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The Jordan-Israel Peace Treaty at 25: A Slightly Tarnished, but Still Important, Silver Anniversary

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Twenty-five years after the signing of the Jordan-Israel peace treaty, the bilateral relationship is in a challenging phase, but nothing should obscure the crucial benefits strategic and security cooperation affords to both sides, and the centrality of the relations to each side's national security.

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Executive Summary

The treaty between Israel and Jordan in 1994 was the culmination of over thirty years of discreet engagement and cooperation, punctuated by periods of tension and conflict. It reflects a broad base of shared interests and of particular but complementary perspectives.

The relationship between Jordan and Israel is a strategic one, and its closeness is expressed mainly in the national security realm, where cooperation between the two countries is deep, wide and of paramount significance to both of the countries' leaderships. The two states share a long mutual border, but also a mutual pro-Western orientation, and, for decades and despite numerous regional changes, very similar threat perceptions. They therefore consult and cooperate on a host of regional issues.

The preservation and stability of Jordan's Hashemite regime, borders and sovereignty, is a key component of Israel's own national security. A stable Jordan prevents the establishment of a hostile regime or the spread of chaos on Israel's longest border, and serves as a trustworthy "doorkeeper" to the West Bank. From Jordan's part, relations with Israel enable Jordan not only to face regional and internal threats effectively, but to neutralize potential threats stemming from Israel itself, including the deep-seated fear that Israel will solve demographic pressures at Jordan's expense. The security connection enables many differences in other spheres to be addressed in a businesslike and de-escalatory way.

On the political side, the peace is not popular in Jordan, where the majority views it as "the King's", not "theirs". Little preparation of public opinion was done before its announcement, which was a surprise to the Jordanian population and elites. Opposition to the peace treaty serves as a "glue" for the opposition's disparate components, and as a socially and politically acceptable vehicle for criticizing the ruling family.

The Israeli-Palestinian issue is the primary issue preventing further development of bilateral relationships. King Abdullah is supportive of the two-state solution and opposes both Israeli government policies and American diplomatic initiatives which are seen as departing from this paradigm. In addition, continued violence and political impasse between the Palestinians and Israel, keeps Jordanian public opinion “on the boil”.

The Temple Mount is a recurring source of tension between the two countries. This is due, on the one side, to increased pressures within Israel to limit the power of the Jordanian-appointed *Waqf* (Islamic custodial trust), and to allow greater access by Jews. On the other side, King Abdullah has taken a much more active and public role as ‘Defender of the Holy Places in Jerusalem,’ largely in order to cement his domestic legitimacy and Islamic bona fides, especially in view of efforts by the Palestinian Authority, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Hamas to make inroads on the Temple Mount. This leads to an “escalation trap” regarding Jerusalem, where he is forced into a position of continually reacting to developments, which there is little ability to solve in a satisfactory fashion for long. This then has a negative effect on Jordanian attitudes towards Israel, which makes it in turn more costly politically for the regime to maintain the necessary ties. On the other hand, this is also a reason for Jordan to quietly seek the preservation of the status quo in Jerusalem.

On the economic side, the direct benefits of the peace have been scanty. Few if any of the many visionary projects bruited were implemented. Several major joint projects – especially the deal to supply gas from Israel’s gas fields to Jordan, and the Red-Dead Canal – hold out the promise of significant amelioration of key problems in Jordan’s economy. On these issues, where the regime perceives a powerful national interest, it is willing to expend political capital. While these mega-projects hold great potential, their very size and significance makes them a “lightning rod” for anti-Israel sentiment.

Jordan’s leadership is currently concerned about possible implications of the American peace initiative for Jordan’s interests and security. It feels that the preparations for the Trump Plan, and especially limited American coordination with Jordan and dependence on the Gulf States, indicate a lessening of Jordan’s regional role and importance for both the United States and Israel. The unveiling of the political part of the Trump Plan will be extremely sensitive for Jordan, since it could force the King to clearly voice opposition, angering a U.S. Administration which may well then punish Jordan for this position.

A stable long-term relationship requires sustained effort, investment of attention and affection, and understanding of the other side’s limitations and freedom of maneuver. Israel could do more, and could be more generous, on the issues important to the Jordanian leadership. One problem is that many Israelis, including senior ones, seem to take the longstanding relationship for granted, assume Jordan has no other good options, and look at the ties in narrow political and economic terms. However, while some costs of the relationship, especially of the major infrastructure projects, are ostensibly calculable, it is much more difficult to count the savings and benefits from twenty-five years of peace.

Israel’s leaders must step up and manage public expectations. Peace between governments, especially when one of the states is not a representative democracy, does not easily translate into

peace between peoples. The peace treaties with Jordan and Egypt likely would not have come into existence if their peoples were given a say. But the lack of open warmth in the relations, should not blind us to their necessity between close neighbors, their great and proven strategic worth, and the immense benefits they continue to provide to both.

The most plausible scenario for the near- to mid-term is “more of the same”. The leaderships and national security establishments will continue to consult and cooperate regarding regional developments and threats, Jordanians will continue to dislike the agreement, and Israelis will continue to feel bittersweet about a “stalled romance”.

In the optimistic scenario, gas begins to flow and electricity prices in Jordan drop; the Red-Dead project is approved by the new Israeli government; security ties remain good; and the bilateral relations continues as they have, but slightly better. Jerusalem continues to be the major irritant, but both sides know to wall off their tensions there from other vital components of the relationship, with Israel abstaining from provocative initiatives. Even in this scenario, however, it is a step too far to expect a significant warming of the relationship at the popular or cultural levels. There are three pessimistic scenarios:

- Political developments in Israel, including vis-a-vis the Palestinians, significantly abrade Jordanian sensitivities regarding what it sees as vital interests, and increase criticism, which might turn violent, of the King’s policy towards Israel. Such developments may be: moves by a new Israeli government to annex settlements or parts of Area C, or to change the status quo on the Temple Mount; widespread violence in Judea and Samaria and the Kingdom following the publication of the Trump Plan; an incident with Muslim casualties on the Temple Mount; or an incident with Jordanian casualties on the border.
- Internal tensions, due to criticism of corruption, economic hardships, and desires for political reform, increase further, and are expressed in a more massive and violent way than they have been until now. In such a case, deflecting the criticism by freezing or suspending the gas deal with Israel, other bilateral agreements or even the treaty itself, in order of probability, could be seen as the regime as the “the least bad option”.
- The most dangerous is for the two to combine, and for a severe development on the Israeli-Jordanian axis to become a rallying point for the disenchanted.

Introduction

On July 25, 1994, at the White House, King Hussein of Jordan and Prime Minister Yitzchak Rabin of Israel, witnessed by U.S. President Bill Clinton, signed the Washington Declaration, formally ending the 46-year state of war between Jordan and Israel. Three months later, on October 26, on the joint border in the Aravah Rift Valley – amidst a minor sandstorm – the leaders of Israel and Jordan signed the bilateral peace treaty.



photo source: GPO

The peace treaty established diplomatic relations, opened the way for significant economic ties and joint infrastructure projects, and codified – and expanded greatly – a cooperative security regime that had existed for many years. Significantly, it also enshrined the “special role” status of Jordan in the Temple Mount Compound (*al-Haram al-Sharif*) through the agency of the Waqf – thus securing for the Hashemites (once the custodians of Mecca and Medina) a unique position in the world of Islam.

However, twenty-five years later, the relationship is still characterized in some respects as a “cold peace”, and despite progress on some issues (such as energy supply), the situation is worse than when it was established. There is a great deal of disappointment and disillusionment on both sides with the scarcely visible “fruits of peace”. On the Jordanian side, especially, formal relations have not progressed to a significant lessening of popular mistrust and hostility. In the past two years, there have been repeated crises regarding the Temple Mount, protests and parliamentary activity in Jordan against the purchase of Israeli gas, the shooting at the Israeli embassy and temporary suspension of relations, the Jordanian announcement that it would not renew the annexes regarding Zofar and Naharayim, Jordanian anger at the opening of the Ramon Airport, and tension over pro-Israeli American policies, *inter alia*. It appears as if the bilateral relationship is suffering significant reverses and is under growing threats, and commentators and observers, as well as politicians and statesmen, have raised fears for its future.

The purpose of this study is not to present the history of 25 years of Jordanian-Israeli relations. It is to provide a clear-eyed, balanced picture of their current status, of their continued importance for both sides and for regional stability, and of potential threats and pressures challenging their future.[1]

The Strategic and Security Dimension

The treaty between Israel and Jordan in 1994 did not happen in a vacuum. It was the culmination of over thirty years of discreet engagement and cooperation, albeit punctuated by periods of tension and conflict – and two bouts of all-out war, in 1948 and 1967. And it came on a broad base of shared interests, and of particular but complementary perspectives. These have been, for the most part, only deepened over the past quarter century.

The relationship between Jordan and Israel is predominantly a strategic one, and its closeness is expressed predominantly in the national security realm. In this sphere, cooperation between the two countries is deep, wide and of paramount significance to both of the countries' leaderships. For each of them, the relationship with the other is one of its most important strategic assets. The two states share a long mutual border, but also a mutual pro-Western orientation, and, for decades and despite numerous regional changes, very similar threat perceptions.

The first source of strategic commonality are the threats to both posed by aspects of Palestinian nationalism. While being, as we shall see, one of the primary irritants in the bilateral relationship, this also one component of the “glue” which has bound the two states. The PLO and the radical Palestinian organizations were for decades a mutual enemy, and in the past two decades, the two neighbors both face an unstable political entity between them, and especially fear the rise of Hamas or other radical Islamist groups to power there. Both countries are today also concerned about the succession to Abu Mazen in the Palestinian Authority.

Another joint interest is their fear of radicalism, whether of the Nasserist, the Shia radical, or the jihadist variety. Jordan's greatest fear is of regional instability which could challenge one of its five borders, three of which – with Iraq, Syria and the West Bank – have been threatened for long periods of its history. Radicals may also link up with and foment internal unrest. This concern is shared across the river.

Almost since the establishment of the State of Israel, the preservation and stability of the Hashemite regime in Jordan, and the security of the kingdom's borders and sovereignty, have been seen as a crucial Israeli national interest and key component of Israel's own national security. The greater the external threats to Jordan grew, the more its relations with Israel improved. This is because, for Israel, a stable and Hashemite Jordan prevents the establishment of a hostile regime, or chaos on Israel's longest border, and serves as a stable “doorkeeper” to the West Bank. Jordan allows Israel a buffer, “strategic depth”, between it and threats stemming from Iraq, Iran and to a large extent, Syria. General Amos Gilad, former head of the politico-military branch in the Israeli Defense Ministry, and formerly a key interlocutor with Arab allies, defines the border between the Jordanian desert and Iraq as “Israel's de facto security border”. [2]

This being the case, Israeli support of and assistance to Jordan in securing its borders directly contributes to protecting Israel's own borders. The Jordanian army and security services are a key component of Israeli border security along Israel's longest border. There has not been a successful terrorist infiltration of the Israeli border with Jordan since before the peace treaty was signed, and has not been a cross-border attack since the incident in March 1997 when a Jordanian soldier opened fire and killed seven schoolgirls in an area under Jordanian sovereignty accessible to Israeli visitors.

