



Jordan's Approach to Syria- Interests and Policy Options

**Expert-Workshop in Amman
October 21-22, 2022
Working Papers**

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Introduction and Summary

The Center for Strategic Studies (CSS)

The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) and the Center for Strategic Studies (CSS) at the University of Jordan held a 2-day closed workshop, in Amman, with regional and international experts on the topic of Jordan's approach to Syria – interests and policy options. This event was the second in a series of workshops that examine different areas of Jordan's foreign policy, organized jointly by both organisations. The workshop provided insight and analysis of Jordan and Syria's status quo and dynamic in a changing geopolitical context, border security and the geopolitical threats at Jordan's northern border, policy areas of economic cooperation whilst considering the regional realities and international politics, and the Syrian refugees in Jordan and the question of integration, relocation or return. This introductory summary presents some of the ideas discussed during the workshop but does not necessarily reflect the opinion or assessment of each participant or the hosting institutions.

Since the beginning of the Syrian crisis, Jordan has entertained a fraught and, at times, complicated relationship with its northern neighbor: Syria. However, the region has recently witnessed a progressively increasing Arab openness, including Jordan, towards Syria- with several states reopening their embassies and reposting their diplomats. At the same time, Western countries, including the Kingdom's most important allies, continue their anti-normalization and sanction policy toward the Assad regime as long as no serious political process in Syria is in sight.

Considering that Syrian-Jordanian reconciliation has not turned into full normalization, the closed expert workshop delved into decoding Jordan's approach to Syria in a changing geopolitical context and multilateral and international cooperation, shedding light on the relevant issues at stake: the current and prospective geopolitical dynamic and scenarios, the security of state borders, the horizons of economic alliances and cooperation, and the status of refugees and policies for integration, relocation or return.

Along with the policy-oriented discussions, the workshop provided recommendations for the multiple policy options available to Jordanian-Syrian relations, areas of potential effects (that directly or indirectly could cause alteration of Jordan's rapprochement with Syria), and long-lasting outcomes of policy options of Jordan's positions toward Syria, amid a changing regional and international context.

The Jordanian caution signs of rapprochement with Syria crosscut with the global and regional geostrategic scene, stemming from two major determinants: the global drivers of change and the dynamic of alignment and new alignment. As for the global drivers of change, the world has been affected by the recent power shift dynamic; China as a major geo-economical competitor, Russia as a military power, and the Europe-US as a central strategic partner. In addition, the reoccurring cycle of violence and interstate war (such as the Russian- Ukrainian war) has changed the states' strategic tactics of diplomacy, security and foreign policy. This leads to the third driver of change- the uncertainty period shaping globalization; characterized by personal/individual autonomy, interdependence, and the absence of unifying long and short-term priorities.

And, this brings to mind the second determinant, alignment and the new alignment; shaping not only economies, but policies, and international relations. At the regional level, the Arab countries emphasize the importance of strengthening regional partnerships and cooperation. Consider for example the Abraham Accords, the Arab League, and the New Levant initiative between Egypt, Jordan, and Iraq.

The question of Syria lies within these geostrategic realities. It should be (re-) conceptualized beyond the process of rapprochement with Bashar al-Assad's regime. Instead, Syria should be discussed by emphasizing two axes: the significance of Syria in (re)shaping the new world order and the reality of Syria (Syria from within). The latter is closely related to al-Assad's regime vs. the various Syrian opposition and coalition (inside and outside). Power division and dynamic within Syria has been vitality

important in determining the course of peace negotiation in the Middle East, the normalization with the Syrian regime, and the process of rehabilitating postwar Syria. While, the former, is related to al-Assad's regime vs. the other global and regional power (i.e. Iran, Turkey, Russia, Israel, the U.S, and the EU). Particularly with the Russian strategic interest in maintaining its influence in the Middle East through its military presence in the East of Syria. The U.S withdraw from the region. Iran's economic and military gains in Syria, are marked by a looming conflict with Israel.

Regarding Jordan's position toward Syria, multidimensional factors and trends were presented in the workshop. First, the geopolitical struggle over power-entailing access to energy, oil, gas, and water. The water-energy-food nexus became a central priority in the country's foreign policy and regional security dialogue. With that in mind, Syria's return to the Arab League become an anchor of regional stability. Such an approach to Syria is embraced by Jordan and UAE.

Second, economic cooperation and stability, specifically, Syria as a new avenue of economic growth for Jordan and the region. The past few years have witnessed a change in Jordanian-Syrian relations as a result of the global economic prospect. Areas of economic opportunities include but are not limited to, the revival of Jordanian-Syrian trade relations, facilitation of foreign and national economic growth, recovery of the shipping and transport sector, growth of the Jordanian tourism sector, and improvement of trade relations between Jordan and Lebanon.

Third, the reopening of the border crossings and Jordan's position on the emerging threat; drug smuggling, terrorism, and organized crimes. The workshop highlighted the long-term effects of these threats on Jordan's stability, the absolute necessity for a national security strategy to counter the internal and external threats to the country, and the multilateral regional and international cooperation overarching objectives of national and regional peace, security and stability (given its geostrategic position of particular significance to the Middle East, North Africa, West Asia region and the globe).

Finally, Jordan's position toward Syria is shaped by the country's policies on Syrian refugees within three scenarios; integration, relocation or return. Several cross-cutting themes were identified to design holistic, rights-based and sustainable durable solutions for Syrian refugees within these scenarios. First, design internal policies to guarantee Syrian refugees' inclusion; equal rights and access to services, specifically in areas concerning access to health care and higher education. Second, prioritise voluntary repatriation with the choice of free return to the host country. Third, the regional and international community should advocate, assist and guarantee durable solutions for Syrian refugees. Fourth, enact legal and administrative procedures to facilitate the refugees' right to return, integrate or relocate. Finally, invest in researching these scenarios; integration, relocation or return, to identify opportunities, challenges and possible areas of solutions.

The internal, regional, and global dynamics at play resulted in rethinking the future of Syria, and consequently, the security and stability of the Middle East. This connects with maintaining an inclusive open dialogue with states' leaders, experts, policymakers, academics and other key players. Some of the Policy Options discussed during the event include:

- Jordan has to rethink new approaches for rapprochement with Syria. One that considers Syria as part of a broader regional stabilization, hence, requires a multilateral joint regional response.
- Syria should be reconfigured beyond al-Assad's regime, to encompass the reality of Syria itself, Syria (within), and the significance of Syria for the region's stability.
- The new global geopolitical dynamic emerging from the great power competition call for an Arab diplomatic solution to reconstruct Syria.
- A joint regional effort is required to find innovative long-term solutions to support the future of Syria and the region. Which might entails opening new channels of dialogue within the region's key powers and beyond.

- A road map must be agreed upon at the forthcoming Arab summit in Algeria to guarantee Syria's rehabilitation, internal reconstruction, and its (re) integration into the regional alliance.
- Reopening the Jordanian border with Syria will positively nourish the Jordanian economy. Windows of opportunities are: Jordanian-Syrian trade relations, agricultural commodities and commodities exported to Syria and Lebanon, the balance of the Jordanian labor market, expansion of the Jordanian tourism sector, and new opportunities for investment from Jordan to Syria and vice versa.
- Syrian refugees' integration, relocation or return should be discussed within a framework that guarantees the principle of non-refoulment.
- It is pivotal to modify policies to integrate Syrian refugees within the local communities by providing equal access to services and guaranteeing their right to have rights.
- Although the international community has been providing substantial aid assistance to meet the basic and immediate need of the Syrian refugees, it is essential for the international community to find a sustainable solution that mitigates and manages the impact of the Syrian crisis on Jordan. Including, pressure on services, natural resources, infrastructure and the labor market.

The Jordanian-Syrian Rapprochement and the Positioning of Germany

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Abstract:

This short paper discusses the Jordanian-Syrian rapprochement over a year after its initiation in 2021 as well as the positioning of Germany – the largest economy in the European Union and one of Jordan’s central donors – towards this process. In the fall of 2022, the pitfalls associated with the rapprochement outweigh its at least short-term benefits, as is evidenced in the continuously tense security situation in southern Syria, the increasing drugs smuggling from Syria into Jordan as well as the only minimal rise in bilateral trade and cross-border economic exchange.

Against this backdrop, I argue that while Germany has not been in favor of Jordan’s cautious thawing of relations with the Syrian government after 2021, Berlin accepts this so long as Amman’s rapprochement with Damascus remains at an early stage and does not become a full-fledged normalization. In the current constellation of “early rapprochement,” Germany’s overarching interest of supporting stability for the Hashemite Kingdom clearly prevails, and therefore policy continuity can be expected to a large extent.

Introduction: Differentiating Rapprochement from Normalization

Numerous terms have been used to describe the (semi-)public reestablishment of relations between state governments in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) with the Syrian government of President Bashar al-Assad over the last years. A non-comprehensive list of such terms includes (in alphabetical order): Accommodation, adaptation, breaking the isolation, easing of restrictions, normalization, reconciliation, rehabilitation, (sub-)regional reintegration, restoration, thaw, thawing and warming. Typically, many of these terms are employed interchangeably, thereby sometimes glossing over potentially important differences when it comes to the breadth and depth or the extensity and intensity in the reestablishment of inter-governmental diplomatic, security, economic or social relations. To capture the differences in the quality of the reestablishment of ties between antagonistic, often enemy governments, I suggest focusing on rapprochement and normalization as two commonly used process terms which should be differentiated from one another.

In the realm of politics, rapprochement can be understood, following its original French meaning, as the “drawing nearer (again)” or “bringing together (again)” in inter-governmental relations. More specifically, rapprochement denotes the (initial) reestablishment of relations between at least two governments which were previously considered enemies or, at least, rivals. Like rapprochement, normalization also contains an understanding of a process of reestablishing bi- or multilateral ties between (former) enemy governments. But normalization’s distinctive feature is the assumption of a return to a period of much more cordial, bi- or multilateral relations.¹

1. In Jordanian political language, normalization (Arabic: *tatbi'*) has most often referred to the increased political, social and economic upgrading of relationships with the Israeli government and Israeli society, especially after the bilateral peace treaty of 1994. In Jordan, an “anti-normalization front” has emerged protesting these dynamics; cf. D. Kornbluth (2002), *Jordan and the Anti-Normalization Campaign, 1994-2001, Terrorism and Political Violence*, 14, 3, 80-108. On anti-Israel protests in Jordan more broadly, cf. Jillian Schwedler (2022), *Protesting Jordan: Geographies of Power and Dissent*, Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, pp. 131-149 and 198-201.

In recent Jordanian-Syrian relations, such periods of (allegedly) normalized, functioning bilateral relations existed briefly in 2000/1 and again around 2008/9, i.e. after the succession by the young heads of state (King Abdallah II. of Jordan and President Bashar al-Assad of Syria) and before the Arab uprisings of 2011, respectively.² In terms of sequence, rapprochement can be the necessary first step or early period of a political process towards normalization. But rapprochement can also stop, leading to a kind of standstill in the bi- or multilateral relations, with potentially worsening ties down the line.

With this differentiation of rapprochement and normalization in mind, I can foreshadow the main thesis of my short paper: While Germany as the largest economy in the European Union (EU) and one of Jordan's central bi- and multilateral donors has not been in favor of Jordan's cautious thawing of relations with the Syrian government under President Bashar al-Assad since 2021, Berlin accepts this as long as Amman's rapprochement with Damascus remains at an early stage and does not develop into a full-fledged normalization. To develop this argument, I proceed in three steps: First, I examine the quality and substance of the Jordanian-Syrian rapprochement over a year after its initiation. Second, I briefly present the German government's central political interests in the Middle East in general and vis-à-vis Syria and Jordan in particular. Third and final, I discuss Germany's positioning towards today's Jordanian-Syrian relations.

The Jordanian-Syrian Rapprochement 2021/22

To understand the emergence of the initial thawing of Jordanian-Syrian relations, it makes sense to examine the geopolitical context in the Middle East in 2021. For Jordan, led by Hashemite King Abdallah II. and the

2. On Jordanian-Syrian relations in the 2000s, cf. Raymond Hinnebusch / Neil Quilliam (2006), *Contrary siblings: Syria, Jordan and the Iraq War*, *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 19, 3, 513-528 and Curtis R. Ryan (2006): *The Odd Couple: Ending the Jordanian-Syrian "Cold War,"* *Middle East Journal*, 60, 1, 33-56.

government under Prime Minister Bisher al-Khasawneh, this geopolitical context had improved internationally, regionally and also domestically: Internationally, the new US administration under President Joe Biden, which succeeded President Donald Trump in January 2021, took a more openly supportive view of Jordan again. Regionally, in Israel, Likud politician Benjamin Netanyahu lost or, rather, did not win the parliamentary elections of 23 March 2021, ushering in a rotating coalition government under Naftali Bennett and Yair Lapid in June 2021. This government shift in Israel led to a thawing of bilateral, Israeli-Jordanian relations, including a number of high-level visits. Also in the region, Jordanian-Saudi ties improved again during 2021, after more tense relations in the years before, including between the Jordanian king and the Saudi Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman. Domestically, by summer 2021, King Abdallah II also felt more assured to actively take on a new regional and foreign policy initiative, with the so-called “Hamza affair” from April 2021 being largely resolved.

Against this specific background in 2021 and against the broader trend among Arab countries, such as the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Oman but also Algeria, towards rapprochement with Assad’s Syria, King Abdallah II’s state visit to US President Biden in the White House in July 2021 – as the first Arab head of state – paved the way for the thawing with the Syrian government. In the following weeks, important symbolic and practical steps followed: Officially, all border posts between Jordan and Syria fully reopened by August 2021. Then, a publicly announced phone call between the Jordanian king and the Syrian president took place in October 2021. Around this time, a number of mutual Jordanian-Syrian visits took place, especially by representatives from business associations but also by some ministers. By fall 2021, these first steps of a Jordanian-Syrian rapprochement looked like they could develop into a much more substantial reestablishment of bilateral relations.

One year later, in the fall of 2022, it is fair to say that the rapprochement between Jordan and Syria has not developed any further, not at all. Rather,

bilateral relations are at something of a standstill, with opinion-makers such as Khaled Yacoub Oweis arguing that rapprochement has actually been a “lose-lose situation.”³ While I would not go quite as far as this assertion, it is certainly clear that in different policy fields related to Jordanian-Syrian ties, there has not been substantial improvement, to say the least.

In the realm of *military security*, there exists a continuously tense situation in the Jordanian-Syrian borderland. In southern Syria, a plethora of state and non-state armed groups continue to exist and to operate right at Jordan's northern border. With the Russian invasion in Ukraine in February 2022 and the continued war since then, concerns in Jordanian government circles have increased that Russia might further move away its few remaining military police from this area – and that Moscow might also reduce its earlier controlling and mitigating roles, especially between Israeli and Jordanian interests on the one hand and pro-Iranian forces and the Lebanese Hizballah on the other. There has been a particular concern in Amman that Iran and Hizballah might increase their military postures in southern Syria. Here, Syrian regime forces represent only some among many armed fractions and not necessarily the strongest ones.

The Jordanian-Syrian borderland has also experienced a drastically increased *drugs smuggling*, not only in recent years but especially in the “period of rapprochement,” i.e. from 2021 to 2022. Thereby, Jordan is not only a gateway or transport route for narcotics, among them methamphetamines such as Captagon, to the Gulf countries. Increasing rapidly, Jordan has become a destination country and a consumer market for drugs itself, with Jordanians mostly consuming Hashish or the highlyaddictive Chrystal Meth.

3. Oweis, Khaled Yacoub (2022), Jordan and Syria's stalled reconciliation leads to a 'lose-lose' situation, The National, 14 October, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/mena/jordan/2022/10/14/jordan-and-syrias-stalled-reconciliation-leads-to-a-lose-lose-situation/>.

The *economy* in general and bilateral trade in particular have been the fields where some slight improvements can be detected from 2021 to 2022:⁴ According to Jordanian central bank data, Jordan's exports to Syria slightly increased to 47 million US\$ in the period from January to June 2022 when compared with the 39 million US\$ for the period of the first six months in 2021. Similarly, Jordan's import of good from Syria slightly increased in the same period 2022 to 33 million US\$ from 28 million US\$ for the first six months of 2021.⁵ Beyond this rather meagre increase in bilateral trade and a slight improvement in Jordan's trade balance vis-à-vis Syria, Jordan had hoped to start exporting electricity via Syria to Lebanon in March 2022. But here, U.S. concerns stemming from the Caesars Sanctions Act, which also concern so-called secondary sanctions, have prevented such energy or electricity projects involving the Syrian government from developing so far.

