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## The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan And its Role in Middle Eastern Geopolitics

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**The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan  
And its Role in Middle Eastern Geopolitics**

An Honors Thesis submitted in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for  
Honors Studies in International Relations and  
Middle Eastern Studies

By

Elizabeth Heckmann

2015

International Relations and Middle Eastern  
Studies

J. William Fulbright College of Arts and  
Sciences

**The University of Arkansas**

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## Introduction

The Middle East is notorious for the seemingly endless series of conflicts, instances of internal unrest, and political insurrections it witnesses. From the Gulf Wars in the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century, to the Arab Spring that began in 2010, to the rise of the Islamic State in 2013, it appears that almost every state in the region is inescapably engulfed in violence and instability. However, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has proven itself to be the exception to that rule over the years. While Jordan is not unfamiliar with domestic conflict and political unrest, the kingdom has demonstrated a remarkable resilience against and capability to overcome these crises and persevere in spite of them. Jordan's rather unusual stability can be traced to its moderate political system that cooperates with many states across the globe, and its geopolitical position that is simultaneously vulnerable and of great strategic value. It is for these reasons that Jordan's foreign policy decisions have a distinct impact on the region as a whole. These factors also distinguish Jordan from the majority of other Arab states due to the manner in which they affect the way Jordan approaches international relations. How and why, then, does Jordan have any significance to the international relations of the Middle East, and how is Jordan distinctive from other states in the region? This thesis will answer these questions by providing an overview of the history of Jordanian foreign relations, analyzing its role in current regional issues, and discussing in what ways this small desert kingdom can impact the stability of the Middle East as a whole.

## Literature Review

When selecting works upon which to base the information used to establish historical background and political context, the author of this thesis chose several types of literature that would best serve the purposes of this research. These include historical accounts of Jordanian foreign relations in particular, and broader works that discuss Jordan's internal political structure. There are several sources upon which the author of this thesis relied for the majority of the background research. The following section will briefly review these works regarding their relevance to this thesis, beginning with general works about Jordan's political structure, and continuing to works specifically concerning Jordan's foreign relations. The works reviewed in this section, however, are only a few of the many sources utilized while researching for this thesis. The following four works were chosen to be reviewed due to their particular value as sources for this thesis compared to other scholarly or periodical articles.

*Jordan: Living in the Crossfire* by Alan George, a journalist and former Assistant Director of the Council for the Advancement of Arab-British Understanding, discusses the current political system in Jordan under the rule of King Abdullah II. George accomplishes this task by looking at Jordan through both historical and contemporary lenses in an attempt to give the reader a comprehensive understanding of Jordanian domestic politics and its people's opinions about the current state of affairs. He begins the book with a chapter on Jordan's path to creation as a result of the Sykes-Picot Agreement and eventual independence from Britain. He then discusses the late King Hussein's and current King Abdullah II's actions throughout their respective reigns.

George then frames Jordan's modern political structure tangibly by interviewing several types of Jordanian citizens and asking their opinions on Jordanian domestic policies. Finally, he discusses the current political structure in Jordan and how its leaders have reacted to recent crises such as the U.S. invasion of Iraq.

The people George interviewed include King Abdullah himself, tribal leaders, taxi drivers, and refugees. George attempts to understand each interviewee's life by asking questions about his opinion on relevant domestic policy issues, such as the water shortage, the refugee crises, and the continued unrest in Palestine. The book concludes with an analysis of several contemporary issues facing Jordan from the interviewees' points of view. For example, he synthesizes what King Abdullah, a sheikh, dentist, and farmer had to say about the controversial "One Person One Vote" law. In this manner, George paints a picture of Jordan's diversity in opinions, the fact that the majority of Jordanians have an opinion to offer about most issues, and how these opinions do, in fact, impact how the king conducts the kingdom's affairs.

While George's book does provide a substantial background of Jordan's formation and current affairs, the main reason *Jordan: Living in the Crossfire* was helpful to this thesis that it demonstrates how Jordanians from all walks of life are involved in Jordan's politics. It provides the reader with a more comprehensive understanding of all types of Jordanians and how they think about and react to domestic policy changes such as the "One Person One Vote" clause in the Election Law as well as foreign policy decisions the government makes that will affect them in some way. This book gives the reader an understanding of the current Jordanian political system and, more helpful for the purposes of this thesis, the manner in which that affects its foreign policy.

The second book used for background research is Laurie Brand's *Jordan's Inter-Arab Relations*. Brand, a professor of international relations at the University of Southern California, gives an extensive account of the inner workings of Jordan's relations with five major Arab states: Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Syria, Iraq, and Egypt. Each case study explores issues specific to each state's political and economic relationship with Jordan. Each chapter contains detailed accounts of Jordan's diplomatic meetings, treaties, and economic and trade agreements with each of the highlighted states. Synthesizing various accounts of meetings, formal and informal deals, government documents in both Arabic and English, Brand puts together a comprehensive account of Jordanian foreign relations with its neighboring states during the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

Brand's book is useful to this thesis because it offers a detailed history of Jordanian regional relations, both political and economic, giving the reader a comprehensive understanding of how Jordan interacts with its neighbors. Its meticulous accounts of meetings, treaties, and agreements that took place between Jordan and a few key states in the region provide a thorough background on Jordanian international relations within the Middle East. Additionally, Brand analyzes these events from the points of view of both states in each account, giving the reader a grasp of why Jordan occasionally makes unusual and controversial foreign policy decisions. Brand does an excellent job outlining Jordan's role in international relations in the Middle East and it proved valuable to the research for this thesis.

Another important element to consider when conducting research for this thesis is Jordan's international relations with the West, primarily the United States. Although many different works were consulted on this topic to gain a complete understanding of

this facet of Jordan's foreign policy, the major source used in this portion is Mahida Rashid al-Madfai's *Jordan, the United States and the Middle East Peace Process, 1974-1991*. A scholar of Middle Eastern politics, Madfai covers the United States' interactions with Jordan during the years following the 1974 Rabat Summit, in which Jordan formally recognized the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, to 1991 and the Madrid Conference, which was an international attempt to collectively revive the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process. Madfai focuses on the how the United States impacted Jordan's role in the Middle East Peace Process, a key factor in Jordan's Middle Eastern foreign relations.

Madfai organizes her book according to the terms of major U.S. leaders and focuses on how their personal political goals impacted U.S. policy toward Jordan. She begins with a brief overview of Jordanian foreign policy goals – defense of national independence, mobilization of external and internal resources for national defense, and utilization of whatever resources remain for economic and social development.<sup>1</sup> Madfai asserts that, because national security is the foremost concern of Jordan's leaders, they are willing to negotiate with what would be considered imperialist powers, such as Israel and the United States, by some Arab states. Madfai states that her primary goal throughout the book is to answer two questions concerning the Middle East peace process: why did so many different peace initiatives fail to bring peace to the Middle East and what can be learned from their failures?<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Madiha Rashid al Madfai, *Jordan, the United States and the Middle East Peace Process, 1974-1991* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 10.

<sup>2</sup> IBID, 12.



While this book focuses primarily on America's role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in conjunction with Jordan's involvement, it was useful to research on this thesis concerning U.S.-Jordanian relations because of the significant role Jordan plays in the peace process. Due to the fact that the Palestinian crisis has a considerable impact on Jordan's economy and foreign affairs, the research presented in Madfai's book is beneficial to understanding both the U.S. policy towards Jordan throughout the mid-to-late-20<sup>th</sup> century and how Jordan responded to United States influence. Having an understanding the history of Jordan's relationship with the United States is essential to recognizing the role Jordan plays in the geopolitical makeup of the Middle East. This book provides an excellent overview of the U.S.-Jordanian relationship throughout the Cold War years which gives important insights into what type of player Jordan is in the Middle East.

The final major work used for background research is Yehuda Lukacs's *Israel, Jordan, and the Peace Process*. Lukacs, Associate Provost for International Programs and Director of the Center for Global Education at George Mason University, explores Jordanian-Israeli relations from the 1967 Arab-Israeli War until the Israeli-Jordanian Peace Treaty in 1994. The reason Lukacs chose to focus on these dates, and consequently the reason why this book was particularly useful to this thesis, is that these are the years in which Jordanian-Israeli cooperation grew the most. He specifically emphasizes the years from 1967 to 1988 when King Hussein officially rescinded Jordan's political and administrative authority over the West Bank, conceding those responsibilities to the Palestinian Liberation Organization. After 1988, Jordan was no longer the main player in peace negotiations, which changed the dynamic of Jordan's and Israel's relationship.

Lukacs argues that, “despite the formal state of war between Israel and Jordan, the two countries have engaged in a policy of functional cooperation resulting from a perception of shared interests.”<sup>3</sup>

Lukacs expounds these points in three major sections. In the first, he explains why Israel and Jordan choose to cooperate with each other despite their historic state of war. He claims that it is due to their mutual interdependence and corresponding interests in maintaining a peaceful border, a mutual reliance on natural resources such as water, and a desire to decrease the role of the PLO nationalist movement in political processes. Secondly, Lukacs points out that, in the years following the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, Jordan and Israel operated under a functional system of international relations in which it was more mutually beneficial for both states to engage in trade, the movement of people and capital, and to contain the political movements of the PLO. It was a combination of these motivations that caused Israel to assist Jordan when, in 1970, the PLO engaged Jordanian military in the armed conflict known as “Black September.”<sup>4</sup> Finally, Lukacs concludes that this “functional cooperation” contributed to the stagnation of the formal peace process. Because no formal peace treaty was signed until 1994, Jordan and Israel were able to address the more pressing issues of border security and trade agreements through clandestine, candid talks rather than long, often frustrating diplomatic negotiations. While this benefited the two states in the short run, as they were able to eradicate immediate bilateral problems without delving into more touchy subjects such as Israel’s withdrawal from the Occupied Territories, it essentially stalemated the official

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<sup>3</sup>Yehuda Lukacs, *Israel, Jordan, and the Peace Process*, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1997, 2.

<sup>4</sup>Lukacs, 3.

peace process. Since Jordan and Israel had already covertly agreed upon issues their leaders felt more pertinent to the economic well-being and political stability of their respective states, they felt less obligated to engage in formal peace negotiations.

*Israel, Jordan, and the Peace Process* discussed a number of factors concerning Israel and Jordan's bilateral relationship and, by extension, Jordan's and Palestine's relations. Primarily, Lukacs demonstrates how Jordan's actions in international relations are heavily influenced by economic factors. Jordan deemed the economic payback of maintaining a secret relationship with Israel to be worth the risk of damaging ties with powerful economic and political powers in the region. Lukacs does not comment on the possibility of a total breakdown of Jordan's relations with other Arab states should the nature of Jordan's talks with Israel have come to light before 1994. However, it is safe to assume that Jordan's leaders were confident in its neighbors' reliance upon its stability within its geopolitical location that they could not afford to completely disown the kingdom. Although this book was written specifically about Israel's and Jordan's relationship in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the concepts Lukacs expounds in his book are applicable to Jordan's relations with Israel today. Essentially, Lukacs suggests, Jordan depends on other states' reliance on its stability to ensure the economic aid it needs to maintain domestic political stability. This theme is extremely important to Jordanian international relations and guides the majority of its foreign policy decisions.

## Key Terms and Events

In order to provide an understanding of the current geopolitical reality of the Middle East, several major events that played a part in shaping the modern state of Jordan are defined below:

- Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916) – Named for British diplomat Sir Mark Sykes and French diplomat François Georges Picot, it was a secret agreement near the end of World War I between Britain and France that divided the Ottoman Empire into spheres of influence. Both parties were primarily concerned with how the division would benefit their respective states and did not sufficiently consider the indigenous people and the boundary lines were therefore drawn with a disregard to religious identity, ethnicity, or history. Most scholars agree that the fallout of this agreement is one of the reasons so much conflict exists in the Middle East today.<sup>5</sup>
- Balfour Declaration (1916) – A letter from British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour to Baron Rothschild which stated that Britain would view the creation of an Israeli state in Palestine favorably under the condition that nothing would be done to disrupt the indigenous population. This declaration gave legitimacy to the European Zionist movement that later immigrated to Palestine and formed what is now the State of Israel.<sup>6</sup>
- The Six-Days War (1967) – Also known as the War of 1967 or the Third Arab-Israeli War. This was a crucial point in Jordan's foreign affairs in which it joined

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<sup>5</sup> Peter Gubser, *Jordan: Crossroads of Middle Eastern Events*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1983, 77-78.

<sup>6</sup> M.E. Yapp, *The Making of the Modern Near East 1792–1923*, Harlow, England: Longman (1987), 290.

Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon in attacking Israel. The major outcome of this conflict for Jordan was the loss of the West Bank to Israel. As a result, over 300,000 Palestinians fled their homeland and became refugees in Jordan. Despite the immense destruction this war brought the region, Jordan soon engaged in secret negotiations and peace talks with Israel, something the region had not seen since the 1948 Arab-Israeli War.<sup>7</sup>

- Black September (1970) – A series of violent uprisings that were a reaction to King Hussein’s decision to expel the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). PLO supporters, most of whom were refugees from the 1948 and 1967 Arab-Israeli wars, clashed with the Jordanian military and attempted to assassinate King Hussein I. Jordan-Arab relations significantly deteriorated following the military's aggressive termination of the fighting. As a result, Jordan struggled financially for several years because of the subsequent decline in regional economic aid to Jordan.<sup>8</sup>
- The Yom Kippur War (1973) – Also known as the Fourth Arab-Israeli War. Syria and Egypt, supported by troops from Jordan and Iraq, set out to reclaim the territory taken from them in the Six-Days War in 1967. The conflict ended with two disengagement agreements between Israel and Egypt in 1974 that outlined the return of the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt. These agreements were the precursors to the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty signed in 1979 which made Egypt the first Arab state to sign a formal peace treaty with Israel. This action significantly strained

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<sup>7</sup> Dale Hoiberg, “Six Day-War: Middle East 1967,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, November 12, 2014, April 23, 2015.

<sup>8</sup> IBID.

Egyptian-Arab relations and, although Jordan officially condemned Egypt's actions, it soon repaired bilateral relations with Egypt.<sup>9</sup>

- 1974 Rabat Summit (1974) – A meeting of the Arab League in Rabat, Morocco, in which member states voted to recognize the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. This gave the PLO the ability to speak directly with Israeli leaders instead of having to go through other channels of communication, namely Jordan. It also essentially ended all hopes Jordan had for reclaiming the West Bank as part of its territory. King Hussein agreed to honor the PLO's right to negotiate for the Palestinians and was rewarded with an annual \$300-million grant for four years from the Arab League.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> "Yom Kippur War," *History*, 2009, April 23, 2015.

<sup>10</sup> Clara L. Klausner and Ian Bickerton, "What Was the 1974 Rabat Summit and What Was Its Significance for the PLO?," *ProCon*, 2002, April 23, 2015.

