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Bachelor's Thesis

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**What has been Jordan's role in the Israeli-Palestinian
conflict since the beginning of King Abdullah II's reign?**

Bachelor's Thesis

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Declaration

1. I hereby declare that I have compiled this thesis using the listed literature and resources only.
2. I hereby declare that my thesis has not been used to gain any other academic title.
3. I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.

In Prague on 26th January 2025

Matěj Hrnčířík

References

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Abstract

This thesis examines the role of the Kingdom of Jordan in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict under the reign of King Abdullah II, analysing whether neorealist theory, particularly the concept of national interest, explains its actions. It explores Jordan's strategic involvement, advocacy for a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, and efforts to balance regional diplomacy, aiming to reveal whether these efforts are driven predominantly by Jordan's pursuit of its own stability and security. The thesis argues that to be able to fully comprehend Jordan's role in the conflict, the interest of the ruling Hashemite dynasty and specifically its leading figure, the King, must be understood. That is why the interest of the ruling Hashemites is carefully described and analysed in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The research concludes that neorealism does best explain Jordan's role, driven by security concerns and preserving the Hashemite monarchy. While strongly supporting Palestinian statehood rhetorically, Jordan prioritises its national interest, including ties with Israel, its US partnership, and domestic stability considering its Palestinian population. This framework highlights Jordan's focus on survival within an anarchic international system.

Abstrakt

Tato práce zkoumá roli Jordánského království v izraelsko-palestinském konfliktu za vlády krále Abdalláha II. a analyzuje, zda neorealistická teorie, zejména koncept národního zájmu, vysvětluje jeho jednání. Zkoumá strategickou účast Jordánska, prosazování vzniku palestinského státu na Západním břehu Jordánu a v pásmu Gazy a snahu o vyváženost regionální diplomacie s cílem zjistit, zda jsou tyto snahy motivovány snahou Jordánska o vlastní stabilitu a bezpečnost. Práce tvrdí, že abychom mohli plně pochopit roli Jordánska v konfliktu, je třeba porozumět zájmům vládnoucí dynastie Hášimovců a její vůdčí osobnosti, krále. Proto jsou zájmy vládnoucích Hášimovců pečlivě popsány a analyzovány v kontextu izraelsko-palestinského konfliktu.

Výzkum dochází k závěru, že pozice Jordánska v Izraelsko-Palestinském konfliktu je vedena bezpečnostními zájmy a zachováním Hášimovské monarchie. Jordánsko sice rétoricky silně podporuje palestinskou státnost, ale upřednostňuje své národní zájmy, včetně vazeb s Izraelem, partnerství s USA a domácí stability s ohledem na své obyvatele s Palestinskými kořeny. Tento kontext zdůrazňuje, že Jordánsko se zaměřuje na přežití v anarchickém mezinárodním systému.

Keywords

Middle East, The Kingdom of Jordan, neorealism, national interest, Israeli-Palestinian conflict, King Abdullah II, the Hashemite dynasty

Klíčová slova

Blízký východ, Jordánské hášimovské království, neorealismus, národní zájem, Izraelsko-Palestinský konflikt, král Abdalláh II., dynastie Hášimovců

Title

What has been Jordan's role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict since the beginning of King Abdullah II's reign?

Název práce

Jaká je role Jordánska v izraelsko-palestinském konfliktu od počátku vlády krále Abdalláha II.?

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Introduction

The following thesis aims to explain the reasons underlying the involvement of the Kingdom of Jordan in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This conflict has remained a broadly discussed subject both among academics as well as in high-level political circles. In order to fully comprehend the various contextual dimensions, one needs to possess a profound understanding of the history and political setting of the region of the Middle East. Additionally, familiarity with cultural and national distinctions as well the ability to navigate in the field of international relations is essential.

It would be both impossible and simplistic for me to attempt to explain such a complex issue. Therefore, the subject of my thesis is centred on a specific aspect of it. In the following thesis, I am going to illustrate what role the Kingdom of Jordan has played in the conflict in the last 20 years.

Theoretically, my analysis revolves around the research question whether neorealism, one of the most prominent theories in the field of international relations, can effectively explain the fundamental motivations for Jordanian involvement. The foremost proponent of this theory, Kenneth Waltz, defines international relations as an anarchic environment in which every state pursues its own goals and objectives, as it cannot depend on anyone else but itself to ensure its security and survival (Waltz et al., 2018, p. 238). I am thus going to investigate whether Jordan's involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict could be attributed exclusively to this theory, or whether there are additional factors to account for this involvement. The primary theoretical concept I am going to employ is the concept of national interest.

It is important to stress out that due to the fact that Jordan is a monarchy, the national interest and the interest of the ruling Hashemite dynasty often overlap and are deeply interconnected. However, the distinction between the two is vital, as actions of the King may align with the national interest while being primarily driven by the dynasty's need to preserve its legitimacy. This differentiation allows for a better understanding of the incentives behind Jordan's policies, particularly in relation to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

My research question for this thesis is as follows:

Is the main driving force behind Jordan's position towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict security of Jordan and survival of the Hashemite's monarchy?

Furthermore, I have formulated two hypotheses which I will further test in my research. The first hypothesis is as follows:

Jordan's role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict under the leadership of King Abdullah II can primarily be attributed to the Hashemite's monarchy's overarching concerns for its own security. The kingdom has engaged in the conflict with the primary goal of mitigating potential threats that could jeopardise the safety and sovereignty of the monarchy and Jordan as such.

The second hypothesis I will be researching is the following:

Jordan's role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict under King Abdullah II cannot be fully explained by the concept of national interest. The neorealist concept of national interest fails to capture the complexities of Jordan's involvement. A more appropriate framework for understanding Jordan's position would be to analyse Kingdom's shared values and identity with the Palestinian people and thus to study Jordan's position using a different theory, such as constructivism.

Later in this work, I am going to provide definitions for both the theory of neorealism as well as an explanation of the specific concept of national interest.

I have selected Jordan's involvement in the conflict as the focus of my case study to underscore its indisputable significance in the broader context. The Kingdom of Jordan holds strategic importance in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict due to historical, geopolitical, and demographic considerations.

Analysing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from the perspective of Jordan's involvement appears to me as a compelling approach mainly due to Jordan's critical role in the conflict since its very beginning. The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan played an essential role in the conflict already from its outset, when after the First Arab-Israeli war, during which

part of the land which used to be the Mandatory Palestine had become the modern state of Israel, while Jordan annexed the remaining Palestinian territories in the West Bank. In addition to that, Jordan also granted full citizenship to Palestinian refugees, a move distinct from those of other Arab nations (Brand, 1995, p. 47; Klausner & Bickerton, 2016, p. 122). Jordan's historic role in the conflict will be examined further at the beginning of the empirical part.

One of the most apparent reasons for the Kingdom's importance in the conflict is the geographical proximity of Jordan to Israel. Jordan shares an approximately 480 km long border (Sovereign Limits, n.d.) with both Israel and the West Bank, which significantly impacts the movement of people and goods in the region. This proximity also influences the humanitarian and economic initiatives undertaken by Jordan to support Palestinians, particularly in the West Bank. The Kingdom has played a crucial role in providing assistance in various areas, including infrastructure, education, and healthcare.

Moreover, as previously stated, Jordan is home to a significant Palestinian population, primarily comprising refugees who were displaced or fled during various Israeli-Arab conflicts, such as the 1948 Israeli-Arab war (referred to by the Palestinians as the Nakba) or the Six-Day War in 1967. The monarchy must consider the interests of both indigenous Jordanians and Jordanians with Palestinian roots who gained the country's citizenship after the war in 1948 when articulating a position on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Significantly, the Kingdom of Jordan became the second Arab nation, following Egypt, to formalise a peace treaty with Israel in 1994 (Yitzhak, 2017, p. 567). This agreement led to the normalisation of relations between the two countries and has played a pivotal role in fostering stability within the region. Additionally, this treaty has served as a cornerstone for diplomatic dialogues between Jordan and Israel.

Furthermore, Jordan assumes custodianship over important Islamic holy sites in Jerusalem, notably the Al-Aqsa Mosque – one of the most important holy sites in Islam. The administration of these sites frequently takes centre stage in discussions surrounding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Kumaraswamy, 2019, p. 295).

While conducting a thorough investigation into Jordan's actions regarding the conflict from its inception would offer a more expert analysis, the scope of a bachelor's thesis simply cannot accommodate such an in-depth examination. The time frame for this work is thus outlined by the ascension of the current King of Jordan, King Abdullah II, to the throne

in 1999. I am therefore going to examine Jordan's approach to the conflict by considering events such as the Second Intifada in the early 2000s, the Arab Spring or the negotiations regarding water and electricity between the Kingdom of Jordan and Israel. In the following sections of this study, I am going to delve deeper into the aforementioned subjects in order to thoroughly examine the role that the Kingdom of Jordan has played in them. Such comprehensive analysis will enable me to provide a well-informed response to the research questions posed in this thesis. The biggest focus will be centered on the significant change of Jordan's national interest when King Hussein renounced the claim of the West Bank in 1988 (Klausner & Bickerton, 2016, p. 252) as that takes the centre stage when it comes to the Kingdom's position towards the establishment of an independent Palestinian state.

This thesis is structured in the following way. I will start by presenting the literature that I have used to build my research on. I continue by introducing the theory of neorealism, along with its key authors, concepts and fundamental premises. Follows a more detailed description of the concept of national interest. I am going to provide a general overview of this concept and different understandings of it and then will proceed to an explanation of how it is specifically applied in the context of my concrete case study. The theoretical part is subsequently complemented by the empirical part. Finally, I am going to summarise my findings in a concluding chapter that will reveal the answer to my research question and whether my initial hypotheses were accurate or not.

Literature review

This literature review, introducing sources I have used to compose my thesis, includes both primary and secondary sources. The secondary sources include academic literature, such as books, academic articles and political journals, while primary sources include records of speeches of the highest-ranking Jordanian politicians or data collected by international organisations such as the UN.

To gain a comprehensive understanding of Jordan's stance in the conflict and the state's historical connections within the region, I drew from literature regarding the kingdom's history. I also examined official documents issued by Jordanian authorities, including those from the king and his family, as well as the government.

