

معهد السياسة والمجتمع
Politics and Society Institute (PSI)



**Jordan and the Day After the War: A Strategic Reading of
Regional Transformations and National Security Imperatives**

*From Managing Shock to Shaping Strategy: How Jordan Is Redefining Its
National Interests in a Post-Twelve-Day War Middle East*

July 2026



- The Israeli–American war against Iran did not produce a decisive outcome in the classical military sense. Instead, it redistributed strategic questions and security threats across multiple fronts, compelling Jordan to adopt a fundamentally different reading of the so-called "day after."
- Despite the near–total elimination of its senior leadership in the opening strike, Iran emerged from the confrontation with a significant political advantage. It succeeded in transforming institutional resilience into a narrative of victory while securing an American commitment to substantial economic investment.
- Israel failed to achieve a strategic outcome commensurate with the scale of its military mobilization. This shortfall is likely to encourage efforts to compensate elsewhere, particularly in geographically proximate and strategically sensitive arenas for Jordan, foremost among them the West Bank and Jerusalem.
- Jordan's primary security challenge has neither diminished nor changed. It remains the documented trajectory of Israeli legislative initiatives and settlement expansion in the West Bank and Jerusalem, rather than the ultimate outcome of the war with Iran.
- The strains in U.S.–Israeli relations are real and supported by tangible evidence. Nevertheless, they represent a limited political opening rather than a strategic rupture. Their significance depends on Jordan's ability to engage directly with the principal centers of decision–making in Washington, rather than relying primarily on congressional channels.
- A carefully calibrated opening toward Iran has become a security and political necessity rather than a matter of strategic preference. However, the emergence of a security– and military–oriented leadership succession in Tehran significantly narrows the prospects for meaningful engagement in the near term.



- Jordan has already moved in practice—not merely in doctrine—from a posture of observation to one of proactive deterrence in southern Syria, as demonstrated by documented air operations. This model merits institutionalization as an explicit strategic doctrine rather than remaining an operational practice without formal policy articulation.
- Jordan's domestic front is not merely a symbolic line of defense but a measurable strategic asset. Public debt approaching 118% of GDP, a fiscal deficit exceeding 4.6%, and youth unemployment surpassing one quarter of the workforce collectively underscore that economic security is as integral to national security as any external threat.
- The most serious challenge confronting Jordan is not the absence of an accurate assessment of the current strategic environment, but the absence of an institutional mechanism capable of translating that assessment into a written, comprehensive, and accountable national security strategy, despite previous royal directives calling for such an approach, at least in the military domain.

Executive Summary

The Israeli–American war against Iran, which began in late February 2026 with an unprecedented aerial campaign targeting Tehran and several other Iranian cities, concluded with an outcome too complex to be characterized as an unequivocal victory for either side. The opening strike eliminated the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic, the Minister of Defense, the Commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), and the Chief of Staff in what was widely regarded as the most consequential decapitation of Iran's leadership structure in decades. Yet the operation neither precipitated state collapse nor compelled political surrender. Within a single week, a successor was selected through an accelerated constitutional process, reflecting a high degree of institutional preparedness for precisely such a contingency. This apparent paradox—the near–total loss of the country's senior leadership alongside the continuity of the state—explains why Iran has emerged from the conflict widely perceived, both regionally and internationally, as



a country that withstood an unprecedented military and technological coalition rather than one that suffered strategic defeat.

By contrast, Israel and the United States fell short of achieving the decisive outcome they had publicly sought. This reality was reflected in the Memorandum of Understanding that brought the direct confrontation to an end, signed at the Palace of Versailles near Paris in mid-June 2026. Rather than imposing unconditional surrender, the fourteen-point agreement established a structured sixty-day negotiating framework, introduced a phased easing of restrictions on Iran's oil exports and maritime activities, and included a U.S. commitment to an economic reconstruction and development package valued at no less than US\$300 billion. This substantial financial commitment has provided Iran with what may be described as a significant reservoir of negotiating leverage. Instead of emerging from the war under mounting economic isolation, Tehran now seeks to safeguard the prospect of large-scale investment through a cautious management of its regional policies rather than by engaging in renewed military escalation that could jeopardize these gains.

This dual strategic reality—Iran emerging with enhanced political standing despite severe leadership and material losses, and Israel confronting strategic frustration despite overwhelming military superiority—constitutes the framework within which Jordan must assess the post-war regional environment. On one hand, the political forces driving Israel's settlement project are likely to compensate for the absence of strategic success on the Iranian front by accelerating their agenda in the West Bank and Jerusalem, a trajectory supported by documented legislative initiatives and official policy developments. On the other hand, growing tensions between Washington and Tel Aviv over the scope and timing of Israeli expansionist policies—including explicit U.S. warnings against formal annexation even as Israel's legislative process continues—have created a narrow yet tangible diplomatic opening. For Jordan, this window offers an opportunity to engage more effectively with key decision-making centers in Washington and to reinforce its diplomatic efforts in defense of its national interests and the future status of the Palestinian territories.



