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The Impact of Jordan's Peacebuilding Efforts in Gaza on its domestic politics

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Geopolitics of the Middle East

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May 8, 2024

Abstract

The Israeli-Palestine conflict has persisted for decades, becoming one of the world's longest unresolved conflicts. It is a long-standing struggle for sovereignty and territorial legitimacy on the land between the Jordan River on the east and the Mediterranean Sea to the west. Since the UN Partial Plan in 1947 and the formation of the country of Israel until the most recent war started by the attack of Hamas on October 7, 2023, this conflict has shaped the politics of the Middle East. Jordan as its closest neighbor has especially been impacted by the developments of the conflict. Taking into consideration that nearly half of the Jordanian population has Palestinian origins and the deep cultural and historical ties between the two nations, this paper aims to examine Jordan's efforts and governmental policies aimed at fostering peace in Palestine. It focuses on determining the impact of these efforts on Jordanian domestic politics. It analyzes its political impact in terms of governmental stability and electoral dynamics and its economic impact. Jordanian efforts are reflected in a strong diplomatic presence in international organizations and good bilateral relations with Western partners as well as focusing on providing humanitarian aid to civilians in Gaza. The impact of the war in Gaza can be seen in economic terms with the decrease in trade and increase in unemployment. The Jordanian government is also being criticized for not doing enough for Palestinians which affects their stability before the upcoming parliamentary elections. The long-term effects of the war in Gaza remain uncertain.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my advisor Dr. Jawad Anani and Academic Director Dr. Raed Al Tabini for supporting me throughout my research process.

In addition, I would like to thank the University of Richmond which granted me the opportunity and scholarship to complete a study abroad semester in Amman, Jordan.

Lastly, I am thankful to my family and friends who have listened to me and supported me through my whole experience abroad.

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Introduction

A. The Problem

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been one of the most prolonged and complex political issues in contemporary history. It is marked for decades as a struggle for nationhood through various wars, regional insecurities, questions of legitimacy and sovereignty with the strong involvement of the international community. The conflict was intensified by the rise of Zionism after World War II, despite significant Jewish immigration during the British Mandate period following World War I (Goss, 2023). The British Mandate for Palestine, from 1917 to 1948, laid the real groundwork for a Jewish state in Palestine to become a reality (AlJazeera, 2014). This caused a dramatic demographic change which was profoundly unsettling for the local Arab population. The dream to establish a Jewish state in Palestine based on the historical narrative of the migration of Abraham and his family to Palestine, was established through the 1948 Arab-Israeli War (AlJazeera, 2014). Collective Israeli identity was created while Palestinians were completely oppressed and denied their right to citizenship and their land. Tensions between Israelis and Palestinians after this date intensified and continued until today. In 1947, the United Nations divided Palestine into two independent states, one Palestinian, consisting of the West Bank and Gaza, and the other Jewish which preceded the official formation of the independent country of Israel in 1948 (UN, 2023). The first Arab- Israeli conflict of 1948 resulted in a big loss of territory for Palestinians and forced migrations of its citizens (AlJazeera, 2014). The conflict in 1948 also had a huge impact on Jordan and its population as it permanently transformed the territory and demographics of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Of the 726,000 refugees outside Israel, a tenth (70,000) fled to Jordan (Husseini, 2013). With 280,000 refugees, the Palestinian territories to the west of the Jordan River, later annexed to the Kingdom as the "West Bank", comprised the largest

host region (Hussein, 2013). Most of the refugees settled in the main Jordanian towns (Amman, Irbid, Zarqa and Salt) and the Jordan Valley (Hussein, 2013). The remaining part was accommodated in temporary refugee camps around the country. The refugee influx posed a burden on the Jordanian economy and administration.

B. Focus

This paper will focus on the war that occurred in Gaza after the Hamas attack on October 7, 2023. It will specifically examine the efforts of Jordan to create peace in Gaza and it will analyze the impact of those efforts on its domestic politics. Gaza, often referred to as the biggest open-air prison in the world, is one of the most densely populated areas in the world. Israel sees this large population as an existential threat to itself. Filiu believes if there is a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it is Gaza itself (Filiu, 2014). He believes that the harsh conditions that Gazans are facing have a fundamental role in shaping the Palestinian identity (Okumuş, 2018). Before the current war in Gaza, living conditions in the Strip were very poor. Gazans have faced a growing population with a lack of clean water, sewage and electrical services, high rates of unemployment and from September 2007, sanctions imposed by Israel on the region (Okumuş, 2018). Gaza is not only an integral part of Palestine, but also the only one that survived the 1948 Nakba without either being absorbed into Israel or annexed by Jordan (Okumuş, 2018). Gaza is also the home of Hamas, which orchestrated the attack on October 7th. Created in 1987, Hamas has been at the forefront of armed resistance in the occupied Palestinian territories since its victory in the Palestinian elections in January 2006 and its takeover of Gaza in June 2007 (Okumuş, 2018). Hamas grew out of the Muslim Brotherhood's Gaza branch which is often referred to as the reason to consider Hamas a terrorist organization. After the attack of Hamas, all Western nations condemn their actions accusing them of terrorism. On the other hand, the attack was celebrated in the streets of the Arab

countries seeing this attack as a rebellion against the Israeli occupation. However, as the war progressed there was an increasing polarization in the way the war was perceived. A dominant approach in Western media was condemning Hamas and labeling it a terrorist organization, also focusing on the right of self-defense of Israel. On the other hand, in the Middle Eastern media, the dominant narrative contextualizes the issue and explains that Israel as the occupying power does not have that right.