When it comes to primary sources I have used for the empirical part of this thesis, I have analysed public speeches delivered by the most prominent figure in the Jordanian

royal family, namely King Abdullah II. Specifically, I have studied his speeches with a focus on statements related to the conflict, the situation of Palestinians, and the relationship between Israel and Palestine. These findings have thus portrayed the development of an approach representing the formal stance adopted by the Kingdom of Jordan regarding the conflict. I have done so by examining speeches delivered by King Abdullah II at different occasions such as public performances at various world universities, interviews for diverse media outlets or performances at political occasions such as the Arab Summits or the World Economic Forums. To obtain such data, I accessed the official website of The Royal Hashemite Court (The Royal Hashemite Court, 2024). Furthermore, I have obtained official transcripts of the United Nations General Assembly sessions with primary focus on the speeches given by a Jordan's representative. That was either the King himself, or his son, the Crown Prince Hussein bin Abdullah or minister of foreign affairs of Jordan. This data I have accessed through the electronic library of the United Nations (United Nations, n.d.). Some of these speeches were officially given in Arabic and later translated into English, as indicated in the transcripts.

I have utilised King Abdullah II's autobiography as an additional primary source. In this work, he delineates his perspective on the Israeli-Palestinian and Israeli-Arab conflicts. The autobiography also recounts specific conversations with politicians, negotiations, peace talks, and other instances in which he actively participated.

In relation to secondary sources, I have gathered information from literature encompassing the history of the Jordanian kingdom and the broader history of the Middle East. While I have incorporated insights from various works addressing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in a broader context, I have also used literature specifically focused on the relationships between Jordan, Israel, and Palestine, along with their respective peoples. The book *A History of Arab-Israeli Conflict* (7th Edition) by Ian J. Bickerton and Carla L. Klausner has been used as one of the main sources on the general information on the conflict, specifically for understanding the historic context of it. Further, I have drawn from the book *The Struggle for Sovereignty: Palestine and Israel, 1993-2005* written by Joel Beinin and Rebecca L. Stein. Their work regards the situation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict after the Oslo Accords of 1993. It describes the effects of the Oslo Accords on Israel and Israelis as well as on the Palestinians living in the West Bank or Gaza. I have utilised those parts of the book that discuss the role of Jordan in the conflict in these years.

For a closer analysis of the relation of Jordanians and Palestinians, I have drawn from the article *Palestinians and Jordanians: A Crisis of Identity* by Laurie A. Brand. This book provides a good overview of the situation of Palestinians living in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in history and thus how the current relation of Jordan towards Palestine and its people was formed. Another book regarding the topic of the relation between Jordan and Palestine is *Jordan's Palestinian Challenge, 1948-1983: A Political History* by Clinton Bailey. This work very comprehensively describes the situation of Palestinians from the year 1948 in connection with the Jordanian Kingdom.

Language of all the sources I have used throughout the work on my thesis has been English with exception when it comes to the speeches by Jordanian officials. In these cases, as stated earlier, the primary language in which the speech was given (Arabic) was later translated into English.

1. Theory & Methodology

As stated earlier, my research revolves around the attempt to explain Jordan's participation in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by utilising the theory of neorealism and one of its central concepts – the national interest. I am going to introduce the theory itself and I will also delve specifically into the concept of national interest mentioned earlier and will demonstrate how I intend to apply this concept in my case study.

I have used several books by prominent authors of neorealist theory of international relations. One of them being Kenneth Waltz and his works *Theory of International Politics*, where Waltz introduces a structural realist theory that explains international relations, often referred to as neorealism. The essence of this theory is described in detail later in my work. Another book by Kenneth Waltz that has been used as a primary source is the one called *Man, the state and war: A theoretical analysis*. In this piece, Waltz analyses why conflicts occur between states. He differentiates between three driving factors for wars to occur – one being the human nature embedded in individual leaders, the second one the internal setting of individual states and lastly the structure of the international system in which the states all operate.

A realist author whose works served me when composing this thesis is Hans Morgenthau. His book *Scientific Man vs Power Politics* and his article *Another "Great Debate": The National Interest of the United States* both helped me understand the fundamental realist theory of international relations. The article then specifically has been used when composing the chapter about national interest, as Morgenthau comprehensively discusses important traits of national interest of a state in general as well as posing an example of the national interest of the United States throughout history.

When conducting the part of my thesis on national interest, I have also used the article *The National Interest and its Interpretation* by Miroslav Nincic, which discusses different possible interpretations of national interest and argues against the realist perception of national interest.

Lastly, for the part on national interest, I have utilised, among others, an article by Joseph S. Nye *Redefining the National Interest*. In this article he discusses how the concept of national interest is used within foreign policy with focus on the foreign policy of the US. He argues that elected representatives should play a crucial role both in forming the national interest and subsequently in pursuing it.

When working on the scholarly discussion on whether a unipolar international system is more stable than a bipolar or multipolar, I have drawn from articles of different scholars. One of them being again Kenneth Waltz's *Theory of International Politics*. Among other ones are for instance William Wohlforth and his work *The Stability of a Unipolar World*, who unlike Waltz argues, that a unipolar setting is inherently more stable than the bipolar one. Furthermore, when trying to depict such a position that argues in favour of the greatest stability under the multipolar setting, I am citing the research by the two scholars Karl W. Deutsch and J. David Singer presented in the article *Multipolar Power Systems and International Stability*.

In the theoretical chapter of my work, I have also utilised various textbooks on different theories of international relations. All of these I used to get a better understanding of the traits of the theories of realism and neorealism as well as their contrast with different international relations theories. These textbooks being *International Relations Theories* (3rd edition) by Time Dunne, Milja Kurki and Steve Smith. Another one being *The Globalization of World Politics* (8th Edition) by John Baylis, Steve Smith and Patricia Owens. Another such textbook I have used for my thesis is *Introduction to International Relations* (8th Edition) by Georg Sørensen, Jørgen Møller and Robert Jackson. Lastly, I have also used the 6th Edition of *Theories of International Relations* by Scott Burchill et al.

1.2 Neorealism

To make the distinction between neorealism and the prominent theory of realism, it is important to reiterate that realism stands on a fundamental assumption about human nature. As articulated by Morgenthau: "man is a political animal by nature, ... man is born to seek power" (1947, p. 145). Morgenthau thus asserts that the pursuit of power is an inherent trait to all individuals, compelling them to seek advantages over others to ensure their own security and survival. This can, according to realism, be done only through the institution of an independent state (Jackson et al., 2022, p. 76).

We can observe a difference between classical realism and structural realism, often referred to as neorealism, when we examine the question of why humans seek power. As mentioned earlier, classical realist thinkers, like Hans Morgenthau, argue that humans are inherently driven by the pursuit of power. It is embedded in the very human nature and, therefore, power politics are shaped by individuals who project this nature of theirs into international power politics. On the other hand, neorealists do not attribute the pursuit of

power to human nature, instead, they attribute it to the structure or architecture of the international system (Dunne et al., 2013, p. 78).

Kenneth Waltz characterises the structure of international politics as anarchic. According to his perspective, this concept is defined by absence of a recognised and effective authority: "Anarchy is seen as one end of a continuum whose other end is marked by the presence of a legitimate and competent government" (1979, p. 114).

Unlike the realist claim that the craving for power is inherently ingrained in the nature of every human being, neorealists argue that the anarchic structure of the international arena is the primary catalyst for states' pursuit of power. Waltz refuses the idea that any state's behaviour could be derived from the intentions of an individual since the anarchic structure functions as a determinant – it punishes certain behaviour and rewards others (1979, p. 74).

The absence of any supervisory authority that could deter states from attacking each other causes a sense of fear for their own security. Consequently, it is only natural for states to strive to maximise their power, equipping themselves with the means to safeguard their interests should they face a threat from another state (Dunne et al., 2013, p. 78). The absence of any global governing body within the anarchic framework of international relations gives rise to a self-help principle that states adopt. As no higher authority could grant state protection, states must rely solely on their own resources to secure their interests, as Thomas Hobbes appropriately articulated: "men live without other security, than what their own strength, and their own invention shall furnish" (Hobbes et al., 1999, p. 113).

Neorealists attribute the aforementioned behaviour to all states, maintaining that there is no distinction between democratic and autocratic states, for instance. In fact, states would be regarded as "black boxes", signifying their uniformity in pursuing a common objective – that of being the most powerful of all (Dunne et al., 2013, p. 78).

Mearsheimer, one of the most prominent neorealist thinkers, highlights different forms of power. He argues that states possess two types of power – latent and military power. Though it may be argued that military power ultimately determines the outcome of power struggles, states must also give equal consideration to latent power. Latent power constitutes the socio-economic foundation crucial for developing a state's military capability (2001, p. 55). Power can, therefore, be achieved not only through warfare but also, for instance, through factors such as population growth (Dunne et al., 2013, p. 78).

"This privileging of military power notwithstanding states care greatly about latent power, because abundant wealth and a large population are prerequisites for building formidable military forces" (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 56).

It is important to mention the difference within the framework of neorealism concerning how much power states actually desire and how much it is desirable to have. This is where perhaps the two most prominent figures of neorealism, Waltz and Mearsheimer, differ. Mearsheimer's theory, often referred to as offensive realism, posits that states seek to maximise their power as a means of ensuring their safety (Baylis et al., 2019, p. 137). In contrast, Waltz's defensive realism believes it is unwise for states to pursue maximum power, as doing so would invite punishment from the international system through the counterbalancing actions of other states (Baylis et al., 2019, p. 137; Dunne et al., 2013, p. 78). Waltz claims: "the first concern of states is not to maximize power but to maintain their positions in the system" (1979, p. 126).

In his book, Waltz clearly suggests that maximisation of power should not be the main goal of a state. Other states that would feel threatened by such an approach are likely to attempt to balance the power of the state seeking hegemony (Dunne et al., 2013, p. 82; Waltz, 1979, p. 126). Besides discussing power balancing, Waltz also introduces the concept of "bandwagoning". Weaker states, lacking the means to balance more powerful states, often tend to bandwagon, aligning themselves with the leading power and hoping that this alignment will ultimately prove more beneficial than opposing the rising power (Burchill et al., 2022, p. 67). Kenneth Waltz says: "bandwagoning is sensible behavior where gains are possible even for the losers and where losing does not place their security in jeopardy" (1979, p. 126).

Another important concept linked to the balance of power is the "security dilemma". In the anarchic international setting, where states are preoccupied with their survival and fear the actions of other states, they begin to arm themselves in anticipation of self-defence. However, this triggers a similar response from other states, as they, too, suddenly start to feel threatened by their heavily armed neighbour. This initiates a vicious cycle that proves difficult to resolve (Dunne et al., 2013, p. 80; Waltz, 1979, p. 186).