## The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan



The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is a constitutional monarchy located in the heart of the Levant region of the Middle East. Despite the fact that this state is often overlooked in analyses of Middle Eastern events, it is, in fact, quite important to many other states in the region. Jordan shares borders with Israel and the West Bank to the west, Syria to the north, Iraq to the east, and Saudi Arabia to the south east, and is therefore a critical actor in regional geopolitics simply because of its location. Roughly the size of Maine, Jordan is a semi-rentier state which means that it is partially dependent on foreign aid. Jordan itself does not have a self-sufficient economy because it has virtually no natural resources. Agriculture accounts for only four percent of its GDP and

industry makes up 30 percent.<sup>11</sup> The most abundant naturally-occurring resource is phosphates, which the kingdom exports. However, the income gained from these enterprises is not nearly enough to cover Jordan's budget, four percent of which is spent on the military alone.<sup>12</sup> Additionally, Jordan has no petroleum and therefore imports all petroleum stocks from its neighbors, primarily from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. As a result of these factors, Jordan relies heavily on foreign aid to sustain its economy, even more so now that more than 600,000 Syrian refugees have flooded into the kingdom. Jordan's Arab neighbors continue to channel substantial aid into its economy because of three primary reasons: its strategic geographic location, its moderate government, and its role in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Jordan's relations with its non-oil-producing neighbors are also very important because of common history, shared borders, and the need for greater economic integration.

One of the main reasons Jordan attracts so much attention from larger, more powerful states is its stable, moderate government, coupled with its strategic geopolitical location. This, then, raises the question: how does Jordan's government manage to be so moderate and stable when most other Middle Eastern states are not? This political phenomenon is due to a combination of internal and external factors, which will be discussed throughout this thesis. An important internal element that attributes a great deal to Jordan's stability is its current and past monarchs and their commitment to keeping domestic and regional peace.

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<sup>11</sup> "The World Factbook: Jordan," *Central Intelligence Agency*, April 21, 2015, April 23, 2015.

<sup>12</sup> *IBID.*



While Jordan has had a total of five kings since its creation in 1921, this thesis will focus on the two most recent kings due to their extensive work in progressing regional peace and economic growth. King Hussein I, who ruled from 1952 to 1999, is hailed as a leader who guided his country through strife and turmoil to become an oasis of peace, stability and moderation in the Middle East.<sup>13</sup> Hussein paved the road for Jordan to become the model state in the Middle East for stability, peace, and increasing democratization. He was instrumental in drafting United Nations Security Council Resolution 242 following the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, which calls for a complete withdrawal of Israeli troops from the Arab lands they occupied. Additionally, Hussein played a large role in convening the 1991 Madrid Peace Conference and acted as an ombudsman between the Israelis and Palestinians during multiple peace negotiations. King Hussein consistently pursued genuine Arab reconciliation, a goal for which he consistently displayed his commitment. For example, during the Iraq-Kuwait War in 1990, he worked tirelessly to find a peaceful conclusion to the war by causing the Iraqi troops to withdraw from Kuwait as soon as possible. Perhaps his greatest contribution to the peace process in the Middle East was the Jordanian-Israeli Peace Treaty that he signed with then-Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1994, making Jordan only the second Arab state behind Egypt to sign such a treaty. The agreement, which was witnessed by then-U.S. President Clinton, outlined not only the terms of peace, but also clarified borders, and terms of trade, transportation, and the division of water resources.

The late King Hussein also prepared the path for Jordan to be the region's leader in democratization. Although the kingdom is still officially a constitutional monarchy and

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<sup>13</sup>*King Hussein I: Biography*, King Hussein, August 12, 2015.

fell under martial law for over 20 years following the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, its government is still one of the region's most liberal systems. The parliamentary elections that were held following the end of martial law in 1989 were internationally-accredited to be among the most fair and free elections in the Middle East. Hussein promoted further democratization of the kingdom and, in 1990 he appointed a royal commission representing the entire spectrum of Jordanian political thought to draft a national charter. Today the National Charter, along with the Jordanian Constitution, serves as a guideline for democratic institutionalization and political pluralism in Jordan.<sup>14</sup>

King Hussein's son, King Abdullah II, continued his father's legacy in 1999 with a genuine concern for his people's wellbeing, and upholding the state's economic and political stability. Although Abdullah formerly served as the commander of the Jordanian Special Forces from 1993 to 1999 before his ascension to the throne in 1999, the majority of his actions have been focused on economic reform. He has paired economic changes with political liberalization and an innovative program of national economic development. His goals include bringing together the public and private sectors, creating jobs for the unemployed youth of the country, and alleviating poverty. Additionally, Abdullah led Jordan's accession to the World Trade Organization in 2000, which made Jordan the first Arab state to sign a free trade agreement with the United States and has forged new bilateral and multilateral economic alliances with countries across the globe.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> *King Hussein I: Biography*, Royal Hashemite Court, August 12, 2015.

<sup>15</sup> *King Abdullah bin al-Hussein: Profile*, Royal Hashemite Court, August 12, 2015,

During the Arab Spring, which began in 2010, Abdullah responded proactively to the demands of the protesters by taking such steps as dissolving the government and calling for new elections. He stated that he intended to set a course for political reform, beginning with credible legislative elections, followed by consultations with the deputies to form a body similar to a parliamentary government. His hope was that the process would eventually usher in a new phase of the constitutional monarchy in which elections are free and fair, and the people would have a larger voice in governmental procedures.<sup>16</sup> By quickly and directly addressing the demands of the protesters, led mainly by the Jordanian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, the Islamic Action Front (IAF), Abdullah was able to address the complaints of his people and avoid the devastating developments several other Arab states faced during this time.

Abdullah has also proven that he is a strong leader who is willing to assert Jordan's military power to protect Jordan's national security when necessary. As the former commander of Jordan's Special Forces, the king is no stranger to military action. Abdullah was one of the first Arab states to join the U.S.-led coalition fighting against the Islamic State (IS). He is now considered to be the unofficial leader of the Arab forces that have joined the United States in attacking the Islamist organization in Iraq and Syria. Jordanians recognize this leadership and commend him for it. Yousef Majid al-Zarbi, a Jordanian citizen, stated that "we all [Jordanians] are Hashemites and we are following the government with no reservations in this fight against these godless terrorists."<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Osama Al Sharif, "King Abdullah Seeks to Champion Reforms," *Al Monitor*, March 18, 2013, August 13, 2015.

<sup>17</sup> Martin Chulov, "Jordanians turn their minds to revenge after Isis killing of pilot," *The Guardian*, February 4, 2015, November 11, 2015.

According to the Gatestone Institute, King Abdullah “has shown genuine leadership and courage, both in the air and on land, to halt the spread of [IS] toward other Arab states.”<sup>18</sup>

It is this type of leadership that aided Jordan’s rise to prominence in the Arab world as a pillar of moderate policies. Additionally, it has demonstrated willingness to cooperate and work with its neighbors and friends outside the Middle East. If King Hussein’s and King Abdullah’s past actions are any indication, it appears that Jordan’s leadership legitimately strives for improvement in the lives of its people, and the stability and security of the state. It is clear that Jordan’s rulers, both past and present, are quite different from the majority of Middle Eastern heads of state, especially those who hold extensive power. It is this distinction that differentiates Jordan from other Arab countries. The fact that Jordan’s leaders seem to be genuinely concerned for the wellbeing of the country has made it possible for this small desert kingdom to not only exist, but distinguish itself among Arab states.

While Jordan's political system, like so many other Arab states, has its fair share of corruption, Jordanians have not demanded a complete regime change as the people did in Egypt or Tunisia. During the Arab Spring in 2010, thousands of Jordanians took to the streets to protest corruption and lack of transparency in the government. They did not, however, call for a regime change or demand that King Abdullah step down. Despite widespread public discontent with climbing prices, unemployment, and government corruption, the protests failed to mobilize massive numbers of Jordanians to the streets. Jordanians that did march in protest of the state of affairs, primarily members of the

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<sup>18</sup> Bassam Tawil, *Hero of the Middle East: King Abdullah II of Jordan*, Gatestone Institute International Policy Council, March 2, 2015, August 13, 2015.

Islamic Action Front (IAF), Jordan's political branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, merely called for political reforms.

In response to these demands, King Abdullah II dissolved the parliament halfway through its four-year term in May 2010 and enacted an election law that more strictly defined and monitored parliamentary elections. Part of these reforms included adding quotas to include more minorities in the *Majlis al-Nuwab* (Lower House). This law increased the number of seats in the *Majlis al-Nuwab* from 110 to 120, doubled the quota of seats for women from 6 to 12, and put judges in charge of overseeing the elections and punishing those who attempted to rig or corrupt any votes. Abdullah did this to not only address the complaints of his people to avoid causing greater internal unrest, but also to encourage greater participation in political life. Abdullah's self-proclaimed mission is to increase the level of democracy in Jordan's political system and refers to the kingdom as a "nation in democratic development." He pledges to continue his efforts to implement additional democratic features into the country's government.<sup>19</sup>

Overall, Jordan's government has a reputation for making an effort to maintain domestic stability, encourage a more pluralistic political system, and promote regional peace. In this manner, Jordan's leaders distinguish themselves from many of the surrounding regimes because they are legitimately interested in increasing liberal democratic policies and giving Jordanians a sense of security in their daily lives and the opportunity to participate in political life. It is because of both Jordan's stability and the necessity of that stability that it plays an important role in regional geopolitics.

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<sup>19</sup> Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein, "Our Journey to Forge our Path Towards Democracy," *His Majesty King Abdullah II Ibn Al Hussein*, December 29, 2012, September 17, 2015.

## **Bilateral Relations and Current Events**

In order to understand why Jordan is important to the region, it is necessary to understand the political atmosphere of the Middle East and how Jordan fits into the complex political fabric of regional politics. The following sections of this thesis will expound on the details of Jordan's bilateral relations with several key states. It will discuss how Jordan's foreign relations are important to Jordan's role in the region simultaneously as a stabilizer for its neighbors and a dependent upon their economic aid. Additionally, this section will analyze Jordan's role in two major current events and how Jordan distinguishes itself in regional politics because of these issues.

### **The Levant**

“The Levant” refers to the region of the Middle East that contains Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Palestine, and Israel. While Jordan certainly maintains a diplomatic relationship with Lebanon, they do not have extensive economic relations, nor does Lebanon provide Jordan with any significant amount of aid. Because one of the most important factors in Jordanian foreign relations is economics, it follows that their relationship is relatively limited. Therefore, this thesis will not discuss Lebanese-Jordanian relations in great detail. The Palestinian territories, the Syrian Arab Republic and the Republic of Iraq, however, are three entities with which Jordan has had extensive, if varying relations. All three of these nations were part of the mandates set up under the Sykes-Picot agreement of 1916 and therefore share a common history. In some cases, this makes extensive economic and political cooperation fairly logical. The next three sections will discuss Jordan's bilateral relations with Palestine and Israel, Syria, and Iraq.

## **The Palestinian Territories and the Jewish State of Israel**

Jordan's and Palestine's histories and futures are inescapably intertwined and have a major impact on Jordan's relations with its other neighbors. The Arab-Israeli conflict is currently one of the most contentious issues in Middle Eastern politics. Jordan has played a large role in negotiations and diplomacy in this conflict, and it also shares the largest border with Israel of the Arab states. Therefore, it is necessary to understand Jordanian-Palestinian relations before delving into other regional relationships. Jordan's complex history with Palestine, and consequently the State of Israel, proves to be a driving force behind why major regional and international powers continue to support Jordan financially and politically, in order to maintain its stability. However, Jordan and Palestine have not always had an amicable relationship. While Jordan and Palestine were united against Israel's occupation of Palestine along with the rest of the Arab states, the 1948 Arab-Israeli War marked a distinct decline in Jordanian-Palestinian relations. Although Jordan's leaders nominally supported the cause of Palestinian independence and opposed Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories, Jordan's participation in the conflict began with ulterior motives.

In the years leading up to this war, King Abdullah I of Jordan reportedly met secretly with Israeli officials, brokering a deal in which portions of what was then the British Mandate of Palestine would be incorporated into Jordan. However, when the Israelis would not commit to the proposed plan, Abdullah joined Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon in attacking Israel in May 1948. Jordan intended to claim as much Israeli territory for Jordan as possible, and eventually succeeded in reclaiming the West Bank and East Jerusalem for the Hashemite kingdom. Following Jordan's annexation of the

West bank and East Jerusalem, Abdullah attempted to integrate the Palestinian national identity into the Jordanian identity by granting the Palestinians who resided in the newly-conquered territories Jordanian citizenship.<sup>20</sup> Throughout the following months, Abdullah once again engaged in secret peace negotiations with the Israelis, hoping to begin repairing political relations with the intent of establishing economic relations. However, once his Arab neighbors discovered this, he agreed to give up speaking to the Israelis in return for Arab recognition of Jordan's incorporation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem into the kingdom.<sup>21</sup>

Despite his efforts to redefine Palestinian identity as Jordanian, the intensity of Arab-Israeli conflict made it impossible for Abdullah to completely replace the Palestinian identity. The Arabs now had a poster child for their cause against the Israelis and they were not going to allow Abdullah take it away simply to expand his kingdom. Even when Palestinians in Jordan rose up against the Jordanian government and attempted to assassinate King Hussein during Black September in 1970, the Arabs sympathized with the Palestinians and condemned the Jordanians for putting down the rebellion with such force. This suggests that many Arab states' policies are determined, at least in part, by the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and Jordan's role in it.

For example, after the 1967 Arab-Israeli War in which Jordan lost control of the West Bank and Jerusalem, King Hussein followed in the footsteps of Abdullah I and engaged in secret negotiations with Israel. Hussein maintained the opinion that Jordanians and Palestinians were of the same ethnicity, part of the "East Arab" nationalist

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<sup>20</sup> Dale H. Hoiberg, ed. (2010), "Abdullah". *Encyclopedia Britannica* (15th ed.). Chicago, IL: Encyclopedia Britannica Inc., 22.

<sup>21</sup>Efraim Karash, *The Arab-Israeli Conflict*, London: Osprey, 2002, 51.



identity. Additionally, Hussein still believed that Jordan was entitled to the rule of the Palestinian territories because of the agreements between the British government and his ancestor, Sharif Hussein, in the early 20th century. He was very careful not to express this opinion publicly, for fear of losing the funding Jordan needed to maintain economic stability. Therefore, he worked secretly with the Israelis to maintain a covert peace despite the fact that the two states were officially at war with each other. Throughout this time, Hussein hoped that by maintaining a good relationship with his Arab supporters by publicly condemning Israel's right to exist, while secretly keeping Jordan's relationship with Israel amicable through negotiations and talks, his country would have an ally for any situation.<sup>22</sup> However, once Jordan's Arab financial supporters discovered that Jordan had been engaging with Israel in covert talks, they decreased their economic support to the kingdom. Soon after this discovery, Jordan reportedly ceased its secret negotiations with Israel in 1968 and regained the trust and financial backing of its stronger Arab neighbors. Jordan also joined the rest of the Arab world in calling for Palestinian autonomy an end to the Israeli occupation.