Overall, the Jordanian-Syrian rapprochement in the fall of 2022, over one year after its initiation, is still at a very early stage, to say the least. The even more tense security situation in southern Syria on the border with Jordan as well as the clearly increased drugs smuggling even suggest that the rapprochement has actually gone hand in hand with *more* short-term challenges for the Jordanian government.

4. For more details on current economic exchanges between Jordan and Syria, cf. the contribution by Jihad Yazigi.

5. Cf. Oweis (2022).

Germany's Middle East Policy and its Positioning vis-à-vis Jordan and Syria

In this section, I briefly present the German government's foreign policy approach to the Middle East as well as its central political interests in the Middle East in general and vis-à-vis Syria and Jordan in particular.

Fundamentally, German Middle East policy sees itself as strongly embedded in European Middle East policy and transatlantic Middle East policy. This necessitates that it is typical for the German government to coordinate its initiatives in the Middle East with its core partners, first in the EU and with central partner states, such as France, and second with the US as the strongest, Western state and core member of NATO. Against this background, German *Alleingänge* (unilateral leanings, solo efforts), especially in a geopolitically strategic region such as the Middle East, are an absolute exception.

The central pillars of German Middle East policy are made of the following components which can shift in their prioritization over time which have remained surprisingly stable over the last decades:⁶

- ***Ensuring the security of Israel***, in large part because of the historical responsibility for World War II and especially the Holocaust. For German governments, this has not only meant a clear restraint when it comes to criticizing the Israeli governments but also continuously strong support, including financial support, for of a Two-State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
- ***Ensuring Energy Security***. Importing of large Amounts of Relative

6. Cf. Volker Perthes (ed., 2002): German Middle East Policy: Interests and Options, Berlin: SWP, https://www.swp-berlin.org/publications/products/fachpublikationen/GermanyAndTheMiddleEast_mitKopierschutz.pdf. Even though two decades old, this study still presents the main contours of German policy towards the Middle East, especially the Mashriq. For analyses of the current government, cf. Tobias Borck / Sebastian Sons (2022), Germany's new government and the Middle East, RUSI, 14 January, <https://rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/germanys-new-government-and-middle-east> and Przemyslaw Osiewicz (2022), Staying the Course ... for now: Germany's MENA policy under the Scholz government, Middle East Institute, 22 June.

ly cheap, high-quality oil and gas from the Middle East and North Africa has been of strategic importance for Germany's economic development over the last decades. While the relative importance of Middle East oil and gas had relatively gone down over the last years, it has drastically increased again with the Russian invasion in Ukraine in February 2022.

- *Preventing and/or Fighting Terrorism.* Especially after 9/11 but also in the context of the Iraq war post-2003 as well as the Syria war post-2011 did the German government collaborate with governments in the region, e.g. in the anti-ISIS alliance operating from Jordan.
- *Preventing and/or Controlling Forced Migration.* (See more on this below.)

To achieve these four overarching objectives of German's Middle East policy, Berlin has cooperated with different governments in the region, aimed at ensuring the respective state's stability. Among them, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has been one of the longest standing, closest allies and Germany has therefore been one of largest bi- and multilateral donors of the Hashemite Kingdom for decades. From the German government's perspective, it is of particular importance that Jordan is one of the few Arab countries to have signed a peace treaty with Israel and that it continues to support the so-called Oslo Process, with its strong ties to the Palestinian Authority (PA). In addition, Germany has strongly collaborated with Jordan when it came to fighting terrorism, especially but not only against radical-Islamist organizations such as al-Qa'ida or ISIS. Also, there has been strong bilateral cooperation concerning the hosting of refugees and forced migrants, be it Palestinians, Iraqis, Syrians or others. Against this background, in early October 2022, Germany signed a new bilateral aid package with Jordan of around 414 million € for the years 2022/23.⁷

7. Cf. Jordan Times (2022), Germany announces 413.9m euros in assistance for 2022-23, 9 October, <https://jordantimes.com/news/local/germany-announces-4139m-euros-assistance-2022-2023>.

In contrast to the strong, collaborative German-Jordanian ties, the German government's relationship with Syria under Assad has been antagonistic and hostile since the beginning of the devastating war in Syria in 2011. Berlin considers the Syrian government to be a brutal dictatorship which has been responsible for the bulk of the human rights atrocities in the country over the last twelve years. The German government has been the leading European country to host Syrian refugees and forced migrants itself, especially since 2015 (circa 800.000), and it has also been a central multilateral donor in the humanitarian response, both for people inside Syria and for those who reside in neighboring countries, among them Jordan. The German government remains committed to United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution 2254 from 18 December 2015 which suggests a process of political transition as a precondition for an end to sanctions against the incumbent government.⁸ Relatedly, Germany has also supported the so-called Geneva process and the negotiations of the Syrian constitutional committee. Very much in line with its understanding as a core, leading member state of the EU, the German government's Syria policy has continued to be primarily about keeping the European diplomatic consensus on non-normalization with the Syrian government intact. In recent years and likely into the near future, keeping an anti-Assad position in Europe will likely become more of a challenge, especially with the new right-wing, anti-refugee governments in Italy and Sweden, the latter being a former core partner of Germany in hosting Syrians in Europe.

8. Cf. <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/2254>.

Germany's Positioning vis-à-vis the Jordanian-Syrian Rapprochement 2021/22

With the German government's broader Middle East policy in general and its earlier positioning towards Jordan and Syria in mind, Berlin has not been in favor of Amman's thawing of relations with Damascus since 2021. At the same time, it has accepted these initial, bilateral relations so long as they do not lead to a reinstating of President Assad and his government on the international and regional stage. For the German government, a stable Jordan in a volatile regional context remains of importance. That is why some disagreements over the initial rapprochement with Syria will not threaten the decades-long partnership between Berlin and Amman. This would only change if a full-fledged normalization between Jordan and Syria under Assad materialized. But in my view, the latter scenario is very unlikely, at least in the short- to mid-term.

Syrian Crisis in a Changing Geopolitical Environment

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Executive Summary

My intervention revolves around repositioning the Syrian crisis in the Russia-West geopolitical conflict resulting from the crisis in Ukraine. It looks at the consequences of that conflict on Syria, notably the future of the Arab role in that crisis.

Theme 1: Syria and Russia-West Conflict

Crises in Syria and Ukraine have emerged within the context of the Russia-West geopolitical conflict. At the beginning of the Ukrainian conflict, much was said about the decline of Syria's importance in Russian politics, considering Moscow's pre-occupation with the war in Ukraine. However, in reality, Syria has gained more significance in Russia's list of priorities as the Russia-West conflict has become a competition over influence spheres worldwide.

Amid the increasing possibility of military confrontation with the US and NATO, Russia has a strategic interest in keeping its air and naval bases in Syria. These facilities support Moscow's military preparedness in the eastern Mediterranean. In contrast, despite Syria's marginal importance in US geopolitical calculus, Washington is keenly observing Russia's understandings with influential regional actors on the Syrian issue, (i.e., Turkey and Iran) which tend to push against the US military presence in Syria. That was manifested in the outcomes of Tehran's trilateral summit in June. The US responded to the moves of these three actors on the ground by reaffirming its military presence in the east of Syria by reacting to the action of Iran-backed militia groups targeting the Tanf military base.

Theme 2: The Repercussions of Ukraine's Crisis and Russia-West Conflict on Syria

The conflict in Ukraine and the Russia-West confrontation reflected on the Syrian issue. Due to the US and the West's pre-occupation with Ukraine and response to its challenges, the significance of the Syrian crisis has declined in international politics, eventually hindering the political process in the country in its totality. There was indeed no real political process to address the Syrian crisis before the Ukraine war, as the crisis was being dealt with in line with the "status quo policy" described by Jordan's Foreign Minister, Ayman al-Saffadi.

However, Russia-West polarization since the start of the Ukraine war has hindered efforts to resolve the crisis. For example, the constitutional committee negotiations have stopped since July due to Russia's insistence on holding talks outside Geneva. The second reflection of Ukraine's crisis on Syria is the growing Iranian intervention in the country with Russian complicity. Moreover, Iran took advantage of the Ukraine crisis to enhance its military and economic influence in Syria.

The third impact of the Ukrainian conflict is that it has hindered Syria's return to the Arab League, a project mainly led by both the UAE and Jordan. Washington currently perceives the Syrian issue as related to its larger conflict with Russia. Therefore, despite all the extensive and exceptional efforts made by Algeria and other Arab countries to ensure Syria attend the Arab Summit in Algeria in November, they did not work because of the US pressures on some Arab states to oppose the move.

Due to Iran's growing influence in the south of Syria with Russian complicity and the Iranian proxies' support for drug manufacturing and trafficking across the Syria-Jordan borders, Washington is now trying to tighten the noose around the Assad regime by introducing new laws and measures. The US House of Representatives approved a bill in September to dismantle the Captagon trade and narcotics networks in Syria. Some US lawmakers also introduced a bill for amending the Caesar Act that prevents the Syrian regime from investing in natural gas, electricity, and energy.

Conclusions

The new global geopolitical dynamics emerging from the Ukraine crisis and the Russia-West standoff will make regional crises even more challenging to resolve, including the one in Syria. While the *status quo* remains a more probable scenario, it is not inconceivable that the prolongation and escalation of the Russia-West encounter in Ukraine will move the confrontation between the two sides to the Syrian battlefield.

In light of these dynamics, it is in the Arab countries' interest to restore their role in the Syrian conflict. I imagine this will be impossible without returning Syria to the Arab fold. It is also essential that the next Arab League summit in Algeria reach a roadmap to ensure Syria's return to this regional organization.

Notably, most Arab countries have not sided with the West against Russia in Ukraine's crisis, nor have they joined Western sanctions against Moscow. More importantly, major GCC countries, (i.e., Saudi Arabia and the UAE), have resisted US pressures not to support OPEC+ plans for a significant oil production cut. Despite the positions of the Arab countries, Russia has not rewarded them on the Syrian issue.

Arab countries must address Russia with one voice calling on Moscow to consider Arab countries' interests in Syria. They should demand that Russia not use Iran's influence in Syria as part of its bickering with the West. Instead, Moscow should help drive Iran's influence outside Syria and give more momentum to constitutional committee meetings to reach an acceptable political settlement in the country.

Jordan and Syria in a Changing Geopolitical Context

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Introduction

Jordan's policy towards the Syrian civil war (2011-present) has been primarily shaped around the country's security concerns over the shared border and the impact of refugees in the country. While Jordan's King Abdullah was the first Arab leader to call for al-Assad to step down, Jordan also spearheaded the efforts to reintegrate the Syrian regime into the international and regional society, influenced by the evolution of the conflict over the years⁹. The primary aim of Jordanian policy aims to help reestablishing stability in Syria and in the MENA, as the country appears to provide a bridge between Russia, the US, China, Syria, and other regional actors with its balanced foreign policy initiatives¹⁰.

Jordan's concerns guiding its foreign policy involves international and domestic elements, such as the threat of terrorism, especially by ISIS, the possible backlash from other states, and the growing unrest within the country due to the socioeconomic effects of the conflict¹¹. Thus, Jordan has had to walk a thin line: managing the expectations of all involved parties

9. Haid, Haid. "Assad picks and chooses from Jordan's goodwill gestures." *The Arab Weekly*, 05.01.2022. Kilani, Abdulaziz. "Jordan's Diplomacy in Syria, Part 1". *The New Lines Institute for Strategy and Policy*, 10.11.2022.

10. Kilani, Abdulaziz. "Jordan's Diplomacy in Syria, Part 2". *The New Lines Institute for Strategy and Policy*, 10.11.2022.

11. Young, William, et al. "Spillover of the Syrian Conflict into Jordan." *Spillover from the Conflict in Syria: An Assessment of the Factors That Aid and Impede the Spread of Violence*, RAND Corporation, 2014, pp. 47-56. Al-Sharif, Osama. "Jordan softening stand on Syrian regime." *The Middle East Institute*, 15.04.2018. Kreidie, Lina Haddad & Jesse Marks. "Jordan's Interest in a Stable Syria." *The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 23.08.2018.

while preserving its interests. In addition to the destabilizing effects of Syrian civil war, other factors also contributed to Jordan's foreign policy concerns in this period: regional instability due to Arab uprisings, destabilization of Jordan's neighbors by the war, expansion of ISIS, attacks of Al-Qaeda, and Jordan's already fragile economy exacerbated by the external energy dependence, and changing foreign policy approaches by the great powers were some of those factors.

First stage for Jordan-Syria relationship during the conflict was defined by external security concerns, culminating into Jordan's closing off Syrian border in 2015 and incrementally severing diplomatic ties¹². Second stage, however, was reconciliatory towards al-Assad regime, the main focus being the alleviation of economic issues caused by the conflict itself, the refugees and the pandemic¹³. The US' hesitancy towards military involvement in the crisis contrasted with Russia's willingness to penetrate into the region, and Chinese financial support for development. These factors shifted Jordanian perspective to a "pragmatic" rapprochement towards al-Assad¹⁴ in the second half of the long civil war. The Tripartite Ceasefire of 2017 and its outcomes mark a significant turning point between these stages¹⁵. This paper analyzes the evolution of Jordanian policy over the course of the Syrian civil war, focusing on the issue areas of terrorism, regional alliances, great powers, refugees, and relations with al-Assad regime.

Issue Areas

Terrorism

ISIS took advantage of the instability in Iraq and Syria, and grew to

12 Al-Sharif, *ibid.*

13 Kreidie & Marks, *ibid.* Morris, Julia. "The politics of return from Jordan to Syria." *Forced Migration Review*; Oxford Iss. 62, (Oct 2019): 31-34. Kilani, *ibid.*

14 Eyadat, Zaid & Moh'd Khair Eiedat. "Strategic Report." *Center for Strategic Studies*, May 2021.

15 "United States, Russia, and Jordan Sign Limited Ceasefire for Syria." *The American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 111, No. 4 (October 2017), pp. 1053-1056.

hold control of territory from western Iraq to eastern Syria. First aligning itself with al-Qaeda, it then grew to be a threat to al-Qaeda's perceived hegemony as the leading Islamic extremist group in the region¹⁶. The territorial expansion alarmed Jordan as ISIS approached its borders, with Syrian government unable to curb the advancement of terrorists, Jordan closed off its Syrian border in 2015 as a means of preventing the possible flow of militants into the country.

Concerned by ISIS' rapid expansion, Global Coalition to Counter ISIS was founded under US leadership and Jordan was a key ally, enjoying financial and military support from the US as it extended its efforts and human resources to combat this extra-state security threat¹⁷. While the first strategy was to recruit and organize regional combatants and provide arms for them, this has proven itself to be inflammatory concerning the larger conflict in the region over the years¹⁸. Although the military operations played a big part in suppressing the evolution of ISIS into a state-like entity, the activity of the group had not ceased but turned towards isolated terrorist attacks abroad, which was the trend observed also for al-Qaeda¹⁹. The danger terrorism poses against Jordanian security remains, as the radicalization of youth in poverty, both Syrian and Jordanian, is a point of concern for the country, for it overstretched its resources for the duration of the Syrian Conflict.

16 Glenn, Cameron et. al. "Timeline: the Rise, Spread, and Fall of the Islamic State." *The Wilson Center*, 28.10.2019.

17 "Joint Statement Issued by Partners at the Counter-ISIL Coalition Ministerial Meeting." 03.12.2022. "JORDAN: A KEY US PARTNER." *House Hearing, 114 Congress*, 11.02.2022.

18 Borger, Julian & Nick Hopkins. "West training Syrian rebels in Jordan." *The Guardian*, 08.03.2013. Al-Sharif, Osama. "Is Jordan ready to normalize ties with Syria?." *Al-Monitor*, 24.09.2018.

19 "Recent terrorist activities and their strategic repercussions." *University of Jordan Center for Strategic Studies*, December 2015.

