

Vow Renewal

JORDAN AND THE US AT THE BEGINNING OF THE TRUMP ERA

While Donald Trump's executive orders and the focus of his administration on "America first" have left many political leaders in the world with sentiments ranging from apprehension and anticipation to dread and fear, the relationship between the US and the Jordanian government is stronger than ever. King Abdullah II was the first Arab leader, indeed one of the first world leaders, to meet with President Trump on the 2nd of February 2017. Last week, just two days before the US response to the alleged chemical attack by Bashar Al-Assad's forces in Khan Sheikhoun, King Abdullah II and President Trump met for the second time. Both leaders have stated their commitment to peace efforts and anti-terrorism strategies, reaffirming Jordan's role as mediator, military and strategic ally to the US.

Background

Each new administration inadvertently takes on the consequences of the previous administration's policies. It is therefore important to understand the history of cooperation between Jordan and the US, and consequently to know what to expect from Trump's presidency. Jordanian political analyst, journalist and Director of MEMPSI, the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Amer Al-Sabaileh, argues that, "usually, Arabs favour Republicans more than Democrats, simply because they are less demanding on crucial issues like liberties, political reform,

human rights, etc."¹ According to Al-Sabaileh, Jordan had a clear role during President George W. Bush's Iraq war, and an over-privileged relationship with the US administration.² The scope of Jordan's involvement in world politics, and the financial support given, "spoiled" both the government and the population into having an overblown perception of Jordan's role in the Middle East, as well as its importance in global politics.

The reliance on the US was further enhanced by former President Obama's foreign policy, as well as the outbreak of the Syrian Civil War and Jordan's crucial role as a leading refugee host country. In February 2016, Jordan's ruling monarch King Abdullah II said in a press conference with President Obama, "[t]he help that we've gotten from you, Mr. President, from your administration, from the Congress, and the people of the United States is something that is very difficult to express in any words. And we are very, very grateful for that."³ This can also be seen in Obama's budget pro-

¹ Interview with Amer Al-Sabaileh, 2nd March 2017, conducted by KAS Jordan.

² Interview with Amer Al-Sabaileh, 2nd March 2017, conducted by KAS Jordan.

³ The White House, "Remarks by President Obama and His Majesty King Abdullah of Jordan After Bilateral Meeting", 24.02.2016. [https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/02/24/remarks-president-obama-and-his-majesty-king-abdullah-jordan-after] (Last accessed 08.04.2017).

Konrad Adenauer Foundation

**COUNTRY OFFICE
JORDAN**

STEFANIE TURKANIK
DR. MANUEL SCHUBERT
MONA DEEB
IMKE HAASE

APRIL 2017

www.kas.de/amman

posal for fiscal year 2017: Jordan is the second-largest recipient of US development assistance, with 632.4 million USD (merely succeeding Afghanistan and its 1 billion USD), receiving 367.6 million USD for security assistance, and is in fifth place with respect to total foreign aid (preceded by Afghanistan, Israel, Egypt, and Iraq).⁴ With a struggling economy and the corresponding growth of internal dissatisfaction, Jordan continues to be in dire need of foreign aid, and its security and development would be severely impeded without the financial support of the United States.

To date, the US has also needed Jordan. It is perceived as an "island of peace" in the Middle East, eager to cooperate with Western democracies, and has a geo-strategically valuable location – between Israel, Syria, Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Both the United States' use of Jordan as a military base, and Jordan's role as mediator in peace talks made the relationship between the two countries indispensable.⁵

When Donald Trump was elected, the immediate reactions in Jordan seemed to be either excited, wary, or both.⁶ Reasons for

the wariness were Donald Trump's statements during his presidential campaign, as his "views on Middle Eastern crises and problems [were] vague, incomplete or simplistic declarative sentences."⁷ A growing majority of political analysts, however, were clinging to the idea that Donald Trump will be different as a president, growing in his responsibility and understanding.

