

## Jordan and the Terrorist Threat of DAESH 2003-2017

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### Abstract

**Objectives:** This paper provides an in-depth analysis of the DAESH terrorist threat to Jordanian national security. In particular, it focuses on its transnational terrorist threat, ideology, and strategy towards the Jordanian society. It also addresses some Jordanian issues that may be relevant to Jordan's strong presence on the DAESH agenda, such as its geographical location and economic, social, and demographic factors, in an attempt to understand the evident targeting of Jordan from 2003-2017 in terms of recruiting Jordanian citizens as foreign fighters under its banner.

**Methods:** This paper applies the descriptive analytical method and qualitative content analysis by systematically collecting data related to Daesh from a set of books, newspapers, speeches, interviews, and social media posts to investigate the group's motivations for targeting Jordan's security and its citizens.

**Results:** The study reveals that DAESH was well aware of the reality of Jordanian society and its challenges; as a result, it was able to infiltrate Jordan by intensifying the recruitment of Jordanians to carry out terrorist acts and engage in terrorist activities between 2003 and 2017.

**Conclusions:** The group's tenets are rooted in transnational strategies, recruitment, religious inspiration, fanaticism, effective media and propaganda, and indiscriminate targeting. The group's generic principles can be exploited to create a predictive framework to fortify the domestic front, including adopting a comprehensive national plan of action to address the terrorist threat and an effective reintegration plan for returnees, in order to deter, mitigate, or neutralize terrorist attacks.

**Keywords:** DAESH, Jordanian national security, ideology, terrorist threat.

### الأردن والتهديد الإرهابي لداعش في الفترة بين (2003-2017)

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#### ملخص

الأهداف: تقدم هذه الورقة تحليلاً معمقاً للتهديد الإرهابي الذي يشكله داعش على الأمن القومي الأردني. و تركز على نحو خاص على التهديد الإرهابي العابر للحدود الوطنية، والأيدولوجية، واستراتيجيتها تجاه المجتمع الأردني. كما تتناول بعض قضايا الواقع الأردني التي قد تكون ذات صلة بالحضور القوي للأردن في أجندة داعش، مثل الموقع الجغرافي، والعوامل الاقتصادية والاجتماعية والديمقراطية. لفهم الاستهداف الواضح للأردن خلال الفترة بين 2003-2017 من خلال العمليات الإرهابية وتجديد مواطنين أردنيين كمقاتلين أجنب تحت لوائه.

المنهجية: استخدمت هذه الورقة المنهج الوصفي التحليلي، وتحليل المحتوى النوعي من خلال جمع منهجي للبيانات المتعلقة بالجماعة الإرهابية من مجموعة من الكتب والصحف والمجلات، والخطب والمقابلات، ومحتوى الويب ومنشورات وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي، والصور الفوتوغرافية، والأفلام، للتحقيق في أيدولوجية الجماعة ومعتقداتها واتجاهاتها الفكرية، ودوافع الجماعة لاستهداف المواطنين وأمن الأردن.

النتائج: أظهرت نتائج الدراسة أن تنظيم داعش الإرهابي كان على دراية جيدة بواقع المجتمع الأردني والتحديات التي يواجهها. لذا فقد تمكن من استغلال عمليات التجنيد للإرهابيين الأردنيين للقيام ببعض الأعمال الإرهابية وتجديد مزيداً من الأردنيين للمشاركة في نشاطاته الإرهابية بين عامي 2003 و 2017.

الخلاصة: إن استراتيجية داعش العابرة للحدود الوطنية، والتجنيد، والإلهام الديني، والتعصب، ووسائل الإعلام والدعاية الفعالة، والاستهداف العشوائي هي القواعد التي استندت إليها الجماعة الإرهابية. ويمكن استخدام المبادئ العامة للمجموعة لإنشاء إطار تنبؤي لتحسين الجهة الداخلية، بما في ذلك اعتماد خطة عمل وطنية شاملة للتصدي للتهديد الإرهابي وخطة فعالة لإدماج العائدين لردع الهجمات الإرهابية، وتخفيفها أو تحييدها.

الكلمات الدالة: داعش، الأمن الوطني الأردني، الإيدولوجية، التهديد الإرهابي.



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## 1. Introduction

DAESH<sup>1</sup> with its brutal approach presented an escalating danger posed to the national security of neighboring states, including Jordan. The group's administrative skills, combat effectiveness, and utilization of armed conflicts in the region, which escalated into violent confrontations, underscored the threat. The group has occupied lands and built organizational structures in Syria and Iraq. Specifically, it has made a bold effort to establish an extremist religious entity by undermining the political boundaries of nations that have been in place since the conclusion of the First World War. It has done so by disregarding both regional and international borders, posing a threat to the stability of states within and outside the region. Its ability to extend its influence beyond its territories in Iraq and Syria, through a network of active and dormant cells operating under various aliases, has demonstrated this. It has attracted thousands of supporters worldwide, particularly from Arab countries like Jordan, to fight under its banner. Regardless of whether the fighters remained in the fighting zones or returned home, the recruits are a significant security threat to the countries due to their experience in Syria, Iraq, and elsewhere, in addition to family and organizational ties in their countries.

Jordan considers the threat of DAESH a threat to its national security and stability, targeted the state through operations from the inside, and recruited Jordanian youth as terrorists, including those migrating to join DAESH and other terrorist groups. However, a direct terrorist attack by militia rebels like DAESH against the Jordanian army would be unexpected and unfeasible due to the organizational, technological, training, and administrative gaps between the Jordanian military and the militia of DAESH, with such militias aware of that fact. The groups adopt ideological strategies based on avoiding such confrontations. Similarly, Jordan and other countries are aware of the organizations' ability to enter the country, provoke strife, and conduct terrorist operations individually by exiting the borders, such as DAESH. Moreover, the group employs "lone wolves" within the country, motivated by extremist ideology, to carry out selective and limited operations against specific targets or individuals, to sway Jordan's public opinion and advance the group's broader objectives. Additionally, the terrorist fighters returning after DAESH's defeat show more security risks due to acquiring practical field experience through employing the DAESH strategy in Iraq and Syria.

## 2. Significance of the Study

This paper is significant in providing insight into ISIS's intentional focus on the Jordanian state. It aims to comprehend the group's strategy and motivations for targeting the state from 2003 to 2017. During this period, the terrorist organization successfully carried out attacks within the state and recruited numerous Jordanian youths as foreign fighters. These terrorist activities have raised security concerns and necessitated efforts to strengthen the internal front to safeguard the security and well-being of Jordanian society.

## 3. Statement of the Problem

The problem of the study arises from the significant security worry that Jordan experienced as a neighbouring country to Iraq and Syria, due to the terrorist threat posed by DAESH from 2003 to 2017, as well as other countries in the region. It was clear that Jordan witnessed an escalation in DAESH activities that affected its stability, and a rise in the number of young people belonging to the extremist organization and its ability to attract volunteers from Jordan and around the world, which raises many structural issues about motives, contributors, and influences. Reasons for the attractiveness of DAESH. Are there factors and circumstances related to Jordanian society and Jordan itself that prompted these Jordanian youth and volunteers to join DAESH or related to the influence of the organization's beliefs and orientations?. Thus, the study addresses the below research questions:

1. What were the motivations of the terrorist group of DAESH to target Jordan between 2003 and 2017?
2. How did the group attracted some Jordanian youths to join its terrorist activities?

## 4. Research Objectives

This study investigated DAESH's reasons for targeting Jordan between 2003 and 2017 and attracting Jordanian youths. Jordan's stability is affected by the security concerns posed by the terrorist group of DAESH. Following are some of the

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<sup>1</sup>DAESH: a militant Islamist group, formed in the early 21st century in Iraq and Syria, whose aim is to create a cross-border caliphate. Also called: Islamic State (IS), Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), or Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

study's key objectives:

1. To examine the motivations that drove the terrorist group of DAESH to target Jordan between 2003 and 2017.
2. To identify youths' motivations to fight under the group banner.

DAESH is already engaged in a vast array of terrorist attacks, locally in Iraq and Syria, as well as regionally including Jordan, and internationally. It has also attracted a considerable amount of research initiatives due to its extreme terrorist strategies, and its media propaganda in comparison to other terrorist groups. DAESH has shown deep animosity towards Jordan, although hundreds of Jordanian youths have been engaged in its terrorist activities since 2003.

