

The Impact of U.S. President Trump's Middle East Peace Plan on Jordan and Palestinians

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Abstract

Objectives: This study aims to assess how a more pro-Israeli stance from the U.S. can potentially harm Jordanian interests and relations, and pose a challenge in the region.

Methods: The qualitative approach and the case study were applied, as well as extensive investigation and examination of relevant resources published in journal articles, newspapers, reports, press releases, and TV interviews.

Results: The study found that Trump's plan affects Jordan, as it contradicts with the priority in Jordan's national interests which lies in the question of Palestine, supporting the two-state solution, and the creation of a viable Palestinian state. Since Trump's initiative does not include a viable Palestinian state and removes the two-state solution from the peace process, it poses significant challenges to Jordan's national security, economy, and role in Jerusalem, and implementing it will cause further conflict; impacting Jordan's interests. Ignoring Jordan's special role as the custodian of Jerusalem's Islamic and Christian holy sites, will complicate and negatively impact Jordanian - American and Jordanian-Israeli relations.

Conclusions: The study recommends the need of rebuilding trust between Jordan and the U.S, as they enjoy close security cooperation and strategic relationship. It is expected that Biden's administration will seek conflict management with low interest, instead of conflict resolution. Jordan shall convince Arab leaders normalizing relations with Israel that resolving the Palestine issue is the most important, and it will not give up its historic role in Jerusalem.

Keywords: Middle East peace process, Donald Trump, Jordan, Palestine, security.

تأثير خطة الرئيس الأمريكي ترامب للسلام في الشرق الأوسط على الأردن والفلسطينيين

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قسم العلاقات الدولية، كلية الأمير الحسين بن عبد الله الثاني للدراسات الدولية، الجامعة الأردنية، عمان، الأردن.
ملخص

الهدف: هدفت الدراسة إلى تقييم كيف يمكن أن يؤدي الموقف الأمريكي المؤيد لإسرائيل إلى الإضرار بالمصالح والعلاقات الأردنية وبشكل تحدياً في المنطقة. المنهجية: استندت الدراسة إلى تطبيق المنهج النوعي، وإلى دراسة الحالة، إضافة إلى تحقيق وفحص مكثف للموارد ذات الصلة المنشورة في مقالات المجلات والصحف والتقارير والبيانات الصحفية والمقابلات التلفزيونية.

النتائج: توصلت الدراسة إلى أن خطة ترامب تؤثر في الأردن لأنها تتعارض مع أولوية المصالح الوطنية الأردنية المتمثلة في قضية فلسطين ودعم حل الدولتين وإقامة دولة فلسطينية قابلة للحياة. نظراً إلى أن مبادرة ترامب لا تتضمن دولة فلسطينية قابلة للحياة وتلغي حل الدولتين من عملية السلام، فإنها تشكل تحديات كبيرة لأمن الأردن واقتصاده ودوره في القدس، وسيؤدي تنفيذها إلى مزيد من الصراع. إن تجاهل دور الأردن الخاص كوصي على المقدسات الإسلامية والمسيحية في القدس، سيعقد ويؤثر سلباً في العلاقات الأردنية الأمريكية والأردنية الإسرائيلية، لأنه يهدد استقرار الأردن.

الخلاصة: أوصت الدراسة على أهمية إعادة بناء الثقة بين الأردن والولايات المتحدة: حيث يتمتعان بتعاون أمني وثيق وعلاقة استراتيجية. من المتوقع أن تسعى إدارة بايدن إلى إدارة الصراع باهتمام منخفض، بدلاً من حل النزاع. أن يقنع الأردن القادة العرب المطبوعين مع إسرائيل أن حل القضية الفلسطينية هو الأهم. ألا يتخلى الأردن عن دوره التاريخي في القدس.

الكلمات الدالة: عملية السلام في الشرق الأوسط، دونالد ترامب، الأردن، فلسطين، الأمان.



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Introduction

The U.S.'s role as a third-party mediator, or a peace-broker, between the Palestinians and Israelis is, although bias, considered significant, and as a key player since the Cold War. The Middle East peace process between Arab countries and Israel have been brokered by the US throughout history, with Jordan being the second Arab state to sign a peace treaty with Israel in 1994. The 1994 treaty recognized borders, agreed to establish full diplomatic relations, and settled many disputes over security, water, and territory. (Khalidi, 2014)

Since the 1948 Nakba and Arab-Israeli conflict, different US administrations adopted differing policies in the Middle East, yet the security of Israel is one of the main indifferent policies throughout all administrations. (Elgindy, 2019) The most recent initiative formally released by the U.S. was in 2020; President Donald Trump's "Peace to Prosperity: A Vision to Improve the Lives of the Palestinian and Israeli People". As previous initiatives, it favored Israel and demanded Palestinians to concede more than the plan before it.

Jordan has a strong relationship to the Palestinian cause, and a historical role in peace negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis; as Jordan will be impacted by any agreement made. However, Trump's plan was drafted without the consideration of Jordan and its role in the Palestinian cause. Jordan's national interests lie with the question of Palestine; standing by its long-term advocacy for the two-state solution and the creation of a viable Palestinian state. In despite of the 1994 peace treaty between Jordan and Israel, recent developments in the Palestinian cause and U.S.'s shift to a more pro-Israeli position, under Trump, can potentially impact Jordan and Jordanian-Israeli relations.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study stems from its focus in analyzing President Trump's peace initiative and U.S. policy towards the Palestinian question, and its potential influence on Jordan. Its importance comes from the significant role the U.S. plays in the peace-building process, and in the pursuit of the two-state solution. (Quandt, 2005) As the plan goes against the two-state solution and ignores the role of Jordan in negotiations, it also poses a challenge to the Palestinian question, Jordan's national and strategic interests, and Jordans relations with Israel. The aim of this study is to assess how a more pro-Israeli stance from the U.S. can potentially harm Jordanian interests and relations, and pose a challenge in the region. This study also shows how Trump's vision did not consider Jordan's and the Palestinian's interests, as it relates to the two-state solution or the core issues, such as the return of refugees and status of Jerusalem. Thus, dramatically changing the U.S. long-held view regarding the two-state solution.