The excitement about Trump's election is due to the aforementioned enhanced relationship of the Arab world with Republicans, and the perception of Trump as a competent businessman. Tamara Abdel-Jaber, one of the most successful business and IT consultants in the region, credits the excitement to the notion that Trump could be different from previous administrations, and therefore better for Jordan.⁸ According to Director of the Jordanian branch of Operation Mercy, Bob Cole, the Arab worldview favours strong, male leaders, mostly without a critical position towards their words or actions, as long as the population is taken care of. In this sense Obama was often seen as weak, while Trump is perceived as a pragmatic leader "who knows what he wants and gets things done."⁹ Amer Al-Sabaileh argued in November 2016 that, "while the people of the Arab and Muslim

⁴ Bearak, Max & Gamio, Lazaro, "The U.S. foreign aid budget, visualized: From building wells to building armies", in *The Washington Post*, 18.10.2016.

[<https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/world/which-countries-get-the-most-foreign-aid/>] (Last accessed 08.04.2017).

⁵ The White House, "Remarks by President Obama and His Majesty King Abdullah of Jordan After Bilateral Meeting", 24.02.2016. [<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/02/24/remarks-president-obama-and-his-majesty-king-abdullah-jordan-after>] (Last accessed 08.04.2017).

⁶ See: Melhem, Hisham, "What does a Trump presidency mean for the Middle East?", in *Al-Arabiya*, 26.11.2016. [[http://english.alarabiya.net/en/views/news/middle-east/2016/11/26/What-does-a-Trump-](http://english.alarabiya.net/en/views/news/middle-east/2016/11/26/What-does-a-Trump-presidency-mean-for-the-Middle-East-.html)

[presidency-mean-for-the-Middle-East-.html](http://english.alarabiya.net/en/views/news/middle-east/2016/11/26/What-does-a-Trump-presidency-mean-for-the-Middle-East-.html)] (Last accessed 08.04.2017).

⁷ Melhem, Hisham, "What does a Trump presidency mean for the Middle East?", in *Al-Arabiya*, 26.11.2016.

[<http://english.alarabiya.net/en/views/news/middle-east/2016/11/26/What-does-a-Trump-presidency-mean-for-the-Middle-East-.html>] (Last accessed 08.04.2017).

⁸ Interview with Tamara Abdel-Jaber, 30th March 2017, conducted by KAS Jordan.

⁹ Interview with Bob Cole, 16th March 2017, conducted by KAS Jordan.

Regan, Tom, "Why many in the Middle East prefer Obama", in *The Arab Weekly*, 01.08.2017. [<http://www.the arabweekly.com/Opinion/7512/Why-many-in-the-Middle-East-prefer-Trump-over-Obama>] (Last accessed 08.04.2017).

Konrad Adenauer Foundation

**COUNTRY OFFICE
JORDAN**

STEFANIE TURKANIK
DR. MANUEL SCHUBERT
MONA DEEB
IMKE HAASE

APRIL 2017

www.kas.de/amman

world might view Trump negatively, their leaders might actually be quite positive towards him as his policies could have a positive impact for the region by creating common ground for cooperation, especially in combatting terrorism.”¹⁰ This theory is in line with the results of a study conducted by the Arab Center Washington DC in the Middle East before the US presidential elections, where 62% of Jordanian respondents voted their sentiment towards Donald Trump as “negative overall” (only 33% voted this for Hillary Clinton), and 68% favoured Hillary Clinton as the next US President (as opposed to 9% favouring Trump).¹¹ Further, a similar number of respondents in Jordan (roughly 30%) believed that the new US President would either “not change” or “slightly change” US foreign policy towards the Arab world, while 67% of Jordanians believed Hillary Clinton would bring about a positive impact in policy towards the Arab world (with 11% for Trump).¹² Most importantly, however, a staggering 70% of Jordanian respondents believed Hillary Clinton to have a positive impact towards their own country, and a mere 7% believed the same for Donald Trump.¹³

Most likely, these initial perceptions have changed as a result of the cordial and responsive rapport between President Trump and King Abdullah II. During their first meeting on the 2nd of February 2017, Trump and Abdullah discussed the issue of moving the US Embassy to Jerusalem and the mat-

ter of the Israeli settlements. Following the meeting, Trump temporarily stopped mentioning the controversial move and encouraged Israel to freeze settlements. Pressed on whether he had influenced the president on the settlement issue, King Abdullah said in the interview, “I think people are giving me way too much credit. They are saying that I had something to do with it [...] I just expressed my views.”¹⁴