## **5. Literature Review**

DAESH has been a terrorist group since its inception in 2003, and poses a rising threat to national and international security. Most of DAESH's foreign fighters are from Arab countries, including Jordanian volunteers (Cibra, 2017).

### **5.4 Jordan in DAESH's agenda**

A part of this perspective focuses on the risk that DAESH poses to Jordan's national stability and the country's reaction to international terrorism. It is critical to appreciate the significance of this problem in terms of regional and global terrorist threats based on the views of a majority of experts. According to Rabie, due to the growth in extremism in the north of the country, Jordan had joined and participated against terrorist activities in other Middle East countries. When evaluating Jordanian law and regulations, the threat to the Jordanian people, particularly those dedicated to the battle against terrorism, is taken into account (Rabie, 2016, p. 65).

Terrill had emphasized on Jordan's geographical location in the Middle East and its current moderate policies. DAESH's terrorist acts constitute a severe threat to Jordan, but this does not explain why Jordan's crucial role in combating global terrorism makes it an appealing target for extremist and terrorist attacks. A strong relationship with Western countries, particularly the US, is critical for the stability of the region (Terrill, 2008).

Rothe stated that DAESH seeks to destabilize Jordan's internal security by creating disruption and instability in the country in order to further its terrorist agenda. DAESH's interest in Jordan was evident in the 2005 hotel bombings in Amman, which were carried out by the terrorist organization. It makes little difference whether Jordan is a member of an international coalition fighting DAESH as long as its infrastructure and fighters are destroyed and many of DAESH's members are killed. DAESH's control over border areas close to the common borders has had significant implications on Jordan's economy, particularly in the importation of "Iraqi oil" and personal property from the two neighbouring countries. Hence, DAESH saw Jordan as an entity that was destabilizing the region even further. The author, on the other hand, stated that foreign DAESH fighters are concentrated in Jordan due to the country's high population density. According to him, "the immediate adversary" was more important to DAESH's Jordanian friends than a worldwide jihad and numerous other factors, including the significant influx of refugees from Syria. Thus, Jordan's infrastructure, social services, and unemployment among the younger generation suffered greatly. DAESH was able to start an ideological assault on Jordan due to the state's socio-economic circumstances (Rothe, 2015).

Nesser, Petter, and Gråtrud argued that Jordan contains all of the factors that contribute to the transnational expansion of civil unrest, namely a poor economy, large number of refugees, and the presence of transnational terrorists, which are all significant concerns. Transnational rebel networks can help supporters in adjacent nations or inspire would-be militants to engage in violence. Based on their findings, a jihadist movement was also expanding within the state. Additionally, there were numerous reasons why international jihadists had the desire to attack the country. Since 9/11, Jordan has been one of the most significant allies of the US in counter-terrorism initiatives. Jordan and Israel have continued to build good ties. In 1994, both countries signed a peace treaty, which Islamists viewed as treacherous. However, the Jordanian government's attitude toward terrorism is the most penetrating explanation. Jordan employs "calibrated suppression." The general strategy of the monarchy against domestic subversive elements, like demonstrators and protesters, has been defined in terms of "a soft security" initiative, which refers to aggressive repression of urgent terrorist threats while co-opting lesser militant components to suppress internal subversive movements. This strategy has reduced Islamist violence in the country to a minimum level (Nesser & Gråtrud, 2021, pp. 492–506).

In the same context, Barakat and Leber explained that concerns about home-grown extremism in Jordan have arisen due to Jordan's participation in global counterterrorism operations against DAESH, and the potential spill-over effects of the Syrian conflict. The study investigated the role of Jordanian civilians involved in DAESH attacks in Jordan. Despite Jordan's efforts to combat DAESH, terrorist activities continued to plague the country. Thus, due to its proximity to Jordan, it had tried to handle this issue on a systematic basis (Barakat & Leber, 2015).

Speckhard and Shajkovci argued that the spread of al-Nusra and DAESH in Syria and Iraq had led to Jordan facing numerous terrorist attacks and now faced an expanding core of terrorist organizations with their bases situated near its borders.

Over the last few years, Jordan has seen approximately three thousand individuals, including Tunisians and Saudis, joining DAESH and other militant organizations in its neighbouring countries. On a per capita basis, some estimates place Jordan either at the top or second in the world for having the most foreign fighters fighting for DAESH and other extremist organizations in Syria and Iraq.

### ***5.2 Jordanian fighters in the ranks of DAESH.***

Many studies have assessed the factors that contribute to DAESH's ability to attract foreign militants of diverse backgrounds.

In terms of terrorist violence, several studies opined that extremism is caused by a confluence of sociological and political factors (Winter, 2020, pp. 38–42.). According to the Sociological Cleavage Theory, nations with numerous party systems are more likely to face multiple elections, unmanageable ruling coalition's, and "anti-regime" movements (Neto & Cox, 1997, pp. 149-174). Terrorism, according to "Rooted in Poverty" thinkers, is rooted in poverty. Poverty, inflation, and unemployment were among the economic factors considered in this study (terrorism) and terrorists can blend into the crowd inognito, avoid capture, generate finances, and recruit new members (Piazza, 2006, pp. 159-177). In terms of "population growth", it is expected that the country's economic and political systems will be significantly strained by a rapid population increase. More "religious-ethnic diversity" in the analysis, more likely the emergence of conflict and terrorism (Gambhir, 2014). In contrast to anticipated outcomes, many social and political factors emerge as eye-catching predictions with substantial ramifications. Most probably violence and terrorism will sprout in nations with a more diverse population, ethnicity, and religion than in those with a more homogeneous religion and ethnicity (Boylan, 2010). Terrorism is more likely to emerge in countries where there are more than three political parties than in countries with fewer than three political parties. Terrorism appears not to have an important link with economic development. However, the "Social Cleavage Theory" was found to explain terrorism better than previous hypotheses. Economic and social factors have no significant impact on extremist thoughts or behavior. To understand how DAESH's safe societies were developed, spread, and became dangerous in the first place, it is critical to examine the internal elements of extremism and violence.

According to Milton-Edwards, Jordan was facing a growing menace as a result of focusing its attention on community security issues at the expense of other essential aspects of life. The root of extremism in politics, society, economy, and culture should be further investigated. Transparency and good implementation of policies are essential, but a review of the plan is even more important if it is to be altered to avoid the spread of extremism and violent ideology throughout the country. Nonetheless, despite positive outcomes like the capture and prosecution of terrorist suspects, disruption of terrorist cells, and efforts to contain external violence in neighboring countries, however, safety and legal solutions have had serious consequences on public cohesion, essential rights, individual freedom, and the basic needs of the people .

Yom and Sammour attempted to explain the push factors behind Jordanian youth radicalization that poses a threat to Jordan's internal stability from a political standpoint, thus, contending that poverty, weak education, and radical Islamist beliefs all contribute to the issue. However, the primary issue is that young Jordanians have a weak sense of national identity and therefore are disinterested in the established political system. The Jordanian government takes a military strategy to countering extremism through attacks on terrorism's organizational infrastructure by spotting militant activity early, eliminating cells upon findings them, and guarding against DAESH agents crossing the border from Iraq and Syria. They stated that despite these security measures, Jordan nonetheless experienced an extraordinary rise in domestic terrorism

beginning in late 2015, which raised further concerns about instability.

Diab, Murad, and Almawajdeh found that less than half of the student population (43.4 percent) feared that someday they would become DAESH victims. The study also found that 69.4 percent were concerned about the growth of local radical movements, which was aimed at addressing radical, moderate, and extremist ideas, fears, as well as encouragement and resources for behavior and material needs for DAESH's appeal for two Jordanian universities in southern Jordan. Findings also indicated that 59.5 percent of students had radical views about social, tribal, and religious issues (Al-Badayneh, Almawajdeh, & Al-Enazi, 2021, pp. 139-156). The survey included 840 youths between the ages of 16 and 26 living in the Jordanian cities of Zarqa, Irbid, and Tafileh.

Braizat, Speckhard, Shajkovci, and Sabaileh found that refugees frequently flowed from bordering countries due to economic and political issues, as well as Salafi ideology prevalent in Jordanian society that played a major role in creating vulnerabilities and motivated the youths to become terrorist recruits inside Jordan. However, their study emphasized that educational, social, economic, and political factors influence radical beliefs and organizations that support violence tend to jeopardise the country's internal security (Braizat, Speckhard, Shajkovci, & Sabaileh, 2017).