Study Hypothesis

This study will argue that President Trump's peace plan is bias and unjust against the Palestinians and Jordan; hence the anticipation of unrest and a negative public opinion in both Occupied Palestine and the Kingdom of Jordan. The two-state solution is abandoned by President Trump, and the official U.S. call for an alternative only serves to advance Israeli interests. King Abdullah can use various channels to mediate the rising tensions and injustice toward the Palestinians, and mediation should be given another chance; especially with a different administration. Additionally, this should improve Jordan's relations with the United States and promote regional peace.

Study Questions

1. How does President Trump's foreign policy impact Jordan?
2. How does President Trump's foreign policy impact the Palestinian cause and Palestinian lives?
3. To what extent does this impact the peace process and Jordan's 1994 peace treaty?
4. What are possible alternatives to positively impact or revive the peace process?

Study Objectives

The overall objective of the study is the attempt to provide an analysis of U.S. President Trump's peace plan, and its impact on Jordan and the Palestinians.

- Assessing President Trump's Peace to Prosperity Plan in regards to Jordan's national interests
- Identifying the challenges posed on Jordan in regards to the Palestinian question and Trump's plan
- Examining the plan's potential impact on Jordanian-Israeli relations

Methodology

This study will be based on a qualitative approach with the application of a case study. Our primary research method included the assessment of U.S. President Trump's "Peace to Prosperity" plan as the case study. The secondary research method includes extensive investigation and examination of relevant resources published in journal articles, newspapers, reports, press releases, and TV interviews for a deeper analysis of the plan's impact on Jordan. Additionally, the analysis will help articulate the implications on Jordanian-Israeli relations and on Jordan's interests. This method will provide a better understanding of the prospects of the plan's impact on Jordan and Jordanian-Israeli relations, in addition to the U.S.'s role in Jordan's interests.

Trump's Vision

President Trump and his son-in-law and special advisor, Jared Kushner, drafted the Middle East peace plan; announcing in January 2020, "Peace to Prosperity: A Vision to Improve the Lives of the Palestinian and Israeli People". Comprised of 181 pages and split between Two frameworks; a political and economic framework. This section includes a brief overview of the main components of each framework; starting with the political framework (Federal Government of United States, 2020):

Jerusalem

Trump and the U.S. recognizes Jerusalem as the sovereign and undivided capital of Israel in the plan; with all holy sites under Israeli control. The sovereign capital of the Palestinian State will be located in East of the existing barriers, near Shuafat and Abu Dis villages in the outskirts of Jerusalem, as "Al Quds" or what the Palestinian state determines. Trump takes Jerusalem away from the Palestinians and hands it over to Israel. Without even the regard for the religious and historical affiliations, confining the Palestinian capital outside of Jerusalem displays the negligible role of the Palestinians under Trump's plan (Federal Government of United States, 2020). (Arafeh et al., 2020)

Borders and Territories

Trump's vision also furthers Israeli interests by consenting and providing a framework to annex its settlements in the West Bank and Jordan Valley; which also goes against international law. Palestinians would be left with restricted and limited autonomy of less than 70% of the West Bank, less than any previous peace proposal, in addition to land swaps in the Naqab Desert. However, the conceptual maps (Conceptual maps 1 and 2 are in Appendix A) in the plan display the redrawing of borders (Gearan et al, 2020), distorting UNSC Resolution 242, but the Palestinian state will not gain the complete 1967 borders. Israel will also have full sovereignty of the Jordan Valley, territorial waters, and all Israeli settlements in the West Bank; claiming them critical for Israel's national security, and ignoring the Palestinian state's security.

Gaza will be incorporated into the State of Palestine, only after achieving the "Gaza Criteria" according to Israel's demands. The criteria include: Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and all other militias and so-called 'terror organizations' in Gaza are disarmed; Gaza is fully demilitarized; Hamas adopts the Quartet principles, which includes recognizing the State of Israel and its right to exist, accepting previous agreements and obligations, and disarming all so-called terrorist groups (Federal Government of United States, 2020).

Refugees

In their plan, President Trump and Kushner considered eligibility for refugee status will only be through UNRWA-registered refugees. Furthermore, any refugee resettled in a permanent location are only eligible for compensation. The plan envisions 3 options for Palestinian refugees; 1) Absorbed into the State of Palestine (subject to limitations); or 2) permanent integration in current host countries (subject to those countries consent); or 3) the acceptance of 5,000 refugees each year for up to 10 years (50,000 total refugees) in individual OIC member states who agree to participate in the Palestinian refugee resettlement (Federal Government of United States, 2020).

Security and Sovereignty

Trump's Peace to Prosperity Plan includes the preconditions expected to be met for a Palestinian State to be recognized; with Israel and the U.S. judging if the criteria is met or not. The preconditions for the foundation of a Palestinian State

include (Federal Government of United States, 2020):

- 1- Implementing a governing system with a constitution, or a system for the rule of law.
- 2- Establishing transparent, independent, and credit-worthy financial institutions capable of engaging in international market transactions in the same manner as financial institutions of western democracies with appropriate governance. The State of Palestine should meet the independent objective criteria to join the International Monetary Fund.
- 3- Ending all programs, including school curricula and textbooks, that serve to incite or promote hatred or antagonism towards its neighbors, or which compensate or incentivize criminal or violent activity.
- 4- Achieving civilian and law enforcement control over all of its territory and demilitarized its population.
- 5- Complying with all the other terms and conditions of this Vision.