The final point I would like to emphasise within the theoretical framework, which I believe is important for a comprehensive understanding of neorealism, is the debate concerning the "polarity" of the international system. In this context, powerful states assume the roles of "poles" and the system therefore be classified as unipolar, bipolar or multipolar, depending on the number of major powers within the structure (Burchill et al., 2022, p. 86; Waltz, 1979, p. 15). The central question revolves around which of these configurations is the most stable. This raises the question of whether a unipolar system, defined by a single overwhelmingly powerful state, offers more stability than a bipolar or multipolar system, which consist of two or more equally dominant powers. Waltz argues that the bipolar structure is the more stable one: "with only two great powers, both can be expected to act to maintain the system" (1979, p. 204).

Waltz and other neorealists claim that bipolarity is the more stable setting for the international system for several reasons. First, having fewer great-powers reduces the likelihood of a war. Second, the chances of miscalculation that tend to lead to conflict are lower as only two powers "have fingers on the trigger". Third, wealth and material resources are distributed more evenly just between the two powers which reduces possible tensions. Finally, it is easier for states to deter each other in a bipolar system, which contributes to overall stability (Dunne et al., 2013, p. 85; Jackson et al., 2022, p. 89).

By some scholars, it is however argued that unipolarity is inherently more stable. Wohlforth asserts that the absence of two hegemonic powers engaged in a struggle for dominance contributes to a more peaceful international system (1999, p. 7). He further posits that unipolarity is "durable", citing the example of the US post-Cold War. According to Wohlforth, it was then improbable that the US would face a comparable competitor in the near future (1999, p. 8).

Wohlforth's claims are however disputed by Monteiro, who argues that a unipolar system is prone to conflict as the system itself incites wars between the one great power and other minor powers as well as conflict among major and minor powers (2012, p. 37).

Moreover, to substantiate the argument in favour of a stable international setting characterised by multipolarity, I will cite the research of Karl W. Deutsch and J. David Singer. They endorse the hypothesis that there is a correlation between multipolarity and stability, attributing it to the distributed focus of members within the multipolar system. In essence, their theory posits that the substantial number of actors in the system leads to a correspondingly high number of potential "dyadic" relationships between states. Consequently, the likelihood of antagonistic relationships occurring between any given states is reduced (Deutsch & Singer, 1964, p. 396; Rosecrance, 1966, p. 317).

1.3 National Interest

Now that I have introduced the theoretical foundations of neorealism, I would like to introduce and define a concept of national interest that will serve as the focal point of my research.

This concept, which holds significant importance in the realm of neorealist theory, serves as an explanatory framework for the behaviour of states (Dunne et al., 2013, p. 65). In its early stages, the concept of national interest served as a tool within the framework of realism, which sought to explain the origins of war and diplomatic conduct. (Burchill, 2005, p. 32). In discussions about foreign policy, the cornerstone determining it is the national interest (Buchanan, 2002, p. 97; Nye, 1999, p. 23).

According to the prominent realist thinker Hans Morgenthau, a state's foreign policy should be guided by its national interest, serving as "the one guiding star, one standard thought, one rule of action" (1951, p. 242). Morgenthau describes national interest as a fundamental responsibility for every statesman engaged in foreign policy. National interest should always transcend potential shifts in government, rather than being defined by goals of an individual politician or the partisan allegiance to a political party (Burchill, 2005, p. 36).

National interest then comprises two levels. The first one involves the fundamental interest of each state in safeguarding its physical, political and cultural identity against interventions from other states. The second level is variable and depends on historical circumstances that can differ over time and from one nation to another. Such circumstances may be shaped by strong political figures, diverse public opinions or by sectional interests (Burchill, 2005, p. 37; Morgenthau, 1952, p. 972).

This notion of Morgenthau's objectivity of national interest being valid for every individual state is however refused by a number of scholars. According to their perspective, national interest is not an "objective truth" universally relevant to every nation. Rather, it constitutes a set of subjective preferences regarding foreign policy, influenced by the will of each nation's citizens. The will of the citizens is then expressed through elections in which they choose such a politician, whose idea of the country's national interest matches with the perception of national interest of the voter. Importantly, these preferences naturally differ from one nation to another (Burchill, 2005, p. 40).

Waltz, as a structural realist, diverges in his perspective on national interest from Morgenthau. While Morgenthau envisions states as units whose leaders formulate foreign policies based on their decisions, subsequently evaluated by the citizenry for alignment with the national interest, Waltz perceives states primarily as constructs that act, above all, according to the international setting (Burchill, 2005, p. 43). Rather than focusing solely on the national interest, Waltz places greater emphasis on the methods through which it can be achieved.

"...to say that a state seeks its own preservation or pursues its national interest becomes interesting only if we can figure out what the national interest requires a country to do" (Waltz, 1979, p. 134).

Not surprisingly, neorealist thinkers explain the concept of national interest in terms of power. They primarily view power as a matter of material capabilities, diminishing the role of justice or moral principles when it comes to decision-making processes within international politics (Dunne et al., 2013, p. 65). Due to the anarchical system individual states exist in, in which no entity guarantees a state's safety, the national interest, encompassing the protection of territory, people, and values, ultimately shapes foreign policy (Jackson et al., 2022, p. 69).

As each state prioritises its own national interests, it is hence impossible to rely on other states when it comes to establishing international agreements. These agreements can naturally be only temporary. This fragility applies to all international agreements, laws and treaties as it is likely that they will be disregarded if they ever clash with a national interest of one or more of the signatory states (Jackson et al., 2022, p. 69). In essence, this makes any kind of long-term international cooperation impossible.

Kenneth Waltz explains that a state must "carefully plan diplomatic and military moves not to jeopardise the survival of the state" (1979, p. 134). Within the framework of neorealism, the behaviour of states is explained by the basic assumption of the anarchic international environment, where there is no one else the state could rely on when securing its own safety. States therefore exercise the power they strive for so much in a way to ensure their survival. States do so without taking into account the interests of other states as long as it does not directly affect their national interests (Nincic, 1999, p. 31).

Drawing on the academic literature previously discussed, I have formulated the following definition of the concept of national interest:

National interest encompasses a state's commitment to safeguarding its survival, maintaining territorial integrity and protecting its citizens. Within an anarchic system where no external entity guarantees these essential elements, states employ power as a means to attain these crucial objectives.

In my thesis, I will explore whether Jordan's ongoing involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict can be primarily explained through the lens of neorealism, specifically using the concept of national interest. This view suggests that Jordan's actions are essentially driven by the need to ensure its own survival and omits consideration of other aspects. The region of the Middle East, where the Kingdom of Jordan is located, is a volatile and unstable area with Syria being struck by civil war, Lebanon being a failed state and Iraq grappling with internal instability due to sectarian divisions, terrorism, and political fragmentation. Additionally, the seven-decades-long conflict on the western borders of Jordan further intensifies the regional instability. It may thus appear logical for Jordan to focus solely on advancing its national interest.

2. Palestine & The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (1948 – 1999)

The following section of my thesis overviews the historical ties between Jordan and the Palestinian territories, including the West Bank and Gaza, and their populations. The most significant events will be mentioned and their importance for today's position of Jordan explained. Employing a neorealist perspective, these historical events will be examined, putting emphasis especially on illustrating how Jordan's national interest changed in the time before the ascension of King Abdullah II to the throne and highlighting factors that affect Jordan's national interest up until today. The most essential aspect within Jordan's national interest is the Kingdom's position towards the establishment of the Palestinian state and how this position has changed.

Since 1948, the national interest of Jordan has been shaped by its ruling Hashemite dynasty. As explained further in the thesis, it is crucial to consider the dynasty's primary interest in maintaining political power when examining Jordan's actions regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

On May 15, 1948, the Arab Legion, the military force of the Emirate of Transjordan, joined by the armies of neighbouring Arab states, attacked the recently formed state of Israel, marking the onset of the first Arab-Israeli War (Klausner & Bickerton, 2016, p. 108).

As a result of this war, Israel acquired control over nearly three-quarters of the region which was previously referred to as the Mandate for Palestine, a territory between the river Jordan and Mediterranean Sea. The kingdom of Transjordan at first occupied and subsequently in the year 1950 annexed Judea and Samaria, later referred to as the "West Bank", along with East Jerusalem. The kingdom therefore assumed responsibility for the Palestinian population residing in that area (Brand, 1995, p. 47; Klausner & Bickerton, 2016, p. 111; Kumaraswamy, 2019, p. 466).

King Abdullah of Jordan had initially shown no intention to involve himself in a conflict over Jerusalem, as he recognised British authority over the city. However, his stance shifted when Jewish forces entered the Old City, presenting a direct challenge to Jordan's Arab Legion positions in the West Bank – a clear threat to Jordan's power from a territorial point of view. Moreover, the Hashemites strongly opposed the prospect of the Al Aqsa Mosque coming under the control of the Jewish state. Having found himself

compelled to defend his interests, Abdullah decided to take up arms in response to the situation (Kumaraswamy, 2019, p. 296). Ultimately, Jordan and Israel divided the sacred city of Jerusalem, thus rejecting the plan on making Jerusalem a city under the international control, as proposed by the Partition Plan from 1947 (Klausner & Bickerton, 2016, p. 128; Winder, A., n.d.).

Jordan's significance in relation to Jerusalem will be explored further in my thesis, as the Hashemite monarchs have always utilised Jerusalem as a means to legitimise their rule and, consequently, strived to uphold the monarchy. Preserving its role in Jerusalem has undeniably evolved into one of the key interests of the monarchy, serving as a crucial element in securing the legitimacy to govern Jordan, as highlighted by Kumaraswamy (2019, p. 295).

The reason behind King Abdullah's participation in the war, more broadly, was to gain control over the Arab region of former mandatory Palestine, with a primary focus on gaining authority over Jerusalem, as previously noted. His efforts stemmed from concerns about Syria, as he perceived that both Syria and the Palestinian mufti, Mohammed Amin al-Husseini, had similar intentions of claiming Arab Palestine. Amin al-Husseini intended to rule over Arab Palestine himself as he also declared the "All Palestine Government" in Gaza in 1948 (Klausner & Bickerton, 2016, p. 112). We could thus argue that neorealism explains Jordan's steps very well, as its participation in the war was to gain territory and to prevent other regional players from obtaining it.

A direct consequence of the war was the displacement of over 725,000 Arab refugees, as estimated by the United Nations, who were either expelled or forced to flee their homes in territory which became Israel. Nearly half of this population relocated to what would later be referred to as the "West Bank," or to Transjordan itself (Gilbert, 2012, p. 47; Klausner & Bickerton, 2016, p. 116). The Hashemite Kingdom stood out as the only exception among other Arab nations hosting refugees from former Palestine, as it granted full citizenship rights to these individuals (Brand, 1995, p. 47; Klausner & Bickerton, 2016, p. 122).