When Egypt signed the first official Arab-Israeli peace treaty in 1979, the Gulf States pressured Jordan financially and politically even more, forcing it to remain officially at war with Israel. Jordan's Gulf allies, as well as Syria and Iraq, feared that if Jordan followed Egypt in making peace with Israel, the opportunity to reduce Israeli power in the region would all but disappear. As with many decisions made in Jordan, economics is one of the first things that is considered. Because Jordan relied so much on

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<sup>22</sup>Yehuda Lukacs, *Israel, Jordan, and the Peace Process*, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1997, 16-18.

foreign aid to sustain a working economy, it had no choice but to acquiesce to its financial supporters' demands, but still secretly worked with Israel. However, King Hussein slowly began to bring his relationship with Israel into the public eye as he deemed it necessary to reach a formal peace agreement with his powerful neighbor.<sup>23</sup>

History shows that Jordanian-Palestinian and Jordanian-Israeli relations are among the major forces behind how the Arab states and international powers such as the United States, interact with Jordan. The Arab world is unequivocally on the side of the Palestinians, supporting their cause to the point of refusing to recognize Israel as a state, referring to the Israelis only as "occupiers." For Jordan, this unwavering loyalty can manifest itself in a decline in financial aid or political support based upon how the kingdom handles diplomatic relations with Israel and Palestine or behaves towards Palestinians with its own borders. For example, during Black September, the Jordanian military forcefully put down a series of violent riots throughout the kingdom, including an assassination attempt on Hussein's life in Sweileh, a town about ten miles north of Amman. Many of Jordan's regional allies did not support the manner in which Hussein dealt with the uprisings. They responded by pulling the majority of their funding, chilling Jordan's relations with its Arab neighbors for several years.

Throughout this time, Jordan was reportedly still engaging in secret talks with Israel. However, since Jordan is a semi-rentier state, it must constantly be mindful of its relationships with its major financial supporters. Without them, Jordan could potentially cease to exist. This is one of the main reasons Jordan did not let its relationship with

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<sup>23</sup>Lukacs, 20.

Israel be made public for several decades, simply because the negative economic consequences of such an action would outweigh any positive developments. However, as the United States continued to increase its relations with and financial aid to the Kingdom, Jordanian officials believed that it would be relatively safe to engage in formal peace talks with Israel. Following the Madrid peace conference of 1991, which was attended by most Arab states, King Hussein began to openly discuss the possibility of a formal peace treaty with then-Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

When the bilateral peace treaty was officially signed in 1994, many of Jordan's Arab financial supporters significantly decreased their aid to the kingdom. Despite this marked decline in regional support, however, increased relations with the United States and Israel compensated for most of the lost foreign aid through grants, loans, trade agreements, etc.<sup>24</sup> A primary result of the treaty for Jordan was its promotion to "Major Non-NATO Ally" status by the United States. Benefits of this new international position include the opportunity to purchase more U.S. military equipment sooner and at a highly subsidized rate. The economic support Jordan gained from the United States as a result of the peace treaty with Israel supported the kingdom enough to stabilize its economy when it lost Arab funding. While making official peace with a neighboring state is in Jordan's national interest, having the economic support of the United States certainly helped motivate Jordan to seek formal peace with Israel. If the United States had not offered such a significant amount of economic assistance to Jordan, it is unlikely that the two states would have signed a formal peace treaty. Jordan would simply not have been able

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<sup>24</sup>Lukacs, 22.

to survive economically if it lost the funding it received from its Arab neighbors and did not gain any additional support.

Because Jordan is geographically and therefore politically close with Israel and Palestine, it plays a major role in the peace process and engages both nations in joint projects such as coordinating water usage of the Jordan and Yarmuk Rivers.<sup>25</sup> It has also historically played a large part in the peace process overall, despite the fact that it no longer has any political claims to the Palestinian Territories. Because of the extent to which Jordan is involved in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it is imperative to many states throughout the world that Jordan remain a stable, functioning, moderate state. Since Jordan and Israel signed the peace treaty in 1994, and more recently since to the rise of the Islamic State (IS) as a prominent non-state actor in the region, Israel has deemed it in its best national self-interest to support Jordan financially. Chuck Freilich, a senior fellow at the Belfer Center of Harvard's Kennedy School of Government and a former deputy national security adviser in Israel, stated in an interview with the *Jerusalem Post* that "Jordan's stability and security are foremost Israeli interests,"<sup>26</sup> adding that this pattern is unlikely to change in the near future.

### **The Syrian Arab Republic**

Syria, like Jordan, has relied heavily on external aid to stimulate its economy and is not, therefore, a major financial supporter of Jordan like the Gulf States or Iraq.

However, because the two states have sizeable common borders, they maintain extensive

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<sup>25</sup> Ted Swagerty, "Israel/Palestine/Jordan – EcoPeace/Friends of the Earth Middle East and the Good Water Neighbors Project," *The EcoTipping Points Project*, April 2014, June 8, 2015.

<sup>26</sup> Ariel Ben Solomon, "What Will the Next 20 Years of Jordan-Israel Relations Look Like?," *Jerusalem Post*, October 27, 2014, June 8, 2015.

political and trade relations. During World War I, Britain enlisted the help of Sharif Hussein, the Protectorate of Mecca, to drive out the Turks. Because of the religious authority he had in the region as the caretaker of the holy site of Mecca, as well as the military power he commanded, he was able to push back the Ottomans. In exchange for this service, the British promised him control of what is now the Levant and the Gulf States. However, they did not fully deliver on their promises because of commitments they made to the French that were later manifested in the Sykes-Picot Agreement. Sharif Hussein's firstborn son, Faisal I, was given control of Syria for a few months before the French took over, handing the governing duties to the Alawites, a minority tribe from the north. Hussein's second son, Abdullah I, who was given the rule of Jordan, still considered Syria to be part of the territory promised to his family by the British, and made several failed attempts to establish his rule in Syria. This belief was a major factor in Syrian-Jordanian relations and, although Syria was wary of Jordan's intentions at first, several efforts were made in the past to unify the two governments economically and, at times, politically.

Syrian-Jordanian relations have witnessed the most extreme fluctuation of any of Jordan's neighbors, a result of the changing political atmosphere and alliances throughout the years. Because of the first king of Jordan's obvious desire to establish his rule in Syria, the two states' relationship had a rocky start. Adding to the tension is the Arab-Israeli conflict and Jordan's history of tension with the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). Syria, along with the rest of the Arab world, disapproved with how King Hussein put down the uprising of Black September in 1970. However, Syria took its disapproval and turned it into military action. Syria sent troops into Jordan to support the

Palestinian rebels, a move which essentially froze Jordanian-Syrian relations for several years.

However, with the onset of the Yom Kippur War in 1973, King Hussein attempted rapprochement with Syria. As confrontation states, both with large military expenditures and reliant on foreign aid, it was in both states' best national interest to improve their relations. Despite the fact that were aligned with different Cold War blocs, they determined that, if they combined their political clout, the Gulf States would be more willing to grant them aid and subsidized oil. Therefore, at the 1974 Arab League summit conference in Rabat, officials from Jordan and Syria resumed diplomatic talks which focused on economic cooperation, commercial exchange, transport, and electricity integration. This was a major step towards economic and industrial integration, and eventually led to an agreement to establish a Joint Higher Command (JHC). The JHC was essentially a bilateral political alliance that was designed to foster greater political coordination between the two states and lead to the construction of a more unified foreign policy.<sup>27</sup> Additionally, Jordan and Syria correctly predicted that they could utilize their unified political position as leverage to persuade the Gulf States to follow through on the promises of financial aid and grant them further aid.<sup>28</sup>

However, obtaining oil and financial assistance from the Gulf was not the only concern King Hussein and Syrian President Bashar Assad had during this time. In 1975, Lebanon had erupted into civil war directly to the west of Syria, which was far too close

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<sup>27</sup> Lorie Brand, *Jordan's Inter-Arab Relations: the Political Economy of Alliance-Making*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1994, 150-157.

<sup>28</sup> Brand, 159.

to Jordan for comfort. Soon after the war began, Syria committed its military to try to end the conflict between the Christian Maronites and the Palestinian refugees displaced to Lebanon after the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. Assad was afraid that a PLO-Lebanese National Movement alliance could overthrow the existing regime in Lebanon which was stable and predictable, which was preferable for Assad's regime.<sup>29</sup> Although Jordan did not become militarily involved in the conflict, it was the only Arab state to fully support Syria's military and propaganda campaign against the civil war.<sup>30</sup> From Jordan's point of view, it was simply too dangerous to allow this war to run its course on its own, particularly with the events of Black September fresh in Hussein's mind.

However, Syria's and Jordan's cooperation did not last. Following the resolution of the Yom Kippur War and Egypt's peace treaty with Israel, Jordanian-Syrian relations began to cool once again due to Jordan's refusal to openly condemn Egypt's bold political move. On November 19, 1977, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat made an historic trip to Jerusalem, becoming the first Arab leader to ever visit the Jewish State of Israel.<sup>31</sup> The vast majority of Arab states condemned Sadat's visit to Jerusalem as a betrayal of the Arab brotherhood; Jordan, however, did not join in the protests. Although Hussein stated that he would not go the way of Sadat and sign a peace treaty with Israel, he declined to join the coalition of Arab states that condemned Sadat's actions, increasing the tension between Jordan and Syria.

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<sup>29</sup> U.S. Library of Congress, *Jordanian-Syrian Relations*, Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1989. Accessed April 21, 2015.

<sup>30</sup> Brand, 156.

<sup>31</sup> Michael Omar-man, "This Week in History: Sadat comes to Jerusalem," *The Jerusalem Post*, November 20, 2011, April 24, 2015.

Additionally, Syria continued to drift away from Jordan as Jordan became closer to Iraq, Syria's eastern neighbor and long-time rival for power in the region. By the end of 1978, Jordan was suffering from a lack of aid because the states that promised aid at the Arab Summit in Rabat in 1974 had stopped forwarding the money. Therefore, in 1979 at the Arab Summit in Baghdad, Jordan gladly accepted the help of Saddam Hussein in persuading the Gulf States to resume channeling economic relief to Jordan's empty treasury. With Saddam Hussein's support and political backing, Jordan was able to convince the Gulf States to recommit to making annual aid payments to the confrontation states. As Jordanian-Iraqi ties strengthened, Syria became increasingly uneasy.<sup>32</sup> Internal unrest in Syria and a general suspicion that Jordan was housing members of the Muslim Brotherhood, who were hostile towards the Syrian regime, added further strains to the Syrian-Jordanian relationship.

Tensions continued to rise until 1980 when Syria attempted to stop a December Arab summit at which, Syria feared, Iraq would increase its standing among the Arab states. Jordan refused to go along with Syria in this matter because Hussein had planned to use this summit to further discuss the Jordanian economy and request more aid. Assad felt extremely threatened at this point – Egypt had made peace with Israel and withdrawn its military support from the border, Iraq's power in the region continued to increase as did its relationship with Jordan, and Syria was experiencing significant domestic instability. As a result, Syria boycotted the summit and, in protest of Jordan's decision, Assad stationed about 20,000 troops and 400 tanks on the Syrian-Jordanian border. Jordan responded by deploying a similar number of troops to guard the border, creating

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<sup>32</sup> Brand, 165-167.



the highest tensions between the two states since Syria sent troops into Jordan during Black September.

Saudi Arabia soon stepped in to mediate the conflict. Two confrontation states fighting each other instead of concentrating on Israel was not seen as being in anyone's best interest. When Syria's troops finally withdrew from the border, Assad demanded that Hussein denounce the Muslim Brotherhood, not support them in any way, and formally recognize the PLO as the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. Jordan and Syria eventually reached an agreement, but not before they caused significant damage to the good economic and political relationship they had fostered for the past few years.

As political relations deteriorated between Jordan and Syria as a result of this conflict, so did their economic alignment and integration. By 1979, the Jordanian government had exchanged economic relations with Syria for Iraq, withdrawing from the joint committees of Jordan and Syria. As the Iran-Iraq War went on, Jordan aligned itself more with Iraq, abandoning Syria as the only Arab ally of Iran. As a result, the Syrian economy worsened due to financial aid given to Iran for the war effort. Additionally, the Syrian government put heavy restrictions on private sector access to foreign exchange, causing Jordanian exports to Syria plummeted from \$41 million in 1980 to \$23.2 million in 1982.<sup>33</sup>

Despite Jordan's and Syria's governments drawing away from each other, the economic integration they had nurtured over the past decade proved to be stronger than

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<sup>33</sup> Brand, 170-179.

damaged political relations. The joint projects and industry the two states undertook continued to operate, but at a slower, more cautious pace than before. In 1984, in the midst of the Iran-Iraq War that drew Jordan and Syria apart because of their opposite allegiances, it was announced that the Syrian-Jordanian Industrial Company's \$52.6 million white cement plant near the Jordanian city of Zarqa' would begin production that year. Additionally, despite the fact that Jordan had renewed ties with Sadat of Egypt, a move that Syria vehemently opposed, a Syrian delegation went to Amman to discuss the possibility of oil exploration and sharing.

These case studies demonstrate that economics is one of the top priorities in Jordanian-Syrian relations, and can even supersede major political differences. Although some large projects were never completed, such as the Maqarayn Dam on the Yarmuk River, because of strained political relations, economics still brought the two states together bilaterally and also in regards to their oil-providing Gulf allies. When the Gulf States failed to provide assistance they promised, Jordan sought closer ties with Syria to increase pressure. Overall, Jordanian-Syrian relations are largely financially driven, and are fully understood only in the context of the two states' respective relations with other major regional powers.<sup>34</sup>

### **The Republic of Iraq**

As the section on Syria mentions, the extent of Jordan's relations with Iraq are usually inversely-related to how its relations are with Syria. Because Iraq and Syria generally do not have a good relationship, Jordan has been unable to maintain relations

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<sup>34</sup> Brand, 179, 195.

with both states at the same time. Nevertheless, Jordan's and Iraq's relationship is not unlike many other Jordanian-Arab relationship: it is based on largely on economics. Their economic relationship began growing during the aftermath of Black September in 1970. When the Gulf States withheld a significant amount of aid from Jordan after the kingdom took military action against the PLO, Jordan sought after Iraq for an alternative source of financial assistance. Additionally, the pipeline through Syria closed in the 1970's, making transporting oil from the Persian Gulf difficult, Jordan became Iraq's main supply corridor and its main outlet for oil exports.<sup>35</sup> These economic relations, as this section will show, are one of the main centers of Jordanian-Iraqi relations.

