanians, demanded democratic reforms.

Statements clearly showed the shift in role conception during these events: Jordan is an oasis of stability in an unstable region, vehemently opposes radical jihadist groups in West Asia, mediates between Muslim and Arab countries and the Israeli government, and advocates peace and humanitarianism during crises and against military interventions.

However, that conception was met by the harsh reality of the nature of the

international system: ISIS was at its strongest point, and inaction would lead to its expansion inside Jordan; border security in the north became an issue, and drug smuggling threatened the "oasis of stability" conception; international coalitions were formed, and the Syrian civil war led to close to 1.4m Syrian refugees entering Jordan.

Domestic and international actors held the mutual expectation of Jordan as an oasis of stability. However, while domestic actors viewed foreign policy as a primarily humanitarian affair, international actors viewed it as a primarily military one. Most importantly, the mediator role Jordan has maintained moved to the sidelines, as the US ensured direct contact between Israel and Arab countries, which was Jordan's semi-exclusive role in the region since 1994, and the non-Paper initiative to reintegrate Syria into the Arab League was led to direct normalisation between the gulf and Syria while disregarding Jordanian interests.

The collapse of the "mediator" role led to international expectations that Jordan's role would be restricted as a coalition member

and an oasis of stability. These two roles fall on the more passive side of the spectrum of role activity and threaten to diminish Jordan's regional dynamic.

### **What is to Come?**

Clinging to the mediator role in a region that no longer requires one puts Jordan at odds with the international system. Instead, the Jordanian role conception needs to shift under the current material factors while maintaining its ideational.

While peacemaker, humanitarian, coalition member, and oasis of stability still fit within the current regional nature, Jordan needs a uniquely active role. Its role as the facilitator for the Aqaba Process is a good example. However, the Aqaba Process is an international affair that is not concerned with the immediate region.

Jordan needs to take advantage of its strategic regional position. As such, Jordan needs to take leadership in the development and military operations in its immediate neighbourhood, face radical movements and smuggling operations, and lead the

rebuilding of Syria, Gaza, and other war-torn countries in the region.

The reconceptualization of Jordan as a coalition leader and active stabiliser takes advantage of its relative advantages: strategic position, stability, pragmatism, and capacity for hosting international civil society, actors, and coalitions against bad actors. It further aligns with the current nature of the regional system, which requires an active stabiliser who is not directly involved in the Saudi-Iranian cold war and takes advantage of the

US and NATO expectations for Jordan as a military partner, which was highlighted recently in Blinken's visit to Jordan as his first stop in the Syria Crisis tour.

The role of Jordan as a regional leader in humanitarianism and military operations builds over existing Jordanian policy: The MOC in Amman during the Syrian crisis and Jordan leading humanitarian aid into Gaza during the Israeli aggression since October 2023.

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# Interactions within the West Bank: Mutual National Security of Jordan and Palestine

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Donald Trump's victory in the U.S. elections and his preparation to return to the White House in January 2025 have created a state of cautious anticipation in the region. This comes amidst the ongoing Israeli extermination war on the Gaza Strip, which has persisted for over a year and two months, alongside escalating tensions in several areas, including Israel's war on Lebanon and internal developments in Syria.

However, Trump's return casts a direct shadow on the Palestinian political developments, which were central to his interventions during his previous term. It also has profound repercussions for Jordan's national security, especially since the primary focus of the U.S.-Israeli projects during Trump's previous presidency was the West Bank.

Today, with his return, Trump faces a new reality shaped by rampant settlement activity and Israel's official shift to the far right. These dynamics have prompted the architects of such projects to prepare plans reflecting their vision of swallowing what remains of the West Bank. This development carries significant consequences for the Palestinian territories and Jordan.

This article seeks to shed light on the situation in the West Bank amid these settlement-related developments. It examines the rapid erosion of the Palestinian governing authority, unprecedented economic and social restrictions, and projects involving displacement and population restructuring. Furthermore, the article explores Trump's administration and its stance on the

Palestinian cause while analyzing the implications of these developments on the Palestinian political entity and Jordanian national security. Finally, it aims to explore potential strategies for confronting and addressing these challenges.

### **The General Context of the West Bank After October 7**

Since October 7, 2023, Israel has leveraged its extermination war on the Gaza Strip to accelerate the establishment of a settler statelet in the West Bank. This effort has been fueled by the nature of the right-wing settlement-driven government and the influential role settlers play within it, particularly Bezalel Smotrich, who oversees the Ministry of Finance and the areas designated for settlement under the Ministry of Defense.

A year and two months into the war, the West Bank now includes 174 settlements and 171 settler outposts, which are being rapidly “legalized.” These settlements are home to approximately 800,000 settlers in the West Bank and Jerusalem, supported by an extensive infrastructure network from which Palestinians are increasingly excluded. By the end of 2023, the settlement infrastructure in the West Bank has emerged as a cohesive system interspersed with isolated Palestinian enclaves, as illustrated in the map below.

Approximately 750 gates and military checkpoints fragment these enclaves.

*Figure 1:*

*Settlement map in the West Bank until the end of 2023, Source: Settlement Wall Authority*

Simultaneously, Smotrich is leveraging his position to undermine the funding sources of the Palestinian Authority, which primarily rely on clearance revenues—taxes forcibly collected by Israel on Palestinian imports due to its control over land and sea crossings. He has deducted increasing portions of these revenues under several categories: net lending (debts for the compulsory import of water and electricity from Israel, unilaterally assessed without review), punitive deductions for supporting the families of martyrs, the injured, and prisoners, punitive deductions

for Palestinian transfers to the Gaza Strip, and compensation for settlers and their families who are "affected by military operations." Overall, by September 2024, the total amount withheld by Israel from the clearance revenues amounted to approximately one-third of the total general budget (\$2 billion).

These deductions occurred amidst escalating burdens on the Palestinian Authority, which faced an unprecedented economic reality in the history of the West Bank. Around 200,000 workers lost their jobs in the Israeli market, and their work permits were revoked, depriving the Palestinian economy of approximately \$4.8 billion annually. Added to this were those who lost their jobs in the local market, bringing the total to about 306,000 workers, meaning that one-third of the West Bank's labor force is unemployed.

Additionally, the closure of checkpoints and crossings along the Green Line deprived the Palestinian economy of critical resources previously generated by Palestinians shopping within Israel, particularly in the central northern cities of the West Bank: Jenin, Tulkarm, and Nablus. Consequently, UNCTAD described the Palestinian economy as being in a state of devastation.

The crisis of the Palestinian Authority has been exacerbated by the ongoing erosion of its governance on the ground. Israel has intensified its incursions and destruction of city centers and Palestinian refugee camps, particularly in Jenin, Tulkarm, Tubas, and Nablus. For the first time since the end of the Al-Aqsa Intifada (2000–2005), Israel has targeted the West Bank using drones, helicopters, and warplanes, extensively destroying infrastructure and property while portraying the Palestinian Authority as entirely powerless.

In this context, the number of martyrs in the West Bank rose from 169 in 2022 to 478 by mid-November 2024, with extensive damage to infrastructure and property amounting to tens of millions of dollars. The Palestinian Authority has been unable to compensate for or repair these losses, further amplifying its image of political and administrative incompetence and its inability to confront Israeli violations.

Politically, Israeli opposition to strengthening the Palestinian Authority has escalated. The governing right-wing coalition is unified in its intent to weaken and undermine the Authority, rejecting the notion of any Palestinian political entity, whether it is "Hamastan" or "Fatahstan," as described by Smotrich and Netanyahu. This has only worsened the situation.

### Trump and the Upcoming Transformations

The conditions on the ground appear ideal for advancing the settler vision of annexation and incorporation—conditions further reinforced by Donald Trump's return to the White House for a second term and the implementation of the "Decisive Plan" or "One Hope Plan" presented by Smotrich. In a meeting organized by the "Yesha Council," the regulatory settler council for the West Bank and Gaza, at the end of November, features of a proposed plan to be submitted to the Trump administration emerged, serving as a roadmap for the next four years.

The program aims to annex the West Bank and impose Israeli sovereignty through the following measures: establishing civil control over Palestinian villages in Area C and suffocating them with settlement expansion; dismantling the Palestinian Authority and replacing it with local administrative councils; redefining the relationship with Palestinians to mirror the relationship with East Jerusalem residents; massive investment in settlement-serving infrastructure; implementing Israeli law and managing the West Bank through Israeli government offices; and transforming strategic settlements into cities by creating four major cities and attracting Israelis to settle in them. While these proposals may seem extreme,

reflecting their proponents' nature, ambitions, and vision, they have been emboldened and fortified by Trump's return to the White House. One of Trump's earliest signals of his upcoming policies was his invitation to settler leaders to attend his inauguration ceremony, including Yossi Dagan, head of the Northern Samaria Settlements Council, who had previously rejected Trump's plan known as the "Deal of the Century," deeming it unjust to Jewish rights in "Judea and Samaria."

Trump's nominees for key positions are staunch supporters of Israel and aligned with its current right-wing orientation. Among the most prominent are the proposed Secretary of State, Marco Rubio; the proposed National Security Advisor, Michael



**Israel seeks to impose a reality that forces all parties to respond compulsively, whether through bypassing its obligations—such as violating the Jordanian custodianship principles over the holy sites in Jerusalem—or by creating an environment that compels all sides to respond and conform in order to prevent any wide-scale humanitarian deterioration.**



Waltz; the proposed U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Elise Stefanik; and the proposed Ambassador to Israel, Mike Huckabee. The latter is known for his infamous statements denying the existence of Palestinians, rejecting the use of the term "West Bank" in favor of "Judea and Samaria," and being a fierce advocate for the annexation of the West Bank.

### **Implications for Jordan and Palestine: Mutual Challenges to National Security**

This map of interactions and challenges, both current and anticipated, points to a set of key conclusions concerning Jordan and Palestine. These challenges impact Jordan's national security on one hand and threaten the existence of the Palestinian political entity on the other. These challenges can be summarized as follows:

#### **The Challenge to the Political Entity:**

Israeli right-wing projects aim to dissolve the Palestinian political entity and replace it with Israeli security control over the West Bank, a self-service administrative system at the city level, and a functional attachment of Palestinians to Jordan on selected issues, such as certain aspects of education, religious endowments and services, travel and related documents, etc. This is rejected by both the Jordanian state and the

Palestine Liberation Organization, as confirmed in accumulated bilateral understandings.

In parallel with the political dissolution in the West Bank, signs of acceptance for a limited role for the Palestinian Authority in Gaza have started to appear. This brings to mind Israeli attempts to confine the Palestinian Authority to Gaza and limit the Palestinian state and national project to the small sector.



**This indicates that we are no longer dealing with «hilltop youth' as an exceptional case in Israeli society but with an organized militia protected by the government.**

Israel seeks to impose a reality that forces all parties to respond compulsively, whether through bypassing its obligations—such as violating the Jordanian custodianship principles over the holy sites in Jerusalem—or by creating an environment that compels all sides to respond and conform in order to prevent any wide-scale humanitarian deterioration.

**The Security Challenge:**

The rising settlement-driven right-wing movement in Israel, with its focus on the West Bank, generates increasing fears from a wave of expulsions of Palestinians, aiming to forcibly push tens of thousands to migrate from the West Bank.

This has been hinted at or stated explicitly by several Israeli politicians. This could lead to waves of attacks on Palestinian villages, particularly in Area C, such as the night of the Hawara fire and the assaults on the villages of al-Mughayer and Turmus' Ayya.

Today's settler movement is organized through various associations, organizations, and coordination groups that handle mobilization, training, organization, and guidance. They also defend settlers in cases of arrest. The movement is armed with approximately 100,000 firearms, emergency teams, and settlement guards seeking to arm themselves with drones and anti-tank weapons. This indicates that we are no longer dealing with "hilltop youth" as an exceptional case in Israeli society but with an organized militia protected by the government.

In contrast, Israel has intensified its efforts over the past year to strike at the resistance in the West Bank, which had been an individual or poorly organized phenomenon at best. Its groups began

forming in 2021 and were concentrated in refugee camps, not villages. The occupation then used drones, warplanes, helicopters, special forces, and comprehensive destruction of infrastructure to target both the resistance and its supporters.

**The Economic Challenge:**

Over the past year, Israel has begun efforts to adapt to the absence of Palestinian labor, prevent Israelis from accessing Palestinian markets, and shift from "calming" economic approaches to a more aggressive, exclusionary approach. Through these approaches, Tel Aviv aims to institutionalize a hostile environment and promote voluntary migration from the West Bank to abroad while also creating a difficult economic reality in the West Bank, which cannot adopt any development policies or achieve economic disengagement under occupation, which is inherently exploitative and settlement-driven.

The economic reality in the West Bank directly impacts Jordan, not only through trade exchange but also through social connections and their economic consequences. Any movement of skilled Palestinian labor toward Jordan—especially those holding the yellow ID card (Jordanian Citizens)—will put pressure on the Jordanian labor market, which is already suffering from the region's ongoing crises.

