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Jordan and the Middle East: A Forward-Looking Strategic Vision

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Section One: Jordan's Repositioning within a Reshaping Regional Order

The Middle East constitutes a dynamic space in which geopolitical and geo-economic functions are being reconfigured through specific trajectories linked to the redirection of energy flows from the Gulf toward Europe and Asia, the restructuring of supply chains through new land-maritime corridors, and the intensifying competition over the control of strategic transit nodes such as ports, pipelines, and logistical transport networks. This transformation is reflected in the evolution of certain states from mere transit zones into hubs for redistribution, storage, and processing, thereby enhancing their capacity to influence the movement of trade and energy flows. Within this context, the regional role of states is being redefined according to their position within these networks and their ability to control or integrate into their infrastructures, leading to a redistribution of power balances on a functional basis associated with the management of flows rather than solely with conventional capabilities. Amid these dynamics, a new political-economic geography is emerging, centered on logistical corridors and value chains, reinforcing the region's role as a pivotal connector within the global economy.

In this context, the region itself is being redefined as a networked space structured around transnational logistics and energy corridors rather than as a cohesive geographical unit. These corridors are designed to connect production centers in the Gulf and Asia with consumer markets in Europe through specific infrastructures that include ports, railway networks, pipelines, and storage and processing facilities. Such networks are configured according to the priorities of international powers and transnational corporations to ensure the uninterrupted flow of goods and energy at the lowest cost and highest efficiency, without requiring regional cohesion as a precondition for their construction or operation. Within this transformation, the value of states is increasingly determined by their functional position inside these networks: whether they serve as production hubs integrated into value chains, logistical nodes for redistribution and storage, limited transit corridors, or territories bypassed in favor of alternative routes. This functional classification reshapes the position of states within the international system on the basis of their ability to control flows or influence their trajectories, rather than according to sovereignty in its traditional sense.

This transformation carries a critical implication concerning the redefinition of the strategic value of states, whereby such value is measured by a state's ability to convert its geographical location into an operational economic function embedded within specific regional and international networks, including energy corridors, supply chains, and logistical infrastructures related to transport, storage, and processing. In this regard, Jordan faces a functional dilemma associated with the possibility of being positioned merely as a transit corridor whose role is confined to facilitating the movement of goods and energy without possessing the instruments necessary to control these flows or generate added value through storage, intermediate manufacturing, or redistribution.

Accordingly, analytical approaches that directly equate geographical location with strategic importance lose much of their explanatory precision, since the significance of location is ultimately determined by the manner in which it is integrated into specific projects and by its position within the value chains associated with them. The same geographical location may therefore generate high returns when embedded within advanced production and processing networks, while remaining confined to a limited and low-impact role if its function is restricted to transit without possessing the infrastructure or regulatory instruments necessary to maximize economic value.

The central question of this paper emerges from the issue of Jordan's positioning within ongoing regional and international projects, particularly regarding the nature of the function it performs within them: is Jordan moving toward a role associated with production, storage, and redistribution, or is its role limited to facilitating transit without generating direct economic value? Addressing this question requires an examination of the structures governing these projects, which are organized according to two parallel logics.

The first concerns horizontal corridors (East–West), through which projects are designed to connect production centers in Asia with consumer markets in Europe via specific routes that include ports, railway networks, and pipelines. This model is primarily based on reducing transportation time, lowering costs, and increasing transit efficiency, thereby determining the position of states within these networks according to their ability to provide rapid and low-cost infrastructure, without necessarily requiring the development of domestic productive activities.

The second logic is represented by vertical axes (North–South), which are centered on linking energy markets, integrating production chains, and coordinating logistical infrastructures among the Gulf, the Levant, Egypt, and Turkey. This model seeks to localize stages of the value chain within the region through activities such as industrial processing, strategic storage, and redistribution, thereby enabling the generation of direct economic returns and strengthening interdependence among regional economies.

The fundamental distinction between these two trajectories lies in the nature of the economic function they produce. Horizontal corridors integrate states into global supply chains primarily through a transit function, whereas vertical axes enable the construction of internal productive and logistical functions that strengthen the capacity to control flows and generate added value. On this basis, the position of the state is determined by the degree of its integration into value chains rather than by its geographical location in the abstract.