On the 5th of April 2017 - one day after a toxic gas killed over 80 civilians in Syria’s Idlib province and two days before President Trump gave order to launch 59 missiles targeting Assad’s Al Shayrat airfield base, Trump and Abdullah met again. Just before the official White House meeting, King Abdullah II had a remarkably candid interview with the Washington Post about the key role he expects to play with the president in reviving the stalled Israeli-Palestinian peace talks, and about the need for the United States to engage with Russian President Vladimir Putin and perhaps make some concessions to solve the crisis in Syria.¹⁵ Both the questions and answers in the interview also indicate that the president might have heeded the King’s advice and may continue to do so. Jordan currently appears to be back as one of the most influential strategic US allies in the region. However, stability in Syria and counter-terrorism are not the only fields of interest for the US and Jordan. Are there still possible points of conflict and tension between the Trump administration and the Jordanian government?

¹⁰ Al-Sabaileh, Amer, “Donald Trump Seen From The Arab & Muslim World”, in *Atlantic Treaty Association*, 24.11.2016. [http://atahq.org/2016/11/donald-trump-seen-from-the-arab-muslim-world/] (Last accessed 08.04.2017).

¹¹ Arab Center Washington DC, “Arab Public Opinion and US Presidential Elections 2016”, 01.11.2016: p. 5-6.

¹² Arab Center Washington DC: p. 8-9.

¹³ Arab Center Washington DC: p. 10.

¹⁴ Weymouth, Lally, “King Abdullah: Compromise With Russia on Crimea to Get Its Help in Syria,”

¹⁵ Weymouth, Lally, “King Abdullah: Compromise With Russia on Crimea to Get Its Help in Syria,” in *The Washington Post*, April 6, 2017 [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/king-abdullah-compromise-with-russia-on-crimea-to-get-its-help-in-syria/2017/04/06/b985b894-1a61-11e7-bcc2-7d1a0973e7b2_story.html?utm_term=.27cf427cd57f] (Last accessed on 11.04.2017).

COUNTRY OFFICE
JORDANSTEFANIE TURKANIK
DR. MANUEL SCHUBERT
MONA DEEB
IMKE HAASE

APRIL 2017

www.kas.de/amman

Anti-Terrorism & the Stability of Syria

To end the civil war in Syria and effectively counter terrorism - primarily against the so-called Islamic State (ISIS) - are high priorities for both the new US administration and Jordan. During the joint press conference between King Abdullah II and President Trump on 5th of April 2017, this alignment of interests was strongly emphasised.¹⁶ Trump stated that, "The King has been a leader in calling for a plan to defeat ISIS once and for all. [...] We're both leaders on that, believe me. That's what we speak about today, and that is what we are going to do. And it will be a shorter fight than a lot of people are thinking about [...] We will destroy ISIS and we will protect civilization. [...] King Abdullah and I also discussed measures to combat the evil ideology inspiring ISIS and plagues our planet."¹⁷

Peace in Syria is desirable for Trump's administration in so far as it would curtail terrorism in the region, as well as provide the symbolic prestige of "ending the Syrian Civil War." Right after the toxic gas killings in Syria, President Trump said he had a change of heart regarding Assad. "I like to think of myself as a very flexible person. [...] And I will tell you, that attack on children [...] had a big impact on me - big impact. [...] And I have that flexibility, and [...]"

¹⁶ The White House, "Remarks by President Trump and His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan in Joint Press Conference", 05.04.2017. [https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/04/05/remarks-president-trump-and-his-majesty-king-abdullah-ii-jordan-joint] (Last accessed 08.04.2017).

¹⁷ The White House, "Remarks by President Trump and His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan in Joint Press Conference", 05.04.2017. [https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/04/05/remarks-president-trump-and-his-majesty-king-abdullah-ii-jordan-joint] (Last accessed 08.04.2017).

my attitude toward Syria and Assad has changed very much."¹⁸

These developments have shown President Trump's interest in the Middle East, and his desire to "fix this mess"¹⁹. Apparently, "America first" means that the new administration feels responsible for protecting human rights in Syria and that it will maintain an active military involvement in the Middle East.