Jordan and Iraq have a somewhat complicated history. Faisal, Abdullah I's brother, was established as the ruler of Syria by the British in 1920. After he was dethroned by the French a year later, he moved to Iraq to establish his reign. Therefore, Jordanian-Iraqi relations were extremely close because of family ties from 1921 until 1958, when the Hashemite monarchy of Iraq was overthrown in a bloody coup. The Ba'athist party that took over Iraq's government proved to be quite hostile to Jordan and, throughout the 1960's and early 1970's their political relations were strained. However, Gulf financial assistance to Jordan had decreased significantly following the events of Black September. As a result, Jordan was forced to seek other sources of aid.

By the mid-1970's, Jordan began to export agricultural products to Iraq to increase trade between the two states and, more importantly, Iraq began to export oil to Jordan and quickly became one of Jordan's major oil suppliers. Additionally, Iraq started funding the

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<sup>35</sup> Curtis Ryan, "Between Iraq and a Hard Place: Jordanian-Iraqi Relations," *Middle East Report*, No. 2015 (2000), 41.

expansion of the Aqaba port, Jordan's outlet to the Red Sea, and developments of Jordan's road system. Iraq was interested in gaining access to this port as an alternative to relying on inconsistent ground transportation to and from the Gulf ports or the even more unreliable option of couriating products from the Mediterranean Sea through Syria, with which Iraq had an unstable and fluctuating relationship. Jordan gladly accepted the financial aid because, not only did it provide the opportunity to improve its infrastructure, but it also strengthened its ties with Iraq, which was proving to be an increasingly important ally in the region.<sup>36</sup>

By the 1980 Iran-Iraq War, Jordan had switched its regional alliances from Syria to Iraq. The main reasons for this sudden shift in alliance had largely to do with the economic benefits of backing Iraq instead of Syria. In 1978 at the Arab summit in Baghdad, Iraq joined Saudi Arabia in promising Jordan about \$1 billion in aid, an offer that Jordan could not afford to refuse. Additionally, due to Iraq's investment in improving and expanding Jordan's infrastructure and the Aqaba port, Jordan felt obligated to continue politically backing its benefactor. Finally, Hussein felt a certain sense of duty to his Arab comrades in Iraq. He stated that Jordan "stand[s] on the side of our brothers and support them with all our capabilities and resources."<sup>37</sup> Although Hussein's decision to back Iraq cost him the economic support of Syria, he decided that it was in Jordan's best interest to do so because of Iraq's oil supply.

Iraq's relationship with Jordan continued to improve during the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, although it came at the expense of the weakening of its relationship

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<sup>36</sup>Peter Gubser, *Jordan: Crossroads of Middle Eastern Events*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1983, 119-120.

<sup>37</sup>Gubser, 121.

with most other Arab states. When King Hussein lifted martial law in 1989, which had been in place since the Arab-Israeli War of 1967 and had disbanded all political parties and called off all elections, the Jordanian people were allowed to speak their minds about the regional political atmosphere. The Islamic Action Front (IAF), the Jordanian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, quickly banded together and held public demonstrations in which they openly supported Saddam Hussein of Iraq. After Iraq invaded Kuwait, King Hussein was in a difficult position. Domestically, his people called for a pro-Iraq stance, while regionally, his Arab neighbors called for a pro-Kuwait stance. Eventually, he chose the middle ground and officially took a neutral position on the war, but it was very clear that Jordanians favored Saddam Hussein. As a result, while King Hussein maintained a positive popular opinion on the home front, the regional repercussions of his support of Iraq in the war were detrimental. Aid from the United States, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia abruptly stopped. Exports to and from Arab states declined dramatically. The Aqaba port was shut off to commercial traffic, which caused a sharp decline in port revenues and exports.<sup>38</sup>

As a result, Jordan slowly began to distance itself from Saddam Hussein's regime in an effort to regain the goodwill of its Arab neighbors. After the Iraq-Kuwait War, the United Nations (UN) placed economic sanctions on Iraq, prohibiting any state to trade with it. Jordan officially complied with these sanctions, mainly because it had to improve its international and regional standings. Yet, it was rumored that the Jordan-Iraq border was not entirely closed and that goods were still transported back and forth between the

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<sup>38</sup>Curtis Ryan, "Between Iraq and a Hard Place: Jordanian-Iraqi Relations," *Middle East Report*, No. 2015 (2000), 41.

two states. Although Amman may not have been aware or approved of the illicit trade with Iraq, the Jordanian population was united in the opinion that the trade embargo severely hurt the Jordanian economy and was the primary reason for the economic recession into which Jordan had fallen. When King Hussein signed a formal peace treaty with Israel less than four years after the Iraq-Kuwait War ended, not all Jordanians accepted the peace. Some Jordanians, spurred on by the IAF, held protests in 1998 to express distaste for the treaty and call for the lifting of the sanctions on Iraq.<sup>39</sup>

When King Abdullah II took over the rule of Jordan after his father's death in 1999, he attempted to improve relations with Iraq and, in his first speech before parliament, called to lift the Iraq blockade. By 2000, Iraq and Jordan had resumed official trade relations, allowing Jordan to import 80,000 barrels of oil per day at a highly-subsidized rate. This improvement in economic relations did not fully restore the relationship Iraq and Jordan had before the war, but it was certainly progress. Jordan even spoke up in defense of Iraq's regime in 2003 when the United States invaded. Jordan was vehemently opposed to the use of military force to solve the issues at hand, even though Abdullah was no friend of Saddam Hussein's. The king stated that Jordan was "one with [their] people who reject and condemn[s] the [U.S.] invasion." He also denounced any claim that the United States would be able to transport troops and munitions through Jordan into Iraq.<sup>40</sup>

Despite some fluctuations in Jordanian-Iraqi relations throughout the twentieth century, economics has tied the two states together, sometimes even superseding politics.

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<sup>39</sup> Ryan, 42.

<sup>40</sup> "Jordanian king slams 'invasion' of Iraq," *Agence France-Presse*, April 3, 2003, April 25, 2015.

When the rest of the Arab world turned its back on Iraq following Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in 1990, Jordan maintained covert economic relations. When Abdullah II rose to power in 1999, Iraqi-Jordanian relations drastically improved, mostly because both states needed each other's economic support. After Saddam Hussein's regime fell in 2003, Jordan became even more involved in Iraq's affairs because it relies heavily on its oil supply. It would be detrimental to Jordan's economy if the Iraqi government fall into the hands of an extremist group.

As the case studies explored in this section indicate, Jordan's policies towards Iraq are motivated by several key factors. Arguably the most important factor is economics, followed closely by domestic and regional political pressures. Therefore, as the two states continue to entwine their economies by joint projects such as extending the oil pipeline from Iraq to Aqaba and opening up trade from Iraq to Israel via the Jordan River Crossing, it is likely they will continue to have good economic relations. Of course, the situation has become significantly more complicated in recent years due to the presence of the Islamic State in the region. One of the reasons King Abdullah was so eager to participate in the air strikes against the Islamic State is because to restore a stable, moderate government in Iraq with which he can resume normal trade relations and, in turn help grow the Jordanian economy.

## **The Gulf States**

Jordan's foreign relations with the Gulf States are incredibly important for its economy. The kingdom receives the majority of its regional financial aid from the oil-rich gulf region. Because of the conservative nature of the Gulf States' governments and the Sunni majority population, they see Jordan as an ally that shares the same general beliefs. The governments of these states, particularly Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, therefore financially support Jordan through low-interest loans, grants, and subsidized imports. They see maintaining the kingdom's stability as vital to their national securities. The following sections will discuss the policies of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait towards Jordan, focusing on their economic relations within the context of the regional political climate.<sup>41</sup>

### **The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia**

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is indisputably one of Jordan's closest allies in the region. Jordan's strategic geopolitical location is a valuable asset to Saudi Arabia. Because Jordan has a moderate government is financially-dependent on its economic supporters, Saudi Arabia sees this as an opportunity to have not only an ally in the region, but also a geographic buffer. As a confrontation state that shares its entire western border with Israel, Jordan has historically been one of the first to encounter military action in any Arab-Israeli war. Therefore, it in Saudi Arabia's best national interest to financially support Jordan to keep its economy stable. In the event of another armed conflict with

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<sup>41</sup> Stanley Reed, "Jordan and the Gulf Crisis," *Council on Foreign Affairs*, 1990/91.



Israel, Saudi Arabia will be protected a first line of defense - Jordan. From Jordan's perspective, as a semi-rentier state, it depends on aid from states such as Saudi Arabia to continue existing. Consequently, it gladly accepts Saudi Arabia's offer of friendship through economics.

However, Saudi Arabia still occasionally has different views on certain regional issues which causes the kingdom to withhold economic assistance from Jordan at times. For example, in 1984, Saudi Arabia criticized Jordan for re-establishing diplomatic ties with Egypt following its controversial peace treaty with Israel. Saudi Arabia did not have any qualms about Jordan reaching out to Egypt in 1983 economically. Rather, King Khalid of Saudi Arabia disagreed with Jordan because it did not consult the other Arab states before taking that step. While it appears to be a small political matter, Saudi Arabia took Jordan's move to reestablish relations with Egypt as a usurpation of Saudi Arabia's position as Jordan's main financial supporter. Because Saudi Arabia supports Jordan financially, it believes that it has the prerogative to have a hand in Jordan's foreign affairs. This difference in political views affected the amount of aid Jordan received from Saudi Arabia. As history shows, when Saudi Arabia disagrees with Jordan's foreign policy, it reacts by reducing the amount of aid it normally gives instead of directly confronting the kingdom's leaders.<sup>42</sup>

In 1985, King Hussein reached out to Saudi Arabia, seeking support in the Arab summit to discuss Hussein's plan for further Jordanian-Palestinian cooperation in the peace process. In spite of the outcome of the Rabat summit in 1974, Hussein still

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<sup>42</sup> Brand, 87, 98.

maintained that Jordan needed to play a larger role in the Arab-Israeli peace process and sought Arab support for this proposal. Despite Hussein's persistence, Khalid chose to vote in favor of channeling all future assistance directly through the PLO instead of Jordan. Hussein was certainly disappointed at this turn of events, but it did not cause any major rifts in his relationship with Saudi Arabia. The \$300 million in collective aid the Arab states promised Jordan and the oil subsidies Saudi Arabia provided were enough to quell any thoughts of immediate argument against the consensus.

While Jordanian and Saudi Arabian political and security interests may intersect at times, each state's first priority is its own national wellbeing. For Jordan, this means obtaining foreign aid simply to survive. For Saudi Arabia, this means using its vast wealth to gain allies throughout the region, in an effort to decrease the likelihood of any external threat coming inside its borders. Due to Saudi Arabia's interest in Jordan's strategic geographic location, it has remained one of Jordan's main regional economic supporters since the 1950's. However, Jordan is far more reliant on Saudi oil and money than Saudi is on any Jordanian products. Therefore, Saudi Arabia occasionally manipulates the political and economic power it has over Jordan to gain the upper hand in trade agreements or get out of deals. This was the case with the Hijaz Railway, a project left unfinished due to a lack of Saudi Arabian commitment. The Hijaz Railway was intended to physically connect the two kingdoms with a rail system that would, in theory, increase their bilateral trade. After the project began, however, Saudi Arabian officials decided that the endeavor was not worth their effort or money. They therefore pulled out

on deal and there was virtually nothing Jordan could do to convince the Saudis to rejoin the project.<sup>43</sup>

However, Jordan does have the advantage in human capital, giving it a small amount of leverage in bilateral politics with Saudi Arabia. Jordan has long boasted of its excellence in education and claims to have the finest education system in the Middle East. Therefore, investment of labor, particularly educated labor, has proved to be the most important Jordanian export to Saudi Arabia. Not only do expatriate workers send home foreign capital to their families in Jordan, but they also decrease the strain on the labor market in their home state. The major export of labor was in the field of education; in the late 1970's there were some 8,000 Jordanian teachers working in Saudi Arabia. Despite the economic downturn in the early 1980's, Jordanians continued to live and work in Saudi Arabia in fields such as construction and technology.

Since Saudi Arabian foreign politics are realist at their core, no action is taken unless it will contribute to its national self-interest. This includes all economic aid, grants, and loans the kingdom ever gave Jordan. Since Jordan serves as a geographic buffer between Saudi Arabia and the more volatile states to its north and east, Saudi Arabia continues to view it in its national interest to keep Jordan a stable, moderate monarchy. This goal manifests itself in supporting Jordan's economy more than anything else. If Jordan's government can provide its people with subsidized water, petroleum, and gas, there will be far less of danger of public unrest. Therefore, Jordan's domestic stability

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<sup>43</sup> Brand, 98.

will allow it to continue to serve the purpose of a geographic buffer between Saudi Arabia and the Levantine conflicts.

### **The State of Kuwait**

Jordan's second largest financial supporter in the region has historically been the State of Kuwait. Jordan's relations with Kuwait are very similar to its relations with Saudi Arabia. Just like Saudi Arabia, Kuwait is an oil-rich state with income to spare and that it chooses to invest in Jordan's stability. Again, just like Saudi Arabia, it is in Kuwait's best national self-interest to have a stable, moderate monarchy between it and the conflicts in the Levant, which are mostly centered on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Although Jordan and Kuwait disagree on some major regional situations such as the decision in 1974 at the Arab summit in Rabat to recognize the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinians, Kuwait still sends large sums of money to Jordan to help stabilize its economy and, in turn, its government.

In general, Kuwaiti-Jordanian relations have been cooperative and cordial. Despite a few setbacks in bilateral relations due to political differences on regional conflicts or issues, Kuwait has always decided to resume its funding of and diplomatic relations with Jordan. Kuwait recognizes the value of Jordan's strategic geographic location as a buffer between it and the Arab-Israeli conflict. Kuwait's main objectives for its relations with Jordan have been to maintain Jordan's stability, which occasionally meant keeping its citizens satisfied economically so they would not pose a threat to the Jordan's stable monarchy. As long as Jordan remains firm in the face of all the conflicts

constantly flaring up in neighboring states, Kuwait can avoid direct confrontation more than without Jordan.

Kuwait was the first Arab state to implement a systematic means of distributing aid when they established the Kuwaiti Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) in the wake of the first crisis with Iraq in 1961. This foundation was the first step Kuwait took instituting “dinar diplomacy,” which is essentially buying friends and allegiances. KFAED was designed to provide long-term, low-interest loans for developmental purposes to Arab states and, eventually, other Islamic and African states. Kuwait also invested in Jordan's financial district through the Kuwait Real Estate Investment Corporation (KREIC). Jordan is eager to attract foreign investment to bolster state revenue and also enlarge the private sector. While the investments Kuwait makes in Jordan are much smaller than in Europe and the United States (mostly due to the stability of Western markets and guarantees of returns on investment), Kuwait has put significant amounts of money in Jordanian banks and development projects. The KREIC purchased 3 million shares (a total value of \$9 million) of the Housing Bank of Amman and committed to purchasing 10 million additional shares in the future. Furthermore, the Jordanian government permitted the KREIC to establish a number of companies in Amman with very few restrictions. This indicates how eager Jordan was to obtain as much rent income as possible to alleviate the pressure from its own domestic economy.<sup>44</sup>

Most of Jordanian-Kuwaiti bilateral relations center on the economic aid it provides to Jordan. In return, Jordan provides a stable geographical buffer between

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<sup>44</sup> Brand, 136-137.