The paper concludes that Jordan is not confronting a single, clearly defined threat that can be addressed through a single policy instrument. Rather, it faces an interconnected set of strategic challenges. The most immediate is the evolving situation in the West Bank and Jerusalem, which directly affects both the Hashemite Custodianship and the broader demographic and political stability of the region. A second, indirect challenge emanates from southern Syria and Iraq, particularly through the activities of Iran-aligned militias. Jordan is no longer merely monitoring this threat; it has increasingly adopted a proactive operational posture, as evidenced by documented military actions. At the same time, the regional security architecture is undergoing rapid transformation, with new patterns of alignment emerging that do not necessarily guarantee Jordan a meaningful role in shaping their direction. These external pressures coincide with deep-seated domestic economic vulnerabilities—including public debt approaching 118% of GDP and a fiscal deficit exceeding 4.6%—which now constitute strategic constraints comparable in significance to any external security threat.

Against this complex strategic landscape, no single policy option offers a decisive solution. Instead, Jordan's most viable course lies in an institutionalized strategy of strategic hedging: avoiding full alignment with any single regional axis while maintaining open channels of communication with all major actors, and simultaneously strengthening the country's economic and social resilience. A robust domestic front is not merely a prerequisite for stability but the essential foundation upon which any effective foreign and security policy must ultimately rest.

I. The Regional Landscape After the War: From Military Decisiveness to the Management of Strategic Uncertainty

The war that erupted in late February 2026 did not conclude with a clear military or political victory for either side, despite the United States employing what specialized military assessments describe as its most advanced intelligence capabilities and precision-strike technologies, enabling the elimination of the senior leadership of a major regional power within a matter of hours. This paradox—unprecedented operational effectiveness coupled with the inability to secure a decisive political outcome—extends well beyond the Iranian case. It underscores a broader strategic



lesson: the ability to inflict overwhelming military damage does not necessarily translate into the capacity to impose a durable political settlement. This insight is equally relevant to assessing future regional security challenges, including those confronting Jordan.

An even more revealing paradox emerged in the aftermath of the assassination of Iran's senior leadership. Rather than triggering the institutional collapse anticipated in many pre-war scenarios, Tehran demonstrated a remarkable capacity to manage the leadership vacuum through an accelerated constitutional succession process. The Speaker of Parliament assumed interim executive responsibilities, a senior security official took charge of the Supreme National Security Council, and within a single week the Assembly of Experts formally appointed a new Supreme Leader. The speed of this transition—supported by a succession committee reportedly established in advance for precisely such a contingency—suggests that what this paper characterizes as Iran's "political victory" was achieved not because its leadership survived, but despite its near-total elimination. The episode therefore reinforces the proposition that the institutional resilience of the Iranian state is considerably deeper and more adaptable than most pre-war assessments had assumed.

By contrast, Israel's post-war landscape appears considerably more complex than its overwhelming military superiority might suggest. The principal domestic divide is no longer defined by the traditional distinction between the political right and left, but increasingly by disagreements surrounding the Prime Minister's political future and leadership. At the same time, however, a broad consensus continues to unite much of Israel's political spectrum—from the right to the center—around two fundamental objectives: preserving the Jewish character of the state and expanding effective Israeli control over territories that, until recently, remained the subject of international negotiations. It is precisely this cross-partisan consensus that renders the challenge facing Jordan structural rather than circumstantial. The threat does not depend on the survival or replacement of a particular government; instead, it reflects a deeply embedded political trajectory within Israel's governing system, as demonstrated by the continued advancement of expansionist legislative initiatives regardless of changes in governing coalitions.



II. The West Bank and Jerusalem: Jordan's Primary and Most Clearly Documented Security Challenge

Jordan's national security cannot be assessed independently of the accelerating trajectory of Israeli legislative initiatives, a process documented through a sequence of concrete parliamentary actions. The Israeli Knesset has given preliminary approval to two separate legislative proposals: the first seeks to extend full Israeli sovereignty over "Judea and Samaria" (the West Bank), while the second calls for the formal annexation of the settlement of Ma'ale Adumim, east of Jerusalem. The latter advanced by a margin of only a single vote in the Knesset plenary. The explanatory memorandum accompanying the first proposal makes explicit symbolic references to the anniversary of the 1967 war and to the "return of the Jewish people to their historic homeland," underscoring that these initiatives are rooted in a long-term ideological vision rather than serving as short-term political tactics.

This trajectory extends well beyond symbolic parliamentary voting. In early June 2026, the Knesset approved an unprecedented package of benefits for Israeli settlers in the West Bank, applied retroactively from the beginning of the year through the end of 2027. At the same time, Israeli authorities advanced tenders for thousands of new settlement units within a broader strategic development plan in East Jerusalem. According to specialists in Israeli settlement policy, the project is designed to isolate Jerusalem from its Palestinian hinterland while severing the geographic continuity between the northern and southern West Bank as part of a longer-term strategy extending to 2050. The concept commonly referred to in official and media discourse as "Greater Jerusalem" is therefore not merely a planning designation; it represents a political project intended to consolidate the idea of a unified and permanent Israeli capital without recognition of Palestinian or internationally acknowledged claims to the city.

Notably, this legislative escalation unfolded while senior American officials were visiting Israel, despite earlier public statements from Washington indicating that the United States would not support the formal annexation of the West Bank. The divergence between official American rhetoric and Israel's legislative trajectory provides one of the clearest indications that the tensions



examined in this paper between Washington and Tel Aviv extend beyond disagreements over timing or diplomatic tactics. Rather, they reflect a substantive divergence in strategic priorities. For Jordan, this divergence constitutes a limited but meaningful diplomatic opportunity that warrants careful engagement with key decision-making centers in Washington rather than remaining confined to declaratory opposition.