Today, there are at least 35000 killed civilians in Gaza, of which many are children and women (AJLabs, 2024). More than half of Gaza has been destroyed or damaged including hospitals, schools and residential buildings (AJLabs, 2024). Therefore, Jordan and especially its citizens feel the responsibility to prevent those atrocities and help Palestinians reach a ceasefire as soon as possible.

Literature Review

Although extensive literature exists on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, there is a lack of substantial research regarding the ongoing war in Gaza. It is especially hard to find resources for the impact of the war on Jordan as many researchers believe it is still too early to conduct accurate and substantial research and the impacts will be seen in the future. However, a lot of exports from different industries have written opinion articles that can be used to better understand this topic. These articles commonly explore themes such as the political radicalization associated with Hamas and its influence, the close cultural and historical ties between Jordanians and Palestinians, and the challenges that the conflict poses for Jordan. Additionally, there is a significant polarization between Western and Middle Eastern media and articles regarding their portrayal and interpretation of the war. Palestinian and Israeli authors tend towards writing that presents their own people's history as the "right" history. There is also a significant difference in the literature

that was published right after the Hamas attack and in the recent literature when more than 30,000 civilians were killed and there was a severe humanitarian crisis. There was also a difference in the proposed solution to the conflict, as in the beginning a lot of scholars were advocating for defeating Hamas and relying on the mediation of the international community, however, recently the consensus is the two-state solution. Regarding Jordan's positions scholars stated in the article *Jordan's navigation of the Hamas–Israel War* for International Center for Strategic Studies, are certain that de-escalating the war in Gaza and resolving the wider Israeli-Palestinian conflict will remain Jordan's top priority for the foreseeable future.

Methodology

At the outset, it is necessary to recognize that the complexity of the topic goes beyond the scope of the capacity of this study. Especially having in mind that the war in Gaza started seven months ago and it is developing every moment it is very challenging to track all the information and progress. While every attempt has been made to gather an adequate amount of information and data to complete the study, the temporal and logistical constraints, it impossible to predict the future events and impact that this war will have. This study, then, represents the attempt to gather the existing data and information on the topic and provide a qualitative rather than quantitative overview of the topic. It also offers questions that should be asked about the topic and it encourages future dialogue and analysis. Therefore, most of the gathered information was collected through interviews with government officials, policy experts and researchers.

Despite conducting research in a foreign country with different cultural and social norms, I have faced many big concerns in this regard. With a few exceptions, interviews went smoothly and seemingly straightforward. A significant challenge was faced when I interviewed the representative of the Economic and Social Council, due to the language barrier and their non

willingness to enclose the data they obtained. Despite this obstacle, I was able to include different perspectives from both government and research and while I do not claim to offer a complete perspective from any sector, I believe that sampling is more or less representative of the broader trends.

The Interview Process

The complexity of the issue being discussed, the emotions involved around the topic and the potential for so many diverse responses, made interviews the most reasonable way of data collection. Surveys were ruled out early on, both because of their limited capacity to accurately convey intricate abstract concepts and the simple fact that the study's scope would not allow the collection of enough surveys to ensure a more quantitatively acceptable sample. The two most important actors interviewed were government officials and researchers from think tanks which provided various perspectives ranging from official opinions up to the civil society opinions and thoughts.

I conducted two interviews within the government sector. One was with Dr. Ali Al Assar at the Economic and Social Council, the advisory body to the Jordanian Government on economic and social issues and policies. The other was with Dr. Samhouri at the Palestinian National Committee, the legislative body of the Palestinian Liberation Organization for all the Palestinian people inside Palestine and in the Diaspora. Besides that, I conducted an interview with a program manager at the Jordan Hashemite Charity Organization (JHCO) which is, with the assistance of the Jordanian government, the main provider of humanitarian aid to civilians in Gaza. JHCO is a non-governmental, non-profit organization that provides aid and charitable activities in Jordan and

all around the world. In addition, I have interviewed scholars from Jordanian think tanks including Dr. Hussein Sarayreh from the Politics and Society Institute, Dr.

Zaid Eyadat, director of the Center for Strategic Studies and economic expert and former minister of Economics Dr. Yousef Mansour. All of them provided me with important analysis of current affairs from their understanding and experience.

All interviews were conducted in person and English. The interview questions were drafted in advance and adjusted according to the flow of the conversation adding follow-up questions and additional spontaneous questions. No interviews were recorded, but notes were kept on the laptop instead. The location of interviews was unique to each participant, usually occurring in their own offices to ensure comfort. All interviews were prearranged with the help of the advisor and academic director.

Data collection and integrity

The integrity of the data collected was of paramount importance. All notes were saved on my laptop secured by a password without free access to anyone else. All interviewees were asked if they would like their name to appear in the study and each agreed. This was especially important and relevant for the governmental officials, keeping in mind their public positions.

Obstacles and challenges

The whole process went relatively smoothly and there was a general positive experience. However, there were a few obstacles encountered. Initially, I had a lot of challenges getting a response from the interviewees whose contact numbers I obtained with the help of the adviser. After reaching out

to the academic director, this issue was solved. I received all the needed information, however, five out of six interviews were conducted in the last week of the research.