In the Jordanian case, the challenge emerges in the nature of integration into horizontal corridors, as unconditional engagement in East–West connectivity projects risks consolidating Jordan's role as a transit corridor confined to facilitating the movement of goods and energy across its territory

without possessing the instruments necessary to control flows or generate added value through storage, processing, or redistribution. This challenge becomes even more acute in light of the existence of competing regional alternatives, including alternative maritime and land routes, as well as the ability of international actors to redirect corridors according to considerations of cost and efficiency, thereby reducing dependence on the Jordanian route.

By contrast, the development of vertical axes offers the possibility of redefining Jordan's economic role through the localization of specific functions within value chains, including energy storage, electricity grid interconnectivity, the establishment of logistical redistribution hubs, and the development of production chains linked to food security and intermediate industries. Such an approach would strengthen Jordan's capacity to transition from a transit position toward a productive-logistical role capable of generating direct returns while granting the country greater leverage in influencing regional flows.

Accordingly, effective positioning requires the adoption of a dual strategy based on benefiting from international corridors under conditions that guarantee tangible economic returns, alongside the construction of a regional depth grounded in integrative projects that enhance bargaining capacity and reduce dependence on fluctuating external routes.

Within this framework, a set of transformations emerges as foundational variables for any future-oriented conception of Jordan's role within these networks:

- First, disruptions affecting maritime corridors, particularly at strategic chokepoints such as the Red Sea and the Strait of Hormuz, have redirected part of global flows toward land-based routes. This development is reviving the importance of the Arab Mashreq as an alternative transit space and offering its states an opportunity to reposition themselves within corridors linking the Gulf to Europe through land and railway transportation networks.
- Second, the energy sector is undergoing a transformation toward interconnected systems that integrate electricity, water, and hydrogen through projects involving regional electricity interconnectivity, energy-linked desalination plants, and the production and transportation of green hydrogen. This shift expands the concept of energy security beyond the mere possession of primary resources to include control over the infrastructure of interconnected networks.
- Third, competition among international projects is shifting from the selection of routes toward the control of governing nodes within networks, including major ports, storage facilities, electricity interconnection points, and logistical service hubs. These nodes provide the capacity to direct flows and influence their trajectories.
- Fourth, the regional environment is increasingly moving toward a multiplicity of alternative routes rather than reliance on a single corridor, driven by the overlap of

international and regional initiatives. This trend grants medium-sized states greater room to renegotiate their roles by diversifying partnerships and linking themselves simultaneously to multiple networks.

This paper is grounded in a central hypothesis that the challenge facing Jordan is linked to how the opportunities emerging from the restructuring of corridors and supply chains are defined, as well as to the mechanisms through which they are addressed at the level of policy and infrastructure. The core of this challenge lies in the analytical framework guiding the decision-making process rather than in the principle of engagement itself, since the nature of a state's economic role is ultimately determined by the manner in which it is integrated into these networks.

Within this context, the absence of a redefinition of the national role leads to the positioning of the state within limited functions imposed by the design of these networks, whereby its role becomes confined to transit without possessing the instruments necessary to influence the trajectories of flows or generate added value. As the redistribution of roles within the region accelerates, delays in developing an integrated strategic vision risk entrenching the state within a low-impact position inside these structures, one that may become increasingly difficult to alter over time.

Accordingly, this paper reformulates the strategic question on a functional basis: how can geographical location be transformed into an operational platform for value creation through specific projects in the fields of transportation, energy, and logistics services? And how can the transition be made from a transit role to that of a strategic node through the development of capacities in storage, processing, redistribution, and connectivity between regional and international networks?

Section Two: Deconstructing the Strategic Landscape - Competing Corridor Networks and the Reshaping of the Region

The projects currently unfolding across the region-such as the India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), Gulf connectivity initiatives, Israeli projects in the fields of ports and energy, and Chinese movements associated with the Belt and Road Initiative-can be understood as components of a competitive network aimed at reorganizing the economic geography of the Middle East. This competition is centered on the design of routes and the determination of governing nodes within them, including ports, transportation lines, storage hubs, and interconnection points between networks. Within this context, the positions of states are defined according to specific functions inside these structures, including linking routes, securing transit, managing distribution operations, and controlling value generation through activities related to storage, processing, and logistics services.