As the plan greatly emphasizes on Israel's security, another Israeli prerequisite to establish the State of Palestine in the plan includes a demilitarized Palestinian State, including the prohibition of developing any military capabilities and weapon systems. As well, Israel has the right to prohibit the entry of weapons and weapon-making materials into the State of Palestine, and the right to engage in security measures to ensure the demilitarization of the Palestinian State. Further, the State of Palestine will not have the right to forge intelligence or security arrangements with any country or actor threatening Israel's security. Even if the State of Palestine is established, Israel will maintain overriding security of the Palestinian State; but the Palestinian State is responsible of internal security, under Israel's security requirements. In addition to that, Israel will have full security control of the entire Jordan Valley, and the settlements in the West Bank. Israel also will control the airspace of the West Bank and control security at all international crossings into the Palestinian State (Federal Government of United States, 2020)

Economic Framework

As the second part of the plan, the economic framework included the facilitation of \$50 billion USD in investments over 10 years, through 3 initiatives. The first initiative, "Unleashing Economic Potential", creates a new foundation for economic growth, business investment, and job creation. This initiative envisions policy reforms coupled with strategic infrastructure investments that will improve the business environment and stimulate private-sector growth. The second initiative, "Empowering the Palestinian People", invests in the development and expansion of four programs to enrich and improve the well-being of Palestinians and public life. This includes the education system, workforce development, healthcare sector, and the overall quality of life. The third initiative, "Enhancing Palestinian Governance", encourages the Palestinian public sector to provide services and administration necessary for a better future and to achieve long-term economic success. This includes programs regarding property rights, tax frameworks, and improving judicial independence, court systems, and government operations and services.

These programs in both the West Bank and Gaza involve facilitating \$27.813 billion in investments in human capital, entrepreneurship, small businesses, transportation, border crossings and mobility, infrastructure, power, water, digital services, tourism, agriculture, workforce development, and others. Other investments in regional programs include \$7.365 billion for Jordan, \$9.167 billion for Egypt, and \$6.325 billion for Lebanon (Federal Government of United States, 2020).

WEST BANK / GAZA PROGRAM TOTALS

(US\$ in mm)

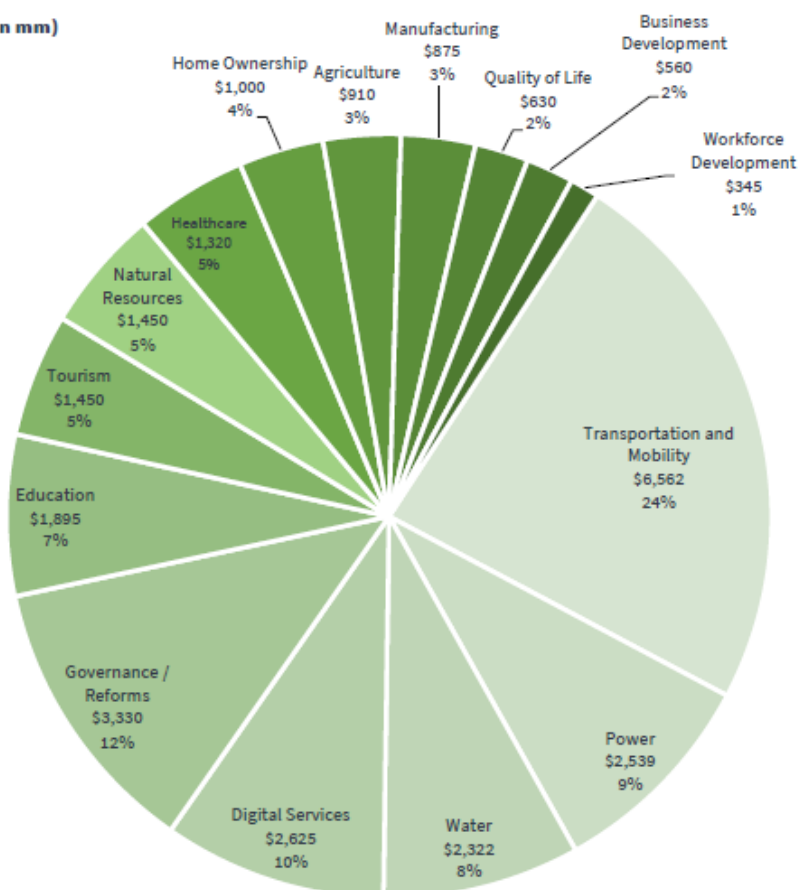


Figure 1. West Bank / Gaza Program Totals. From “Peace to Prosperity: A Vision to Improve the Lives of the Palestinian and Israeli People.” The White House, 2020, *Federal Government of the US*, p. 96. Copyright 2020

REGIONAL PROGRAM TOTALS

(US\$ in mm)

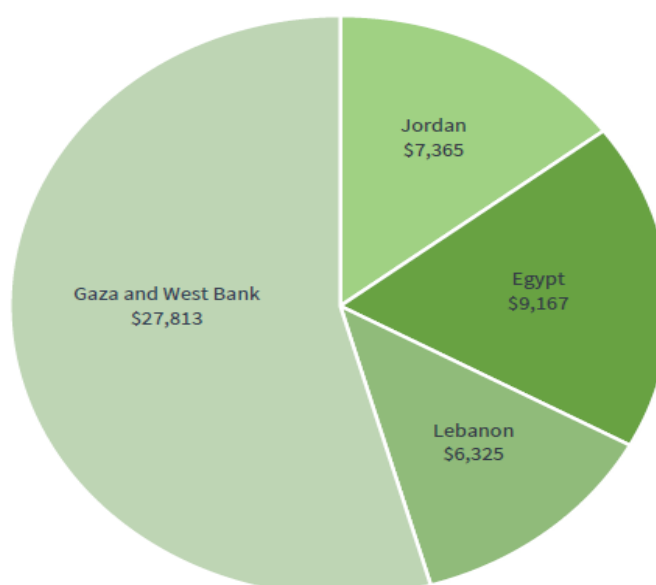


Figure 2. Regional Program Tools. From “Peace to Prosperity: A Vision to Improve the Lives of the Palestinian and Israeli People.” The White House, 2020, *Federal Government of the US*, p. 97. Copyright 2020

Table 1. Regional Program Summary. From “Peace to Prosperity: A Vision to Improve the Lives of the Palestinian and Israeli People.” The White House, 2020, *Federal Government of the US*, p. 98. Copyright 2020