Initially, I was planning to interview someone from the Department of Palestinian Affairs Or the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, however, it was challenging to get their contact information. In exchange, my advisor helped me to reach the Palestinian National Council which also provided a valuable perspective but more centered on the experience of Palestinians than Jordan.

Additionally, I had obstacles finding enough reliable data that reflects the impact of the war in Jordan. As the war started seven months ago and there are new developments every day, it is still too early to conduct an accurate and substantial analysis. Therefore, I had to rely my research purely on the information I obtained from the interviews which can create biased perspectives.

Adaptations:

Throughout the interview process, I was aware of my biases, being European educated at an American university. To combat this, I was introducing myself before the interview emphasizing the potential differences and biases, keeping an open mind and my willingness to learn. I was also aware that this topic is very sensitive to a lot of people who are refugees from Palestine themselves or whose families and relatives have been affected and killed in the ongoing genocide. Therefore, I was always making sure that the interviewee felt comfortable with the asked questions and the flow of the conversation. Besides that, before scheduling interviews I was introduced to the interviews by my advisor Dr. Jawad Anani who is a well-established and respected individual who helped me to have access to all the interviewees and their willingness to share their experiences

and knowledge with me for the study. . It is of course impossible to completely prevent skewed results, but I believe that all my interviewees were forthcoming and genuine.

Additional adaptations through the course of the study were numerous but minor and included shifting the style of interview questions, and restating questions when I felt it necessary. In all, the study reflects my best attempt to discuss these complex issues as fully as possible with the most appropriate actors.

Findings:

Palestinian National Council

"I was forced to leave my home, witnessing the brutal loss of many relatives. Every Palestinian family has a family member who was killed in the Israeli occupation" (F. Samhouri, personal communication, April 30, 2024). In the office of the Palestinian National Council, I was welcomed by Dr. Fawzi Ali Samhouri, a researcher and member of PNC who was also a refugee from Nakba in 1948. He shared his experiences repeating that Palestinians do not dislike Jewish people and that their only wish is peace on their land. "Palestinians lived before with the Jewish neighbors in peace and we wish to witness that again (F. Samhouri, 2024)". Dr. Samhouri emphasized that he believes in a two-state solution and the soon ending of the war in Gaza.

Palestinian National Council (PNC) serves as the parliament representing all Palestinians inside and outside the Palestinian territories (F. Samhouri, 2024). They represent the supreme authority of the Palestinian people in all their places of residence. According to Dr. Samhouri, the office in Jordan specifically focuses on the presence of Palestinians in all forms of parliament including the national, Islamic and social parliaments. They advocate and apply the official policies of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and advocate for the implementation of the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 194 which ensures the right of return to all refugees. While the PLO serves as the sole representative of the Palestinian people, the PNC has the authority to choose its Executive Committee and formulate PLO's policies (F. Samhouri, 2024). He also emphasized the strong partnership with Jordan's government and the King in the joint efforts to stop the ongoing war, lift all sanctions in Palestine and reject unsatisfactory plans that are being proposed by various parties. They believe that Jordan and Palestine have the same interests and policies and expressed hope that they will be able to solve the conflict.

"We have two choices. One is to fight and the second is to believe in international law. We choose the second option" (F. Samhouri, 2024). PNC believes in the independence and fairness of the International Criminal Court, and they entirely rely on international law and its implementation. Besides many failed attempts and disappointments for their people, it is interesting to see that they still believe in the international system and believe that they will support them in returning to their land. The main priorities and requests of the PNC are that the ICC treat Israeli action as aggression without any provocation, to respect the right to return of Palestinian refugees and to ensure peace for all Palestinians (F. Samhouri, 2024). Even though they hope for the implementation of international law they emphasize that the international system is destroyed and that it is necessary to make pressure to amend the mandate of the UN Security Council and take away the right to veto from the five Permanent Members (F. Samhouri, 2024). Dr. Samhouri explained how the United States is manipulating this right for its interests, preventing Palestine from becoming a full member of the United Nations even though it fulfills all the requirements. He also expressed how the United States is diminishing the willingness of the majority of the UN members wishing for a ceasefire of the war. Dr. Samhorui said that there are 6 million Palestinian refugees worldwide and that it is expected that the number will increase to 12 million in the future. Because of that, this issue should be at the utmost priority of the international community. When asked about the hope for the future Dr. Samhouri said that it depends on the will of Americans to end the war. He is hoping that the end of the war in Gaza will also be the end of American dominance all over the world. "Unless that is the case, Gaza will happen again and it will happen to all of us (F. Samhouri, 2024)".

Additionally, Dr. Samhouri underscored the importance of implementing the borders from 1967 with Jerusalem as the spiritual capital. Palestinians are ready to share the capital with the Israelis, but they do not believe that Israel is ready for peace with them (F. Samhouri, 2024). They

also hope that the Israeli occupation will end and there will be no more Zionists. At the same time, they make it clear that Israel should not be trusted. Israel never implemented the Oslo Accords, they are completing their occupation in Jerusalem and there is no trust that they will be cooperative in the future, especially during the existing government led by Benjamin Netanyahu. However, they are still not losing hope that this will change, and they will be able to return to their land and ensure peace and freedom for their Palestinians.