The current landscape is shaped through three interconnected layers that govern the reorganization of flows across the region:

- The first layer consists of global corridors, which are designed to connect production centers in Asia with consumer markets in Europe through routes passing across the Middle East and incorporating specific infrastructures such as ports, railway networks, and pipelines. At this level, the value of a corridor is measured according to direct operational indicators, including transportation time, transit costs, and continuity of operation. Consequently, states are integrated into these networks primarily through the function of facilitating flows, without requiring the development of accompanying domestic economic activities.
- The second layer is represented by regional hubs, through which certain states seek to expand their role from mere transit toward the management of flows by developing capacities in storage, industrial processing, redistribution, and specialized logistical zones. At this level, competition shifts toward control over logistical nodes such as strategic ports, storage centers, and interconnection points between networks, enabling the generation of direct added value from transnational flows.
- The third layer is embodied in the logic of re-routing, which is based on the continuous reassessment of routes according to criteria related to cost, risk, and operational feasibility. This includes redirecting flows toward alternative routes in cases of heightened security risks, cost imbalances, or infrastructural disruptions. As a result, this level becomes the most influential in determining the continuity of states' roles within these networks, either by consolidating their position or by bypassing them in favor of alternative pathways.

The IMEC can be analyzed as a project aimed at reorganizing trade flows between India and Europe through a route passing across the Gulf states and the Levant, relying on infrastructure that includes ports, railway networks, and logistical connectivity systems. The project is supported politically and financially by international powers seeking to diversify trade routes and reduce dependence on pathways associated with Chinese-led initiatives, thereby granting it an implementation momentum that extends beyond a purely theoretical framework.

The design of this corridor is based on linking specific nodes characterized by high operational efficiency, with a primary emphasis on reducing transportation time and lowering costs, without necessarily incorporating mechanisms for integrating regional economies or developing internal production chains. Consequently, economic value along the route is generated through the speed of transit and the efficiency of transportation rather than through productive activities within the region itself.

According to this logic, the benefits accrued by states located along the corridor are determined by their ability to develop functions that go beyond transit, such as establishing logistical hubs for storage and redistribution or integrating segments of value chains associated with transportation and intermediate manufacturing. By contrast, limiting participation to a transit role risks entrenching a low-value position within the network, one that remains vulnerable to replacement should more efficient alternative routes emerge.

Second: Israeli Projects and the Reconfiguration of Geography

The proposals associated with projects such as the "Ben Gurion Canal" fall within a broader vision aimed at redistributing global trade routes through the creation of partial or complete alternatives to traditional corridors, most notably the Suez Canal. Although these projects remain largely within the realm of planning and strategic debate, they already perform a direct strategic function by introducing alternative routes into the calculations of international actors, thereby prompting a reassessment of the economic and security viability of existing corridors.

This orientation is based on a logic that seeks to reshape geography through engineering instruments and infrastructural systems designed to redirect flows, enabling commercial movement to shift from established routes toward new pathways whenever conditions of cost, efficiency, and security become favorable. Within this framework, the bypassing of certain states ceases to be merely a theoretical possibility and instead becomes an operationally viable option, particularly in an environment characterized by multiple routes and flexible mechanisms of re-routing.

Third: Gulf Initiatives - From Financing to the Reconfiguration of Regional Roles

The Gulf states are increasingly repositioning themselves within networks of energy and trade by expanding their role from financiers to active participants in the design and implementation of corridors. This transformation is occurring through investments in strategic ports, land and railway transportation networks, electricity interconnection projects, and the production and export of renewable energy and hydrogen. Such a shift reflects a transition from the role of project sponsor to that of a strategic actor capable of shaping the routes themselves and defining their operational structures.

As a consequence, centers of gravity within the region are being redistributed, as financial capacity becomes intertwined with the ability to direct investment flows and determine priorities of connectivity between markets. This grants Gulf states direct influence over the design of regional networks. In this context, financing no longer serves merely to support existing projects; rather, it extends to shaping their trajectories and determining the critical nodes through which they pass, thereby reinforcing the Gulf's position as a principal center in the management of energy and trade flows.

Fourth: The Chinese Presence - Continuity Through Flexibility

Chinese-linked initiatives, most notably the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), are based on an approach that distributes investments across multiple routes, including ports, railway networks, and industrial zones, thereby reducing dependence on any single pathway and minimizing operational and political risks. This model enables the redirection of flows among alternative routes whenever a particular corridor becomes disrupted or excessively costly, granting these networks a greater capacity for continuity and resilience.