Beyond the occupation's use of the economy as an exclusionary system, Jordanian banks, for example, account for about 40% of the banking sector in Palestine and provide around 35% of total credit facilities in Palestine. Therefore, they are directly affected by the occupation's policies related to severing ties with the Palestinian banking system—essentially isolating it from the world and causing its collapse—or from the continued deterioration of the economic situation and the failure to address credit facilities.

### **Joint Jordanian-Palestinian Responses**

Since October 7th, the Jordanian and Palestinian leaderships have worked in close coordination. With the direct challenges facing the West Bank and Gaza, both Jordanian and Palestinian rhetoric has focused on warning against displacement, settler terrorism, and the policies of occupation. Clear positions on displacement and the violation of Palestinian national rights have been articulated in bilateral summits, trilateral meetings with Egypt, and joint Arab-Islamic summits.

Jordanian-Israeli relations have seen the highest levels of tension over the past year. In addition to the aggression, policies in the West Bank and the continuous violations of Islamic holy sites in Jerusalem were direct causes of this tension.

Jordan has also been active in collective Arab diplomacy, which moved at both the international and UN levels to stop the aggression and address the humanitarian catastrophe in both Gaza and the West Bank.

However, the acceleration of occupation policies and the international shift in support, marked by Trump's return to the White House, necessitate proactive approaches through which Jordan, in coordination with Palestine, moves along two tracks. The first is a bilateral track focused on building a response and challenge plan to occupation policies, distributing roles, work programs, and responses. This supporting track is related to political coordination. It extends to joint efforts in exploring mechanisms and strategies to enhance Palestinian resilience as a shared Jordanian national security interest and Palestinian interest.

The second track is the Arab track, where, in recent months, a collective Arab stance has emerged, with coordinated positions on central issues related to the aggression. However, it is essential to escalate this coordination and build on its outcomes, particularly the collective Arab-Islamic-international work to create a viable Palestinian state and prevent any Israeli-Arab settlement paths from being taken unilaterally. It is

also crucial to push for linking any Palestinian or regional settlement agreements that end this war to the situation on the ground in both the West Bank and Gaza.

In conclusion, the challenges facing Jordanian national security are the same challenges that affect the comprehensive political existence of Palestine. However, the responses and confrontation here, although primarily the responsibility of collective Arab regional efforts, are urgent and existential for both the Jordanian and Palestinian sides. These responses must also be carried out sensitively to the ongoing regional developments.

#### Conclusion

With Trump's victory in the U.S. elections, Smotrich declared that 2025 would be the year of enforcing Israeli sovereignty over "Judea and Samaria," in parallel with a comprehensive settlement plan that will be presented to the incoming U.S. administration, aligned with this project in both structure and ideology.

Thus, we may be facing a new "Deal of the Century" in the context of expanding the Abrahamic normalization, focusing on Riyadh, and creating economic approaches that bypass Palestinians politically or reduce what they may receive, at best. The joint Palestinian-Jordanian responses against the first deal presented by Trump

were clear by vetoing the course and outcomes of the deal, not only in relation to demographics and geography but also in matters concerning the Hashemite custodianship of the holy sites in Jerusalem, framed in the peace treaty between Jordan and Israel.

In conclusion, in a joint and effective political movement, the confrontation here is political, based on re-strategizing and building regional alliances to protect the Palestinian political entity and Jordanian national security. It also involves leveraging the Saudi stance against normalization without a Palestinian state as the core of the supportive front for countering the Zionist settlement project.



**Any movement of skilled Palestinian labor toward Jordan—especially those holding the yellow ID card (Jordanian Citizens)—will put pressure on the Jordanian labor market, which is already suffering from the region's ongoing crises.**

# Jordan's National Security and Jordanian-Gulf Relations: A Road for a Better Understanding

**BADR SITAN AL-MADI**

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The term national security of states refers to the protection and preservation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of a state and the well-being of its citizens from external and internal threats. It includes a wide range of measures, including protection of national sovereignty, prevention and deterrence, economic and political stability, military preparedness and social cohesion, international diplomatic alliances and the custodian of energy resources to ensure and protect the interests of the nation and ensure its stability and development.

A strategically located country in the Middle East, Jordan has always been a pillar of regional stability despite the many challenges it has

faced since the founding of the state. Given its proximity to major geopolitical hotspots such as Syria, Iraq, Israel, and Palestine, Jordan's national security is inextricably linked to the dynamics of regional conflicts, global powers, and changing relations within the Arab world. Central to Jordan's national security policy is its relationship with the GCC states—particularly Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, and Qatar—which has been central to shaping the kingdom's political, economic, and military strategies.

## **Jordan's National Security Challenges**

Jordan's national security is affected by a set of internal and external factors, which are greatly reflected in its national security, which

contributes to narrowing the spaces of options for the political decision-maker to achieve the required political and security balances.

Among the most important of these factors, which pose a fundamental challenge to Jordan's national security, are a set of internal and external factors:



**For years under the Asad regime, drug smuggling across the Syrian border into Jordan, and subsequently to Gulf countries, has exerted pressure not only on Jordan's security apparatus but also on its social and economic structures.**

### **1. Regional instability:**

Jordan shares borders with countries embroiled in ongoing conflicts, including Syria, Iraq, and Palestine. The Syrian civil war, in particular, has posed significant security risks, as the influx of refugees has strained Jordan's resources and created potential for extremism or spillover violence. Additionally, Jordan faced challenges related to drug trafficking and armed militias along its northern border, particularly before the recent changes in

Syria's political landscape.

For years under the Asad regime, drug smuggling across the Syrian border into Jordan, and subsequently to Gulf countries, has exerted pressure not only on Jordan's security apparatus but also on its social and economic structures. Notably, the latest publication by the Policy and Society Institute, authored by researcher Hasan Jaber, titled *The Northern War*, highlights the security risks caused by drug trafficking, which was officially sanctioned by the former Syrian regime and impacted Jordan for many years.

Moreover, Jordan's proximity to Israel and the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict exposes it to developments that can destabilize its borders and internal security due to its geographical and social ties to Palestine.

### **2. Weak structure of the Jordanian economy:**

Jordan's economy, heavily reliant on foreign aid and remittances from Jordanians working abroad (many of whom are in the Gulf), faces significant structural challenges. A large portion of the population depends on government subsidies, particularly for energy and essential goods.

Economic instability could lead to domestic discontent, fueled by governmental policies that have failed to provide long-term solutions to Jordan's structural economic issues. These challenges are exacerbated by regional conflicts and crises, which have significantly impacted international trade routes, Jordanian industries, the agricultural sector, and tourism—a key pillar of the national economy. The current government is making significant efforts to address these longstanding issues, particularly by promoting and incentivizing investment as a critical driver of Jordan's economic recovery.

### **3. Terrorism and extremism:**

Jordan has long been a target for terrorist organizations, such as al-Qaeda and ISIS, which have sought to exploit regional instability to undermine the country's security and stability. However, Jordan's robust security and military efforts, coupled with the lack of social support for extremist ideologies and the awareness of the Jordanian people and residents, have thwarted attempts to destabilize the country.

In this context, Jordan has played a pivotal role as a key partner in global counterterrorism

efforts, particularly in collaboration with Western allies. Nonetheless, the threat of extremism, both within Jordan and in its surrounding region, remains a pressing concern.

One contributing factor is the failure of Israel to cooperate in achieving a fair and comprehensive resolution to the Palestinian issue. The ongoing occupation serves as an inspiration and rallying point for ideological and extremist movements in the region. Without meaningful solutions that uphold the Palestinian people's right to self-determination, as enshrined in international laws and resolutions, extremist groups may find further justification for actions that threaten Jordan's national security.

### **4. Internal Jordanian affairs as a source of threat or stability:**

While Jordan enjoys structural stability compared to its neighbors, periodic protests and public discontent over economic and political issues can challenge the status quo that has characterized the country for many years. The government's ability to address opposition and maintain national cohesion remains a constant priority for Jordanian authorities.



In response to these concerns, Jordanian decision-makers have recognized the necessity and importance of public participation in decision-making processes. As a result of a broad national effort involving all Jordanian political and social factions, a comprehensive framework for political, economic, and administrative modernization was developed under the directive of the head of state.



**The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), which includes Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman and Kuwait, plays an influential role in regional geopolitics, and its members have provided fundamental and historical support to Jordan in various ways as a result of the distinctive relationship that binds Jordan with the Gulf states, represented by mutual respect between the Jordanian leadership and the leaders of the Gulf Cooperation Council.**

This initiative resulted in an electoral law that garnered widespread approval across Jordanian society and led to a significant parliamentary election in the context of Jordan's democratic transition, with the participation of Jordanian

opposition groups. This development helped alleviate public anger toward the government and demonstrated the success of Jordan's political system in distributing decision-making responsibilities among national institutions, rather than placing the burden solely on the monarchy.

### **Jordan's Strategic Relationship with the Gulf States**

Jordan's relationship with the Gulf states is pivotal in addressing many of these security and economic challenges. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), which includes Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman and Kuwait, plays an influential role in regional geopolitics, and its members have provided fundamental and historical support to Jordan in various ways as a result of the distinctive relationship that binds Jordan with the Gulf states, represented by mutual respect between the Jordanian leadership and the leaders of the Gulf Cooperation Council, as well as the people-to-people ties between these countries and Jordan.

### **Military and security cooperation**

Military and security cooperation is one of the main pillars of Gulf-Jordanian cooperation.

Jordan and the Gulf states share common interests in countering regional threats, particularly from terrorist groups and growing Iranian influence in the region, which has dealt a heavy blow to what has happened in Syria over the past few days.

### **Jordan and Saudi Arabia: Military and Security Cooperation**

As the largest member of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in terms of population, economic resources, and influence, Saudi Arabia is a key ally of Jordan in military and security collaboration. The two nations exchange intelligence on counterterrorism and security threats affecting their national stability and have engaged in joint military exercises to enhance the capabilities of their armed forces. In recent years, Jordanian forces have participated in Saudi-led coalitions, particularly in the Yemen conflict, where both countries have cooperated in combating Houthi insurgents and other regional threats.

### **Jordan and the UAE: A Renewed Military and Security Partnership**

The UAE, with its significant advancements in military capabilities, has fostered a strong relationship with Jordan. The two countries

collaborate on counterterrorism efforts, with the UAE providing military and financial assistance to strengthen Jordan's military and security defenses. This support is vital for Jordan's ability to maintain a stable military presence along its borders, particularly in the face of threats from ISIS and other extremist groups on its northern and eastern borders

### **Jordan and Kuwait: A Historical Relationship**

Kuwait has played a vital role in providing development aid to Jordan, particularly in the security and military sectors, amid rising refugee inflows from neighboring conflict zones. This assistance has helped Jordan maintain internal stability, which in turn supports broader regional security objectives.

### **The Economic and Financial Dimension of Jordan-Gulf Relations**

The economic relationship between Jordan and the Gulf states is equally significant. Over the years, Jordan has received substantial financial aid, investments, and loans from GCC countries, helping it navigate economic hardships and maintain political stability. Major contributors include Saudi Arabia, the



**Their shared apprehension about Iran's ambitions, particularly its interventions in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, and Lebanon, has driven increased security cooperation, including intelligence sharing and joint military exercises.**

UAE, and Kuwait. Since the Arab Spring in 2011, when Jordan experienced its own waves of protests, Gulf states have provided billions of dollars in assistance to bolster Jordan's economy.

In return, Jordan has often aligned itself with Gulf countries on key regional and political issues, contributing to shared objectives in the Arab region, the Middle East, and on the international stage.

The Gulf states also serve as a vital employment market for skilled Jordanian professionals, particularly in Saudi Arabia and the UAE, where thousands contribute to various economic and technological sectors. The remittances sent back by these workers significantly impact Jordan's economy, providing substantial income for many families and supporting investment and

production within the country.

On the other hand, Gulf investments in Jordan span major projects in infrastructure, real estate, and energy. For instance, the UAE has invested in renewable energy projects in Jordan, helping reduce its dependency on imported energy and ensuring a more secure energy future. Kuwait, with its investments exceeding \$20 billion in recent years, has become a significant investment partner due to its accumulated expertise. Saudi Arabia has also financed numerous developmental projects, playing a critical role in alleviating the economic burden on the Jordanian government.

### **Political and Diplomatic Ties Between Jordan and the Gulf States**

Jordan and the Gulf states share mutual respect regarding sovereignty and collaboration on regional and international platforms. Over the years, this relationship has demonstrated strategic alignment across various domains, reflecting its resilience and depth.

Both Jordan and the GCC countries share common concerns about Iran's regional influence and the threat posed by extremist groups. Their shared apprehension about

Iran's ambitions, particularly its interventions in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, and Lebanon, has driven increased security cooperation, including intelligence sharing and joint military exercises.

Furthermore, Jordan's support for the Arab Peace Initiative concerning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict often mirrors the positions of Gulf states, especially Saudi Arabia. Gulf states have consistently recognized Jordan's pivotal role, particularly regarding Jerusalem and its custodianship over the city's holy sites.

### **Challenges and Future Prospects**

Despite their close ties, several challenges could influence the future relationship between Jordan and the Gulf states:

**1. Shifting Regional Alliances:** Gulf states are undergoing a period of diplomatic realignment. For example, the UAE has adopted a more independent foreign policy in recent years, fostering closer relations with Israel through the Abraham Accords. While Jordan supports peace processes, its cautious stance toward Israel can sometimes lead to divergences in its relationship with the Gulf states.