The strategic significance of these developments lies not only in the continued expansion of Israeli settlements but also in their convergence with a more consequential scenario. The political forces leading the settlement movement may seek to exploit—or potentially contribute to creating—periods of heightened regional instability in order to generate the political and security conditions necessary for large-scale population displacement. Such displacement could occur either through direct expulsion or through the systematic erosion of economic and living conditions to the point where outward migration appears formally voluntary while remaining substantively coercive. From Jordan's perspective, developments in the West Bank therefore cannot be regarded as an external policy issue. They constitute a core national security concern because of their potential demographic, social, and political implications for the Kingdom.

Within this strategic context, the Hashemite Custodianship over the Islamic and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem represents far more than a historical or religious responsibility. It constitutes the principal internationally recognized legal framework preserving both Palestinian and Jordanian institutional presence in the city. Any effort to weaken, circumvent, or redefine this custodial role would therefore represent a direct challenge to Jordan's national security in its most concrete strategic sense, rather than merely at the symbolic level.

III. U.S.–Israeli Tensions: A Limited but Meaningful Political Opportunity

The growing tensions between the U.S. administration and the Israeli government warrant a careful assessment that avoids both exaggeration and dismissal. There is mounting evidence that key decision-makers in Washington perceive the United States as having been drawn into a costly regional confrontation—politically and economically—that extended beyond its original



strategic calculations. This perception helps explain the relatively rapid conclusion of a Memorandum of Understanding with Iran, which incorporated concessions widely regarded as more substantial than the confrontational rhetoric that had preceded the war would have suggested. At the same time, these developments should not be interpreted as signaling a durable strategic realignment in the U.S.–Israeli relationship. The bilateral partnership remains deeply institutionalized, underpinned by long–standing political, military, and strategic foundations that are unlikely to be fundamentally altered by episodic disagreements over policy, timing, or tactics.

Nevertheless, even a limited political opening deserves careful diplomatic investment. Jordan's longstanding emphasis on cultivating influence through the U.S. Congress is no longer sufficient in an increasingly fragmented American policymaking environment, where authority over Middle East policy is dispersed across multiple institutions and competing centers of influence within the executive branch itself. An effective Jordanian strategy therefore requires deeper and more sustained engagement with those decision–making circles that exercise genuine influence over the formulation of U.S. regional policy. Such engagement should seek to restore the level of access and strategic dialogue that characterized earlier periods of U.S.–Jordanian relations, while recognizing that the American administration is not a monolithic actor but a complex system composed of institutions with differing priorities, authorities, and degrees of influence.

Another dimension that deserves closer attention is frequently overlooked. The decision to bring the war to an end was likely shaped not only by strategic considerations but also by immediate domestic economic pressures within the United States, particularly concerns over energy prices and their political implications during a sensitive electoral period. This serves as a reminder that American decision–making on Middle Eastern conflicts is rarely driven by geopolitical considerations alone. It is equally conditioned by domestic political and economic dynamics that Jordan–and other Arab states–can analyze and incorporate into the timing and framing of their diplomatic initiatives, rather than waiting for a fundamental transformation in U.S. strategic doctrine that may never materialize.



Within this context, Jordan's most effective diplomatic narrative is to reinforce the argument that Israeli policies in the West Bank and Jerusalem—not the policies of Arab states—constitute the principal factor increasing the risk of drawing the United States into future regional confrontations. Advancing this message requires a sustained and coordinated diplomatic and strategic communications effort, rather than episodic public statements issued only in response to moments of crisis.

IV. Iran After the War: A Conditional Strategic Advantage

Compared with the Gulf states, Jordan occupies a relatively secondary position in its relationship with Iran. The scope of unresolved bilateral issues between Amman and Tehran is considerably narrower than the complex network of security challenges and strategic disputes that define Iran's relations with the Gulf monarchies. Moreover, Jordan incurred only limited direct material costs during the recent conflict, particularly when contrasted with several Gulf states that were subjected to direct missile attacks. This relatively peripheral position provides Jordan with a broader degree of strategic flexibility. It does not, however, imply the absence of an Iranian challenge. Rather, that challenge assumes a predominantly indirect character through Iran-aligned militias and proxy networks operating in Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon. These actors do not necessarily function under the direct authority of the central governments in those countries; instead, they often pursue operational agendas shaped by their own organizational priorities while remaining broadly aligned with Tehran's regional strategy.

Against this backdrop, the establishment of a carefully calibrated political and security dialogue with Iran has become a strategic necessity rather than a discretionary policy choice. Such engagement should be grounded in pragmatic security management rather than strategic alignment. Tehran's enhanced negotiating position following the war may well translate into increased support for its regional partners unless regional relationships are managed with strategic prudence. At the same time, expectations regarding the prospects for engagement should remain measured. The succession to Iran's highest leadership has ultimately favored a figure historically associated with the country's security and military establishment rather than



with the relatively more pragmatic current that some early post-war assessments anticipated. Consequently, continuity in Iran's security doctrine appears more likely than any fundamental political opening in the near term. Nevertheless, limited opportunities for dialogue remain, driven in part by Tehran's own interest in implementing the extensive economic commitments embodied in the post-war Memorandum of Understanding.