There is intimate and daily cooperation between the militaries on both side of the border, which extends from the tactical to senior levels (the military liaison relationship between the two sides dates from 1982). This enables Israel to designate only a limited amount of manpower (one and half brigades) to the entire Jordanian border, by far Israel's longest. The same area is controlled on the Jordanian side by two military commands (Central and Southern), each under the command of a general; their combined forces comprise several brigades. Israeli and Jordanian pilots have trained together in Red Flag air exercises held in the United States, and Jordanian Air Force F-16s are reported to have been refueled from Israeli Air Force tankers on their way to the exercise.

From the Jordanian side, continued stability against external threats depends to a large extent on the Israeli "security umbrella" and on Israeli assistance. The security relationship, which includes use of the security channel to carry on diplomatic connections, predates the official diplomatic relationship by at least thirty years. Israel passed information to Jordan in 1958 about a Nasserist plot to assassinate the king and foment a coup. It also used aerial demonstrations, reserve mobilization, and ground deployments to deter additional Syrian military intervention on the side of the PLO during the "Black September" crisis in 1970, when King Hussein, under threat from PLO military power and subversion within the kingdom, broke the organization's power in Jordan. Jordan has provided Israel with crucial information about threats to its national security, including warning, on 25 September 1973, that Syria and Egypt were preparing to attack Israel shortly.^[3] Concern about repercussions inside Jordan, and trust in King Hussein's undertaking not to permit Iraqi forces to enter Jordan, are reported to have played a major part in Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's decision not to retaliate against Iraqi missile strikes in 1991.^[4]

Relations with Israel also enable Jordan to neutralize potential threats which may stem from Israel itself. These include the threat encompassed by the Jordanian phrase "the alternate homeland" (*al-watan al-badil*), or in its Israeli form, "Jordan is Palestine". This position – which holds that the division of Palestine in 1921 created one Jewish State, later Israel, and one Arab state, Jordan, which is the Palestinian homeland – has been rejected by mainstream Israeli policy makers for many years. It does however recur often on the margins of the political debate, and always raises subterranean fears in the Jordanian leadership. As Jordanian journalist Osama al-Sharif notes, "Jordan views the treaty as an insurance against any plans to turn the kingdom into an alternative homeland for the Palestinians, the so-called 'Jordan Option', which some far right Israeli politicians have been espousing in the past and even today".^[5] Jordan also fears mass movements, and even expulsions, of Palestinians from the West Bank to Jordan in the event of a Palestinian-Israeli war. In addition, Jordan fears collateral damage resulting from uncoordinated use of Jordanian territory or airspace in an Israeli conflict with Syria, Iran or Iraq. All these

concerns can be addressed more effectively in the context of an intimate, collaborative relationship.

“It is a very important relationship for Israel,” writes Nathan Thrall, a Middle East analyst with the International Crisis Group, “there is very intense intelligence cooperation and Jordan has probably the best intelligence service in the region.”^[6]

Jordan’s security cooperation with Western countries, including Israel, became even greater after the November 2005 terrorist attacks carried out by Al-Qaeda’s Abu Musab al-Zarqawi in Amman, and the Kingdom’s intense activity against the jihadi threat. In addition, in the early 2000’s Jordan became more concerned about the Iranian, and the greater Shia threat to both its own and to regional security: King Abdullah spoke in late 2004, against the background of the collapse of Iraq, about the danger posed by the “Shia Crescent” to regional security. Jordan reportedly served as a “matchmaker” between Israeli and Gulf Arab leaders regarding the Shia threat, and hosted meetings between them in Amman.^[7] While Iran is seen today by Jordan as a second-tier threat, this is only because others are even more immediate and pressing: Jordan still does see Iran, and Shia actors in the region, as long-term threats.

The already close bonds between the two countries’ security communities were only strengthened by the collapse of order in Syria, beginning in 2011. Jordan became a hub for Western and Arab surveillance of Syria, air operations and clandestine operations within Syria, as well as coordinated, covert security assistance to the Syrian opposition. This last was carried out through the Military Operations Center (MOC), or “operations room”, centered in Amman between 2013-2016, and staffed by U.S., Jordanian, Saudi and Emirati officers.^[8] Israel and Jordan were (and are) reportedly both concerned with the Iranian and Hezbollah presence in Syria, which poses a threat to their borders. In addition, the founding of ISIS in February 2014 and its rapid conquests of northern Syria and northwestern Iraq likewise posed a threat to Jordan. ISIS’s encroachment of the Jordanian border from the directions of Iraq and Syria raised the risk of ISIS incursions, and heightened security cooperation with Israel. Israel is reported to have helped build a ground barrier and a smart, early warning fence on the Jordanian–Iraqi and Jordanian–Syrian borders.^[9] Israel transferred 16 AH-1 Cobra attack helicopters, withdrawn from service in the IAF, to Jordan in July 2015 to enhance security on the Syrian and Iraqi borders.^[10] In talks with US officials in 2014, Israeli diplomats reportedly said Israel would be prepared to take military action to save the Hashemite Kingdom if it came under ISIS attack.^[11] The two countries are also reported to have closely cooperated on “deconfliction” with Russian forces in Syria after Russian violations of Israeli airspace in 2016; King Abdullah is quoted as having told American congressional leaders “when I speak to the Russians about the South [of Syria], I speak for the Israelis as well”.^[12]

The security relationship is, as Gilad notes, the “core” of the bilateral relationship, and its most significant and intimate part. While both countries are closely allied with the United States, the superpower is distant from the region, and has its own interests and priorities. The very longevity of the security relationship, and its survival through political ups and downs, is a key component in its robustness. It is tried and true. The deeper and wider these connections are, the sturdier the relationship as a whole will be. Much effort is put therefore into insulating the security and military relationships from the vicissitudes of the political relations. The existence of a security

connection enables many differences in other spheres – as we shall see regarding the Embassy incident of 2017 and the tensions on the Temple Mount – to be addressed in a businesslike and de-escalatory way. Also, the fact that the military and security leadership on both sides understand the true nature of the strategic relationship, leads them to play a restraining role during periods of political tension. As al-Sharif notes, “there is a belief in Amman that Israeli intelligence and security bodies still defend that relationship and Jordan’s domestic stability”.

On both sides, the overall relationship is managed by the chief executive, assisted by a small number of senior security officials. While specific bilateral issues are handled by professional ministries or even by local authorities on both sides of the border (at which level there is quite a bit of ad hoc cooperation), all issues of political significance and sensitivity are handled by the King of Jordan and the Prime Minister of Israel, or their personal representatives. On the Israeli side, the heads of the two intelligence services, as well as the Prime Minister’s diplomatic and national security advisors, have been key players. This is because such a large part of the substantive cooperation is in the security field, but also because the Jordanians prefer that almost all the key content of the bilateral relationship be handled through covert, and therefore discreet, channels.^[13] Israeli diplomats in Jordan have continually complained about the existence of parallel, more significant, channels of communication and coordination, often opaque to the Foreign Ministry, and the resulting marginalization of the formal diplomatic ties.^[14]

It can be argued that the excellence of the security relationship, and the predilection to handle most of the most significant issues through discreet channels, may actually have a negative effect on the overt political relationship, since tension in the political and economic spheres can be dismissed as posturing for public consumption. The gap between the “real”, discreet relationship, and the overt one, is seen by knowledgeable Israeli sources as greater now than ever before. Gilad estimates that as the political and public relations worsen, the importance of the discreet security relationship will only increase. However, he adds, “a stable peace cannot only be based on one leg”.

The Political Dimension

The peace treaty with Israel in 1994 was a move by King Hussein to cement his legacy, to remove a key challenge to Jordanian strategy and foreign policy for his successor, to adapt Jordanian policy in light of the separate peace process that the PLO and Israel had begun in Oslo, without Jordanian knowledge.^[15] It was also part of a larger effort by King Hussein to rehabilitate relations with the United States, which had reached a nadir due to the Jordanian refusal to join the coalition against Saddam Hussein in 1990-91. In that he succeeded: it opened up new sources of urgently needed economic and military assistance from the West (see economic chapter below), and cemented the kingdom’s position at the head of the roster of pro-Western Middle Eastern states.



photo Credit: Saar Yaacov, GPO

The treaty with Israel came as a surprise to the Jordanian population and elites. Little preparation of public opinion was done before its announcement: Jordanians had known little or nothing about the secret meetings and understandings between the King and Israeli leaders over the decades before the peace treaty was announced. As Jordanian analyst Farooq Mitha notes, “One Jordanian official pointed to the decades when the Jordanian public was told to consider Israel to be the enemy — then all of a sudden to be Israel’s friend... While visionaries like King Hussein could make the transition with ease, it was never easy for the public ...”.[16]

Apart perhaps for in its immediate aftermath, the peace treaty has never been popular among the Jordanian “street,” as well as among intellectuals, professional associations, and parliamentarians.[17] Calls for its abrogation have existed almost since it was signed, and almost every crisis between the countries, or indeed between Israel and the Palestinians leads to calls for the closure of the Israeli embassy. Already in 1996-1997, developments between Israel and the Palestinians (the building of the Har Homa neighborhood in Jerusalem, and especially the “Western Wall” Tunnel riots), the Israeli Operation “Grapes of Wrath” in Lebanon (especially the Qana incident), and tensions in Israeli-Jordanian relations themselves (the refusal of Israel to allow Arafat to fly to Gaza on the King’s plane and the King’s irate response, and especially the

attempted assassination in Amman of then Hamas Political Bureau Head Khaled Mashaal) erased much of what public pro-treaty sentiment existed. Political changes in Israel over the years undoubtedly contributed as well, from the heady days of 1994 under Yitzhak Rabin (with whom the King felt a close personal bond), through his assassination, the Second Intifada and the failure of the Palestinian-Israeli peace process, the lengthy war of attrition with Hamas in Gaza, and the predominance of Likud-led governments since 1996 (viewed by Jordanians as indicating a shift to the right in Israeli society). Former Israeli ambassador to Jordan Shimon Shamir notes, too, that by February 1999, both King Hussein (who passed away that month), and former Crown Prince Hassan (who was removed from his post in January, after 45 years), who were the driving forces behind the peace agreement and the greatest believers in the “warm peace”, were no longer influencing Jordanian policy.^[18]

As Beverly Milton-Edwards notes, “although it has been more than twenty years since Jordan and Israel signed a historic peace agreement to end decades of war, many visitors to the region could be forgiven for thinking that the two sides remain enemies; particularly at a popular level”. Most Jordanians appear not to share their Kings’ acceptance of Israel, and view the peace as “the King’s”, not “theirs”.^[19]

The peace treaty is also widely perceived in Jordan as having halted a promising, if controlled, political reform process begun in 1989 (including the first parliamentary elections in more than 25 years, termination of martial law in 1991 and legalization of political parties in 1992), due to the regime’s perceived need to suppress opposition to the peace treaty.^[20] To a certain extent, in Jordan, democratization and the peace with Israel are contradictory vectors.

The “anti-normalization” campaign, led by the Muslim Brotherhood-dominated professional associations, parts of the media and the Parliament, is one of key characteristics of the wider relationship between the two states. It limits the people-to-people, indeed all non-leadership and non-security, aspects of the newly formalized relationship, and singles out individuals and organizations which engage with Israel or Israeli entities and individuals and carries out public “naming and shaming”. The campaign has to a large extent isolated the Israeli embassy from contact with its usual interlocutors in elites, intelligentsia and business circles, and forced support for the peace treaty with Israel and engagement with Israel “underground”.