Jordanian citizenship was extended not only upon the indigenous Palestinians of the West Bank and those who migrated from the former mandatory Palestine, now Israel, but also upon those who directly relocated to the "East Bank", the then Hashemite Kingdom of Transjordan – this way, Abdullah hoped to establish a basis for the "unity of the two banks" (Brand, 1995, p. 47). According to Dunne, it could be argued that Jordan leveraged its latent

power by granting citizenship to Palestinians, aiming to consolidate territory under the Kingdom's authority (Dunne et al., 2013, p. 78).

A significant portion of these Palestinians not only held hostility towards the newly established state of Israel but also towards Jordan itself. The annexation of the West Bank by the King contributed to the emergence of a Palestinian identity that stood in contrast to the Jordanian one (Brand, 1995, p. 49). Furthermore, it is argued that often tensions between Palestinians and Jordan stemmed from the resistance of some Palestinians attempting to preserve their identity after having the new citizenship imposed onto them (Kumaraswamy, 2019, p. 343).

Jordan not only had to cope with a considerable portion of its population experiencing a form of misalignment, but also witnessed orchestrated raids by Palestinians, particularly from the West Bank, into Israeli territory after the year 1949. These actions led to retaliatory attacks from Israel (Klausner & Bickerton, 2016, p. 128). Jordan thus had to navigate a delicate balance, managing both the dissatisfaction among Palestinians and safeguarding its security interests in defending the border with Israel to avert potential retaliatory attacks from the Israeli side (Kumaraswamy, 2019, p. 345). As described earlier in the definition of national interest, Jordan had to balance between protecting its territorial integrity and between protecting the interests of its citizens, consisting of two groups of people having different interests. Palestinians in the newly annexed West Bank and also in the East Bank felt betrayed by the Kingdom and were opposed to their new Jordanian identity marked by the Jordanian citizenship being imposed onto them. Jordanians, on the other hand, were negatively affected by this through Israeli retaliatory attacks onto Jordanian territory and it was the Kingdom's responsibility to protect them.

In 1951, Jordanian King Abdullah fell victim to an assassination which was carried out by a Palestinian nationalist from the Mufti faction. This faction viewed the King as a rival and a traitor (Kumaraswamy, 2019, p. 297). Following these unfortunate events, his grandson Hussein assumed the throne two years later (Klausner & Bickerton, 2016, p. 130). Under King Hussein's reign, the Palestinian opposition directed both towards Jordan and the ruling Hashemite monarchy persisted. This situation created the opportunity for cooperation between Jordan and Israel, given their shared opposition to the Palestinian National movement and the establishment of a Palestinian state (Yitzhak, 2017, p. 559). King Hussein perceived Israel as a strategic partner capable of helping him to maintain his position on the throne and safeguard the monarchy itself (Yitzhak, 2017, p. 561). Much like his grandfather

before him, King Hussein initially believed that the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank was a direct threat to the stability of the Hashemite monarchy and consequently to Jordan's national interests. From a neorealist perspective, the creation of such a state would undermine Jordan's influence and weaken its territorial claims.

Advancing to the year 1964, King Hussein of Jordan summoned a Palestine National Council that formally established the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and laid foundations for the formation of the Palestine Liberation Army (PLA). This development arose from the reluctance of the Arab League members to directly confront Israel themselves. The main objective of this organisation, destined to represent Palestinians for years to come, was the "liberation of Palestine from its Zionist oppressors". Nevertheless, in the subsequent years, the relationship between the PLO and King Hussein deteriorated. Hussein's concerns about the PLO gaining too much autonomy within Jordan resulted in the apprehension of PLO members and a complete halt of the organisation's operations (Klausner & Bickerton, 2016, pp. 159, 160). So even though that through the establishment of the PLO and the PLA, whose goal was the opposition against "international Zionism" and "colonialism" (Jewish Virtual Library, n.d.), Jordan distanced itself from directly opposing the state of Israel, in the upcoming years, these organisations directly threatened Jordan's national interest during the so-called Black September, about which I will talk more in detail later.

Nevertheless, Palestinians persisted in launching attacks on Israel from Jordanian territory triggering Israeli retaliations. One such response occurred in 1966 when a military assault on the town as-Samu in the Jordan-controlled West Bank was conducted. Resulting in almost twenty fatalities and more than fifty injuries, Israel's action faced criticism for potentially embarrassing King Hussein. Such embarrassment provided Palestinians with further reason to undermine the Jordanian regime, which they did not view as their legitimate representative (Klausner & Bickerton, 2016, p. 162). Such clashes would further deepen Palestinian frustration with the Jordanian regime, which appears to be placing its security interests above the frequently emphasised rhetorical support for Palestinians in the pursuit of their goals (Kumaraswamy, 2019, p. 345).

Also in the following years, the challenge persisted for Jordan as the PLO continued to pose a threat to the country's political stability. Not only was the King unable to negotiate any kind of security settlement with its neighbouring Israel as long as it did not include the PLO, the PLO's covenant also directly sworn that it would liberate all of mandatory

Palestine – including the West Bank annexed by the Kingdom of Jordan (Jewish Virtual Library, n.d.; Klausner & Bickerton, 2016, p. 186). However, this scenario has never materialised, as the West Bank became one of the territories occupied by Israel following its decisive victory in the Six Day War of 1967. Consequently, the Kingdom experienced a significant economic setback, given that a crucial portion of the country's revenue was derived from the West Bank (Gilbert, 2012, p. 68; Klausner & Bickerton, 2016, p. 168; Kumaraswamy, 2019, p. 466).

Following the Six-Day War and the loss of control over the West Bank, Jordan's stance towards the establishment of a Palestinian state underwent significant change, reflecting a shift in its national interest. Prior to the conflict, the Kingdom opposed an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank as it feared territorial loss. However, after the war, with Israel assuming control of the West Bank, Jordan initiated proposals for a joint Jordanian-Palestinian confederation. Examples include the King Hussein Confederation Plan of 1972 and the 1985 plan, which I will discuss later on (Brand, 1995, p. 52; Klausner & Bickerton, 2016, p. 197).

The ongoing tensions between the PLO and the King resulted in a series of events in 1970, where Palestinians hijacked three planes headed for Jordan's capital, eventually detonating them on the ground. This led to an armed conflict between the Palestinian fedayeen and Jordan's military, with Israel's involvement deterring Syria, which had contemplated intervention on the side of the fedayeen as it had pledged their support in case the fedayeen's cause was threatened. These events are often referred to as the Jordanian Civil War or Black September (Slaieh, 1974, p. 53). By 1971, King Hussein successfully ousted the fedayeen from Jordan's territory, primarily pushing them into neighbouring Syria and Lebanon (Gilbert, 2012, p. 79).

However, the effective expulsion of the PLO from Jordan led to the emergence of a terrorist organisation known as Black September, named after the previous conflict between the Kingdom and Palestinian fedayeen. This group not only orchestrated the Munich massacre during the 1972 Summer Olympics but also carried out the assassination of Jordan's Prime Minister Wasfi Tell a year prior (Klausner & Bickerton, 2016, p. 186; Susser, 1994, p. 168).

In the 1970s and 1980s, there was a prevailing belief within Israeli and US circles that the Palestinian identity was already, and should continue to be, connected with the Jordanian identity. A representative of Israel to the United Nations in 1974 went so far as to

assert that "Palestinian Arabs already have a state, claiming that geographically and ethnically Jordan is" (Klausner & Bickerton, 2016, p. 214). However, this notion was strongly refused by the PLO chairman Yaser Arafat.

Among the Palestinians, King Hussein remained to be perceived publicly as aligning with the US and Israel at the expense of the Palestinian cause (Brand, 1995, p. 52; Klausner & Bickerton, 2016, p. 186). As previously highlighted, it aligned with Jordan's strategic interests to participate in a confederation with the Palestinians, suggesting a potential restoration of Jordanian authority over the West Bank, which had been occupied by Israel since 1967. Jordan was also economically motivated to regain control of the West Bank, as the region contributed significantly to the country's financial resources and overall economic activity. According to Dakkak, since the annexation of the West Bank by Jordan, the East Bank of Jordan was dependent on agricultural production from the West Bank (1985, p. 77). During the presidencies of Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan, the "Jordanian option" to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remained popular. The so-called Reagan Middle East Peace Plan from 1982 serves as an evidence for such sentiment (Klausner & Bickerton, 2016, p. 219; Yitzhak, 2017, p. 565).

The Reagan Middle East Peace Plan called for the establishment of an independent Palestinian administration within the West Bank and Gaza which would be tied to Jordan. As that would increase the Kingdom's influence over the territories, Jordan openly supported the plan. Furthermore, Jordan feared that Israel might annex the West Bank after the war in Lebanon and claim that Jordan itself is a "Palestinian state" due to the fact that so many Jordanians have Palestinian roots. Even though Israel favoured Jordan having influence over the West Bank and over the PLO, it opposed the plan put forward by president Reagan as it demanded full Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories and also a complete halt to settlement building (Yitzhak, 2017, pp. 565, 566).

A slight improvement in relation between the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO), representing the Palestinians, and the Kingdom of Jordan became evident in 1985 when Arafat and Hussein jointly declared a policy. This policy advocated for a UN-sponsored conference during which a Jordanian-PLO delegation would call for Israel's withdrawal from all the occupied territories after the Six-Day War. Subsequent proposals involved the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank within a Palestinian-Jordanian confederation. However, encountering opposition from both the United States and Israel, the plan faced significant challenges. Eventually, King Hussein abandoned the initial

agreement with the PLO and proceeded to engage in negotiations about the conference that should lead to the establishment of a Palestinian state on the West Bank within a Jordan-Palestine confederation with Israel independently (Klausner & Bickerton, 2016, p. 249).

By 1988, after the failed attempt for negotiations and the onset of the First Intifada, which King Hussein perceived as a threat to political stability in his country and the stability of the monarchy, he renounced the claim over the West Bank, excluding Jerusalem. The Intifada may have compelled him to realise that Palestinians would not accept him as their leader or any proposal involving the governance of Palestine under Jordanian authority and the importance of securing the stability and continuation of the monarchy prevailed within the national interest of the country over the pursuit to govern the West Bank (Brand, 1995, p. 53; Klausner & Bickerton, 2016, p. 252; The Library, 1988).