REGIONAL PROGRAM SUMMARY

(US\$ in millions)		Years				
	Total	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10
Grants	\$13,380	\$3,282	\$3,882	\$3,280	\$1,966	\$971
Subsidized Loans	25,689	2,070	7,055	7,355	6,120	3,089
Grants and Loans	\$39,070	\$5,351	\$10,937	\$10,634	\$8,086	\$4,061
Private Capital	11,600	857	3,369	3,210	2,562	1,602
Total Sources	\$50,670	\$6,208	\$14,306	\$13,844	\$10,649	\$5,663

The Impact of Trump's Plan on Jordan

The two-state solution is a priority for Jordan's foreign policy. However, Trump's plan was issued without the Jordanians being consulted; nor acknowledging Jordan's role in preserving Jerusalem with its Arab historic and Islamic sites.

A public opinion poll conducted by WINEP in June 2020 shows that Jordanians vastly disapprove the plan, and 68% believe the plan means the US and Israel are trying to make Jordan an alternative homeland for Palestinians (pollack,2020). This rhetoric of the "Jordan option" appeared after right-wing Israelis rose to power, such as with the Likud Party in the 1970's; yet, continues to emerge (Yom & Sammour, 2019).

I. Jordan's insistence on the creation a Palestinian State

The creation of an independent Palestinian State is of utmost importance to Jordan, since it is considered essential to end Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Trump's vision does not include a viable Palestinian state, and it dismisses the two-state solution; in which Israel annexes 30% of the West Bank and East Jerusalem. This is also a violation of international law. The plan does not promise a contiguous and sovereign Palestinian state, and the unrealistic criteria required for the creation of this 'limited autonomy' will eventually culminate into the legitimization of Israeli annexation and occupation. Implementing this plan will cause political unrest and further conflict; impacting Jordan's sovereignty with the potential of domestic instability. Without a viable Palestinian state, Palestinians and Jordanians will continue to struggle in a void of uncertainty, as their discontent grows towards Israel's aggression.

II. Jerusalem

President Trump ended a long-term U.S. policy, where recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital will come after final status negotiations are settled. In 2018, Trump officially recognized Jerusalem as Israel's undivided capital, fully under Israel's sovereignty, and approved moving the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, without negotiating with Palestinians or Jordanians. This deprives and prevents the Palestinian right and claim of East Jerusalem as the capital of a future Palestinian state. In addition to that, this is in violation of international law, where the UN General Assembly declared Trump's recognition and U.S. embassy move "null and void" (GA Res ES, 2017; Kattan, 2018).

Trump's plan alters the political, religious, and historic status quo of Jerusalem and holy places. After Israel's continuing occupation of the rest of Palestine in 1967, Israel accepted Jordan's custodianship of Haram Al-Sharif and agreed to maintain the historic status quo. In addition to Jordan's complete control over the whole compound, Israel then recognized this with Jordan in their 1994 treaty.

However, since the rise of Israeli right-wing groups, Israel challenged the status quo by permitting large numbers of settlers to storm the compound daily while protected by the Israeli Occupation Forces. The Israeli government supported many plots and actions to change the religious status quo via violations, which always led to unrest and violence. A clear example was Ariel Sharon's provocation in Al Aqsa compound in 2000 which caused the Second Intifada. Other incidents include the recent attacks by Israeli forces on worshippers in Al Aqsa Mosque in May 2021, even on Christian Palestinians in Jerusalem on their holidays also (Al-Khalidi, 2021; Middle East Monitor, 2021).

Jordan's special role as the custodian of Jerusalem's Islamic and Christian holy sites is not mentioned in Trump's plan. Furthermore, his plan calls for 3 changes that will certainly alter historic and legal status: not recognizing Jordanian custodianship, ending the ban on non-Muslims praying inside Haram Al-Sharif (religious status quo), and extending Israeli religious and political sovereignty over the whole city of Jerusalem while continuing settlement building and the process of Judaization.

Jordanians were critical and vocal against Trump's plans for Jerusalem. Jordan's Foreign Minister, Ayman Safadi, stated how sovereignty over occupied Jerusalem is Palestinian, custodianship of its holy sites is Hashemite, and the protection of the city and its sanctities is a Palestinian, Jordanian, Islamic and international responsibility (Jordan Times, 2020a). King Abdullah reiterated Jordan's long-standing position towards the Palestinian cause; reaffirming that Jordan will not accept any attempts to change the historical and legal status quo of Jerusalem. King Abdullah also reaffirmed Jordan's full support for the Palestinians and stressed that the only path to a just solution lies in a negotiated settlement based on a two-state formula, including a Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital (Al- Khalidi, 2019; Alsharif, 2019).

Nation-wide protests in the capital, Amman, near the US embassy, and also in different cities, such as Madabah, Irbid, Ajloun, Jerash, Zarqa, and others were held against Trump's plans to undermine the Palestinian cause and to support the King's decision to reject the plan (Jordan Times, 2020b). The US and Trump formally recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's sovereignty, and later adding this to his proposal, only stirred up popular anger and unrests, which ultimately lead to uprisings against this decision. This will also complicate and impact Jordanian-Israeli relations, as it threatens Jordan's stability.

Jordan's Demographic Challenge

Israel's plans of annexation in Trump's initiative, which include the rejection of a Palestinian state, will have 2 possible outcomes from a one-state reality: either apartheid Israel, where Palestinians have no equal rights (Mitchell, 2019); or addressing the demographic problem at Jordan's expense. The Jordanian concern about potential demographic threats to Jordan's national identity is substantial in this plan, through the already existing occupation, and its subsequent potential displacement of the Palestinians.