This presence is grounded in the construction of an interconnected network of logistical nodes and production centers rather than a concentration on one highly efficient corridor, reflecting a fundamentally different logic of organization. While some projects rely on a specific route designed to maximize operational efficiency in terms of speed and cost, the Chinese approach is based on the multiplicity of routes and the distribution of movement among them according to criteria related to cost, risk, and feasibility.

Accordingly, competition assumes a structural character that extends beyond the comparison of separate projects to encompass a broader contest between two distinct models: one based on a single optimized corridor designed for maximum speed and cost efficiency, and another built around a flexible multi-route network capable of adapting to political and economic transformations.

A unified reading of these ongoing projects demonstrates that the region is evolving into a competitive multi-route system centered on testing alternative logistical pathways rather than relying on a single stable corridor. Within this context, flows are distributed across parallel routes subject to continuous reassessment according to criteria such as cost, transportation time, and risk levels. This dynamic undermines the notion of a fixed route and makes the continuity of any corridor dependent upon its operational performance.

As a result, the center of value shifts from the routes themselves to the nodes that govern them, whereby the economic significance of states is increasingly determined by their control over strategic ports, storage hubs, or interconnection points between networks. Likewise, the ability to redirect flows among alternative routes becomes a direct instrument of influence used to manage risks, optimize costs, or bypass bottlenecks.

These dynamics are clearly illustrated through existing regional experiences. In the case of the United Arab Emirates, the country’s role has not been derived solely from its geographical position; rather, ports such as Jebel Ali have been transformed into integrated logistical nodes combining storage, re-export, and industrial services, enabling the UAE to capture a substantial share of the value generated by transnational flows. Similarly, Turkey has leveraged its location as a bridge between Asia and Europe through the development of railway networks and industrial

zones linked to major corridors, thereby strengthening its role as a productive-logistical hub rather than merely a transit route.

These cases demonstrate that value is not generated simply by flows passing through a state, but by the state's capacity to attach additional functions to those flows, transforming transportation activity into a complex economic process.

Within this transformation, geographical location alone no longer guarantees integration into these networks. Rather, integration depends on the state's ability to provide specific functions within value chains, including advanced transportation services, storage, processing, and interconnectivity between networks. In the absence of such functions, the state's role remains confined to transit while simultaneously bearing the risks associated with fluctuations in routes and shifting logistical priorities.

The most significant transformation lies in the shift from competition over territorial control to competition over the control of flows. Control over logistical nodes provides greater bargaining power than the mere possession of a transit route, while value-added activities-such as energy services, storage, intermediate manufacturing, and data services-enable states to generate direct returns from these flows. By contrast, limiting participation to a transit function imposes operational risks without granting the instruments necessary to influence the direction or conditions of movement.

Accordingly, engaging with this landscape requires the adoption of a strategy based on diversified connectivity, enabling simultaneous engagement across multiple routes while developing domestic capacities capable of repositioning geographical advantages in response to shifting balances. On this basis, the strategic question moves beyond selecting a particular project toward designing a flexible functional position that allows movement across multiple initiatives without becoming dependent on any single one of them.

Section Three: Jordan's Strategic Options - From a Transit Position to the Engineering of Role

Jordan's position within the regional landscape is being redefined as a question of designing an economic function within a dynamic network of corridors rather than selecting a fixed place within it. Consequently, the available strategic options are linked to the forms of positioning that the state can develop in response to an environment characterized by multiple routes and rapidly shifting patterns of re-routing.

The following scenarios represent interconnected trajectories, each differing in terms of potential returns, associated risks, and the degree of control over regional flows:

Scenario One: Integration into Global Corridors (Transit Integration Model)

This scenario is based on integrating Jordan into horizontal corridors through the development of the infrastructure necessary to facilitate the flow of goods and energy, particularly within projects such as the IMEC. Implementation would focus on enhancing the efficiency of land and railway transportation networks, expanding the role of the Port of Aqaba as a transit hub, and simplifying logistical procedures in order to reduce transportation time and costs.

Such a trajectory could generate relatively rapid returns through increased volumes of trade and energy flows. However, it will also constrain Jordan's ability to capture added value if its role remains confined to transit without the parallel development of complementary functions such as storage, processing, and redistribution.

Scenario Two: Transformation into a Regional Node (Regional Node Model)

This scenario is based on expanding Jordan's role from a transit corridor into a center for managing regional flows through the development of storage capacities, re-export functions, energy network interconnectivity, and industrial activities linked to supply chains. This includes the establishment of advanced logistical hubs, the strengthening of regional electricity interconnection systems, investment in sectors such as ammonia and hydrogen, and the development of digital infrastructure through data centers.