Saudi Arabia's stance on Israel—insisting

that normalization is contingent on securing Palestinian rights—offers Jordan some reassurance. Although relations between Jordan and Saudi Arabia have appeared muted in recent years, Jordan recognizes Saudi Arabia's potential to play a significant role in the region, especially amid the diminished influence of traditional Arab powerhouses. Additionally, Jordan acknowledges Qatar's ambition to assume a more prominent political role and its regional alignments, even when these do not align with Jordan's views on the roles of other regional powers like Turkey and Iran.

**2. Economic Pressures in the Gulf:** Gulf economies are undergoing significant transformations due to fluctuating oil prices and a push toward diversification. As these states adjust to new economic realities, their financial aid to Jordan may diminish, potentially affecting Jordan's ability to address domestic economic and security challenges. Recognizing this shift, Jordan has been actively working to reduce its dependency on Gulf aid by fostering self-reliance and aligning its strategies with the evolving Gulf perspectives on financial assistance.

**3. Internal Dynamics in Jordan:** Jordan

faces its own political and economic pressures, which could impact its relationship with the Gulf. The Jordanian government's political choices often diverge from those of Gulf states. For instance, Jordan has embraced a different approach to respecting popular will and fostering political participation among its citizens.

This approach has led to broader participation by various political factions in recent elections and advancements in the party-based political process. These developments, while positive for Jordan's democratic evolution, might create ideological and political discomfort for some Gulf states.

Moreover, Jordan's active civil society and relatively free press represent additional dynamics that could influence its relationship with the Gulf and other regional actors.

## **Conclusion**

Jordan's national security is closely intertwined with its relations with the Gulf states, particularly considering the evident instability in once pivotal political actors like Iraq and Syria. Through military cooperation, economic assistance, and diplomatic alignment, Jordan has navigated the complex security environment of the Middle East. The support provided by Gulf states has been vital in helping Jordan maintain stability, even amidst significant challenges. However, Jordan's ongoing political modernization, political development, and the revisions it is undergoing may pose sensitivities for some Gulf states. This is particularly true for states that perceive the active participation of certain ideological forces in the political process as a genuine threat to their stability.

# Iran's regional strategy and Jordanian national security

## FIRAS ELIAS

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The Iranian regional strategy has raised many questions regarding the objectives it seeks to achieve in the Middle East. Are these objectives tied to Iran's vision for the region, or are they more focused on countering adversaries and rivals? Regardless of the nature of these objectives, what remains certain is that Iran, through its actions in the region—particularly after 1979—has, in one way or another, reshaped regional balances. This shift has prompted regional states to seek alternative options, at times through temporary, regional alliances and at other times through pragmatic international arrangements, all aimed at curbing Iran and its regional strategy. This strategy is fundamentally based on establishing an Iranian strategic project that stretches from Tehran to the Mediterranean Sea.

This article aims to illuminate Iran's current regional strategy, examine Jordan's position within the context of this strategy, and explore its implications for Jordanian national security. It also seeks to identify Jordan's requirements for implementing this strategy in the coming phase.

### **Analytical Dimensions of Iran's Regional Strategy**

Analyzing Iran's regional strategy from the perspective of its geopolitical depth has garnered significant attention from decision-makers at both regional and international levels. This is particularly true regarding its approach to managing complex regional issues and selecting allies and friends. Iran has demonstrated a strategic commitment to supporting its allies, whether state or non-state actors, making it a formidable player in the region's strategic equation.

First, Iran has successfully leveraged its regional strategy to serve its geopolitical project. Second, it has employed non-state regional actors to further this project, positioning itself as a major influential power in the region. This influence allows Iran to control the pathways of de-escalation and escalation. More importantly, it has positioned itself as a counterweight to the U.S. role in the region.

Today, after four decades since the establishment of the Islamic Republic, Iran's regional strategy has been influenced by significant regional and international developments. This is particularly relevant as the region prepares to adapt to strategic balances that will emerge following the fall of the Bashar Al-Assad regime in Syria and the return of Donald Trump to the White House. Such developments could also lead to complex international shifts impacting Iran's strategic direction. Thus, analyzing and explaining Iran's regional strategy naturally requires a systematic approach, as changes in the regional and international systems have shaped the external interactions of Iranian governments since 1979. This analysis addresses actors involved in Iran's regional strategy and the variables influencing it.

Given Iran's current geopolitical situation, it can be said that if its political system remains closed and resistant to change while its internal and international environment continues to evolve, it will gradually become increasingly disconnected from its regional surroundings. Remaining in a state of neither war nor peace will challenge Iran's development capabilities and its diplomatic and strategic potential, particularly under the continued imposition of international sanctions following the U.S. withdrawal from the nuclear deal in May 2018. Additionally, Iran has faced cumulative strategic setbacks, such as the assassination of Qassem Soleimani in January 2020, which have contributed to significant challenges for the "Axis of Resistance," particularly in Gaza, Lebanon, and Syria. There is also the potential for these setbacks to extend to Iraq and Yemen.

In summary, Iran today faces a highly challenging strategic situation. It seeks a strategic solution to restore balance to its regional role post-Assad, particularly in light of the rise of other regional players, especially Turkey, which has become a key factor in reshaping new regional balances after Assad. Consequently, Iran strives for strategic outcomes that enable it to maintain its role in the region with the same level of effectiveness and



influence. This pursuit is rooted in its central vision of the region, based on the belief that it possesses the historical, geographical, demographic, ideological, and political justifications to play a leading role. Iran's self-perception of its power and natural capabilities, combined with its conviction in these justifications, has shaped the nature of its relationships with regional countries, including Jordan. Jordan is a significant example reflecting Iran's ambition to assert a prominent regional role and its understanding of the boundaries and construction of this role.

### **Reformists and Iran's Regional Role**

President Masoud Bezshikian's ability to establish stable relations with the United States in the region will significantly shape Iran's role in the upcoming phase. The complex interplay between Iranian and American regional roles has created instability. Iran's investment in supporting and funding allies in Iraq, Lebanon, and Yemen has often been met with harsh and unexpected American reactions. Furthermore, the two countries' interactions in Gaza, Lebanon, and Syria reveal a substantial gap in their regional security and stability perceptions.

Bezshikian's presidency might provide a narrow

window for Tehran to abandon its previous approach, amend its anti-Western policies, and adopt a pragmatic stance in the post-Assad era. The key challenge for Bezshikian will be balancing the Foreign Ministry and the Revolutionary Guard. Much of this balance will depend on the role played by Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi. Araqchi, who previously served as deputy foreign minister under Rouhani and was a prominent figure in the nuclear negotiations with major powers, is a staunch advocate of securing and entrenching the Revolutionary Guard's vision abroad. This duality in his character could assist Bezshikian in managing the balance with minimal losses.

Therefore, given the current regional circumstances, Iran's regional role will largely remain under the Revolutionary Guard's authority, particularly after the fall of the Assad regime. Through Araqchi, the Revolutionary Guard will likely focus on bolstering efforts in Iraq and Yemen, compensating for the setbacks faced by Quds Force commander General Esmail Qaani, and reorganizing Iran's fragmented presence in Lebanon and Syria. This restructuring aims to restore the effectiveness of Iran's regional role.

Bezshikian's weak connections with Iran's

regional allies, especially within the "Axis of Resistance," will make him heavily reliant on the Revolutionary Guard, particularly in critical matters affecting the Islamic Republic's influence and the future of its allies. Today, numerous political and strategic imperatives surround Iran, requiring Bezshikian's attention and decisive action. Supreme Leader Khamenei will likely place his complete confidence in this president and his accompanying team to manage the Islamic Republic's internal and external affairs in the coming phase.



**Iran views Jordan through a highly complex lens, complicating any efforts toward reconciliation. From Tehran's perspective, Jordan is part of the "normalization axis" opposing the "Axis of Resistance" in the region**

### **Iran and Jordan: The Dilemma of Building Trust**

The Iranian-Jordanian relationship is one of the most notable outcomes of Iran's regional strategy. It is fundamentally built upon the dilemma of trust-building between the two parties. In response to Iran's "expansionist strategy" in the region, Jordan has adopted a counter-strategy

of "deterrence and containment" to mitigate the effects of Iran's regional maneuvers.

This tension in Iranian-Jordanian relations is not a recent phenomenon but rather the result of years of strain following the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979. At that time, Iran championed the export of its revolution and opposition to monarchical systems in the region. Tensions were exacerbated by Jordan's support for Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War (1980–1988). After the events of September 11, 2001, the U.S. military presence in the region became more pronounced. Contrary to the expectations of President George W. Bush's administration, the U.S. invasion of Iraq resulted in increased Iranian regional influence. Consequently, the U.S., Israel, and Arab governments sought to counterbalance Iran's growing power, unify Arab states with Israel, limit Iran's influence in Iraq, protect Israel, maintain regional stability, and ensure energy supplies.

One of the key developments in the post-9/11 Middle East was the emergence of the so-called "Shia Crescent," particularly after the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq. Milestones included the ascension of Shia leadership in Iraq in 2003, Hamas's victory in the 2006 Palestinian Legislative Council elections, and Hezbollah's rise as a military force following

the 2006 Israeli-Lebanese war. These developments reshaped the geopolitical landscape of the Middle East, prompting Jordan's King Abdullah II to describe the primary outcome of the Iraq War as the formation of a Shia-controlled geographic arc, referred to as the "Shia Crescent." Although he later clarified that he had meant an "Iranian Crescent," his initial remarks reflected a deep-seated concern.

King Abdullah II's statement about Iran's rise was not unfounded; it stemmed from the image of Iran ingrained in Jordanian political decision-makers, shaped by Iran's regional roles. After 2003, Jordan became one of the primary targets of Iran's regional strategy, a reality reflected in the strained relations between the two countries following the U.S. occupation of Iraq.

Iran views Jordan through a highly complex lens, complicating any efforts toward reconciliation. From Tehran's perspective, Jordan is part of the "normalization axis" opposing the "Axis of Resistance" in the region. Furthermore, Jordan's Hashemite custodianship of religious sites in Jerusalem undermines the Revolutionary Guard's "liberation of Jerusalem" narrative, stripping it of complete legitimacy. Most significantly, Jordan represents a vulnerable flank in Iran's strategic regional bridge toward the Mediterranean.

Therefore, Iran is attempting to forge a path that serves this vision. Despite its numerous efforts to establish connections with Jordan—whether through revitalizing diplomatic relations, leveraging economic incentives, promoting religious tourism, or utilizing regional mediation, particularly by Saudi Arabia and Iraq—Jordan remains hesitant to open up to Iran. This hesitation stems from the lack of a serious Iranian initiative addressing Jordanian concerns. Such reluctance is fundamentally rooted in Iran's indirect actions toward Jordan, including the presence of armed groups loyal to Iran in western Iraq, its involvement in drug trafficking in the region, and, most importantly, its attempts to destabilize Jordan's security and stability through its ongoing conflict with Israel.

The escalation between Iran and Israel following October 7, 2023, has deepened Jordan's mistrust of Iran's regional intentions, especially after Iran issued warnings to Jordan against intercepting any Iranian attacks on Israel. Although Jordan publicly declared that any such intervention would solely be to protect its sovereignty—a stance articulated by Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi during his visit to Tehran in August 2024—Iran and its regional allies, particularly Iraqi groups, launched a media campaign against Jordan. This was in response to Jordan's role

in intercepting some Iranian missiles heading toward Israel over Jordanian airspace in April 2024.

Iran's actions alone did not create this trust deficit with Jordan. The activities of Iran's proxies have also been a source of concern for the Hashemite Kingdom. These actions have had direct repercussions, such as the closure of the Bab al-Mandeb Strait and the disruption of commercial shipping in the Red Sea by the Houthis, which adversely impacted Jordan's sole Red Sea port, the Port of Aqaba. Simultaneously, there has been a surge in illicit drug trafficking to Jordan from Syria. Before the fall of the Assad regime on December 8, 2024, there was a significant increase in the number of "Captagon" shipments smuggled across Jordan's northern border. The Jordanian army has increasingly intercepted drones carrying drugs from Syria and engaged in shootouts with drug smugglers along the border.

These activities underscore the scale of Iran's troubling roles toward Jordan, which extend beyond drug trafficking to include smuggling weapons such as small arms, anti-tank missiles, rocket launchers, explosives, and anti-personnel mines. While some of these weapons, transported by Iran-affiliated agents, remain in Jordan, the majority transit through the country en route to the West Bank. There, Iran seeks to flood the area with weapons in hopes of

undermining Israeli security.<sup>(2)</sup>

### **Requirements for Jordan's National Security in the Context of Iran's Role**

Jordan currently faces an exceptionally challenging regional reality, especially following the fall of the Assad regime and the uncertain landscape in a new Syria now governed by jihadist/opposition factions. Jordan finds itself surrounded by a geographic environment marked by armed conflicts: war in Gaza, a fragile ceasefire agreement in Lebanon, the growing possibility of conflict spilling over into Iraq and Yemen, and the complex relationship between Iran and Trump. These developments necessitate Jordan's adoption of proactive security strategies to manage risks and mitigate the regional security repercussions on its domestic stability.