It is therefore difficult to assess the true extent of support for the peace treaty in Jordan, and to delineate the “pro-Israel constituency”. Some knowledgeable (but pessimistic) Israeli experts put it at one-tenth to one quarter of the population. One recent poll puts support for cooperation with Israel “even before an agreement with the Palestinians”, on such issues as technology, counter-terrorism, and containing Iran, at 26%.^[21] Al-Sharif notes that “no one will come out to support ties with Israel except perhaps former prime minister Abdel Salam Al-Majali who negotiated the treaty. He defends it by saying that it had secured Jordanian borders and rights. Few would dare agree in public. If there is a constituency that defends ties with Israel it prefers to stay in the dark [and is composed of] businessmen who had benefitted through common projects”.^[22]

As Dr. Abdullah Swalha, of Amman’s Center for Israel Studies, notes, it is difficult to express views freely in Jordan regarding relations with Israel, “without worries from the dictatorship of the majority”. There is in his view a dearth of objective information on the basis of which

citizens could make informed judgements, which stems from lack of detailed information provided by the government regarding bilateral cooperation, due to fear of public reaction. This leads to a situation where people don't know if what they see in the media is real, or only reflects opinions of the people who monopolize the media outlets. There is, he notes, a lack of statistics, and of objective and professional public opinion polls that could indicate if the people reject or accept some kind of relationship with Israel and under what circumstances they would agree with the government regarding its relationship with Israel.[23]

On the broader level, criticism of the peace treaty with Israel, anti-Zionism, and calls for curtailing “normalization” of relations and even to abolish the treaty itself, form a common denominator – in fact, one of the only common denominators – and a “glue”, for opposition and protest movements of many stripes: leftist, Pan-Arab, liberal-democratic, progressive and Islamic. As Curtis Ryan notes, the various opposition parties and movements are more likely to agree on foreign policy issues, especially regarding the Palestinians and Iraq, than on domestic ones. He quotes a Jordanian analyst, Nassem Tarawneh, who sees Israel as the “easiest and safest distraction for the masses”. [24] Opposition to the peace treaty to Israel is not only deeply felt, but also may serve as a socially and politically acceptable vehicle for indirect criticism of the ruling family, since it is perceived as being their venture.

The growth in Jordan of civil society and open discourse, and the uncontrollable increase in transparency, makes it more costly for the regime to pursue policies which are not popular. There is much more consideration for public opinion than in the past. It is important to note that social media has become very significant in the Kingdom (despite steps to limit it since 2012-2013). The Palace is very cognizant of it, and reacts to it. Israeli officials and experts complain that the regime conceals the benefits of the peace with Israel, and doesn't strongly make the economic and strategic arguments to counter the critics: defending the relationship with Israel openly has only costs and no benefits, in internal political terms.

Swalha assesses that both sides have failed to mobilize their peoples for peace and to “build a culture of peace” because they do not want to speak up about the significant cooperation and coordination that do exist between the sides, because of possible popular reactions. “The ordinary people in Jordan do not know about these projects and the government does not speak out about these projects ... [This is] because they believe that this will make our people angry that Jordan normalizes its relations with Israel, despite the fact that there is no resolution of the Israeli- Palestinian conflict”.

The Economic Dimension

The peace treaty with Israel led to the transformation of the Jordanian economy. After the peace treaty was signed, the United States initiated a series of foreign-debt relief and restructuring arrangements, with a total value of more than \$3 billion (including forgiving over 700 million dollars in debt to the U.S.). Washington also implemented, at first, a highly beneficial Qualified Industrial Zones (QIZ) – as detailed below. Later, the U.S. signed a free-trade agreement with Jordan. Washington also encouraged lending by international organizations. In addition, the

treaty opened the floodgates of U.S. economic and military assistance to Jordan. In 1993, Washington provided Amman with just \$35 million in economic support funds; the 2017 figure was \$832 million. Similarly, Jordan received just \$9 million in U.S. Foreign Military Financing in 1993, compared to \$470 million in 2017. Total bilateral U.S. aid to Jordan through 2017 amounted to approximately \$20.4 billion. Currently, Jordan is the third-largest recipient of annual U.S. foreign aid globally, after Afghanistan and Israel, with 1.5 billion dollars in economic and military aid annually.[\[25\]](#)

Jordan has, from 1994 until the last decade, become one of the most advanced Arab economies in terms of economic liberalization, technology and services, and integration into the global economy. In the first decade of this century, Jordan's economy had annual real growth of six percent, its exports increased four-fold, its GDP per capita grew 2.5 times, and unemployment dropped.[\[26\]](#)

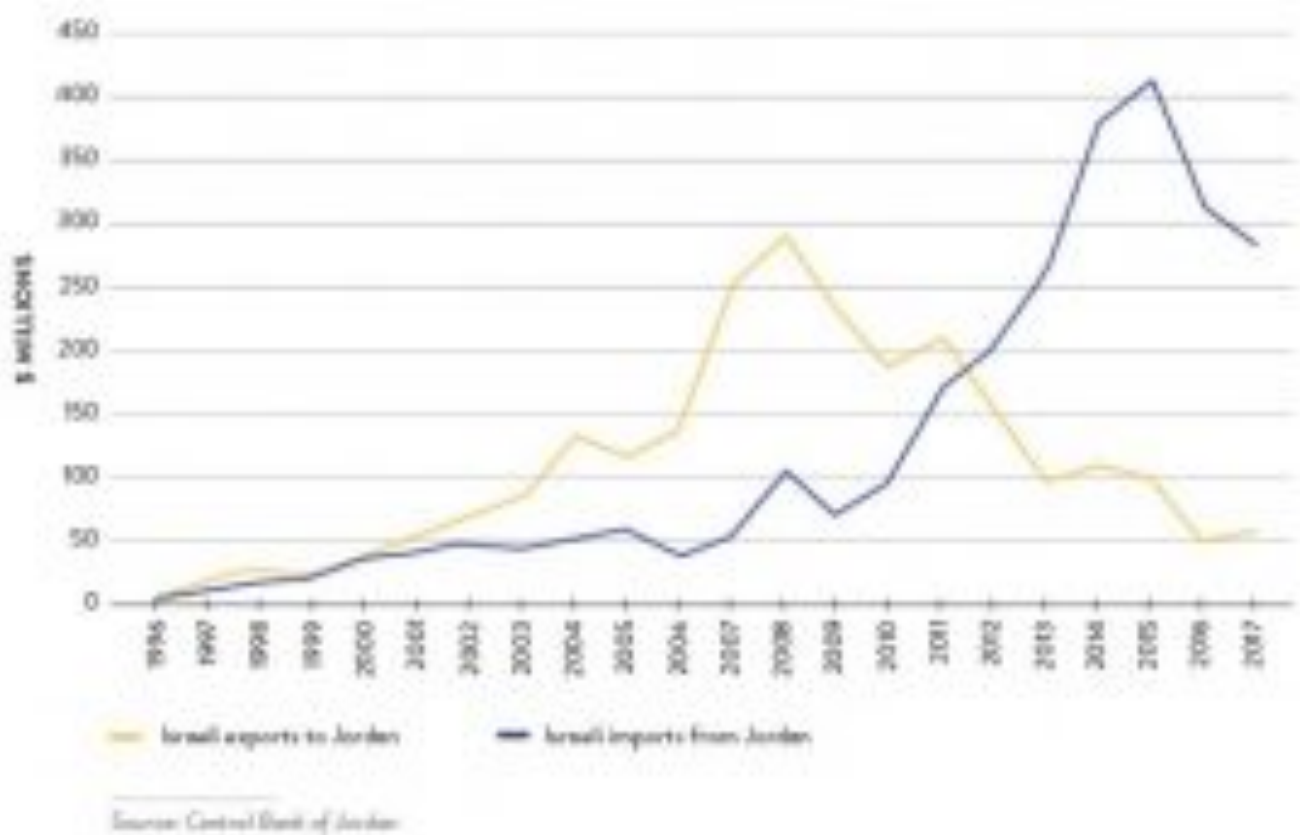
However, since 2010-2011 Jordan is facing a significant worsening of its economic condition, due largely to the large number of refugees (estimated variously from 760,000 to 1.5 million, or 9-18 % of the population, at a cost estimated by the World Bank at 2.5 billion USD annually) it has admitted in the past decade. Debt is at 96 percent of GDP (the second largest public debt:GDP ratio in the region, after Lebanon); growth is two percent; unemployment is at 18%, with youth unemployment around 35 percent; exports in 2014-2016 were at the same level as in 2010. The IMF and other international donors have been pushing for multi-year measures – including price increases, subsidy cuts, and tax rises – to reduce debt and to rein in the public sector, which employs two out of three Jordanians. This, as well as public discontent with the cost of living and perceived corruption, led to large-scale non-violent public protests in June 2018, in the wake of which the prime minister was dismissed and the planned austerity measures were frozen.

Bilateral Economic Cooperation

One of the early successes of bilateral (actually, trilateral) economic cooperation were the Qualifying Industrial Zones (QIZs). In 1997, the QIZ agreement was signed between Israel, Jordan and the United States, with the aim of encouraging business cooperation and thus advancing the peace process. This agreement (and a similar one with Egypt) afforded duty-free access to the U.S. market for goods produced cooperatively, with certain levels of Israeli and Jordanian content. The QIZ program was a major driver of economic growth for Jordan, especially in creating an export sector (textiles were still the largest export item – 21% of total – in 2018). In 13 QIZs factories primarily funded by Asian investment and predominantly populated by guest workers from Asian countries (whose poor work conditions raised a clamor in Jordan) co-produced apparel products with partner operations in Israel. Over four years, the program contributed an amount equivalent to 30% of Jordan's total GDP growth. The QIZ agreement also played an important role in the development of a widespread network of industrial estates, free-trade zones and special development zones, which has become a vital platform for export-oriented industrial activity, as well as in investment and employment in peripheral districts in the north and south of Jordan, where it directly and indirectly created an estimated 60,000 jobs.[\[27\]](#)

In 2001 the United States and Jordan negotiated a free trade agreement (only the fourth that the U.S. signed worldwide, after Israel, Canada and Mexico) that went into effect that same year. This meant that Jordan no longer had to co-produce with Israel in order to eliminate tariffs on its exports to the United States. Jordanian exporters gradually moved from the QIZ framework to the framework of this agreement, phasing out Israeli involvement in the industries developed in the QIZ, though, as noted, continuing to use the infrastructure and contacts developed in them. Israeli firms shifted to the easier (and more secure) route of producing in China and the Far East, and Israeli exports to Jordan dropped from 200-250 million dollars a year in the early 2000s to 100 million in 2013-2015.[\[28\]](#)

Israel exported 58.6 million dollars worth of goods to Jordan in 2017 (predominantly gas and clothing) – 0.1 percent of Israel’s exports and 0.28 percent of Jordanian imports, and imported 294 million dollars worth – chiefly plastics and electrical goods and components – 0.47 percent of Israeli imports. A significant, but undetermined, part of these imports (estimated at two thirds) is re-export – starting in the last decade – from Jordan of goods originating in other Arab countries, especially in the Gulf, which do not have formal relations with Israel. While exports to Israel were in 2017 3.6% of Jordan’s total exports, exports from domestic sources, as opposed to re-exports, were probably around 1-1.5 percent.[\[29\]](#)



Israeli-Jordanian Trade in Goods, 1996–2017 (Gal and Rock 2018)

Trade in services is also reported to be low: Jordan exports roughly \$100 million in services to Israel – less than 2 per cent of total Jordanian exports of non-factor services, and about 1 per cent if Jordanian workers' compensation is included.^[30] Much of the service trade is tourism: there are over thirty flights weekly between Israel and Amman. Israeli tourism to Jordan fluctuates according to security considerations, and consists mostly of Arab Israelis, and of day-trippers from Eilat to Petra and Aqaba; it reached 218,000 Israeli tourists in 2013. On the other hand, Jordanian tourism to Israel is negligible, and subject to strict security vetting, leading to extremely long waits to receive visas. The dichotomy in the visa regime between the ease in which Israelis can obtain on-the-spot visas to Jordan at the border entries, and the extreme difficulty for Jordanians – including businessmen – to obtain visas to Israel, is an ongoing source of friction in the bilateral relations. According to the Israeli Ministry of Tourism, 12,363 Jordanians visited in 2018, which was less than one half of one percent of all tourists entering Israel (and a 38 percent drop from two years before); a total of 81,500 Jordanians visited Israel between 2009 and 2014. The service trade also notably includes the attendance of universities in Jordan by thousands of Israeli Arab students.