This model would enable Jordan to retain a portion of the generated value within the national economy while strengthening its bargaining position by transforming the country into a regional node upon which transnational flows increasingly depend. Achieving this objective, however, requires substantial capital investment, intensive regional coordination, and the precise identification of sectoral priorities. The principal risk lies in incomplete implementation that could result in high-cost assets without proportional economic returns.

Scenario Three: Building a Regional Vertical Axis (North–South Integration Model)

This scenario is based on repositioning Jordan within a regional axis extending from the Gulf to the Levant and Turkey through the interconnection of energy networks-including electricity, gas, and water systems-the development of land and railway transportation lines, and the construction of integrated production chains that distribute roles between Gulf-based financing and energy resources on the one hand, and manufacturing and service sectors in Jordan and the broader Mashreq on the other. The model also includes strengthening Jordan's role in regional food security through integration with agricultural investment initiatives across the region.

This approach would contribute to generating value within the region itself while reducing dependence on fluctuations in global routes and external logistical transformations. Nevertheless, it remains associated with political challenges and requires complex regional

understandings and coordination mechanisms, making it the scenario with the highest long-term strategic value but also the longest and most demanding in terms of implementation.

Scenario Four: The Smart Balancing Strategy (Hybrid Adaptive Strategy)

This scenario is based on building a flexible strategic capacity that enables Jordan to operate across multiple pathways without becoming dependent on any single one of them. It combines integration into horizontal corridors in order to secure short-term returns, gradual investment in the components of a regional node model, and the selective development of vertical integration projects, while simultaneously diversifying partnerships to distribute risks.

This model provides a greater ability to adapt to shifting routes and reduces the risks associated with reliance on a single strategic option. However, it requires a clear strategic framework capable of defining investment priorities and preventing the fragmentation of resources.

The comparison between these scenarios should not be based on which one is “best” in absolute terms, but rather on which scenario:

- aligns with the state’s current capacities;
- can be developed gradually without imposing high political costs;
- generates accumulative and sustainable value rather than merely short-term gains.

Transforming these strategic options into executable pathways requires the identification of clear entry points beginning with specific projects characterized by direct and scalable impact. Within this framework, three initial operational priorities can be identified:

Short-Term Priority (0–3 Years): Consolidating an Enhanced Transit Position

Objective: Capturing additional value from existing flows.

Projects:

- Developing an integrated logistical hub in Aqaba combining storage and re-export functions.
- Establishing a northern land hub in Mafraq for redistribution toward Syria and Iraq.
- Digitizing customs procedures in order to significantly reduce transit times.

Outcome: Increasing the value generated from transit activities without waiting for major long-term projects.

Medium-Term Priority (3–7 Years): Building the “Node” Function

Objective: Transitioning from transit to the management of flows.

Projects:

- Expanding regional electricity interconnection systems, positioning Jordan as a distribution hub.
- Investing in ammonia and hydrogen sectors.
- Establishing regional data centers.

Outcome: Retaining a larger share of generated value within the domestic economy.

Long-Term Priority (7–15 Years): Consolidating a North–South Axis

Objective: Reducing dependence on external corridors.

Projects:

- Developing railway connectivity linking the Gulf, Jordan, and the Mediterranean.
- Building integrated production chains combining Gulf energy resources with Jordanian manufacturing capacities.
- Strengthening food security through integration with regional agricultural investment projects.

Outcome: Transforming Jordan into an integral component of a broader regional production system.

Section Four: Risk Matrix and the Decision-Making Framework - Managing Uncertainty Rather Than Assuming It

The transformations unfolding across the region are not generating conventional risks that can be contained through partial policy responses; rather, they are producing an environment characterized by the continuous redirection of routes and the rapid shifting of actors' priorities. In such environments, the problem lies less in the lack of information than in the assumption of its stability.

Accordingly, Jordan's engagement with strategic options becomes tied to the state's capacity to manage uncertainty as a permanent variable rather than as a temporary transitional phase. This requires moving beyond the logic of "risk reduction" toward a logic centered on the distribution and strategic utilization of risks.