Challenges persist despite Jordan's measured actions toward Iran—such as the moderate rhetoric of Jordanian leadership and the ongoing diplomatic efforts spearheaded by Jordan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs to reduce the strategic consequences of Assad's fall on the region. Jordan hosted a regional and international meeting in Aqaba on December 14, 2024, to discuss Syria's situation and manage the transitional phase post-

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(2) David Schenker, *Iran Targets Jordan: The Kingdom Joins the Theocracy's List of Enemies*, The Washington Institute, Jun 5, 2024. <https://shorturl.at/E6Qvu>.

Assad. However, such efforts are likely to have only short-term strategic effects, particularly with the return of President Donald Trump to the White House and Iran's absence from this meeting. These developments suggest the region, and Jordan in particular, may face a new wave of escalation, necessitating the adoption of preventive strategies in the coming period.

Given Iran's multifaceted approach in the region, Jordan's ability to address Iran's regional strategy remains relative rather than absolute. Regarding Jordan, Iran has employed various measures to penetrate Jordan's domestic landscape, ranging from political to religious avenues and both formal and informal channels.



Jordan faces a strategic dilemma in taming Iran's behavior. While current regional circumstances may offer an opportunity to reshape Iran's role toward Jordan—especially with Iran's reduced influence on Jordan, notably in Syria and Lebanon—Jordan's ability to free itself from specific regional commitments remains a decisive factor in determining the success or failure of this opportunity.

Considering these realities, Jordan faces a strategic dilemma in taming Iran's behavior. While current regional circumstances may offer an opportunity to reshape Iran's role toward Jordan—especially with Iran's reduced influence on Jordan, notably in Syria and Lebanon—Jordan's ability to free itself from specific regional commitments remains a decisive factor in determining the success or failure of this opportunity.

A simple review of Jordan's approach toward Iran in recent years reveals evident hesitation in formulating a clear and consistent policy toward Tehran. This is not due to shortcomings in Jordanian political decision-making but rather the parallel pressures exerted on Jordan by Gulf states, Israel, and the United States. These influences have, directly or indirectly, impacted Jordan's national options regarding Iran. Overcoming these threefold pressures could provide Jordan with an opportunity to address the strategic risks posed by Iran's role and contribute to curbing the behavior of Iran's proxies toward Jordan.

Jordan's diplomatic outreach to Iraq and its efforts to build bridges with Iran's allies there, specifically the "Coordination Framework" factions, could be a coherent approach for recalibrating its strategic orientation toward Iran.

The current regional decline in Iran's strategic influence and the return of President Donald Trump to the White House present Jordan with an opportunity to construct a clear strategy toward Iran. This would involve adopting a diplomacy that balances Iran's need to secure its regional position with Jordan's need to ensure domestic stability. By encouraging Iran to reshape the roles of its allies in neighboring countries, Jordan could engage in regional diplomacy to reduce the risks of sustained regional escalation. This strategy would depend on leveraging "trans-regional conflict diplomacy."

Jordan's lack of a clear history of direct conflict with Iran positions it as one of the Arab states most capable of advancing such initiatives. Jordan could shift regional relations from a zero-sum framework to a non-zero-sum equation, making changes in Iran's regional behavior a domestic matter shaped by internal Iranian developments. This approach aligns with the desire of major powers, particularly the United States, to sustain the current Iranian regime while attempting to alter its behavior. As such, adopting confrontation strategies against Iran appears unrealistic, given the ongoing efforts of some regional and international actors to engage in dialogue with Tehran. Therefore, Jordan's national interest,

rather than broader regional considerations, should be the primary driver of its diplomacy toward Iran in the coming period.

### **Conclusion**

Numerous internal and external factors have shaped Iranian-Jordanian relations since 1979. Over the years, these relations have fluctuated, ranging from cautious openness to persistent tension. However, in the current context—especially following the fall of the Assad regime—Jordan must allow political maneuvering, diversify its economic benefits, and mitigate security concerns emanating from Iran.

Despite some optimism surrounding the potential for improved relations between the two countries, their ties remain in a phase of testing intentions. This is due to a complex interplay of internal and external factors and the multidimensional nature of their relationship, making it susceptible to disruption at any moment. Jordan's behavior toward Iran thus far has shown no significant reservations about engaging positively with Tehran. However, this will largely depend on Iran's actions, particularly in avoiding behaviors that could destabilize the kingdom. This dynamic will subject Iranian-Jordanian relations to genuine testing in the coming period.



# Jordanian-Iraqi Relations:

## Towards a Rethinking?

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In recent years, Jordanian-Iraqi relations have witnessed a qualitative leap, following a long period marked by much doubt and caution between the two sides. While it cannot be said that the development of this relationship has completely eliminated the previous situation, it has made it less ambiguous. The relationship has undergone numerous transformations since the American occupation in 2003 and the arrival of the new regime in Baghdad, reaching today a more effective diplomatic communication and more developed economic movement, despite remaining political and security concerns between the two parties.

The nature, determinants, and course of the relationship between the two sides cannot be separated from the continuous changes in both international and regional contexts, and before that, the ongoing transformations within Iraq which led to the absence of a clear strategic vision for Iraq's foreign relations, particularly with its neighbors. However, changes in recent years have developed a new state of awareness for both parties about the necessity of developing the relationship between the two countries. In contrast, Jordan saw Iraq as an important opportunity and outlet in light of economic challenges resulting from decreased treasury support from regional countries and affairs with some



experiencing a period of coolness, which was accompanied by the intransigence of the Syrian regime, led by Bashar Al-Assad, against economic openness towards Jordan, despite attempts by Jordanian diplomatic leaders internationally to reduce sanctions represented by the Caesar Act, and grant Syria some exceptions, along with Amman's efforts to reintegrate Damascus into the Arab sphere within steps addressing the course of the Syrian crisis, but Assad chose then to bypass Jordanian efforts.

Although the relationship between Jordan and Iraq began to take another turn during the tenure of former Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi, whose brief period witnessed King Abdullah II's visit to Baghdad and the holding of trilateral summits between Amman, Cairo, and Baghdad, a state of revival was experienced by Jordan with Mustafa Al-Kadhimi assuming the premiership of the transitional government, who developed the course of the relationship between the two countries politically and not just economically. It seemed clear that the Jordanian side had hoped for Al-Kadhimi to continue in his position after the October 2021 elections, but Amman came to face a

new-old reality, titled «The Coordination Framework» which includes traditional Shiite political forces and forces that include armed factions in their structures, which presented Mohammed Shia Al-Sudani to be Iraq's prime minister, who notably made his first foreign visit to Jordan, and the latter, in turn, spared no effort in engaging and seeking to develop relations on both political and economic levels specifically.

Perhaps Donald Trump's return to the White House, which was preceded by a period of transformation that the region is experiencing in the balance of powers after the «October 7th» incident and subsequent events, primarily the dismantling of Lebanese Hezbollah's capabilities, the assassination of its Secretary-General, and the fall of the Syrian regime, necessitates today a rethinking of the Jordanian-Iraqi relationship. What enhances the necessity of rethinking is that there are upcoming challenges for the region and at the same time more opportunities that may open for both countries, particularly Jordan, which has better foreign relations than Iraq at both regional and international levels.



**Amman recognized the necessity of expanding its network of understanding with Shiite Islamist political forces rather than limiting its relations to so-called «moderate forces»—which are also part of the Coordination Framework, such as former Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi and Ammar Al-Hakim, leader of the Hikma Movement, who already has good relations with Jordan.**

### **The Jordanian-Iraqi Relationship: Persistent Attempts to Break Barriers**

Before the Jordanian-Iraqi relationship began to develop into its current form, Amman had already prepared itself for this phase—long before the establishment of the «Coordination Framework»—by opening channels of communication with various political forces in Iraq, particularly the Shiite political forces. Despite visits by Jordanian officials to Iraq, including a notable visit by the King, one remarkable event was the visit of Abdul Salam Al-Odah in November 2021, who was the then Speaker of the Jordanian Parliament <sup>(2)</sup>. During that visit, accompanied

by a Jordanian parliamentary delegation, he met with both traditional Shiite forces and factions originating from armed groups listed on U.S. terrorism lists.

This visit was followed by recurring Jordanian visits that renewed contacts with these figures. This marked a shift in Jordan's perception of the Iraqi equation, signaling that disagreement does not necessarily preclude engagement or containment. Amman recognized the necessity of expanding its network of understanding with Shiite Islamist political forces rather than limiting its relations to so-called «moderate forces»—which are also part of the Coordination Framework, such as former Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi and Ammar Al-Hakim, leader of the Hikma Movement, who already has good relations with Jordan. It is worth noting that the Coordination Framework is not a monolithic bloc but includes internal differences in orientations. Jordan also maintains a relationship with Muqtada Al-Sadr, who chose to remain independent of the Shiite alliance.

(2) Husna. «Jordanian Parliamentary Movement in Bagh-

dad Confirms Support for Jordanian-Iraqi Agreements.' Published September 15, 2021. Accessed January 4, 2025. <https://husna.fm>.

This background suggests that Amman, even before the formation of the Coordination Framework following the 2021 elections—whose government formation consultations lasted nearly a year—had worked to establish lines of communication with various Shiite forces. This effort facilitated engagement with the government of Mohammed Shia Al-Sudani, who visited Jordan in November 2022 during his first foreign tour as Prime Minister. This visit was followed by a joint call involving Al-Sudani, former U.S. President Joe Biden, and King Abdullah II. <sup>(3)</sup> The relationship between the two countries has been shaped by cumulative positions and policies following the U.S. invasion of Iraq. Jordan initially viewed the new political system post-2003 with great concern, perceiving it as an extension of the Iranian project in the region. This led Jordan to «securitize» the Iraqi file for many years.

However, recent shifts in Jordanian policy reflect a realization that armed factions, through their political faces, now wield significant influence over political, economic, and security matters in Iraq. Jordan has recognized the strategic inevitability and opportunities it cannot afford to miss amidst its internal and external political, economic, and security challenges.

As a result, Jordan has repeatedly sought to reintegrate Iraq into its regional role, which could eventually lead to its integration into the Arab world. This was evident in initiatives like the «New Levant Project», which brought Amman, Baghdad, and Cairo together. While the project's primary focus was economic, it also carried significant political dimensions. On the other hand, the Coordination Framework forces have sought to operate from a different perspective to consolidate governance and maintain gains after disappointing election results and internal struggles, particularly with their popular bases and the Sadrist Movement—a rival Shiite political force with broad social and regional ties. To achieve this, the Coordination Framework has attempted to present a different image from the stereotype

(3) «The Readout of President Biden's Call with Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani of Iraq.» The White House, February 2, 2023. Accessed January 4, 2025. [https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2023/02/02/readout-of-president-bidens-call-with-prime-minister-mohammed-shia-al-sudani-of-iraq/?\\_gl=1spfdjd\\_gaN-zA5MzA3NDQuMTczNjAwNDg5NQ..\\_ga\\_N6Y255Y5X-2MTczNjAwNDg5NC4xLjEuMTczNjAwNDk4OC42MC4wL-jA.\\_gcl\\_au\\*NzYxODI1NDM1LjE3MzYwMDQ4OTY](https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2023/02/02/readout-of-president-bidens-call-with-prime-minister-mohammed-shia-al-sudani-of-iraq/?_gl=1spfdjd_gaN-zA5MzA3NDQuMTczNjAwNDg5NQ.._ga_N6Y255Y5X-2MTczNjAwNDg5NC4xLjEuMTczNjAwNDk4OC42MC4wL-jA._gcl_au*NzYxODI1NDM1LjE3MzYwMDQ4OTY).

of being Iran-aligned forces by adopting a more pragmatic approach and pursuing greater openness to the Arab world.

Furthermore, the Coordination Framework recognizes the depth and importance of Jordan's relationship with the United States, potentially opening a channel of communication that could ease the complex situation it faces. This includes U.S. Treasury Department sanctions targeting leaders within the Framework and restrictions on banks affiliated with Framework factions. Expanding relations with Jordan might alleviate these pressures.

However, efforts to strengthen Jordan-Iraq relations often face significant obstacles, particularly the Iranian influence in Iraq.



**some Framework forces leverage their parliamentary representation to apply constant pressure on Jordan, citing reasons such as harboring Iraqi opposition figures and the banned Baath Party maintaining ties with Israel, or benefiting from preferential oil prices from Iraq. They argue that such privileges warrant reconsideration.**

The relationship between Jordan and Iran remains characterized by suspicion, caution, and mistrust. Some Iranian-backed armed factions exhibit open hostility toward Jordan, as seen in their digital media outlets, their presence near Jordan's borders, and their involvement in drug smuggling attempts into Jordan.

Additionally, some Framework forces leverage their parliamentary representation to apply constant pressure on Jordan, citing reasons such as harboring Iraqi opposition figures and the banned Baath Party,<sup>(4)</sup> maintaining ties with Israel, or benefiting from preferential oil prices from Iraq. They argue that such privileges warrant reconsideration.