Zaid Eadat and Mohammad Abo-Romman recently published a book that tracked 330 cases of youths being radicalized in Jordan and the jail sentences they received for terrorism-related charges. The book focused on the radicalization of Jordan's youth between 2017 and 2022. The book addresses the risks posed following the fall of DAESH, whether the direct threats caused by its expansion close to the Jordanian border, the organization's cells, or the indirect threats posed by DAESH's intellectual and ideological impact (Abo-Romman & Eadat, 2022).

Beverly M-E, in his study on the danger of jihad and Salafi-jihadi groups in Jordan, stated that Islamism in Jordan had increased and plays a significant role in both domestic and international insurgent movements. Such Islamists represent the significant relationship that exists between AQ and DAESH, as well as the severe conflicts that have occurred between the two forces. Moreover, the Jordanian authorities view radical Islamists of all sorts as a real threat to a political system that is widely criticized as anti-democratic and dictatorial, and this current risk and concern about their ideas for control have been promoted alongside the Arab public revolutions. Indeed, Jordan has been paying more attention to local Islamist groups as a possible fifth column that wants to remove the government. In the end, the author said that Jordan finds it difficult to keep the country safe and needs to make important changes to its economy and government. He also said that more terrorist acts at home and conflicts on the northern borders are expected to result from the unresolved issue of radical Islam inside Jordan's borders.

Despite its limited scope, the study can make important contributions to Jordan's discourse on extremism and terrorism. Given a thorough analysis of youths joining DAESH (ISIL), it was emphasized that military strategies and partial temporary solutions alone will not be enough to solve this problem. As a result, more stable social and sustainable development is required. This research into terrorist motivations, regardless of group or location, is incredibly important (Milton-Edwards B. , 2017).

## **6. Research Methodology**

This study used a qualitative methodological approach and qualitative content analysis by systematically collecting data related to the terrorist group, to analyze DAESH's strategy and approach to Jordan and its youth, and it seems well-suited to the nature of the problem statement and investigations into terrorism in general. Detailed qualitative narratives offer a more profound and thorough understanding of the subject under study than quantitative or experimental methods might be able to.

Based on the qualitative approach, this research sought to employ primary and secondary sources to meet the study's objectives, thus, collecting and analyzing data by obtaining appropriate information from numerous sources, such as books, academic papers, newspaper columns, published journals, think tanks, and relevant government documents and papers related to terrorism, as well as reports from governments, NGOs, and non-governmental institutions.

## **7. Limitations of the Study**

The collection of sensitive data related to the inner issues of DAESH was not available throughout the study period due

to the group's clandestine nature as well as the instability and security chaos in neighboring countries. While it is true that there have been some studies that focused on DAESH-related concerns, only a small number of these studies dealt with the terrorist threat of DAESH posed to Jordan, and no exhaustive data addressing the nature of the threat and the recruitment process connected to Jordan was found.

Furthermore, several studies focused on Jordan's financial, political, social, and security components as well as the impact of international terrorism on these aspects. Moreover, security concerns also prevented the collection of some pertinent data (confidential and sensitive content). However, the study focused on that threat to Jordan within the period between 2003 to 2017 and addressed the internal and external factors related to the terrorist threat of DAESH on Jordan and its youths.

## 8. Jordan in the agenda of DAESH

Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, a Jordanian insurgent, claimed leadership of DAESH in Iraq in 2003, which launched attacks on the Jordanian embassy in Baghdad as part of his terrorist agenda. However, between 2005 and 2017, the DAESH terrorist organization attacked inside Jordan multiple times, killing hundreds of innocent civilians. The terrorist attacks on three international hotels in Amman on November 9, 2005, may have been evidence of DAESH's involvement in the terrorist attacks inside Jordan. Terrorists have targeted Jordan's infrastructure multiple times since the hotels attack, including Al-Rukban on July 21, 2016, Al-Karak on December 18, 2016, and Al-Baq'a in August 2018 (Atran, 2015). The threat posed by DAESH on its eastern and northern borders was not only becoming increasingly a disturbing development but also in the number of Jordanians recruited to join its ranks.

### 8.1 Politically

DAESH's ideology considers the political system and religion linked together, making all governance and political decisions dependent on Islamic law's rigid interpretations (Van Aarde, 2018). Moreover, DAESH prioritizes the implementation of takfir<sup>2</sup> as a means to establish a cross-border caliphate<sup>3</sup> (Gilliam, 2017, p. 53). They maintain the conviction that Islam necessitates internal purification, and they regard Muslims who disagree with their interpretation as apostates deserving of elimination. The takfirist statement extends to other Muslims outside of DAESH's ideological principles. Therefore, DAESH's ideology and thought to label secular, nationalist, and democratic regimes as "infidels and outlaws of Islam (BaniSalameh, 2024)," necessitating their confrontation (Hassan, 2016).

Hence, DAESH views Jordan, Arab, and Islamic countries as apostates, falling under the disbelief framework (Tønnessen, 2008, pp. 543-562). The DAESH categorizes the world into two distinct frameworks: one for good and evil, one for believers and infidels, one for order and chaos, and one for a pure white world and an imperfectly intimated world. The group does not adopt any approach, thus placing other countries in a circle of disbelief and targeting (Fadel, 2019, pp. 83-94.).

On the other hand, Jordan's geopolitical location and human and natural resources determine its policies and political positions. Therefore, decision-makers face challenges in balancing the country's internal and external aspects, particularly in the context of volatile regional circumstances and a global system that considers countries' geopolitical and demographic specificities. Thus, Jordan worked hard to apply its location to foreign policies and play a prominent regional and

<sup>2</sup>Takfir refers to the act of categorising Muslim individuals or groups of Muslims as kafir, or kuffar (non-believers), and infidels, hence justifying the commission of transgressions against them. As Juan E. Campo (2009, p. 420) states, "The word takfir was introduced in the post-Quranic period and was first done by the Khawarij." Their position was that "Muslims who commit grave sins effectively reject their religion, entering the ranks of apostates, and therefore deserve capital punishment" (Sonn& Farrar, 2009). Moreover, according to the Oxford Dictionary of Islam (Takfir, n.d.), "Takfir is used to sanction violence against leaders of Islamic states who are deemed to be too little religious in the modern era." However, the scope of takfir has expanded to encompass both common Muslims and other Islamic groups. However, some groups, including Daesh, exploited takfir to delegitimize other Muslims and further their objectives, and exterminated those they perceived as kafir. For more details see Timani, H. S. (2017). Takfir in Islamic thought. Lexington Books.

<sup>3</sup>The term "caliph" (Khalifah in Arabic) is generally regarded to mean "successor of the prophet Muhammad." At the same time "caliphate" (Khilafah in Arabic) denotes the office of the political leader of the Muslim community (ummah) or state, particularly during the period from 632 to 1258. Although the caliph was not considered to possess spiritual authority as Muhammad had, the caliph presided over a state governed under Islamic law (Sharia) whose territories constituted the "abode of Islam" (dar). al-Islam.

international role, given its resources and modest area (BaniHamad & BaniSalameh, 2023). Jordan has ties, treaties, and alliances with many countries, particularly the Western ones, which differ in nature, obligations, and internal and external repercussions. The most significant relations targeted by DAESH are the strategic alliances with Western countries, including the USA, due to its fight against terrorism, especially after 2001.

Jordan is one of the most active and influential countries in international military and security cooperation against terrorism (Yitzhak, 2016, pp. 213-235). Significantly, terrorism is the scourge of the times; Jordan has experienced attempts to undermine its stability and security multiple times, thus highlighting the importance of sustainable measures to safeguard national security and their effectiveness in confronting terrorism. Furthermore, Jordanian decision-makers realize the danger to world peace, security, and humanity. The DAESH and other terrorist groups have justified their attacks and targeting of Jordan by citing the terrorist ideology, which views Muslim alliances with Western countries as conspiring with the enemy and supporting infidels. Therefore, DAESH regards any coalitions against Muslims as adversaries that necessitate confrontation.