Regional Alliances

Although there are various major actors in the Middle East, it is not sustainable for any single country to assume the position of a hegemony, which makes the strategic partnerships in the region even more important.

In a constant game of power-balancing, the politics is even more precarious due to the fact that the Arab uprisings destabilized the established regimes, the US is not as involved as before in the region, the rise and fall of ISIS further complicated the political landscape, and the international relations in the region have been heavily influenced by personality of leaders, identity, and history.

One facet of the competing interest in the region is the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, in which Jordan has an important stake, namely the ruling Hashemite Dynasty historically being the custodians of holy sites in Jerusalem. In comparison to Jordan's moderate foreign policy towards Israel, some Gulf states have shown a hostile stance, stemming from identity conflict. Jordan assumes the role of mediator in integrating Israel into regional political scene, which is also seen in Jordanian approach to Syrian regime²⁰.

The Arab League suspended Syria's membership in 2011, with near-unanimous vote. However, since Russian intervention in favor of Syrian regime changed the tide of the conflict and resulted in concrete milestones proving al-Assad regime's endurance from 2018, most of the League members started normalizing relations with the regime, as Jordan did²¹. Currently, Syria's return to the Arab League is being negotiated, yet a clear timeline is not reached²².

20. Eyadat, Zaid & Moh'd Khair Eiedat, *ibid*.

21. Al-Sharif, Osama. "Jordan ruler's Moscow visit raises hopes of an end to Syrian crisis." Arab News, 24.08.2021.

22. Al-Sharif, Osama. "Jordan softening stand on Syrian regime."

Developments in the Levant region brings a modest, yet promising vision to the table, as the tripartite agreement between Jordan, Iraq and Egypt carry the potential to solve the enduring energy problem of and to provide a new avenue for economic growth for Jordan. The plan also has the room for involving other states, especially Syria, provided that their situation stabilizes. While the economic implications are great, the alignment provides political leverage for all parties involved, with Jordanian steps backed by the US as the region tries to find a new equilibrium²³.

Relations with Great Powers

Jordanian stance over the course of Syrian Crisis was undoubtedly affected by the maneuvers of the great powers, such as the US, Russia, and China. Jordan has been, historically, an ally to the US and the western bloc²⁴. However, despite the financial support and foreign policy concessions, for instance exemption from the Ceasar Act, the US refusal to deploy ground forces against al-Assad regime even after the Syrian leader passed the supposed the US red-line, usage of chemical weaponry, disappointed Jordan which shifted towards a balancing strategy in engagement with Russia²⁵. The US involvement in the area was limited to counter-ISIS efforts, airstrikes, and containment efforts against Russian and Turkish intervention in Syria, a reflection of foreign policy goals of Obama, Trump and Biden administrations. Still, Jordan-US relations are far from instable, as the Tripartite Ceasefire of 2017 and 2021 defense agreement demonstrate the alignment of interests²⁶.

23. Eyadat, Zaid et al. "The 'New Levant': Rationales, Implications and Future Trajectories of the Cooperation between Jordan, Iraq and Egypt." University of Jordan Center for Strategic Studies, December 2021.

24. Eyadat, Zaid & Moh'd Khair Eiedat, *ibid*.

25. Kaplow, Larry. "History Of US Responses To Chemical Weapons Attacks In Syria." National Public Radio, 13.04.2018. "Can Jordan Ease Caesar Act Sanctions?". The Syrian Observer (Translated from Enab Baladi), 10.08.2021. "Jordan Top Diplomat Discusses Caesar Act Exemptions in Washington." The Syrian Observer (Translated from Al-Watan), 17.01.2022. "Lebanon: US Ensures Egypt, Jordan are Exempted from Caesar Act on Gas Deal." Asharq Al-Awsat, 02.08.2022.

26. Eyadat, Zaid & Moh'd Khair Eiedat, *ibid*.

The opposite of the US trend is seen in Russia's growing interventionism. Russia's obvious support for al-Assad regime, evidenced by its willingness to get involved in the battlefield, has given President al-Assad enough leverage to ensure the survival of his rule, which was received favorably by Jordan in 2015. Jordan's stance on Russian intervention was influenced by the belief that Russia had the means to drive the conflict towards a political settlement. Another positive development for Jordan has been the Russian promise to keep militants away from Jordanian territory²⁷. Jordan's reconciliatory and self-preserving attitude was exemplified in the Tripartite Ceasefire between the US, Russia, and Jordan, as it established a de-escalation zone in Jordan-Syria border, which was believed to provide a precedent for other conflict zones in Syria at the time, and opened the path for easing the burden of refugee flow into Jordan and for rapprochement between Jordan and Syria²⁸.

Another case of increasing interventionism by great powers is Chinese influence in the region. As China made reliable promises of investment to Jordan, which was refreshing for Jordan's ailing economy due to recent developments, made even more appealing with the pledge of non-interference²⁹. However, this does not constitute enough basis to suggest a realignment with great powers for Jordan, but only a balanced approach to maximize Jordan's gains.

Refugees

The burden of refugees has been tremendous on Jordan despite the international support. At first, the approach was to find short-term solutions, however, this paradigm has gone under a shift with Jordan

27. Al-Sharif, Osama. "Jordan ruler's Moscow visit raises hopes of an end to Syrian crisis."

28. "United States, Russia, and Jordan Sign Limited Ceasefire for Syria." Al-Sharif, Osama. "Jordan softening stand on Syrian regime." Kuttub, Daoud. "Defiant Jordan keeps border closed to Syrian refugees." *Arab News*, 04.07.2018.

29. "China is Relentless as the US Retreats From the Mideast." *Middle East Media and Policy Studies Institute*, 05.07.2022. Kreidie & Marks, *ibid*. Eyadat, Zaid & Moh'd Khair Eiedat, *ibid*.

Response Plans 2015 and 2016-2018 towards a focus on long-term integration as the conflict extended³⁰. The conditions of refugees and host communities further deteriorated because of the COVID-19 pandemic as the global and domestic economy took an unexpected hit. UNHCR, which closely cooperated with the government of Jordan over the course of the Syrian crisis, reported in July 2022 that although the current environment is not conducive for refugees to return to their home country, there is overwhelmingly positive response for the prospect to do so in the future³¹. The report also detailed that despite the remarkable standards the Jordanian Government provided, the refugees' conditions continued to deteriorate, which suggests that the situation is not sustainable, another reason for Jordan to find a diplomatic solution to the conflict as soon as possible.

The infrastructure issues were underlined in government reports since 2015, as the necessary services such as health and education, overstretched to meet the needs of an unanticipated yet massive increase in population, which was aggravated by deficit in funding, especially from external sources. Furthermore, reallocation of government funding caused Jordan to fall short of macroeconomic growth goals, creating a vicious cycle. This strain reflected on the Jordanian population, especially in host communities, which house more than 80% of the refugees, slowly generating public dissent that negates the government efforts for integration of refugees³². Prevention of poverty and resentment is particularly important for Jordan in these communities, as these conditions would facilitate radicalization, therefore proliferation of sympathy for terrorist groups such as ISIS and al-Qaeda, in addition to singular cases of intra- and inter-community

30. "Jordan Response Plan for the Syria Crisis 2016-2018." *The Government of Jordan (Appeal)*, 14.01.2016. "The Jordan Compact: A New Holistic Approach between the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the International Community to deal with the Syrian Refugee Crisis." *The Government of Jordan (Press Release)*, 07.02.2016.

31. "Jordan: As vast Za'atari refugee camp turns 10, Syrians face uncertain future." UN News, 29.07.2022. Kreidie & Marks, *ibid*.

32. Morris, *ibid*. "Jordan Response Plan for the Syria Crisis 2016-2018."

violence, both putting the domestic security of Jordan in jeopardy³³.

There have also been positive developments vis a vis refugees over the years as the Jordanian Government spared no effort for the humanitarian cause. The programs to educate and match refugees' skillsets, and ensuring the rebuilding of Syria after the end of the conflict, combined with efforts to provide business opportunities in refugee camps prevented further deterioration³⁴. Jordan also prioritized the integration of refugee children in formal education, as it carries great implications for the future of Jordan and Syria, with the added advantage of pre-emptively fighting youth radicalization³⁵. Besides the domestic programs in cooperation with international agencies, Jordan took an important role in diplomatic approach to Syria in terms of providing cross-border humanitarian aid, as it benefits Jordan by lessening the burden on domestic institutions thanks to the services offered in Syrian territory³⁶. Still, the threat of Jordanian public opinion turning sour remains as more and more citizens think the refugees have overstayed their welcome. Jordanian rapprochement to Syrian regime is incentivized by this to some degree, as a harmonious ending to the conflict, be it al-Assad's consolidation, and stabilization in Syria would signal the refugees' return³⁷.

Relations with Al-Assad Regime

While the influx of refugees is a cause of concern for Jordan, the military nature of the conflict have implications on Jordanian security as well. The first response by Jordan was to take a stance against al-Assad regime, but

33. Young, et al. *ibid.*

34. "The Jordan Compact: A New Holistic Approach between the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the International Community to deal with the Syrian Refugee Crisis." "Jordan: As vast Za'atari refugee camp turns 10, Syrians face uncertain future."

35. Ruisi, Francesca. "Challenges Faced by Syrian Refugees in the Higher Education Systems of Host Countries and How to Overcome Them. Lessons Learned from Jordan." EuroMeSCo Policy Brief, No. 92, 25.02.2019.

36. Kuttab, *ibid.*

37. Kreidie & Marks, *ibid.*

the consolidation of al-Assad's power changed the course of this strategy as Jordanian government took a "pragmatic" approach³⁸. Spillover of the conflict was the main concern in the first few years of the Syrian Conflict as Jordan and its allies made contingency plans for the case of al-Assad regime falling, a fear exacerbated by the territorial expansion of ISIS³⁹. This concern, while remaining, left its primary position to economic and political ones as Jordan started to prioritize a vision of stability in Syria rooted in the domestic repercussions of the Syrian Conflict⁴⁰.

The first stage of foreign policy strategy was marked with concerns over the survivability of the al-Assad regime. In 2013, Jordan, alongside its western allies, was rumored to train non-Islamist rebels in order to ensure that if al-Assad regime were to fall, the power vacuum would not be filled by extremists while supplying weapons to rebels⁴¹. The following two years also saw strict measures taken by Jordan, as it couldn't rely on Syria to prevent illegal activities such as drug-smuggling, or the entrance of militants and arms into the country in the border zone, which included closing of the border in 2015. While it was perceived as an absolute necessity for Jordan's security, this severance of ties has had adverse consequences on Jordan's economy as the trade and tourism halted between the two countries⁴². Another issue was the aggravation of water scarcity in Jordan, as the refugees increased the need dramatically while Syria continued to violate bilateral agreements of water-sharing from the Yarmouk River⁴³. Despite the expulsion of Syrian ambassador in 2014, the embassy in Jordan stayed open, suggesting a receptive attitude towards settlement

38. Kilani. "Jordan's Diplomacy in Syria, Part 1 & 2."

39. Borger & Hopkins, *ibid.* Young, et al. *ibid.*

40. Al-Sharif, Osama. "Jordan ruler's Moscow visit raises hopes of an end to Syrian crisis."

41. Borger & Hopkins, *ibid.*

42. Haid, *ibid.*

43. "Yarmouk River: Tensions and cooperation between Syria and Jordan." <https://climate-diplomacy.org/>. Haid, *ibid.*

via diplomatic channels⁴⁴.

The second stage witnessed rebuilding the relationship between two countries. Normalization process came after Syrian regimes' reclaim over territory in eastern and southern Damascus in first half of 2018, as Jordan sought coordination over border security and trade with the first Jordanian business delegation arriving to Damascus in five years, while showing open support for Syria's return to the Arab League⁴⁵. Jordan's pursuit for stability was also observed in its pressure on rebels in southern Syria to seek settlement with al-Assad regime⁴⁶. October 15 of the same year provided a clear demarcation of foreign policy as the border closed in 2015 was reopened. Jordanian efforts for reconciliation only intensified since then, exemplified by the parliamentary delegation at the end of 2018, King Abdullah II's insistence on a diplomatic solution in his talks with Moscow, on an exemption from the Caesar Act by the US and his phone call with al-Assad in 2021⁴⁷. Al-Assad regime had a favorable reaction underlined by the release of a Jordanian detainee in 2018, however, the regime has not been totally cooperative, for instance on the issue of waterflow from the Yarmouk River⁴⁸.

This rapprochement process is in line with the global trend, evidenced by the Joint Statement on Syria of August 31 in 2022. Jordan, like most countries, seeks a peaceful and swift resolution to the Syrian Crisis, however, the calls for Syrian regime for an attitude change remains unanswered, as al-Assad has not made radical political concessions which would propagate a secure atmosphere for refugee return⁴⁹. Nevertheless,

44. Al-Sharif, Osama. "Jordan maintains Syrian ties despite envoy's expulsion." Al-Monitor, 29.05.2014.

45. Al-Sharif, Osama. "Jordan, Syria make headway in resuming normal ties." Al-Monitor, 04.12.2018.

46. Kreidie & Marks, *ibid*.

47. Al-Sharif, Osama. "Jordan, Syria make headway in resuming normal ties." Al-Jounaidi, Laith. "Jordan king receives 1st call from Syria's Assad since 2011." Anadolu Agency, 03.10.2021.

48. Al-Sharif, Osama. "Jordan, Syria make headway in resuming normal ties." Haid, *ibid*.

49. Al-Sharif, Osama. "Jordan ruler's Moscow visit raises hopes of an end to Syrian crisis." "Joint Statement on Syria."

Jordanian policy on the crisis has proven itself to be flexible as the country was quick to adapt to the changes since the break out in 2011, and pursued a balancing act while bridging the gap between multiple actors without sacrificing its utmost interest, the stabilization of the region.

Conclusion

Jordan, conscious of its position in the region, took careful foreign policy steps since the break-out of the Syrian crisis in 2011. First taking a stance against Syria as the situation was assessed to lead to fall of al-Assad regime, preparing for such an outcome in coordination with western coalition, Jordan prioritized the security of itself and its borders. This need for security was aggravated due to ISIS expansion. The Russian intervention in favor of al-Assad in 2015 changed the course of events and the perception of the Syrian crisis, and Jordan shifted its stance to pursue a moderate path towards reconciliation with Syrian regime. This shift was also affected by the burden of refugees weighing on Jordanian economy and infrastructure, as the Crisis reached the fifth year mark. It is clear that the conflict has gone on for longer than expected by all parties and Jordanian government and public had to bear the costs related to refugees. Due to the negative effect of COVID-19 pandemic on global and Jordanian economy, the focus of foreign policy turned even further towards economic interests, accelerating the efforts to achieve regional and global cooperation. The current international attitude towards Syria is a call for diplomatic settlement, and Jordan was ahead of the trend due to its proximity to and balanced assessment of evolution of the crisis. Jordanian approach is pragmatic. One could conclude that Jordan has balanced various actors and its own interests quite successfully during the Syrian crisis and is ready to normalize relations with Syria and find a peaceful solution for Syrian refugees' safe return.

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 28. "Lebanon: US Ensures Egypt, Jordan are Exempted from Caesar Act on Gas Deal." *Asharq Al-Awsat*, 02.08.2022.
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 31. "United States, Russia, and Jordan Sign Limited Ceasefire for Syria." *The American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 111, No. 4 (October 2017), pp. 1053-1056.
 32. "Yarmouk River: Tensions and cooperation between Syria and Jordan." <https://climate-diplomacy.org/>.
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Jordan's Approach to Syria – Interests and Policy Options

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The Jordanian Approach Towards Syria – Interests and Policy Options
Terrorism, Organized Crime and Geopolitical Threats at the Northern
Borders of Jordan

Terrorism, Organized Crime and Geopolitical Threats

Cross-Border Terrorism

There is a strong correlation between organized crime, global terrorism, global smuggling operations – particularly of drugs- , the arms trade and smuggling and human trafficking on the one hand, and geopolitical threats that emerge in armed conflicts on the other. Numerous reliable global quantitative indicators exist which corroborate this dangerous fact.

Armed conflict remains the primary driver of terrorism, as more than 90% of deaths resulting from terrorism in 2021 were in countries embroiled in armed conflict. The ten countries most susceptible to terrorism in the past decade all had at least one armed conflict, and most of these countries were in the Arab world. Syria ranked second in the Arab world after Iraq, and was fifth at the global level according to the 2022 Global Terrorism Index (GTI), issued by the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) in Sydney.