Some Trump supporters, and even former critics, see the unexpected US response to Bashar Al-Assad's alleged chemical attack in Khan Sheikhoun in a positive light. The strike signalled that the US would not tolerate any action that crosses the "red line." Many veterans of President Obama's team considered his handling of Syria his biggest failing and expressed regret that their administration did not stop a war that left more than 400,000 dead and millions displaced.²⁰ This positive attitude towards the missile attack on the Shayrat airfield is shared by many Jordanians including high-ranking officials.

¹⁸ The White House, "Remarks by President Trump and His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan in Joint Press Conference", 05.04.2017. [https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/04/05/remarks-president-trump-and-his-majesty-king-abdullah-ii-jordan-joint] (Last accessed 08.04.2017).

¹⁹ The White House, "Remarks by President Trump and His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan in Joint Press Conference", 05.04.2017. [https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/04/05/remarks-president-trump-and-his-majesty-king-abdullah-ii-jordan-joint] (Last accessed 08.04.2017).

²⁰ Baker, Peter, "For Obama, Syria Chemical Attack Shows Risk of 'Deals With Dictators'", in *The New York Times*, April 9, 2017 [https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/09/us/politics/obama-syria-chemical-weapons.html?_r=0] (Last accessed 08.04.2017).

COUNTRY OFFICE
JORDANSTEFANIE TURKANIK
DR. MANUEL SCHUBERT
MONA DEEB
IMKE HAASE

APRIL 2017

www.kas.de/amman

Jordan also seeks peace and stability in Syria, as it would increase the security of its own northern border, and fill the vacuum the so-called Islamic State is currently occupying. Counterterrorism has been a high priority for Jordan, since many of the leading emirs of terrorist cells were raised or educated in Jordan. "Their theories are from Jordan. When you talk about Abdullah Az-zam [Osama bin Laden's teacher], al-Zarqawi [one of Al Qaeda's leading emirs], al-Maqdisi [al-Zarqawi's spiritual mentor], or Abu Sayyaf [head of the Jordanian Jihadi Salafist Movement] – all these big names are from Jordan,"²¹ Jamal al-Shalabi points out. As Professor of Political Science at the Hashemite University, Al-Shalabi argues that Jordan's political cooperation with Israel and the bad economic situation are the cause for the ideology's manifestation. In order to curtail home-grown terrorism, King Abdullah II pioneered the Amman Message, a call for tolerance and unity in the Muslim world. Other initiatives have also been launched in order to work against extremist ideas.²²

Trump and King Abdullah maintain that Jordan and the US are seeking the same goal. Indeed, King Abdullah stated that, "[t]he challenges we face today [...] are global, and particularly the threats to global security. Terrorism has no borders, no nationality, no religion, and, therefore, joint action with a holistic approach [...] is crucial. I am very delighted that you [President Trump] have the vision to be able to move in that direction and I think that the world will be in a very good place as we move with all these challenges ahead."²³

²¹ Interview with Jamal Al-Shalabi, 19th March 2017, conducted by KAS Jordan.

²² Interview with Jamal Al-Shalabi, 19th March 2017, conducted by KAS Jordan.

²³ The White House, "Remarks by President Trump and His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan in Joint Press Conference", 05.04.2017.

However, there may also be points of tension between the two countries regarding concrete anti-terrorism measures. During his campaign, Trump announced his intention to put the Muslim Brotherhood on the terrorist list. Although already banned in Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, Jordan traditionally pursued its own way of dealing with the local movement of the Brotherhood. Its political arm, the Islamic Action Front, is the largest faction in the Jordanian parliament. So far, and after interventions from Jordanian diplomats, the US Administration has put a hold on Trump's executive order.²⁴ Nonetheless, Oraib Al-Rantawi states that the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood is not in good shape regarding relations with the West at large, including, in particular, the Trump administration.²⁵ The Director of the Al Quds Center for Political Science believes that the Muslim Brotherhood opened the channels of communication with governing institutions too late, losing their relevance first, and credibility second. Although there is belief that the current US President will not go through with his threat, it is a "Trump-card" which – if played – would present a significant challenge to the Jordanian leadership. If handled well, it could lead to a progressive separation of the religious and civic aspects in institutions led by the Muslim Brotherhood, as well as in Jordan in general. However, should the leadership be unable to effectively manage the transition, it

[<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/04/05/remarks-president-trump-and-his-majesty-king-abdullah-ii-jordan-joint>] (Last accessed 08.04.2017).