The renunciation of Jordan of the claim to the West Bank marks both an important change in the national interest of the Kingdom as well as a change of dynamic when it comes to the conflict as such. The king this way also renounced his claim of loyalty towards the Palestinian people living in the West Bank, which was the cause of conflict between the Kingdom and the PLO, which also perceived itself as the "guardian" of the Palestinian people. Hussein's step thus allowed for a more independent Palestinian political entity to be established in the West Bank, with the PLO as its sole representative. The decision to renounce the Jordan's claim of the West Bank also ensured an increase of popularity for the King among Palestinians living in the East of the Jordan river (Brand, 1995, pp. 53, 54).

According to Barari, King Hussein's decision shocked the Israeli Labour Party, a big proponent of the Jordanian option, and allowed for the "Palestinian option" (the establishment of a Palestinian state independently on the Kingdom of Jordan), pushed forward by future Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin, to get more popularity (2009, p. 17). However, Hussein intended to preserve Jordan's role in the Holy Islamic Sites of Jerusalem as it served as a tool providing legitimacy for the continuation of the Hashemite rule, thereby aligning with the national interest.

In 1991, during the relatively unsuccessful Madrid Conference, the Palestinians were denied participation as a separate entity. Therefore, a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation was reestablished (Brand, 1995, p. 56; Klausner & Bickerton, 2016, p. 283). This same Jordanian-Palestinian delegation later represented Palestinian interests during the Oslo Accords, occurring two years after the Madrid conference (Klausner & Bickerton, 2016, p. 299).

Another important milestone in the context of Jordan and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is certainly the peace treaty between the Kingdom of Jordan and Israel signed in 1994. Seizing the opportunity presented by the Oslo Agreement, which had officially normalised relations between Israel and the PLO a year earlier, King Hussein aimed to extend the same legitimacy to his own country (Yitzhak, 2017, p. 567). This unequivocally brought an end to the forty-six years lasting state of war between the two nations. Not only did this peace agreement legitimise Jordan's strategic relations with Israel and acknowledged Jordan's sovereignty – asserting that Jordan is distinct from Palestine – the agreement also acknowledged Jordan's custodianship over the Muslim holy shrines in Jerusalem (Klausner & Bickerton, 2016, p. 309; United Nations, 1994; Yitzhak, 2017, p. 568). Naturally, this angered the PLO and numerous Palestinians residing in Jordan (Brand, 1995, p. 58). The treaty also helped restore US-Jordan relations, strained by King Hussein's support for Saddam Hussein during the First Gulf War, while the forgiveness of \$700 million in debt and increased foreign investments boosted Jordan's economy (Yitzhak, 2017, p. 568).

On February 7, 1999, King Hussein of Jordan died of cancer. Prior to his passing, he designated his eldest son, Abdullah, as his successor (Klausner & Bickerton, 2016, p. 351). As evident from this chapter, among other factors, the reality that Palestinians constitute approximately half of Jordan's population (UNHCR, 2007), has made it impossible for the Kingdom to stay detached from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This involvement has entangled Jordan in various serious events, at times culminating in tragic outcomes. It is also apparent that Jordan has played a crucial role in the peace process, actively seeking viable solutions to the conflict. This perspective persists to the present day, and thus, in the upcoming chapters, I will delve into Jordan's actions concerning the conflict following the accession of King Abdullah II to the throne.

3. The National Interest of the Kingdom of Jordan

In this part, I argue that while resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through the establishment of an independent Palestinian state has been a key part of Jordan's national interest since King Hussein relinquished Jordan's claim to the West Bank in 1988 (Klausner & Bickerton, 2016, p. 252), the Kingdom must also balance this goal with other important aspects of its national interest.

King Abdullah and Jordan in general need to balance between a number of factors that significantly limit the country's possible manoeuvring when it comes to pushing forward the creation of the Palestinian state. As I will demonstrate, Jordan's actions are heavily constrained by economic and diplomatic factors, making it hard to take concrete steps toward establishing a Palestinian state although rhetorically, the support for Palestinians from Jordan has always been significant and remains even under King Abdullah's rule.

After having provided an overview of Jordan's involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict prior to the year 1999, marked by the ascension of King Abdullah II to the throne, the subsequent focus will centre on the analysis of Jordan's national interest in regards to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict under King Abdullah II. This section of my study will delve into analysis of the motivations of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan behind the sustained engagement in the conflict since 1999 and examine how this involvement aligns with the national interest of the Kingdom.

I argue that when applied to the Jordanian context, my definition of national interest encompasses diverse elements that, for the purpose of this study, can be categorised into two groups. In general terms, Jordan is unquestionably committed to ensuring its survival. Nevertheless, the first category regards the fundamental security and persistence of the nation, affirming Jordan's sovereignty. The second category, however, is more centred on the considerations related to the interests of the ruling regime within Jordan.

Regarding the first category, Jordan must cope with its geographic positioning within the region. It must contend with the challenge of fresh water scarcity and with the volatility of neighbouring countries in the region, which often give rise both to economic and security issues for Jordan, a topic I will describe further. An important aspect in considering the state's survival is also the support extended by the US to the Kingdom of Jordan. Another aspect encompassed under the state's survival pertains to Jordan's pursuit of good relations with a pivotal neighbour – Israel. The State of Israel, serving as an important security and

diplomatic partner, significantly influences Jordan's approach to addressing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

When talking about the second category of Jordan's national interest that I present in my thesis, it is important to delve into the priorities of the ruling regime in Jordan, embodied by the Hashemite dynasty and its monarch, King Abdullah II. Even though the theory of neorealism considers states as black boxes, not taking into consideration state's domestic politics, I argue that the interest of the ruling monarchy very often corresponds or even overlaps with the national interest. The interests of the Hashemites play a crucial role in shaping policies related to both the overall national interest of the state and its stance on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Central to the Hashemite dynasty is the objective of preserving its authority in Jordan (Kumaraswamy, 2019, p. 474).

Even though the legitimacy of the Hashemite dynasty stems from the lineage of Prophet Mohammed and the Hashemites being the Prophet's descendants (Sharp, 2023, p. 3), the King, as the primary representative of the dynasty, tries to legitimise and preserve the power of his lineage through various other means. Those encompass upholding Jordan's role in Jerusalem as a custodian of the Islamic Holy Sites (Kumaraswamy, 2019, p. 300). Additionally, economic performance stands out as another important factor in this pursuit. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the regime has persistently tried to control Jordan's extensive Palestinian population, hand in hand with pro-Palestinian sentiments among not only its Palestinian citizens but also among those who are not of Palestinian descent. Consequently, King Abdullah must tackle this dynamic even under his rule.

The two previously described categories explaining the diversity in Jordan's national interest which I put forward for the purpose of my thesis, are united by a common theme – the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. This objective has been pursued not only by the current king, Abdullah II, but also by his father and predecessor, King Hussein (Abdulah II, 2011, p. 208; Kumaraswamy, 2019, pp. 382, 387).

Even though the position of Jordan towards the establishment of the Palestinian state in the West Bank changed throughout history ever since the Hashemite Kingdom annexed the territory in the 1950, under the current King, Jordan has been standing firmly behind the efforts to establish an independent Palestinian state on the west side of the Jordan river.

Although I am categorising the national interest into two distinct areas for the purpose of explanation, it is important to acknowledge that these categories are often

intertwined. For example, one could argue that economic success benefits Jordan as a whole, which is a completely valid perspective. However, in this section of my work, my aim is to demonstrate how the overarching interests of the Hashemite dynasty play a pivotal role in shaping the national agenda for the entire country.

Moreover, I argue that the various aspects of Jordan's national interest are significantly influenced by its relationship with the US, marking Jordan's dependency on Washington. Consequently, this dependency plays a crucial role in influencing Jordan's stance within the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, forcing the Kingdom and its monarch to navigate a delicate balance between their genuine position on the conflict and the stance of the US, which thus often shapes Jordan's actions.

3.1 Jordan's Economy – Water Scarcity, Lack of Economic Resources

Moreover, Jordan lacks any significant amount of natural resources that could enhance its economic prosperity. This sentiment is affirmed by King Abdullah himself in his memoirs:

"Jordan has no oil and its other natural resources are limited. Both water and agricultural land are scarce" (Abdullah II, p. 163).

According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, Jordan ranks among the world's most water-scarce countries (Looney, 2014, p. 348). As specified by the World Population Review, the annual water usage per capita in Jordan is approximately 108 cubic metres. In contrast, water consumption per capita in Israel is approximately 266 cubic metres (World Population Review, 2024). This severe lack of water poses significant political and economic challenges for the nation (Looney, 2014, p. 348). The influx of refugee waves into Jordan only exacerbates the demand for water, placing an additional burden on the economy (Sharp, 2023, p. 11).

King Abdullah believes that sustainable resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the key to bringing prosperity to the region, and thus ensuring prosperity for the Kingdom as well:

"The only thing that can bring lasting prosperity to our region, replacing bombs and bullets with tourists and entrepreneurs, is a lasting solution to the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, the root cause of much of the violence and instability in our region" (Abdullah, p. 179).

In his biography, he proposes that fostering a project that links the economies of Jordan, Israel and Palestine could serve the establishment of a "business hub in Levant". Such vision connects the agricultural potential of Israel with the available land and workforce of Jordan and Palestine (Abdullah II, 2011, p. 179). Thus, King Abdullah underscores that finding a solution to the conflict is in the national interest of Jordan, given the potential positive economic impact that a lasting peace could bring upon the Kingdom.

As King Abdullah mentions himself, a stable solution to the conflict would attract foreign investments into the region in general, and would increase tourism (Abdullah II, 2011, p. 179). Furthermore, the labour market would improve with Palestinians having easier access to jobs in both Israel and Jordan, which would benefit all the concerned sides. Jordan could further benefit from investments into Palestinian infrastructure, building roads, water infrastructure, etc. Overall freedom of movement of people and goods would benefit all, the Palestinians, the Israelis and Jordanians.

The United States has been assisting Jordan in addressing its severe water scarcity by providing aid to preserve Jordan's water resources as well as improving economic opportunities for its citizens. In addition, in 2008 the United States extended financial support for the future project involving the construction of a canal connecting the Red Sea and the Dead Sea. This initiative, signed in 2013, aimed to restore the water level in the Dead Sea as well as to generate electric power for potential use in water desalination (Looney, 2014, p. 348). This project exemplifies one of the instances of collaboration among the US, Israel, and Jordan.

Another notable project is the Energy for Water agreement forged between Israel and Jordan, with backing from the United States and the United Arab Emirates. Israel faces a challenge due to limited land availability for the installation of large-scale solar panels to

meet its renewable energy needs. On the contrary, Jordan possesses an abundance of suitable land for such installations, aligning with its objectives outlined in the National Energy Strategy for 2020-2030, which prioritises increasing the share of renewable energy sources in the Kingdom's energy portfolio. This partnership enables Jordan to generate sustainable, eco-friendly energy that it can then supply to Israel. In return, Israel, leveraging its advanced capabilities when it comes to water desalination, promises to provide fresh water to Jordan, which will be mutually beneficial. Furthermore, Palestinians residing in the West Bank could possibly gain improved access to water facilitated by this project.