The terrorism threat has diminished at the northern Jordanian borders, yet this threat isn't over. Therefore, this threat at the northern borders remains one of the most significant determinants of Jordanian foreign policy with its neighbor Syria, since terrorism is the most prominent of geopolitical threats to Jordan, especially in light of the ongoing armed conflict and failure of the state in Syria.

Following the elimination of Daesh in Syria subsequent to the collapse of the organization's last stronghold - in the battle of Baghuz in Syria in March 2019 -, Daesh's propaganda became more active and particularly on social media. This became a dangerous source of inspiration that motivates recruitment and calls upon supporters to execute terrorism operations in Jordan. In recent years, the outcome of this was sleeper cells or "lone wolf" operations, most of which have been foiled by the General Intelligence Directorate.

Accordingly, there remained -on average- two terrorist operations annually in Jordan up till 2021, according to the "index on terrorism in Jordan" issued by the Shorufat Center for Globalization and Terrorism Studies (SCGTS).

Smuggling

The nature of smuggling activities changed fundamentally in the past decade. During the 1990s, smuggling along the Jordanian-Syrian border of 375 km was limited to the smuggling of livestock, foodstuffs, cigarettes and arms. Today, smuggling is focused on various drugs (such as hashish, captagon pills (i.e. fenethylline), crystal meth and others). This expansion resulting from drug smuggling activities - which spread from Syria, that was torn by the war, to neighbouring countries - is usually called the "Captagon war".

Despite the rapprochement that took place between Jordan and the Syrian regime, Jordanian authorities have noted an extreme increase in drug smuggling activities to Jordan throughout 2022. This has posed a significant challenge to Jordanian security forces, namely, securing the borders to stop the flow of drugs to the region and Europe. This is taking place at a time when these forces are facing ongoing cross-border attacks by Iran-backed militias.

Today, Syria is considered the global capital of captagon drugs; armed groups opposing the state in Syria were the first to utilize the captagon trade as a major source of funding during their war against the Syrian regime. Since then, the regime and its major regional allies such as Iran and Hezbollah, have been able to control territory and consolidate their role as primary beneficiaries in the drug trade. Today, Syria has become a global focal point for the production and exportation of hashish and captagon pills to various destinations such as Turkey, the Arab Gulf and Europe. In 2020, Syrian exports of captagon had a market value of no less than 3.46 million USD.

Numerous sources point out to the involvement of notable figures of the Syrian regime and Hezbollah militias in the drug trade and their success in promoting this trade at the regional level. A number of Jordanian security officials have affirmed that undisciplined forces from the Syrian regime's military have been cooperating with drug smugglers across the border.

The Jordanian Approach

The Jordanian approach relies on a longstanding historical geopolitical heritage that goes back to the post-Great Arab Revolt phase and the period after the brief Hashemite rule of Syria. This rule represented the first Arab government of Syria, namely the government of King Faisal the First. Jordan was a part of this government under the name of the Syrian Arab Kingdom that was announced on March 8, 1920. It was eliminated approximately four months later on July 24, 1920 by the French and British pursuant to the Sykes-Picot Agreement and the beginning of the mandate upon Jordan and Syria as is known.

Without delving into extensive historical detail, I can briefly state that the general trend in the relations between the two countries throughout the past century has been characterized by a constant tension albeit with

several very short calm periods. The 1960s was known in the literature of international relations in the Middle East as the “Arab Cold War”.

Through an accumulation of experiences –many of which were painful and dangerous- Jordan was able to devise a holistic approach that combines between hard approaches (represented in changing the rules of engagement at the borders) and soft approaches which characterized the Jordanian “moderate policy” that was built with considerable patience and wisdom by the late King Hussein bin Talal. King Abdullah II bin Al-Hussein continued with this policy. I think it is easy to follow this approach today, via the conduct of the state and government in Jordan.

Regarding the soft dimension, officially, throughout previous decades, Jordan maintained a diplomacy of self-control and non-escalation with Syria. This was practiced while respecting Syria’s political stances as well at many historic milestones, despite Syria’s military interference in Jordan on more than one occasion and its sponsorship of terrorist groups from the 1950s to the 1990s.

Following the 2011 outbreak of war in Syria, Jordan received Syrian refugees at the official and popular levels. The Jordanian armed forces were seen receiving families of refugees, along with children, the elderly and those with special needs, assisting them in entering Jordanian territory.

Officially, Jordan has continued to call for a political solution to the ongoing crisis in Syria. In the middle of 2021, Jordan attempted to break Syria’s isolation, particularly after the visit of King Abdullah to the USA and being the first Arab leader to meet with President Biden in July 2021. Syria was at the top of the king’s agenda. This was followed by phone calls between the king and President Asad, and meetings between high-ranking officials in the ministries of foreign affairs and defence from both sides. The topics of terrorism and smuggling in particular were discussed. This was followed by a complete re-opening of the borders in September 2021 after they were closed in 2015.

However, despite all the Jordanian diplomatic efforts exerted, the conduct of the regime and its allies towards Jordan hasn't changed. Jordan's security concerns have not been respected, and there are geopolitical risks resulting from the negativity of the Syrian regime's conduct and lack of control over its borders. Accordingly, the threat of terrorism remains, and the frequency of arms and drug smuggling has increased considerably, thus posing a danger to national security and the structure of Jordanian society.

This has resulted in increased financial costs on the state's budget and a moral burden shouldered by the armed forces and security apparatuses. Additionally, all this threatens relations with neighboring countries such as Saudi Arabia, along with other countries in the Arab Gulf, and Israel.

Unpacking Jordan's Security Challenges, Exploring its Options

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In the past half-a-century, Syria and Jordan have broken and then mended their bilateral ties several times. The two neighbors' ability to reverse their policy towards one another has been remarkable. At times, they were friends, even allies, while other periods fierce foes. In summer 2021, when King Abdullah II of Jordan stated on CNN that Assad was there to stay, he was initiating yet another reversal in the relations of the two neighbors. In effect, Jordan was cracking Syria's wall of isolation open some ten years after its King became one of the first world leaders to call for President Assad's departure. More than a year ahead, this rapprochement has remained limited without turning into normalization.

Since 2021, there have been some improvements in bilateral relations most notably in the economic domain. Although economic relations are nowhere near the pre-2011 levels, statistics, and empirical evidence especially from northern Jordan indicate that the situation has improved since the rapprochement in 2021. However, the challenges, especially security challenges, dwarf the achievements and – perhaps more worryingly – they are beyond Jordan's ability to solve them alone. In this working paper, I will attempt to unpack these security challenges, explain why they worry Jordan and what has the kingdom done to mitigate these challenges. I will conclude with a brief remark on Jordan's policy options.

Security Challenges of Jordan's Northern Border

In the past decade, the war in Syria has transformed the country's borders with its neighbors, including the Syrian-Jordanian border. This line no longer separates two sovereign states; rather, it has become a frontier between the Syrian regime and two of its allies, Iran and Hezbollah, on one

hand, and Jordan, Israel and the Arabian Gulf, on the other. Thus, contentious issues like drugs smuggling, militarization and internationalization of Syria's southern border are matters that are inherently connected to Syria-Jordan border but effectively transcend the two countries to become regional concerns needing regional solutions. The implications of this new situation on Jordan's security are many.

□ **Neighboring Iran, not only Syria:** The post-conflict reality in southern Syria means that Jordan does not only neighbor the regime, but it also neighbors all the foreign forces that are there, notably Iran, Russia, and Hezbollah. In 2018, as the regime with the support of Russia geared to recapture Dar'a and Quneitra from the opposition, Israel and Jordan backed off. There was a deal and Iran was at its core. The regime was to return though without Iran, while Russia was to guarantee that. That was an Israeli demand that aligned with Jordanian and U.S. interests. Although solid information is hard to come by, Iran seems to have refrained from building offensive capabilities in the south (an Israeli red line). Nevertheless, it has been expanding its influence through different ways. Jordan does not hide its displeasure with growing Iranian influence in southern Syria. Reports of Iran trying to penetrate society in the Hawran Plain and its Hills (including Dar'a and Suwayda), nurturing networks that facilitate the movement of illicit goods most notably drugs and weapons, shiification, all threaten Jordanian security. Iran's growing activities in southern Syria resemble great danger to Jordan's national security.

□ **Southern Syria, a Powder keg:** After the regime's return to south Syria, Jordan finds itself ever more concerned with Israel-Iran confrontation on its doorsteps. If before 2011, the nearest Israeli-Iranian frontline was southern Lebanon and to a lesser degree in Gaza, today, the possibility that southern Syria could be added

to that list is real and worrying for Amman. For now, a major escalation between Israel, on one hand, Iran and Hezbollah, on the other, does not seem to be imminent. But were Iran to change its policy, and become more assertive and aggressive, or if Israel was more preemptive, southern Syria – which happens to be Jordan's northern border – could become a site for a major confrontation.

- ❑ **More Regional than local:** A trip to northern Jordan is enough to understand the extent of the drug problem in the country. It is a common topic among locals, ordinary people can list various types of drugs, their availability and price, government policing has become heavier, and there are occasional violent confrontations with smugglers on the border. Jordan has become a target. Nevertheless, the greatest problem is not the drug business per se, rather, its weaponization and regionalization. In other words, the drug trade does not target Jordan alone, which is not even the main market. The sized shipments suggest that Arab Gulf and Europe are the biggest markets. Also, drugs production and shipment have become a crucial source of hard currency to heavily sanctioned Syria and Iran. Therefore, any solution to this matter needs a regional approach and it is beyond Jordan's and Syria's, sovereign decision.

Jordanian Attempts to Face the Security Challenges

In 2017-2018, Jordan gradually decreased its support to Assad's opponents in the south. That was a major step in Jordan's Syria policy de-tour. Since 2018, as the Syrian regime with Russia's help attempted to consolidate its power in the south, and as Assad was not going anywhere, the Hashemite kingdom geared to face the challenges stemming from the transformation of the political, economic, and most importantly security landscape of its northern border. Towards that end, Jordan adopted several approaches.

□ **Rapprochement with Syria:** Keeping the status quo in Syria was not favorable for Jordan. Thus, after King Abdullah secured a U.S. green light from the new Administration of President Biden in 2021, Jordan started a process of re-engagement with Syria. Official visits, phone calls, adjustments in the border policies (including full opening of the Nassib-Jaber crossing), all were small steps towards closer Syria-Jordan relations. Arguably, Amman was not naïve about the unsurmountable challenges on its northern borders. But engagement seemed a better alternative than endorsing the western-led policy of isolating Assad. Jordan was directly on the line of fire while those who sought to isolate Syria were far away.

Whether rapprochement paid off or not is the subject of a lengthy debate. What can be said with some certainty is that there are some concrete gains on the economic level, next to none on the security level, while other matters, like water sharing issue, is still a work in progress without any results. On the *economic level*, not only cross-border trade volume has increased after the full reopening of the border in 2021, but the trade balance has also shifted to Jordan's favor, which hints to the fact that Jordan may be benefiting from Syria's sanctions. Moreover, trade has contributed to the socio-economic stabilization of Jordan's northern border area where border related trade is one of the pillars of the local economy.

On the *security level*, reengagement has not paid off. Despite high level communication on security, military and political levels, the main security challenges – foreign presence in southern Syria, drug and weapons smuggling to or via Jordan – have continued to threaten Jordan. Some even argue that the situation has gotten worse than what it was in 2021. As for water, there have been discussions with the Syrian side thought have not yet yielded tangible results. Unlike the security matters, which needs multilateral solution, water is an

issue that concerns Syria and Jordan, and any agreement in Damascus and Amman could solve the issue. In short, rapprochement has had mixed results with gains only on the economic front.

□ **Reliance on Third Parties, Russia, U.S, and others:** as mentioned above, after 2018, Russia became strongly present in southern Syria in the form of a guarantor, guaranteeing that Iran does not expand militarily in territories re-captured by the regime. Jordan accepted Russia's presence in Syria and in the south. The King never failed to mention Russia's importance in Syria and build good diplomatic relations with Moscow. However, Russia's actual ability in deterring Iran from expanding in the south has been up for debate, which cannot be elaborated here for shortness of space. What can be said, however, is that Russia's involvement in Ukraine has weakened its influence in many of its zones of influence around the world (such as Central Asia and the Caucasus) and Syria is no exception. Thus, from Jordan's perspective, Russia's presence in the south not only had partial success since 2018, but there is also the danger of even smaller Russian role – and more emboldened Iran – due to the Ukraine conflict.

The U.S., Jordan's traditional ally, has also helped Jordan shore up its defenses on the border with Syria and through its presence in al-Tanf base and the so-called "Area 55km" on the meeting point of Jordan and Iraq borders with Syria. Reportedly, the role of the Gulf countries, which are supposedly concerned with the Syrian-Jordanian border, has not met Jordan's expectations.

□ **Mobilizing Regional Powers to 'Solve the Syrian Conflict':**

Since 2021, Jordan has been actively advocating for a greater Arab role in Syria's conflict. Jordan embraced the Arab opening to Damascus in 2021 and supported Syria's return to the Arab League along with other key players like Algeria and the UAE. At its core, the rationale of this effort has been to create an Arab counterweight to Iranian and Turkish intrusion to Syria, which potentially could help mitigate some of the challenges that Jordan faces on its northern border by pulling Assad back to the so-called Arab fold and check Iran's growing influence. Thus far, however, these efforts have not succeeded.

□ **A Toughening War Within:** Jordan's problems don't only come from Syria's side of the border. Any smuggling network in Syria necessarily needs some degree of cooperation on the Jordanian side to sneak in drugs or weapons, especially in large quantities. There are many suspects ranging from the *Bahhara* (petty traders that frequent the Syrian-Jordanian border) to Bedouins in the east who've long been involved in smuggling activities, as well as corrupt border guards. Jordan has increased policing, security and crackdown on groups involved in smuggling. Such efforts, albeit necessary, they also have limits. It is a question to what extent the kingdom can escalate its war within, against these localized actors on the backdrop of bad socio-economic conditions and increasing resentment against the ruling elite.

Looking Forward:

Jordan's options are limited. When it comes to bilateral matters, not everything falls under two neighbor's sway given their heavy dependency on foreign actors. Nevertheless, the increase in economic exchange show that the sides do have a margin of maneuver, which could be extended to other domains such as water sharing. Major security issues, on the contrary, remain hostage to regional power politics. To that end, Jordan has several options though none promise to bring satisfactory results. Those include hard security measures on the Syrian-Jordanian border preferably in cooperation and coordination with allies along with tougher policing inside Jordan. Beyond that, Jordan seems to have little choice but to continue advocating for a stronger Arab counterweight to Iran while considering opening channels with Tehran, which is an influential player in the region and will likely remain so for the foreseeable future.

Economic Relation Between Jordan and Syria

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Introduction:

The Syrian crisis imposed fundamental challenges on Jordan from several aspects, security and economy were the most prominent. The economic losses incurred by Jordan as a result of the closure of the border crossings, and the decrease in the rates of intra-regional trade, made Jordan, like other neighboring countries of Syria, faced with the difficult choice of reconciling its security and economic requirements. At first, Jordan followed the open door policy to Syrian refugees, but with the exacerbation of the Syrian crisis, Jordan closed its borders completely in 2015, after those borders began to threaten Jordan's security and stability. The past few years have witnessed a change in the Jordanian-Syrian economic relations as a result of the political conditions that Syria has experienced. This has greatly increased the limitations of the economy in both Jordan and Lebanon as a result of the closure of the border crossings between Syria and Jordan. This paper will address the dimensions of the Syrian crisis and the closure of Jaber Crossing with Syria on Jordanian-Syrian trade relations, and the impact of the Syrian crisis on the Syrian and Jordanian economy in general, in addition to the impact of the closure of Jaber Crossing on agricultural commodities and commodities exported to Lebanon.