### **Jordan and the Economic Opportunity in Iraq: Obstacles to Major Projects**

Jordan has long viewed Iraq as a strategic depth, an economic lifeline, and a key determinant of its economic situation. Historically, Jordan has often served as

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(4) Although Jordan has historically embraced figures opposing Saddam Hussein and hosted in the 1990s meetings and opposition figures who shaped the new political regime after 2003.

Iraq's economic gateway during times of crises with regional or international actors. For example, in the 1960s, when Syria closed the Port of Latakia to Iraqi exports and imports, Jordan opened its Port of Aqaba as an alternative, competing with Latakia at the time. A more significant historical event was the international sanctions on Iraq in the 1990s, following Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait. During this period, Jordan became Iraq's sole economic outlet and conduit for humanitarian aid.

In recent years, Jordan-Iraq economic relations have witnessed notable growth. After being severely affected by ISIS's control of the Trebil border crossing with Jordan, trade volume has since rebounded, surpassing \$1 billion annually following the reopening of the crossing in 2017. Additionally, Iraqi investments in Jordan have exceeded \$30 billion. <sup>(5)</sup>

While both countries share extensive economic interests, Jordan's ambitions

for major projects in Iraq face numerous obstacles. One significant hurdle is the potential impact of these projects on Iranian interests in Iraq. For instance, the Basra-Aqaba oil pipeline project continues to encounter delays, partly due to Iranian influence. Armed factions have threatened to target the pipeline under the pretext of Jordan exporting oil to Israel,<sup>(6)</sup> contributing to the slow progress from the Iraqi side.

Similarly, the Jordan-Iraq electrical grid connection, which has been implemented on a limited scale, is seen by Iran as a threat. This is because the U.S. excludes Iran from supplying energy to Iraq, despite Iraq's urgent need for large energy supplies. Iran leverages this need as an opportunity to earn hard currency amidst ongoing sanctions, limiting the effectiveness of the energy grid project. The same challenges apply to the proposed joint economic zone between Iraq and Jordan, which could reduce Iraq's dependence on Iran for goods worth over \$4

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(5) Jordan News Agency (Petra). «The Jordanian-Iraqi Business and Finance Forum Highlights Iraqi Investments of \$32 Billion in Jordan.» Published July 24, 2023. Accessed January 4, 2025. <https://www.petra.gov.jo>

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(6) ARGUS Media. «Basrah-Aqaba Oil Pipeline Will Never Be, Iraq Militia.» Published January 22, 2023. Accessed January 4, 2025. <https://www.argusmedia.com/en/news-and-insights/latest-market-news/2414153-basrah-aqaba-oil-pipeline-will-never-be-iraq-militia>.

billion annually. <sup>(7)</sup>

### **Post-"October 7": A Critical Change in the Landscape**

Jordan has participated in security dialogue rounds hosted by Baghdad involving Iran. Despite the perception among many experts that Jordan's relationship with Iran aligns with Saudi Arabia's stance—highlighted by Jordan's withdrawal of its ambassador from Tehran in 2016 following the storming of the Saudi embassy—it was surprising to these observers that Jordan did not restore full diplomatic representation after the 2023 Saudi-Iranian agreement brokered by China. This is despite repeated Iranian calls for normalization, voiced by former Foreign Minister Amir Abdollahian. Jordan appears to have its own unique, security-related issues with Iran that directly affect its national security.

While Jordanian elites have long recognized that meaningful engagement with Baghdad often necessitates dialogue with Tehran, and that strategic discussions

with Iran could be a diplomatic necessity, Jordan's security concerns have only grown since October 7.

Following the surprising Hamas operation, there has been an uptick in smuggling attempts involving drugs and weapons, implicating Iraqi armed factions linked to the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). These factions are active along Jordan's northern border with Syria and its eastern border with Iraq. Jordan's concerns were further heightened by demonstrations near its border organized by factions tied to key forces within Iraq's Shiite Coordination Framework. These protests were intended to pressure Jordan and the international community to halt the war in Gaza. <sup>(8)</sup>

Compounding these issues, Kata'ib Hezbollah targeted a U.S. base in northeastern Jordan, killing three U.S. soldiers. <sup>(9)</sup> In response, American

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(7) Shafaq News. «Iran Exports \$4.5 Billion to Iraq Over Five Months.» Last modified 2023. Accessed January 4, 2025. <https://shafaq.com/ar>

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(8) Al-Araby Al-Jadeed. «Protest at Turaibil Border Crossing in Solidarity with Gaza Enters Its Third Week: Any Worth?» Published October 12, 2023. Accessed January 4, 2025. <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/politics/>

(9) U.S. Department of Defense. «3 U.S. Service Members Killed, Others Injured in Jordan Following Drone Attack.» Published January 28, 2024. Accessed January 4, 2025. <https://www.defense.gov/News/>



forces launched strikes against leaders responsible for the attack. Months later, Abu Ali al-Askari, the spokesperson for Kata'ib Hezbollah, declared the faction's readiness to arm 12,000 Jordanians. Meanwhile, Iranian missile strikes on Israel passed through Jordanian airspace twice, despite repeated Jordanian warnings to Tehran to avoid dragging Jordan into regional conflicts.

Jordan has also taken a firm political stance against Israel due to its national security concerns and its solidarity with Palestinians. This position has been consistently communicated to Iran, emphasizing Jordan's refusal to become a battleground for regional confrontations.

### **Regional Transformations and Trump's Return: Open Scenarios for Amman and Baghdad**

Jordan realizes that it is currently facing a complex regional equation that requires rethinking many issues and preparing for the upcoming phase, especially with the uncertain Iraqi situation following Iran's strategic losses in Lebanon and

Syria, and the return of Trump, who may apply maximum pressure on Iran and its proxies in the region, which is their most important and final stronghold.

Security-wise, despite the fall of Bashar Al-Assad's regime and the control of armed forces hostile to Iran and its proxies, which should alleviate Jordanian concerns related to border security and drug smuggling operations, the route of smugglers may shift from the northern border to the eastern border with Iraq, which extends over 180 kilometers. This border had witnessed large-scale smuggling attempts, with millions of pills being smuggled,<sup>(10)</sup> although in recent years the Syrian front was more active due to the length of the border between Jordan and Syria, which is twice as long as the border between Iraq and Jordan. However, we are talking about a drug economy that is a key economic resource for armed factions, which view Jordan as a stable base and a passage to the Gulf countries.

Politically, after Lebanon and Syria,

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News-Stories/Article/Article/3659809/3-us-service-members-killed-others-injured-in-jordan-following-drone-attack/

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(10) France 24. «Jordanian Authorities Foil Major Drug Smuggling Operation Coming from Iraq Hidden in Two Trucks of Date Paste.» France 24, December 25, 2022. <https://www.france24.com/ar/>



Iraq may be next, and it seems that Iraqi politicians are awaiting an event whose scale and scope are unknown. However, this necessarily directs preparations for all scenarios, which is reinforced by the repeated Israeli threats to armed factions in Iraq and the strikes launched on the Ansar Allah group in Yemen. This appears to be an Israeli-Western investment in the retreat of Iran's role in the region and its isolation, despite its loss of allies and strategic areas for which it has worked and sacrificed for years. Additionally, Israel feels a surplus of power, and its Prime Minister has repeatedly promised to change the shape of the Middle East. These ambitions now coincide with Trump's return, which could bring many surprises.

Economically, the U.S. administration holds a set of options to pressure Iran and Iraq, should Trump fulfill his promises of exerting pressure, such as imposing more sanctions on Iraqi political leaders and additional sanctions on Iraqi banks accused of smuggling hard currency to Iran. Furthermore, there are many possibilities, such as the potential drop in oil prices, on which the Coordination

Framework government relied heavily in recent years to stabilize its rule and achieve the greatest gains. Additionally, the potential cancellation of the U.S. exemption for Iranian energy exports to Iraq poses new challenges for Jordan. However, this may also present an opportunity at the same time.

### **Conclusion**

Although the Jordanian-Iraqi relationship has witnessed unprecedented qualitative and quantitative developments at both the economic and security levels since the foundation of Iraq's new regime in 2003, this relationship still faces numerous challenges. Among these are the question of Iraq's external decision-making independence and Jordan's repeated neglect of the need to open a strategic dialogue with Iran, rather than relying solely on the United States as an important factor in managing the relationship between Amman and Baghdad. Additionally, Jordan still cannot disregard its security concerns due to the ongoing threats it has received from the Syrian border and the presence of armed factions in western Iraq near the Jordanian border. These factions

have attempted to destabilize domestic security through smuggling, incitement, and the bombing of the American base in northeastern Jordan, which is feared to recur amid the escalating pressure on Iran in the upcoming phase.

However, in all cases, Jordan seems to believe that the boundaries of rapprochement and the necessity of developing relations with Iraq should remain present, and that any political force ruling the country must be engaged. This is also seen by some Iraqi political forces, which may feel its importance even more in the coming phase. Although the two

parties may share some common visions on certain issues, there are strengths in the Jordanian-Iraqi relationship that Jordan may further activate in the upcoming phase or reconsider how to engage with them. These include good relations with Shiite forces within the Coordination Framework, Jordan's Sunni depth in Iraq represented by social structures and political forces, attracting more Iraqi investments abroad, and Jordan's regional and international relations as an asset, which Baghdad may also try to benefit from more in the coming phase.

# Jordan's National Security and the European Union:

## A Vital Partnership Surrounded by Crises

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The term national security expresses the convergence of national power elements in the state to preserve interests and address threats. In a turbulent regional environment, every relationship Jordan has with its partners is important and plays a role in crystallizing the matrix of multi-dimensional security stability. Hence, Jordan's ties with the European Union gain importance in Jordanian national security considerations, specifically in terms of regional and international security and the local economy.

On the other hand, Jordan plays roles in the region that make it receive attention and appreciation from the European perspective. Middle East crises cast their shadow on the European continent through asylum and

terrorism, which contributed - among other factors - to creating a shift in the European societal political structure and moving away from mainstream parties. Consequently, regional crises have become at the heart of European policy dynamics.



**The European Union provides support to Jordan, which plays roles in reducing regional instability, making it important in the European perspective. Jordan was the first Mediterranean Dialogue country to obtain «advanced status» classification in its relationship with the European Union in 2010.**

From here, it can be said that European-Jordanian relations are a two-way relationship in which interactions flow through both parties, giving it continuity. The European Union provides support to Jordan, which plays roles in reducing regional instability, making it important in the European perspective. Jordan was the first Mediterranean Dialogue country to obtain "advanced status" classification in its relationship with the European Union in 2010.

Accordingly, we are talking about a sum of positive interactions on more than one level, which are based on institutional structures, most notably the EU-Jordan Partnership Council, which held its latest meetings in July 2024 chaired by Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates Ayman Safadi, and the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell, in addition to Jordan's membership in EU-related structures and programs, such as the new European Neighborhood Policy "ENP".

Therefore, Amman's relationship with the European Union is considered multidimensional, and for the purposes of framing it from the perspective of Jordanian

national security, the analysis will briefly discuss the following axes:

- 1. The role of the European Union in strengthening Jordanian national security*
- 2. Implications of turning points in EU foreign policy on the relationship with Jordan*
- 3. The next phase and Jordanian diplomacy's engagement with the European Union*

### **Elements of Strengthening the EU Role for Jordan's National Security**

Jordan is witnessing a transitional phase on two levels: The first level relates to the regional situation, where there is near consensus among experts that the current regional engagement is merely a labor for establishing new equations and new delineation of the regional balance of powers. Jordan, most closely linked to the Palestinian cause, is affected by this engagement, as it seeks to neutralize its geography from the mutual missile exchanges between the conflicting parties, and more importantly, its pursuit not to let the Middle East after October 7 become a fertile ground for the explosion of conflicts and export of crises.

As for the second level, it relates to the local environment. Despite regional turmoil, the Jordanian state insists on moving forward with a three-dimensional modernization project - political, economic, and administrative - with the aim of strengthening local power elements to face various challenges and improve citizens' quality of life.

*Under these transitional conditions, the European Union supports Jordan's national security in the following main areas:*

### **A. Security**

Jordan has faced security challenges since the beginning of the millennium, both in terms of terrorism and the collapse of security situations in its geopolitical surroundings. Views between Amman and the European Union have long been close regarding regional crises and somewhat identical in counter-terrorism strategy. Jordan, as confirmed by royal statements, adopts a comprehensive approach to addressing terrorism by breaking it down into two components: ideological extremism and behavioral violence, and addresses European policy with this perspective.

The Partnership Priorities 2021-2027<sup>(2)</sup> signed in May 2022 emphasized the importance of supporting Jordan in countering terrorism and enhancing cooperation in regional stability. The Union also provides its support through programs such as EuroMed Justice, Police TAIEX, and CyberSouth, which aim to enhance cooperation and information exchange between national and international agencies. The European-funded Integrated Border Management (IBM) program is one of the successful security partnerships on the ground, where the program supports Jordanian capabilities to monitor and manage borders "through a rights-based approach." The Syrian crisis and its resulting asylum and terrorism deepened aspects of mutual coordination between both parties, reaching a military operational level with Jordanian territory hosting soldiers from countries such as Germany and France.