Lastly, we discussed the role of Hamas in Gaza. Without hesitation, Dr. Samhouri states: "Hamas is part of our people. Some people consider them extremists, but it is Israel who is aggressive, it is Israel who creates internal problems with Palestinians, not by force, not by aggression but from outside factors." However, he explains that it is necessary to understand that Hamas is not the representative of Palestinians it is the PLO that represents their people both domestically and internationally.

Through the insights of Dr. Samhouri, it can be concluded that Palestinian authorities are committed to obtaining a peaceful solution. They believe in the two-state solution, ceasefire to the war and fairness of the international system. They also trust and rely on Jordan and its efforts in creating peace in Palestine. On the other hand, they critique the American impact of the war and their role in the international system. Despite facing numerous challenges, including skepticism towards the international system and mistrust towards Israel's intentions, the PNC remains resilient in its pursuit of Palestinian rights, including the right of return for refugees and the establishment of Jerusalem as the capital.

Jordan's effort in managing the conflict

Jordan, which shares a border with the West Bank and Israel, has always been deeply involved and impacted by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In the 1940s conflict, Jordan accepted many Palestinian refugees that at that time tripled the Jordanian population. All of them received Jordanian citizenship and a big percentage of them remained in Jordan making up a significant amount of the current Jordanian population. Today, Jordan is considered to be a pillar of peace in the Middle East, a close ally of the United States and a frequent cooperator of Israel (Muasher, 2023). Jordan signed an armistice with Israel in 1949 that ended the First Arab-Israeli War, and in 1994 by signing the Peace Treaty, it became just the second country in the Middle East to begin official diplomatic relations with Israel. However, Jordan did not sign the U.S.-led Abraham Accords in 2020.

Since the beginning of the war in Gaza, Jordan has been deeply involved in trying to resolve the conflict in Palestine. They are focusing on using its diplomatic ties to advocate for a ceasefire and assistance to Palestinians. In addition, Jordan is the leading country in providing humanitarian assistance to all Palestinian civilians.

Their diplomatic efforts are focused on advocating for a ceasefire and fighting for Palestinian rights in international organizations and with their Western partners. Both Queen Rania and King Abdullah II have openly criticized the Israeli regime and its response after Hamas's attack on October 7. For instance, Queen Rania has given numerous interviews in which she assailed Western leaders for not condemning Israel's killing of Palestinian civilians. King Abdullah took the lead in voicing opposition to cutting funds for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

Furthermore, one of its first actions as a response to the war in Jordan was to withdraw its ambassador from Tel Aviv and advise the Israeli Ambassador to not return to Amman. Jordan also threatened to freeze all the agreements and treaties with Israel. As they still preserved the Peace Treaty from 1994, Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi announced that the Hashemite Kingdom would not proceed with a water-for-energy deal with Israel and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Jordan also decided to close its borders to Palestinians. On the surface this decision appears to be insensitive to Palestinian sufferings, however, it enjoys wide domestic and Arab support as they believe that only in this way Palestinian will keep the right to remain on their land. Internally, they are concerned about the potential flux of Palestinian refugees which they openly stated are not willing to accept.

Additionally, the Jordanian government canceled President Joe Biden's planned October 18, 2023, meeting in Amman, with Safadi saying that such a summit would be ill-advised while the United States would not agree to end the Gaza war. However, since then King Abdullah together with Minister Safadi had numerous visits to the United States despite their continued support of Israel's aggression. Jordan's delicate balancing act in response to the Gaza war stems from its need to maintain cordial ties with the United States. As Washington provides the cash-strapped Jordan with about \$1.5 billion in annual aid, the Biden administration remains the Hashemite Kingdom's largest donor.

Moreover, Jordan with the support of the Arab Group initiated the UN General Assembly Resolution calling for an "immediate, durable and sustained humanitarian truce" in Gaza. Even though the resolution is not binding, its adoption sends a strong message condemning Israel's actions in Gaza. Jordan's diplomatic team was also focused on helping Palestine to apply to become

a full UN member, however, this decision was vetoed by the United States at the UN Security Council meeting.

Airdrop aid to Gaza

The King also participated in a February military airdrop of medical supplies to Gaza. Jordan also collaborated with the US military to drop food packages to Gazans. Jordanian Armed Forces are cooperating with the Jordan Hashemite Charity Organization (JHCO) in providing much-needed aid to Palestinians and to improve a very dire humanitarian situation on the ground. For the paper, I have interviewed the Head of the Planning and Programs Department. JHCO provides daily assistance such as food, medical equipment and supplies and relief convoys. Their main donors are the UN and other international organizations, organizations from the Gulf, private companies and individuals from all over the world (JHCO, 2024). They closely cooperate with international organizations such as UNRWA, UNDP, Unicef, UN Woman, Mercy Corps, World Food Program as well as different governments such as British, French, American and Kuwait (JHCO, 2024). They provide significant resources and assistance to two Jordanian Field Hospitals located in Gaza (JHCO, 2024). Together with all the partners they created an imported network on the grounds in Gaza which helps them to always have access to those in need. The biggest challenge that they face in the current conflict in Gaza is obtaining permits from the Israeli authorities to cross the borders and enter Gaza (JHCO, 2024). Besides that, many times they are not allowed to enter all the prepared food and relief supplies. The JHCO worker emphasized that the political situation and the rapid changes on the ground also make their job harder as there is always a risk that their work would be hindered (JHCO, 2024). When asked how they ensure that the aid reaches those most in need in Gaza, she said every person who is currently residing in Gaza is in extreme need, the situation on the ground is very dire. However, they pay close attention to

providing special needs to the women affected and make sure that all of their trucks enter the territory of Gaza and are distributed adequately. She also emphasized that JHCO only focuses on the relief work and does not interfere with the peacebuilding efforts.