First: Redefining Risk

In the current context, risks emerge not only from direct threats but also from changes in the rules of the game itself. These risks can be classified into four interconnected categories:

- Geographical Bypass Risk

This risk concerns the possibility that corridors may be redesigned in ways that bypass Jordan altogether, whether through maritime alternatives or newly developed land routes. Such a risk does not necessarily stem from internal weakness but from the capacity of external actors to redirect flows elsewhere.

- Low-Value Integration Risk

This risk arises when participation in projects occurs without the acquisition of value-added functions, leading to the absorption of infrastructure costs without generating meaningful economic returns.

- Single-Track Dependency Risk

Dependence on a single route or project increases the fragility of the national position in the event of political or economic shifts affecting that specific corridor.

- Internal Capacity Risk

This category relates to the state's implementation capacity, institutional coordination, and negotiating preparedness. Such risks are often less visible in the early stages but ultimately become the most decisive in shaping outcomes.

Second: The Risk Matrix Across Scenarios

When these categories are applied to the proposed scenarios, different patterns of exposure emerge:

- The global corridor integration scenario carries relatively low short-term risks but higher medium-term risks in the event of route redirection. It is particularly exposed to "geographical bypass" and "low-value integration" risks.
- The regional node scenario involves higher implementation and investment risks but provides a greater capacity to reduce the likelihood of marginalization. Its success depends primarily on overcoming "internal capacity" risks.
- The vertical axis scenario entails elevated political and regional risks, particularly within an unstable regional environment. However, it carries the lowest level of dependency risk over the long term.
- The hybrid strategy distributes risks across multiple pathways, yet it simultaneously increases the risk of strategic fragmentation if not governed through a coherent framework.

Third: From Risk Assessment to Risk Engineering

Traditional approaches treat risks as factors that must be minimized. In the current context, however, such an approach is insufficient. Certain risks must be accepted because they constitute a necessary condition for achieving higher strategic value.

For example:

- Reducing investment may lower financial risks, but it also entrenches a low-value position.
- Avoiding political complexity may preserve short-term stability, but it prevents the construction of an effective regional role.

Accordingly, the strategic decision is not about minimizing risks altogether, but rather about determining which risks can be absorbed in exchange for which forms of return.

Fourth: The Decision-Making Framework - Three Governing Levels

In order to transform scenarios into implementable decisions, this section proposes a framework composed of three interconnected layers:

Priority Structuring

This level requires answering a fundamental question: in which sectors should Jordan become a "value producer" rather than merely a "corridor?"

These sectors include, at a preliminary level:

- Energy (electricity, hydrogen, regional interconnectivity)
- Advanced logistical services
- Digital infrastructure (Data Centers)
- Specific industrial sectors (such as ammonia)

The absence of such prioritization leads to the distribution of resources without cumulative strategic impact.

Strategic Alignment

Partnerships should not be built solely on the basis of financing, but also on the distribution of roles.

The decisive question here is: does the partnership strengthen Jordan's position as a node, or does it merely reinforce its role as a corridor?

This requires:

- Diversifying partnerships across Gulf, European, and Asian actors;

- Building flexible alliances rather than exclusive alignments;
- Developing negotiating capacity grounded in clear domestic strategic objectives.

Execution Readiness

Even the strongest scenarios will fail in the absence of implementation readiness. This includes:

- Developing specialized negotiation teams;
- Preparing clear concept notes prior to engagement in any initiative;
- Improving coordination among institutions;
- Building databases capable of supporting strategic decision-making.

The challenge here lies not in the shortage of ideas, but in the weakness of transforming those ideas into executable and operational projects.

Conclusion: Toward the Reengineering of Jordan's Role - Priorities of Intervention and Capacity Building

The analysis demonstrates that Jordan's position within regional networks is not determined merely by the existence of projects, but by the state's ability to design a clear economic function within this evolving system. This requires moving beyond passive observation of developments toward defining actionable intervention priorities that integrate infrastructure, sectoral policies, and investment instruments.

The current phase is characterized by the growing tendency of international actors-particularly in Europe-to formulate future pathways for energy, trade, and economic security through plans based on the modeling of flows and the identification of strategic nodes. By contrast, a significant portion of the domestic debate remains focused on reacting to these initiatives after their launch, thereby limiting the ability to influence their design. This disparity creates a gap in role-definition capacity, as advantage increasingly accrues to those actors capable of establishing the rules of connectivity and determining the direction of flows in advance.