Palestinians living in Israel's annexed territories of the plan, such as the 30% of the West Bank and East Jerusalem, will find themselves stateless or displaced. Jordanians fear those Israeli policies in Jerusalem and the West Bank against the Palestinian residents might compel them to seek refuge in Jordan because of the expected suppressive measures by the State of Israel. The feared influx of new refugees into Jordan will change the demographic nature of the state; supporting the Israeli argument that there is no need to establish a Palestinian state since already a majority of Palestinians live in Jordan. According to some Israeli's rhetoric, there is only a need to change the name of the state (Zakaria, 2021a).

III. Refugees and Trump's Vision

Jordan was always the country most impacted by the refugee crisis in the Middle East, and currently holds almost 1/3rd of Palestinian refugees worldwide. With regard to Palestinian refugees in Trump's plan, it only considers UNRWA-registered refugees as Palestinian refugees, ignores international law, and completely dismisses the right of return for all Palestinian refugees without a just settlement; a core issue in the question of Palestine. Furthermore, it goes against the 1994 Jordan-Israel Peace Treaty; where Israel is committed to resolve the refugee issue in accordance to international law, and in consultation and involvement of Jordan. President Trump removes another core issue to the Palestinian cause, and as well, does not recognize Jordan's important role in the refugee problem.

Instead of holding Israel accountable for creating the refugee problem, the plan transfers the responsibility to the international community. The plan forces Jordan to permanently settle the status of the millions of Palestinian refugees it hosts; dismissing the right of return, and without consulting or agreeing with Jordan. In addition to that, there are no alternatives if any of the relevant parties reject this proposal, and the compensation to these parties are unclear and unreliable. These implications are not limited to Jordan, but to every country with Palestinian refugees.

The impact of the U.S. and Trump cutting aid from UNRWA lead to Jordan struggling to manage the deficit, and the plan undermined Jordan's economic and domestic stability. The settlement of the refugee problem is a priority for Jordan since it involves 2 million Palestinian refugees, while the Israeli government promotes the unachievable and unrealistic "Palestinian homeland in Jordan."

IV. Trump's Plan and Security

Trump's plan emphasized on the importance of Israel's security, but disregards the implications on Jordan's security. Thus, Trump undermined and disregarded Jordanian national interests since Israeli annexation of the Jordan Valley could possibly cause the potential collapse of the PNA, militia violence in the West Bank and unrest in the East Bank; ultimately putting Jordan's security at stake.

The essence of the plan dismisses the right of the establishment of a Palestinian sovereign state, and does not take into consideration Jordanian national interests. This is likely to create popular unrest and resistance; effecting Jordan's stability. The annexation of the Jordan Valley, as pledged by Netanyahu, is a direct violation of the 1994 peace treaty between Jordan and Israel. King Abdullah stated after Netanyahu's announcement that this alone will cause a "massive conflict" (Al Arabiya News, 2020).

Another implication on Jordan's security includes the threat of Israel itself. Relations between Jordan and Israel has deteriorated since the rise of the right-wing populist and settler movement supported by the Likud government. As Israel grew more aggressive and opposed to a two-state solution, the security of Jordan must be of concern as a potential threat grows; especially as relations between the two countries are very low (Ersan & Abu Sneineh, 2021; Youssef, 2020).

Jordan is confronted with challenges in guiding any peace process, so it is vital for Jordan to refocus on borders, security, and refugees. However, Jordan cannot isolate or disengage itself from any plan; since it is connected to Palestine by geography, politics, and history.

V. Economic Implications

Trump's plan of 'economic peace' reiterates Israel's economic proposals since the 1990's; where Palestinians concede their freedom in exchange for economic incentives (Buttu, 2020; Kershner, 2009). The US might have acquired the support of some Arab states, but for Jordan, it is not of any economic value. This is especially because a large amount of the programs' funds proposed for Jordan are in loans, and the programs referred constitute a negligible fraction of Jordans GDP.

The plan also includes Palestinian territories fully surrounded by Israel; which means there are no direct borders between Palestine and Jordan. This imposes further challenges on Jordan, as well as Palestinians, as it will restrict and curtail trade and economic associations. Additionally, it will impact the Palestinian economy since it depends on Jordan for global exports. Trump's vision limits the mutual cooperation between Jordan and Palestinians that stabilizes growth and supports stability and development.

Jordan's Domestic & Regional Pressures

Jordan's national interests lie with the question of Palestine, and negotiations with the Palestinians is a priority for Jordan. Specifically, Jordan's national interests include; the formation of a Palestinian state, defining the borders and territories, guarding the safety and status of Jerusalem, and the return of Palestinian refugees.

Recent domestic and regional changes have brought forth challenges for Jordan and King Abdullah II, which ultimately impacted Jordan in many aspects. The first challenge regards the economy of Jordan; in which Jordan's national debt is equivalent to more than 90% of the GDP, and poverty and unemployment rates has risen. A crucial factor, which is not recent but must be taken into account, is the limited natural resources that makes it difficult for Jordan's economy and trade. Jordan is the most country with water shortages and with the highest dependencies on foreign resources of energy, where more than 90% of its total energy are imported. Another factor challenging Jordan's economy is the heavy reliance on foreign aid until today, in which the U.S. is the largest contributor, reaching \$1.5 billion in 2020 (Jordan - Economic Indicators, 2021; International Monetary Fund, 2021; McDevitt, 2011; The World Bank in Jordan, 2021).

Another challenge includes the threats to the security of Jordan, in regards to the regional upheavals since the Arab Spring in 2011 and the Syrian crisis. The wave of protests and revolutions in the region encouraged many Jordanians, including opposition groups, to organize demonstrations against the government and their rising fuel and food prices (McDevitt, 2011). Demonstrations were to continue up to 2021; despite, and because of, many governmental and economic reforms in policies, and the economic impact of the pandemic (Nusairat, 2021). Additionally, terrorist groups, such as ISIS, have been threatening the security of Jordan, on the borders and in the country. Counter-terrorism laws have been enforced after the arrival of many Jordanians from Syria, who have been part of the combats in Syria; especially after terrorist attacks in 2018 (Jordan Times, 2018). The Arab Spring has also impacted the Jordanian economy due to the reliance on Egypt's gas supplies and on the trades on Syria and Iraq borders (Al-Sharafat, 2019; BBC News, 2018). Adding to that, King Abdullah recently claimed Iranian pressure on the region is growing, and in Jordan; as the kingdom was attacked by Iranian-made drones in the past year (Middle East Monitor, 2021b).