This joint project illustrates well both the deep interdependence between Israel and Jordan, as well as Jordan's normalised relations with its neighbouring nation. Due to the ongoing war in Gaza, Jordan was encouraged by other Arab countries to suspend the project. Nevertheless, it is very probable that the project will be resumed once the conflict ends, showcasing that cooperation with Israel clearly aligns with the Kingdom's national interest. As Al-Sharafat claims, the continuation of the cooperation is inevitable as it serves the national interests of both of the countries, also serving as a mechanism for preventing potential future conflicts between them (2024).

3.2 Jordan's Neighbours – Syria and Iraq

Let me commence by providing a brief overview of the challenges that are posed to Jordan by its neighbouring countries. The neighbouring instability of Syria, characterised by a protracted conflict, presents a number of risks for Jordan. This instability has not only led to a significant influx of refugees into Jordan (with 2023 UNHCR estimates surpassing 650,000), imposing a burden on the economy, but it also has necessitated the management of criminal activities related to drug-trafficking along the Jordan-Syrian border (Sharp, 2023, p. 15).

Additionally, the ongoing instability in another Jordan's neighbour, Iraq, creates more challenges for the Hashemite kingdom. Being regarded as a pro-Western stronghold in the Muslim world, Jordan has been confronted with terrorist attacks primarily orchestrated by the Islamic state of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). These attacks directly challenge Jordan's sovereignty and the legitimacy of its Hashemite monarchy, thus posing a clear threat to the nation's interest (Rothe, 2015, pp. 4–6). Notably, both the United States and Israel provided Jordan strong support in its effort to combat ISIS (Rothe, 2015, pp. 16, 35).

3.3 Jordan & Palestinian Terrorism

Jordan's relation with the Palestinians, both domestically and abroad, has long been marked by a significant role of terrorism stemming from Palestinian resistance both against Israel and the Hashemite dynasty. In the previous chapter, I described the burden of Palestinian terrorism on Jordan before King Abdullah assumed the throne. In the subsequent section, I will elaborate on the threat the Palestinian terrorism posed for the Hashemite dynasty and for the overall stability of Jordan during King Abdullah's rule.

Following the first intifada (1987 - 1993), Hamas gained prominence and was initially considered by Jordan as a counter-balancing force against the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank led by Yaser Arafat. Jordan saw it as a means to fragment the Palestinian power. Even though Jordan allowed the establishment of a Hamas office in Amman for its high-ranking officers, tensions escalated between Jordan and the group with Israel-Jordan peace treaty and Hamas's continuing attacks against Israel (Kumaraswamy, 2019, p. 312).

With King Abdullah's ascension to the throne, the situation for Hamas in Jordan significantly deteriorated as the King closed a number of Hamas offices and imprisoned numerous members of the group. The expulsion of several Hamas-affiliated terrorists faced criticism from Palestinians within Jordan, who saw it as undemocratic and feared it might set a precedent for expelling Palestinians from the country (Kumaraswamy, 2019, p. 314).

Despite being expelled from Jordanian territory, Hamas continues to pose a threat to the monarchy's national interest. On one level, it challenges Jordan's role in safeguarding the Islamic Holy Sites in Jerusalem. On the second level, Hamas incites protests within the West Bank, undermining Israel and the Palestinian Authority. The monarchy is afraid that uprisings in the West Bank may lead to Palestinians seeking refuge in Jordan, similar to the situation before when many Palestinians sought refuge there (Kumaraswamy, 2019, p. 320).

Another factor posing a threat to Jordan is Hamas's affiliation with the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood, a clear enemy of the monarchy. Lastly, as has been the case since almost the establishment of the state of Israel, Jordan tries to prevent Hamas attacks against Israeli positions being launched from Jordanian territory, as potential Israeli retaliatory attacks would naturally also jeopardise Jordan's national interest (Kumaraswamy, 2019, p. 321).

3.4 Jordan & Israel

Another crucial aspect of Jordan's national interest is its relations with neighbouring Israel. Since the outset of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it can be observed that the mutual interest of Israel and Jordan was to oppose the Palestinians, particularly the Palestinian national movement later formed within the Palestinian Liberation Organisation. Initially, both countries opposed the creation of a Palestinian state in the West Bank as it was in conflict with the national interest of the countries (Yitzhak, 2017, p. 559). Upon King Hussein's accession to the throne, Israel not only aligned itself with Jordan against the establishment of a Palestinian state but also forged a partnership with the Hashemite dynasty and the King to support and uphold its authority (Yitzhak, 2017, p. 561).

In his article, Yitzhak contends that, regarding the war in 1967, King Hussein of Jordan felt compelled to join the attack on Israel with its Arab neighbours to prevent an internal uprising. After the war, when Israel held the West Bank and discussions ensued about its future of governance, Israel favoured King Hussein assuming control over the territory instead of establishing a Palestinian administration (2017, p. 563).

Following the war, as mentioned in the previous chapter, Palestinian fedayeen sought to topple the regime in Jordan through various means, including terrorist attacks. Thus, the mutual interest of confronting Palestinian resistance persisted between Israel and Jordan. Yitzhak Rabin, the Israeli minister of defence and later prime minister, even expressed that "Israel's policy is to strengthen Jordan's position in the West Bank and strike at the PLO" (Yitzhak, 2017, p. 566). However, as previously mentioned, due to the intense Palestinian resistance within the West Bank, escalating into the First Intifada, King Hussein renounced claims to the territory in 1988 (Barari, 2009, p. 17). This decision marks a significant shift in Jordan's national interest. The Kingdom abandoned its aspirations for control over the West Bank, recognising the prevailing Palestinian aversion to any such involvement. Since 1988, Jordan has called for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state within the West Bank, reflecting a shift in its stance towards the territory.

In the subsequent years following the Madrid Conference in 1991 and signing of the first Oslo agreement in 1993, Jordan promptly entered into a peace treaty with Israel, a strategic move to remain an integral part of the Middle East political process, among other considerations described earlier (Barari, 2009, p. 18; Yitzhak, 2017, p. 567).

Jordan made it clear to Israel that the sustainability of peace between the two nations depends on advancement of the Palestinian question, as well as on whether it results in an enhancement of the economic well-being of the Jordanian population (Barari, 2009, p. 19).

The support for the treaty among Jordanian citizens deteriorated significantly with the onset of the Second Intifada, triggered by the sight of Israeli forces storming Palestinian towns and killing its citizens. On top of that, the anticipated economic benefits promised by the peace treaty failed to satisfy the Jordanian populace. It is, however, important to mention that the peace treaty facilitated the establishment of several Qualified Industrial Zones, offering job opportunities for Jordanians – an achievement made possible through the collaboration with Israel (Barari, 2009, p. 23). Furthermore, among other benefits of the peace treaty for Jordan was the influx of Israeli tourists coming into Jordan. The treaty also caused foreign investments into both Jordan and Israel to rise significantly shortly after signing of the treaty (Boghardt, L., P., 1997).

Despite the Jordanian regime criticising Israel for its actions against Palestinians, it faced the challenging task of safeguarding its peace treaty with Israel. This challenge was exacerbated by the unwavering pro-Palestinian sentiment among Jordanian citizens (Yitzhak, 2017, p. 569).

The biggest problem Jordan had to tackle during and after the Second Intifada (2000 - 2005) was the concerted efforts of Hamas and the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood to topple the Hashemite regime in Jordan (Yitzhak, 2017, p. 570). The shared interest between Jordan and Israel in opposing these groups was evident (Yitzhak, 2017, p. 571).

The relations of the countries have been characterised by the continuous Israeli support for the Hashemite regime. This support encompasses assistance in the form of increased water supply to the Kingdom, increasing the issuance of work permits for Jordanians to work in Israel, as well as offering military and intelligence aid to Jordan. Israel collaborates with the Jordanian army to jointly counter terrorist attacks targeted at the Kingdom (Kumaraswamy, 2019, p. 385; Yitzhak, 2017, pp. 572, 573).

Upon the emergence of ISIS in 2014, Israel provided military support to Jordan. This aid was crucial as the Kingdom served as a buffer state, preventing the spread of radical Islamists groups (Yitzhak, 2017, p. 573).

On the Jordanian front, the normalisation of relations with Israel might include symbolic gestures, such as renaming the territory of Jewish state in textbooks and maps to "State of Israel" from "Palestine", which was the term Jordan used since the 1948 war.

Additionally, as Yitzhak argues, during its tenure as a temporary member to the UN Security Council, Jordan refrained from using its influence to take pro-Palestinian measures against Israel on multiple occasions (2017, p. 574).

3.5 Jordan & United States

After previously highlighting Jordan's geographical position in negative terms, it is important to acknowledge that simultaneously, the country's location holds big strategic importance, contributing positively to the US-Jordan relationship (Sharp, 2023, p. 2). Given that the "Arab system" present in the region lacks the assurance of security, political or economic guarantees – validating the neorealist theory – Jordan has consistently sought support primarily from the West, with the United States playing a predominant role (Looney, 2014, p. 201). From Jordan's perspective, the United States stands as a highly valuable ally in aiding the monarchy to address challenges arising from Jordan's relatively small size, limited resources, refugee burden and its precarious location within a volatile region, as previously illustrated (Sharp, 2023, p. 2).

Jordan has been the recipient of military and economic assistance from the US since 1951. The total amount of support has reached \$3.9 billion from 1951 to 1997. Recognising Jordan's important role in the 2003 Iraq war, the US provided the Kingdom with nearly \$1.6 billion as a form of foreign aid (Looney, 2014, p. 195). In 2024, US aid to Jordan comprises nearly \$1.5 billion of the president's budget (Sharp, 2023, p. 2).

The enduring instability in Iraq and Syria, coupled with Jordan's assistance to the US in fighting terrorism, makes the Hashemite Monarchy a valuable ally in the region. Additionally, as previously highlighted, Jordan plays a crucial role in advancing a peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, a contribution acknowledged by the American president Joe Biden's administration (Sharp, 2023, p. 2). Some even contend that the pivotal regional role played by Jordan serves as the very foundation for the country's survival and the continuity of its ruling regime (Looney, 2014, p. 194). Hence, it is a paramount objective for Jordan to uphold its crucial role in the region.