Within this context, a debate centered solely on the question of accession or participation no longer provides sufficient analytical value, as it presupposes a pre-existing framework whose conditions are determined outside the sphere of local influence. Developing a more effective approach requires redirecting the question toward identifying national interests that can be translated into economic functions, such as managing energy flows, developing storage and redistribution services, and connecting logistical and digital networks. On this basis, participation in projects becomes a tool for achieving these interests rather than an objective in itself.

This transformation reshapes strategic priorities:

- Jordan should not be approached merely as a transit route, but as a platform for value production.
- Strategic options should not be directly confined within existing frameworks such as the "Economic Modernization Vision," since the nature of current transformations exceeds these frameworks in both scale and timeframe.
- The logic must shift from "integration into projects" toward "reshaping projects in ways that serve Jordan's position".

Considering the dominance of horizontal projects, there is a growing need to develop a parallel trajectory that strengthens internal regional integration. This does not imply rejecting global corridors but rather balancing them through North–South axes capable of redistributing value within the region itself.

Within this framework, Jordan emerges as a potential pivotal actor capable of linking:

- The Gulf (finance and energy);
- The Levant (geographical position and logistical services);
- Turkey (manufacturing and markets).

This approach acquires additional significance in light of transformations within the Syrian landscape, where any degree of security and administrative stabilization could facilitate the reintegration of Syrian territory into regional connectivity networks. This includes the development of land and railway corridors linking the Gulf to Turkey and Europe through Syria rather than relying exclusively on alternative routes that bypass it.

Such a possibility would lead to a reassessment of the viability of existing routes in terms of cost, distance, and direct market connectivity, potentially positioning Syria as a shorter or less costly corridor under certain scenarios. In this context, integrating Syria into regional networks becomes an operational option tied to developments in stability and infrastructure rather than merely a theoretical political proposition.

The Next Phase: Methodology for Developing Jordan's Strategic Visions

The preceding reading of the regional landscape indicates that the challenge facing Jordan extends beyond interpreting transformations to the question of how to produce an executable strategic vision capable of defining the state's position within emerging networks. This requires moving from the level of general analysis toward the construction of a practical institutional framework through which strategic options can be studied, developed, and translated into policy.

The next phase therefore begins with the establishment of a multi-level analytical process aimed at transforming strategic visions into operational scenarios that can be systematically assessed.

The first step: Precisely defining the strategic question.

The process begins with formulating a clear governing question: what function does Jordan seek to consolidate for itself within the region over the next ten to fifteen years? The answer must be framed operationally-for example, as a logistical node, an electricity interconnection hub, a storage and processing platform, a redistribution center, or part of a North–South integration axis. This step is essential because it determines the direction of analysis, investment, and negotiation, while preventing the fragmentation of visions across disconnected projects lacking a unified objective.

The second step: Identifying possible strategic visions.

A defined set of strategic visions that Jordan can realistically pursue must then be established. Within this paper, four principal visions emerge: integration into global corridors, transformation into a regional node, construction of a regional vertical axis, and the adoption of a hybrid strategy combining these trajectories in varying degrees. These visions should be treated as practical options requiring evaluation rather than as political slogans or broad conceptual aspirations.

The third step: Deconstructing each vision into operational components.

Every strategic vision must be translated into measurable components. This includes identifying the required infrastructure, potential partners, beneficiary sectors, expected returns, associated risks, and the timeframe necessary for implementation. For instance, if the vision centers on transforming Jordan into a regional node, its components would include developing Aqaba as a storage and redistribution hub, establishing a northern land hub in Mafraq, expanding electricity interconnection systems, attracting investments in ammonia and hydrogen, and developing regional data centers. This level of decomposition transforms the vision from a general idea into an actionable program.

The fourth step: Building unified evaluation criteria.

The proposed visions should be assessed through a single evaluation matrix comprising five principal criteria: direct economic return, the capacity to retain added value within the domestic economy, the level of political and operational risk, financing requirements, and the state's implementation capacity across different time horizons. A sixth criterion should also be added concerning long-term strategic impact-that is, the extent to which each vision contributes to enhancing Jordan's bargaining position within the region. These criteria provide the selection process with a clear institutional foundation.

The fifth step: Studying the regional environment surrounding each vision.