One aspect of the post-war settlement deserves greater analytical attention. A careful reading of the agreement suggests that the understandings ending the conflict implicitly acknowledged Iran's role in the Lebanese arena by incorporating the cessation of military operations there into the framework of the agreement itself. Equally significant is the absence of any reference to Gaza or the Palestinian question. This omission should not be viewed as accidental; rather, it appears to reflect a deliberate decision to avoid overlap with a separate negotiating track involving a specific Palestinian actor. For Jordan, this distinction carries important strategic implications. Despite the centrality of the Palestinian issue to Jordan's national security calculations, it remained entirely outside the framework of U.S.–Iranian understandings. Accordingly, any assumption that progress on the Iranian file will automatically generate positive outcomes for the Palestinian cause lacks a reliable strategic foundation and should not serve as a guiding premise for Jordanian policymaking.

V. Southern Syria: From Strategic Monitoring to Documented Proactive Deterrence

Southern Syria has emerged as Jordan's most consequential medium-term security front—not as a theoretical source of instability, but as an operational environment in which the Jordanian Armed Forces have been actively engaged for several years. Since approximately 2022, Jordan's military posture along its northern border has evolved from a predominantly defensive response to intermittent cross-border smuggling attempts into an explicitly proactive doctrine of deterrence. This shift has entailed moving beyond border defense to targeting the sources of security threats inside Syrian territory. During the past spring, documented Jordanian air operations struck facilities associated with networks involved in the trafficking of narcotics and weapons extending from eastern Daraa through Suwayda Governorate toward the Jordanian desert. Official



statements described these operations as targeting "drug- and arms-smuggling networks operating along the Kingdom's northern border."

These operations reveal a multidimensional security challenge that extends well beyond conventional border protection. The targeted areas include zones of influence controlled by local factions associated with what has been described as the "National Guard" in Suwayda Governorate. These groups portray themselves as defenders of a local community against documented abuses committed during the sectarian violence that affected the governorate in July 2025. At the same time, multiple assessments indicate that they have benefited from informal regional protection while facilitating the re-emergence of the narcotics economy in southern Syria following the decline of other armed actors that had previously dominated these networks. Consequently, the security threat emanating from southern Syria cannot be reduced to a single dimension. It represents the convergence of illicit trafficking, Syria's fragmented security landscape, and Israel's expanding strategic posture in parts of southern Syria, where it has publicly opposed the deployment of Syrian government forces south of Damascus.

Jordan's role further illustrates the complexity of this security environment. On one hand, Amman serves as both a guarantor and an international mediator in the implementation of the "Roadmap" agreement concluded in September 2025 to address the Suwayda crisis, with the participation of the Syrian government and the United States. On the other hand, Jordan has conducted direct military operations inside Syrian territory through what has been described as an informal convergence of interests involving Amman, Syria's transitional authorities, and the United States. This dual role—as both political guarantor and operational security actor—should not be viewed as contradictory. Rather, it reflects the evolution of Jordan's national security doctrine toward an integrated model that combines diplomatic engagement with proactive deterrence. As such, it offers an early practical example of the broader strategy of anticipatory engagement advocated in this paper and merits formal institutionalization within a comprehensive and publicly articulated national security strategy.



Developments in Iraq also suggest the emergence of opportunities that could prove favorable to Jordan. The orientation of Iraq's new political leadership appears more receptive to strengthening relations with the Arab regional environment and less closely aligned with an exclusively Iran-centered strategic outlook than previous administrations. Nevertheless, changes at the level of political leadership do not alter a fundamental reality: decision-making on sensitive security matters—particularly those involving armed militias—does not always rest with the central government. Instead, it is frequently influenced by armed groups possessing autonomous interests and external affiliations. Consequently, any optimism regarding Iraq's future trajectory must remain conditional upon the state's ability to preserve a stable balance between formal governmental institutions and powerful non-state armed actors.

VI. The Emerging Regional Alliance Landscape: Where Does Jordan Stand?

The regional strategic landscape is being reshaped at an accelerating pace, and Jordan's role within these emerging configurations is neither assured nor necessarily visible. Recent developments point to the gradual formation of a closer strategic understanding among Turkey, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia, alongside a looser alignment involving India, the United Arab Emirates, and Israel. At the same time, China, Russia, and Iran appear to be consolidating a separate strategic triangle aimed at balancing regional power dynamics, drawing in part on Iran's demonstrated ability to increase the costs of any future regional confrontation. These evolving patterns have raised legitimate questions regarding Jordan's absence from several recent regional platforms and high-level meetings involving influential Arab states, prompting debate over whether such absence reflects deliberate strategic restraint or a narrowing of Jordan's room for diplomatic maneuver.

From Jordan's perspective, the most effective response to these developments lies in maintaining a carefully calibrated strategic balance. On the one hand, Jordan cannot afford to delay defining its regional posture until these alignments fully crystallize, since strategic passivity would ultimately leave the Kingdom adapting to regional arrangements designed by others and under less favorable conditions. On the other hand, refraining from full alignment with any single bloc



should not be interpreted as strategic weakness. On the contrary, preserving a degree of strategic autonomy enhances Jordan's diplomatic value by allowing it to remain an acceptable interlocutor for competing regional actors while sustaining diversified partnerships rather than becoming constrained by the commitments of a single alliance. Accordingly, the organizing principle for Jordan's regional strategy should be one of **strategic hedging**: preparing for adverse scenarios while preserving the broadest possible range of political and diplomatic options.