²⁴ Taylor, Guy, "How to deal with Muslim Brotherhood triggers Trump White House infighting," in *The Washington Times*, March 27, 2017 [<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2017/mar/27/muslim-brotherhood-listing-as-terror-group-delayed/>] (Last accessed on 11.04.2017).

²⁵ Interview with Oraib Al-Rantawi, 5th March 2017, conducted by KAS Jordan.

COUNTRY OFFICE
JORDANSTEFANIE TURKANIK
DR. MANUEL SCHUBERT
MONA DEEB
IMKE HAASE

APRIL 2017

www.kas.de/amman

could give rise to revolutions akin to the Arab Spring.²⁶

Israeli and Palestinian Territories

One matter Jordanian prominent political analysts Oraib al-Rantawi, Amer al-Sabaileh and Jamal al-Shalabi agree on is that Trump's foreign policy towards Israel could potentially have the greatest long-term consequences in Jordan. The Palestinian Cause is a top priority for Jordan, due to the high percentage of Palestinians in the country. Jordan has had to strike a difficult balance between being politically peaceful and socially antagonistic. This means that, practically, the Jordanian government opposes Israeli settlement policies and advocates for the two-state-solution.

The fact that President Trump tasked his leading adviser on Middle Eastern affairs and pro-settlement son-in-law Jared Kushner with "doing peace" in the Middle East already caused concern in Jordan and the wider region.²⁷ Even more disconcerting were the claims made during Trump's campaign that he would relocate the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem after his inauguration. The move would likely be threatening to stability, as Jerusalem is viewed as the capital by both Israelis and Palestinians. Relocating the US embassy would be indicative of a global acknowledgment of Jerusalem as the legitimate capital of Israel. "[M]essing with Jerusalem would be the catalyst for a focused and unified Arab and Muslim response. There would be massive unrest across the region and de-

mands for a response,"²⁸ argues Director of the Arab-American Institute, James J. Zogby. Jordan would be affected by this unrest due to the high percentage of Palestinians in the country, and the fact that the holy sites in Jerusalem are under Jordanian jurisdiction.²⁹

Due to Donald Trump's "great respect for King Abdullah II,"³⁰ it fell to the Jordanian leadership to point out the destabilizing confusion caused by Trump's remarks, not to mention the risk of fuelling anti-Israeli and anti-US sentiments, chaos that could occur if he followed through. As a likely result of the conversations held between Trump and Abdullah, the White House issued the following statement on 2nd of February: "While we don't believe the existence of settlements is an impediment to peace, the construction of new settlements or the expansion of existing settlements beyond their current borders may not be helpful in achieving that goal."³¹

Oraib Al-Rantawi also argues in favour of Jordan's strategic importance to the US. "The results of the King's first visit and meeting with Trump and the administration

²⁸ Zogby, James J. "Washington Watch: Don't Mess with Jerusalem", in *Arab-American Institute*, 14.01.2017.

[http://www.aaiusa.org/don_t_mess_with_jerusalem] (Last accessed 08.04.2017).

²⁹ Khoury, Jack, "Palestinians, Jordan Agree to Take Steps if U.S. Moves Embassy to Jerusalem", in *Haaretz*, 22.01.2017. [<http://www.haaretz.com/middle-east-news/palestinians/1.766824>] (Last accessed 08.04.2017).

³⁰ Trump, Donald, via *Twitter*, 08.12.2015. [<https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/674382044097449985?lang=en>] (Last accessed 08.04.2017).

³¹ The White House, "Statement by the Press Secretary", 02.02.2017. [<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/02/02/statement-press-secretary>] (Last accessed 08.04.2017).