Trade Agreements Between Jordan and Syria

1. The commercial agreement signed in 1975 included these important following points:
 - Requiring Syrian public sector institutions to import Jordanian-origin materials and products, at least two million Jordanian dinars annually, taking into account the customs exemptions enjoyed by the products of the two countries.
 - Allowing the import of all agricultural and animal products, natural resources and industrial products of Jordanian or Syrian origin into the two countries and canceling the exemption from import ban provisions from all administrative and monetary restrictions and other restrictions.
 - Exemption of agricultural and animal products, natural resources and industrial products exchanged between the two countries from customs duties and other taxes and from import licenses.
 - It is not permissible to re-export the exchanged products without the approval of the exporting country.
 - Forming a customs committee to undertake the inventory of raw materials imported and included in similar local industries in both countries, in order to unify customs duties and other fees and taxes imposed on them.
 - Allowing the creation of reciprocal commercial centers between the two parties.
 - Forming a permanent joint committee to follow up on the implementation and development of the agreement and the economic relations between the two countries.

2. The Commercial Protocol of 1999, which included these important following points:
 - Applying full customs exemption to two groups of Syrian-Jordanian goods.
 - Applying the gradual exemption contained in the provisions of the Greater Arab Free Trade Zone to the rest of the commodities, except for some commodities that are excluded from this exemption.
 - The protocol was suspended after the signing of the free trade zone agreement between the two countries.
3. Agreement to establish a free trade zone between the two countries. The agreement was signed on 10/8/2001 and entered into force on 23/5/2002. The agreement provides for the liberalization of trade exchange between the two countries and the exemption of national goods and products exchanged directly between them from customs duties and other fees and taxes of similar effect. Where the agreement stipulated the cancellation of fees on 99% of the goods and merchandise covered by trade between the two countries, with the exception of some articles due in the agreement, where they will be reduced gradually by 60% starting from the date of commencement of the agreement.

The Syrian Economy Before the Crisis

- The Syrian economy was heading towards maximizing its economic, cultural, and even political and social growth, as Syria was classified at the time as one of the safest countries, as it was moving confidently towards achieving comprehensive development in its various sectors, especially the economy, before the start of the Syrian crisis and the transition of the events.
- Within the plans of the Syrian government in the field of health care to provide free health care to all Syrian citizens, as a health center has been allocated for every 10,000 people in the countryside and health centers for every 20,000 people in the city, while the pharmaceutical industry has flourished to cover the needs of the local market by nearly 90%. In addition to the export of Syrian pharmaceutical products to more than 54 countries around the world, which in 2010 was guarantor not only to cover the local need, but also to export the surplus to Lebanon. It would supplement the gross domestic product and contribute to the creation of new job opportunities and the advancement of the Syrian economy, as the Syrian oil sector ranked 27th in the world in terms of oil production.
- Unemployment levels decreased during the pre-crisis years, reaching the limits of 8.4%, as Aleppo governorate was considered the strongest governorate in employing manpower by 94%, before terrorist acts destroyed 113 thousand industrial facilities, including 35,000 facilities in Aleppo.
- In the field of education, the number of schools has exceeded 21,000, while the illiteracy rate in the country has decreased to 5% from 70% in 1970, with an improvement rate of approximately 8% every five years, as it was among the government plans to reach Syria Until the stage of complete literacy in 2015, however, the revolution had a clear impact in the destruction of about 7,000 schools, as many schools were used as centers of violence.

Syria and its Foreign Trade Movement with the World Before the Crisis

The Syrian industry was able to achieve a self-sufficiency rate of food products, with which economic institutions in the public and private sectors shifted from local consumption to export, and the inter-regional agreements with neighboring countries, including the Greater Arab Free Trade Agreement, facilitated the flow of Syrian exports to those countries. Syrian exports have a great competitive advantage, especially with regard to quality and prices, thanks to the customs exemptions provided for in this agreement. The liberalization of trade and the rise in the exchange rate of the Syrian pound contributed to a clear increase in the contribution of foreign trade to the Syrian gross domestic product between 2005 and 2007, respectively, due to the rise in oil prices on the one hand and the implementation of trade liberalization on the other.

It was expected that the Syrian economy would witness great growth and openness to the global economy and that this would be reflected positively on the Syrian industry, thus increasing its competitiveness, especially after completing the liberalization of foreign trade and easing restrictions on it. However, the outbreak of the revolution in Syria stood in the way of achieving this. The following table shows the volume of Syrian foreign trade with the countries of the world during the pre-revolution years (2005-2010):

Syrian foreign trade with the world before the revolution - billion dollars		
The value of Syrian exports	The value of Syrian imp	Years
6.4.	7.9	2005
10.9	11.5	2006
11.5	14.7	2007
14.4	18.1	2008
9.7	15.4	2009
11.4	17.6	2010

Source: UN Comtrade

Data on foreign trade in Syria between 2005 and 2007 showed a development in overall exports and imports. The volume of foreign trade doubled in 2007 in comparison to what it was in 2005, the data shows that the volume of Syrian imports increased from 7.9 billion dollars in 2005 to 14.7 billion dollars in 2007 and Syrian exports increased from 6.4 billion dollars in 2005 to 11.5 billion dollars in 2007. The following table shows the most important Syrian commodities imported and exported to the world for the years before the revolution (2005-2010), as oil and agricultural crops took the lead in the following table in terms of ranking the most important Syrian commodities exported to the world:

Syrian foreign trade with the world before the revolution	
The most important imported goods	The most important commodities exported
Oil and fuel	Oil and fuel
iron and steel	Agricultural crops / vegetables and fruits
Vehicles and spare parts	cotton
Machines and mechanical devices	Clothing
plastic	textile threads

Source: UN Comtrade

Agricultural exports are one of the most important pillars of the Syrian economy and the backbone of Syrian exports. Where the area of arable land is 32% and the agricultural sector constitutes 26% of the total national income, and according to the Syrian official statistics for the year 2007, about one million workers work in the agricultural field alone. Syria is classified as one of the most important olive oil exporting countries in the world. In 2007, it ranked fourth in the world in terms of olive oil exports with the share of Syrian exports of olive oil reaching 5.3% of the total global agricultural exports of olive oil. Sheep ranked second in the ranking of Syrian agricultural exports while Syrian apples ranked third. At the Arab level, 32nd at the global level and ninth at the level of Asian countries.

The Syrian apple ranked 17th among global agricultural production, where the global production of apples amounted to 65.9 million tons in 2007. China alone produced 42.2% of the world's agricultural production. The United States produced 6.2% of the world's production, followed by Iran which produced 4%, then Turkey producing 3.7%, and the Russian Federation producing 3.5% of the world's apples.

With regard to underground resources, the total Syrian production of it, especially phosphate, for the year 2011 amounted to about 3.6 million tons, most of which were exported. It is also classified among the most important Syrian exports, unlike natural gas, whose production is estimated to be 28 million cubic meters and is consumed locally.

Syria after the Crisis

- An increase in the poverty rate to 50% and an increase in the unemployment rate to 52%, according to 2015 statistics. There's also a significant rise in the prices of primary commodities, especially in the besieged areas.
- The decrease in the Syrian budget to four billion dollars in 2016, after it was 16 billion dollars in 2010.
- The exit of oil, which was contributing between 30% to 40% of the national income.
- Destruction of the industrial areas, where Aleppo was at the forefront in terms of economic damage. It contained a large number of industrial facilities and approximately 35,000 facilities were destroyed.
- 3 Million Students left the education corps, 20,000 engineers left the country, and 780,000 people who used to work in the industry were lost.

Syria and its Foreign Trade Movement with the World after the Crisis

The current political situation in Syria has clearly affected the Syrian economy and the volume of the country's foreign trade during the period between 2011 and the beginning of 2016, when Syrian exports decreased significantly with the beginning of the Syrian revolution in 2011. The economic sanctions imposed on the Syrian regime in 2012 clearly and negatively affected Syrian exports to decline at greater rates if compared to 2011, when the contribution of exports to the gross domestic product declined, which led to the contraction of the Syrian economy. As a result of the imposition of the Arab League and the European Union on diplomatic and economic sanctions that extended Syrian officials and businessmen, in addition to economic entities, against the backdrop of political events. These sanctions caused many problems and obstacles, represented in the

rise in export costs and the rise in the prices of raw materials, which led to the fear of international companies from dealing with Syria as a result of the imposed sanctions, this led to an increase in the price of insurance on exports and Syrian imports.

Trade Relations between Jordan and Syria before the Syrian Crisis

The Syrian market is one of the main markets for Jordanian exports. The geographical proximity between the two countries gave Jordanian exports a great competitive advantage, which had a clear role in distinguishing them at the right price and high quality. Agricultural commodities such as vegetables and fruits topped the list of the most important main commodities exported to the Syrian market. The table below shows the trade balance between Jordan and Syria during the pre-Syrian crisis period (2004-2010):

trade balance	The total value of Jordanian exports	The total value of Jordanian imports	Year
-55.1	152.52	207.6	2004
-24.1	202.54	226.6	2005
17.4	268.8	251.46	2006
-56.5	307.6	364.03	2007
-97.6	246.8	344.47	2008
-73.6	232.9	306.51	2009
-119.2	256.5	375.63	2010

Source: UN Comtrade

The trade balance deficit evident from the previous table indicates the strong commercial relationship between the two countries, where Syrian products were one of the most important products that invade the Jordanian market, considering that the Syrian market is one of the

most important markets from which Jordanian merchants import their goods or raw materials to be marketed or manufactured later. In Jordan, because

it is characterized by high quality and low costs when compared to the costs of shipping and importing from other countries, which are incurred by the Jordanian merchant.

On the other hand, Jordan is also an important market for Syria, as Syria used to import many Jordanian products and its traders benefit from trade agreements aimed at facilitating intra-regional trade between the two countries and reducing customs duties on goods imported from Jordan. The Syrian crisis came to force many Jordanian traders and factory owners to replace their plans and production lines by relying on other countries to import goods and raw materials, such as Turkey and China, instead of Syria. Cement, chemical and paper products, and engineering industries are among the most important Jordanian commodities exported to the Syrian market, while agricultural commodities, textiles and clothing are among the most important Syrian commodities exported to Jordan. The following table focuses on the total value of Jordanian exports to Syria during the period (2004-2010) and shows the growth rate achieved in it:

growth rate	The total value of Jordanian exports	Year
-	152.52	2004
32.8%	202.54	2005
32.7%	268.81	2006
14.4%	307.57	2007
-19.7%	246.83	2008
-5.6%	232.89	2009
10.1%	256.48	2010

Source: UN Comtrade

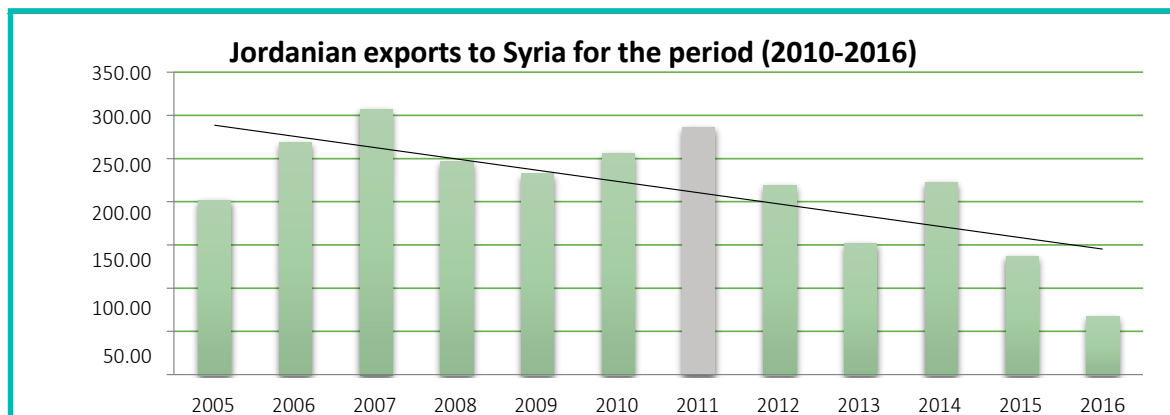
The years before the Syrian crisis and the closure of border crossings witnessed a positive growth in the total value of Jordanian exports heading to Syria, especially since Syria is the only direct land port for Jordan with Lebanon and Turkey, as it is linked with them by a good trade exchange movement. The following graph indicates a noticeable rise in the total value of Jordanian exports to Syria in 2007, which is due to several factors, including the liberalization of Syrian trade and the rise in the exchange rate of the Syrian pound, as was previously mentioned.

Trade Relations between Jordan and Syria after the Syrian Crisis

Jordanian exports to Syria decreased significantly during the years of the crisis, as the annual exports to Syria in 2011 amounted to approximately 286.8 million dollars, and plunged to 137.7 million dinars in 2015. This is a result of the current political situation in Syria and the closure of the land borders between the Kingdom and Syria, Jordanian exports continued to decline, reaching \$67.7 million in 2016. This significant decline is attributed to the Jordanian government's decision to close Jaber Land Crossing in 2013, especially after ISIS took control of the areas of southern Syria, intensified fighting and increased shelling of several homes in the territories of Jordan at the time.

growth rate %	The value of Jordanian exports (million dollars)	Years
	256.48	2010
11.82%	286.80	2011
-23.37%	219.78	2012
-30.66%	152.39	2013
46.73%	223.6	2014
-38.42%	137.7	2015
-50.84%	67.7	2016

Source: UN Comtrade



The reopening of the land borders between Jordan and Syria will have a significant and clear impact on the Jordanian economy in general and on the national industry in particular, which was affected by the closure of the crossing, leading to a decline in national exports and a rise in production and export costs as a result of the high costs of alternative transport, especially maritime transport, and therefore weakened its competitiveness in foreign markets. This is due to the Syrian market being a land transit station for national exports to enter the Syrian, Lebanese, Turkish and some European countries. The Jordanian land transport sector was also negatively affected by the closure of the borders, as it was one of the large sectors, alongside the national industry. Therefore, the reopening of the crossings will lead to the operation of the Jordanian land transport sector.

The following table shows the trade balance between Jordan and Syria for the period (2011-2016):

Trade Balance (Jordan - Syria)			
(millions in US dollars)			
trade balance	Jordanian imports	Jordanian exports	Years
-89.26	376.06	286.80	2011
-18.83	238.61	219.78	2012
-107.48	259.87	152.39	2013
71.47	152.20	223.68	2014
35.89	101.83	137.72	2015
-21.4	89.1	67.7	2016

Source: UN Comtrade

The Closure of the Jaber Border Crossing and its Impact on Jordanian-Lebanese Trade Relations

The closure of the border crossing between Syria and Jordan affected the Lebanese economy as well, through its negative impact on trade between Jordan and Lebanon, due to the interruption of the only land point connecting the two countries. The agricultural sector to Jordan and the Arab Gulf states was negatively affected, as Lebanon exports by land to Arab markets foodstuffs of vegetables, fruits, canned goods, grains and livestock, in addition to machinery, electrical equipment and raw materials for the chemical industries. Jaber crossing is the only land crossing through which Lebanese exports pass to the Gulf and Iraqi markets. Also, the land export sector in Lebanon was affected due to the Syrian war, and it is considered the second largest affected sector after the agricultural sector. As a result, the Lebanese government had to adopt a new approach to reduce the losses that affected its economy.

Trade Cooperation Agreement between Jordan and Lebanon on the Import and Export of Agricultural Products

In accordance with the laws and regulations in force in both countries, the trade cooperation agreement between Jordan and Lebanon stipulated several provisions that would encourage the movement of exports and imports of agricultural products between the two countries, through:

- The Jordanian government allows the import of agricultural and animal products and natural resources of Lebanese origin imported directly into Jordan, and the Lebanese government allows the export of these products.
- The Lebanese government permits the import of agricultural and animal products and natural resources of Jordanian origin imported directly into Lebanon, and the Jordanian government permits the export of these products.
-

- The Jordanian and Lebanese governments' exempt vegetables and fruits from all customs duties, fees and other taxes imposed in the two countries upon importing them directly without obtaining an import license, provided that this is done in light of the agricultural calendar in force in both countries.
- The Jordanian government exempts live animals, animal and plant products, and unmanufactured natural resources of Lebanese origin imported directly into Jordan from customs, tariff fees and other fees and taxes of similar effect.
- The Lebanese government exempts live animals, animal and plant products, and unmanufactured natural resources of Jordanian origin imported directly into Lebanon from customs, tariff fees and other fees and taxes of similar effect.
- The vegetable and fruit products imported directly from one party to the country of the other party shall be accompanied by a certificate of origin issued by the competent authorities and certified by the relevant authorities in both countries.
- Coordination takes place in advance between the two concerned parties regarding the export and import of vegetables and fruits in light of the agricultural calendar in force in both countries.