The complexity of this regional environment is further reinforced by the evolving dynamics within the Gulf itself, traditionally regarded as Jordan's foremost strategic depth. Contrary to the appearance of unity often conveyed in official discourse, recent years have witnessed growing differences among Gulf states over several major regional issues, including Yemen, Sudan, and approaches toward relations with Israel. These divergences have emerged among countries that were once widely perceived as belonging to a cohesive strategic camp. As a result, the Gulf can no longer be understood as a single, unified geopolitical actor. Instead, it should be viewed as a network of overlapping—and at times competing—national interests. For Jordan, this reality necessitates a differentiated diplomatic approach that distinguishes between public political messaging and the more nuanced management of bilateral and multilateral interests behind the scenes. Such an approach would enable the Kingdom to deepen cooperation where interests converge while preserving the flexibility required to navigate areas of divergence without compromising its broader regional position.

VII. The Domestic Front: Economic Resilience as a Parallel National Security Front

Jordan's greatest strategic asset—and its capacity to navigate an increasingly volatile regional environment—ultimately rests on the resilience of its domestic front rather than on the breadth of its external alliances alone. This is no longer simply a political assessment but an economic reality that can be measured with considerable precision. According to the latest official and international estimates, Jordan's public debt has reached approximately 117–118% of GDP, a level that cannot be substantially reduced over the short term without deep structural reforms in fiscal policy. The government's medium-term objective, developed in coordination with the



International Monetary Fund, is to reduce the debt ratio gradually to around 80% by 2028. At the same time, the 2026 budget deficit is projected to approach JOD 2.1 billion—equivalent to approximately 4.6% of GDP—while current expenditures, including public-sector wages, debt servicing, pensions, and subsidies, account for roughly 87.7% of total public spending. By comparison, only about JOD 1.6 billion has been allocated to capital and development expenditures.

This fiscal structure represents far more than a technical economic challenge; it constitutes a strategic constraint in the fullest sense of the term. When the overwhelming share of public resources is devoted to financing recurrent expenditures, the state's capacity to invest in productive sectors capable of generating sustainable employment is significantly diminished. As a result, long-term development remains heavily dependent on external grants amounting to approximately JOD 750 million annually, leaving Jordan vulnerable to fluctuations driven by regional and international developments beyond its control. These structural pressures are particularly evident in the water sector, one of the Kingdom's most strategically sensitive domains. Outstanding debt in the sector has risen to nearly JOD 600 million, while essential infrastructure projects—including the National Water Carrier Project—require financing exceeding US\$2.3 billion, in addition to approximately US\$700 million needed for other priority investments that cannot realistically be postponed.

Labor market conditions further reinforce the strategic significance of Jordan's domestic economic challenges. Overall unemployment continues to fluctuate between approximately 16 and 21% according to different official estimates, while rates among young people and women remain substantially higher, reaching roughly 27% for young men and 33% for young women in certain age groups. More than any other socioeconomic indicator, these figures illustrate why national security in Jordan cannot be meaningfully separated from economic security. A generation facing persistent and well-documented economic hardship must simultaneously confront an increasingly demanding regional security environment, making social cohesion an essential prerequisite for effective state resilience.



From this perspective, Jordan's Economic Modernization Vision—which aims to raise annual economic growth to 5.6%, expand GDP to more than JOD 58 billion, and generate approximately one million new jobs by 2033—should not be viewed as an economic development agenda separate from national security strategy. Rather, it constitutes one of its principal strategic pillars. Nevertheless, implementation continues to fall short of the ambition embodied in these objectives. Current projections indicate that economic growth in 2026 is likely to remain between 2.7 and 3.0%, highlighting the considerable gap that still separates long-term strategic aspirations from present economic performance.

VIII. The Regional Economic Dimension: Jordan as a Gateway, Not Merely an Affected State

One dimension that warrants deeper analysis is the genuine economic opportunity created by Jordan's geographic position in this transitional phase, rather than viewing its regional surroundings solely as a source of threat. Syria's gradual return to regional and international networks opens a direct economic opportunity for Jordan as the natural corridor for reconstruction activity and for the flow of European and Gulf investments directed toward the Syrian market. Early indicators of this trajectory have already begun to take shape through the activation of a higher joint coordination council between the two countries, covering vital sectors including energy, transport, water, trade, health, and education. This has coincided with a notable recovery in Jordanian exports to the Syrian market, which increased by more than 480% during the first two months of the current year compared with the same period the previous year, according to specialized estimates.

At the same time, the issue of shared water resources with Syria—particularly the Yarmouk River Basin—remains one of the most vital files receiving insufficient public attention despite its strategic importance. Any future agreement to rehabilitate this basin would carry direct implications for Jordan's water security at a time when the country is already facing intensifying water stress, as reflected in the worsening pressures affecting the water sector discussed above. Jordan's diversification of major economic partnerships also deserves a more serious policy debate. This



requires moving beyond the traditional U.S.–Gulf framework by exploring carefully balanced opportunities with other emerging economic powers. Such diversification does not imply replacing existing partnerships; rather, it means broadening sources of investment and financing in ways that reduce dependence on any single external channel, particularly given Jordan's heavy reliance on fluctuating foreign grants in strategic sectors.