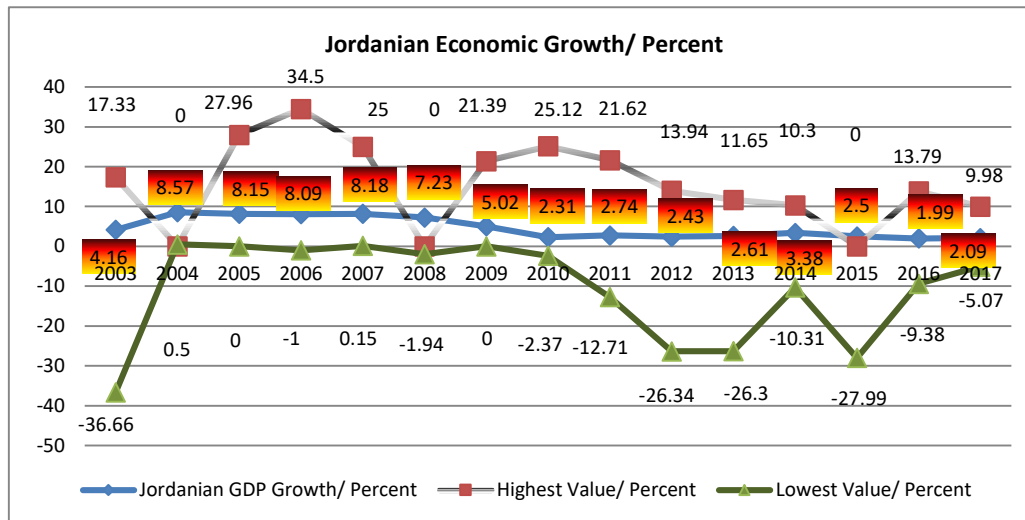
The DAESH also believes that Jordan's agreements with Israel support the Jews who usurped Palestine (Anani, 2006), implying that Jordan is in opposition to Palestinian rights. Moreover, the agreements are considered an explicit recognition of Israel's rights and the legalization of the Israeli occupation. Therefore, DAESH views Jordan as an infidel, justifying its actions through its terrorist ideology, and its extreme interpretations of true Islam and claimed support for Muslims in Palestine.

## **8.2 Economically**

Jordan's economy is unproductive, mainly depending on services, trade, tourism (Salameh & Hourani, 2022), and specific extractive industries such as phosphates and potash, making imports larger than exports in the trade balance. Besides, Jordan's economy is open to the outside world, surrounded by many regional repercussions and crises that negatively impact the country (Milton-Edwards, 2017, p. 19). Jordan's limited natural resources and heavy reliance on external aid and grants made it vulnerable to international, regional, and local crises.

The insecurity of the regional environment, the Palestinian issue (Bailey, 2019), the Iraq war in 2003 (Lasensky, 2006), and the Syrian crisis in 2011 have significantly burdened the Jordanian economy, particularly given the historically significant and direct trade links with Iraq and Syria. Hence, Jordan has lost crucial trading markets, significantly impacting Jordan's economic, political, and social reality (Salameh, Torki, ., & Al-Silwani, 2020, pp. 13, 89).

Internal issues, particularly the high levels of poverty and unemployment and limited employment opportunities, undeniably contribute to Jordan's complex economic situation, at the expense of society's well-being and progress. Indeed, Jordan's economy was beleaguered by continuously low growth trends and structural problems. Jordan's real GDP growth rate was 4.63 percent between 2003 and 2017, which was insufficient to provide sufficient employment opportunities for the Jordanian workforce. Part of Jordan's poor development record may be traced back to repeated external shocks over the last decade, as well as its geographical location in the middle of a volatile region and a lack of natural resources.

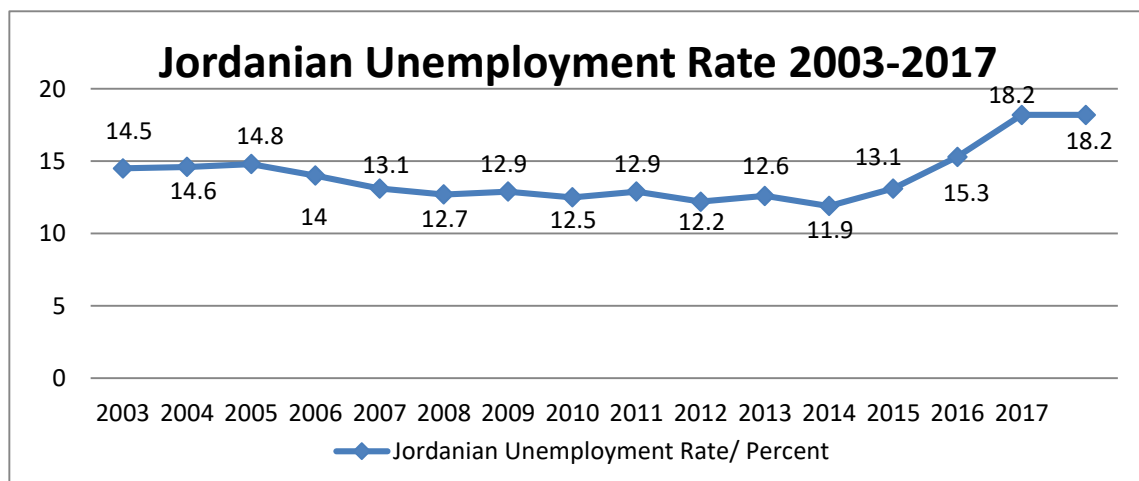


**Figure 1: Jordanian economic growth rate 2005-2017.**

Source: Author's calculations based on Jordan Chamber of Industry, Department of Statistics, Jordan and the World Bank.

The Jordanian GDP<sup>4</sup> growth rate improved in 2004 to more than 8 percent, compared to 4.16 percent in 2003, but began to slow sharply in the following years and reached 2.9 percent in 2017 (Jordan Strategy Forum, 2018). The decline was a result of several factors, including the global economic crisis that occurred between 2008 and 2010 (Ahid & Augustine, 2012), the turmoil in Syria that began in 2011, the violence in Iraq, the slow progress in Jordanian-Iraqi economic cooperation, the economic slowdown in the Gulf Cooperation Council nations, the suspension of Jordanian-Syrian economic support, and several domestic and international challenges that significantly affected real growth prospects and achievements, as reflected in the national economic performance.

In addition to the influx of Syrian refugees, which reached 1,305,350 in 2015 (Statistics, 2015), the economic challenges mentioned previously contributed to a further rise in unemployment rates during the beginning of the third millennium, which exceeded 18 percent in 2017, as indicated in Figure 3.4 below.



**Figure 2: Unemployment rates in Jordan 2000-2017.**

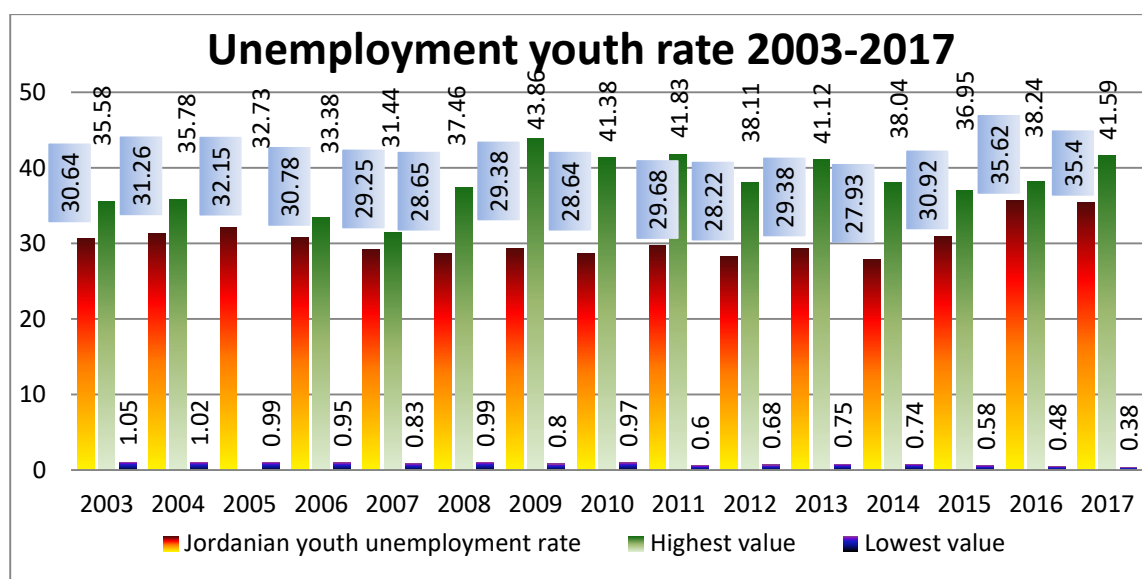
Source: World Bank, Monthly Statistical Bulletin (2005-2017) April 2018, and The Central Bank of Jordan.