One of the most significant projects that has been done is the airdrop of humanitarian aid to the Palestinians in Gaza. This was done with the Jordanian Armed forces who are responsible for negotiating with the Israeli army to allow this kind of assistance, and also to logistically support this project. The final responsibility of this idea is under the responsibility of King Abdullah. She also explained that JHCO has people on the ground in Gaza who are collecting donations, driving trucks as well as providing them with media coverage. Besides the direct air dropping to Gaza, JHCO also sends aircraft to Egypt which should further be distributed through the borders on the ground (JHCO, 2024). She also claimed that JHCO's warehouses are full of supplies and donations and they do not lack the resources, however, sometimes they are unable to distribute all the aid due to the previously mentioned obstacles. Nevertheless, JHCO always has a clear risk mitigation plan and different scenarios that always ensure the safety of their workers but also the flow of the aid. Regarding the future of their work, she said that JHCO will focus on fulfilling the needs of all civilians in Gaza with the joint efforts from all the organizations. She also expects that more aid will be needed after the end of the war and she ensures that her organization is ready to provide it.

Jordan has emerged as a key player in the management of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, using its historical involvement, diplomatic ties and humanitarian efforts. Jordan has actively pursued peace initiatives, advocating for a ceasefire and Palestinian rights on the international stage. The ambassador's withdrawal and threats to freeze the deal underscore Jordan's tough stance amid the conflict. Joint efforts with organizations like JHCO demonstrate Jordan's commitment to providing vital aid to the Palestinians, despite logistical challenges and political complexities.

While Jordan manages its delicate balancing act, its role in fostering peace and addressing humanitarian needs remains crucial in the ongoing conflict.

Jordan's domestic politics

Jordan is a parliamentary monarchy with the Prime Minister as the head of the government. The executive branch also consists of the King and his cabinet. As marked in the Freedom House report, the King of Jordan plays a dominant role in politics and governance (Freedom House, 2024). They also assess the judicial branch as not independent, often failing to ensure due process. Therefore, Jordan is classified as a not-free country lacking political rights and civil liberties (Freedom House, 2024). One of the main challenges for the Jordanian governance is maintaining peace and stability in the country as well as the high percentage of unemployment especially among the youth population. According to CEIC, Jordan's unemployment rate in February 2024 was 22.30% increasing from the previously recorded data of 21.40% in November 2023 (CEIC, 2024). Due to the high unemployment rates, a lot of Jordanians, especially youth are considering emigrating from the country (Magid, 2024). The war in Gaza had an impact on its unemployment due to the boycotts of all companies having ties with Israel and the West, it also negatively affected the tourism industry as there is a significant drop in tourism during the fall of 2023.

The current conflict in Gaza is also impacting Jordan's stability. With the already existing challenges such as a struggling economy and high youth unemployment Jordan is also facing dissatisfaction of its population about remaining bilateral relations with Israel and in general response to the war. In the recent attack of Iran on Israel, Jordan played a significant role as it was actively involved in downing the Iranian drones. The local population was critical of these actions as they believed that Jordan allowed the Israeli and French military to enter Jordan's airspace. This act was seen as the protection of Israel (Magid, 2024). This also shows that military ties between

the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and Israel remain tight. Many Jordanians are already frustrated with maintaining diplomatic relations with Israel despite the soaring Gaza death toll.

Around six months into the war, many Jordanians have not been satisfied with their government's response to the Gaza war. During late March, thousands of Jordanians demonstrated in Amman on a nightly basis, with some trying to storm the Israeli embassy. While activists have demanded that Jordan sever all ties with Israel, the Hashemite leader refused to cancel the 1994 peace treaty. Protests in Jordan have almost reached the size of the protests during the Arab Spring. However, they were rapidly suppressed by the military as a lot of protestors were threatened and detained.

Additionally, Jordan fears the influx of Palestinian refugees from the West Bank, the end of UNRWA, the loss of Jordanian custodianship over Muslim holy sites in Jerusalem, and interruptions in vital water and energy supplies from Israel due to heightened political tensions. Any new refugee influx is a destabilizing factor for its society and political system. Amman is concerned that controversy over Jerusalem could increase public support for Islamist groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood, Jordan's main opposition movement. This group has traditionally exploited the public sentiment associated with Jerusalem to challenge and embarrass the government.

Dr. Eyadat, Director of the Center for Strategic Studies assesses that the numerous protests that were happening in the streets of Amman will not bring any drastic change and they do not pose a threat to the government (Z. Eyadat, personal communication, April 17, 2023). He emphasized that there is a difference between supporting Palestinians and Hamas. He claims that Jordanians are only showing solidarity with their brothers and sisters in Gaza but not Hamas (Z. Eyadat, 2024). When asked about Jordan's efforts to build peace in Palestine, he identified the

King-led foreign policy which was reflected in the frequent visits to the United States, advocating for a ceasefire and initiating airdrop aid to Gaza (Z. Eyadat, 2024). He also highlighted the efforts of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Jordanian society in general which all create pressure and raise awareness about the war. Dr. Eyadat also believes that Jordan is the leader of other Arab countries regarding the Palestinian question and it had a very important and relevant role in securing the first truce that enabled a short pause of bombing and exchange of hostages.