Jordanian-Lebanese Commercial Relations after the Syrian Crisis and the Closure of Jaber Crossing

Lebanon is the fourth largest Arab country for Jordan in terms of exports after Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Syria. The following table shows the trade relations between Jordan and Lebanon in terms of the movement of exports and imports after the closure of Jaber Crossing:

Jordanian-Lebanese trade relations (exports - imports) after the closure of Jaber crossing one million dollars			
(% change)	export value	(% change)	import value
-12.48%	293.73	18.81%	134.85
-47.56%	154.03	20.30%	162.23
-7.38%	142.66	-27.53%	117.56
-5.59%	134.68	-9.95%	105.86
37.28%	184.89	-10.88%	94.34

Source: UN Comtrade

- The value of Jordanian exports to Lebanon decreased in 2016 and reached 184.8 million dinars, compared to what they achieved in 2012, which amounted to 293.7 million dinars.
- On the other hand, the value of Jordan's imports from Lebanon decreased in 2016 to reach 94.4 million dinars compared to what it achieved in 2012 when Jordanian imports from Lebanon reached 134 million dinars with an average decrease of (-1.58%).
- The numbers refer to the negative effects of the ongoing war in Syria on Jordan and Lebanon, as they are among the neighboring countries of Syria, the home of the war.

The following table shows the most important imported and exported commodities between Lebanon and Jordan during the period 2011-2016:

The most important commodities imported and exported (Jordan - Lebanon) for the period between 2011- 2016 million dollars:			
The most important commodities exported to Lebanon		The most important commodities imported from Lebanon	
184.6	pharmaceutical products	86.4	vegetables and fruits
160.9	Jewelry and gemstones	72.9	Fruits and nuts
135.7	aluminum	39.5	Electrical machinery and equipment
64.9	plastic	36.6	live animals

Source: UN Comtrade

Jordanian-Lebanese Trade of Agricultural Products (Exports - Imports) during the Period 2004-2010 before the Closure of Jaber

Jordan is interested in activating and strengthening agricultural cooperation relations with the Republic of Lebanon to serve the interests of the two countries and to overcome the obstacles facing the two countries in the matter of the exchange of agricultural commodities. Livestock, water harvesting and treated water in the interest of the growth of the agricultural sector of Jordan and Lebanon. The following table figures show the total value of the trade movement of agricultural products for the two countries during the years before the Syrian crisis:

Jordanian-Lebanese trade of agricultural products (exports - imports) before the closure of Jaber Crossing (in million dollars)		
export value	import value	Years
58.5	63.1	2004
64.0	75.6	2005
66.8	81.0	2006
99.6	106.0	2007
128.1	121.0	2008
180.9	113.8	2009
197.1	109.1	2010

Source: Department of Statistics

The total value of Jordanian exports to Lebanon of agricultural products increased during the years (2004-2010), respectively, as Lebanon is one of the most important countries for Jordan in terms of export, especially with the agreements signed between the two countries, which stimulated the foreign trade movement in 2010 with an export \$197.1 million.

Jordanian-Lebanese Trade in Agricultural Products (Exports, Imports) during the Period (2011- 2016) after the Closure of Jaber Crossing

The balance of agricultural exchange between Lebanon and Jordan tends to favor Lebanon, if Lebanese exports exceed ten times Jordanian exports. However, Jordan's closure of the Jaber border crossing with Syria incurred losses and significant declines in the figures of total exports in general and agricultural exports in particular, to the Lebanese Ministry of Agriculture. The following table shows a decrease in the value of Jordanian agricultural exports to Lebanon for the years (2012-2016) respectively, while the figures in the same table show a reverse increase in the value of Lebanese agricultural exports to Jordan in 2012, and the reason for this is likely to be the interruption of trade movement On the Jordan-Syria line, which stimulates an increase in the export of Lebanese agricultural products to Jordan, as the Jordanian market has become an alternative to the Syrian market for agricultural products in particular, coinciding with the signing of an agreement it aims to facilitate the flow of agricultural products and to regulate quantities. The following table shows the trade of agricultural products between Jordan and Lebanon during the years (2011-2016):

Jordanian-Lebanese trade (exports - imports) after the closure of Jaber Crossing (in million dollars)		
Export Value	Import Value	Years
298.6	116.0	2011
239.1	138.0	2012
138.7	165.0	2013
138.3	119.2	2014
128.9	107.4	2015
137.5	95.9	2016

Source: Department of Statistics

The rise in transportation costs between the two countries due to the dangers of traffic in Syria contributed to the decline in commercial traffic between Lebanon and Jordan in 2016, especially since 80% of Lebanon's agricultural exports pass through the land line, while the rest of the merchants resort to shipping via the maritime line between Lebanon and Jordan through the port of Aqaba, which may lead to the delay in the arrival of the goods due to the long road path, which takes a longer period of time, and thus affects the quality of agricultural products, which may be damaged if they arrive late. The following agricultural products are imported from Lebanon: (apples, grapes, onions, food, and feed preparations, especially corn bran), while Lebanon imports from Jordan the following agricultural products: (tomatoes - beans - eggplant - watermelon - melon - tomato paste).

Analysis of the Impact of the Syrian Crisis on Foreign Trade between Syria, Jordan and Lebanon

The following table figures show the sharp decline and fall in both the value of exports and imports between Jordan and Syria during the years preceding the war in Syria and the years of the crisis and the resulting closure of the land borders with Syria, where the rate of change in the value of exports and imports was calculated and compared between the years of the crisis and some years after the crisis:

Foreign Trade between Jordan and Syria

After the Syrian crisis			Before the Syrian crisis		
Imports	Exports	Year	Imports	Exports	Year
0.11%	11.82%	2011	9.15%	32.80%	2005
-36.55%	-23.37%	2012	10.97%	32.70%	2006
8.91%	-30.66%	2013	44.77%	14.40%	2007
-41.43%	46.73%	2014	-5.37%	-19.70%	2008
-33.09%	-38.42%	2015	-11.02%	-5.60%	2009
-12.50%	-50.84%	2016	22.55%	10.10%	2010

Source: UN Comtrade

With regard to Lebanon and the export of agricultural products and benefiting from the agreements signed with it, which is largely reflected in the export and import of agricultural products, the closure of the

Jaber crossing also had clear effects on the commercial movement between Jordan and Lebanon. Agricultural products between the two countries before and after the years of the Syrian crisis:

Results:

- Customs and control crossings with physical restriction of transit, whether for goods and commodities or individuals, especially with Turkey, Jordan and most Gulf countries, and freezing trade agreements.
- Stagnation in the shipping sector and losses in some clearance, transport and tourism companies, which depended mainly on organizing tourist and religious trips to Syria, in addition to the clearance companies that were working on transporting goods to and from Syria.
- A clear decline in national exports to Syria, in addition to a decrease in the value of imports from Syria, especially since the Syrian market was considered one of the most important markets for Jordan, as many Jordanian merchants depend on importing many Syrian products of clothing and others, the most important of which are agricultural products in addition to Raw materials. The closure of the borders forced many Jordanian traders and entrepreneurs to search for other sources of import; Such as Turkey and China, which led to higher production costs and higher final price of the commodity.

Recommendations

The paper recommends to open border, grow relation for the following reasons:

- Providing huge opportunities for the Jordanian construction and IT sector, to be partially or completely implemented in the reconstruction projects in Syria.
- The recovery of the shipping and transport sector again after the closure of the borders, which lasted for a few years since the outbreak of the revolution on some border tracks, this would help the employment of individuals and companies in Jordan as it was in the past.
- The recovery of the Jordanian economy and the positive impact of national exports, as the reopening of the Jaber crossing will give the opportunity for Jordanian products to invade the Syrian market as before, benefiting from the agreements signed between the two countries, while the Jordanian merchant will rely on importing again raw materials and goods from Syria, taking advantage of the licenses for shipping and transportation costs. In addition, the Syrian products are of very good quality, which will reduce the costs incurred by the Jordanian merchant when importing goods for their project from other countries if compared to the costs of shipping, transportation and others. This is all a positive change for the benefit of our national economy, considering Syria a successful strategic partner.
- The growth of the Jordanian tourism sector, as Jordan was one of the most important tourist destinations for the Syrian tourist, because Syria is one of the sister countries with which Jordan shares many customs, traditions and cultures. Jordan was a destination for religious, medical and educational tourism, as many Syrian

students went to Jordan. All this will support the Jordanian economy and will achieve positive growth in the tourism sector, which is considered an integrated sector with other sectors such as transportation, health, restaurants and others, because tourists need to spend during their stay. This will contribute to moving the wheel of economic growth, which will benefit the Jordanian economy. Note also that Syria is among the most important destinations of the Jordanian tourist, which Jordan used to visit due to the proximity of distances and the convergence of cultures.

- Improving trade relations between Jordan and Lebanon, as reopening the Jaber crossing will benefit the Syrian and Jordanian sides by supplying the treasury of the two countries, in addition to the fact that this will lead to the return of the flow of goods between Lebanon and Jordan on the one hand, and between Lebanon, the Gulf states and Iraq on the other. The crossing is the only land port linking Lebanon with the countries of the Arab Mashreq.
- Restore balance to the Jordanian labor market due to the return of Syrian workers to their homeland after it negatively affected the high unemployment rate and low wage levels. Syrian hands will return to work in reconstruction projects in Syria, the high cost of the working hour for Jordanian workers and the rise in wages, because of the reopening of Jaber Crossing it will work on the return of skilled labor from Jordan to Syria to work on reconstruction projects. This will coincide with the return of Syrian businessmen to restart their factories in Aleppo, which will raise the hourly cost of the remaining labor, and this will lead to a sharp drop in apartment prices and housing wages in most cities. In addition to the decrease in general demand for goods and services due to the decline in the population, this will lead to a decrease in the inflation rate as a result of the decrease in the prices of goods and services, which will cause a rise in the wages of workers due to the lack of labor force.

This will all positively affect the Jordanian economy because, according to the theory from an economic perspective, higher wages will increase the purchasing power of citizens, and consequently will increase the demand for goods and services, which will move the wheel of the Jordanian economy.

Syrian-Jordanian Economic Relations

Jihad Yazigi

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Since the summer of 2021, Syria and Jordan have embarked on a gradual restoration of their economic and trade ties. While the two countries were expected to capitalize on this warming of relations to improve their economic lot, a combination of political, security and economic factors continued to stand in their way.

For Syria, improving ties with its southern neighbour is an issue of strategic importance. It would represent one more step towards its reintegration within the Arab fold, particularly important given Jordan's closeness to the U.S. and ties with Israel; it would provide significant relief to its ailing economy; it would enable the Syrian authorities to negotiate with the Jordanian government a number of issues while leveraging the presence of refugees there.

1- Historical Background to the Syrian-Jordanian Economic Relations- Before 2011

Economic Relations and Trade

Although, historically, political differences have often driven a wedge between Damascus and Amman, shared economic interests have frequently spurred rapprochement between the two countries. These interests are foremost rooted in geography; Jordan and Syria share a 362-kilometre border and the Nassib-Jaber border crossing is a gateway for the flow of goods and people between the two countries, as well as to the Gulf, Egypt, Turkey, and Lebanon.

In 1975, Syria and Jordan signed the first trade protocol that represented a marked thaw in relations after years of acrimony. Two years later, the Jordan-Syria Land Transport Company and the Jordan-Syria Maritime Transport Company were established to transport goods, primarily cement and mining products, between the two countries. In 2001, a free trade agreement was signed, lifting tariffs on a wide range of goods. Trade volumes increased gradually to USD 250 million in 2003, USD 430 million in 2005, and USD 632 million in 2010.

Jordan was by then Syria's 14th largest foreign trade partner, and the fourth largest in the Arab world, behind only Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. Its importance stemmed, however, mostly from the fact that it was a transit road to reaching the gulf markets.

Investments

Syrian investments in Jordan were always very limited. A rare important investment occurred in 2002 when Syria's leading hotel chain, Cham Palaces and Hotels, signed an agreement with Jordan's Social Security Corporation to manage two hotels in Jordan. Two years later, the Cham Hotels chain opened its first deluxe hotel outside Syria in the Shmeisani District of Amman and was set to manage another on the Dead Sea. Other very small but symbolic investments included, for instance, the Maktoob online portal and chocolate manufacturer Ghraoui, which ran a store in Amman.

Jordanian investments in Syria were more significant, mostly in the financial industry, as Jordanian financial institutions sought profit from the liberalisation of the sector. Three Jordanian banks, the Housing Bank for Trade and Finance, Arab Bank, and the Bank of Jordan applied and received a licence to operate in Syria. Several Jordanian financial brokerage houses also operated in Syria, although some have since suspended their activity. They include Global One, International Financial Center, Al-Aula Financial Investments, Syrian Investment House, and Sanabil for Financial Investments.

Travel

Before the conflict, Syrian and Jordanian nationals could travel between the two countries without visas, with a growing number travelling for business and leisure.

At an annual meeting of the joint Jordanian-Syrian Committee in 2009, several measures were adopted to further enhance movement between the two countries, including the lifting of all border taxes for people crossing the common land borders. Fees levied on cars and buses were also removed. By 2010, Jordanians formed the second-largest contingent of visitors to Syria, behind the Lebanese, at some 1.9 million, many of whom travelled to Syria for medical reasons, tourism, and family visits.

Joint Projects

In February 2004, King Abdullah II of Jordan and Syrian President Bashar al-Assad laid the foundation for the long-delayed Al-Wahda (or Unity) Dam project on the Yarmouk River. The project of a dam had been underway since 1953, and in 1986, building plans were agreed upon. However, it had been repeatedly delayed for both funding and political reasons. Eventually, the project was completed in 2011, seven years after the latest announcement. The dam provides Jordan with 110 million cubic meters of water, part of which is used as potable water (50 million cubic meters) and as irrigation water for agriculture. In turn, Syria is supplied with 18,800-megawatt-hours of electricity.

That same year, in 2004, the heads of Syrian, Lebanese, Jordanian, and Egyptian governments signed an agreement to build the second section of the Arab Gas Pipeline to export Egyptian natural gas to Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon, after the first section was completed in July 2003. Following the completion of the second section in

December 2005, the third section, which links Jordan to Syria, was completed in 2007. The fourth section, which was operational since early 2008, extended from the Syrian-Jordanian border to Homs, and later to Tripoli, Lebanon, and Kilis, Turkey. The pipeline provided Damascus with 2.5 million cubic metres of natural gas mainly used to feed Syrian power plants. In 2011, gas supplies through the pipeline were stopped due Egypt's reduction of exports and several attacks on the AGP in Sinai and Syria.

During the Conflict

Economic Relations and Trade

The 2011 uprising and ensuing conflict changed the course of bilateral relations. After rebels seized the Nassib-Jaber crossing in 2015, the Jordanian government closed its side of the border, interrupting trade flows, including land exports from Syria and Lebanon to the Gulf.

In 2016, a Jordanian official stated that his government would consider opening a new border crossing with Syria. Beyond logistical and security challenges, however, Jordan's formal opposition to the Syrian regime was an impediment to such a plan. The U.S. administration also pressured Amman to maintain the border's closure as it sought to use the crossing as leverage against the Syrian regime.

In July 2018, the Syrian regime regained control of the Nassib crossing and the border was reopened in October although political relations remained fraught with tension. For Syrian exporters, the reopening of the crossing re-established land access to the Gulf and Iraq – important markets for Syria prior to 2011.

Jordan invited several Syrian business lobbying groups to Amman in an additional step towards restoring its ties with Damascus. In 2018, an invitation from Jordan's Chamber of Industry to the Damascus chambers of commerce and industry and the Federation of Syrian Chambers of

Industry was the first of its kind since 2011.

The following year, in 2019, it was announced that Jordan and Syria would reopen the shared free-trade area on their common border. Industries present in the zone include cement, plastic, marble, mineral oil, paints, and photovoltaic.