Kuwait and the conflicts in the Levant. However, Jordan has also contributed a great deal to Kuwait's economy ways other than direct foreign aid. Although Jordan does not have many natural resources, its greatest resource is arguably human capital and educated workers. Kuwait currently houses the second largest number of Jordanian expatriate workers in the region, numbering about 350,000 at its peak. Kuwait also sends many of its citizens to Jordan to study in top technological institutions such as the Technical Engineering Institute. Similar to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait "imported" a large number of teachers and university graduates to work in its public schools and government offices.

Additionally, Kuwait has sent some of its top military officials to Jordan to learn from their own military. The Jordanian Armed Forces, also known as the Arab Legion, is one of the top military forces in the Middle East due to extensive training from both the British during the period of the Mandate, and the United States in more recent years. The United States has also invested a great deal of money in improving the Jordanian defense system since 1996 when it became a "major non-NATO ally," which entitles the kingdom priority delivery of military hardware and U.S. government assistance to buy arms and equipment, privileges that significantly bolsters the Jordanian army's reputation in the region.<sup>45</sup> Kuwait recognizes this and takes advantage of Jordan's military prowess in return for economic assistance.

However, Kuwait's government does not always agree with the Jordanian government's policies. Similarly to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait dealt with these disagreements by cutting off financial aid to the kingdom or employ other passive methods to suggest

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<sup>45</sup> Philip Gerald, "Major Non-NATO Ally," *The American Conservative*, July 9, 2012, April 23, 2015.

how Jordan should conduct its foreign affairs. When King Hussein or his emissaries visited Kuwait to request additional funding or inquire as to when the money would be delivered, the answer would often be the noncommittal *in-shah-Allah* (Arabic for “If God wills it”). For example, following the dividing events of Black September in 1970, Kuwait, along with most other Arab states, chose to withhold economic aid from Jordan. As a result, Jordan quickly became extremely short on finances and was forced to approach its benefactors asking them to resume sending the money they promised in the wake of the Six-Days War in 1967. In 1973, Kuwait finally acquiesced to Jordan’s request and sent the kingdom the aid it pledged in 1967, along with an additional \$51 million it promised at the 1974 Rabat Summit. However, Kuwait only resumed its foreign aid to Jordan after the kingdom had reconciled with the Palestinians, which was the main issue Kuwait had concerning Black September.

By 1990, however, the additional aid Kuwait pledged to Jordan did not arrive due to the Iraq invasion in August of that year. Despite the millions of dollars in aid Kuwait had to Jordan over the previous two decades, the Jordanian people were unsympathetic toward Kuwait when Iraq effectively eradicated its military in two days. In 1989, King Hussein lifted martial law, which had been in place since the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. Jordan had its first elections in more than two decades and with the elections came an increase in freedom of the press and free speech in Jordan. This allowed the more Islamist organizations, namely the Islamic Action Front (IAF), to speak of their support for Saddam freely and, in turn, garner support from the Jordanian people for Saddam’s regime. Jordan’s King Hussein had very little room to maneuver between what was the clear consensus of the Arab world and Western allies, and the demands of his people.

Therefore, Hussein chose to take the middle ground as much as possible. The Jordanian government declined to join the U.S.-led coalition, which virtually all other Arab states had joined, a move that proved to be very unpopular among Jordan's allies and supporters and caused severe economic repercussions for the next several years.<sup>46</sup>

After the U.S.-led coalition expelled Iraq's forces from Kuwait in 1990-1991, Jordanian-Kuwaiti relations were strained for much of the remainder of the decade. As a political move to express its contempt for Jordan's actions in this conflict, Kuwait expelled about 300,000 Jordanian migrant workers, taking away their sources of income. This put an additional strain on Jordan's economy in two ways. First, because workers were returning from abroad, they were no longer bringing foreign money into Jordan. Secondly, the sudden increase of Jordanians coming back strained the state's infrastructure. Jordan suddenly had to provide more water, petroleum, and gas for hundreds of thousands of people.

However, after King Hussein died in 1999 and his son Abdullah II ascended to the throne, their relations markedly improved. Kuwait began to allow Jordanian workers back into the country and resumed sending aid to Jordan.<sup>47</sup> Despite their occasional differences in political opinions concerning regional issues, Kuwait and Jordan have consistently repaired their relations and resumed economic and political cooperation simply because it is better for both states to do so. Kuwait needs a strong, stable ally that can keep the Arab-Israeli conflict, and now the Syrian civil war, from spilling over into

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<sup>46</sup> Ryan, 41.

<sup>47</sup> Beverly Milton-Edwards and Peter Hinchcliffe, *Jordan: A Hashemite Legacy (The Contemporary Middle East)*, London: Routledge, 2009.



its borders and directly affecting its own stability. Jordan needs Kuwaiti oil and economic support to maintain its economy, particularly now that hundreds of thousands of refugees have fled the war in Syria.

It is apparent from the case studies presented here that the Kingdom of Jordan's foreign policy decisions and whom it supports have much to do with economics. Jordan has no oil and very little agriculture or industry; its economy is not self-sufficient and it must constantly rely on its neighbors for financial assistance. Therefore, every decision the government makes must take into account how Jordan's benefactors will react. However, since Jordan is only a semi-rentier state, the government must also account for the wishes of the people, which still play a major role in foreign policy decisions. As Black September, the Iraq-Kuwait War, and, more recently, King Abdullah's reluctance to participate in air strikes against the Islamic State without some public support demonstrate, Jordanians' opinions are a major factor in how Jordan acts. Another factor that clearly plays into Jordan's foreign affairs is its relationship with Israel and the Palestinians. Since Jordan is geographically very close to Israel, many Arab states channel millions of dollars into Jordan's treasury to help keep the state stable and Jordanians financially satisfied.

Most of Jordan's foreign affairs and internal issues revolve around economics. When the IAF holds demonstrations, the demands mostly concern economics and do not call for a complete regime change. Therefore, if Jordan has enough money to subsidize the cost of petroleum and other staple goods in the kingdom, it can devote more time and effort to keeping the Palestinian-Israeli conflict away from non-confrontation states. This is why wealthy Arab states continue to support Jordan financially. Consequentially,

because Jordan is dependent on foreign aid, it will consider how the rest of the Arab world will react before making foreign policy decisions. Since Jordan's very existence hinges on its benefactors, it will continue to balance what its patrons want and what Jordanians call for, as long as these demands remain in Jordan's national self-interest.

## **Non-Arab Relations**

Since its creation in 1921, Jordan has proven itself to be an important regional actor. It has drawn the attention of major non-regional powers, historically Great Britain and more recently the United States. Although Jordan and the United Kingdom have an extensive historical background centered on the Great Arab Revolt and the subsequent Sykes-Picot Agreement that created the modern state of Jordan, the United States remains Jordan's top financial and political supporter in today's world. The following section will discuss Jordan's relations with the United States and how they affect Jordan's role in Middle Eastern politics.

### **The United States of America**

The United States has shown its commitment to Jordan by providing large amounts of financial aid, military protection, and political support. After World War II and America's rise to prominence as a world super power, it took it upon itself to become more politically involved in the Middle East. The United States quickly discovered that the Arab-Israeli conflict was one of the most important issues in the Middle East. Since Jordan was geographically close to Israel and had played a major role in the conflict in the past, the United States quickly realized the strategic value of creating a good relationship with Jordan. Jordan remains one of the main receivers of U.S. foreign aid in the Middle East today.

Throughout the first half of the 20th century, the United States maintained good, if minimal, relations with Jordan. Since the United States did not initially consider Jordan of the utmost importance to its own national interest, American-Jordanian relations were

amicable but limited from about 1922 until the early 1950's. The years following the Arab-Israeli War of 1948 proved to be particularly problematic for Jordan. However, it was also at this time that U.S. relations with Jordan aid to the kingdom dramatically increased. The United States entered the region in the aftermath of the conflict to help mediate the negotiations. One of the focuses of its diplomatic efforts was Jordan. In 1951, the United States began giving Jordan economic aid and in 1957, granted the kingdom military aid as well. After King Hussein ascended to the throne in 1952 and enacted the first Jordanian constitution with democratic elements, U.S. officials deemed Jordan a stable, moderate ally that could be a strategic asset, and with which they could establish strong economic and diplomatic ties. They also recognized that, if they had Jordan's loyalty through diplomatic efforts and economic aid, Jordan would be more likely to be supportive of the United States in future regional negotiations.

Although official foreign policy has changed throughout U.S. presidential administrations, there are several overall goals that have remained consistent: preserving the national security of the United States, promoting world peace and a secure global environment, and maintaining a balance of power among nations.<sup>48</sup> According to the first point on this list, America's top priority is to maintain the security of its people, which includes protecting U.S. interests abroad. As U.S. actions and policy statements from the Cold War indicate, American priorities in maintaining national security at home and abroad included keeping the governments of the Middle East free from Communism, protecting U.S. access to the oil supply, and supporting the State of Israel.<sup>49</sup> While

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<sup>48</sup> "American Government," *U.S. History*, 18 April, 2015.

<sup>49</sup> Michael C. Hudson and Louisa Fawcett, *The International Relations of the Middle East* (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 2013), 322.

keeping Communism out of the Middle East has not been a top U.S. goal since the end of the Cold War, the overall goals remain the same. It is these priorities that motivate U.S. and decisions concerning Jordan.

In the aftermath of the 1967 Six Days War and the 1973 Yom Kippur War, the Nixon Administration stepped into the fray in order to mediate the peacemaking dialogues that would surely follow. Leading these negotiations was U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, who sought stability in the region, but sometimes at the expense of the Arab states' demands. Kissinger, who was a major proponent of "shuttle diplomacy," saw U.S. involvement in the mediations as leverage to lift the 1973 oil embargo. After two years of negotiations in which Kissinger focused nearly all his efforts on the Egyptian front, Israel and Egypt signed a disengagement agreement in which Israel agreed to withdraw from the Sinai Peninsula. When Egypt and the rest of the Arab world saw the leverage the U.S. possessed and Kissinger's ability to renegotiate the possession of lost land and border disputes, they agreed to lift the oil embargo under the assumption that the Syrian-Israeli issues would be dealt with immediately.

However, Jordan did not make the top of America's list of priorities in the Middle East. According to then-Jordanian Prime Minister Zeid Rifai, United States' foreign policy in the Middle East was "initiated only on the basis of crisis management, and that in the absence of a crisis, there would be no U.S. policy."<sup>50</sup> As the U.S. was in the midst of the Cold War at the time, Kissinger was not particularly concerned about achieving a complete resolution to conflicts in the Middle East. Rather, he was content with "a

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<sup>50</sup> Madfai, 16.

relatively stable but illusory status quo” in which the United States could continue to combat the Kremlin’s influence on the region while still focusing on more pressing matters of U.S. national security.<sup>51</sup> He did, however, pledge to Jordan that the United States would not negotiate with the Palestinian Liberation Organization after the Rabat Summit of 1974, a move that set in place a dilemma which the U.S. would face for many years after the fact.

But Jordan would not be dissuaded. Throughout this time, Jordan continued to vie for U.S. attention in addressing its own issues with Israel. Jordan lost most of its official administrative role in the West Bank after Israel captured the land in the 1967 war, and King Hussein wanted it back. In January 1974, Hussein presented Kissinger with a withdrawal plan that sought a peaceful solution to the border conflict by having Israeli forces pull back about ten kilometers from the bank from the Jordan river, marking this area as a demilitarized zone. According to *Jordan, the United States and the Middle East Peace Process, 1974-1991* by Madiha al Madfai, the Jordanian government made this request to test Kissinger in two ways. First, to determine if he was as serious about forging a disengagement agreement between Jordan and Israel in the same capacity as he did in Egypt and was in the process of doing in Syria. Secondly, King Hussein and Jordanian Prime Minister Rifai wanted to test Kissinger’s determination to pass and implement United Nations Security Council Resolution 242. Jordan saw this resolution as a compromise on several major terms, namely the question of the West Bank and Jerusalem. Ultimately, Jordan wanted to determine how willing Kissinger was to work with Jordan to achieve its diplomatic aims: “to secure Israeli withdrawal from all the

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<sup>51</sup> IBID, 28.

occupied territories including East Jerusalem and to restore the national rights of the Palestinian people.”<sup>52</sup> Of course, King Hussein still wanted to maintain as much administrative and diplomatic control of the West Bank as possible. He became quite territorial when, in Rabat in 1974, the Arab states pressed for the Palestinian Liberation Organization to be the sole representative of the Palestinian people.<sup>53</sup>

These talks revealed that Kissinger was far more concerned with closing the deals between Egypt and Israel. The territory that was being negotiated in these agreements, the Sinai Peninsula, were far less controversial and had fewer emotional and religious ties to them, unlike the West Bank and East Jerusalem. According to former Jordanian Prime Minister Rifai, Kissinger was only after safe deals that would be certain to reach decisive conclusions and bolster Kissinger’s reputation at home and abroad. Rifai believed that Kissinger’s main motivation for pushing for the PLO’s increased international recognition and political responsibilities was to remove Jordan from the negotiations of the West Bank. If Kissinger could place the PLO in the position as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian territories, an organization Israel refused to recognize or have diplomatic relations with, it would stalemate the negotiations. He only needed to get the rest of the Arab states on board, which he did by pushing the plan on Egypt’s Anwar Sadat, and the other Arab nations followed his lead. Rifai went on to say that “the only way for Kissinger to rid himself of Jordanian demands was to knock us out, once and for all. Kissinger plotted against the Arab nation and Sadat took part in the plot. The rest of the Arabs fell into the trap.”<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Madfai, 12, 19.

<sup>53</sup> Alan George. *Jordan: Living in the Crossfire* (London: Zed Books, 2005), 32-33.

<sup>54</sup> Madfai, 20-21.

When Jimmy Carter assumed the presidency in 1977, he walked into a scenario full of strained relations, stalemated power struggles, and temporary, weak peace treaties that did not promise to hold for any significant period of time. As a new president, Carter felt it necessary to create a new foreign policy, beginning with the Palestinian crisis. He undertook a complete break from the Kissinger method of and promoted the idea of a homeland for the Palestinians. However, the more he brought up these points concerning a change in U.S. policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict, the more backlash he received from Congress and the American people. Despite the resistance from the American people on the Palestinian question, he continued to seek to repair relations with Jordan during his time as president by promising the kingdom that he would always be directly involved in any discussion regarding the Palestinian territories.