<sup>4</sup> The GDP's annual market price growth rate is based on the constant local currency JD in U.S. dollars. GDP is the total gross value generated by all resident producers, plus product taxes, less unaccounted-for subsidies.



In addition to external factors influencing Jordanian economics, there were internal factors that exacerbated the unemployment problem, such as a mismatch between labor market demands and educational system outputs, the failure of government sectors to provide new job opportunities, and the lack of genuine incentives for private investment. The intertwined problems of poverty and joblessness have significantly impacted the political and social order (Alrabba, 2017).

In Jordan, the labor force participation rate was 39.2 percent in 2017 (The World Bank, 2018). Moreover, more than 60 percent of Jordan's population was under 30 years old at that time. Statistics show that the male unemployment rate was 10.8 percent compared to 19.9 percent for females in 2010. A 2012 survey showed that the unemployment rate among university graduates was 16 percent higher than at other education levels. Jordan faces challenges in creating jobs, which suggests that there are fewer jobs in the domestic market and talented human capital is migrating abroad, particularly to the Gulf states. A lack of harmony exists between university education, the labor market, and weak government efforts to promote vocational training among youths, which has contributed to a rise in unemployment (United Nations Development Programme, 2020).



**Figure 3: Youth unemployment in Jordan, ages 15-24.<sup>5</sup>**

Source: The World Bank (Youth unemployment, ages 15-24, the average based on 47 countries).

A related issue to the unemployment rate is poverty, which is defined as having an income that is inadequate to meet an individual's basic needs (Hagenaars & De Vos, 1988). Many scholars, including Lorne, Smith, and other academic experts, have extensively discussed and analyzed the relationship between poverty and terrorism in the twenty-first century. Many scholars widely acknowledge the significant and direct role poverty plays in the emergence and perpetuation of terrorism. Nevertheless, recent research has indicated that the correlation between poverty and insurgent terrorism is minimal or nonexistent since those who engage in acts of terrorism typically do not belong to the economically disadvantaged segment of society.

Krueger and Maleckova assert that the recruitment of participants and adherents involved in militant actions is not primarily sourced from impoverished populations. Furthermore, they argue that national poverty levels do not serve as a reliable predictor for the frequency of terrorist acts perpetrated by persons originating from a particular country. If anything, there appears to be a stronger correlation between wealth and terrorism. (Krueger & Maleckova, 2003, p. 6).

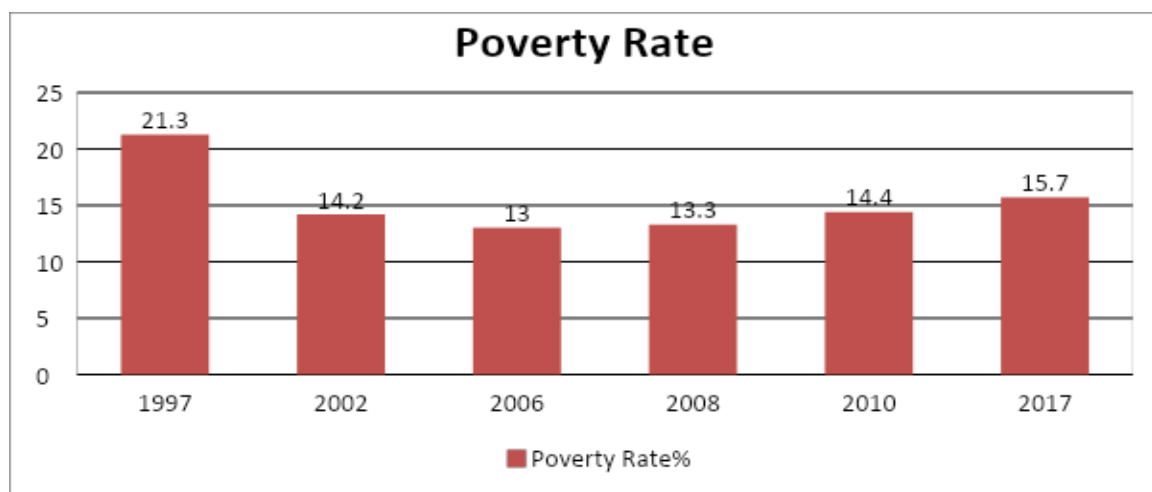
Extremists use poverty and other social issues to justify their violence. However, Liu and Ehrlich point out that the socioeconomic situations in the countries where terrorists originate sometimes "provide a good basis" for moral anger, even

<sup>5</sup> The average based on 47 The Asia countries.

when some terrorists themselves are quite affluent (Ehrlich & Liu, 2002, pp. 183-192). Radicals "exploit" poverty for their own ends, despite the lack of a clear causal relationship between the two. (O'Neill, 2003, p. 22) Terrorist organizations use appeals to issues such as poverty to mobilize support and encourage individuals to take action on behalf of the populace (Khataybeh & BaniSalameh, 2014). Thus, although a terrorist may not always be impoverished, economic hardship is often a driving force behind terrorist acts (Brynjar & Skjølberg, 2004).

Poverty also significantly influences the development of support for the deployment of terrorist methods. The MacCulloch research, which used data from polls of more than a quarter of a million individuals to draw the conclusion that support for violent revolution is lower the less poverty there is, supports this result. It is crucial to recognize that political instability, of which poverty can occasionally serve as an indicator, may not be the sole cause of the correlation between support for terrorism and poverty (MacCulloch, 2004, pp. 830-848).

Schmid's research reveals that nearly one-fourth of Kashmiri terrorists cite 'unemployment' as a recruitment motivation (Schmid, 2005, pp. 223-240). Sassen further argues that the socioeconomic devastation prevalent in the regions commonly referred to as the 'global south' facilitates terrorism (Sassen, 2002). "Countries with institutionalized poverty and inequality serve as incubators for violent extremist groups in general, and terrorism in particular." (Gurr, 2005).



**Figure 4: Jordan's poverty rates in 1997-2017.**

Source: Author's calculations based on data provided by Jordan's General Statistics Department (household survey).

Lack of jobs and high unemployment also contributed to a high poverty rate, extreme poverty, and both food and non-food poverty in Jordanian society.<sup>6</sup> However, these conditions have improved since 2008, with the lowest levels emerging during the millennium.

In 2008, the poverty rate in Jordan rose from 13 percent in 2006 to 13.3 percent and reached 14.4 percent in 2010, based on the latest official statistics. The total absolute poverty (food and non-food) in Jordan increased to 15.7 percent by 814 dinars (1,145 dollars) per person per year in 2012; it was previously 680 Jordanian dinars (955 dollars) per person per year. "A study on household income and spending between 2017 and 2018 by the Department of General Statistics found that there were 1 million impoverished persons out of 7.1 million Jordanians in the Kingdom, which had a total population exceeding 10 million." (Al-Khaleej, 2019).

Hence, the modest Jordanian economic situation seems to attract terrorism and recruitment activities, or at least encourage the embrace of terrorism, providing an environment that fosters DAESH's extremist ideas and other terrorist organizations (Turner, 2018). Therefore, DAESH's targeting of Jordan and its efforts to spread security and political chaos

<sup>6</sup>Measuring poverty conditions in Jordan is based on household expenditure and income surveys implemented by the Department of Statistics (1992, 1997, 2002, 2006, 2008, 2010, and 2017).

highlight the significance of the Jordanian economy and its impact on the country. The group aims to exploit the weaknesses in the Jordanian social fabric, as the low standard of living, deprivation, poverty, and unemployment serve as fertile grounds for those seeking an organizational framework to escape reality. (Prince, Halasa-Rappel, & Khan, 2018)

### **8.3 Socially**

Jordan has a religiously homogeneous society with refugees from neighbouring countries (Palestinians, Iraqis, and Syrians) who share the same Islamic religion, resulting in religious harmony. Consequently, the relative religious orientations and ideas espoused by DAESH and other religious groups in Jordanian society make Jordanian society an attractive target for DAESH and other terrorist organizations. For example, the "Sunni sect" follows Islamic principles based on moderation, tolerance, and rejection of extremism and exaggeration. The DAESH's media attempts to spread its ideology, which the Sunni sect shares with other sects as the true religion and the correct approach for all Muslims to follow. However, Islamic scholars and Muslims worldwide have demonstrated through religious texts and logical arguments that DAESH does not accurately represent Islam and the correct approach. The group faces exclusion from religion and its morals due to intimidation, murder, and brutality.