While trade between Syria and Jordan slightly recovered to USD 138.7 million in 2019, obstacles, such as import bans, remained. The Syrian government barred a large set of consumer products with locally manufactured equivalents from entering the country while Jordan's Ministry of Industry, Trade, and Supply banned 194 different types of Syrian goods from entering into the Kingdom, including food items such as cucumber, tomatoes, tomato juice, bottled and soda water, fish, poultry, and meat. Ongoing pressure from the U.S. administration also meant that Syrian trucks, in particular, faced obstacles crossing into Syrian territory from Jordan.

The pandemic dealt an even heavier blow to bilateral trade, which fell to its lowest since the start of the conflict after the border crossing was closed in August 2020 to contain the spread of the virus, though cargo shipments continued to cross in small volumes.

Investment

While Syrian investors in Jordan were few in number prior to the uprising, the conflict brought them to Amman in droves, especially after violence expanded to Syria's two largest business centres, Damascus, and Aleppo, in the summer of 2012. As a result, the number of Syrian companies incorporated in Jordan in the first nine months of 2013 surged by 145 percent compared with the same period in the previous year, with 44 percent of those investments in the manufacturing sector. By 2014, Syrian investors led the ranks of foreign investors in Jordan over the first seven months of the year, with a combined registered capital of JOD 13.16 million, or around USD 18.60 million, although the actual value of the investments is estimated to be much higher.

Investments included important manufacturing companies such as food processing firm Durra, which relocated its plants from southern Syria to Jordan, but also countless smaller projects including in the retail and hospitality sectors.

As violence ebbed, Jordanian investors in turn began tentatively exploring opportunities in Syria. In 2018, a Jordanian business delegation arrived in Damascus – the largest gathering of its kind in at least five years. Jordanian investors were seeking to reap the benefits of Syria's reconstruction, although the prospects remained distant. All Jordanian banks in Syrian continue operating.

Travel

After 2011, Syrians began streaming across the border into Jordan, seeking refuge from the intensifying conflict. In the ensuing years, the number of Syrian refugees would swell to more than 1.3 million, while the number of Jordanians visiting Syria would dwindle to just 15,000. In 2014, Jordan set several restrictions to curb the entry of Syrians, granting exemptions for certain segments of the population, such as investors.

In 2018, a Jordanian official delegation held talks in Syria to discuss the resumption of flights between Amman and Damascus. Syrian airline Cham Wings had already launched a new service to Amman, facilitating the transport of passengers and goods, which had been forced to travel via Beirut in the preceding years.

The pandemic once again froze movement between the two countries, with the border closed to people in 2020. As countries learned to live with the virus, Jordan eased restrictions for some individuals, among them businessmen, on the condition that they had a negative PCR test. In May, an online platform allowing Syrians to register to visit Jordan was reactivated with a limit of 150 people per day. On August 1, the border eventually fully reopened to people, as well as goods, and, in late

September, the Jordanian authorities announced that commercial flights between the two countries would resume.

II- Since August 2021

With the economies of both countries suffering and President Bashar Al-Assad's standing more or less secured, the two countries moved to repair ties in 2021. During a visit to Washington DC on July 19, 2021, King Abdallah met with U.S. President Joe Biden and reportedly discussed opening channels with President Assad. Already in 2019, Amman appointed a charge d'affaires to its embassy in Damascus, marking a shift in the Hashemite Kingdom's position towards the Syrian regime.

In 2021, a series of high-level meetings between Syrian and Jordanian officials following the announcement of the American initiative to provide Egyptian gas and Jordanian electricity to Lebanon via Syria further signalled the progressive normalisation of relations between the two countries.

In December 2021, the joint free trade zone was reopened. In August 2022, the zone was added to the National Window for Trade, a one-stop shop for investing in Jordan.

2022 saw two business events held in Damascus to boost economic ties with the attendance of several dozen Jordanian companies, the latest of which was between October 08 and 10. According to *the Jordan News Agency*, Jordanian exports to Syria increased by 23 percent during the first seven months of 2022 to JD 40 million (USD 56.41 million according to the current exchange rate), while imports from Syria in the same period stood at JD 26 million (USD 36.70 million).

Still, relations between the two countries seem fraught with challenges and despite these few advances, the hopes raised by the warming of ties have not materialised.

The border crossing is being regularly closed because of continuous Captagon and drug smuggling from Syria and, more recently, the cholera outbreak, which pushed Amman to restrict imports, specifically raw food items. Restrictions on Syrian truck drivers entering Jordan have also hampered trade.

As to the Syrian business environment, it remains too poor to attract any meaningful investment from Jordan and more than a year-and-a-half after the easing of relations no meaningful joint projects have been announced except for an agreement between Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Iraq's agriculture ministers to boost agricultural cooperation and discuss establishing a joint company to market agricultural products from each country.

As per The Syria Report's database Jordanian investors opened eight companies last year in Syria, a decline compared with 13 companies in 2020, the first year of the COVID-19 outbreak, and 14 companies in 2019.

III- Future Challenges

Relations between the two countries face a combination of challenges likely to limit the scope of cooperation and economic benefits in the near future.

- 1-** The Caesar Act: the bill remains a major hurdle for foreign investments in Syria. During his visit to Washington in 2021, King Abdullah reportedly requested that Jordan be exempted from the deal but to no avail. There are no clear prospects of the deal being lifted or exemptions being granted to specific countries. OFAC did grant an exemption to foreign investors interested in investing in areas outside regime control, mostly in the northeast, but this is unlikely to interest Jordanian investors.

- 2- Iranian militias: Pro-Iranian militias controlling part of the Syrian side of the border constitutes an important security risk for Jordan and hampers the return of refugees. That will remain a point of contention between the two countries. The fate of these militias is not for Damascus to decide alone though.
- 3- Drug trade, particularly of captagon, will continue to constitute a major obstacle to improving relations. Based on the shipments seized by various customs department around the region and in the Mediterranean, Syria's exports of captagon, valued generally well above USD 1 billion per year, represent a source of foreign currency earnings for the Syrian economy that surpasses the export of goods, valued at USD 700 million per year. It is also a source of funding for a variety of militias and business cronies, and it is unclear how much Damascus has an interest in stopping that trade. Captagon export also represents an important leverage for Damascus with its neighbours, including Jordan.
- 4- The Syrian central government is very weakened. While the regime is largely secure for the short-term, Damascus has to deal with a collapsing economy; large parts of the country being only under its nominal control, the south in particular; poor services delivery; and policies by the presidential palace that have alienated the business community. It is no surprise that the government has failed to attract interest from almost any of the Arab countries it has been rebuilding ties with, such as the UAE, or that investment coming from allies such as China, Russia or Iran is so meagre. Russian investment projects in Syria, for example, are almost all at a standstill, years after they were inked.
- 5- Absence of international interest: Mashrek countries have fallen back in the priorities of most international players. Syria was once a major player across the Levant region, it is now

a scene of competition between various regional and international actors. It used to be said that there would be no peace between Israel and the Arab world without first a Syrian-Israeli peace agreement (the saying was no war against Israel can take place without Egypt and no peace without Syria). The Abraham accords have proven that this was not true anymore. Warming Israeli-Gulf ties may also impact the role of Jordan in the region.

- 6- Ukraine war, Iran, JCPOA: The international context is very unstable, and it is unclear how things will evolve and what impact international political developments will have for the region. For now, few important initiatives are likely to succeed.

Annex 1: Syria's Trade with Jordan between 2006 and 2021 (US dollar)

	Imports	Exports	Total
2006	268,812,908	251,459,159	520,272,067
2007	307,572,822	364,025,450	671,598,272
2008	246,831,291	344,466,696	591,297,987
2009	232,887,889	306,508,609	539,396,498
2010	256,483,224	375,634,382	632,117,606
2011	286,799,517	376,059,310	662,858,827
2012	219,777,152	238,608,152	458,385,304
2013	152,393,749	259,874,119	412,267,868
2014	223,678,661	152,204,474	375,883,135
2015	137,719,499	101,829,743	239,549,242
2016	67,758,986	89,100,543	156,859,529
2017	65,790,651	66,900,292	132,690,943
2018	65,158,968	70,284,980	135,443,948
2019	95,315,460	43,380,034	138,695,494
2020	63,853,254	44,776,005	108,629,259
2021	118,322,810	70,784,916	189,107,726

Source: UN Comtrade

Syrian Refugees (Integration, Resettlement, or Return)

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Since the beginning of the Syrian crisis, Jordan has seen an influx of Syrian refugees from all Syrian governorates, particularly Daraa, in search of a safe haven for themselves and their families. According to Jordanian government sources, there are 1.3 million Syrian refugees and according to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in Jordan, 656000 of those refugees are registered, and 83.3% of the refugees live in Jordan outside of the camps, while 16.7% live in the Azraq, Zaatari, and Jordanian-Emirati camps⁵⁰.

Jordan has worked to provide humanitarian, medical, and educational services to refugees since the beginning of the crisis and has worked to integrate Syrian refugees into Jordanian society by providing job opportunities in a variety of economic sectors such as agriculture, commerce, construction, industry, and crafts. According to government and UNHCR figures, 62,000 work permits for Syrians were issued in 2021, the highest annual number since the introduction of work permits for Syrian refugees⁵¹.

Due to the international community's lack of commitment to the aid agreed upon with Jordan to care for the enormous number of Syrian refugees in the region, which has only committed to 7% and is still declining, particularly in the wake of the Corona pandemic and the Ukrainian crisis, the Jordanian government is having a very difficult time managing the

50. https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/394854/amp?gclid=Cj0KCCQjwhsmaBhCvARIsAIbEbH5QvXsKPXSswktKKPdIFKPh6T7oUWqhbG4Nl67vUZ5eEbmiQELuTwQaAqLvEALw_wcB

51. <https://www.unhcr.org/ar/news/press/2022/1/61f03b704.html>

Syrian refugee file. The „Peace Research Institute in Oslo“ (PRIO) warned in March that more than half of the Syrians in Jordan live below the poverty line despite cash assistance provided to refugees by the United Nations and other organizations. This will put pressure on Jordan as a host country and increase its burdens in caring for the Syrian refugees⁵².

It is not anticipated that Syrian refugees in Jordan will return to Syria any time soon. This is because „the issue is not only related to the return of the Syrian refugee to his country, but to specifying the exact place to which he will return, and most importantly, preparing that place in the first place, and providing objective conditions for a decent life for him in his country, including political participation“⁵³. Given that Jordan and the UNHCR stressed the importance of voluntary return and refused to compel it, there were 1,895 Syrian refugees who returned from Jordan to Syria in the first six months of 2022. Based on a survey conducted by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, 46,103 refugees have returned from Jordan to Syria since the border was opened in 2018, including 5,476 refugees from the Zaatari camp.

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees has worked on the resettlement of Syrian refugees who have sought refuge in Jordan in order to find work or be reunited with their families in countries other than Jordan, such as Canada, European countries, and Ireland⁵⁴. 10% of refugees in Jordan need resettlement, while 1% actually have the opportunity⁵⁵.

52. <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/506696#ixzz7iLW1hNt2>

53. <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/506696#ixzz7iLW1hNt2>

54. <https://help.unhcr.org/jordan/helpful-services-unhcr-%D8%AE%D8%AF%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%81%D9%88%D8%B6%D9%8A%D8%A9/resettlement-%D8%A5%D8%B9%D8%A7%D8%AF%D8%A9-%D8%AA%D9%88%D8%B7%D9%8A%D9%86>

55. https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/394854/amp?gclid=Cj0KCQjwhsmaBhCvARIsA_IbEbH5QvXsKPXSswktKKPdIFKPh6T7oUWqhbG4Nl67vUZ5eEbmiQELuTwQaAqLvEA_Lw_wcB

There is no government directive to resettle Syrian refugees in Jordan or to grant Syrian refugees citizenship⁵⁶.

The following proposed policies were developed based on the information provided above and the analysis of the actual circumstances surrounding the Syrian asylum file:

First, A General Policy for Integrating Syrian Refugees into Jordanian Society

Jordan has adopted this policy to integrate refugees into Jordanian society and view them as an opportunity rather than a burden by integrating them into the Jordanian labor market in specific sectors and issuing work permits, but only at certain rates, and sectors such as health, higher education, and tourism have been closed.

Policy Implementation Procedures

- Increasing the percentage of work permits issued to Syrian refugees.
- Opening closed economic sectors to Syrian refugees, allocating a quota for them.
- Encouraging investment by Syrian refugees with capital.
- Converting camps into residential cities for Syrian refugees rather than caravans, and facilitating exit and entry without specific permits.
- Investing in highly qualified craftsmen and professionals and asking them to train Jordanian workers.
- Imposing taxes on workers parallel to the taxes imposed on Jordanians.

56. <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/506696#ixzz7iLW1hNt2>

Advantages and Opportunities of this Policy

- Investing in refugees as a source of opportunity and skilled labor, as well as alleviating poverty and unemployment among them.
- Reviving the Jordanian economy as a result of capital investments made by Syrian refugees.
- Contributing to community integration and working to improve camp living conditions.
- Improving the competencies of young Jordanian professionals, particularly in the crafts mastered by Syrian refugees, which reduces unemployment among Jordanians while increasing competition for professional job opportunities in foreign markets.
- Investing taxes collected from Syrian labor in developing infrastructure in Jordan.

Policy Implementation Challenges

- Inability to amend labor legislation.
- Inability to amend the investment law.
- The inability of the Vocational Training Corporation to invest in Syrian professionals and craftsmen to provide training programs for Jordanians.
- Security warnings regarding freedom of entry and exit from the camps.

Second: General Policy for the Voluntary Return of Syrian Refugees to Syria

This policy encourages the voluntary return of Syrian refugees to Syria by ensuring their safety and providing them with a decent life upon their return.

Policy Implementation Procedures

- Best practices for encouraging voluntary and long-term return by providing information and advice on return options and conditions in Syria.
- Advocate for funding to allow the International Organization for Migration and other partners, such as the Jordanian government and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, to establish assistance programs for the voluntary return and reintegration of Syrian refugees into their country of origin.
- Providing assistance to reintegrate Syrian refugees into their community in their country of origin upon their return.
- Taking international humanitarian action to ensure that Syrians with specific needs, such as unaccompanied or separated children and individuals with disabilities, are taken care of upon their return.
- Activating the International Organization for Migration's role and accepting its responsibilities for the voluntary return of Syrian refugees, as well as ensuring their safe return, support, and ability to live in Syria.
- The Jordanian government launching awareness campaigns with the help of the international community and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, and creating awareness strategies to inform potential Syrian refugee returnees of all their options as well as the situation in their home country, Syria, and any potential risks of unauthorized movement.
- Training government officials and members of civil society on how to guarantee the compassionate and respectable repatriation of Syrian refugees in conformity with human rights norms.
- Conducting risk assessments prior to the return of Syrian refugees to identify international protection needs.
- The international community participating with the government in providing advice on return, and providing answers that meet the special needs of returnees during the return process.

- The international community providing advice and answers to Syrian refugees' questions and needs after their return to their country, following up on them during the post-return period, and establishing monitoring mechanisms for the post-return phase in coordination with the relevant authorities to determine their protection needs in Syria.
- The international community and UNHCR encouraging Syrian refugees to participate in reintegration plans for Syrian refugee returnees, and monitoring reintegration activities that benefit the individual and the local community in Syria.

Advantages and Opportunities of this Policy

- The repatriation of Syrian refugees and their reunion with their families in Syria.
- The opportunity to return to their previous lives, prior to the war and the asylum.
- Obtaining the property they left behind during the war.
- Improving the economic, social and psychological situation of the refugees who have returned to Syria.
- If Syrian refugees who possess factories and capital return, Syria can be rebuilt and its economy will be revived.
- Reducing the obligations Jordan and the international community has for Syrian refugees, as well as the social, economic, and humanitarian burdens borne by Syrian refugees.
- Directing international aid to Syria's reconstruction rather than providing humanitarian aid to refugees in host countries.

Policy Implementation Challenges

- Syrian refugees' unwillingness to return to Syria.

- There is a fear that the environment won't be favorable for Syrian refugees to return in terms of security, economy, and society.
- The international community's inability to fulfill its obligations for the safe return of Syrian refugees and for their return to be dignified and sustainable, such as providing follow-up to their affairs inside Syria, providing protection for them, providing mechanisms for integration into their communities of origin, following up on them after their return, and providing them with economic opportunities.
- Gaps and internal issues might arise between society members and the returning refugees, as well as the Syrian society's unwillingness to embrace Syrian refugees and their return.