Therefore, it is obvious that both countries act in accordance with their national interests, making the cooperation between them mutually beneficial. In line with the neorealist theory, we could argue that this collaboration is inherently pragmatic. This perspective is supported by a statement from a former Jordanian prime minister, suggesting that Jordan would consider severing its ties with the US if any Arab country were to offer equivalent aid (Looney, 2014, p. 190).

The practical military and economic aid provided by the US to Jordan partially covers the Kingdom's expenditures, ensuring its effective functioning. It is a fact that the legitimacy of Jordan's political system and the Hashemite dynasty is derived from its performance. Nevertheless, there is a noticeable effort on Jordan's part to shift from reliance on US aid towards fostering strong bilateral economic relationships. This strategic shift aims to attract foreign investments from the US (Looney, 2014, p. 194).

Another integral component of Jordan's national interest is the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, to be achieved through negotiations between the Palestinian Authority and the State of Israel. Jordan frequently leverages its relationship with Washington as means to advance its interest in resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Kingdom believes that the United States needs to play a pivotal role in establishing the Palestinian state, given that the non-existence of an independent Palestinian state poses a threat to Jordan's sovereignty. Jordan principally rejects any resolution to the conflict that would be achieved at the expense of the Kingdom – such as the one advocated for by the Likud Party members about Jordan effectively being Palestine (Looney, 2014, pp. 193, 194).

As Looney articulates, the primary emphasis within the US-Jordan relations centres on various factors. These mainly include bilateral relations aimed at supporting Jordan economically, security and military ties that bolster the capabilities of the Jordanian military, and ultimately a focus on the Palestinian question, with an emphasis on establishing a Palestinian state (2014, p. 197).

Examining the US-Jordan relations from the US perspective, there is a desire on the part of the United States for Jordan to maintain its moderate stance within the region. This is seen as a means to safeguard security in the broader region (Looney, 2014, p. 194).

A more concrete example can be found in the cooperation between the US and Jordan following the terrorist attack on the United States in 2001. At that time, the Kingdom actively supported the US military operations in both Afghanistan and Iraq. This collaborative effort

resulted in the historic signing of the first-ever Free Trade Agreement between the United States and an Arab country, solidifying the bond between the US and the Kingdom of Jordan (Ryan, 2004, p. 54).

Viewing the relations through the lens of neorealism, I argue that Jordan's stance towards the US can be partially explained by the concept of bandwagoning. The Kingdom of Jordan and its representatives have long strived to align with the United States, recognising it as a significant international actor with a strong foothold in the Middle East. As a substantially smaller and less powerful state, Jordan follows its national interest by maintaining good relations with the hegemon. As emphasised multiple times, the ruling Hashemite dynasty depends on the United States, among other factors, for the preservation of its power and legitimacy.

4. Jordan under King Abdullah II

Having outlined Jordan's evolving national interest, particularly regarding an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and other key factors impacting the Kingdom and its monarchy, I will now examine its position under King Abdullah II.

Regarding the most important aspect of Jordan's stance on the conflict – the establishment of a Palestinian state – King Abdullah has so far upheld his father's position. Similar to King Hussein during the later stage of his reign, King Abdullah has been a strong supporter of establishing a Palestinian state in the West Bank, with East Jerusalem as its capital (Abdullah II, 2011, pp. 154, 161; The Royal Hashemite Court, 1999). Building on Jordan's capacity to influence the conflict, I will highlight concrete examples of King Abdullah's diplomatic efforts in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, following a chronological analysis from his ascension in 1999 to October 2023, when Hamas invaded Israel and Israel launched a military operation in Gaza.

King Abdullah II, like his father, has been moderate and very careful to maintain Jordan's relations with its Western allies, mainly the United States at the time. Since his accession to the throne, Abdullah II has succeeded in strengthening these ties and in linking Jordan's economy more closely to international economic institutions such as the World Trade Organisation and the International Monetary Fund (Ryan, 2004, p. 44). He has also emphasised the importance of Jordan's role in Jerusalem and has been committed to a two-state solution as the best solution to the conflict (Abdullah II, 2011, pp. 196, 208).

Abdullah came to the throne at a time of tense relations between Jordan and Israel. Two years prior to Abdullah's accession, Israeli intelligence agents attempted to assassinate Khaled Meshaal, then a senior member of Hamas's political wing, in the Jordanian capital of Amman (Abdullah II, 2011, p. 140). Although Meshaal's life was saved, the incident severely damaged relations. Netanyahu's public criticism of Jordan and King Hussein shortly before meeting Abdullah further delayed any chance of improving ties, a point Abdullah recalls when reflecting on his first official encounter with the Israeli leader (Abdullah II, 2011, pp. 142, 143).

He also said that the 1997 Wye River Memorandum, which aimed to resume the implementation of the 1995 Oslo II Accords, should be revived (Abdullah II, 2011, p. 161; Klausner & Bickerton, 2016, p. 345). The signing of this memorandum was achieved with the help of Abdullah's father, and Abdullah felt that Netanyahu was holding back progress.

During his US visit, he and President Clinton agreed that new Israeli leadership could benefit the peace process. (Abdulah II, 2011, p. 192). The importance of promoting the Wye River Memorandum was also stressed by the Jordanian Foreign Minister, Mr El-Khatib, during the fifty-fourth session of the United Nations General Assembly in 1999 (Abdelelah, A., 1999).

King Abdullah II first attended Israeli-Palestinian negotiations in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, in 1999, resulting in the Sharm el-Sheikh Memorandum (UNSCO, 1999), which called for implementing the Oslo II Accords. He later urged Israeli Prime Minister Barak, a signatory, to "make progress with the Palestinians" to enhance Israel-Jordan relations (Abdulah II, 2011, p. 192).

During the same General Assembly session I mentioned earlier, Minister El-Khatib stressed Jordan's commitment to supporting the Palestinians in the peace negotiations. He said directly that "the issues on the agenda relate to Jordan's national interest". He then spoke mainly about the burden of refugees on the Kingdom's economy. He then went on to urge the international community not to allow any cuts in funding to UNRWA. Mr El-Khatib called on all donor countries to continue their activities so that UNRWA can continue its work (Abdelelah, A., 2000). I argue that, even though the actions Jordan advocates for align with Palestinian interests, the primary motivation behind these calls is not the well-being of the Palestinian people but Jordan's own national interests. For instance, advocating for UNRWA funding aligns with Jordan's interests, as Minister El-Khatib noted the immense economic burden of refugees on the Kingdom. Cuts to UNRWA would harm Jordan's economy and the monarchy's/king's legitimacy, which partly relies on economic stability.

This brings us back to the relationship between the US and Jordan, as the US has been the largest sponsor of UNRWA activities in recent years. It can therefore be argued that the money that the US channels into UNRWA activities has a direct impact on Jordan's economy and political stability. By reference, the amount of US money that went into UNRWA between 2017 and 2023 was more than \$1.1 billion, while the contribution of the European Union as a whole was "only" a little more than \$900 million (United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, n.d.).

In the context of the unsuccessful Camp David Summit in the year 2000, the Jordanian Foreign Minister, Mr El-Khatib, stressed the importance of US efforts to reach a settlement. He also stressed the importance of Israeli withdrawal from the territories occupied after 1967. He then echoed King Abdullah's call for the Palestinians to be granted the right of return, arguing that Jordan must be able to guarantee the rights of all its citizens,

including the Palestinian refugees, as if this was not possible, a lasting peace could not be achieved (Abdelelah, A., 2000). Here again, Jordan's representative advocates for Palestinian rights (meaning also of Jordanians with Palestinian roots), as the monarchy's legitimacy is closely tied to the Palestinian issue, aligning thus with both national and king's interests.

In the aftermath of the Second Intifada, King Abdullah endorsed the advancement of the peace process when he told President Bush that resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would prevent groups like al-Qaeda from gaining power, and that it could also help increase support for the US in the region among other Arab leaders (Abdulah II, 2011, p. 205). According to Barari, this is what the Jordanians believe. Although there is a strong feeling among Jordanians that a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would create more "moderate Arab forces", Israelis do not share this view (Barari, 2009, p. 26). This, too, serves Jordan's national interest, as the Kingdom itself has long been targeted by various terrorist groups. King Abdullah believes that the establishment of a Palestinian state could put an end to this.

Jordan's king leverages the strong US-Jordan relationship to promote the economic benefits of a Palestinian state for the US – enhanced trading opportunities or reduced costs of aid – while pursuing its own national interests. Thanks to the strong US-Jordan relationship, any resolution of the conflict worked out with the involvement of the United States is likely to be favourable to the state of Jordan. Resolving the conflict could increase US popularity in the Arab world, potentially ridding Jordan of its role as the most prominent Arab ally—a status often criticised by neighbouring Arab states.

In his biography, Abdullah reflects on his father's peace approach with Israel, which he wanted to continue with. The plan called for all Arab states to pursue joint peace with Israel in exchange for Israel's full withdrawal from Arab lands. Key conditions included the creation of a Palestinian state, resolution of refugee issues based on UN Resolution 194 (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, n.d.), the status of Jerusalem, and withdrawal from the Golan Heights and Lebanese territories (Abdulah II, 2011, p. 207; Klausner & Bickerton, 2016, p. 387). The King states in his book that he proposed the idea to the Egyptians and Saudis, with Saudi Arabia later developing the full initiative adopted at the 2002 Arab League summit in Beirut (Abdulah II, 2011, p. 208).

King Abdullah hosted the Aqaba Summit in 2003, where President Bush met with Mahmoud Abbas and Ariel Sharon to discuss a peace plan. However, the proposal for a Palestinian state was rejected as Abdullah recalls Bush blaming Yasser Arafat for failing to make peace, while him defending Arafat's importance to the Palestinians. (Abdulah II, 2011, p. 233; Klausner & Bickerton, 2016, p. 396).

Jordan has often served as a kind of middle ground for the two opposing parties to meet and negotiate, due to Jordan's and King Abdullah's long-term moderate approach to both sides of the conflict. From a neorealist perspective, being a mediator benefits Jordan by keeping strong ties with Israel and advancing its agenda in conflict negotiations and potential outcomes.

After Israel's invasion into Lebanon in 2006 as a response to Hezbollah fighters' incursions into northern Israel, Jordanian public opinion and the King strongly rejected the Israeli response (Abdulah II, 2011, p. 276). Although Hezbollah was celebrated throughout the Arab world for standing up to Israel in the war, Jordan, along with Egypt and Saudi Arabia, saw the war as Iranian intervention in Arab politics and thus condemned Hezbollah's actions while also criticising Israel (Abdulah II, 2011, p. 276).