He also emphasized Jordan's balancing act which is reflected in condemning Hamas and involvement in putting pressure on Hamas, however, he believes that Jordan should do less for Palestine as he thinks that if they are solely focusing on the Palestinian question that can harm their interests and bilateral relations. One of the requests of the protests was to stop the relations with the United States, which he believed would be detrimental to Jordan and it could not be accepted. Jordan has to always put its interests first and not let the sentiments of the people impact its policies. Nevertheless, the parliamentary elections are coming up and political parties need to ensure that they gain the trust of the voters. He believes that the war in Gaza and sentiments about it will impact the election process, but it will not change its outcomes. However, the Jordanian population in general is not very interested in political participation and the voter turnout will likely not be affected by the war.

Looking into the future, Dr. Eyadat said that the most likely scenario is that the IDF will defeat Hamas and establish its rule in Gaza. Regional dynamics will be severely impacted and he believes that conflict will be protracted for a while. He also expects a rise of radicalization in the region and a rise in the influence of non-state actors and militias.

Additionally, Dr. Hussein Sarayreh, from the Politics and Society Institute (PSI), the nonprofit organization using the scientific methodology to analyze the behavior of policymakers,

has provided another perspective on similar issues (H. Sarayreh, personal communication, April 22, 2024). He believes that Jordan has a significant role in peacebuilding in Palestine due to its custody of the Holy Places in Jerusalem, and the demographic connection between Jordanians and Palestinians. He expressed that the Palestinian question is perceived as one of Jordan's cases too. Jordan is also affected by the long borders of both countries and it is their responsibility to keep their borders safe as their national security depends on it. However, it can not be expected that Jordan will "unoccupy" Palestine or attack Israel. He also expressed disappointment in how other Arab Countries see Jordan just as the corridor to Palestine without taking into consideration its internal safety and peace. He also explained that Jordan was seen as an Israeli collaborator for advocating for the two-state solution. However, now after October 7th this solution has become much more favorable and it is getting wider support. Nevertheless, Dr. Sarayreh believes that Israel is an enemy who will not stop its goals of enlargement and he is concerned that Jordan is a target for Israel to be occupied later on. He also sees Hamas as a potential threat to Jordanian stability. Even though Hamas has been out of Jordan since 2001, Dr. Hussein believes that Hamas is now out of the game politically in Gaza and is planning to find another host country. He states that Hamas has no control over Gaza right now and is losing its people to death and injuries and causing genocide by their actions. As Jordan is a more important player in the region than Qatar, he believes that Hamas will try to move their offices from Doha to Amman. Doha benefited from Hamas as it became a more effective player, but Jordan is already an important player even without the presence of Hamas. However, Doha wants to clear itself from the responsibility as America does not support Hamas in building common ground for dialogue with Israel (H. Sarayreh, 2024). He is afraid that will transfer the crisis from Gaza to Jordan. Even though, during the recent protests in Jordan in support of Gaza, many banners and chants were saying "All Jordanians are Hamas"

that is more an emotional slogan which is reality not true. Jordanian people will not support their presence in Jordan as they enjoy the current peace and that will not be the same with Hamas. There is also a poll done among Jordanians which confirms that they support Hamas only in Gaza and not in Jordan and only because they are defeating Israel (H. Sarayreh, 2024).

He also emphasized that Jordan always had a strong diplomatic effort for the Palestinian question. Since the first foreign minister, they have been involved in the diplomatic, political and humanitarian efforts to obtain peace for Palestinians and ensure the respect and implementation of international law. Even in this current war, Jordan is not helping Hamas and their goals but it is defending Palestinian civilians and their basic human rights. King Abdullah is a strong advocate of this policy as well as the ceasefire which he mentions in his frequent meetings with President Biden.

Dr. Sarayreh also believes that Jordanian allies are in Washington and London and that to preserve good relations it needs to remain stable and peaceful. He believes that as soon as Jordan becomes unsafe and unstable, the United States will not provide any aid and assistance to its people.

Regarding the upcoming elections, Dr. Sarayreh explained that it would be interesting to follow them as they are the first elections after the political modernization reforms that are supposed to encourage political participation. He expressed disappointment in the reaction of Jordanian political parties after the October 7th. They were all shocked by the events, without being able to defend the Jordanian narrative. Far-right parties, mostly consisting of former government officials, just agreed with the King and his vision while the leftists supported resistance and Hamas together with the Muslim Brotherhood. He concludes that political parties in Jordan are not mature enough to understand Gaza. There are no "smart" parties with strategies,

strong political narratives, good speakers and advocates who will recruit the audience. Therefore, he is not expecting to see any change after these elections. He also added that Jordan is not looking to become a democracy and its local population thinks that human rights are conspiracy things and democracy is only for white people and not the Arabs. Dr. Sarayreh also believes that Muslim background candidates will try to use the tribal approach and not political and that in the Jordanian election systems tribes are on the top and political parties on the bottom. He also believes that these elections are significant only because they will be a "cemetery" for many political parties and leaders as many of them will not be able to reach the Parliament.

