



Jordan's Political Strengthening: Regional and International Context

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The July meeting of U.S. President Joe Biden and Jordan's King Abdullah II was a manifestation of the improvement in relations between the two countries. Abdullah's distinction as the first Arab leader Biden met since becoming president confirms the shift in U.S. Middle East policy from the previous administration's, which enhanced the kingdom's destabilisation. Jordan's stability is crucial for the EU to maintain its influence on the security situation in its immediate neighbourhood.

On 16 July, President Biden met King Abdullah in Washington. Biden referred to the central role of the alliance with Jordan in U.S. Middle East policy and the administration's support for efforts to achieve a two-state solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Abdullah was the first Middle Eastern leader to visit the White House, which further underscored Jordan's return to the role of one of the most important American partners in the region, following President Donald Trump's isolation of the kingdom.

Middle Eastern Context. A consequence of Trump's Middle East policy, which prioritised relations with Israel and Saudi Arabia, was the weakening of Jordan's position in the region. Particularly striking to the prestige of the Hashemite Kingdom was the previous U.S. administration's recognition of Jerusalem [as the capital of Israel](#), even though the King of Jordan officially acts as the guardian of the Christian and Muslim holy sites located there. Trump also maintained particularly close relations with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, [who declared his will to annex the West Bank](#), which Jordan sees as an existential threat. In 2020, Trump announced the "[Deal of the Century](#)", which was his administration's plan to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The assumptions presented in this division of territory between Israel and Palestine threatened an influx of Palestinian residents of the West Bank to Jordan. In the same year, [the U.S. administration brokered agreements to normalise relations between Israel and the United Arab Emirates \(UAE\), Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan](#). These agreements, which are not dependent on the progress in solving the Palestinian-Israeli issue (so, contrary to the

assumptions of the Arab Peace Initiative of 2002), hinder the realisation of the Jordanian goals of stopping unilateral Israeli actions in East Jerusalem. Trump also sought to sign a treaty on the normalisation of relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia. The proposal made to Saudi Arabia was to include the possibility of the Saudi monarchy taking over the role of the protector of holy Muslim sites in Jerusalem from the Hashemite dynasty.

Trump's actions weakened the position of King Abdullah, who also was criticised by Jordanian citizens due to the deteriorating economic situation (unemployment is now 24%) and the increasing violations of civil liberties in the country. In 2020, the security services arrested around 1,000 teachers belonging to a trade union that organised protests over low wages. Jordanians also demonstrated in protest against the government's ineffective response to the economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, the country is facing a growing water crisis—Jordan is the fifth most water-scarce country in the world. This encouraged members of the royal family and politicians who oppose the king to plan a coup and replace Abdullah with his half-brother Hamza; however, the Jordanian security services foiled the plan. Among the two convicted of attempting to destabilise the state was the Jordanian Bassem Awadallah, who until the indictment was an adviser to Saudi Prince Muhammad bin Salman.

To maintain the stability of the state, the Jordanian authorities increased their involvement in regional alliances. In April this year, the fourth meeting of the leaders of Jordan, Egypt, and

Iraq since March 2019 took place. The alliance of the three countries focuses on the economic and political challenges in the region. Since 2018, the [Jordanian authorities have been gradually improving relations with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad](#) after his regime regained control over most of Syrian territory. There also has been an improvement in relations with Israel [after Netanyahu's departure](#). Israel's new prime minister, Naftali Bennett, met with Abdullah in July. Both leaders expressed their will to continue state-level cooperation, as confirmed by Israel increasing the water supply to Jordan a week later, a source key to the latter's water security.

Relations with Western Countries. The actions of the Trump administration posed a threat to Jordan's stability, which other Western partners were interested in maintaining. This is particularly important in the context of Jordan's unstable neighbourhood—the civil war in Syria, the presence of ISIS, and Iraq's permanent state of crises. In Jordan, troops from the U.S. (about 3,000) and European countries, including Poland (about 80) are stationed, mainly fighting ISIS as part of the global coalition. The cooperation of the EU and the U.S. with Jordanian intelligence and security services is also crucial in combating terrorism in the region. Jordan is one of Poland's most important political partners in the Middle East—in 2016, President Andrzej Duda, followed in 2019 by the then head of Polish diplomacy, Jacek Czaputowicz, visited Amman. The purpose of the meetings was to strengthen economic and military relations.

The re-strengthening of Jordan's role in the Middle East is part of the Biden administration's foreign policy towards the region. This is related to [the U.S. return to policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that takes into account the need to improve the situation of the Palestinians and their state ambitions](#). In January this year, the U.S. and Jordan signed a Defense Cooperation Agreement governing the status of American forces in the Kingdom. U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken travelled to Amman in May to discuss the ceasefire signed by Israel and Hamas. The meeting with the ruler of Jordan—about half of the population of which is of Palestinian origin—confirmed the new U.S. administration would consider Jordanian interests in the conflict. The durability of the alliance with Jordan was also emphasised by Biden during his meeting with Abdullah in Washington.

The EU is also interested in rebuilding U.S.-Jordanian relations and strengthening Jordan in the region. A stable situation in Jordan allows the Syrians and Iraqis who fled from the civil war

and violence in their countries (1.3 million and 200,000, respectively) to remain there, which is crucial for the EU's strategy to contain irregular migration from the Middle East. To help Jordan deal with the consequences of the Syrian conflict, the EU has provided it with €3.2 billion since the start of the crisis. Foreign support is crucial for the Jordanian economy—in 2019, development aid accounted for 6% of its GDP. From the EU perspective, Jordan's position in the region is also important in the context of the latter's membership in the [Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum established in 2019](#). The Union, which obtained observer status in this organisation and aims to diversify its gas sources, is interested in the development of gas cooperation in the Middle East.

Conclusions. The erosion of Jordan's regional role threatened EU interests, exposing it to another influx of irregular migrants and a further decline in security in its immediate vicinity. The stability of the Jordanian state, guaranteed by foreign support and maintaining an active role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, has a positive impact on the situation in the Middle East. Preserving it is crucial to achieving EU policy goals, such as combating terrorism, the root causes of migration and maintaining an active role in preventing regional conflicts.

Due to the large number of inhabitants of Palestinian origin, one of Jordan's key interests is to stabilise the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and maintain the role of the Hashemite Kingdom in Jerusalem. This will make it easier for the authorities to calm the public mood in the country. The recent meetings between members of the U.S. administration and Abdullah increase the chances of progress in the pursuit of a two-state solution to the conflict, which is also the goal of EU policy towards the Middle East. Coherence of assumptions between the EU, U.S., and Jordanian policies in this area may also facilitate the formulation of transatlantic cooperation in the Middle East, which would be particularly important due to the [strengthening of authoritarianism in the region](#), which threatens the EU's goals.

Jordan's tightening relations with Egypt and a gradual improvement in relations with Israel will positively influence the continuation of regional gas and water cooperation. However, Jordan's increasingly favourable policy towards Assad remains a challenge for the EU, which is seeking to isolate the Syrian president. It also increases the risk of decisions being made on the forced return of Syrian refugees. To reduce the chances of this, the EU must consider increasing economic support for the kingdom.