This trend seems to remain unchanged across presidencies. Over the decades, U.S. interests in the Middle East always remain the same and, it appears, so does foreign policy. As American presidents came and went, and with them “fresh” policies on the Middle East, few things realistically changed in U.S. policy or action toward the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, or Jordan’s involvement in it. As Reagan, Bush Sr., Clinton, Bush Jr., and finally Obama entered the presidency, they all to some extent claimed that ending this devastating conflict was a top priority in the region. However sincere they might have been at the time, idealistic principles tend to take a secondary role in the formation of foreign policy. Much of this unchanging policy in the Middle East has to do with the United State's unwavering loyalty to Israel. U.S. officials have openly stated many times that maintaining Israel's stability is a high priority for its foreign policy in the Middle East. President Reagan stated that “Israel is the only strategic asset in the area the



U.S. can rely on” and that an Israel that is armed and combat-ready is “a force in the Middle East that actually is of benefit to us. If there was no Israel...we’d have to supply [the region] with our own [force].”<sup>55</sup>

Because of the U.S. policy towards Israel and its objective to keep U.S. oil supplies safe and accessible, it does everything it can to preserve these interests and resources in the region. So why has the U.S. continued to support Jordan economically and militarily throughout the years despite occasional strained relations? Because having a moderate, Western-friendly monarchy such as Jordan in its strategic geopolitical location as an ally is an immense asset to the United States. Former U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz stated before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on June 19, 1985 that “the bold, courageous leadership of Jordan [in the search for peace in the Middle East] is indispensable...Jordan needs economic relief so it is not weakened or distracted while it confronts the hard political choices ahead... If we want to advance the cause of peace, we will provide that help.”<sup>56</sup>

Although Shultz references regional peace efforts, domestic political pressures in the United States usually causes policy makers to support Israel first and Arab states second. For example, Jordan requested multiple air defense weapon systems in 1947. This weapons transfer was to be financed by Saudi Arabia and would therefore not cost the United States anything financially. However, some U.S. officials and politicians determined that such a sale would endanger the safety of Israel, so they denied the request. Despite multiple efforts by Jordan to convince the United States to grant the

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<sup>55</sup> Madfai, 50-69.

<sup>56</sup> George Shultz, “Jordan and the Middle East Peace Process” (statement, Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Washington, D.C., June 19, 1985).

kingdom the weapons, the United States continue to refuse them. Jordan's official became frustrated with America and turned instead to the Soviet Union to obtain the weapons. Because the United States was in the midst of the Cold War and did not want an important state such as Jordan to fall into the Soviet bloc, it became more cooperative. In 1984, President Reagan sent a delegation headed by Francis West, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, to Amman to persuade Jordan to reconsider its allegiances. When the delegation arrived, Jordan once again requested 36 F-16 fighter jets and other assorted missile systems. However, due to uproarious protest from Israeli politicians and pro-Israel political forces in America, the delegation was forced to deny the request once again. However, at the same time, the United States sold 75 F-16's to Israel, the largest arms sale to Israel in four years, which occurred with virtually no political protest or question.<sup>57</sup>

Once Jordan signed the Jordan-Israel Peace treaty with Israel in 1994, however, U.S.-Jordanian relations increased considerably. On October 26, 1994, King Hussein signed an official peace agreement with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and became only the second Arab state to take such a step. In 1996, the United States made Jordan a major non-NATO ally which “makes Jordan eligible for priority consideration for the transfer of excess defense articles, the use of already appropriated military assistance funds for procurement through commercial leases, the stockpiling of U.S. military material, and the purchase of depleted uranium munitions.”<sup>58</sup> This milestone in U.S.-Jordanian relations adds credence to the fact that U.S. interests and actions in the Middle

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<sup>57</sup> Madfai, 80-84.

<sup>58</sup>Ugur Akinci, *US declares Jordan a “major non-NATO ally,”* Hurriyat Daily News, 16 November 1996, 19 April 2015.

East are motivated largely by Israel's presence and its commitment to preserving the security of the Jewish state.

King Abdullah II has demonstrated for some time that he will go to great lengths to maintain good relations with the United States, including covertly supporting the America in the extremely controversial conflict in Iraq, a move that alienated the kingdom from some of its Arab neighbors. Although the king was never openly in favor of U.S. military action, it is reported that Jordan informally provided logistical support for the U.S.-led campaign to oust Saddam Hussein in the spring of 2003. Jordan also supported the U.S.-backed Iraqi government that was put in place after Saddam Hussein was removed from power. Additionally, Jordan trained the new Iraqi army and police force. In an interview with Al-Arabiyya TV on August 3, 2004, King Abdullah mentioned that Jordan had sent military equipment to the reconstituted Iraq army, including more than 150 armored vehicles.<sup>59</sup> Despite the fact that many Jordanians supported Saddam Hussein, King Abdullah still decided to support the United States. He considered the preservation of Jordan's good relations with the United States to be a more pressing objective than appeasing Jordanian sympathizers of Saddam Hussein, the path his father King Hussein chose in 1990.

King Abdullah has been fairly cooperative with the United States and abides by regulations and conditions the United States sets up for arms deals and economic grants. The most recent development in U.S.-Jordanian relations concerns the Islamic State (IS) in Iraq and Syria. Although Jordan was one of the first states to join the U.S.-led coalition

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<sup>59</sup> Congressional Research Service, *Jordan: U.S. Relations and Bilateral Issues*, by Alfred B. Prados, Washington D.C.: Foreign Affairs, Defense, and Trade Division, 2006, <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/IB93085.pdf> (accessed April 21, 2015).

that engaged in airstrikes against IS, the Jordanian public was against engaging in any military action. In December 2014, a Jordanian fighter jet was shot down by IS missiles when it was carrying out an airstrike against an IS military base. The pilot, First Lieutenant Moaz al-Kasasbeh, was captured by the Islamic State. Jordanians were outraged and demanded that King Abdullah end military involvement in the coalition. However, on February 3, 2015, the Islamic State released a video that showed the Jihadist organization burning al-Kasasbeh alive in a cage. Jordanians were outraged. They demanded that King Abdullah retaliate and avenge their brother's death. The rage Kasasbeh's execution sparked in the Jordanian gave Abdullah the political momentum he needed to engage in strikes with strong public support.<sup>60</sup> He vowed to the Jordanian people that he would engage in a "relentless war" against IS, a bold statement that was greeted with overwhelming support in Jordan and abroad.<sup>61</sup>

As this case study on Jordan's relations with the United States demonstrates, U.S. priorities in the region are many and varying. The United States seeks to preserve its access to Gulf oil reserves, prevent the spread of violent extremism, and protect the security of Israel. It is this third objective is most pertinent to U.S. relations with Jordan. Jordan's strategic geopolitical location as well as its history of involvement in the Arab-Israeli conflict are valuable assets to the United States. As a result, the United States has invested immense amounts of economic and military aid, particularly after 1994. However, Jordan's fairly consistent support of and cooperation with the United States can

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<sup>60</sup> Rod Nordland and Rayna Kadri, *Jordanian Pilot's Death, Shown in ISIS Video, Spurs Jordan to Execute Prisoners*, "New York Times", 3 February 2015, 19 April 2015.

<sup>61</sup> Sultan Barakat and Andrew Leber, *Jordan, Egypt, and the response to ISIS: Beyond air strikes*, "Brookings", 22 February 2015, 21 April 21, 2015.

be a controversial topic with Jordanians. As freedom of the press continues to increase, many Jordanians, particularly those associated with the IAF, are able to contest the governments' actions. Therefore, the government must take into account both what the people say as well as how the United States wants it to act. This balancing act is often treacherous, and Jordan occasionally finds itself in a scenario in which it will inevitably lose, such as the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. However, despite occasional conflicts of interest between the government and its people, it is likely that Jordan will continue to work closely with the United States because of the immense economic and military aid it provides Jordan.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>62</sup>Congressional Research Service, *Jordan: U.S. Relations and Bilateral Issues*, by Alfred B. Prados, Washington D.C.: Foreign Affairs, Defense, and Trade Division, 2006, <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/IB93085.pdf> (accessed April 21, 2015).

## **Current Events**

A discussion of Jordanian foreign policy and its impact on the region as a whole would not be complete without analyzing Jordan's role in and response to major regional conflicts. The two current issues discussed here that directly affect Jordan and, by extension, its role and policy in the region, are the refugee crisis and the Islamic State (IS) in Iraq and Syria. Although Jordan has a history of housing refugees whenever the need arises, the economic strain that the increased population put on Jordan seriously affected its domestic stability, both economically and politically, which in turn changes how Jordan responds to regional events. Additionally, Jordan's strategic location not only makes it an important ally for some states, but also vulnerable to attack by states or other non-state actors whose aims are to overrun the region, namely the Islamic State. The following sections will focus on Jordan's role in both the refugee crisis and the fight against IS and how these impact Jordan's role in regional and international affairs.

## **Refugee Crisis**

The large refugee presence in Jordan is incredibly taxing on its economic stability which, in turn, affects its foreign policy and how it interacts with other states. As a politically moderate, stable kingdom in the midst of political turmoil, Jordan normally accepts refugees with few or no reservations. According to the latest official figures, Jordan is currently home to more than half a million Syrian refugees alone who have been displaced from Syria because of the civil war, although the actual figures are most

likely much higher.<sup>63</sup> However, Jordan has taken on this role mostly out of necessity, and sometimes begrudgingly so. In the case of the Palestinian refugees, Jordan first welcomed hundreds of thousands of displaced Palestinians from the West Bank with open arms in 1948. It even went as far as to grant the majority of them Jordanian citizenship. However, as the war went on and more refugees sought asylum in the already economically-stretched kingdom, Jordan became more restrictive in its original generosity towards the Palestinians and, more recently, Syrian and Iraqi refugees.

Refugees have been a routine part of Jordan's existence since 1948 when hundreds of thousands of Palestinians flooded into the kingdom, fleeing the destruction the first Arab-Israeli War brought their homeland. Jordan welcomed them into its cities and assimilated them into Jordanian society as much as possible, even going so far as to grant them Jordanian citizenship, identification cards, and passports. Although this action was unprecedented then and virtually unheard of now, it was a wise political move at the time. King Abdullah I's long-term goal at the time was to incorporate the West Bank into the Kingdom of Jordan. Part of his strategy to integrate the Palestinians into Jordanian society was to establish a new national identity that included both Palestinians and Jordanians. With this background in mind, it becomes clear why Abdullah would make such a move. He wanted to make Palestinians feel at home in Jordan and help them blend in as much as possible in order to progress his idea of a mutual nationality. He therefore provided the newly-displaced Palestinians with a new political identity – a Jordanian identity.

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<sup>63</sup> UNHCR, "2015 UNHCR country operations file – Jordan," *UNHCR*, December 2014, August 26, 2015.

However, Abdullah's goal was not to be fully realized. The bilateral conflict between Israel and Palestine swiftly became a regional cause behind which the Arab states rallied together against the Israelis. Due to the new regional, and increasingly international, focus on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, it was not possible to simply redefine the Palestinian identity as part of the Jordanian national identity by attempting to morph the two nationalities into one. Therefore, as more refugees poured across the border, Jordan was both unable and unwilling to grant them the same benefits it gave the initial wave of refugees in 1948. The refugees who continued to be drawn to Jordan's stability in the midst of violent conflicts remained just that – refugees without a home.

Throughout the years following the first Arab-Israeli War in 1948, refugees from all around Jordan continued to come into the comparatively stable state. As the American war in Iraq caused increased violence and instability in the already divided state, thousands of Iraqis sought refuge within Jordan. In 2010, when the Arab Spring reached Syria and led to one of the largest displacement of a single people group in recent history, Jordan let in over half a million refugees. These substantial movements of people have had a significant economic and political impact domestically and on Jordan's regional and international foreign affairs.

The massive influx of refugees in recent years has placed large economic and political strains on the kingdom. With population increase in Jordan comes an increased demand for food, water, supplies, jobs, and even political rights. Some of these items the King chooses not to grant to the refugees, such as political and voting rights, and some he simply cannot give, such as water. The fact that Jordan is home to so many thousands of refugees effects its political decision-making in the regional and international sphere



simply because Jordan is forced to turn to its regional and international supporters for help in housing the additional people and maintain domestic stability.

As mentioned in previous sections, Jordan is a semi-rentier state and is incredibly reliant upon foreign aid and grants to maintain its small, yet still growing, economy. The influx of refugees has increased the demand for school, sanitation, housing, food, energy and water. Jordan's government spent an estimated \$53 million on medical care for refugees between January and April 2013, with only \$5 million provided in direct support by UN agencies during this period.<sup>64</sup> Wages were driven down while rent increased. Unemployment also rose from 14.5 percent to 22.1 percent between 2011 and 2014, particularly in areas with high concentrations of Syrian refugees.<sup>65</sup> Providing simple social amenities to refugees also increases the burden on Jordan's government. However, the cost of providing basic services such as medical clinics, garbage collection, and running water is somewhat offset by a Saudi donation of \$1.25 billion, one of the largest donations Jordan has received since the refugee crisis began. Nevertheless, it is not enough to completely cover Jordan's budget deficit which weighs in at around \$2.5 billion.<sup>66</sup>

As refugees keep seeking safety in Jordan, the small desert kingdom finds its already meager resources dwindling faster than it can replenish them with foreign aid. The increase in population has oversaturated the job market and left more than 50 percent of people under the age of 25 unemployed. Jordanians who once welcomed Palestinian,

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<sup>64</sup>"The impact of Syrian refugees on Jordan's economy," *Oxford Business Group*, September 15, 2013, July 14, 2015.

<sup>65</sup>Gideon Rose, Ed., "Political Instability in Jordan," *Council on Foreign Relations*, June 2015, July 14, 2015.

<sup>66</sup>Zvi Bar'el, "King Abdullah Struggles to Keep a Lid on Jordan," *Haaretz*, May 23, 2015, August 11, 2015.

Syrian, and Iraqi refugees have now become increasingly unsympathetic towards them because of how their presence has a growing negative impact on the trade markets, agricultural sectors, and education systems throughout the kingdom. With this social unrest comes a significant amount of political unrest as well, and King Abdullah is forced to reform Jordan's policy towards refugees in order to maintain the internal stability for which his country is known and relied upon by the rest of the world. Despite the support it receives from foreign benefactors and international organizations such as the United Nations, it has struggled not only to provide for the basic needs of the refugees, but also to maintain the economy for its own citizens.<sup>67</sup>

In addition to the direct economic impact the refugee crisis has on Jordan, it has also effected how Jordanians perceive the crisis in regards to their individual wellbeing. The Jordanian public often overstates the negative impact of Syrian refugees on their economy, politicizing the crisis even more. Public sentiment toward Syrian refugees has a disastrous effect on the government's ability to respond productively to the refugee influx. Although less than one percent of Syrian refugees have received work permits or valid Jordanian ID's, many Jordanian citizens still see Syrians as a major threat to their own economic well-being and therefore see an increase in Syrian refugees as having an overall negative impact on the economy.<sup>68</sup> As a result, Jordan's government is forced to first attend to keeping Jordanian citizens satisfied, then it is free to turn to the needs of

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<sup>67</sup> Alexandra Francis, "Jordan's Refugee Crisis," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, September 21, 2015, November 8, 2015.