From another perspective, Society's grievance and increased marginalization and frustration among some of the community categories, especially the youth (Khataybeh & Salameh, 2014), indicate a lack of societal interdependence due to unclear prospects that lessen the identity and importance of belonging to society for some youth. Hence, the situation encouraged DAESH to attack Jordanian society. The group has also listed clear expectations and predictions connecting the results to actions to provide a manageable future. The perspective has a unique charm for troubled youths easily persuaded by DAESH's ideas that acknowledge their inability to deal with conflicting cultural demands (Kruglanski, 2014, p. 28).

Additionally, DAESH was adamant about highlighting the humiliation of Muslims worldwide by the West in Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine, and Bosnia. Hence, the feeling of guilt and being targeted make the youth seek revenge and respond to aggression by searching for or joining DAESH, regarded as a godfather and savior. With DAESH, numerous insurgencies and uprisings with a local focus now have a pan-Islamist and anti-hegemonic narrative to turn to. It was able to create a global jihadist movement by dividing the world into Muslim and non-Muslim halves, then sewing them back together. Because of their shared suffering, Muslims around the world were able to project the Ummah as a political identity against national trends. Psychologically, DAESH's appeal lies in its rapid reform and safe way to achieve substantial gains. Seeking importance is an instinctive human feeling that some individuals seek through humanitarian works that require patience and perseverance (McElreath, et al., 2018, pp. 26-45), often taking years to complete, as opposed to the instant gratification of aggression and murder (Duntley & Shackelford, 2008). Aggression has an instinctive, developing attraction through aggressive dominance that has influenced many volunteers to join DAESH and Al-Qaeda.<sup>7</sup>

### **9. Aspects of Targeting Jordan by DAESH**

DAESH's strategy employs a cross-border ideology to achieve its terrorist goals, whether by committing terrorist attacks or through media and recruitment. During the planning phase, the group infiltrated Jordan, killing hundreds of innocent people and uncovering numerous terrorist operations. Furthermore, many Jordanian youths were DAESH foreign fighters who have been affected by the media of the group.

The Jordanian security forces played a crucial role in the international coalition against DAESH by handling numerous terrorist operations that were discovered during the planning phase and arresting many terrorists. The security force significantly helped weaken the organization's control and ability to perform operations, decreasing terrorist activity in the country in 2017 compared with previous years. (Country Reports on Terrorism (2017) – Jordan, 19 September 2018).

### **10. Terrorist Attacks**

In 2018, Jordan ranked 60th internationally with a (4,043) percentage out of 10 on the International Terrorism Scale under the Institute for Economics and Peace in Sydney, which measures the effects of terrorism on 163 countries from 2000

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<sup>7</sup>Al-Qaeda: in Arabic: al-Qā'idah ("the Base") is a broad-based militant Islamist organization founded by Osama bin Laden in the late 1980s and became one of the world's most notorious terrorist organizations after carrying out the attacks of September 11, 2001.

to 2018. The rank indicates the seriousness of terrorism in Jordan, which has an average position in the total number of countries covered by terrorism. It also refers to the rate of terrorism on a scale of 0 to 10, which reached 3.78. (Institute of Economics & Peace, 2018).

Thus, Jordan's battle with terrorism began in the early century and increased with the emergence of DAESH in Iraq in 2003, with various attacks on Jordan, most important of which are the following (Al-Momani, F, 2018).

- 1989: The security services foiled a plan by the "Jaish Mohammed." To attack public institutions such as government buildings.

- 1994: the "Jordanian Afghans" Organization targeted cinemas and liquor stores in Al-Baqaa and Sweileh, which failed, including an attempt to bomb "Jerusalem Hotel" in Amman.

- 1994: the Jordanian security services arrested Abu Mus'ab Al-Zarqawi, Al-Maqdisi and several comrades in connection with the Imam's pledge of allegiance to establish an Organization carrying takfirist ideas having weapons outside the law.

- the terrorist operations receded for several years until September 11 2001, through foiled plots and attacks, mainly linked to Ahmed al-Khalayla, Abu Mus'ab Al-Zarqawi.

- 2002: a terrorist cell belonging to Al-Zarqawi committed an assassination of the U.S. diplomat Lawrence Foley, a former worker at the U.S. Agency for the International Development in Amman.

- 2004: Zarqawi's cells launched Katyusha rockets near the military hospital in Aqaba's Southern region, killing one person and injuring four.

- 2004, the security services arrested the commander and members of the Al-Jayosy terrorist cell that attempted terrorist attacks with chemical weapons. Al-Jayosy and his Organization appeared on the Jordanian television explaining their plan, which the General Intelligence Service foiled. Al-Jayosy confessed that the aim was the prime minister's office, the General Intelligence Service and the U.S. Embassy in Amman. Hence, the cell prepared 20 tons of chemical explosives ready to kill 80,000 citizens and permanently injured 60,000 others.

- 2005, Al-Qaeda in Mesopotamia bombed Amman and targeted three hotels in the capital's centre, killing 60 and injuring hundreds.

- 2006-2014, no terrorist operation occurred, but dozens of planned operations inside the Jordanian territory were constantly announced. Furthermore, many attempts and operations were thwarted, and the perpetrators were transferred to the State Security Court.

- 2015, DAESH broadcasted a video executing the Jordanian pilot Mo'ath Al-Kasasbah, alive on 15 February 2015, captured and burned in an iron cage in a gruesome crime scene (Badawy & Ferrara, 2018, pp. 453-470). The video, released by DAESH's Al-Furqan Foundation, showed the gruesome final moments of the Jordanian pilot, 27, who was put in an iron cage before being burned to death (Helfont, 2015).

- 2015: DAESH blew up a gas pipeline in Egypt's Sinai in May 2015 (Metwally, 2015).

- In 2016: a Jordanian Special Forces security officer was killed after storming the headquarters of a particular cell linked to DAESH in Irbid, killing seven of the cell members, and the rest were arrested.

- 2016: a terrorist attack was performed whereby five officers from the Jordanian general intelligence services were killed in an armed attack targeting the department's headquarters in Al-Baq'a camp North of Amman.

2016: on Sept. 18, shooters attacked the city security centers in the southern province of Karak, barricading inside the historic Karak Castle and exchanging fire with the security forces. The incident killed seven security personnel and a Canadian tourist and injured 28 others.

2016: A terrorist bombing near Al-Rukban refugee camp occurred near the Jordanian borders on June 21, 2016, killing six Jordanian soldiers.

## **11. DAESH's Media Speech against Jordan**

DAESH has used all media outlets as part of its strategy, employing the latest technical methods to achieve its ideological goals (Melchior, 2014). The group views the media as a form of jihad, just as crucial as jihad on the battlefield, where the media weapon plays a pivotal role in inflicting psychological defeat on enemies, ultimately leading to victory.

The "DAESH" media message targets a variety of mass audiences. For instance, the group uses legitimate evidence and logical justifications based on religious misinterpretations to justify the brutal killings of its members. Moreover, the group targets the "commoners" under its control or neighboring communities, such as Jordan, with the aim of spreading chaos and instability, as well as recruiting more fighters by understanding the enemy's media strategies. DAESH believes that its media policy success depends on understanding the opponents' media policy and ensuring the materials and releases reach the target audience. The organization also employs emotional appeals to win people's minds and hearts through intimidation (Spens, 2014).

The DAESH divides its conflict with others into two camps: the believing camp (without kufr, or "infidelity") and the kufr camp. The group commits jihad by intimidating and terrorizing others, labeling those they perceive as "hypocrites," such as those who have not pledged allegiance to the caliph "Al-Baghdadi," and threatening to kill them. On the other hand, DAESH boosts the morale of its members by disseminating news of their victories, while simultaneously undermining the enemy's morale by disseminating their defeats. They also use kidnapping tactics to stir up media and political controversy, similar to what happened with the Jordanian pilot Mo'ath Al-Kasasbeh (Dabiq, 2015). The organization also tries to portray a perfect image to its members, encouraging people to support them while demonstrating their faith, methodology, and goals (Mahood & Rane, 2017, pp. 15-35).