Nevertheless, he is concerned about the very likely political radicalization caused by Hamas's actions. He believes that is going to be seen mostly among youth who are driven by political injustices. That could be seen after every historical event similar to October 7th.

Therefore, the war in Gaza impacted Jordanian domestic politics in various ways. This will especially be reflected in the upcoming parliamentary elections. Dr. Eyadat and Dr. Sarayreh provide somewhat different perspectives on Jordan's role and response to the war as well as its impact on domestic politics. While Dr. Eyadat emphasizes the need for pragmatism and prioritizing Jordan's interests, Dr. Sarayreh underscores the intrinsic link between Jordan's stability and its role in the Palestinian cause. The upcoming elections in Jordan represent a crucial moment in which these different viewpoints can manifest themselves in the political arena. However, both scholars express skepticism about the election's transformative potential, highlighting deeper structural challenges within the Jordanian political landscape, including the dominance of tribalism and the lack of mature political parties. Amid growing concerns about political radicalization fueled by external conflicts, the election could serve as a litmus test for Jordan's ability to manage

internal and external pressures while maintaining stability and addressing the aspirations of its population.

Economic Impact

The regionalization of the war in Gaza has negatively affected the Jordanian economy. Dr. Al Assar from the Economic and Social Council stated that there are direct and indirect economic impacts of the war. He believes that the presence of Houthis in the Red Sea makes the transportation of goods to Jordan more costly as they have to take a longer route. He also believes that the rising presence of non-state actors and militias in Iran, Iraq, Syria, north of Jordan and Yemen are negatively affecting commercial trading. For instance, there is a 16% decrease in exports in Jordan's only port in Aqaba (A. Al Assar, personal communication, April 29, 2024). He also identified a decrease in tourism which he said is not unique to Jordan but all the countries in the region. He compared the current situation with times during COVID-19 in terms of tourism. Dr. Al Assar also emphasized the important impact of the USAID on the Jordanian economy. This assistance is helpful as it provides Jordanians with education and training. Their work focuses more on crafts and technical jobs rather than jobs that require high education. This is useful because Jordan already has a high number of people with a university degree who are unemployed (Al Assar, 2024). This aid offers alternative job options which do not require a degree.

Another impact of the war on the Jordanian economy is the boycott of American and Western companies. He makes it clear that the profits of all of these companies went down both locally and globally. Some of them, such as Starbucks and Carrefour, decided to close a few stores in Jordan. That severely affected unemployment in Jordan as Dr. Al Assar claims that there were

25,000 workers in these stores in Jordan. He also said that in the fourth quarter of 2023, there was a 1.89% decrease in GDP growth due to the boycott impact (Al Assar, 2024).

Lastly, he mentioned that there is a decrease in the GDP, foreign investments and unemployment with the increasing crime rates and security risks. Therefore, the economic impact of the war is severe and it might continue to be like that shortly.

On the other hand, Dr. Yousuf Mansour, CEO of the Envision consulting firm and Former Minister of Economy has provided a slightly different perspective. He believes that Jordan should stay a neutral player to ensure its stability. Jordan does not want war with Israel and because it received aid that it does not pay for it needs to be responsible to its biggest donor, the United States (Y. Mansour, personal communication, April 29, 2024). He believes that the current regime in Jordan would collapse without the help of the United States, however, that is not a condition for a stronger response to Israel. Jordan is trying to balance between all powers and not to make anyone upset. That is the only way Jordan can survive (Y. Mansour, 2024).

He also mentioned the rumors which he believes are most likely true, that there is a land bridge supplying Israel. Even though the government denies it, he believes that some evidence is found that disproves these statements. Dr. Mansour also states that since the beginning of the war in Gaza, there has been an increase in trade with Israel both from Jordan and other countries in the region. Daily trucks are going from Dubai to Israel and Jordan's supply of food to Israel. The war itself, especially the presence of Houthis in the Red Sea is increasing the shipping costs but that does not have a big impact on the prices of goods for the consumers. Therefore, it has a negligible impact.

Dr. Mansour also emphasizes that Jordan's economy is depressed, meaning that there is a prolonged downturn in economic activity featuring high unemployment and negative GDP growth.

He also explains that the average Jordanian consumer is poor, the demand is low and because of that, there is no increase in prices of the daily goods. Furthermore, he said that the statements against Israel delivered by the King, Foreign Minister and the Queen could have posed a threat that Jordan will cut off the water supplies to Jordan. However, no water crisis has happened, and the agricultural sector has not been widely impacted which remains one of the biggest contributors to Jordanian GDP. However, maybe even the most obvious impact is that Jordan lost the Gaza market and Palestinians as there is currently no trade with Palestine even in the West Bank. On the other hand, all exports to Israel increased. Exports from Turkey increased by 50%, before the ban on trade that they introduced which they stated will not be resumed until a permanent ceasefire and humanitarian aid are secured in Gaza.

Concerning Jordan he mentioned that there is a significant drop in trade in Aqaba, and a drop in tourism and transportation services has been affected. However, he poses a question as to how the possible "land bridge" compensated for these losses. This will be hard to measure but he believes there are enough reasons to believe that the loss in trade may be compensated in this way.