The refugee crisis in Jordan has always been a challenge on Jordan and the King, and recent events have taken a toll on Jordan, economically and politically. King Abdullah and the foreign ministers of Jordan have since been dedicated and committed to hosting refugees from surrounding countries, and sought ways to accommodate them. Jordan, with its limited resources for humanitarian needs, were even more committed to seek international funds for refugees, especially after U.S. President Trump's decision to cut all funds to the UNRWA. Jordan hosts many UNRWA camps, and accommodates more

Palestinian refugees than any other country. After the Syrian crisis, Jordan also accepted to host millions of fleeing Syrian refugees, and their future return is still uncertain. The influx of Syrian refugees into Jordan is what hurt Jordan the most, and the Jordanians suffered the most from this impact (Zakaria, 2021b).

The COVID-19 pandemic has also taken a toll on Jordan's economy and social life. The country suffers from a recession after the national lockdown in March 2020, that also included negative impacts on many sectors. The tourism and travel industries were significantly hit, as the government implemented many restrictions on traveling, tourism, and other economic activities; resulting in the loss of millions of USD. Unemployment and poverty rose since the pandemic started. With the lack of a proper strategy to tackle the effects of the pandemic, maintaining stability in this environment is difficult; as political and economic unrest grows with mistrust in government policies (Mansur, 2021; Werman, 2020; Zeitoun, 2020).

Lastly, Jordan is additionally challenged with the situation in Palestine and Jordan's domestic stability. Jordan is pressured from the outside to accept and endorse Trump's initiative, yet, is domestically pressured to reject the plan (Ignatius, 2021). Jordan may find difficulty to sustain stability and peace because of regional instability, and the negative impact of normalization of relations between Israel and the Gulf states and Sudan. Other than that, Jordan has seen its share of demonstrations against the recent Israeli attacks and aggression on the Palestinians of Sheikh Jarrah in the occupied East Jerusalem and on the Palestinians in Gaza. These demonstrations lasted a week, as Jordanians called for an end to normalized relations between Jordan and Israel; in regards to removing the Israeli embassy, and ending the 1994 Wadi Araba treaty and the 2016 gas deal with Israel. Part of the demonstrations expanded to where thousands of Jordanians walked to the eastern borders of Jordan, as a show of solidarity with the Palestinians and in protest to Israel's attacks on Palestinians (Ghaith, 2021).

Jordanian-Israeli relations during the last decade

As mentioned earlier, the relations between Jordan and Israel have retrogressed since Netanyahu was elected; worsening especially the past decade. This is mainly due to the recent developments in the Palestinian issue and Israel's nonchalant and aggressive policies; that are harming relations and provoking Jordan's public and government institutions. Furthermore, the ongoing provocations from Israel towards Al Aqsa Mosque have created diplomatic crises for Jordan.

In recent years, Netanyahu's confrontations with Jordan have led the King to grow with distrust towards Israel. These include, and not limited to, Jordan recalling their ambassador from Tel Aviv in 2014 in protest of Israel's attacks and arrests of Palestinians and Al Waqf members in Al Aqsa Mosque (Jordan Times & AFP, 2015). In addition to the 2014 killing of Jordanian judge, Raed Zuaitar, by an Israeli soldier at the King Hussein Bridge Crossing; resulting in angry protests and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the time, Nasser Judeh, calling for an Israeli charge d'affaires in Amman and an investigation immediately (Freij et al, 2014).

As well, in 2017, another incident regarding Al Haram Al Sharif, when Israel decided to close the compound to install metal detectors and facial recognition at entrances. Considered a response to the shootout between Israeli forces and Palestinians in the compound days earlier. This entailed to further tensions between Jordan and Israel; Jordan and Palestinians understood this as an attempt to change the status quo and affix Israel's control, in the context of security (DW, 2017).

During the same week, an Israeli guard shot dead 2 Jordanians at the Israeli embassy in Amman. A 17-year-old Mohammad Jawawdeh stabbed the Israeli with a screwdriver and the other, Dr. Bashar Hamarneh, was shot by accident. Protests and wide-spread anger flared in Jordan, especially after Israel invoked diplomatic immunity to protect the Israeli from being questioned and tried under Jordanian law (Ghazal, 2018). A major diplomatic dispute between Jordan and Israel lead to the closure of the Israeli embassy for 2 years. However, a deal was made between Jordan and Israel. Israel would take out the metal detectors from Al Aqsa compound, in exchange for the Israeli guard and envoy to be returned to Israel (Al Jazeera, 2017; Winer & Staff, 2017).

there are many provocations the took place in 2019 by Israel against Jordan, with Jordan issuing multiple condemnations against their acts in Palestine. For instance, Israel bars the Head of the Jerusalem Awqaf Council and other top officials from Al Aqsa compound for 40 days. The government of Jordan rejected and condemned this act, describing it as a "new

escalation” and a violation of the Jordanian custodianship over Al Haram Al Sharif (Jordan Times, 2019).

Another diplomatic dispute in 2019 occurred over Israel’s arrest of 2 Jordanians at the borders and held without charge for 2 months, which then lead to the closure of the Israeli embassy and to the return of the Jordanian ambassador from Tel Aviv again (Al Jazeera, 2019). King Abdullah ordered the government to bring the two back home at whatever cost, hence the Foreign Minister, Ayman Safadi, warned of taking further diplomatic measures and a deal between the countries brought them back to Jordan (Reuters, 2019).