Security relations with the European Union and its various countries also played a role in opening a NATO liaison office in Jordan, the first of its kind in the Middle East and North Africa.

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(2) European Consilium, «the EU-Jordan Partnership Priorities 2021-2027», 25-May-2022, accessed from <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-33042022--ADD-1/en/pdf>

## B. Economy

Perhaps most Jordanians do not feel their need for more security or freedoms as much as the need to improve their economic situation. Numbers indicate weak economic indicators related to individuals' economic status. While macroeconomic indicators are reassuring and credit rating is reliable - Moody's credit rating agency raised in May 2024 for the first time in 21<sup>(3)</sup> years the long-term sovereign credit rating from B1 to Ba3 - economic indicators related to individuals are concerning, as unemployment records worrying indicators amid declining tourism activity due to tense geopolitical conditions.

Hence, based on partnership in addressing security risks, the European Union provides support to the Jordanian economy to enhance its resilience and accommodate population needs. This support falls into several forms, first as soft loans and grants aimed at improving host communities' response to refugees and raising the state's capabilities in providing public services. The latest of

these projects was approved by the European Commission in November 2023 during King Abdullah II's visit to Brussels, with a total value of 902 million euros, distributed as 402 in grants and 500 in long-term soft loans from the European Investment Bank. Part of this package's spending will be directed to implementing the national water desalination carrier project, as Jordan suffers from severe scarcity due to global warming, groundwater scarcity, and population increase due to refugee waves.

Prior to approving this package of loans and grants, the Union allocated in May 2020 700 million euros, disbursed in 3 installments to mitigate the economic repercussions of the Corona pandemic.

The second form of European support for the Jordanian economy is directed towards refugees, as the Union, already affected by asylum, appreciates the role Jordan plays on behalf of world countries in hosting refugees. The total value directed as humanitarian, development, and financial assistance is estimated at 3.8 billion euros since the

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(3) Moody's, «Moody's Ratings upgrades Jordan to Ba3», 9-May-2024, Accessed from <https://ratings.moodys.com/ratings-news/420606>

beginning of the Syrian crisis<sup>(4)</sup>. These aids are usually directed to raising absorptive capacity in sectors affected by population increase, such as education and health.

It should be noted that this European support has witnessed successive reductions in recent years, for considerations including the declining sensitivity of the Syrian crisis and the adaptation of the regional and international environment to its repercussions, in addition to directing support towards Ukrainian refugees. Numbers indicate the severity of the decline in European support allocated to internally displaced persons in Syria and refugees in Syrian neighboring countries. At the London conference in 2016, the European Union and its member states pledged to provide more than 3 billion euros. As for the Brussels conference held in May 2024, the value shrank to 2.12 billion euros for the years 2024 and 2025, which means that the value of support allocated for 2024 is about one-third of the support allocated for 2016. This

poses significant challenges for refugees in Jordan and their ability to meet basic needs in light of their inability to safely return to their country.

Economic support also includes investments and encouraging industrial exports - rules of origin were modified in favor of Jordanian exports - in addition to renewable energy projects, and "knowledge-based growth, quality education, and integrity of job creation" as stated in the aforementioned Partnership Priorities.

### **C. Vision and Role Regarding Regional Crises**

Perhaps Jordan is associated with being an oasis of stability in an inflamed geopolitical environment, which pressures it to harness all its capabilities to neutralize its geography from the repercussions of ongoing crises, and to contribute to formulating a serious reduction in the intensity of ongoing conflicts. As for achieving regional positive peace where conflicts subside and countries engage in constructive relationships; it seems unattainable and the most that can be imagined is negative peace that ends violence but does not build trust or create horizons for cooperation.

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(4) ReliefWeb, «Factsheet - EU support in Jordan», 19-June-2023, Accessed from <https://reliefweb.int/report/jordan/factsheet-eu-support-jordan-15062023>



Faced with this fateful reality of Jordanian geopolitics, it maintains constant communication with its European partners to convey its viewpoint regarding regional crises, which contributes to considering Jordanian considerations in European foreign policy towards the Middle East, whose pillars can be summarized as: stopping violence, supporting state sovereignty and independence, combating violent extremism, and supporting structural reforms in regional countries that include good governance, enhancing rule of law and respect for human rights.

These pillars align with Jordanian interests, and EU positions regarding regional conflicts and issues confirm their alignment to a large extent with Jordanian positions. Regarding the Palestinian issue, the Union has long emphasized the necessity of establishing the Palestinian state, supporting the Hashemite custodianship of Islamic and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem, and facilitating the work of UNRWA, the legal and political incubator for Palestinian refugees.

Regarding what is classified as a "genocide"

in Gaza, the European Union calls for an immediate halt to the war and facilitation of aid entry, and some major European countries, like France and Spain, have gone far in openly calling for stopping arms exports to Israel, while countries like Spain, Ireland, and Norway pressed in favor of Palestinians by officially recognizing their state in May 2024 at the height of the ongoing war.

The same applies to the Lebanese crisis, where the European Union maintains a position condemning the explosion of the situation and has engaged directly and indirectly in mediation efforts to reach sustainable calm according to UN Resolution 1701. The European Union also supports UNIFIL forces in the face of the Israeli political attack on their role. It should be noted that the foundation of UNIFIL forces is European countries, such as Italy, Spain, Finland, and France.

In this context - i.e., the European position towards Israel - it must be noted that some countries tend to support Israeli steps and measures. Given the familiar phenomenon in European foreign policy of one or more countries splitting from the general Union position, the Palestinian issue is one of

those issues where there is no consensus on the mechanisms and means necessary to deal with it, and some countries adopt a position contrary to the position of the Union representation for foreign affairs and security policy or the Commission.

For example, in the wake of the International Criminal Court issuing arrest warrants against Israeli leaders, including Netanyahu, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban invited his Israeli counterpart to visit his country, challenging the court's decision and European respect for this decision. Hungary, a member state of the court, Orban confirmed that the decision would have no value if Netanyahu visited the country.

Contradicting its call to stop exporting weapons to Tel Aviv, France distanced itself from commitment to the international court's decision, considering that "immunities of non-party states to the ICC apply to Netanyahu and other ministers," which aroused the ire of experts in international law who see that France politically interpreted the exception granted to states not signatories to the Rome Statute.

Such deviations from the general position complicate the task of Jordanian diplomacy in establishing a unified European position supporting the Jordanian vision, and pave the way for revisions in European countries' positions that may lead to new positions contradicting what Amman calls for. Throughout the history of European countries' involvement in the Palestinian issue, positions have changed over time and in line with what Israeli policies impose as a *fait accompli*.

As for the Syrian crisis, it led political and security relations between the European Union and Amman to an advanced level, through multi-level coordination between Amman and EU institutions. The crisis that increased economic and security burdens on the Jordanian state reached its repercussions to the heart of Europe through asylum and terrorism, forcing both parties to deepen communication and research mechanisms to contain the crisis's repercussions.

The final statement of the 15th meeting of the EU-Jordan Partnership Council addressed the Syrian crisis, emphasizing the need to end the Syrian crisis "through a political solution

in line with UN Security Council Resolution 2254, while maintaining Syria's unity and territorial integrity, ensuring the elimination of terrorism, alleviating the humanitarian suffering of the Syrian people, and creating conditions for voluntary, safe and dignified return of refugees." The statement considered that "this solution is key to regional stability," which demonstrates the depth of Amman and the European Union's realization of the centrality of the Syrian crisis in regional considerations.

With Syrian opposition forces gaining control of Syrian geography and the escape of Syrian regime president, Bashar Al-Assad, the Jordanian and European approaches face a fundamental challenge related to the ability to adapt to field variables and contribute to formulating a political formula that leads to achieving the higher objectives of maintaining Syria's unity and sovereignty, reaching a political solution that integrates all parties, restoring security, ending the cycle of violence, and paving the way for safe return of refugees. Before this wave erupted, European diplomatic corridors witnessed serious discussion about whether Syria was safe for the return - or even deportation

- of refugees to their homes.<sup>(5)</sup> European countries including Germany and France, in addition to the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, were among the participants in the international Aqaba meetings held on December 14 to discuss the foundations for establishing an inclusive peaceful transitional process in Syria.

Thus, it becomes clear that the pursuit of respecting sovereignty and establishing stability that Europe adopts regarding regional crises supports Jordanian interests and establishes a sustainable vision for regional de-escalation. In this direction - i.e., regional de-escalation - the European Union engages in constant communications, direct and indirect with Tehran, with the aim of integrating it into the regional and international structure and in a way that weakens the dominance of the fundamentalist current in Iran that adopts a strong network of armed proxies that many countries consider play a destabilizing role in regional stability. It is clear from this that the European

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(5) André Bank, and Ronja Herrschner, «Syria Is Not Safe: A Look to Its Regions». GIGA Focus Middle East -italic, 5(2024), <https://doi.org/10.57671/gfme-24052>

Union's links with Amman in the three areas (security, economy, and regional crises) contribute to maintaining Jordan's national security, and Amman in turn contributes to reducing regional dissonances, and the European Union appreciates this role, as its officials' statements confirm that there is no sustainable peace in the region without Jordan's efforts.

### **Internal Transformation**

The European Union is subject to structural changes that pressure in the opposite direction of its traditional logic in managing some aspects, including European foreign policy towards the region. The first of these structural transformations is represented in the Eurasian geopolitical crisis that reached its peak with Russia's annexation of territories from Ukrainian sovereignty. Given that the Russian-Ukrainian conflict - or the international conflict taking place on Ukrainian territory as many observers consider it - is closely related to the security of European geography, energy supplies, and the power map in the continent, no priority exceeds the Ukrainian file and addressing it in a way that ensures preventing sliding towards another level of confrontation with Russia that

may not be possible to predict its outcomes. The European Union's preoccupation with a crisis in its direct land neighborhood has led to narrowing the margin of interest in addressing the repercussions of Middle East crises, as post-February 2022 Europe no longer has the luxury of devoting itself to Middle Eastern challenges in terms of its foreign policy, which has weakened its ability to provide political and funding resources in files such as the Syrian crisis.

It should be noted that even before February 2022, the European Union was unable to move frozen conflicts in the Middle East, as it lacks decisive tools to implement its vision on the ground. But in any case, whether before or after February 2022, the European vision alleviates political pressures on Amman and does not seek to obstruct Jordanian orientations towards regional files. Therefore, the European Union's preoccupation with the Ukrainian crisis has led to moving away from supporting these orientations at a sensitive time when the map of power and influence in the region is crystallizing.

The second of these structural transformations is represented in the rise of populist forces in the European societal political structure and

their transformation from a marginal player to a competitor and rival to mainstream parties. While populist literature attributes this wave of rise to a defect in the structure of the democratic system and the economy's weak ability to create a sense of social justice in the middle class, what Middle East conflicts have created in terms of asylum and terrorist operations in the heart of the continent has contributed to feeding the rise of populist right and mobilizing the European voter behind exclusionary speeches and programs.

A study published by Chatham House on the foundations of foreign policy in the perspective of European populist forces considered that the populist right does not give importance to foreign policy issues as "domestic first," which means they tend to pressure towards practicing isolationist protectionist foreign policy and reducing external interactions that are unimportant in their perspective.

Populist entities give importance to foreign policy issues to the extent these issues are linked to local issues. This means that Middle East crises fall within the core interest of the populist right because they are related to

two crucial files connected to security and identity: terrorism and asylum, and they therefore pressure towards settling regional conflicts and not escalating them for what they lead to in terms of crises threatening societal security, as they envision.

This factor can be employed by Jordan through addressing populist forces with the Jordanian role in limiting the exacerbation of the spiral of regional instability, as Jordan has proven its merit in bearing burdens for the region and the world due to crises such as the Syrian crisis, which provides common ground for adaptation with these rising forces.

Jordanian diplomacy has demonstrated its wisdom in absorbing this variable, as King Abdullah II's speech before the European Parliament in January 2020 reaffirmed the Jordanian perspective towards regional instability, and in a way that touches European concerns that unite different political spectrum represented in Parliament, including the populist right. This is also indicated by summit meetings with prime ministers from right-wing backgrounds, as in King Abdullah II's meeting with Italian Prime Minister Georgia Meloni

### **What's Next?**

It is evident from the previous section that there are factors limiting the continuity of the relationship with the European Union in strengthening Jordan's national security. This does not imply that Europe intentionally ignores or harms Jordan's interests. However, internal structural pressures within Europe, in addition to the nature of the unresolved Middle Eastern conflicts, lead to Europe's disengagement from playing Middle Eastern roles that align with Jordan's vision and interests.

In this context, it is important to note the absence of a consistent foreign policy for the European Union. The areas subject to integration in the EU treaties and protocols have excluded foreign policy, security, and defense from the legally binding nature imposed on member states. The EU's External Action Service attempts to fill this gap by urging members to formulate common positions and avoid contradictory policies.

In this direction, Amman is compelled to manage its relationship with the EU at two levels: the first is with EU institutions,

such as the European Commission and the External Action Service, and the second is with each member state individually, particularly the key states. Practitioners and observers of European foreign policy are aware of the irreconcilable differences in the positions of major European states on issues of strategic importance, such as regional crises, which complicates Jordan's diplomatic efforts in dealing with the sometimes-divided European Union.