Dr. Mansour also commented on the energy cooperation project that was supposed to be signed between Israel and Jordan. He said that the project is currently stopped but not canceled. He assessed the current regime as cooperative with Israel and the West and because of that he is not doubtful that the agreement will be signed as soon as the conditions permit. Dr. Mansour also disagreed with the previous statements that the current economic situation is very similar to the times during corona. He believes those two are not comparable because in Corona some industries profited more than others and we are still observing the impact of the ongoing war which is very likely not going to have that drastic impact on the Jordanian economy. Tourism is affected by both, but the tourism industry contributes to the GDP only by 2% which does not make it very

concerning and relevant. When asked about the foreign investment and their decrease, Dr. Mansour said that they were dead before the war too and that the Jordanian government should be happy that the war happened in those regards as they can use it as an excuse for the non-existent investments. There has not been a new foreign company in Jordan since 2008. "That means it has been 16 years without a new large company, foreign investments were never high, we can not blame the war for that", Dr. Mansour explained.

He also touched upon the topic of boycotting American companies explaining that this affects unemployment, especially among vulnerable groups such as youth. However, it does not have that significant impact on the economy itself. All these franchises are operated by Jordanians and they are the ones affected by it. On the other hand, the boycott shares another message in which Jordanians are very vocal and that is that they do not want to support anything related to Israel.

Dr. Mansour also spoke about the upcoming parliamentary elections in Jordan, the first elections after the new political modernization policies. He believes that will not bring any change and he just sees it as a tool to buy time. Jordan is not a democracy, there is no civil society and these elections or new modernization acts will not change that. He compared it to the research he completed a few years ago that shows that the increased number of women in ministerial positions has had a negative impact on the welfare of women. All in all, the government still enjoys wide support even if street protests presented some threat that was short-lived and rapidly suppressed by the military and police.

Therefore, the war in Gaza has had a significant impact on the Jordanian economy. That is mostly reflected in the drop in tourism, increased unemployment, more costly trade and lack of exports. Dr. Mansour proposed an interesting question that questions the possibility of the

existence of a land bridge between Israel and Jordan that can compensate for the losses of the exports. His perspective is a bit more optimistic stating that the Jordanian economy has suffered more before and that this war will not worsen the current state. On the other hand, Dr. Al Asssar has more pessimistic views comparing the current situation to COVID-19. They both agreed that in the future, we will see more consequences of the war to the Jordanian economy, especially if the war is prolonged.

Conclusion

Palestinian question has always been of great concern for Jordanians. Throughout history, Jordan helped Palestinians to fight Israeli occupation through military, diplomatic, economic, social, and humanitarian aspects. It is also the country that hosts the highest number of Palestinian refugees which makes its ties to Palestine very strong. The civilian population expects the Jordanian government to have a bigger role in condemning Israel and its aggression, however, the government led by King Abdullah has to be more responsible and ensure it keeps the support that it receives from the United States and its Western allies. Therefore, Jordan's government has a task to effectively balance between halting all bilateral relationships with Israel as demanded by the population and looking at the benefits that it receives from both Israel and its allies. Thus, Jordan's efforts for peacebuilding are mainly reflected in their diplomatic pressures such as proposing the UN resolution or advocating for a ceasefire and continuation of UNRWA funding and the humanitarian assistance that they provide to Gazans in need through the air and the ground.

This affects Jordanian domestic politics in three ways. It has economic implications and political implications reflected in government stability and changes in electoral dynamics before the upcoming parliamentary elections.

Therefore, to fulfill the demands of its population Jordan has to balance its support to Palestinians and its interests. The future both for Gaza and its regional and domestic impact is very uncertain. It remains to be seen what the long-term effects will be.

Limitations of Study

One significant limitation is the ongoing and rapidly evolving nature of the conflict in Gaza. As the war unfolds, new developments occur almost minute by minute, making it challenging to capture a static snapshot of the situation for analysis. This dynamic environment poses obstacles to gathering reliable data and assessing the long-term impact of Jordan's peacebuilding efforts on its domestic politics.

Moreover, the scarcity of resources adds another layer of complexity to the study. Limited access to real-time information, restricted fieldwork opportunities, and the need for comprehensive data collection present substantial challenges. The lack of resources may hinder the study's ability to delve deeply into the intricacies of Jordan's involvement in Gaza and its ramifications on domestic politics.

Methodologically, the study also might be limited by its researcher. As a female, European, English-speaking, and American university student, my access to the most complete and accurate responses might have been affected by cultural biases. Attempts were made to combat this possibility by adhering to cultural norms, and the use of mutual connections to assure participants of my intentions.

Recommendations

As the war in Gaza progresses and time passes, more research studies are expected. This war had an impact on the whole region in many different ways. Regarding its impact on Jordan, some of the recommendations for further study are:

- The analysis of the Jordanian parliamentary elections and the impact of the war in Gaza on it
- Measurement of political radicalization among youth as the consequence of the war
- The effects of the potential new refugee flow to Jordan
- Capacity of Jordan to get involved in rebuilding Gaza
- Impact of the war in Gaza on the efficiency of the Arab League
- Examining the public perception of the Jordanian efforts to build peace in Gaza
- The Role of non-governmental Organizations in securing peace in Gaza

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