DAESH occupied the headlines in 2014, 2015, and 2016 due to its dramatic and effective use of propaganda (Nissen, 2014, pp. 2-8). The organization aimed to promote its cause and religious ideology, build its state, the "Caliphate," and build individual and collective ties with the organizations and individuals targeted for joining or supporting it. The organization's ability to dominate the region and attract a significant number of combatants stems from its adeptness in utilizing the media and social media as integral components of its terrorist operations (Abumelhim & Abu-Melhim, 2015).

DAESH included Jordan and other neighboring countries in Iraq and Syria in its media system through Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. The group has shared videos of direct threats against Jordan and its people, as well as voice messages threatening its security and stability.

-DAESH released an audio recording on Tuesday, June 23, 2015, sending a new message to Jordanians and others in the Arab countries. In the audio recording Abu Mohammed Al-Adnani, urged the people of Lebanon, Jordan and Saudi Arabia to participate in the upcoming war against "al-Rawafid (Rafida)"<sup>8</sup>. "Muslims everywhere, we congratulate you on the coming of The Holy Month of Ramadan, so benefit from it, do good things. The closest worship of God is jihad; so, work on it and go for jihad in this holy month and die in it," the recording added: "O Muslims, hurry to jihad, O mujahedeen everywhere, hurry up to make the month of Ramadan a plague to disbelievers." The recording continued for nearly 30 minutes, "The wise man is the one keen on jihad and fighting during Ramadan. Congratulations to those who spent Ramadan fighting for God and to those chosen by God to die in this holy month becoming martyrs." The DAESH members were also addressed, "the fields are ahead of you. This is your weapon, and this is the Holy Month of Ramadan. So, renew your intentions to Allah Almighty," adding that "our people in Lebanon, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, Al-Rawafid are crawling towards you. Your war with them is coming soon. You either fight them or stay asleep until you wake up seeing the same scene people of Iraq, the Levant and Yemen saw of killing, capturing, destroying homes and looting" (Asfour, 2015).

- According to a particular video, the fighters threatened the Jordanian regime and the security services with "tons" of explosives before tearing up a Jordanian passport.

- The DAESH further broadcasted a new 20-minute video threatening the Kingdom of Jordan, calling on supporters to perform operations in the Kingdom similar to the 2016 Karak attack. On Wednesday, April 5, 2017, the video was broadcasted via the "Euphrates State" under the title "So receive what would harm you". The video contains the brutal execution of five people "from the Syrian forces that received military training in Jordan," as claimed by DAESH, describing them as "agents of Crusaders". The DAESH also threatened to surround police, military and intelligence headquarters on the Jordanian border and target the security forces through "soldiers of Caliphate", resembling the Karak

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<sup>8</sup>Rafida: A prostates, Muslims who have left Islam, used by ISIS adherents to arbitrarily declare any Muslim as a heretic and worthy of death.

terrorist attack (AlJazeera, 2017).

The video also included the Organization's obituary of Omar Mahdi Zidan, a prominent Jordanian, after reports of his death. Additionally, the Organization attacked Jordan's tribes and accused them of abandoning their sons who joined DAESH, as announced by the tribes. The group also called on members in Jordan to follow Al-Zarqawi and avoid listening to pro-foreign theorists led by Abu Mohammed al-Maqdisi. In the video, Five Jordanian members, Ayed Zayed al-Daja, Qutaiba Abd Al-Majid al-Majali, Fawaz Mohammed bani Hamad, and Mamoun Ahmed Al-Atiyat, Yousof Arabiat, incited more violence, saying: "O lions of Tawhid (monotheism) in Jordan, be like your brothers in Karak. In a few hours, you saw what happened to Karak, Target police gatherings, security, intelligence, and the Crusaders. Kill them wherever you find them". DAESH further threatened the Army and police soldiers in the Kingdom of Jordan: "O police and soldiers, we have warned you before. You will be slaughtered soon. Despite your execution campaigns and arrest of our soldiers in Irbid, we will not stop. We will go on."

- A video released in December 2016 also threatened the King of Jordan with slaughtering and bombing the country with tons of explosives. The footage included destroying and burning Jordanian passports before gathering fighters dressed in DAESH clothes and armed with weapons. The gathering stood behind a young man who threatened Jordan and burned the Jordanian passport and another who threatened Jordan's king and people with murder and bombings. He burned his passport and called on Jordanians to immigrate to the Caliphate land (Skylark, 2014).

- In a broadcast video by the Organization's "Itesam" foundation, entitled "Message to Jordan", DAESH sent a strongly worded message to the Jordanian Army and King Abdullah II in February 2015: "We are eager to meet you, to cut off your necks and to drink your blood. So, repent before the knives of Abu Mus'ab Al-Zarqawi's grandchildren reach you," One of DAESH's officials talked about capturing the Jordanian pilot and righteously burning him, highlighting the joy of DAESH supporters to such activities and the mixed reactions in the Jordanian street.

In his speech, the fighter called on the Jordanian people to stop "supporting King Abdullah II and refrain from sending their children to the Jordanian army and the security services," adding that "the war is between DAESH and America. Therefore, why are you (Jordanians) taking sides with America against us?" The fighter also addressed Al-Kasasbeh's family: "You are not the only ones whose hearts ached. Haven't you seen what the coalition aircraft did to the sons of Muslims in the Islamic State? Your son (Kasasbeh) stood by the Crusaders. So, you have to taste some of what Muslims tasted." The video was broadcasted by DAESH's Media foundation, including the burning of Mu'ath Al-Kasasbeh (a Jordanian pilot) in an iron cage.

## **12. DAESH's Recruitment of Jordanian Fighters**

The DAESH phenomenon and strategy for attracting fighters went global; it has attracted fighters, supporters, and dreamers who are internally and regionally delusional (Iraq, Syria) from Arab, Islamic, and different countries. Their ideological and media appeal, along with various individual and social factors and motives related to societies and political systems, could play a crucial role in this context. These factors vary in importance depending on the internal circumstances and privacy that set them apart from others.

As a regional state under the terrorist threat of DAESH, Jordan has gained significant importance due to its shared borders with the states of Iraq and Syria, both of which DAESH controls. However, managing DAESH's attractiveness in Jordan requires considering its ideological and media appeal. On the other hand, the regional (Arab, Islamic) rapprochement with the surrounding Arab and Islamic societies holds significant importance.

Regarding the number of Jordanian fighters who joined DAESH, varying sources have been reported, especially the lack of reliable official government statements, ranging from 1,500 (Neumann, 2015) to 4,000 (Milton-Edwards B. , 2018) Jordanian fighters. Regardless of the accuracy of the statistics, the reports prove the involvement of Jordanians as foreign fighters in DAESH. Notably, Jordanians have a certain status in the Organization due to Al-Zarqawi, the head of Al-Qaeda in Mesopotamia, between 2004 and 2006. He also formed a terrorist Organization with his Jordanian colleagues Abd Al-Hadi Daglas, Khaled al-Arouri, and the Syrian Suleiman Khaled Darwish in Herat, Afghanistan, before moving to Iraq between 2001 and 2002, often referred to as the building block where DAESH later launched.

On July 29, 2014, the group announced the establishment of the Islamic Caliphate in Iraq and Syria after taking control of vast territories of Iraq and Syria; Al-Adnani announced in a recording entitled "The Promise of God is Right," in which it removed the name "Iraq and the Levant" from the name of the organization so that the new name was the "Islamic State." In other words, the state fighters had removed the borders between the two countries. DAESH demanded that Muslims worldwide pledge caliph Abu Baker Al-Baghdadi as the "Muslims' caliph" who should be heeded and obeyed. DAESH further called on jihadists everywhere to replace their organizations with the caliphate.

In its speech, announcing the caliphate and the repeated calls to migrate to it attracted many jihadist members, Salafists in Jordan, thus declaring obedience and loyalty to the organization. Presently, there are no accurate statistics on the number of Salafist-jihadists who have sided with DAESH. However, some guiding statistics can be addressed in this context, Abu Mohammed Al-Maqdisi's statement that 70 percent of the members of the Salafist movement support DAESH (Al-Bateeri, 2015). Another one announced that about 70 percent of the members of the Salafist-jihadist movement in Jordan support DAESH (interview, 2018).