The Jordanian public had great expectations that the peace agreement would bring about a rapid improvement in the economic situation and standard of living in Jordan. However, as noted, the direct, bilateral economic benefits of the peace have been scanty so far. Already during the second half of the 1990s, it became clear that some of the bigger and more ambitious joint plans had no economic or environmental feasibility, and that Israel had no real intention to implement them. Shamir writes that dozens of proposed cooperative projects were bruited with much fanfare, of which he notes that not one has been implemented. He opines that the projects were too many, too ambitious, too expensive, not thought through, and did not enjoy the support of various components of the Israeli bureaucracy.^[31] Many of the many sections on economic and civil cooperation included in the Israeli-Jordanian peace agreement and its annexes (as well as some 15 other agreements signed in 1995-1997) have not been, or only partially been implemented. One Israeli expert writes that “on the Israeli side, the reasons for not realizing the potential of political and economic relations are a mixture of indifference, bureaucracy and unwillingness to invest in these areas the effort and attention invested in the security relations.”^[32]

From Israel's point of view, Jordan was seen as providing a potential springboard and bridge into huge potential markets for its products and technology in the Arab World, especially the Gulf. This has not been realized in a significant manner.

There are some bright spots in the economic relationship:

- Since November 2012, as the Syrian Civil War cut off land access from Jordan to markets in Europe, especially Turkey – a not insignificant trading partner accounting for 2.5% of Jordanian exports and 3.5 percent of imports – the two countries have reached a discreet agreement under which these goods have transited the Israeli port of Haifa. This channel is especially important for Jordanian agricultural exports to Turkey and Western markets. Over ten thousand trucks a year (versus 3500 in 2011) make the 80 km. trip between Haifa and the border crossing at Sheikh Hussein, with security checks but without customs fees.^[33] This saves Jordanian firms millions of dollars in shipping from

Aqaba through the Suez Canal. However, imports through Sheikh Hussein are handled “back-to-back”, that is, containers must be unpacked and loaded onto Jordanian trucks: this is in order to prevent the shorter Israeli route from further negatively impacting the port of Aqaba.

- A bilateral agreement allows over 2000 Jordanian workers to cross the border each day to work in housekeeping in the hotel industry in Eilat, alleviating a local labor shortage. They are compensated according to Israeli labor laws (at much higher salaries than in Jordan), and receive health insurance and benefits like pensions.

One of the main joint economic projects on the agenda today is the “Jordan Gateway Project”. This plan, first bruited in 1999, is based on two economic zones near the northern Sheikh Hussein border crossing, one in Israeli territory and one in Jordanian. Each of the zones would be surrounded by a fence, with security and customs control over a single entrance/exit. The two zones would be connected by a bridge spanning the Jordan River (the international border), and would together form a cross-border enclave which will comprise a free-trade zone managed by a joint directorate. Raw and partially-finished materials would enter on either side, and would then undergo processing/manufacturing in the industrial zone on the Jordanian side, and logistics handling on the Israeli side. Within the boundaries of the project, there would be free movement between the two countries, with border controls only at the exit to the other country. This situation which would allow contact and trade between Israeli and Arab companies and businessmen. Goods which were processed within the FTZ and contain sufficient added content (10-18 per cent), would then leave either side, labelled as product of either country, for shipment. In this way, Jordan would achieve better access, through Israel, to European markets, and Israel would gain access to the Arab market. The project is to be developed and managed by private sector elements in both countries, without third-country assistance.



The Bridge at the Jordan Gateway Project. Source: author

The industrial zone on the Jordanian side is already functioning, at this stage solely as a Jordanian free enterprise zone (enjoying some Jordanian tax and labor law exemptions), and seven companies (some jointly Israeli-owned) are already functioning there. The bridge has been completed, but is not open. The employment/logistical zone on the Israeli side does not yet exist, and a tender is expected to be issued for its concessionaire, after which infrastructure work will be begun; its completion is (optimistically) projected to be three years after award of the tender. Ideas abound for creation of convention centers, medical centers and educational institutions within the enclave, but its progress, especially on the Israeli side, has been sluggish, with actual progress (slightly increased since 2012-2013, with a government resolution on the project in October 2013) outstripped by rhetoric.[\[34\]](#)

Several major joint projects hold out the promise of significant amelioration of key problems in Jordan's economy. These include the deal to supply gas from Israel's Mediterranean gas fields to

Jordan, and the major infrastructure project known as the Red-Dead Canal, which will provide significant amounts of desalinated water to Jordan's thirsty cities. Jordan is ranked the fourth most water deprived country in the world with a water deficit of approximately 565 MCM per annum.^[35]

It is important to note that budget deficit growth in Jordan (5.5 % annually) is fed by the huge deficits of the electric company and the water authority, which makes the major projects with Israel on gas and water crucial to the Kingdom's economic health. As noted above, on these two issues, where the regime perceives a powerful national interest, as on security, it is willing to expend political capital. While these mega-projects hold great potential for significant economic and other benefits on both sides, their very size and significance makes them conspicuous and a "lightning rod" for anti-Israel sentiment on the Jordanian side, and makes disagreements and delays in their implementation into major sources of political tension.

The Gas Deal

In 2016, Jordan's state-owned National Electric Power Company signed a 15-year, 10 billion USD with Noble Energy, the American majority owners of Israel's Leviathan gas field, to purchase 45 billion cubic metres of gas, which would be pumped to Jordan via a new pipeline connecting the two countries' existing gas transport infrastructures.^[36] The pipeline will be completed in 2019, and provision of 8.5 million cubic metres of gas daily – over 85 percent of Jordan's daily needs – will begin in early 2020.^[37] Jordan had previously (like Israel) imported gas from Egypt via a pipeline, which was disrupted in 2013 by terrorist activity. The deal ensures a stable, long-term supply of energy at a preferential price: the Jordanian government estimates the annual savings from the deal to the kingdom's fuel bill at close to one billion dollars. This is crucial for Jordan's future economic development, in view of the contribution of energy imports to Jordan's balance of payments crisis, the steady increase – 6-7 percent annually – in demand for electricity; and the need to cut energy subsidies as part of the economic stabilization package, leading to much criticized rises in the cost of electricity.

Israel, for its part, sees the multi-year gas deal with Jordan (and the possibility of a similar deal with Egypt) as part of its strategy of utilizing its new-found energy resources to achieve regional strategic goals, of cementing its relations with its treaty partners. It also seeks to expand the scope and "fruits" of the peace between the countries out of the security realm and into wider, and more visible, areas. This is reflected in the creation of the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum in January 2019, encompassing Israel and Jordan as well as Egypt, the Palestinian Authority, Cyprus, Greece and Italy (as noted below).

The gas deal has been extremely controversial in Jordan, and has, starting in 2014, mobilized a diverse, broad-based coalition of activists, bridging religious, class and ethnic differences, to halt it; the regime is reported to have been surprised by the level of opposition to the deal. Arguments against the gas deal ranged from ideological to economic, but usually comprised a blend of the different rationales. Some touched on the legitimacy of the State of Israel itself, saying that the oil drawn from the offshore oil fields was Palestinian, and was "stolen" by Israel. Others decried the fact that Jordanian taxpayers would be subsidizing "the Occupation", as well as what is termed the "Judaizing of Jerusalem". These arguments were of particularly resonance, since the

September 2014 announcement of the first gas deal came immediately after the fighting in Gaza (“Operation Protective Edge”) in July-August 2014. Still others noted that the economic logic of the long-term gas agreement with Israel was nullified by the opening of a liquefied natural gas terminal in Aqaba, the possibility of renewal of Egyptian supplies (especially after the discovery of new, massive offshore oil deposits in Egyptian waters), agreements with Iraq on provision of oil and on laying an oil pipeline from Basra to Aqaba (and thence to Egypt), as well as renewable energy programs, a project to produce electricity from locally-extracted shale gas, and a (currently moribund) nuclear power project. In addition, critics decried the long-term dependency on Israel the deal would in their view create for Jordan. They also used the gas deal as the spear-point of a more general criticism of the opaque nature of government policy-making, and its disregard of public sentiment and lack of public or parliamentary input. The Lower House of the Jordanian Parliament voted (27 March) to reject the gas deal under Article 33 of the Jordanian Constitution, which requires approval by the Parliament of all treaties and agreements which “involve financial commitments to the Treasury or affect the public or private rights of Jordanians”. The government stated that it has referred the matter to the Constitutional Court, to decide if the Parliament has the authority to address a deal between two companies. The Parliament has rejected this step as irrelevant and aimed at avoiding its decision. The Arab newspaper Al-Sharq Al-Awsat reported on April 30, quoting “senior officials in Jordan” that King Abdullah II had officially ordered a review of the terms of the gas agreement with Israel. According to the newspaper, Amman is expected to use the results of the review to put political pressure on the Israeli government and to deal with the pressure from the parliament to postpone the deal. This report was not confirmed from another source so far.[\[38\]](#)