October of 2019 marked the 25th anniversary of the Jordanian-Israeli Wadi Araba peace treaty, yet, King Abdullah described the relations between the 2 countries at an “all-time low” (WINEP, 2019). This is majorly due to the developments in the Palestinian cause. Jordan did not hold a ceremony, and refused Israel’s offer of a joint ceremony. Announced in 2018, the King reaffirmed his decision a year later, of Jordan terminating the lease of Jordanian land to Israel, Baqoura and Ghumar; annexes leased to Israel under the peace treaty. The Jordanian public applauded the King’s move to confirm Jordan’s sovereignty over these lands once again (Ghazal, 2018; Jordan Times, 2019b).

At the start of 2020, U.S. President Trump announced his peace plan; where Jordan was ignored during its drafting. With Israel considering to implement the plan unilaterally, Jordan grew even more threatened by Israel, hence Jordan’s increasing skepticism towards their relations with Israel. As Netanyahu and Israel planned to annex the Jordan Valley, King Abdullah also warned that such moves will cancel or freeze the 1994 Wadi Araba peace treaty, and is a direct violation of international law. King Abdullah refused to accept calls or meetings with Netanyahu during annexation talks (Middle East Eye, 2020). Jordan gathered international support, with 3 other countries, to oppose and warn against the annexation, describing it as a plan to destroy bilateral relations (Reuters, 2019).

Relations continued to worsen between King Abdullah and Netanyahu in the beginning of 2021. Israeli security measures violated the protocols of a religious and peaceful royal visit by Crown Prince Hussein to Al Aqsa compound, forcing the Crown Prince to cancel the pre-arranged trip due to last minute Israeli complications. (CNN Arabic, 2021). Jordan was angry over Israel’s attempt to undermine Jordan’s role in Jerusalem. This would have been a historic visit for Jordan, as it would have been the first Jordanian royal to visit since the 1994 peace treaty. In retaliation, King Abdullah ordered the government not to grant Netanyahu landing rights in Amman, which was to take Netanyahu to Abu Dhabi during his re-election bid (Al Sharif, 2021a).

Adding to the soured relations between Jordan and Israel under Netanyahu are the recent disclosures unveiled by the Washington Post columnist, David Ignatius, that Netanyahu was involved in the seditious plot of conspiring against King Abdullah and to destabilize the monarchy (Ignatius, 2021). This scheme led to the arrests of three prominent figures, the former senior aide to the king and consultant to Saudi’s Mohammad Bin Salman (MBS), Bassem Awadallah; the king’s half-brother, Prince Hamzah; and the king’s relative, Sharif Hassan bin Zaid. The Jordanian investigation and reports claim it also involved Jared Kushner, Netanyahu, and MBS attempting to “weaken Jordan’s role as custodian of the religious sites in Jerusalem”; with the objective to undermine King Abdullah’s position in rejecting Trump’s ‘deal of the century’. However, according to a former U.S. intelligence official, Israel’s intelligence services sent private messages to the Jordanian monarch, denying any role in the plot and implying that it was Netanyahu involved.

Ever since the assassination attempt on the Hamas leader in 1997 in Amman, the 1994 peace treaty did not truly recover; mainly due to Netanyahu’s careless aggravations. After Trump’s aggressively pro-Israeli policies, King Abdullah continued to be cautious of every move he makes but will not accept policies at the expense of Jordan’s national security.

Jordanian-Israeli relations after Netanyahu

A new administration in the U.S. and the election of a new Israeli PM has potentially shifted the equation for Jordan. In June, Netanyahu’s 12-year hold on power ended as Israel elected a new government, appointing Naftali Bennet as the new PM, Yair Lapid as the new FM, and a coalition including leftists, centrists, and for the first time, Palestinian citizens of Israel. Before Israel’s new government, Israel’s Defense Minister, Benny Gantz, also met with King Abdullah to reassure the king of the importance of their normalization and alliance (Al Sharif, 2021b).

However, Bennet is an ultra-right-wing politician, and his political background is seen as worse than of Netanyahu’s;

especially in regards to settlement building in occupied territories, his calls for annexing the West Bank, and his public rejection of the two-state solution. Bennet's foreign policy includes rectifying Jordanian-Israeli relations, starting with water and drought diplomacy; particularly since Netanyahu neglected the water deals between Israel and Jordan. Bennet met with King Abdullah after a month of the new government, as well as, meetings between both foreign ministers. The agreements concluded with Israel selling 50 million cubic metres of water to Jordan (largest amount sold yet), and to increase Jordanian exports to Palestinians in the West Bank (Al Jazeera, 2021a). Other than Jordanian-Israeli water cooperation, other unprecedented bilateral ties are expected as Israel shows new incentives of buying solar power from Jordan to meet the targets of the 2015 Paris climate accord in reducing greenhouse gas emissions (Al Jazeera, 2021b). An alignment of interests and environmental diplomacy between Jordan and Israel can potentially repair the diplomatic relations.

Even if Jordanian-Israeli relations get better through water cooperation, it will not absolve Israel's aggressive policies of stealing water from Palestinian territories and re-selling it back to them. Israel suppresses the Palestinian people through their control of water sources in the West Bank as Palestinians suffer from water shortages; where Israel directly controls 85% of the water resources in the West Bank and controls how the remaining 15% is distributed. The illegal settlements in the occupied territories never suffer from these shortages; where the Israeli water company supplying the occupied territories, transfers water to these illegal settlements and dries up the occupied territories. On top of that, Israel rarely gives the PA permission to dig more water wells to prevent these shortages (Najib, 2021).

In Gaza, which is still under Israeli blockade since 2006, it is even worse than the West Bank; where less than 4% of fresh water is drinkable, the surrounding sea is polluted by sewage, and water pollution has increased healthcare problems and the spread of diseases for Gazans. The recent shutdown of Gaza's only functioning power plant means Gaza does not have the fuel to run water or sanitation facilities, creating more urgency. The constant Israeli bombardments heavily damaged Gaza's water infrastructure and the siege limits materials entering to develop water infrastructure, despite agreements made between the PA, Israel, and the UN (B'Tselem, 2017; OCHA, 2021).