IX. The Non–Economic Domestic Front: Identity, Strategic Narratives, and the Generational Divide

Redefining Jordan's concept of national security has become an imperative that extends well beyond the economic sphere to encompass what is more broadly understood as **human security**: social cohesion, public trust in state institutions, and an inclusive national identity. Younger generations, both within Jordan and across Western societies, increasingly approach questions of political and moral legitimacy through frameworks that differ substantially from those of previous generations. Consequently, any national security or foreign policy strategy that overlooks these generational shifts in values, political discourse, and patterns of engagement risks losing relevance among significant domestic and international audiences alike. This assessment is reinforced by recent public opinion surveys conducted in Western countries indicating that, among younger respondents, support for a specific Palestinian armed movement has exceeded half of the surveyed population. Regardless of the broader political interpretation of these findings, they point to a profound transformation in the way younger generations perceive the Palestinian–Israeli conflict—one that increasingly transcends the traditional diplomatic narratives upon which Jordan has historically relied in communicating with Western public opinion.

As moral legitimacy assumes greater prominence as a source of political influence among younger generations, the absence of a clearly articulated Jordanian narrative capable of engaging this evolving discourse creates an increasingly significant strategic gap. In particular, the question of who defines and communicates the discourse surrounding the concept of resistance has become more consequential. Historically, Jordan has chosen to emphasize an official diplomatic approach rather than compete directly within this domain. While this position reflects long–



standing strategic calculations, it also leaves space for alternative domestic and regional narratives to shape public perceptions in ways that may not necessarily reinforce Jordan's long-term internal stability.

This context also invites a broader measure of strategic self-assessment. Throughout much of its modern history, Jordan has often demonstrated considerable skill in managing regional crises, yet it has been less successful than some smaller regional actors in translating major geopolitical transformations into lasting strategic gains. Although this observation may appear critical, it carries important analytical value. The distinction between states that accumulate strategic advantages during periods of regional upheaval and those that merely mitigate their consequences lies not only in the quality of strategic analysis but, more fundamentally, in the institutional capacity to convert emerging opportunities into timely and decisive policy action.

Finally, the limited availability of comprehensive national research on the political attitudes, identities, and aspirations of Jordanian youth represents a strategic knowledge gap comparable in importance to more conventional intelligence deficiencies. The formulation of coherent domestic and foreign policies depends upon a continuously updated understanding of how the country's largest demographic cohort perceives questions of identity, belonging, legitimacy, and national purpose. Without such evidence-based insight, long-term strategic planning will inevitably remain constrained by incomplete assumptions rather than informed by a robust understanding of the society it seeks to serve.

X. Comparing Jordan's Strategic Options

Sound strategic decision-making is measured not by the quality of its intentions but by its comparative advantage over realistic alternatives. This paper identifies four distinct strategic pathways that differ in their underlying logic, anticipated costs, and associated risks. These options are not presented as equally desirable but rather as a framework for evaluating policy choices against clearly defined criteria.

Option One: Full Alignment with an Emerging Regional Bloc



This approach would involve Jordan aligning itself decisively with one of the emerging regional coalitions. Such a strategy could provide greater clarity in alliance commitments while securing more immediate political, economic, and security support from a powerful partner. However, it also entails substantial risks. Full alignment would constrain Jordan's strategic autonomy, increase the likelihood of its involvement in wider regional confrontations beyond its direct interests, and potentially alienate other regional and international actors that continue to constitute essential pillars of the Kingdom's strategic environment.

Option Two: Strategic Retrenchment and Reduced Regional Engagement

A second option would prioritize domestic stabilization by limiting Jordan's involvement in regional crises and concentrating state resources on internal economic and social challenges. Although this approach may appear attractive as a means of reducing external exposure, it rests on an increasingly unrealistic assumption. Jordan's geographic position ensures that regional developments inevitably affect its national security regardless of its level of engagement. Moreover, a policy of strategic withdrawal could be interpreted by external actors as diminished resolve, encouraging the creation of new realities along Jordan's borders or within its immediate strategic environment, particularly in the West Bank and southern Syria, where sustained engagement remains indispensable.

Option Three: Open Strategic Hedging

This strategy seeks to preserve active channels of communication with all major regional and international actors—including the Gulf states, the United States, Iran through carefully calibrated engagement, and emerging European and Asian partners—without committing exclusively to any single alignment. At the same time, it places particular emphasis on strengthening relations with Saudi Arabia as the regional partner whose strategic interests most closely converge with those of Jordan. The principal advantage of this approach lies in its ability to preserve maximum strategic flexibility in an increasingly fluid regional environment while avoiding the costs associated with exclusive alignment. Its principal limitation, however, is the high level of diplomatic



sophistication required to manage multiple and occasionally competing relationships simultaneously. Without careful execution, such a policy may be misinterpreted as strategic ambiguity rather than deliberate strategic flexibility.

Option Four: Institutionalized Multi-Track Proactive Engagement

The fourth option builds upon the logic of strategic hedging while introducing an institutional dimension that remains largely absent from Jordan's current strategic framework. It calls for the development of a comprehensive National Security Strategy that clearly defines national objectives, strategic priorities, and the instruments required to achieve them. It also advocates integrating Jordan's regional engagement with a coherent domestic agenda of economic and social reform, institutionalizing the proactive deterrence model already employed in southern Syria as an explicit component of national security doctrine, and expanding systematic engagement with key decision-making centers in the United States and the Gulf through sustained policy initiatives rather than episodic diplomatic messaging. Although this approach demands significantly greater institutional coordination and administrative capacity, it is the only option capable of transforming strategic hedging from an adaptive response into a coherent, accountable, and continuously evolving national strategy.