With the return of Trump to the presidency of the United States, Europe is revisiting its strategies to address a potential Atlantic rift. The previous Trump administration was marked by a troubled relationship with the EU, and the second presidential term may not simply extend the first one. According to some observers, Trump's personality may have been "adjusted," being less confrontational and more diplomatic.

More importantly, the dispute between the Trump administration and the EU has been overcome by European countries increasing their defense spending. Defense spending by European NATO members—including the UK, which is not an EU member—reached

\$380 billion, representing for the first time 2% of their total GDP. This shift was driven by security concerns arising from the Ukrainian crisis. Only seven NATO members met their defense spending commitments of 2% of GDP in 2022, and by 2024, this commitment extended to 18 members out of 32.

Defense spending had been a point of tension across the Atlantic, and overcoming it addresses one of the main demands of the previous Trump administration. Naturally, there remain unresolved issues between the two sides, the most profound being the disagreement over democratic values and the role of political economic liberalism in world affairs.

In some cases, the European-American differences and disagreements provide Amman with an opportunity for maneuvering and coordination with one partner in a case where the other partner adopts a contrary stance, such as in the Trump administration's Middle East peace plan, known as the "Deal of the Century," or in the Gaza and Lebanon conflicts, where the EU's position is not aligned with the Israeli narrative, unlike the American stance.

## **Conclusion**

Strengthening Jordan's national security in a turbulent regional environment and a transitional local one requires Jordan's careful and continuous coordination with the European Union, in a way that serves the kingdom's geopolitical and security considerations. Perhaps the strategic understanding of Jordan in the European mindset is mutual understanding and respect, especially in foreign policy, where both sides come close to being "Like-minded states."

In domestic policy issues, Amman has the opportunity to further open up to EU institutions and convince the European mindset of the seriousness of the modernization programs the state is implementing. Administrative modernization, with its achievements in good governance; political modernization, with its goal of enhancing representation and popular participation; and economic modernization, with its aim of strengthening social justice—all contribute to empowering youth, women, and the state as a whole in the face of pressing challenges, thus attracting the EU towards Jordan's national and regional alignments.





# **BOOK** REVIEWS

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## Hamas: The Rise of Palestinian Resistance and Containment Attempts

**FARAH ABU AYADEH**

*Research Assistant at the Politics and Society Institute*

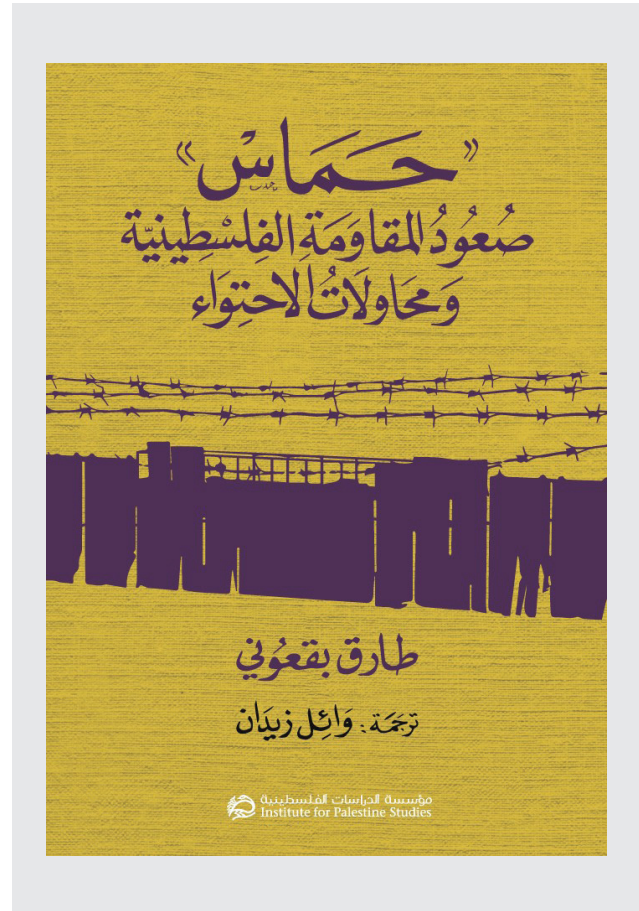
**BOOK NAME:** "HAMAS: THE RISE OF PALESTINIAN RESISTANCE AND ATTEMPTS AT ITS CONTAINMENT".

**AUTHOR:** TAREQ BACONI

**TRANSLATED BY:** WAEL ZAIDAN, **TRANSLATION REVIEWED BY:** AKRAM KHATIB, **COPYEDITED BY:** NERMIN ABBAS

**PUBLISHER:** INSTITUTE FOR PALESTINE STUDIES (IN ARABIC), STANFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS (IN ENGLISH).

**YEAR OF PUBLICATION:** 2018, **TRANSLATED IN** 2024.



The book *Hamas: The Rise of Palestinian Resistance and Containment Attempts* was published in 2018 by its author Tareq Baconi in English through Stanford University Press. The Institute for Palestine Studies issued the first Arabic edition in Beirut in May 2024, translated by Wael Zeidan, with review by Akram Khatib and linguistic editing by Nermin Abbas. The Arabic edition includes an updated introduction reflecting the developments in the area governed by Hamas, Gaza Strip.

The book consists of six chapters: the first titled *The Rise of Palestinian Islamic Nationalism*, followed by *Dismantling Armed Resistance*, *The Politics of Resistance*, *The Strangulation of Hamas*, *Institutionalizing Division*, and finally *Regional Tribulations*. Additionally, the book features a preface preceding the first chapter and a conclusion titled *Containment and Suppression*.

The author, Tareq Baconi, is a Palestinian writer and analyst with a PhD in International Relations from King's College London. He is considered one of the prominent figures providing thoughtful political and media analysis on Palestinian human rights and the struggle for self-determination. He served as a senior analyst for Palestinian/Israeli affairs and conflict economies at the International Crisis Group in Ramallah and has published articles in global newspapers and journals such as *The New York Times* and the *London Review of Books*. He currently chairs the board of "Al-Shabaka: The Palestinian Policy Network" and is the book reviews editor for the *Journal of Palestine Studies*.

The book presents a historical narrative of the emergence of the Islamic Resistance Movement " Hamas," highlighting the factors and enabling environment that contributed to its significant rise, making it one of the key players in the Palestinian cause, both in armed struggle and political engagement. Additionally, the author points out Hamas's complex liberation strategy and its ability to adapt its ideology and develop it to align with its interests. This analysis is supported by numerous official and unofficial interviews, along with the author's reference to a large number of documents and materials, including Hebrew-language ones, adhering to the

highest academic standards through the book's editors and reviewers.

This material attempts to explore the organizational structure of Hamas as outlined in the book, while tracking its political flexibility, external alliances, and relations with other forces. It finally touches on Hamas's regional relationships.

### **The Organizational Structural Network of Hamas**

Tareq Baconi partially addresses the organizational structure of Hamas in his book without providing detailed insight into all its aspects. He discusses the organizational structure within a broader context, focusing on the political and military challenges faced by Hamas under international pressure. Its structure includes the political apparatus as the movement's highest leadership, highlighting its evolving role in light of the changes Hamas has undergone, most notably its 2006 election victory and subsequent governance of Gaza. This includes:

- The Shura Council, established to manage the organization and representing the supreme organizational authority within the movement. It is tasked with outlining the movement's general policies and making strategic decisions, in addition to electing members of the Political

Bureau, with its members representing Hamas's regional divisions internally and externally.

• **The Political Bureau, which oversees leadership and strategic decisions.**

The book also discusses the military apparatus, represented by the movement's armed wing, the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, and examines the nature of the relationship between the political leadership and the armed wing and how they influence one another, in light of the internal division within the movement and external dynamics in dealing with it.

Since the inception of Hamas as a resistance movement with an Islamic national character in the 1980s, the movement has experienced numerous changes across multiple levels. This environment has reflected, as an adaptive outcome, on the position and primary roles of the political apparatus within the organization. The Political Bureau represents the executive leadership of Hamas. As in electoral systems, the head and members of the Bureau are elected by the Shura Council. The Bureau manages various political, military, financial, and media-related issues. It is responsible for implementing the Shura Council's decisions, overseeing foreign relations, and supervising the political and

military wings.

Regarding Hamas's military wing, the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades act as the movement's forceful arm, carrying out resistance operations and overseeing military advancements, including rockets and tunnels, as well as protecting its leadership. This wing enjoys a degree of autonomy from the political leadership, maintaining a balance of power, especially between the movement's political and military factions. While the political wing faces international and regional pressures influencing its behavior and priorities in negotiations with parties, including the Israeli occupation, the military wing favors continuing armed resistance, advancing its weapons, and rejecting truce agreements and accords. This divergence became evident during the October 7, 2023, operation.

This operation highlighted a shift in the balance of power toward the military wing, which increasingly influences the political apparatus and occasionally makes limited escalatory decisions beyond the movement's political vision. Nonetheless, Hamas strives to maintain a precise environment reflecting centralized political decision-making and decentralized operational execution. It adheres to the general frameworks defined by the Shura Council and

the Political Bureau. However, the divergence in the roles of the two branches is tied to the differing environments they operate within: the military wing confronts direct field challenges from occupation and siege while prioritizing basic needs. Meanwhile, leadership abroad operates within distinct diplomatic and political contexts, focusing on building regional and international alliances to support resistance on a strategic level.

### **Political Flexibility: Internal and External Relations**

After decades of its establishment, Hamas demonstrates significant political flexibility, a key factor in its survival and expansion during this period. This flexibility stems from its substantial adaptability to changing circumstances and surrounding conditions on local, regional, and international levels. However, despite this flexibility, the movement has preserved its ideological core and maintained its identity as a resistance movement.

The 2006 Palestinian legislative elections marked a pivotal moment in understanding Hamas's political behavior. The results led to Hamas's victory, but it faced immediate rejection from Western countries, led by the United States, unless

it met specific conditions, such as recognizing Israel, renouncing "violence" (armed resistance), and adhering to previous agreements like the Oslo Accords. These conditions conflicted with Hamas's political program and ideology. The movement showed some flexibility by attempting to negotiate a long-term truce with Israel while refusing to recognize it, a move interpreted as an effort to ease the siege while achieving strategic gains.

In 2007, Hamas took control of the Gaza Strip following armed clashes with Fatah, resulting in political and military division. Israel imposed a suffocating blockade on Gaza, leaving political survival options scarce. Despite immense challenges, particularly in providing basic and humanitarian needs such as food, electricity, and medicine, Hamas adopted strategies such as building tunnels to smuggle goods. It also strengthened its military capabilities, focusing on producing locally manufactured weapons. Additionally, Hamas sought investments and funding from countries like Qatar and Turkey, which helped sustain its programs despite the blockade. Through these efforts, the movement demonstrated adaptability to the imposed realities, playing a dual role as an armed resistance movement and a civil government in Gaza.

This duality derives legitimacy from its civil administration and the social culture underlying Gaza's community. Furthermore, Hamas made multiple attempts to reconcile with Fatah to address shared challenges and strengthen the divided Palestinian front. However, these efforts faced numerous obstacles, both internal, due to disputes over authority, and external, due to regional and international interventions aligned with the interests of the parties and their allies. Hamas has expressed a willingness to make compromises as long as its core political and military interests in Palestine are preserved. The political discourse of Hamas underwent significant and notable evolution with the announcement of its Document of Principles and General Policies in 2017. Compared to the movement's charter issued in 1988, the document reflected a more moderate tone and signaled Hamas's readiness to accept a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders while maintaining its commitment to resistance and refusal to recognize Israel. While Hamas demonstrates a high degree of pragmatism in its behavior, this has not hindered its adherence to its fundamental principles. The flexibility adopted by the movement is a core characteristic that enables it to adapt to changing circumstances and maintain resilience. However, it raises critical questions

about the extent to which this flexibility can go and the challenges it poses internally in balancing power among its various wings.

### **Hamas and the Region**

As a resistance movement striving to liberate Palestinian territories occupied by the Israeli-Zionist movement, Hamas plays a role tied to a complex network of regional powers. Inevitably, it is influenced by the factors and variables associated with these powers, which are reflected in the movement's trajectory and its interactions with the regional environment. Hamas operates not in a political vacuum but in an interconnected sphere shaped by the interests of various actors, including Iran, Turkey, Israel, Egypt, and others. This reality subjects Hamas to numerous influences, compelling it to adapt to shifting regional balances.

Iran is among Hamas's most prominent military and logistical supporters, particularly in the period following 2006–2007 and the subsequent wars with Israel. This support operates within a framework of mutual military and political interests, with Iran emerging as Hamas's primary financier for rockets and weapons in return for the movement adopting positions supportive of the Iranian axis in the region. This dynamic reflects the strategic importance Hamas holds for



Tehran in its struggle with Israel and its allies. Hamas has leveraged several factors to create a diverse network of allies and sources of support. In addition to Iran, Qatar provides financial support, while Turkey offers political backing alongside economic reinforcement.