²⁶ Interview with Amer Al-Sabaileh, 2nd March 2017, conducted by KAS Jordan.

²⁷ Kantor, Jodi, "For Kushner, Israel Policy May Be Shaped by the Personal", in *The New York Times*, 11.02.2017. [<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/11/us/politics/jared-kushner-israel.html>] (Last accessed 08.04.2017).

Konrad Adenauer Foundation

**COUNTRY OFFICE
JORDAN**

STEFANIE TURKANIK
DR. MANUEL SCHUBERT
MONA DEEB
IMKE HAASE

APRIL 2017

www.kas.de/amman

were very fruitful. There is a deep understanding about Jordan's stance and the challenges we are facing,"³² Al-Rantawi explains. A New York Times article also highlighted King Abdullah's ability to "shift policy."³³

However, two weeks after King Abdullah's first visit with Trump, the US President met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Trump's statements in a joint press conference with Netanyahu initially seemed to undo the progress made. The US President first made casual remarks on his indifference between the two-state and one-state-solution, and then disconcertingly announced, "[as] far as the embassy moving to Jerusalem, I'd love to see that happen. We're looking at it very, very strongly."³⁴

Amer Al-Sabaileh argues that Trump's interest in the Middle East is to a greater extent business-related and less political. According to Al-Sabaileh, "the way they backed Netanyahu shows that King Abdullah II didn't really affect policy."³⁵ Indeed, if business is one of the new motivators, Jordan with its few resources and weak economy would become increasingly insignificant, also in regard to the mediator role it has taken in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

Businesswoman Tamara Abdel-Jaber correctly predicted the King's influence will grow after the Arab Summit on the 29th of March 2017 in Jordan, since he would be representing all Arab leaders.³⁶ Indeed, the two leaders sung each other's high praises during the press conference on April 5th, 2017. President Trump called King Abdullah "a thoughtful and determined partner", a soldier who "knows how to fight", and a "tireless advocate" for peace in the region. The Jordanian leader, on the other hand, praised President Trump's "holistic vision", "outlook [...] for everything that is in [the] region", and his "message of hope".³⁷ Even more importantly, however, King Abdullah commended the US President's ability to discern the complexity of the political situation in the Middle East. Referring to the discussions he witnessed in the White House, the Jordanian leader stated that, "[t]he President understands the nuances and the challenges. I think he has the courage and the dedication to be able to do this."³⁸ This vote of confidence is remarkable, but has yet to be proven.

Although the United States' stance towards Israel will remain a touchy subject, with a continuing potential for greater destabilization inside Jordan should more drastic steps of support be taken, the political relation-

³² Interview with Oraib Al-Rantawi, 5th March 2017, conducted by KAS Jordan.

³³ Landler, Mark, Baker, Peter, & Sanger, David, "Trump Embraces Pillars of Obama's Foreign Policy", in *The New York Times*, 02.02.2017. [https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/02/world/middleeast/iran-missile-test-trump.html?_r=1] (Last accessed 08.04.2017).

³⁴ The White House, "Remarks by President Trump and Prime Minister Netanyahu of Israel in Joint Press Conference", 15.02.2017. [<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/02/15/remarks-president-trump-and-prime-minister-netanyahu-israel-joint-press>] (Last accessed 08.04.2017).

³⁵ Interview with Amer Al-Sabaileh, 2nd March 2017, conducted by KAS Jordan.

³⁶ Interview with Tamara Abdel-Jaber, 30th March 2017, conducted by KAS Jordan.

³⁷ The White House, "Remarks by President Trump and His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan in Joint Press Conference", 05.04.2017. [<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/04/05/remarks-president-trump-and-his-majesty-king-abdullah-ii-jordan-joint>] (Last accessed 08.04.2017).

³⁸ The White House, "Remarks by President Trump and His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan in Joint Press Conference", 05.04.2017. [<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/04/05/remarks-president-trump-and-his-majesty-king-abdullah-ii-jordan-joint>] (Last accessed 08.04.2017).

COUNTRY OFFICE
JORDANSTEFANIE TURKANIK
DR. MANUEL SCHUBERT
MONA DEEB
IMKE HAASE

APRIL 2017

www.kas.de/amman

ship between President Trump and King Abdullah II seems significantly strong. Incidentally, this means that even the potential tension regarding Israel may not be as problematic as many previously believed.