Recommendation

This paper concludes that the fourth option provides the most appropriate strategic framework for Jordan. It is the only approach capable of converting the principle of strategic hedging from a recurring policy aspiration into an institutionalized national strategy that effectively balances external flexibility with internal coherence. At the operational level, however, the practical management of regional and international partnerships should continue to reflect the logic of the third option, preserving diplomatic flexibility while avoiding exclusive alignments. The ultimate objective should be the formulation and implementation of a comprehensive written National Security Strategy that transforms this balance into a durable institutional practice rather than an improvised response to successive regional crises. Existing royal directives concerning the



military dimension of national security provide an important point of departure for this process, but they should be regarded as the foundation upon which a broader, integrated national security framework can be constructed rather than as its final destination.

Policy Recommendations

The following recommendations are guided by the premise that Jordan possesses the strategic assets, institutional experience, and geopolitical position necessary to navigate the current regional environment effectively. Their success, however, depends on translating sound strategic analysis into practical, measurable, and institutionalized policy instruments.

1. **Develop a comprehensive written National Security Strategy** through a collaborative process involving relevant state institutions, universities, and research centers. The strategy should adopt an expanded definition of national security that integrates political, economic, social, and border security, while distinguishing between a publicly available strategic framework and classified implementation plans distributed according to operational requirements. Rather than replacing existing military guidance, it should build upon the current royal directives as the foundation of a broader national security architecture.
2. **Deepen Jordanian–Saudi strategic cooperation** through measurable mechanisms for coordination across economic, security, and political domains. Existing initiatives—such as the emerging logistics corridor—should serve as the basis for institutional cooperation that extends beyond positive diplomatic rhetoric toward sustained strategic integration.
3. **Expand Jordan's engagement with the principal centers of decision-making in Washington.** Diplomatic efforts should extend beyond the traditional emphasis on Congress to include the executive institutions that exercise direct influence over U.S. policy toward the West Bank, Jerusalem, and the wider Middle East. Such engagement should also account for the domestic economic and electoral considerations that increasingly shape American foreign policy decisions.



4. **Establish a carefully calibrated political and security dialogue with Iran** focused primarily on limiting the influence of Iran-aligned militias and proxy networks operating in Iraq and Syria. Any expansion of bilateral engagement should remain firmly anchored in Jordan's national security priorities, insulated from exploitation by third parties, and guided by realistic expectations in light of Iran's recent leadership succession.
5. **Institutionalize the doctrine of proactive deterrence** already implemented in southern Syria by incorporating it into Jordan's formal national security doctrine. Rather than remaining an operational practice developed in response to immediate threats, proactive deterrence should become an explicit strategic principle governing responses to cross-border security challenges.
6. **Strengthen diplomatic and strategic communications efforts** to demonstrate that Israeli policies in the West Bank and Jerusalem constitute a principal driver of regional instability. Framing these developments as a broader threat to regional and international stability would reinforce Jordan's diplomatic position while enabling it to capitalize more effectively on existing policy differences between Washington and Tel Aviv.
7. **Support the resilience of Palestinian communities in the West Bank and Jerusalem** through practical economic, social, and institutional initiatives that complement political diplomacy. Such measures should strengthen local resilience and reduce the risk of displacement resulting from direct coercion or sustained socioeconomic pressure.
8. **Formulate an integrated economic and diplomatic strategy** that positions Jordan as the principal gateway for Syria's reconstruction. This strategy should encompass transport, energy, trade, and shared water resources—particularly the Yarmouk River Basin—with the objective of transforming Jordan's geographic proximity to Syria from a security liability into a long-term economic opportunity.
9. **Treat structural fiscal reform as a national security priority rather than solely an economic objective.** This requires rebalancing public expenditure toward productive



capital investment, reducing dependence on volatile external grants, and accelerating implementation of the Economic Modernization Vision in ways that generate measurable improvements in employment, productivity, and sustainable economic growth.

10. Launch a comprehensive national initiative to strengthen social cohesion and national identity. This effort should include the establishment of a permanent evidence-based research program examining the attitudes and aspirations of Jordanian youth, while developing policy responses to the evolving discourse surrounding legitimacy, identity, and civic belonging among younger generations.

11. Maintain strategic flexibility by engaging proactively with emerging regional initiatives and multilateral platforms. Rather than waiting for new regional alignments to consolidate, Jordan should seek an active presence in relevant regional forums and diplomatic processes, thereby preserving its ability to influence evolving regional dynamics instead of responding only after new strategic arrangements have already taken shape.

Conclusion

The enduring value of any assessment of the "day after the war" lies not in the precision of its snapshot of the regional balance of power—which is inherently subject to continual change—but in its capacity to generate institutional frameworks capable of withstanding that uncertainty. The war has not resolved the region's underlying conflicts; instead, it has redistributed their strategic questions and security challenges across multiple interconnected arenas. Israel, despite its overwhelming military superiority, did not achieve a decisive strategic outcome and appears increasingly likely to compensate by accelerating its legislative and settlement agenda in the West Bank and Jerusalem. Iran, notwithstanding the near-total loss of its senior leadership, has emerged with enhanced political leverage while managing the implementation of a major post-war economic framework in accordance with pragmatic national interests rather than ideological considerations alone. Meanwhile, the Arab regional order continues to exhibit structural



fragmentation despite observable, albeit limited, patterns of rapprochement, and the United States is recalibrating its regional priorities in ways that do not always coincide with the preferences of its traditional allies, as illustrated by the divergence between its public statements and its practical approach to Israeli annexation initiatives.