Considering these alliances, the period of the Arab Spring marked a historic turning point in Hamas's network of relationships. Initially, these complex events seemed to offer a respite from the crises it faced, particularly the suffocating blockade and, to a lesser degree, international and regional isolation. Hamas's positions were shaped accordingly. However, this period of opportunity did not last long due to the emergence of counterrevolutions against the Arab Spring, particularly in Egypt, and the movement's stance on the Syrian revolution, which reflected recent developments.

Egypt adopted negative stances toward Hamas under Hosni Mubarak's rule, viewing it as an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood, a banned group in Egypt at the time. However, with the 2011 uprisings, the balance of power shifted, especially with the rise of political forces linked to the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. Mohammed Morsi, the Brotherhood's candidate, was elected president in 2012 and provided various

economic reliefs and political support to Hamas. Yet, the military coup led by Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, which ousted Morsi, restored Egypt's adversarial policies toward Hamas, particularly concerning the Rafah crossing. Hamas, in turn, adjusted to this renewed reality.

As for Syria, Hamas was previously a close ally of the former Syrian regime (under Assad), despite its Islamic ideology, as part of the resistance axis. The Syrian regime provided financial and military support and hosted Hamas's political leadership in Damascus. However, as the Syrian revolution escalated into armed conflict, Hamas sided with the revolution. Consequently, its relations with the Assad regime were severed, its political office in Damascus was closed, and its political leadership relocated to Qatar. This shift also strained Hamas's relationship with Iran, which viewed the move as a departure from the resistance axis, resulting in reduced financial and military support from Tehran.

Despite Hamas's ability to forge multiple alliances and adapt to the challenges and opportunities of each, today, following the fall of the Assad regime and the Syrian opposition's rise to power, questions arise about the next phase. How will Hamas reshape its alliances

considering emerging indications of a new regional landscape? This comes in the context of over a year of attritional warfare, highlighting the success of Sunni political Islam in carving out a unique and distinct discourse across the Arab region.

### **Conclusion**

The book offers a historically grounded and in-depth analysis of Hamas's history and development within the context of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. It focuses on understanding the dynamics of the relationship between Palestinian resistance and the local, regional, and international political contexts. The author highlights the transformation of Hamas from a resistance movement into a dual-role entity that governs the Gaza Strip, pointing to the challenges it faces due to these roles, which diverge theoretically. While Hamas has achieved a degree of success in managing this duality in practice, it currently faces immense challenges amidst the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, marked by extensive destruction, losses in infrastructure, and human suffering.

The author also underscores the dynamics of the Israeli-Palestinian relationship, particularly from the perspective of Hamas. He notes that Israel's

containment of Hamas in Gaza—should this occur—could undermine the effectiveness of any final resolution that addresses the demands of the Palestinian people. The relationship between the two parties appears to revolve around deriving political gains through sporadic confrontations on the battlefield. This dynamic allows Hamas to maintain its authority while enabling Israel to continue its settlement projects in the West Bank and tighten its suffocating grip on Gaza. Ultimately, it is the besieged Palestinians who bear the highest cost.

Like any intellectual work, this book is not without its challenges and criticisms. One key point of consideration is the timing of its translation and publication in Arabic. There is a temporal gap of nearly six years between the book's writing and its translation and release, during which significant events occurred—most notably, the Al-Aqsa Flood operation. This event shifted the resistance movement to a different context, potentially offering a new perspective that differs from the one presented by Baconi. While the author interpreted Israel's approach toward Hamas as one of conflict management rather than resolution, today's Israeli behavior suggests a different trajectory.

Another point of critique concerns the alignment between the book's title and its content. Although Hamas has been "contained" by regional and international powers since 2006, the movement has continued to operate as a resistance force, conducting numerous military operations for various reasons—the most recent being the October 7th operation. This reality contrasts partially with the idea of Hamas being entirely contained as a rational political actor driven solely by its governance and political interests.

While the book provides a historical and academic perspective on understanding the development of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas), it does not account for the potential shifts in the movement's strategies. The Al-Aqsa Flood operation in October 2023 exemplifies one such shift, challenging the author's portrayal of Hamas as being primarily focused on maintaining its authority as a governing body in Gaza.



# **PSI'S ACTIVITIES**

## DURING THE SECOND HALF OF 2024



## Conference on Democracy and Political Transition: A Jordanian-Norwegian Approach

On October 2, 2024, the Politics and Society Institute, in collaboration with the Norwegian Embassy in Amman and in partnership with the University of Jordan, held a conference titled “Democratic and Political Transition: A Jordanian-Norwegian Approach.” The conference spanned two days and brought together experts and researchers specializing in democratic transformation. Its primary objective was to enhance the democratic and political realities of both countries by deriving lessons learned and sharing opportunities and challenges, particularly in light of Jordan’s earnest efforts to modernize its political and democratic system. The event witnessed the participation of representatives from political parties, academic institutions, graduate students, decision-makers, and political and civil activists. The discussions covered a range of topics, including experiences of democratization and party practices around the world - Northern Europe and the Scandinavian monarchies, youth engagement in politics—opportunities and challenges, gender inclusion in political participation and governance structures, as well as a review of Jordan’s democratic experience over the century of the state’s existence. The conference concluded with a session comparing the democratic systems of Jordan and Norway in the geopolitical context.

## Conference on Climate Justice: Governance as a Tool

On October 9, 2024, the Politics and Society Institute, in partnership with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (Middle East Program) and supported by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, hosted a conference titled “Climate Justice: Governance as a Tool.” The event brought together a distinguished group of researchers, experts, and representatives from governmental, private, civil society, and media sectors to discuss the challenges



and opportunities surrounding climate governance in the MENA region. The conference featured over 20 speakers across six discussion sessions for two days. Topics addressed included governance at various levels, the impact of climate governance on the economy and border conflicts, and best practices in climate partnerships and projects.

Theoretical concepts of climate justice were explored alongside their practical implementation in public policy within MENA countries. The conference also delved into mechanisms for measuring climate justice objectives and the gaps in current public policies, emphasizing the need to develop effective policy implementation tools. Discussions also focused on the multi-tiered levels of governance, from local to national and regional, and the pivotal role of cities and municipalities in advancing climate action. Additionally, the conference highlighted the importance of social governance and accountability in managing climate issues, involving civil society, women, youth, and persons with disabilities in policymaking, and analyzing the connection between climate governance and cross-border conflicts. Geopolitical analyses of these conflicts underscored the role of climate governance in fostering human security and resolving disputes over natural resources.



## Launch of the Book “Democratic Transition in Jordan: The Experience of Political Parties and the 2024 Parliamentary Elections”

On October 31, 2024, the Policy and Society Institute, in collaboration with the King Abdullah II Fund for Development, launched the book “Democratic Transition in Jordan: The Experience of Political Parties and the 2024 Parliamentary Elections.” The book, authored by political theory professor, the Institute’s academic advisor Muhammad Abu Rumman, and political sociology researcher Muhammad Al-Amin Asaf,



aims to keep pace with Jordan’s rapidly evolving political landscape. It offers a forward-looking analysis of the next phase, particularly following constitutional amendments and parliamentary elections that have witnessed unprecedented political party activity in the new millennium, with results that surprised many political circles. The book, which emerged from the project “The Political Party Spectrum in Jordan in conjunction with the 2024 Parliamentary Elections: A Field Survey Study,” begins with theoretical discussions on political modernization and efforts to solidify democracy while also presenting a historical account of the political party scene post-political modernization. It categorizes political parties based on their ideological orientations, using data from field interviews with most political parties. The book also highlights the transformations within political parties in the last two years following the legal amendments recommended by the Royal Committee for Political Modernization and the recent parliamentary elections held under new rules. It concludes with an analysis of the election results and attempts to forecast the future of Jordan’s democratic transition, offering various scenarios and insights into the factors influencing each scenario.

## Forum on “Multilateralism and the United Nations Charter: Strengthening International Cooperation for Humanity”

On December 5, 2024, the United Nations in Jordan, in collaboration with the Politics and Society Institute and the University of Jordan, organized a forum titled “Multilateralism and the United Nations Charter: Strengthening International Cooperation for Humanity.” Held to mark the 79th anniversary of the United Nations' founding, the forum brought together leaders, experts, and stakeholders to discuss the role of multilateralism in addressing global challenges.



The sessions focused on enhancing the principles of the UN Charter, fostering international cooperation, and advancing sustainable development in an era of rapid global change. The forum also spotlighted Jordan's role in diplomacy, peacebuilding, and regional cooperation, praising the country's leadership in addressing challenges such as climate change, humanitarian crises, and sustainable development. The forum was attended by a large audience, including diplomats, international organizations, academics, experts, journalists, and activists. The first session, titled “The United Nations Charter and Multilateralism in the 21st Century,” emphasized the importance of the UN Charter in addressing contemporary challenges such as conflicts and inequality. The second session, “Multilateralism in Action: Live Examples of the UN's Political, Humanitarian, and Development Efforts in the Region,” showcased the practical role of the UN in promoting shared human goals through its operations in the Middle East, with a focus on Gaza and Yemen.

## Launch of the Book “The Northern War: Drug Networks in Syria, Jordanian Response, and Regional Options”

On December 18, 2024, the Politics and Society Institute, in partnership with the Omran Center for Strategic Studies, launched the book “The Northern War: Drug Networks in Syria, Jordanian Response, and Regional Options.” The book analyzes the phenomenon of organized drug trafficking networks in Syria and their security, political, and social repercussions on Jordan and the region.



Written by researcher Hasan Jaber, specializing in international conflicts, Middle Eastern affairs, and Syrian and international issues, the book employs quantitative and qualitative analysis methods alongside numerous interviews conducted with Jordanian, Syrian, and neighboring-country academics and experts. It provides an in-depth look at the drug smuggling networks in Syria, considering them a complex security phenomenon with regional dynamics. The book traces their origins to the outbreak of the Syrian crisis in 2011 and the factors that facilitated the rise of organized crime networks in the country.

It also examines Jordan’s response mechanisms to these cross-border networks, exploring the security and diplomatic alternatives pursued by Jordan to address the threats posed by drug smuggling across the Jordanian-Syrian border.

The book concludes that these drug networks are not merely illicit trade operations but political and economic tools exploited by various parties in light of the Syrian state’s diminished role. It underscores Jordan’s vital role as the region’s first line of defense and calls for developing regional Arab cooperation to combat organized crime networks and achieve collective security and security integration.

## Launch of the “Adnan Abu Odah Program for Zionist Movement and Israeli Studies – Ayn”

On December 21, 2021, the Politics and Society Institute announced the launch of the “Adnan Abu Odah Program for Zionist Movement and Israeli Studies – Ayn.” This program focuses on the historical contexts, ideologies, key figures, and political and social consequences of the Zionist movement and the



establishment of Israel, as well as the impact on Israel’s current political, social, economic, and security realities and its role in the region. It also examines the influence of global and regional Zionist lobbies on shaping world policies in Israel’s favor and the implications for the Palestinian cause, Jordan, and the Arab region.

The program aims to equip a new generation of young Jordanian researchers with a deep understanding of the roots, objectives, and development of Zionism as both a movement and an ideology from its inception to the present day. Additionally, it aims to build researchers’ capacities in Israeli studies from multiple perspectives, focusing on providing rigorous scientific and methodological knowledge.

The program targets researchers who wish to study Zionism and Israel. It includes a curriculum of workshops, lectures, and discussion sessions supervised by a steering committee of experts and researchers. Participants will also receive Hebrew language instruction at various levels, and the Institute has established a dedicated library of scientific references on the Zionist movement and Israel.

The program’s launch is timely, reflecting the need for a more profound and accurate Jordanian perspective on the dangerous shifts occurring in Israel, particularly with the rise of the Israeli right and religious Zionism, the decline of the peace settlement project, and the regional chaos associated with normalization and the integration of Israel into the region.

The program’s name honors the late Adnan Abu Odah, a political leader and statesman who believed that a deep understanding of the Zionist movement was crucial for comprehending domestic and international Israeli policies. The name “Ayn” symbolizes a person with discerning vision and insight, aware of the dangers facing Jordan that are closely tied to Israeli affairs.



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# ABOUT PSI

**P**olitics and Society Institute (PSI), is a Jordanian nonprofit, policy and research organization established to advance practical research, innovative ideas and realistic solutions toward building a more prosperous Jordan and a stable region.

The Institute is an independent organization that aims to deepen the understanding of public policy and decision-making processes and to build a better knowledge platform of domestic and regional dynamics that will define our future.

The Institute advances its mission guided by the values of the rule of law, civil society, good governance, and moderation. It provides an innovative, integrated, and global approach to its analysis of complex trends and transformations with particular attention to youth dynamics.

The Institute aims to provide practical solutions, based on up-to-date studies and research in political, economic, security, and social fields. The Institute hopes to define future trends for Jordan and the region through its analysis and projections, focusing on the impact of accelerating transformations on the politics and societies of the Middle East.

By bringing together experts and thinkers from various disciplines and regions, the institute hopes to be able to build ideas and solutions through current and relevant research and integrated analysis that can help policymakers advance national interests and build a more stable region by effectively responding to complex challenges and rapid transformations.

[www.politicsociety.org](http://www.politicsociety.org)



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