Third: General Resettlement Policy for Syrian Refugees (Not provided by Jordanian Government); Resettlement in a Country other than Jordan

The resettlement of Syrian refugees in Jordan is a scenario that the Jordanian government has not yet proposed, but it will be investigated to see if this scenario is proposed. Regarding resettlement, it is a scenario that is currently in effect. People are resettled in nations like Europe, Canada, and Ireland for a variety of reasons, the first of which is to provide job opportunities and facilitate family reunion.

Policy Implementation Procedures

- Amending the law granting non-Jordanians citizenship.
- A government decision to resettle Syrian refugees.
- International community support for this decision, as well as financial and economic assistance to Jordan in order to accommodate resettled refugees by developing economic projects to employ them and Jordanians alike, as well as developing infrastructure and building and developing service facilities to provide appropriate services for refugees and Jordanians alike.

- Finding mechanisms conducted by the International community for resettling Syrians in the host countries, creating job opportunities for these citizens, creating suitable living conditions for them, and working to integrate them into society, particularly in terms of language.

Policy Implementation Challenges

- Inability to amend the law on granting citizenship for refugees.
- The government's unwillingness to resettle Syrian refugees.
- Jordanian society's unwillingness and opposition to the settlement decision—if it is proposed— as well as the government's inability to gain the confidence of the House of Representatives regarding this decision.
- Challenges with refugees and the emergence of an internal conflict in Jordanian society.
- The failure of the international community to uphold its duties and obligations towards Jordan, economically and financially, if this decision is taken.
- Jordan's inability to create job opportunities or develop services, which increases unemployment and poverty and may lead to an internal crisis and deterioration of conditions in Jordan.
- The international community's inability to resettle Syrian refugees and open resettlement opportunities in light of the region's political ramifications, particularly the war on Ukraine, finding job opportunities for refugees, providing them with a decent life, and reuniting them with their families.

Refugees: Integration, Relocation or Return?

Samar Muhareb

Director, Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development (ARDD)

Executive Summary

Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development (ARDD) routinely engages in research and advocacy for durable solutions for refugees. Building on ARDD's 15 years of legal aid experience, multiple research projects, and analysis on the practicability of durable solutions according to international law, this policy brief outlines the main challenges to the three main solutions – return, resettlement and local inclusion- for refugees in Jordan. It puts forward 10 recommendations to guarantee an approach to durable solutions that allows refugees to see their rights protected:

1. **Repatriation** should remain a voluntary choice and refugees should be fully informed of the condition of repatriation. Efforts to achieve **political solutions** that aim to end conflicts and to the restoration of socio-economic and political stability in the home country are central to guarantee repatriation.
2. International advocacy for increasing **resettlement opportunities** is necessary to support countries of first refuge and it should be based on **localization** of initiatives aiming at raising awareness on the need for durable solutions, guaranteeing that the voice of refugees as well as that of the host community are heard at the international level.
3. **Local inclusion** should be based on equal treatment of all refugees disregarding their nationalities.

4. Invest on a radical **change of the overarching framework** under which the refugee issue is usually approached in order to favor a better reception and perception of the refugees' struggle. This perceptual and discursive change should become a priority for local and international actors and should be accompanied by the articulation of legal and administrative procedures that facilitate and support it.
5. Invest in quality data gathering through targeted regional research, particularly on **conditions post return**.
6. Make sure that **legal aid** provides full information about solutions for refugees, and that refugees are not discriminated against on any ground.
7. **Raise awareness** about the circumstances that push people to move across the region and beyond.
8. Advocate for Arab states to hold **regional discussions** on how to ensure that the region learns from the recent refugee crises (Iraq, Syria, Yemen) and capitalizes on it to be a place that saves and protects life.
9. All **stakeholders should be held accountable**, to help maintain the legal status of refugees during their life journey, until full protection is restored. **Transitional justice and reconciliation** should be at the basis of international efforts to restore suitable conditions for durable solutions.
10. **Lobby campaigns** at the international and regional level should pressure government in implementing better strategies of protection through a **bottom-up approach** that allows refugees to make their voice heard.

Introduction

What is the best approach to durable solutions for refugees in Jordan? This is the “one-thousand dollars” question that in recent years has seen experts such as scholars, humanitarian practitioners, policy makers and stakeholders such as INGOs and CBOs engaging with analyses of international legislative frameworks and assessments on refugee conditions on the ground, to outline possible solutions for refugees in Jordan.

Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development (ARDD) routinely engages in research and advocacy for durable solutions for refugees and it has been committed to initiate changes at the individual, community, and policy/service providers’ level that cumulatively creates an environment in which refugees can live a better life, access services and guarantee protection of their rights whether they remain in Jordan, return to home countries, or seek resettlement in a third country. This policy brief builds on ARDD decade long involvement in legal aid, data collection and analysis concerning refugee conditions in Jordan and the practicability of durable solutions according to international law, for protracted refugees in the country. It looks into the three main solutions envisaged by international conventions to refugees analyzing them within the specific context of Jordan. It put forwards recommendations to guarantee an approach to durable solutions that allows refugees to see their rights protected.

International Frameworks and Local Realities: What are the Solutions for Refugees in Jordan?

According to international law, durable solutions aim at ending the condition and status of “refugee” for individuals forced, by conditions such as wars, to leave their country, and allowing them to rebuild a life of dignity and safety. The international legal regime identifies three mechanisms to ensure the achievement of this goal: voluntary repatriation once conditions of safety in the home country are met; resettlement into third countries and integration – achievement of social and economic

inclusion - in the country of first refuge. It is important to highlight here that these options are not mutually exclusive: resettlement into a third country or the access to full economic opportunities and social services in the host country do not foreclose return to the country of origin.

The international legal approach to refugees has been further enhanced in more recent years, following the Syrian refugee crisis in 2015: in 2016 the UN general Assembly adopted the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (NYD), and in 2018 the Compact on Refugees (GCR) was also adopted. Both the NYD and the GCR make reference to, and annex a template for, a Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF). These documents all reaffirm the central role of international law in assuring solutions to the plight of refugees and, more importantly, they highlight the importance of a multi-stakeholder approach in resolving refugee problems as well as the need to implement procedures that promote and strengthen international responsibility sharing.

Through its long experience with refugees, providing them legal aid with the aim of guaranteeing protection and access to services, ARDD has developed an in-depth understanding of the limits and challenges that refugees face in seeking just and durable solutions. While Jordan has been a receiving country since the very first refugee wave in the Arab region more than 70 years ago, and has been continuing hosting people forced into exile ever since, the volume of the recent Syrian refugee crisis has highlighted the need to rethink durable solutions into a broader and overarching framework that addresses the challenges to guaranteeing decent life conditions and enjoyment of human rights, preventing discrimination and prioritizing protections of all asylum seekers.

Return. But where is Home?

Voluntary repatriation -once conditions of safety and dignified life are assured- is a fundamental right of refugees under international law. People who are forced to leave their homes because of violence, war and

fear, often aim at going back to what they left behind, with the hope of re-establishing a dignified life with the economic and social opportunities they had enjoyed before refugeeness. The status of refugee is intended as a temporary one that will be reversed as soon the violence and war end. However, as the case of the Syrian refugees in Jordan shows, the protracted nature of the crisis influences refugees' approach toward repatriation. UNHCR reports that between 2016 and 2021 63,770 Syrian refugees have voluntarily returned to their original homes from Jordan. These are returnees that were officially registered as such, but it is estimated that a high number of refugees returned informally. However, a recent study reported that only 19% of the Syrian refugees (interviewed for the study), want to return to Syria. The precarious economic conditions, the fear of political repercussions, the uncertainty of the security situation and also the lack of legal guarantees and documentation on land ownership, re-compensation and access to economic resources, make repatriation less feasible and desirable for refugees. Moreover, lack of knowledge on border control and policies makes refugees cautious even when they want to return: some Syrian refugees recalled being informed by police officers at the borders that they would not be able to re-enter Jordan again if they repatriate. Often, the lack of documentation, such as passports but also marriage or birth certificates for newly established families in Jordan, make it impossible for refugees to cross the border and formally return home. This is one of the main fields in which ARDD has invested providing legal assistance for undocumented refugees to formalize their status so to be able to return home might they want to do so.

Resettlement. The Option that is not an Option.

While not being connected to a right in and of itself, resettlement is a solution that aims at guaranteeing protection to the most vulnerable refugees. According to UNHCR, since 2014 only 311,064 (out of more than 5million registered refugees) in the whole Middle East, have been resettled.

However, resettlement is considered by refugees a suitable option: for example, two third of Iraqi refugees in Jordan, would apply for resettlement if they had the opportunity to do so. The limited resettlement places, and the several criteria that resettlement countries impose, make it accessible to a limited portion of refugee population: the number of refugees that can benefit from this option is as small as 1% of the refugee population. The number of refugees meeting resettlement criteria and severity of their vulnerabilities continue to escalate but the resettlement places remain limited. While reaching third countries is a favorite solution and often even a dream especially among young refugees - as the constant flux of people who risk everything to be smuggled across the Mediterranean seeking a better life in Europe, shows -, resettlement remains a utopic option for most of them.

Local Inclusion: the “Meanwhile” Strategy.

Given the high number of refugees in Jordan (only Syrians, the most recent population to seek refuge in Jordan, are more than 600 thousand officially registered and an estimated 700 thousand undocumented ones) and the unfeasibility, at least for now, to realistically invest on voluntary repatriation and resettlement, efforts toward better social and economic inclusion of refugees in Jordan has intensifies.

The kingdom has ratified international treaties and conventions that guarantee the right to education and health care for all individuals (regardless of their nationality) in the country. Along with international institutions and organizations such as ILO, IOM, UNHCR, and UNICEF, as well as with civil society organizations and international NGOs, Jordan has invested over the years in efforts to “universalize” easy access to these services and enable refugees to enjoy decent living conditions in the country. The 2016 policy that allows Syrian refugees – whether living in camps or in diverse governorates of the Kingdom – to work in several sectors of the local market without paying fees for work permits as instead required of other expatriate workers, was a positive improvement. This policy was in response to the recommendations of the 2016 Jordan

Compact on the Syrian crisis. However, refugees with other nationalities do not enjoy the same opportunity. UNHCR has considered Jordan an ideal host country for Syrian refugees over the past decade, praising the several efforts that have been made to guarantee inclusion. However, constraints and challenges remain: ARDD has pointed out to the complex socio-economic and legal factors that prevents the access to rights and services such as education and health for refugees. Lack of documentation strongly impacts refugee life in order to register in schools or being accepted in hospitals, refugees need to present their UNHCR card and the Ministry of Interior documents and many of them do not have the required papers and are in need of legal assistance to register with relevant institutions. The lack of knowledge on the legislative framework as well as on the competent institutions for accessing legal support remains a major obstacle for improving refugees' conditions and facilitating inclusion.

Thinking Forward: Facilitating Access to Durable Solutions for Syrian Refugees in Jordan

While the international legal regime has outlined a comprehensive approach to durable solutions, the experience of Syrian refugees in Jordan suggest that additional efforts are required at the local and international levels based on joint, coordinated action and policies towards the implementation of durable solutions.

ARDD has been advising governments and vulnerable groups on what could work as solutions to the plight of refugees. Based on its experience, ARDD recommends investing in the following actionable recommendations:

- 1. Repatriation should remain a voluntary choice and advocacy to prevent the practice of arbitrary or de facto re-entry restrictions should be a priority.**

Nonrefoulement should remain a central principle of government policies towards refugees. Refugees should be fully informed of the condition of repatriation and their ability to entry Jordan if conditions of safety are not met in the home country. To guarantee vo

luntary repatriation as a fundamental right of refugees, international institutions as well as regional actors should strongly invest in **political solutions** that aim to end conflicts and to the restoration of socio-economic and political stability in the home country. This would allow a safe repatriation and would fully enable refugees to enjoy their right of return.

2. Advocacy at the international level for increasing resettlement opportunities is fundamental for guaranteeing durable solutions to refugees.

The international community should take responsibility for providing just and fair life conditions in third countries to a larger number of refugees sustaining in this way the efforts made by countries of first refuge. Local civil society should play a stronger role in advocating for the rights of refugees, including the right to resettlement: **localization** of initiatives aiming at raising awareness on the need for durable solutions is central in guaranteeing that the voice of refugees as well as that of the host community are heard at the international level.

3. Local inclusion should be based on equal treatment of all refugees disregarding their nationalities.

Full access to services and job market should be guaranteed to all refugees. Fighting discrimination should be a government's priority.

4. Investing on a radical change of the overarching framework under which the refugee issues is usually approached.

A positive discourse and vision must be articulated and disseminated in order to favor a better reception and perception of the refugees' struggle. While this remains a complex and difficult shift, given the several economic, social, political, religious and even ethnic challenges that are usually associated with refugee crises and refugees' reception in host countries, this perceptual and discursive change should become a priority for local and international actors

and should be accompanied by the articulation of legal and administrative procedures in host countries that facilitate and support it.

5. Invest in quality data gathering through targeted regional research, particularly on conditions post return, to identify (a) the main challenges faced by refugees/returnees (b) the main options available to ensure voluntary return that do not make the returnee more vulnerable.

This would help enrich the research made available by UN, international organization and NGOs, as border-focused research would give precise idea about the number of refugees that cross borders. In view of the dangers posed while returning, including, often, incommensurable psychological impact, a well-coordinated policy including of CSOs and INGOs across borders is needed.

6. Make sure that legal aid provides full information about solutions for refugees, and that refugees are not discriminated against on any ground.

Refugees should be informed about their rights and opportunities to help approach solutions in an informed and consensual fashion. They should be put in a situation to always make a realistic informed decision about their 'being on the move'. It is critical that actors on the ground, both national and international, refrain from encouraging or creating, even unwittingly, patterns of discrimination in the opportunities afforded to non-nationals, particularly refugees, on the ground of their status, nationality and gender.

7. Raise awareness about the circumstances that push people to move across the region and beyond. Forced migrants should be granted asylum as a basis for durable solutions: (1) voluntary repatriation under the supervision of pertinent agencies, (2) local inclusion in the host country (which should always be a goal); (3) resettlement.

The larger public as well as selected government authorities should be informed about the circumstances that pushed „foreigners“ in to leave their countries. Foreigners, especially if asylum seekers, are entitled to protection and refugee status. The global compacts offer opportunities to governmental and non-governmental entities to debate and find constructive solutions together.

8. Advocate for Arab states to hold regional discussions on how to ensure that the region learns from the recent refugee crises (Iraq, Syria, Yemen) and capitalizes on it to be a place that saves and protects life. This should be reinforced by the pursuit of (1) integrated, humane and coordinated management of refugee questions, including durable solutions, (2) effective prevention of and response to the enforcement of any solution on refugees that is not fully informed and voluntary.

From its forced-upon role of „containment area“ of men and women unwanted in Europe as refugees or migrants, the Arab region must reposition itself as a place of protection where both citizens and foreigners are safe; the way Syrian refugees are accompanied including toward solution will be a case to determine both Jordan and other Arab countries' capacity to deal with these sensitive issues and to set a precedent that is far above practiced standards implemented in Europe.

9. All stakeholders should be held accountable, to help maintain the legal status of refugees during their life journey, until full protection is restored.

It is necessary to ensure the application of international law through local laws and policies, as well as through the rebalancing and remedial function of the courts to lessen the vulnerability of refugees. It is fundamental that **transitional justice and reconciliation** become central instruments to which international and regional actors refer for assuring the end of conflict and the restoration of stable relations among conflicting actors. This will allow addressing the refugee crisis at its roots and facilitate fair and just solutions. Enforcing accountability of the conflicting actors in compensating refugees for their material as well as emotional losses should remain a main goal of the international community.

10. International and regional institutions should invest in lobby campaigns to pressure government in implementing better strategies of protection and inclusion of refugees that can facilitate durable solutions.

It is fundamental that these strategies are designed with a **bottom-up approach** that allows refugees themselves as well as local civil society institutions to participate and **make their voice heard** so to assure the relevance of envisaged mechanisms of protections.

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