In his memoirs, King Abdullah is critical of the attitude of countries opposed to Israel. He argues that they only see staying alive in conflict with Israel as a victory, suggesting that they're happy to support armed conflict as long as they can survive and hurt Israel in the process (Abdulah II, 2011, p. 277). Neorealism suggests that Jordan might align with its Arab neighbours; however, its geographical proximity to Israel and significant economic ties make avoiding conflict and maintaining a cooperative stance with Israel more pragmatic.

King Abdullah often securitises the Israeli-Palestinian conflict not only as a regional issue, but also emphasises the conflict's resolution importance for the US, Europe and the broader international community (Abdulah II, 2011, p. 291). In his speech to the US Congress in 2007, Abdullah pointed out that the continuation of the conflict was damaging the reputation of 'the West' in the eyes of Muslims around the world (The Royal Hashemite Court, 2007).

A crucial period of King Abdullah's reign was undoubtedly the Arab Spring period from 2011 to 2013. As Jordanians took to the streets demanding political reforms, it can be argued that this period posed the greatest threat to the King and the ruling monarchy (Barari & Satkowski, 2012, p. 43; Yeşilyurt, 2014, p. 170). However, it is often argued that the Arab Spring protests never really threatened the ruling monarchy as much, as was the case in other countries in the region. As Yeşilyurt argues, the instability and violence in Jordan's neighbouring countries ensured greater legitimacy for the Jordanian regime (2014, p. 185).

Furthermore, the Arab Spring caused a rise in foreign aid into Jordan, predominantly then coming from the US with the aim to support stability of the region. The amount of Economic Support Fund rose from US\$ 362 million in 2011 to US\$ 700 million in 2014 (Yeşilyurt, 2014, p. 180). To advance Jordan's national interest and present the monarchy in a positive light, King Abdullah positioned himself as a reformist, advocating for change and challenging the status quo. As Yeşilyurt writes: "the King sought to create a "reformist King" image among the public" (2014, p. 183).

The position of the Hashemite Kingdom has been consistent during the negotiations since the proposal of the Arab Peace Initiative. The King has been a strong supporter of the Arab Peace Initiative, stressing that Israel in particular should engage with the plan (The Royal Hashemite Court, 2012). In addition, the King himself and representatives of the Kingdom, such as the Foreign Minister, continue to stress the importance of a two-state solution based on the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as the capital of the Palestinian state (The Royal Hashemite Court, n.d.; United Nations Digital Library, n.d.).

King Abdullah has upheld his father's 1988 decision to renounce claims to the West Bank, recognizing that Palestinians there would never accept Jordanian rule. He has consistently supported an independent Palestinian state, believing it to be in Jordan's national interest to have a neighbouring state for trade. Such a state would satisfy not only Palestinians in the West Bank, but also Jordanian citizens of Palestinian descent, who feel deep sympathies for the Palestinians. Seeing them achieve independence could appease those who view the Hashemites as prioritising their own interests over those of the Palestinian people.

Since 1948, the Hashemite dynasty has used the monarchy's role in Jerusalem as a means of legitimacy and that is why the role of Jordan as the custodian of the Islamic sites in the city has been emphasised in the conflict negotiations (Kumaraswamy, 2019, p. 295). Jordan's representatives often emphasise the country's commitment to preserving its role in the Holy city.

A decision by former US President Donald Trump in 2017 to move the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, which was a direct endorsement of Israel's claim to the whole of Jerusalem as its capital, was not well received by Jordan's King Abdullah. The King warned Trump that such a move, a move very sensitive for the Hashemites, could lead to a deterioration of security in the region (Al-Khalidi, S., 2017).

Since the US is a long-standing ally of the Kingdom, President Trump's decision has put King Abdullah in an uneasy position. The King cannot afford to be seen as complicit in such actions, as this could spark anger among his citizens, leading to unrest (Macaron, J., 2018). At the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation in 2017, King Abdullah directly criticised the US's move to recognise Jerusalem as Israel's capital, warning that it undermines efforts to restart the peace process. The King also reaffirmed Jordan's position in Jerusalem and that he will not allow Jordan's role as custodian to be compromised (The Royal Hashemite Court, 2017).

"Deal of the Century", former President Trump's peace plan of 2020, was yet another low point in Jordan-US relations. This proposal addresses few Palestinian demands for statehood, offering only very small sovereignty and subjecting the state to Israeli security control. It also maintains Jerusalem as Israel's united capital, omitting Palestinian claims for East Jerusalem as their capital. On top of that, it rejects the Palestinian refugee right of return, a long-standing demand of Jordan (Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, 2020). When the plan was unveiled, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu also declared Israel's intent to annex substantial portions of the West Bank, including the Jordan Valley, a move met with opposition from Jordan (McLoughlin, P., 2020).

I would like to conclude the empirical part with a recent event, the Hamas terrorist attack against the State of Israel. Having condemned the actions of Hamas, the King remains critical of the ongoing Israeli military operation in Gaza. However, as the war in Gaza is still ongoing, it would be impossible to objectively assess Jordan's role in the recent events. The current situation makes it very unclear whether any form of Palestinian state will be established in the coming years, as the animosity between Israelis and Palestinians has

increased significantly and the opposition of the Israeli government towards the establishment of a Palestinian state only grew stronger (Cohen, R. S., 2024). While the King remains to stand firmly behind the Palestinians in calling for the establishment of a Palestinian state on the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital, the reality on the ground in Gaza and the West Bank may not allow for such a solution in the near future (The Royal Hashemite Court, 2024).

Conclusion

In this thesis, I argue that the role Jordan has been playing in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict since King Abdullah II ascended the throne can indeed be well explained by using the theory of neorealism and its concept of national interest. With this I confirm the first hypothesis formulated in the beginning of my work which goes as follows:

Jordan's role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict under the leadership of King Abdullah II can primarily be attributed to the Hashemite's monarchy's overarching concerns for its own security. The kingdom has engaged in the conflict with the primary goal of mitigating potential threats that could jeopardise the safety and sovereignty of the monarchy and Jordan as such.

Although King Abdullah II has consistently expressed strong rhetorical support for establishing an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza as a solution to the conflict, in practice, Jordan carefully navigates various factors to protect its own safety and security. Jordan, a weaker state economically and militarily compared to its neighbours, carefully balances its diplomatic relations with Israel, its key economic and military partner, the US, its security guarantor, and the volatile region it is located in. All these aspects are integral to Jordan's national interest, the pursuit of which is vital for the country's stability and success. My thesis shows that despite visible support for the Palestinian cause in the media or during various speeches held by Jordan's representatives either at the UN, EU or elsewhere, Jordan's actions closely follow its own national interest. Additionally, the King prioritises ensuring the stability and continuity of the Hashemite dynasty.

One of the most important aspects of Jordan's role in the conflict has been its position towards the establishment of an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza. As outlined earlier, Jordan's position shifted significantly in 1988 when King Hussein renounced the claim to the West Bank. This decision was driven by growing Palestinian hostility toward the idea of Jordanian rule over the territory. From that point, Jordan ceased its ambitions to govern the West Bank and instead began advocating for Palestinian independence in the area. A neorealist perspective suggests that King Hussein made this move to protect the monarchy's stability, as disillusionment among both West Bank Palestinians and Jordanians of Palestinian descent threatened the Hashemite regime.

By relinquishing the claim, Hussein aimed to appease these groups and safeguard the dynasty. King Abdullah, whose reign is the focus of my work, has consistently upheld his father's stance by strongly advocating for an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank. It is essential to mention that while Jordan advocates for the establishment of a Palestinian state as part of a two-state solution, it prioritises maintaining good relations with Israel, despite the current Israeli government's strong opposition to such a solution. This demonstrates that Jordan puts first its national interest in preserving its relationship with Israel over risking those ties for the sake of the two-state solution.

Therefore, I refuse my second hypothesis which goes as follows:

Jordan's role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict under King Abdullah II cannot be fully explained by the concept of national interest. The neorealist concept of national interest fails to capture the complexities of Jordan's involvement. A more appropriate framework for understanding Jordan's position would be to analyse Kingdom's shared values and identity with the Palestinian people and thus to study Jordan's position using a different theory, such as constructivism.

As I have made clear throughout my work, even though the sense of shared identity with the Palestinian people is strong among Jordanians, it fails to serve as the main reason behind Jordan's position on the conflict as such. My thesis argues that, within the anarchic international system as described by neorealism, Jordan's role in the conflict is driven predominantly by its efforts to safeguard its own security, often at the expense of considerations like shared values or identity. I believe that a theory like constructivism could perhaps effectively explain how pro-Palestinian sentiment among Jordanians influences the Kingdom and its monarch. Nevertheless, such theory falls short in addressing the core aspects of Jordan's role in the conflict. As this thesis demonstrates, during periods of instability, security threats or tension (Jordan's renunciation of its claim to the West Bank, the events of Black September, or its ongoing relations with Israel despite the presence of a far-right government opposed to the establishment of a Palestinian state, ...), the Kingdom has consistently prioritised its own national interests over those of the Palestinian people.

My thesis argues that understanding Jordan's national interest requires examining the priorities of the ruling Hashemite dynasty. Jordan's role in the conflict is strongly influenced by the Hashemites' efforts to preserve their power. Through a neorealist lens, the concept of

national interest can also be applied to the dynasty itself, focusing on its survival, territorial integrity, and the protection of its members. Although not a "nation", the actions of the Hashemite representatives align closely with these principles.

In my research on King Abdullah II's reign, I argue that his approach aligns closely with his father's position on establishing a Palestinian state in the West Bank. As shown in the empirical analysis, while Abdullah consistently supports Palestinian efforts, his actions ultimately serve the monarchy's and Jordan's national interests. Examples include advocating for UNRWA funding to enhance his domestic standing, supporting Palestinian rights to appeal to Jordanian citizens, promoting conflict resolution through Washington to leverage strong US-Jordan relations, and acting as a mediator to shape outcomes favourable to Jordan.

As of late 2024, as I finish this thesis, tensions in the Middle East remain high following the events that happened on October 7 2023. The war in Gaza is still under way, relations between Iran and Israel are very unstable, settler violence in the West Bank rising, and Hezzbolah has just recently just signed a ceasefire with Israel. On top of that, the election of Donald Trump as the next US president adds yet another level of uncertainty to the whole region.

Under the current instability, the role of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is both heavily important and worth further research. Jordan is deeply affected by the region's volatility, particularly then in regards to the evolving reality of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Examination of the Kingdom's actions and influence during the new regional dynamics would surely offer new insights into its position as a regional actor. It will be interesting to observe how the Kingdom navigates the new challenges in the region where stability has been rather scarce.

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