Within this evolving strategic environment, Jordan cannot afford to postpone decisive action until greater certainty emerges. Delay itself carries strategic costs: diplomatic space is occupied by others, new regional alignments take shape without Jordan's participation, security challenges accumulate gradually and often invisibly, and domestic resilience continues to be constrained by persistent structural economic pressures. Under these conditions, the most credible strategic course does not lie in the pursuit of unattainable certainty, but in the construction of an institutionalized framework of **strategic hedging** founded on three mutually reinforcing pillars. The first is the maintenance of diversified and flexible regional and international partnerships rather than exclusive strategic alignment. The second is the strengthening of the domestic front through sustained economic resilience and social cohesion, recognizing that these constitute the Kingdom's primary sources of long-term strategic strength. The third is the adoption of a comprehensive written National Security Strategy capable of transforming rigorous strategic analysis into coherent, implementable, and accountable public policy.

Ultimately, the distinction between a sophisticated analysis of the current regional moment and a fully developed national strategy lies in the transition from periodic assessment to institutional continuity. Jordan's strategic challenge is therefore not simply to interpret regional developments as they unfold, but to establish an enduring policy framework through which national decisions can be guided, evaluated, and continuously refined. Equally important is the transition from reactive crisis management to anticipatory strategic planning grounded in systematic, evidence-based assessment. Only through such an institutional transformation can the "day after the war" evolve from a recurring analytical reference point into the foundation of a renewed conception of Jordanian national security—one that reflects the scale of regional transformation while translating high-level strategic guidance into measurable institutional outcomes over the years ahead.



References

- "2026 Iranian Supreme Leadership Election." Arabic Wikipedia. Updated June 2026.
- "2026 Iran War." Arabic Wikipedia.
- "2026 Jordanian State Budget: Is 2.9% Growth Sufficient to Absorb Youth Employment Needs?" Naba' Al-Urdun, 8 November 2025.
- "2026 Jordanian State Budget: Testing the Balance Between Fiscal Consolidation and Investment Stimulation." Eram Business, 20 November 2025.
- "A U.S.–Iran Memorandum of Understanding Ends the War and Opens a New Negotiating Track." Ultra Sawt, June 2026.
- "Al–Suwayda Roadmap: Between Syria's National Priorities and External Interventions." Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies (Doha Institute), 2025–2026.
- "Days or Weeks? When Will the Iran War End, and Who Holds the Off Switch?" Analysis by Amos Harel, published by Al Jazeera Arabic, 2 March 2026.
- "Gap Between Expectations and Economic Reality." Jo24, June 2026.
- "How Have Syrian–Jordanian Relations Evolved from Regional Cooperation to Logistical Integration?" Al–Thawra Newspaper (Syria), 29 March 2026.
- "In the Heart of Al–Suwayda: Has Jordan Launched a New Strategy Against Syrian Smuggling Networks?" Al Jazeera Arabic, 3 May 2026.
- "Iranian–American Understanding: From the Versailles Signing to Anticipation in Switzerland." Al Jazeera Arabic, 19 June 2026.
- "Jordan's 2026 General Budget: Fiscal Reality and Structural Challenges Across Sectors." Politics and Society Institute, 28 November 2025.



"Jordan's Security and Political Messages: What Did the Airstrikes in Southern Syria Reveal?"
Ultra Syria.

"Majtaba Khamenei: What Is the Assembly of Experts That Selected Iran's New Supreme
Leader?" CNN Arabic, 9 March 2026.

"Majtaba Khamenei: Who Is Iran's New Supreme Leader?" Asharq News, 9 March 2026.

"Negotiations Between Syria and Jordan Include Maritime Connectivity with the Gulf States." Al-
Mudun, 12 April 2026.

"Public Pulse: Incentives for Deepening Israeli Settlement Expansion." Raya, 3 June 2026. Also
published by Amad Media.

"Suwayda at the Center of a Complex Regional Confrontation: Between Jordanian Airstrikes and
Regional Silence." Majhar, 6 May 2026.

"Suwayda Between the Illusion of Self-Determination and the Limits of Reality." Al Habtoor
Research Centre.

"The Jordanian Deterrence Operation: Why Did Jordan Strike Targets in Syria's Al-Suwayda?"
Al Jazeera Arabic, 3 May 2026.

"The Knesset Reveals Details of Two Bills to Annex the West Bank and an Israeli Settlement."
Anadolu Agency.

"Trump Signs Memorandum of Understanding to End the War with Iran in the Presence of Macron
at Versailles." Oman News Agency, 18 June 2026.

"'It Is a Moment of Peace': Trump Signs the Agreement with Iran at the Palace of Versailles."
Monte Carlo Doualiya, June 2026.

"What Are the Main Provisions of the Memorandum of Understanding Between the United States
and Iran?" Sky News Arabia, June 2026.

"Where Is the Jordanian Economy Heading in 2026?" AmmanNet.



"Why Did the Knesset Give Preliminary Approval to the Annexation of the West Bank and the Extension of Israeli Sovereignty?" Nafethat Misr (Egypt Window). Includes coverage of the vote's timing alongside the U.S. Vice President's visit to Israel and previous U.S. statements opposing formal annexation.

"Why Did the IMF Approve a US\$131 Million Disbursement to Jordan Following a Successful Review?" Eram Business.

"The Assassination of Ali Khamenei." Arabic Wikipedia. Updated June 2026.