<sup>68</sup> Luigi Achilli, *Syrian Refugees in Jordan: A Reality Check*, Migration Policy Institute, February 2015, June 15, 2015.

refugees. This hierarchy of priorities prevents Jordan from responding effectively to the refugee crisis.

Jordanians also complain of overcrowding in schools because of Syrian refugees. They request that the government find other solutions to the problem that will not hinder their own children. King Abdullah once again finds himself pulled by two major forces. His people clearly desire their own interests to be addressed before the refugees', while the rest of the world expects him to care for the hundreds of thousands of refugees first. Although Jordan has not officially changed its "open-border policy," there has been a noticeable decrease in the overall amount of refugees coming across the Syrian border. According to The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), no new refugees have been recorded coming into Jordan since October 2014, with the exception of a few women, children, and civilians in need of urgent medical care.<sup>69</sup> Additionally, a report from the UNHCR reports a 43 percent increase in shelters for refugees built on the Syrian side of the border from July to October 2014.

This then begs the question: if the Jordanian government is, in fact, restricting how many Syrian refugees are allowed across the border, why is it not being transparent in its actions? The answer lies with the economics of the situation. Jordan cannot afford to allow unlimited numbers of refugees into the country because its own weak economy cannot feasibly sustain such a massive amount of destitute people. However, it also cannot afford to give up the economic aid it relies upon from its regional and international benefactors. If Jordan completely, or openly, prohibited refugees from

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<sup>69</sup> IBID.

entering the country from Syria and Iraq, the regional and international community would likely decrease or suspend their financial contributions to the Kingdom. As neither of these options would solve Jordan's economic problems, the government chose to take the middle ground by publicly expressing its willingness to allow all refugees to cross its borders while, in reality, only accepting some women, children, and seriously-injured people.<sup>70</sup>

A second reason for Jordan's hesitation to embrace a full "open-borders policy" is its involvement in the war on the Islamic State (IS). As a major regional U.S. ally, Jordan has played a large role in the U.S.-led strikes against IS. However, with each strike of the coalition against the militants in Syria comes fears of terrorist reprisals in Jordan by IS militants. Thousands of Jordanians have reportedly joined the ranks of militant Islamist groups such as IS and *Jabhat al-Nusra*, al-Qaeda's representation in Syria. While the majority of these recruits left the country to join IS, some remain in Jordan, which creates a dangerous situation for domestic security. The Jordanian government must address these additional concerns while still fighting a war abroad. As a result, Jordan continues to tighten border security, which includes not allowing large amounts of Syrian refugees to cross the border. Although this move may be somewhat unpopular in the eyes of the regional and international communities, the government sees it as a necessary step to protecting Jordan's national security, which is his first and foremost priority.

Although large groups of Syrian refugees come into Jordan anymore, Jordan still allows some women, children, and wounded civilians enter the country. This move can

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<sup>70</sup> IBID.

be interpreted in one of two ways. The first is that Jordan's leaders are empathetic towards the plight of these people and allow them into the country as an act of humanitarian good will. While philanthropy undoubtedly plays a factor in Abdullah's decision on this matter, as his record on humanitarian action in Jordan shows, a second, political factor certainly plays a role as well. As previously stated, keeping Jordan safe from the inside out is Abdullah's top priority. However, economics is also high on the list of concerns for Jordan's leaders. As a result, Jordan attempts to maintain a high standing in international opinion, as this helps it obtain more foreign aid. It then follows that politics is most likely a motive for Jordan allowing certain groups of people into the country, in spite of the potential threats to domestic security this risks.

### **The Islamic State**

The second major event that even more directly affects how Jordan conducts its foreign affairs is the growing threat of the Islamic State (IS) in Iraq and Syria. It is not difficult to ascertain why the presence of the Jihadist group that originated from al-Qaeda makes Jordan uneasy. Nestled between both Iraq and Syria, Jordan provides the last line of defense between IS and the rest of the Middle East. However, from the Islamic State's point of view, Jordan's strategic position makes it the obvious next target in which to expand the regional caliphate. Jordan therefore has committed itself to defending its borders by joining several other Arab states in the US-led coalition to combat the rising power of IS.

Unlike most Middle Eastern conflicts, the fight against IS has been a generally unified effort. The vast majority of Arab states agree that the Islamic State is a dangerous Jihadist organization that must be eradicated from the region. Sheikh Ahmad al-Tayyeb, the grand imam of al-Azhar in Egypt, the world's leading institution of Sunni learning, condemned IS as "corrupters of the Earth", who wage war against God and Mohammad. He declared that they "deserve the scriptural punishment of death, crucifixion and the amputation of their limbs."<sup>71</sup> While Jordan's strategy in bringing about the end of IS involves conventional warfare as opposed to the tactics al-Tayyeb proposed, the sentiment that IS needs to be dealt with by physical force is echoed by nearly every Arab state.

In reality, most of the actual Arab support for the U.S.-led military coalition against IS powers has been mostly political backing rather than tangible military support. According to the Guardian, of the roughly 2,000 air strikes carried out in Syria, less than 10 percent were by Arab air forces, although the actual numbers are unclear.<sup>72</sup> Arab states are fairly secretive about how many aircraft they send to join the US coalition apart from an initial publicity blitz to show the world that they are fully involved in the struggle to end IS. Arab leaders are fearful of potential Jihadist uprisings in their own states and are therefore very cautious to hand out sensitive information regarding their military movements. This is partially to avoid any sabotage directly on military assets as well as to decrease the likelihood of domestic terrorism due to the state's political stance.

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<sup>71</sup> Kareem Shaheen and Ian Black, "Arab nations united in fury against Isis but divided on strategy," *The Guardian*, February 11, 2015, July 19, 2015.

<sup>72</sup> IBID.

Jordan fell very neatly into this category for the first year of the war. According to an Amman-based western diplomat, “people didn’t even know Jordan was bombing [IS].”<sup>73</sup> Part of the reasoning behind this tactic was to not give any potential Jihadists or IS supporters in Jordan any reason to carry out an attack on the home front. The southern Jordanian city of Ma’an received a large amount of media attention soon after IS rose to power for its pro-IS propaganda and marches. This understandably made the Jordanian government quite nervous. It therefore took as many precautions as possible to remain involved in the airstrikes without unnecessarily angering potential domestic extremists while still maintaining border security and fulfilling the expectations of its Western allies. However, following the Islamic State's release of the video of Jordanian pilot Moaz al-Kasasbeh’s gruesome murder, the kingdom erupted in outrage against the atrocities committed by the Jihadist organization. This domestic support gave King Abdullah political maneuverability. It allowed him to be more open about Jordan’s involvement in the airstrikes as well as increase the intensity with which Jordan’s armed forces takes on the Islamic State.

Even though the rest of the Arab world grieved with Jordan after IS released the video of Kasasbeh’s death, they did not respond with comparable amounts of force for two main reasons. The first is that it was a Jordanian national who was killed and, although the Arab world was united in abhorrence toward the Islamic State’s actions, Jordan was far more deeply affected. The second reason is that IS presents a greater immediate danger to Jordan than to the rest of the Arab world, as it sits right on the

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<sup>73</sup> Kareem Shaheen and Ian Black, “Arab nations united in fury against Isis but divided on strategy,” *The Guardian*, February 11, 2015, July 19, 2015.

kingdom's doorstep. For a state such as Saudi Arabia, it is easy to merely send money and small amounts of air support than to become heavily involved in the war against IS. However, Jordanians are forced to face the dangers of IS head-on simply because of its proximity to the conflict.

Not only is it vital to Jordan's national security to be directly involved in the fight against IS because of the geopolitical realities of the region, but the conflict also presents Jordan with a unique opportunity to rise to the forefront of the Arab states in terms of international cooperation and military prowess. Since the Islamic State's rise to prominence in 2014, the U.S.-led coalition has been only marginally effective in pushing IS forces. Part of the reason for insufficient results is due to the lack of wholehearted commitment on the part of the majority of Arab states. The United States is still viewed with suspicion in the Middle East. Any major U.S. military movements in the region are seen by most Arabs as a rebirth of the events in Iraq in 2003. As a result, King Abdullah has taken advantage of the distrust towards America by stepping in and presenting his country as an Arab face in the leadership of the coalition. The more involved Jordan is in the planning and execution of air strikes, ground attacks, and training Syrian and Iraqi moderates to fight IS, the more likely the rest of the Arab states will follow suit.

The ideological side of this campaign is arguably the most important. Jordan's strategy is to rally together a core group of Arab and Muslim states that share opposition to the Islamic State. This coalition will most likely consist of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Morocco, and Pakistan.<sup>74</sup> The hope is to unite these states without

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<sup>74</sup> David Ignatius, "Jordan leads the Arab world in the fight against extremists," *The Washington Post*, February 16, 2015, July 20, 2015.



the direct leadership of the US. Although US intelligence and military analysts will most likely still work closely with their Arab counterparts to best combat the rise of extremism in the Levant, Jordan will attempt to maintain a distinct Arab identity for this coalition.

Jordan has also stepped up into a leadership role in terms of training moderate Syrian rebels to combat IS. In April 2015, the U.S. Congress recently approved President Obama's plan to arm and train up to 15,000 moderate members of the Free Syrian Army so they will be better equipped to fight against the rise of IS as well as continue fighting Bashar al-Assad's military forces in Syria. Jordan has agreed not only to host training camps, but has also volunteered the use of its Special Forces to help train the selected Syrian soldiers. However, due to the rigorous screening process required for Syrian rebels to enter the training program, the United States has trained far fewer Syrians than they had hoped. According to a report by U.S. Defense Secretary Ashton Carter on July 3, 2015, only 60 rebels had been vetted, armed, and trained, a number that is "much smaller" than the administration had planned to train by that point.<sup>75</sup> Despite the fact that this plan is not as effective as policymakers originally hoped, Jordan remains on the front lines of any developing U.S. strategies, allowing it to continue as a regional leader in the fight against the Islamic State.

As Jordan continues to make a name for itself in international relations, it also receives additional funding from its benefactors such as the United States and Saudi Arabia. Although Jordan escaped the Arab Spring largely unscathed and has remained, for the most part, politically stable, its economy continues to be a point of concern for

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<sup>75</sup> Jennifer Rizzo, "Carter: U.S. trains only 60 Syrian Rebels," *CNN*, July 7, 2015, October 6, 2015.

both the Jordanian government and the states that rely on its presence and stability for their own national security. Therefore, as the region focuses its efforts on combating IS, Jordan's main financial benefactors keep pouring aid into the kingdom's treasury. Since the beginning of the Arab Spring, Jordan has received more than \$12 billion in aid payments from various sources, mainly the United States, Saudi Arabia, and Japan. After Jordan officially joined the U.S.-led coalition against IS in 2014, the United States increased its annual aid to Jordan to \$1 billion in financial and military aid. Overall, Jordan is second only to the West Bank and Gaza among Arab recipients of foreign aid in U.S. dollars per capita. In total foreign aid, Jordan received three times more than Syria and ten times more than Egypt per capita.

In essence, it is a top priority for states such as the United States, Saudi Arabia and, to a certain extent, Israel, to maintain Jordan's stability. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said in a 2015 speech to the Institute of National Security Studies think-tank in Tel Aviv that he thinks "it is our [U.S. and Israeli] common interest to make sure that a moderate, stable regime like (Jordan) is able to defend itself."<sup>76</sup> However, for a small, resource-poor state such as Jordan, economic aid is often just as important, if not more important, than military aid, even in a time of military crisis such as the threat of IS. Nikita Malik, an analyst for the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, stated that, while Jordan certainly has a large role to play in the military assault against the rise of IS, perhaps the biggest concern for the kingdom is the ongoing domestic economic crisis. Rather than monitoring borders and keeping a close eye on potential Jihadist recruits, some believe that this money could be better spent in the long run on addressing

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<sup>76</sup> Aaron Klein, "US, Israel Aid Jordan Amid ISIS Threat," *World Net Daily*, June 30, 2014, July 28, 2015.

problems of inequality and poverty that fuel extremism in the region. With refugees coming from Iraq and Syria into Jordan, adding further strain on the country's resources, the Hashemite Kingdom's biggest challenge is yet to come.<sup>77</sup> Therefore, it follows that King Abdullah will continue to use his kingdom's role in the war against IS as well as the generosity it has shown in accepting Syrian and Iraqi refugees to garner additional financial support from its foreign allies.<sup>78</sup>

The rise of the Islamic State over the past two years and the imminent danger it presents both to Jordan's immediate national security, and also potentially to its future, forces the kingdom's leaders to make foreign policy decisions for which they would not have otherwise opted. Chief among these decisions is King Abdullah's major push to become the Arab world's leader in the war on IS. Because of Jordan's geographic location, it has the opportunity to take its place as a leader in the Arab world as well as enlist the economic, political, and military support of its powerful regional and international allies. Additionally, since the presence and stability of a moderate regime such as Jordan's is of such importance to many major powers throughout the world, there is a strong case for Jordan to continue receiving the aid and support it needs to help push back the Islamic State forces and maintain its own internal stability.

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<sup>77</sup> Nikita Malik and Abdullah Shami, "Jordan: the Jewel in the ISIS Crown," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, June 24, 2014, July 28, 2015.

<sup>78</sup>Deirdre Walsh, "House approves plan to assist Syrian rebels; Senate votes Thursday," *Cable News Network*, September 18, 2014, July 28, 2015.

## Analysis

As the description of Jordanian international relations and the analysis of its role in major regional issues have shown, Jordan finds itself in a unique position regarding its foreign relations. Its geopolitical location simultaneously provides it with negotiating power and places it at the mercy of regional and international benefactors. Jordan's lack of natural resources compels it to cooperate with other states in order to obtain the resources and finances it needs to survive. At the same time, however, many major players recognize the importance of Jordan's continued presence and vital role in the region, particularly the value of the current regime. Therefore, other nations in the region and the United States are normally quite willing to invest in Jordan's domestic stability and the continued presence of the monarchy, as history has shown.