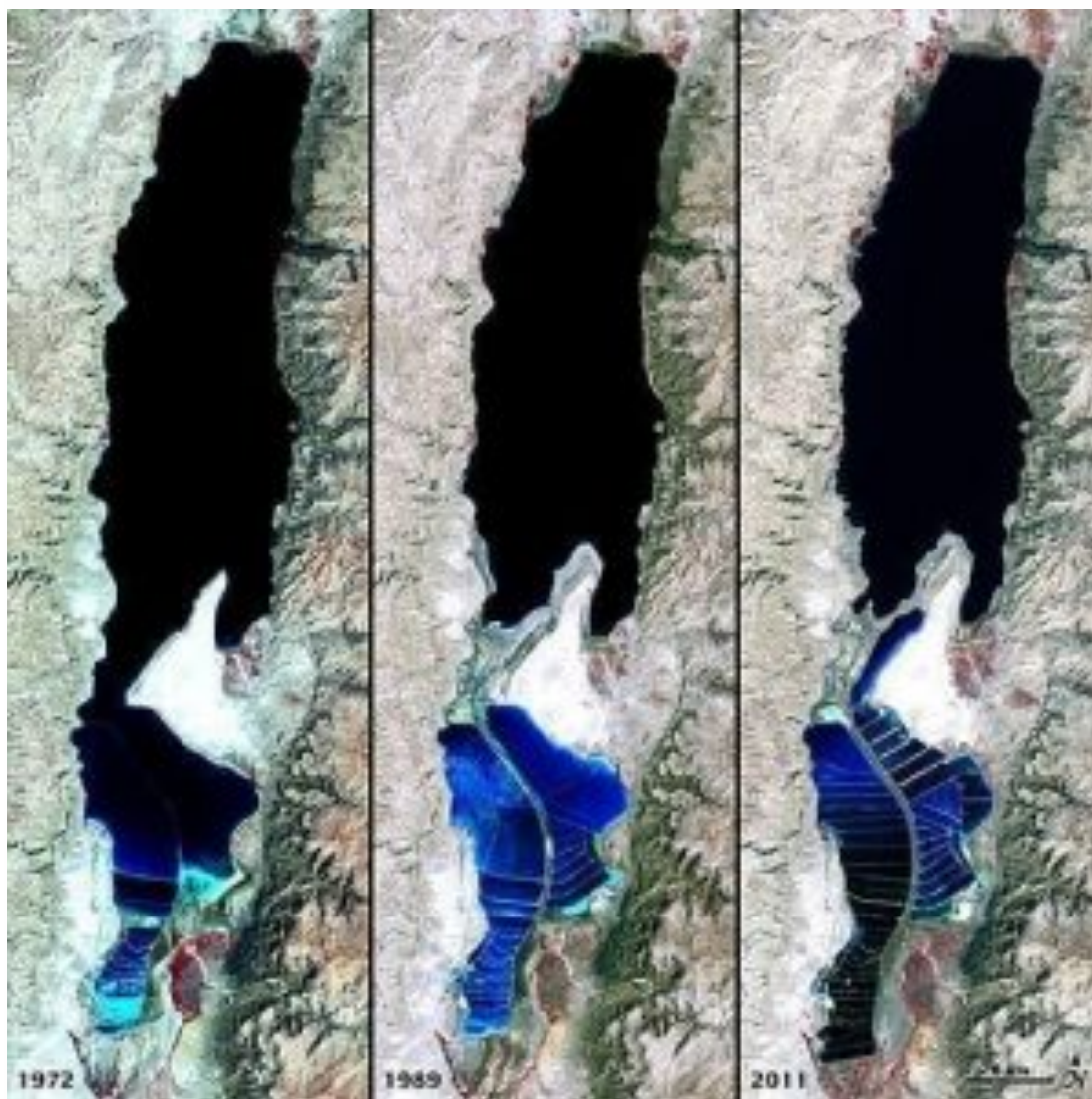
It is important to note that while the public protest on the issue of gas has indeed received widespread media attention and strong support in the bastions of “anti-normalization”, it is not clear how widespread it is, and how connected to the broader (and more worrisome) public agitation against government policy on economic matters and against corruption. Al-Sharif notes that “the young HIRAK movement has focused on domestic change and reforms, fighting corruption and making the government accountable, and less on foreign issues such as ties with Israel”. He also notes, however, that the fate of the agreement could be tied to fallout from the Trump peace plan and to a possible future deterioration in Jordan-Israel ties as a result.

In the case of opposition to the gas deal, Swaha again sees the root of the problem in the lack of transparency. The Jordanian government, in his view, does not give the people enough information about the deal and its benefits, especially its political and strategic benefits. For example, he notes, the government did not explain that the gas deal with Israel helped Jordan to become part of the larger seven-member Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum without being a producer of gas[\[39\]](#), or that it would enable Jordan not only to produce electricity for local consumption, but perhaps to export electricity to neighboring states as well. Most importantly, in Swaha’s view, the government has not made clear the economic and political cost of cancelling the deal: the negative signal it would give to prospective donors, partners and investors regarding Jordan’s respect for its commitments and agreements.

Water Issues, and the “Red-Dead ‘Canal’”

Israel provides Jordan with 55-75 million cubic meters of water yearly from the Sea of Galilee and the Jordan River, more than the 50 million agreed in the peace treaty of 1994 (which codified the situation that had existed between the two states, on the basis of secret, American-brokered, agreements since the 1980s). This is due to Israel's understanding of the potential adverse effects on domestic stability of continued acute water shortages in Jordan. Some on the Israeli right advocated using the excess water supplied by Israel as a means of pressure on Jordan, in the wake of the Zofar-Naharaim decision (see below).

On December 9, 2013, Israel, Jordan, and the Palestinian Authority signed an agreement on the first stage of the Red-Dead "Canal". This aimed at solving water shortages in Jordan and the PA; addressing declining water levels in the Dead Sea; and producing hydroelectric power. Another major and expressed goal of the project, is to promote regional stability and peace and create a symbol of peace and regional cooperation.



The Dead Sea is dying. photo credit: NASA's Earth Observatory [CC BY 2.0]

The agreement was essentially a commitment to a water swap, whereby water pumped from the Red Sea is to be desalinated in a plant to be constructed in Aqaba, Jordan, with half of this water to be used in southern Jordan, and the other half to be bought by Israel for use in the Negev Desert. Israel is to sell fresh water from the Sea of Galilee to northern Jordan, as well as to sell the Palestinian Authority discounted fresh water produced by existing Israeli desalination plants on the Mediterranean. The leftover brine from desalination and whatever water is not processed, will be piped 200 km. to the Dead Sea, to mitigate ecological collapse due to over-pumping for the local chemical industry and overuse of the waters of the Jordan River, which feeds into the Dead Sea. The project will be located entirely on Jordanian territory. In February 2015, a bilateral agreement was signed between Israel and Jordan. This regulates the joint establishment of a water carrier (pipeline, reservoirs and pumping stations), including the manner in which the project is to be co-managed by Israel and Jordan through a joint directorate which will write and issue a tender and choose a concessionaire.

The current project is the first (and perhaps the only) stage, about 15%, of the much larger project originally envisioned. Its cost is estimated at 10-12 billion dollars, which is to be provided by third-party donors. The World Bank is heavily involved in the project, and the U.S. is a central partner, slated to provide \$100 million in funding. It will encompass some 300 million cubic meters of seawater pumped from the Red Sea, of which 65 million will be desalinated (30 million for Jordan and 35 million for Israel), with the remainder to flow to the Dead Sea. Israel will sell 50 million cubic meters to Jordan, and 30 million cubic meters to the PA (which has not carried out negotiations with Israel so far), further north.

However, some Israeli experts, supported by government officials (such as Netanyahu's chief economic adviser, Avi Simhon, and the Ministry of Energy, which is responsible for the Israel Water Authority), question the economic viability of the project.^[40] They prefer an alternative "Northern option", connecting the Mediterranean Sea and Dead Seas. There is also opposition to the project from Israeli environmentalists. In addition, negotiations between delegations from the two sides were suspended during the crisis after the embassy incident in July 2017, and have not yet been renewed. This all has led to significant delays on finalizing and implementing the project, and reportedly, to Israeli attempts, rebuffed by the Jordanians, to suspend the Red-Dead project and/or promote the Northern option ("Med-Dead"). The Jordanians oppose the Northern Option, according to Swalha, because it removes the project from their sovereign territory and makes them more dependent on Israel. The Jordanians asked the Trump Administration to weigh in, and according to press reports, the United States told Israel that the U.S. supports the project and expects Israel to live up to its obligations under the Red-Dead agreement or find a suitable alternative that is acceptable to Israel and Jordan.^[41]

In late 2018, the Government of Israel, understanding that its international obligations outweighed the possible economic drawbacks of the plan, was on track to approve the Red Sea-Dead Sea project at a cost of \$40 million per year for 25 years (Jordan would budget the same, with the remainder to be made up by international contributions). The government decision was necessary to allow putting out the project to international tender (the project will be BOT – Build Operate Transfer). The issue had become more pressing, after indications that the King's decision regarding Tzofar and Naharaim had stemmed, inter alia, from Israeli foot-dragging regarding the Red-Dead project. Israeli Regional Cooperation Minister Tzahi Hanegbi explained

in January 2019 that “this is important for regional cooperation ... Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was convinced that peace has a price, and he agreed to it.”^[42]

Press reports claim that the Israeli government is considering defining the project as one with national security implications, which would enable a shortening of bureaucracy regarding the construction of the canal, open up new funding possibilities, and enable easier overruling of opposition to the project by environmental groups.^[43] However, with the announcement of elections in December 2018, the government meeting was postponed until after the formation of the new government.

Once the Israeli government approves Israel’s participation, including the budgetary implications, the negotiations with Jordan over the tender will commence. The winner of the tender is expected to be announced a year after it is issued; a year after that, work will begin, and four or five years later, construction of the desalination plant and the pipeline will be completed, and a limited, controlled flow of Red Sea water to the Dead Sea will begin.

The Ramon Airport

On January 21, 2019, Israel announced the opening of the new Ilan and Assaf Ramon International Airport, 20 km. north of Eilat and Aqaba. The airport, which will be Israel’s second major international airport and will handle two million passengers a year, is located extremely close to the border with Jordan. The two countries had in 1996 signed an agreement to build a joint airport for Eilat and Aqaba, to be located in Aqaba, on the principle of Geneva’s airport, which is shared between Switzerland and France and allows entrance and exit to both countries. The agreement was shelved by Israel due to domestic (predominantly political pressure stemming from fear of the loss of Israeli tourism and airport jobs in Eilat) and security concerns.

Jordan has registered objections to the construction of the new Israeli airport since construction began in 2013, since its flight approaches may violate Jordanian airspace, and it comes in place of the creation of a joint airport for Eilat and Aqaba. There are also reportedly concerns that it will negatively impact the Aqaba international airport, currently undergoing expansion and located only a few km. away.

Jordan has officially protested the new airport’s opening, including through a complaint to the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO). The opening of the airport, especially at a sensitive time in the bilateral relations, is seen in Amman as another example of Israel’s ignoring its positions and interests, and former agreements, in a public way.

Recent Political Crises and “Irritants”

Temple Mount

The Temple Mount in Jerusalem (in Arabic, *al-Haram al-Sharif*) has been a recurring source of tension between the two countries. This is due, on one hand, to increased pressures within Israel

– including among members of Prime Minister Netanyahu’s governments – to limit the power of the Jordanian-appointed *Waqf* (Islamic custodial trust) on the Mount, “strengthen Israeli sovereignty” there, and to allow greater access to it by Jews.^[44] This is seen by Jordan, as by other Muslims, as a unilateral change by Israel to the unwritten “status quo” existing on the Mount since Ottoman times, which restricts access and prayer by non-Muslims, and was accepted by Israel it regained control of the Old City in 1967. The Jordanian press regularly reports on incidents of Jewish “intrusions/invasions” on the Temple Mount.

On the other hand, King Abdullah has taken a much more active and public role in the past five-six years as ‘Defender of the Holy Places in Jerusalem,’ largely in order to cement his domestic legitimacy and Islamic bona fides as a descendent of the Prophet. This is especially important in view of efforts by the Palestinian Authority, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Hamas to make inroads on the Temple Mount.” Jordan uses a wide interpretation of Article 9 of the Peace Treaty, which reads:

1. “Each party will provide freedom of access to places of religious and historical significance.
2. In this regard, in accordance with the Washington Declaration, Israel respects the present special role of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in Muslim Holy shrines in Jerusalem. When negotiations on the permanent status will take place, Israel will give high priority to the Jordanian historic role in these shrines”.