No strategic vision can be analyzed in isolation from the environment within which it will operate. The next phase therefore requires analyzing existing and competing corridor maps,

transformations in energy systems, the condition of ports and transportation routes, and developments within the Syrian, Gulf, and Turkish landscapes. The objective is to determine where opportunities are emerging and where alternative pathways may reduce the strategic relevance of the Jordanian route. This approach situates each vision within its real operational environment rather than treating it as an abstract theoretical option.

The sixth step: Identifying sectors in which Jordan can generate real value.

Following the evaluation of strategic visions, a more precise stage emerges concerning the identification of sectors in which Jordan can generate tangible added value. In light of the framework presented in this paper, four priority sectors stand out: energy and interconnection networks, advanced logistical services, digital infrastructure and data centers, and selected intermediate industries such as ammonia. These sectors are chosen according to their capacity to connect with regional corridors while simultaneously generating income, employment, and bargaining leverage.

The seventh step: Preparing a domestic implementation agenda.

Internal action begins by aligning national institutions around a coherent strategic vision or a consistent package of visions. This includes establishing a small, highly specialized national team bringing together expertise in planning, energy, transportation, investment, and political economy. This team would be responsible for preparing concept notes for priority projects, gathering data, constructing preliminary return-and-risk models, and proposing the necessary legal and regulatory frameworks. It would also identify gaps in infrastructure, financing, and institutional readiness. At this stage, the process moves from analysis to decision engineering.

The eighth step: Preparing an external agenda for dialogue and partnership-building.

External engagement requires prioritizing relationships according to the nature of each partner. With Gulf states, dialogue would focus on financing, energy, and logistical interconnectivity. With Syria and Iraq, emphasis would center on land corridors, border crossings, and the reactivation of regional routes. With Turkey, discussions would focus on production chains, manufacturing, and market connectivity. With Europe, the emphasis would be placed on energy, hydrogen, supply security, and digital infrastructure. This functional distribution of dialogue enhances Jordan’s negotiating capacity by grounding each partnership in clearly defined interests.

The ninth step: Launching a Track II process with selected Arab states.

Track II diplomacy represents a suitable instrument for refining strategic visions before introducing them into official governmental channels. This process should begin with a limited group of Arab states directly connected to Jordan’s strategic environment, including Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Iraq, and Syria when conditions permit, in addition to Turkish

experts if the vision includes a northern integration axis. The purpose of this process would be to discuss connectivity scenarios, the distribution of functions within value chains, and the possibilities for integration in energy, logistics, and food security. It would also provide a space for testing the convergence of interests before entering formal negotiations.

The tenth step: Structuring temporal priorities.

A strategic vision requires a clear temporal sequence. In the short term, priority should be given to projects capable of rapidly increasing transit value and improving logistical performance, such as customs digitization, the development of Aqaba, and the establishment of a northern land hub. In the medium term, priority should shift toward building the "node" function through electricity interconnection systems, storage capacities, data centers, and selected intermediate industries. In the long term, the focus should move toward consolidating a North–South axis linking energy, finance, manufacturing, and services within a more integrated regional network. This gradual progression allows capacities to accumulate rather than dispersing effort across disconnected objectives.

The eleventh step: Establishing a periodic review mechanism.

Regional corridor dynamics evolve rapidly, requiring every strategic vision to undergo regular review every six months or annually according to defined variables, including the evolution of alternative routes, shifts in energy and transportation prices, the regional security environment, the progress of competing projects, and the preparedness of external partners. The purpose of this review mechanism is to update priorities and reorganize projects without losing strategic direction. In this way, the strategy remains flexible and adaptable within a constantly changing environment.

The twelfth step: Transforming the selected vision into a decision paper.

The methodology concludes with the preparation of a concise decision paper submitted to policymakers. This paper should include the adopted strategic vision, the rationale behind it, projected costs and returns, associated risks, responsible implementing institutions, external partners, and a timeline for the next stages of implementation. This document represents the link connecting academic analysis with public policy, providing the state with a practical instrument for strategic action.

Operational Conclusion

The development of Jordan's strategic visions follows a clear pathway: defining the national function, identifying strategic alternatives, deconstructing them into operational components, evaluating them according to unified criteria, identifying priority sectors, building a domestic agenda, activating an external engagement track, launching Track II dialogue with selected Arab

partners, and then sequencing implementation through phased priorities and periodic review. Through this process, the discussion moves beyond a general question concerning Jordan's position toward a practical roadmap defining what Jordan seeks, how it intends to study its options, with whom it will engage, and which trajectory should begin first.