Furthermore, the sectarian conflict in Iraq after 2003, in the narrative of the Sunni victim, and the repression of the Syrian regime on a broad segment of the Syrian society, created a state of community sympathy among the neighboring communities in Iraq, Syria, and Jordan, as a result of common religious belief, history, customs, and shared traditions. Thus joint and sympathetic feelings emerged for a category in the Jordanian society that transformed into anger and aggression, pushing them to appear in the wrong time and place. Additionally, the misunderstanding and misappreciation of the reality in the intended places led to joining DAESH. Indirectly, such a category found themselves on the battlefields with DAESH or other militant groups in Iraq and Syria.

In 2011, an unfortunate case of a 30-year-old Jordanian man Abu-Dajana, was not religious and had no meaningful purpose in life. He used to stay for hours on the Internet watching many videos, especially jihadist versions. He did not hide his admiration for jihadist fighters appearing in these videos and watched a lot of Sunnis' suffering and their persecution in Iraq by the Shiites. He said that once he watched one of the videos showing several DAESH women led by Iraqi soldiers to Baghdad, he decided to support any group revenging the Sunnis and the "sectarian" Iraqi regime, as he said. Subsequently, he commenced seeking individuals affiliated with the jihadist movement. He aligned himself with them based on the reports and information disseminated by jihadist factions, thus publicly declaring his allegiance to DAESH. This incident occurred after he believed that DAESH was right in being the caliphate of Al-Qaida in establishing the Islamic State. He was also affected by the announcement of the caliphate; thus, he insisted on supporting DAESH. Abu Djana was arrested in early 2016 by the Jordanian intelligence, but this has not affected his loyalty to DAESH. He confirmed that Islamic State supporters are growing by religious adherents from different segments of the Jordanian society (McCauley & Moskalenko, 2014, pp. 69-85).

Similarly, K. is a 26-year-old Jordanian youth who is not religious. He was a young man in the prime of his youth; he studied at a university and graduated with a major in humanities. He narrated his story that began at the beginning of the Syrian crisis in 2011 when he watched the media and the Internet. He explained that "the events in Syria and what the Syrian regime did against the Syrian people had a great impact on me. As an Arab and a Muslim, I felt that I had to support the oppressed and the weak by any means; our innocent people are killed in the streets and neighborhoods, tortured, and displaced from their homes. How can I stay and just watch what is happening? From here, I decided to leave my country and enter across the border into Syria."

Hence, K. personally decided to enter Syria and help the innocent people there, but as soon as his father heard the news of his departure from the house heading to the border, he informed the security authorities, who quickly arrested him. He was questioned, and it appeared that he decided that independently and that he had no affiliations, organizations, or contacts that prove his destination inside Syria. K., identical to others, was influenced by the subjective or objective data related to empathy among societies that share religion, history, and values (interview, 2018).

A.K.M. stated that his 37-year-old brother was able to enter Syria across the border in 2014, and he was self-motivated, not belonging to any organization or party. He was moderately religious; he left for Syria to support the innocent in Syria,

especially in the southern areas of Syria "Daraa," but he found himself among many armed groups fighting each other and others against the Syrian regime. Therefore, he was mixed up in knowing the right group to join. The most influential group was DAESH in Iraq and Syria; thus, he decided to join it with other Syrian people. Nonetheless, after a year of joining DAESH, he saw the group's brutality in revenge against the detainees and other groups. Then, he decided to defect from DAESH and return to his country, Jordan. Fortunately, he was able to escape from DAESH's territory and reach Jordan's borders. My brother talked a lot about the killings of the innocents by the brutal DAESH, as he calls it. In less than two months after my brother's return, he was killed in a car accident(interview, 2019).

Omar's father tells the story of his son, who legally left for Syria in 2013 to fight against the Syrian regime. In a report published by CNN, Omar, who joined one of the armed groups in Latakia in preparation for joining DAESH, returned to Jordan legally after he decided to return and he "regrets what he did," through the Jordanian embassy in Ankara and cooperation with the Jordanian security services. He was received a five-year jail term, his father stated. The story indicated that Omar had no ideological orientation or any party or organizational affiliation before deciding to travel to Syria. Even though his father was a Muslim Brotherhood member, his son did not carry extremist ideology or orientation. His son was a computer science student in the first year of his studies in 2013. He paid his university fees to ensure his travel to Syria and that he had called his relatives from Syria, telling them that he was heading toward Latakia.

His father pointed out that "Omar was constantly familiar with the jihadist websites and Facebook," as it turned out, believing that he was also influenced by several university students who were also said to have gone to Syria. According to the report, the indictments and statements indicated that Omar was implicated in socially unacceptable cases and subsequently blackmailed by a resident of Zarqa, who forced him to go to Syria under threat after he frequented a mosque adjacent to the house. Besides, he used to contact a Syrian national nicknamed Abu Mouawiya on the "Say No to Terrorism" via a Facebook page, thereby influencing his decision to travel and fight in Syria. Omar joined the armed group "Sham al-Islam," and several months later, he called his father and told him he wanted to return. "His father indicated Omar's reason for returning with Omar's words: "We went to fight and defend oppressed people, but it turns out that they kill each other, and I am not ready to die in vain (Gaboul, April 29, 2015)."

### 13. Conclusion

DAESH had taken advantage of some offers and incentives provided by the Jordanian state and, in turn, tried to threaten the security of Jordan. Jordan's geographical location has enhanced DAESH's trend of expanding its operations on the ground by targeting Jordan, mainly because of its geographical proximity to areas active in DAESH activities, like Iraq and Syria. Conversely, this brought Jordan into direct contact with events occurring in the Arab region, especially with Palestine, Iraq, and Syria. These circumstances impose on the political decision-maker the obligation to deal with them in the interests of the country, and at the same time, they constitute an incentive for the organization that can be used to serve its terrorist objectives.

Furthermore, Jordan's geographical location imposed historical and economic limitations because of its lack of important natural resources compared to its Arab neighbors. The nation's political and socioeconomic contexts reflected the orientations, alliances, and policies of the political decision-makers, aimed at balancing the needs of society.

DAESH used the economic vulnerability factor and its emerging political and social repercussions as a source of strength when targeting Jordanian society for its youth recruitment operations and internal terrorist attacks through sleeper cells and radical movements, as well as sympathizers from Jordan and worldwide. The geopolitical, economic, and social implications have become an incentive for DAESH to target Jordanian youth and the kingdom's national security.

However, DAESH's threat to national and humanitarian borders, whether through the ability to carry out terrorist operations or through large-scale recruitment, posed a double threat to the Jordanian state. The organization's 2014 announcement of the caliphate posed a clear threat to those outside its circle, as it adopted a strategy based on ideological motives of expansion, proliferation, and non-recognition of political borders. This strategy led to the organization's expansion into the eastern and northern regions bordering with Jordan in Iraq, and Syria. Furthermore, Jordan's presence on the organization's terrorist agenda also appeared on the organization's media platform through videos and other social



media input, which showed their hatred and terrorist tendencies against the King of Jordan and general Jordanian society. This manifested itself through terrorist operations, inciting Jordanian youth to rebel against the regime and inviting them to join forces with the organization.

In overall, terrorist groups often attract youth by exploiting their anger and frustration, as well as their social connections and/or ideological background. In addition, they also influence youth via the media and propaganda. Thus, youth radicalization is frequently the result of a combination of contextual (internal or external) and personal factors, such as intellectual deviation, feelings of alienation, exclusion, deprivation, frustration, or victimization. Terrorists may be more likely to radicalize youth yearning for a sense of belonging, purpose, or identity. Youth may also engage in such groups to gain the financial and socio-psychological assistance the militant group promises, including income, power, and unity. The disproportionate impact of economic crises on youth in terms of poverty and unemployment in some states may increase their vulnerability to becoming radicalized. Hence, terrorist organizations use and feed these ideas in order to appear to be providing justice and safety to "their community" and pressuring young people to join their cause. Indeed, efforts in combating youth radicalization and building community resilience should begin at a young age, and special efforts must be made to involve these youth, who are usually harder to connect with because they each have their own set of interests and may avoid or resist those they perceive to be in positions of power.

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