Despite Bennet's attempt to better relations, he continues the Zionist agenda, and Israeli policies, of settlement expansion, demolishing Palestinian homes, Palestinian arrests, and violent campaigns against Palestinian areas by settlers and the occupation's forces. So nevertheless, good relations or having allies in the new Israeli government does not mean the main issues on the ground have gone away. Jordan's custodianship of Jerusalem's holy sites is still threatened (Jordan News, 2021), especially when a majority of the Knesset members belong to the far-right. As well, it is expected that Bennet will continue on with Trump's 'deal of the century' by expanding settlements, annexing areas of the West Bank, and displacing Palestinians.

King Abdullah still called for the continuation of the peace process on the basis of the two-state solution, even after meeting the Israeli PM. Bennett's coalition government might be a change for Jordanian-Israeli relations, but it will not be a 'government of change' for Palestinians until there is a fundamental change in the position on the Palestinian right to self-determination, Palestinian right of return, the Palestinian right of establishing an independent Palestinian state, and the end to the occupation.

Conclusion

The Political Outlook and The Future After Trump's Peace Plan

The rejection of Trump's peace plan does not end the real policies on the ground. After Trump's plan was announced, Netanyahu declared Israel's plans of annexing the territories illegally conceded to Israel in Trump's vision. These territories include 30% of the occupied West Bank and the Jordan Valley. Israel also announced further settlement building in Jerusalem and the West Bank.

Both plans are illegal under international law, and brought forth many condemnations internationally, including the UN, EU, UK, and Arab countries. However, Israel decided to delay the annexation as pressure came from Israel and from abroad, especially Jordan (Al Jazeera, 2020; Neuman & Dwyer, 2020). King Abdullah warned Israel and the international community of the threats and instability this move will make on Palestine, Jordan, and the region. The biggest threat, apart

from displacing Palestinians and home demolitions, comes with the fact that annexation will make a Palestinian state unviable (Al Arabiya News, 2020) Another threat to stability in the region, as the annexation might possibly dissolve the PA and push people towards unrest and upheavals (Matar, 2020).

Other Israeli policies still on the ground are, the ongoing land seizure and home demolitions; mass arrests of Palestinians including children; the replacement of Palestinian residents by Israeli settlers from occupied East Jerusalem, the Jordan Valley, and the West Bank; and the ongoing siege and wars on Gaza. Israel's aggressive policies against Palestinians is still continuous, as the provocations and violations against the historical and legal status quo of Al Aqsa Mosque have not ended, even with the new U.S. administration. The Israeli occupation and their policies undermine the two-state solution and the Jordanian custodianship of Jerusalem's holy sites; and will always cause potential strategic, security, and demographic threats to Jordan's national interests.

Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, announced that the Biden administration is committed to resume diplomatic relations with the PA; still holding the two-state solution as the answer to peace and stressing their support for Israel. President Biden is a full supporter of Israel, but reversed some of Trump's policies and decisions. The Biden administration believe U.S. foreign assistance for the Palestinians serves important U.S. interests and supports stability.

Blinken announced the plan to restart U.S. economic, development, and humanitarian assistance for the Palestinians. The plan includes the restoration of \$150 million to UNRWA, \$75 million in economic and development assistance in the West Bank and Gaza, and \$10 million for peacebuilding programs through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). The economic aid includes COVID-19 relief and assistance for the Palestinian civil society. In addition to that, the U.S. plans to resume security assistance programs with the PA. The US will also resume support for UNRWA in all of the host countries; funding its educational and healthcare services. The funds will provide COVID-19 assistance, with cash and food assistance (U.S. Department of State, 2021a).

Other than restoring aid and relations, Biden also rejects unilateral actions, such as the building of settlements on the Occupied Territories. What Biden did not reverse includes, the U.S. embassy move into Jerusalem and Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as Israeli sovereignty. It is expected that Biden's administration will take the conservative approach towards the Palestinian question; seeking conflict management with low interest, instead of conflict resolution.

King Abdullah reassures his close friendship with President Biden, as he was the first leader in the Middle East to visit the newly elected President in Washington in July 2021, as well as the Vice President, key members of the administration, and Congress members. As both leaders reaffirm the close security cooperation between Jordan and the U.S. (U.S. Department of State, 2021b), Crown Prince Hussein also attended meetings with the King to support the strategic relationship to counter terrorism, through military, security, and international efforts (Jordan Times, 2021b).

The meetings also addressed U.S. and international support for Jordan to recover from the pandemic and the economic crisis. Adding to that, meetings covered the mutual understanding between Jordan and the U.S. on regional developments and challenges in the Middle East; especially in the Palestinian cause as the king stressed the importance of pushing towards peace, of the two-state solution, and of avoiding unilateral Israeli action (Jordan Times, 2021a).

The close relationship between the King and President Biden can rebuild the trust between Jordan and the U.S. and can create mutual opportunities, especially after the impacts of the last administration's policies and recent developments in Palestine. Biden and his administration aim to promote a more stable and greater future for Jordan, providing economic opportunities, vaccine support, and military assistance.

King Abdullah continues to pledge for ongoing reform efforts, to stress the need for cooperation, and to continue dialogue; reiterating Jordan's full support for Jerusalem, the preservation of its holy sites, and the commitment for the two-state solution. As Biden reassures Jordan's significance in Washington, King Abdullah is hopeful to challenge this new 'Arab-Israeli' alliance. Jordan hopes it can convince Arab leaders normalizing relations with Israel that resolving the Palestine issue is more important than deterring Iran, and will continue to prove that Jordan will not give up its historic role in Jerusalem.

Appendix A: Maps



Note: Conceptual Map #1 (Israel's map) from President Trump's Peace to Prosperity plan.

Source: Federal Government of the United States. (2020, January). Peace to Prosperity: A Vision to Improve the Lives of the Palestinian and Israeli People. The White House



Note: Conceptual Map #2 (Future State of Palestine's map) from President Trump's Peace to Prosperity plan.

Source: Federal Government of the United States. (2020, January). Peace to Prosperity: A Vision to Improve the Lives of the Palestinian and Israeli People. The White House

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