Jordan has fostered a perception that this “special role” provides it with aspects of control and sovereignty on the Temple Mount, through the Waqf, and applies to Christian holy sites in Jerusalem as well; the King recently announced his intention to fund part of the restoration of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre from his personal funds, and has funded restoration of other Christian holy sites in Jerusalem and its environs.

The most recent crisis began in February, when Jordan expanded the membership of the Waqf council from 11 individuals with close ties to the monarchy, to 18, with the seven new members including the Palestine Authority’s Minister for Jerusalem Affairs (a member of the PLO Executive Committee), Jerusalem Palestinian leaders not exclusively aligned with Jordan, and the head of the Turkish-funded Supreme Islamic Council. The expansion of the Waqf is seen as an attempt by Jordan to co-opt the Palestinians into cooperation with it on the Mount, thus discouraging its use by the PA for provocations against Israel. The newly expanded council immediately defied a 16-year Israeli ban on Muslim worship at the Bab al Rahma (Gate of Mercy, also known as Golden Gate) building on the Temple Mount, which was closed in 2003 due to its use by supporters of the banned Northern faction of the Israeli-Arab Islamic Movement and, reportedly, of Hamas.

On 22 February, thousands of Muslim worshippers broke into the Bab al-Rahma structure and held a mass prayer service there. Israel responded to the changes at the building by arresting worshippers and activists, including the chairman of the Waqf along with his deputy (who were released after questioning), while also temporarily banning several leaders of the council from accessing the Temple Mount. In general, Israeli reactions were measured, and calculated not to

inflame the situation and play into the hands of the provocateurs, especially as they occurred during the run-up to the Israeli elections.

After several days of tension, the issue moved to a more discreet level, involving intermediaries appointed by the Jordanian King and the Israeli prime minister (the latter is National Security Advisor, Meir Ben-Shabat, formerly a senior officer of the Shin Bet and thus well versed in Palestinian affairs). This is because both Israel and Jordan understand that exposure and transparency are not necessarily useful here, and wish to avoid a rhetorical escalation that would be difficult to climb down from. The royal palace reportedly ordered the Waqf to exercise restraint and de-escalate tensions. The Waqf announced (13 March), that it would be carrying out renovation and reconstruction work at the site, which could last for “weeks or months”.^[45] This is reportedly part of a plan in stages, in which the site will be closed for repairs and being re-opened at a later stage, as something other than a mosque (perhaps offices of the Waqf, or an Islamic educational facility, with a prayer space).^[46] While the interim situation has the virtue of postponing clashes on the Mount, and avoiding a pushback by radical elements on the Jewish side as well, it may only have “kicked the can down the road”.



photo credit: ציון הלוי [CC BY-SA 3.0]

In the wake of the Bab al-Rahma crisis, on 20 March 2019, King Abdullah stated in Zarqa: “I will never change my position towards Jerusalem ... We in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan have a historic duty to Jerusalem and the holy sites. For me, Jerusalem is a red line, and my people are all with me ... No one can put pressure on Jordan regarding this issue. The answer will be NO, because all Jordanians stand with me as one regarding Jerusalem, and in the end, all Arabs and Muslims will stand next to us.”^[47]

The King, by taking such public and unequivocal positions as the most important stakeholder in the holy places in Jerusalem, and basing his public legitimacy largely on this role, is compelled to take ownership and responsibility for developments over which he has limited control, especially when the Temple Mount is front and center in the public and media spotlight. This leads to an escalation trap regarding Jerusalem, where he is forced into a position of continually reacting to developments, which there is little ability to solve in a satisfactory fashion for long. This then has a negative effect on Jordanian attitudes towards Israel, which makes it more costly politically for the regime to maintain the necessary ties.

Israel for its part attempts to respond very carefully to these trends, because it understands the resonance and explosive potential that developments on, and perceived threats to, the Temple Mount complex (in Islamist shorthand, “Al Aqsa”) have in the Islamic world, especially among peoples rather than leaderships. The issue of Jerusalem can derail much of what Israel is trying to accomplish in terms of normalization with the wider Arab and Muslim world, and can threaten the strategic relationship with Jordan.

Paradoxically, Jordan’s long-range interests in Jerusalem are actually in line with those of Israel (as long as governments in Israel remain committed to the status quo). While his advocacy of the Two State Solution is undoubtedly sincere, it is less than certain that the King would welcome Palestinian sovereignty over the Islam’s holy places. The formal promise by Abbas to uphold Hashemite rights there is not likely to be honored in practice, given the long history of mutual hostility between Jordan and the PLO.

The Embassy Incident

On July 14, 2017, there was a terrorist attack on the Temple Mount, in which two Israeli policemen were killed. Israel closed the site temporarily, and installed metal detectors at its gates. This led to violent demonstrations in Jerusalem and the Territories, and to condemnation of Israel in the Jordanian Parliament, as well as protests in Jordan.

On July 23, 2017, an Israeli embassy security guard, supervising work in a diplomat’s apartment, was attacked by the worker, a Jordanian. He responded by opening fire, killing his assailant as well as a bystander, the apartment’s owner. A tense standoff ensued around the Israeli embassy for over 24 hours, with the Jordanians demanding to interview the guard, and the embassy staff remaining inside the embassy while discreet and high level talks, at the level of the heads of the

two sides' security services, ensued. The next day, the Israeli security cabinet announced the removal of the detectors; the embassy staff, including the guard, returned to Israel. Upon his return to Israeli soil, he was welcomed, along with the ambassador, by Prime Minister Netanyahu in his office; recordings of the meeting were broadcast.



Prime Minister Netanyahu embraces an Israel security guard upon his return from Amman, July 2017. Source: GPO

The Jordanian government [expressed indignation](#) over how Israel depicted the incident and over the warm reception that the guard received from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on his

return to Israel. The embassy staff was not allowed to return to Amman and the embassy was closed; bilateral cooperation was largely suspended. In January 2018, the Israeli Prime Minister's Office announced that Israel had agreed to investigate the shooting incident at the embassy in Amman, as well as the March 2014 shooting of a Jordanian judge at the Allenby Bridge, and that the Israeli embassy in Amman would return to full activity. Israel also agreed to compensate the families of the three Jordanian citizens. As part of the reported deal, the Israeli ambassador to Jordan at the time of the shooting did not return to Amman, and a replacement was appointed, arriving in April 2018. While bilateral relations seem to have returned to normal, Jordanian public opinion is reported to remain inflamed regarding the incident, whose resolution is seen as not having satisfied Jordanian law and national pride.

Zofar and Naharayim

On October 21, 2018, King Abdullah announced (via Twitter) that he would not renew two annexes to the 1994 peace treaty with Israel. They deal with two small parcels of land, Naharayim (known in Arabic as al-Baqura), south of the Sea of Galilee near the northern "elbow" of the border between the two countries, and Tzofar (al-Ghamr) along the southern part of the border. These areas—covering approximately 1,000 acres— have enjoyed a unique status under the agreement because, while Israel recognized Jordanian sovereignty over them, Jordan agreed that they would continue to be utilized by neighboring agricultural settlements in Israel (as they had been for many years).

The annexes included a clause stating "Without prejudice to private rights of ownership of land within the area, this Annex will remain in force for 25 years, and shall be renewed automatically for the same periods, unless one year prior notice of termination is given by either Party, in which case, at the request of either Party, consultations shall be entered into." Since the agreement had been signed on October 26, 1994, Jordan had to make a decision regarding renewal before October 26, 2018; otherwise, the agreement would be renewed automatically. The royal decision was confirmed in an emergency session of the Jordanian cabinet, at which the king said Jordan would "exercise full sovereignty" over its land.

In the weeks before the decision, there was public and parliamentary agitation in Jordan not to renew the annexes. Eighty-seven Jordanian MPs (out of 130 in the Lower House) had signed a petition urging an end to the "lease"; While the Parliament has no role in Jordanian policymaking, the Lower House, as the only national elected body in Jordan, is an indicator of popular and even elite sentiment. The decision not to renew the annexes to the treaty was a step the King could take to signal to his people his awareness of their unhappiness with the peace treaty (and to Jerusalem and Washington, not to take Jordan for granted) as well as to give Israel a "wake-up call", without taking the dangerous step of suspending or cancelling the peace treaty itself.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said after the decision that Israel would "enter negotiations with [Jordan] on the possibility of extending the current arrangement." Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi said the next day that Jordan will not negotiate with Israel regarding renewal of the annexes, but only on implementation of the cancellation. The Jerusalem Post [reported](#) that senior Jordanian officials in Amman said that the Kingdom could have shown

greater flexibility in dealing with Israel, but “chose not to,” since it “encountered stubborn policies” from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s coalition, including on Jerusalem and other holy places.[48] Some reports stated that Jordan was unhappy with the lack of progress of the “Red- Dead Canal”, which would provide desalinated fresh water for Jordan, but which has been held up in Israel on economic and environmental grounds.

The greatest concerns voiced regard the implications of the move for the overall future of the entire peace treaty. Both Jordanian and Israeli officials have made calming statements in this direction, with Safadi noting, “We acted within the provisions of the peace treaty. This is an indication of our commitment to the peace treaty. There has never been a question of our solid commitment to the treaty.”

Reaction in Israel, after initial expressions of surprise and dismay, was muted. This is probably partially due to a “gag order” imposed by Prime Minister Netanyahu on his ministers. Israeli officials’ and leaders’ reactions seem to have been tempered by their understanding that the Jordanians were within their legal rights, by their cognizance of the domestic pressures on King Abdullah, by the limited actual impact of the step— only several dozen families’ livelihoods are threatened by the reversion of the territories to full Jordanian control—and by the importance they afford to the continued political and strategic relationship with Jordan, as a key element of Israeli national security.

Israel, Jordan, the Palestinians and the Trump-Kushner Peace Plan

The Israeli-Palestinian complex is the primary set of issues which prevents further development of bilateral relationships between the two countries. King Abdullah is supportive of the two-state solution, and opposes both Israeli government policies, and American diplomatic initiatives, which are seen as departing from this paradigm. In addition, the continued violence and political impasse between the Palestinian and Israel, keeps Jordanian public opinion “on the boil”. As Jordanian researcher Hassan Barari puts it: “Jordanians view Israelis’ unwillingness to move ahead with a two-state solution and its stalling tactics as a threat to Jordan’s national security— now and for years to come”. [49] At the same time, the preservation of the status quo in Jerusalem is also of great importance to the Hashemite Kingdom.

Israel-Jordanian relations are affected by developments in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip; there is strong empathy with the Palestinian population. Peaks in Israeli-Palestinian tension and violence are reflected on the Jordanian “street”, through demonstrations and anti-Israeli campaigns. The geographic proximity between Jordan and the West Bank, and the fact that Jordan ruled the area for twenty years, means that there remains a dense mesh of family and economic ties between them. A large percentage of the population has origins in the West Bank; the crude shorthand, often used in Israel, is that they are “Palestinians”. But the reality is more complex, due to intermarriage between communities (and the traditional view of the father’s nationality as the determining one), and the fact that the vast majority are Jordanian citizens (as opposed to the situation in all other Arab states) and have adopted, alongside their Palestinian cultural and historical identity, a Jordanian civic identity.