Foreign Funding

As already mentioned, Jordan has been one of the primary beneficiaries of US development and security aid, and is heavily reliant on foreign funding for the stability of the Jordanian economy, hosting refugees and for safeguarding societal peace.

President Trump's proposed budget for 2018 sees a 29% overall budget cut (amounting to 10.9 billion USD) for state and other development programmes. However, Israel's 3.1 billion annual security aid and, as of last week, also Jordan's technical and financial assistance should remain untouched.³⁹ President Trump promised even an increase in financial aid to Jordan. After acknowledging Jordan's role in hosting Syrian refugees, he announced "additional funds to Jordan for humanitarian assistance" to "host refugees until it is safe for them to return home."⁴⁰ This commitment may also be the administration's way of appeasing US citizens who have been protesting President Trump's travel ban. It seemingly aims to prove that the care for refugees remains intact, but will merely be manifested in a different way.

³⁹ Landler, Mark, "Who Wins and Loses in Trump's Proposed Budget", in *The New York Times*, 16.03.2017. [https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/03/15/us/politics/trump-budget-proposal.html] (Last accessed 08.04.2017).

⁴⁰ The White House, "Remarks by President Trump and His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan in Joint Press Conference", 05.04.2017. [https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/04/05/remarks-president-trump-and-his-majesty-king-abdullah-ii-jordan-joint] (Last accessed 08.04.2017).

Conclusion

After months of uncertainty, the relationship between the US and Jordan seems stronger than ever. The country's leaders have stated their commitment to peace efforts and anti-terrorism strategies, and Jordan's role in the Middle East — as mediator, security and humanitarian asset, and reliable ally — has been re-affirmed.

Despite the relief many are feeling regarding the United States' re-commitment to Jordan, President Trump may still be seen as a "problematic president" among many Jordanians.⁴¹ Adam Baron states it is astounding how many crises Trump has brought on himself via the social media outlet, while Operation Mercy Director Bob Cole points out that, "with each phone call — you never know how it's all going to develop."⁴² This week-to-week inconsistency in meetings, speeches, and tweets may continue to be a difficulty for the Jordanian leadership, and flexibility will be crucial.⁴³

Furthermore, Donald Trump's alleged inability to build relationships could also be a challenge. His history of a lack of sensitivity, courtesy and respect towards other world leaders may quickly burn bridges in the Middle East. Jordan, specifically, does not have the luxury of breaking off contact. "For Jordan, the US is an essential partner," Baron states. "But Jordan also has the opportunity to mitigate Trump's apparent tendency to make hasty decisions, particularly

⁴¹ Interview with Adam Baron, 22nd March 2017, conducted by KAS Jordan.

⁴² Interview with Adam Baron, 22nd March 2017, conducted by KAS Jordan. Interview with Bob Cole, 16th March 2017, conducted by KAS Jordan.

⁴³ Al Jazeera, "The two faces of US President Donald Trump", 04.02.2017. [http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/listening-post/2017/03/faces-president-donald-trump-170304094901994.html] (Last Accessed 08.04.2017).

Konrad Adenauer Foundation

**COUNTRY OFFICE
JORDAN**

STEFANIE TURKANIK
DR. MANUEL SCHUBERT
MONA DEEB
IMKE HAASE

APRIL 2017

www.kas.de/amman

with regards to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.”⁴⁴

Jordan and the United States’ public renewal of their political vows will eliminate much of the grass-roots pessimism regarding Trump and his administration. But experts in Jordan agree that the local leadership will have to “educate Trump” and keep advocating for the importance of the Jordanian and Palestinian narratives to the new US administration.⁴⁵ This role is linked with the hope that Donald Trump and his administration will continue to grow in their understanding of the situation in Jordan and the surrounding countries, and to develop their diplomatic skills.

⁴⁴ Interview with Adam Baron, 22nd March 2017, conducted by KAS Jordan.

⁴⁵ Interview with Bob Cole, 16th March 2017, conducted by KAS Jordan.