This paradox creates a reality in which Jordan and the region overall become co-dependent. Jordan's significance to the region and its very existence are irrevocably tied together. Jordan could not continue to exist if it were not vitally important to maintaining regional stability, due to the amount of foreign assistance it needs to stabilize its economy. Conversely, the region could not retain the fragile stability it has without the presence of Jordan. Additionally, Jordan's strategic geopolitical location, lack of natural resources, and politically-moderate government make its situation unique in comparison to the majority of other states in the world. It is continually dependent on its neighbors and foreign allies for economic aid and simultaneously is relied upon by those same allies for its role in maintaining regional stability. One of the reasons so many states place such a high priority on Jordan's stability is because without Jordan, the Middle East would be

a very different place. Although Jordan is small and might be seen as an insignificant state in the realm of international relations, its presence itself is an important factor in the stability of the region as a whole. Many states, including the United States, have recognized this fact and have therefore chosen to support Jordan economically, militarily, and politically.

Jordan's role in the Middle East can also explain many of its foreign policy decisions regarding its neighbors, and the extent to which it is willing to cooperate with most states, both in and outside the region. It can also explain why many powerful states are so committed to helping Jordan maintain its stability. Within this context, it makes sense that Saudi Arabia would go out of its way to help Jordan financially, including the latest promised donation of \$1.25 billion in 2014 to help offset the financial toll the massive presence of refugees takes on Jordan's economy. It explains why Kuwait is so committed to Jordan's stability that it would commit to investing in Jordan's economy. It also explains why the United States is willing to pour so much money, political support, and military aid into one of the smallest states in the world.

Although Jordan's geopolitical location in the region affords it significant collateral to use when negotiating for economic assistance from its benefactors, it also puts Jordan in a vulnerable position. Because Jordan is located in the midst of Israel, Palestine, Syria, and Iraq, it is forced to not only interact politically with these states, but must be willing to maintain an amiable relationship with each of them. To do otherwise would risk not only economic damage to Jordan, but also potentially incur military aggression against it, just as it experienced with Syria during Black September in 1970.

Therefore, as the sections of this thesis on bilateral relations with major regional players demonstrated, Jordan's monarchs work hard to maintain healthy relationships with every state it can. On occasion, this prompts Jordan to conduct covert dialogues in order to protect its relationships with regional benefactors while still fostering new relationships with other states. For example, in the years following the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, Jordan engaged in diplomatic talks with Israel, without allowing any Arab state to know of this contact, because it believed that the potential economic benefit of a positive relationship with Israel was worth the risks it took to build it. However, Jordan could not keep its increased economic ties hidden from the rest of the world. It is virtually impossible to hide the growth in trade and the movement of goods and people across state lines.

Nevertheless, Jordan continued to make secrecy a top priority in this case because it was also working to improve political relations with Israel in addition to their economic dealings. While there were certainly advantages to increasing political ties with Israel, there would be an even more severe amount of backlash from Arab states if Jordan's correspondences with Israel were made public knowledge. Jordan experienced the negative repercussions of taking the opposite side of its benefactors regarding regional geopolitical issues before. For example, when Egyptian president Anwar Sadat signed the peace treaty with Israel in 1979, the first Arab state to do so, Jordan did not join the chorus of Arab states openly denouncing Egypt's actions. Even though Jordan did not overtly declare that it agreed with Egypt's course of action, its lack of explicit disapproval of Sadat was enough to cool relations with key allies such as Syria and Saudi Arabia.

History shows the outcome when Jordan deviates from the path its financial benefactors expect it to follow. However, Jordan's government has displayed a willingness to risk giving up foreign aid if it deems the action to be worth the risk. As in the case of the 1990 Gulf War, Jordan's support of Saddam Hussein when he invaded Kuwait brought a sharp decrease in aid from major regional supporters. King Hussein was certainly aware of the backlash that decision would receive. He still maintained his resolve in the face of criticism from the majority of the Arab states because, at that point in time, he believed that it was more necessary for his political actions to reflect the loud opinions of his people than blindly follow what the region did. Similarly, despite the fact that increasing political ties to Israel after the 1967 Arab-Israeli War put Jordan in a precarious position with regional powers, King Hussein believed that it was worth the risk.

Jordan is consistently faced with a delicate balance of political power in its international relations. It must find the equilibrium between utilizing the negotiating influence its geopolitical position provides, and not asking too much of its benefactors. Jordan relies on other states for economic support but, in some cases, makes use of other states' reliance on its own stability to negotiate and secure the resources it requires. Jordan's leaders realize the importance of maintaining good relationships with as many of its neighbors as possible. Additionally, as a semi-rentier state, Jordan relies partially on foreign aid, but its government still answers to the people to some extent. If Jordan were a full rentier state and did not collect taxes from the people, its government would be free to operate virtually independent of the people's will. However, Jordan must be responsive to what Jordanians say, as well as maintain good relations with as many states as possible

in order to retain the economic and political backing it needs to survive. This causes the government is generally pulled in multiple directions at the same time.

As a result, Jordan's government is moderate out of necessity. This is not to say that, if Jordan were not compelled to keep so many different parties appeased, it would undoubtedly morph into an authoritarian regime such as Bashar al-Assad's in Syria. As the discussions on Jordan's past two monarchs showed, Jordan's leaders generally have the country's best interest in mind, are concerned with human rights, and want to increase the standard of living for Jordanians. However, the fact that Jordan answers to multiple governments and groups of people indicates that it is naturally pulled toward the center. Of course, it is not always possible to remain opinion-less, although Jordan certainly tried to do so on a few occasions, such as its position on Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990. Virtually every Arab state was against Saddam's military invasion and, along with the United States, pressured Jordan to join the coalition against Iraq. However, because King Hussein had lifted martial law the previous year, there was a significant increase in freedom of speech and freedom of the press. Due to the sudden ability Jordanians had to express their opinions in the media, a large group of IAF supporters convincingly articulated their support for Saddam's invasion.

King Hussein found himself in a difficult situation. Either he sided with his people and appeased them by supporting Saddam and risk putting Jordan's good relationships with other Arab states in jeopardy, or he sided with the majority of the Arab world against Saddam's invasion, thereby showing his people that he disregarded their opinions completely. In either case, Jordan would be set up for failure in some capacity. King Hussein attempted to avoid alienating either group and simply stated that Jordan



would remain "politically neutral" regarding the conflict. However, the Arab world was acutely aware of Jordanians' opinions concerning the war, and as a result, Jordan still lost a significant amount of economic aid from major supporters.

Although Hussein did not achieve the goal he intended through this conflict, his actions reflect a continuing pattern in Jordanian international relations. In general, Jordan attempts to take a moderate approach to regional and international issues, particularly when adopting a more decisive stance could jeopardize valuable relationships with economic supporters. Because Jordan relies on foreign aid to maintain economic stability while still answering to the people, it normally attempts to balance the by taking the middle ground. This impacts the international relations of the region because Jordan can generally be counted on to take the middle ground. Jordan is therefore a fairly predictable player that will normally side with its economic allies, unless other major extenuating circumstances occur. In this case, it will attempt to be as moderate as possible to avoid provoking unnecessary conflict.

The exceptions to this rule tend to be instances in which taking a decisive position is popular with both Jordanians and Jordan's economic partners. The most recent example of this is King Abdullah II's decision to become heavily involved in the attacks on the Islamic State (IS). While Abdullah's stance was that military involvement was necessary to protect Jordan from the rise of IS, particularly after it declared itself a worldwide caliphate in 2013, he did not receive the domestic or regional support necessary to apply a significant amount of force against the Jihadist organization. He did commit a small number of aircraft to combat IS, despite the fact that a large number of Jordanians strongly called upon the government to remain out of the conflict. Although the Islamic

State was brutally beheading civilians, most Jordanians thought that, since IS was not directly impacting Jordan, there was no need to be heavily involved. Most other Arab states, Iraq and Syria not included, had a similar attitude. The conflict involving IS was mostly isolated and most people in the region did not believe it was going to spread very rapidly; therefore, immediate and decisive action was not seen as necessary. In the face of immense domestic pressure after Lieutenant Moaz al-Kasasbeh's plane was shot down and he was taken hostage on December 24, 2014, Abdullah ceased airstrikes against IS indefinitely.<sup>79</sup>

It was not until IS released the video depicting al-Kasasbeh's brutal execution two months later that Abdullah publically committed Jordan's armed forces to help bring down the Islamic State. Although al-Kasasbeh's death was a horrendous act, it awoke Jordanians and major regional players to the fact that the Islamic State is, indeed, a group that should be dealt with. Al-Kasasbeh's father, Safi al-Kasasbeh, stated in an interview with BBC that the Islamic State is a "murderous and despicable group that is condemned by the whole world" and demanded that they should be "wiped out." Sheikh Ahmed al-Tayyeb, the Grand Imam of al-Azhar University in Egypt and one of the leading authorities in Sunni Islam, condemned the killing, saying the burning to death of Lt Kasasbeh violated Islam's prohibition on the mutilation of bodies.<sup>80</sup> Additionally, the Saudi Press Agency quoted an official Saudi Arabian source who condemned the killing as a "barbaric, cowardly act, which is not sanctioned by the principles of Islam" and

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<sup>79</sup> Heather Saul, "Jordan 'halts air strikes' targeting ISIS militants as hostage fighter pilot's fate remains unknown", *The Independent*, January 30, 2015, October 25, 2015.

<sup>80</sup> Frank Gardner, "Islamic State: Jordan's King Abdullah vows 'Severe Response' to IS", *BBC*, February 4, 2015, October 24, 2015.

called on the international community to increase its efforts to eradicate the "extremist organization and all who stand by it."<sup>81</sup> U.S. President Barack Obama also called the killing a "vicious and barbaric" act.<sup>82</sup>

Now that the king had both the domestic and international political backing, he could legitimately launch a rigorous attack on the Islamist organization that he saw as a threat to Jordan's domestic security. Agence France-Presse quotes the king coming out of a meeting with his security officials soon after the release of the video saying "the blood of martyr Moaz al-Kasasbeh will not be in vain and the response of Jordan and its army after what happened to our dear son will be severe."<sup>83</sup> Demonstrations throughout Jordan demanded immediate retaliation against IS, including the execution of Sajida al-Rishawi and Ziad al-Karbouli, two would-be suicide bombers connected with the Islamic State. Abdullah responded quickly to the cries of his people by cutting his visit to the United States short and ordering the two prisoners to be executed.

This series of events demonstrates how sensitive Jordan's leaders are to both domestic and regional forces. Jordan's government officials generally respond quickly to strong outcries by Jordanians, as displayed in the case study above, as well as during the Arab Spring when Jordanians called for policy change. As a constitutional monarchy, the government is, to a certain extent, accountable to its people. In instances such as the Arab Spring, in which the king observed the occurrences in other Arab states, he wisely chose

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<sup>81</sup> وكاية الأنباء السعودية "، المماكة تتابع الجريمة الوحشية التي اقترفها تنظيم داعش بحق الشهيد الطيار الأردني المسلم معاذ الكساسبة" February 3, 2015, October 24, 2015.

<sup>82</sup> John Hall, " Jordan executes ISIS jihadists: Female suicide bomber among two put to death in dawn hangings in retaliation for terrorists releasing video of pilot being torched to death in cage," *Daily Mail*, February 3, 2015, October 24, 2015.

<sup>83</sup> Frank Gardner, "Islamic State: Jordan's King Abdullah vows 'Severe Response' to IS", *BBC*, February 4, 2015, October 24, 2015.

to honor the demands of his people. The extent to which the changes implemented made actual transformations in the political system is debated. However, the fact remains that the king responded to his people's calls for progress quickly, showing that the people can influence change in Jordan's domestic policy and, by extension, foreign policy, as in Jordan's stance in the 1990 Gulf War. While Jordan's government by no means adheres to precisely what the majority of Jordanians call for, popular demand is still a powerful motivator of Jordanian political actions.

Each case study discussed in the previous sections of this thesis also demonstrates this trend in regards to Jordan's foreign policy. Jordan's government is quite sensitive to how its economic and political supporters respond to events throughout the region. It tends to side with the state, or coalition of states, that it deems to best serve Jordan's national interest in the long run. For example, Jordan quietly supported the American invasion of Iraq in 2003, although many other powerful Arab states strongly disapproved of the use of U.S. military force in the region. Jordan values its close relationship with the United States and, in an attempt to strengthen that strategic relationship and make it a centerpiece of Jordan's foreign policy, King Abdullah chose to support the United States in 2003. Although Jordan's role in this conflict remained somewhat surreptitious, it still widened the credibility gap between Jordan's government, its people, and the rest of the Arab world. Abdullah was certainly aware of how his Arab neighbors felt about his actions and the actions of the United States, but was still willing to take this risk in order to pursue what he saw as protecting Jordan's larger interests.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Scott Lasensky, "Jordan and Iraq: Between Cooperation and Crisis," *United States Institute of Peace*, December 2006, October 26, 2015.

## Conclusion

Although most analyses of Middle Eastern geopolitics do not focus on Jordan and how its foreign affairs impact the region, this thesis demonstrates that the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan does, indeed, play an important role in Middle Eastern international relations. Facts about the nature of the kingdom itself, namely its strategic geopolitical location and moderate political system, help explain Jordan's significance to the region. Additionally, factors that distinguish it from most other Arab states give further insight into how the country operates and why its government makes the decisions it does. For example, Jordan's government withstood the Arab Spring protests, unlike many of its neighbors. While this could be due to Jordanians' trust in their leaders and system of government that leads them to demand only minor changes, it most likely has more to do with major political movements' inability to mobilize large enough groups of people. However, Jordan's government is still more responsive to Jordanians' opinions than other Arab states' are to their citizens. In addition to being held accountable to its citizens, the government must also be very aware of what its economic supporters say, due to Jordan's reliance on foreign aid. This combination is fairly rare in the region and creates a push-and-pull effect that leads to relatively a moderate system of government. Jordan's tendency to compromise often manifests itself by taking the "road most traveled," simply because it needs to maintain good relationships with as many different parties as possible.

The most remarkable aspect of Jordan's international relations this thesis examined is that, although Jordan is often brushed by in analyses of Middle Eastern politics, Jordan's very existence is crucial to regional stability. Its geopolitical location is

extremely strategic, which makes Jordan an important factor in regional geopolitics. Powerful states, namely the United States, Saudi Arabia, and even Israel, see it in their interests to invest in Jordan's long-term stability through economic and political support. Although Jordan might not be able to exist as a sovereign state without the extensive foreign aid it receives, the Middle East would look significantly different without Jordan than it does today. Essentially, Jordan relies on other states for economic stability and even its own existence, and those states in turn rely on Jordan's continued presence in the region for some aspects of their security.

Despite the fact that Jordan is frequently brushed by in analyses of Middle Eastern international relations, the research in this thesis demonstrates that Jordan plays a crucial role in regional geopolitics. Its moderate political system and strategic geographic location contribute to the role it plays in the region. Although Jordan is not the largest state in the Middle East, nor the wealthiest, nor the most influential, its presence in the region is a crucial piece of region's geopolitical puzzle. It is for these reasons that Jordan's distinctive and strategic role needs to be taken into account when analyzing Middle Eastern international relations and not discounted because of its small size and limited resources.

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