The Jordanian leadership is currently concerned about the looming American Israeli-Palestinian peace plan, and its possible implications for Jordanian interests and security. The regime has been unhappy that the American peace process team has carried out negotiations with Israel and the Palestinians without bringing it into the loop; it is worried that the precedent of Oslo, where an agreement was completed “behind their backs”, is repeating itself. It has said repeatedly that it has not been consulted on political aspects of the plan, about which it has expressed reservations. It is reportedly carrying out political and security steps (including changes in the leadership of its intelligence service and a government reshuffle) in anticipation of possible negative repercussions in the West Bank and in the Kingdom itself.

Specifically, reports that the Administration had considered giving Saudi Arabia (and Morocco) special status on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem sparked concerns for the Jordanian leadership. It sought urgent clarification from Jerusalem and Washington as to whether there were plans to undermine the Hashemite Kingdom’s historical standing in Jerusalem; it also may have been the basis of the King’s decision to change the makeup of the Waqf. The Trump administration was also reported to have made a proposal to Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas about establishing a confederation with Jordan—without having asked for Abdullah’s opinion; it has now officially ruled out that option, which Jordanians see as threatening to make them a minority in their own country. The Jordanian government has also been extremely unhappy with the Trump administration’s decisions to move the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem and to cancel funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), which it sees as having “forced its hand” in taking a public countervailing position.^[50]

Osama al-Sharif explains: “The King believes Jordan stands to lose if there was a departure from the two-state solution and that the future may bring new pressures on Jordan in terms of renewed threats to the kingdom’s stability, with the burying of the right of return for refugees or reviving [of] Israeli claims about Jordan being an alternative Palestinian state. Also, there are fears that under the Trump plan, Jordan would be forced to play a role in the West Bank over Palestinian population centers under the banner of confederation. So the plan is perceived to constitute an existential threat to Jordan”.^[51] In this context, it is worth noting the May 22 statement by the President of Jordan’s Senate (the Upper House of Parliament, appointed by the King): commenting on the Trump deal, he reiterated that Jordan “will never go back on King Abdullah’s ‘three noes’: ‘No alternative homeland, no re-settlement [of refugees in the countries where they live] and no meddling with the Hashemite Custodianship of Jerusalem.’”^[52]

The Jordanian leadership reportedly feels that the preparations for the Trump Plan, and especially the limited coordination of the American administration with Jordan and its dependence on the Gulf States, are indicative of a more general lessening of Jordanian regional role and importance for both the United States and Israel. The American strategic relationship with Jordan has, until very recently, been Washington’s closest with an Arab partner. Jordan today feels it has been forgotten, and that it is losing its central political and strategic role for American and Israeli policy in the region to Saudi Arabia. The attitude of the United States under Trump are seen by Amman as less intimate, and as more instrumental/functional. The end of the crisis in Syria has contributed to this, as Jordan has less significance as a lynchpin and base for allied activity there.

Recent efforts by Prime Minister Netanyahu to improve ties with Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States are thus also perceived with great suspicion in Jordan. As al-Sharif says, “in recent years Jordan has grown increasingly worried about the fact that Netanyahu was seeking to bypass Jordan, considered [in the past] as a gateway to the Palestinians and to Gulf Arabs, by establishing direct contacts with Saudi Arabia and the UAE. This represents a geopolitical shift that is associated [with] Trump’s ‘deal of the century’, which Amman is resisting. Suffice to say that under Netanyahu, whose is viewed with suspicion by King Abdullah, ties will continue to be strained.”^[53]

The upcoming announcement of the political elements of the Trump Plan is extremely sensitive and dangerous for Jordan (Jordan has announced that it will attend the economic summit in Bahrain). This is because, as Oded Eran, a former ambassador to Amman, writes: “Once it is made public, none of the diplomatic rhetoric will help [King Abdullah], and he will be forced to voice his opposition in clear and unequivocal language so as to silence all those secretly whispering in Amman that generous American aid would moderate his response.”^[54] Amos Gilad predicts that publication of the Trump Plan “will force Jordan to take a position contrary to that of the United States, under an Administration which may well then punish Jordan for its position”.

Conclusion

Twenty-five years after the ceremonies at the White House and the Arava, the bilateral relationship is a key component of both countries’ national security. The peace treaty with Israel is an enormous strategic asset for Jordan, and cooperation with Israel is vital for its national security (including regarding energy and water).

However, the Hashemite monarchy has survived by a careful policy of close attention to public opinion (even when it doesn’t always honor it) and careful trimming, certainly in its public diplomacy. King Abdullah II follows a complex path towards Israel, balancing intensive quiet cooperation with occasional public displeasure and condemnation. The lack of public support for the relationship on the Jordanian side has led its leadership to try to downplay, or even conceal, the nature and extent of bilateral cooperation. While it fulfills vital strategic and national security interests for Jordan, it brings no domestic political benefits, and serves as another irritant and arena of conflict in the domestic struggle over the vector and pace of reforms. Israel’s leadership has for the most part acquiesced to this Jordanian preference, despite its understanding that while it serves to protect the core relationship and insulate it from public pressures, it also helps perpetuate the government-to-government, and therefore “cold”, nature of the peace.

The king is still guided in his conduct vis-à-vis Israel – despite the “potholes” that accompanied and will continue to accompany the relations – by the strategic and security importance to the kingdom of cooperation. The King’s difficult task, then, is to preserve the relationship, while demonstrating empathy with the public’s feelings, and perhaps even the appearance of a willingness to meet some of its demands. On the other hand, he wants to avoid encouraging the Jordanian public forces calling for “rolling back” or even canceling peace and cooperation with Israel, or signaling to them that he is responsive to pressure, thus “increasing their appetite”.

The most plausible scenario for the near- to mid-term, as is so often the case, is “more of the same”. The leaderships and national security establishments will continue to consult and cooperate regarding regional developments and threats, the Jordanian majority will continue to dislike the agreement, and Israelis will continue to feel bittersweet about a “stalled romance”.

In the optimistic scenario, as gas begins to flow and electricity prices in Jordan drop, the Red-Dead project is approved (again) by the new Israeli government (recent developments have again changed the timeframe on this), security ties remain good, and the bilateral relations continues largely as they have, but slightly better. Jerusalem continues to be the major overt irritant, but the two sides know to wall off their tensions there from other vital components of the relationship, with Israel abstaining from provocative initiatives – and Jordan ultimately interested in preserving the status quo. Even in this optimistic scenario, however, it is a step too far to expect a significant warming of the relationship on the popular or cultural levels. There are three pessimistic scenarios: a. Political developments in Israel, including vis-a-vis the Palestinians, will significantly abrade Jordanian sensitivities on what it sees as vital interests. This would increase criticism of the King’s policy towards Israel, which might become violent. Such developments may be triggered by moves by a new Israeli government to annex settlements or parts of Area C, or allow greater Jewish access and/or significantly increase security on the Temple Mount; or by widespread violence in Judea and Samaria and the Kingdom following the publication of a Trump Plan that constitutes a clear withdrawal from the two-state paradigm; an incident with Muslim casualties on the Temple Mount; or an incident with Jordanian casualties at borders and crossings. Contributing factors could be a continued loss of trust between the two leaderships, or even offensive or worrisome (from the Jordanian view) remarks by senior Israeli officials or coalition partners. b. Internal tensions, due to criticism of corruption, economic hardships, and desires for political reform, may increase further, and be expressed in a more massive and violent way than they have been until now. In such a case, deflecting the criticism by “throwing the relationship with Israel under the bus” – freezing or suspending the gas deal, other bilateral agreements or even the treaty itself, in order of probability – could be seen by the regime as the “the least bad option”. c. The most dangerous is for the two to combine, and for a severe development on the Israeli-Jordanian axis to become a rallying point for the disenfranchised.

Both sides had unreasonable expectations of the “fruits of peace”. Those Jordanians who supported the King’s policy thought that their peace with Israel would be soon accompanied by an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement and a two-state solution, as well as significant economic dividends. The dwindling away of that possibility left the relationship with a central irritant, and an impediment to closer overt and people-to-people ties. Many Israelis, for their part, thought in 1994 – as part of a wider optimism regarding regional developments – that they would now be accepted as part of the region, and that Jordan would be a bridge to wider regional popular acceptance of Israel. To some extent, this is now perceived as happening without Jordan’s help – which in turn, feeds Jordanian fears.

A stable long-term relationship requires sustained effort, investment of attention and affection, and understanding of the other side’s limitations and freedom of maneuver. For instance, it is difficult for Israelis to understand how deeply ingrained suspicions are among Jordanians, including at the senior level, regarding nefarious Israeli designs on the Kingdom (especially its role in Jerusalem). Israel could do more, and could be more generous, on the issues important to

the Jordanian leadership. Many Israeli observers note that many of the crises in the bilateral relations stemmed from Israeli decision-making based on internal political considerations, without adequate regard and sensitivity to the possible internal and regional ramifications for their Jordanian partner.

One problem is the often utilitarian and short-sighted Israeli view of the relations. Many Israelis, especially economists and second-tier politicians, seem to take the relationship for granted, assume Jordan has no other good options, and look at it in narrow political and economic terms. However, while some costs of the relationship, especially of the major infrastructure projects, are ostensibly calculable, it is much more difficult to count the savings and benefits from twenty-five years of peace. The cost of the Red-Dead canal, for instance, is not only its actual cost to the Israeli taxpayer or consumer, but also the opposing costs of worsened political relations and lost reputation by not standing by our commitments. The benefits of the relationship become clearer, for instance, when contemplating a theoretical situation where Jordan was a less intimate or unenthusiastic security partner over the past quarter century, and Israel had to invest commensurate resources protecting the border with Jordan, and the borders beyond it.

At the same time, it would behoove the Jordanians to be somewhat sensitive to Israeli public sentiments. There is a more human component to the Israeli position. In this, the disappointment with the “cold peace” with Jordan is similar to that with the situation with Egypt. Israelis want to be liked, or at least not symbolically abused. And many Israelis somewhat naively find it hard to understand why, years after making political and strategic peace with two of its neighbors, the expected peoples’ peace – “normalization” – has not occurred. Such naivete sometimes generates public and political anger, translated into pressure within Israel to push (directly, or through American agency) for a change of attitude– for instance on education and on cultural exchanges (it is worth reflecting whether Israelis would really welcome closer “people-to-people” ties, notably freer movement of peoples between itself and its neighbors.). This is directed at the very regimes which take risks to maintain relations with us, and can be seen by them as a devious demand to risk even more by letting light in on the relations and actively promoting them internally, even when the regional and domestic environment poses great risks for such a policy.

Even if some of the responsibility does fall on the Jordanian side, the Israeli leadership must step up and manage public expectations. Peace between governments, especially when one of the states is not a representative democracy, does not easily translate into peace between peoples. This is so even when the strategic and leadership relations are close. The peace treaties with Jordan and Egypt are treaties with leaderships, that likely would not have come into existence if their peoples were given a say. But the lack of open warmth in the relations should not blind us to their necessity between close neighbors, their great and proven strategic worth, and the immense benefits they provide to both.

[1]In addition to my own research, I interviewed several Israeli experts and former officials, most of whom asked not to be quoted in this paper. I also engaged in a productive dialogue with several Jordanian experts.

[2] Personal interview with author, May 2019.

[3] Riedel, Bruce. *Enigma: the Anatomy of Israel's Intelligence Failure Almost 45 Years Ago*. Brookings Report, September 25, 2017. <https://www.brookings.edu/research/enigma-the-anatomy-of-israels-intelligence-failure-almost-45-years-ago/>

[4] Halevy, Efraim. *Man in the Shadows* [Hebrew]. Tel Aviv: Matar, 2006, pp. 36-38.

[5] Email communication with author, May 2019.

[6] Baker, Luke. "Amid regional turmoil, Israel looks to its firm bond with Jordan". *Reuters*, October 22, 2014.

[7] Yitzhak, Ronen. "From cooperation to normalization? Jordan-Israel relations since 1967". *British Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 44 no. 4, p. 571.

[8] Lund, Aron, "The Battle for Daraa". *Diwan*, Carnegie Middle East Center. June 25, 2015 and Sands, Phil and Maayeh, Suha. "Syrian rebels get arms and advice through secret command centre in Amman". *The National*, December 28, 2013.

[9] Yitzhak, "From Cooperation to Normalization", pp. 573-374.

[10] Harel, Amos. "Israel and Jordan Grow Closer as Iranian Foothold in Southern Syria Grows Stronger". *Haaretz*, June 21, 2017.

[11] "Report: Israel Tells U.S. It Would Act to Save Jordan From Islamists". *Haaretz*, June 28, 2014.

[12] Melman, Yossi. "Abdullah's Secret Talks: an Unusual Peek at Israeli-Jordanian relations". *Maariv* [Hebrew], April 2, 2016.

[13] "GID takes charge of Relationship with Baghdad." *Intelligence Online*. February 20, 2019. See also Halevy, *Man in the Shadows*.

[14] See Shamir, *The Rise and the Decline of the Warm Peace*, pp. 111, 444-450.

[15] Some analysts claim that he also feared that the influx of a million immigrants from the Soviet Union to Israel, would rekindle the idea of "transferring" Arab inhabitants from the West Bank to Jordan. Barari, Hassan. *Jordan and Israel: A Troubled Relationship in a Volatile Region* (Second Edition). Amman: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2014, p. 99.

[16] Mitha, Farooq. "The Jordanian-Israeli Relationship: The Reality of 'Cooperation'". *Middle East Policy Journal*, vol. 17 no. 2, Summer 2010.

[17] One manifestation of this, particularly offensive to Israelis, is the presence of Israeli flags on the floors and entranceways of some public buildings in Jordan, so that passers-by can deface the

flag by walking on it. A diplomatic kerfuffle arose in 2018 when Israel complained about ministers photographed treading on an Israeli flag at the main entrance of the building of the Professional Unions' complex: the Jordanian Prime Minister entered by a side door to avoid walking on the flag. Such flags are also reported on university campuses. Another grating phenomenon was the outpouring of support for Ahmad Daqamseh, who in March 1997 opened fire and killed seven Israeli girls, sixth- and seventh-graders. His release from prison in March 2017 was widely celebrated in Jordan, and his unrepentant musings on his actions were widely quoted in Jordanian media.

[18] Shamir, *The Rise and the Decline of the Warm Peace*, p. 158.

[19] Milton-Edwards, Beverley. "Protests in Jordan over gas deal with Israel expose wider." *Brookings Markaz Blog*. October 26, 2016.

[20] Barari, *Jordan and Israel: A Troubled Relationship*, p. 123 and Ryan, Curtis R. *Jordan and the Arab Uprisings: Regime Survival and Politics Beyond the State*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2018, pp. 147-148. A similar process is described as starting, under a new King, in 2000-2001, this time due to the need to shore up internal security against threats stemming from the Second Intifada and the Global War on Terror after September 11, 2001. It is said to have accelerated after the violent riots in the southern city of Ma'an in 2002, the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 leading to the inflow of hundreds of thousands of Iraqi refugees, and the November 2005 terrorist attacks in Amman.

[21] Pollock, David. *Jordan's Public: Internally Focused, but Shares U.S. View on Iran and Regional Peace*. Washington Institute, February 26, 2019. <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/fikraforum/view/jordans-public-internally-focused-but-shares-u.s.-view-on-iran-and-regional>

[22] Email communication with author, May 2019.

[23] Correspondence with author, May 2019.

[24] Ryan, *Jordan and the Arab Uprisings*, p. 86.

[25] Sharp, Jeremy M.. *Jordan: Background and U.S. Relations*. Congressional Research Service, April 9, 2019.

[26] Gal, Yitzhak. *Cooperation Between Israel and Jordan: An Historic Missed Opportunity Which is Still Reparable* [in Hebrew]. Mitvim Institute, March 2018. http://www.mitvim.org.il/images/Hebrew_-_Yitzhak_Gal_-_Israel-Jordan_cooperation_-_March_2018.pdf

[27] Gal, Yitzchak, and Bader Rock. *Israeli-Jordanian Trade: In-Depth Analysis*. Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, 2018.

[28] “Israel’s trade with Jordan increased in 2013 by 2 percent.” Sponser [in Hebrew]. October &, 2014. <https://www.sponser.co.il/Article.aspx?ArticleId=49317> and Gal, *Cooperation Between Israel and Jordan*.

[29] *The Observatory of Economic Complexity*. 2019. https://atlas.media.mit.edu/en/visualize/tree_map/hs92/export/isr/jor/show/2014/ (accessed April 29, 2019).

[30] Gal and Rock. *Israeli-Jordanian Trade*.

[31] Shamir, *The Rise and the Decline of the Warm Peace*, pp. 546-547.

[32] Gal, *Cooperation Between Israel and Jordan*, pg. 8.

[33] Shmil, Daniel. “What are trucks from Turkey, drivers from Jordan and goods from Iraq doing in Israel?” *the Marker* [Hebrew], April 25, 2013, and Israel Ministry of Regional Cooperation. “25 Percent Rise in transit of goods from Europe to Jordan through Israel.” February 18, 2016. <http://www.morc.gov.il/Agenda/Spokesman/Pages/TransitIncrease.aspx>.

[34] The discussion of the Jordan Gateway Project is based on briefings from the Ministry of Regional Cooperation, and a visit to the site with Col. (res.) Danny Tirza, the project manager.

[35] Lehane, Sinead. *Sharing Water: Israel and Jordan Finalize Agreement for Red Sea-Dead Sea Pipeline*. Future Directions International, March 25, 2015. www.futuredirections.org.au/publication/sharing-water-israel-and-jordan-finalise-agreement-for-red-sea-dead-sea-pipeline/

[36] “Jordan-Israel gas pipeline faces another challenge.” Economist Intelligence Unit Country Reports, Israel Edition, April 30, 2018. The deal was reportedly made with an affiliate of Noble, and not with the consortium which included Israeli companies, in order to diminish the political fallout from a deal with Israeli entities (Gal, *Cooperation Between Israel and Jordan*).

[37] In 2014, Israel signed a separate deal with Jordan to supply \$500 million worth of gas from the Tamar natural gas field, which is already being used by Jordanian firms located near the Dead Sea. Ezran, Eran. “Cancel the Deal with the Zionist Enemy”. *Haaretz* [Hebrew], March 27, 2019.

[38] It is worth remembering that the deal is not only Jordanian-Israeli, but to a large extent Jordanian-American, and was signed with the encouragement of the US government. A withdrawal from the agreement could significantly harm Noble Energy, an influential American company, and is likely to provoke official American anger and pressure on the Jordanian regime.

[39] In January 2019, the Egyptian Ministry of Petroleum announced that Egypt, Israel, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Jordan, and the Palestinian Authority (PA), had agreed to establish the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF), with Cairo as its headquarters. The goal of the Forum is to serve as an umbrella for cooperation and dialogue regarding the development of gas

resources in the region; observers see it also as a “regional lobby” to counter Turkish efforts to disrupt members’ exploration the eastern Mediterranean Sea. While Jordan is not a Mediterranean state and is not involved in gas exploration, its involvement in the forum is apparently connected to its strategic connection to and dependence on two of the gas producers (Israel and Egypt) for its energy needs, as well as its desire to connect to a regional forum which pulls it westward, towards Europe, and not eastwards. Saeid, Mohamed. “Is new energy league an alliance against Ankara?” *Al-Monitor*, January 24, 2019.

[40] Opponents report that Israel is obligated to buy water from the Jordanians at a price substantially higher than the local, unsubsidized price in Israel, which will translate into a net cost of \$ 35 million a year, above and beyond the \$ 40 million a year operational cost. Koren, Ora. “Israel is not interested in the Red-Dead Canal which will cost her 10 billion shekel”. *The Marker* (Hebrew), July 26, 2018.

[41] Ravid, Barak. “Scoop: U.S. pressing Israel to implement pipeline project with Jordan”. *Axios*, July 26, 2018.

[42] Deane, Yvette. “Israel plans to approve Red Sea-Dead Sea pipeline project with Jordan”. *Jerusalem Post*, January 6, 2019.

[43] Landau, Noa and Yaniv Kobowitz. “Israel Examines Promoting the Red-Dead Project in order to Rehabilitate Relations with Jordan”. *Haaretz* (Hebrew), December 14, 2018.

[44] While traditionally Jews do not enter the Temple Mount for religious reasons, there has been a significant uptick in the past decade in Jews entering the Mount, for nationalistic reasons, and attempting to pray there. Temple Mount activists present data showing that in 2009 some 5,000 Jews ascended the mountain, while by 2019 that number had risen to about 35,000. Gedalia, Nadav. “Is the Temple Mount in our hands?”. *Olam Katan* [in Hebrew], May 24, 2019.

[45] Caspit, Ben. “Netanyahu, King Abdullah in bind over Temple Mount”. *Al-Monitor*, March 13, 2019 and Abu Toameh, Khaled. “Wakf says it will start renovating Golden Gate site”. *Jerusalem Post*, March 13, 2019.

[46] *Defusing the Crisis at Jerusalem’s Gate of Mercy*. International Crisis Group Middle East Briefing no. 67, Jerusalem/Brussels, April 3, 2019. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/eastern-mediterranean/israelpalestine/b067-defusing-crisis-jeruselems-gate-mercy>.

[47] <https://en.royanews.tv/news/17037/King-delivers-speech-in-Zarqa-governorate-discusses-certain-aspects>.

[48] “Jordan Says Chose Not Be Flexible With Israel After Cancels Treaty Annexes”. *Jerusalem Post*, October 22, 2018.

[49] Barari, *Jordan and Israel: A Troubled Relationship*, p. 19.

[50] The unhappiness of the King with American behavior seems to be shared by the Jordanian people. A recent poll found that a mere 14 percent of Jordanians say that relations with the U.S. are even “somewhat important” to their country, as opposed to 58 percent a year before. President Trump’s public approval rating in Jordan is 2%. Pollock, David. *Jordan’s Public: Internally Focused, but Shares U.S. View on Iran and Regional Peace*. Washington Institute, February 26, 2019. <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/fikraforum/view/jordans-public-internally-focused-but-shares-u.s.-view-on-iran-and-regional>.

[51] Email communication with author, May 2019.

[52] “If shaken, Jordan will burn everyone around — Fayeze”. *Jordan Times*, May 22, 2019. The second “no” is unclear, since Jordan has already given citizenship to the majority of Palestinians living in the Kingdom (the only Arab state to do so).

[53] Email communication with author, May 2019.

[54] Eran, Oded. *Concerns for Jordan’s Stability*. INSS Insight No. 1169, May 21, 2019.