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Social and political transformations in Jordan: A sociological study of state-society interaction in the context of regional crises

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the impact of regional crises, specifically the Palestinian and Syrian crises, on the social and political transformations in Jordan. It examines how these crises have shaped Jordan's internal stability, socio-political structures, and governance. The research highlights the pivotal role of the Jordanian government in managing the repercussions of these crises through policies such as the Jordan Response Plan (JRP) and the Jordan Compact, alongside the critical contributions of civil society organizations in promoting social cohesion and supporting affected populations.

Utilizing a qualitative approach, the study employs historical analysis, and thematic analysis of secondary data to provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges Jordan has faced. The findings reveal that while Jordan has maintained relative stability amidst regional turmoil, the influx of refugees has strained its resources and heightened social tensions. These pressures underscore the urgent need for political and social reforms to address issues of governance, resource allocation, and public participation.

The research concludes that strengthening partnerships between the government and civil society, enhancing democratic processes, and nurturing economic resilience are essential for ensuring Jordan's long-term stability and sustainable development.

KEYWORDS: regional crises, social and political transformations, civil society

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1. Introduction

This research is of significant importance as it examines the impact of regional crises, particularly the Palestinian and Syrian crises, on social and political transformations in Jordan. It contributes to understanding how the state and society interact in response to these crises and offers recommendations on improving the Jordanian government's future responses. Additionally, it highlights the role of civil society in maintaining social cohesion during crises. The study also underscores the importance of political and social reforms in achieving internal stability in Jordan. The influx of Syrian refugees has had profound socio-political implications for Jordan, affecting its political landscape and social fabric (Bani Salameh et al. 2020). Moreover, the challenges posed by hosting refugees have highlighted the need for Jordan to develop effective coping mechanisms to maintain stability (Beaujouan and Rasheed 2020).

Jordan has faced significant challenges due to regional instability, including the influx of refugees and economic pressures. The government's efforts to implement developmental policies are crucial in contributing to social and political stability, particularly by stimulating the national economy through the support of small, medium, and micro-enterprises (Al-Qahawi 2024). Moreover, civil society organizations play a vital role in the political reform process in Jordan. These organizations have been instrumental in enhancing political awareness and participation among citizens, thereby contributing to the overall process of political reform (Shteiwi 2012). The objective of this research is to examine the social and political transformations in Jordan resulting from regional crises, and to determine the impact of these crises on the state's stability and socio-political security. Additionally, the study seeks to analyze the role of the Jordanian government in addressing these crises, as well as the role of civil society in enhancing social and political cohesion.

The research hypothesis posits that regional crises, such as the Palestinian and Syrian issues, have significantly impacted Jordan's social and political structures. Despite these challenges, the Jordanian government and civil society have managed to maintain relative stability. However, there is an urgent need to expand political and social reforms to address future challenges.

Jordan's strategic position in a turbulent region has subjected it to various external pressures, influencing its internal stability and policy-making processes. Refugees' crisis and regional conflicts has strained the country's resources and social fabric, necessitating adaptive governance and resilient civil society structures (Al-Hakami, 2023). Civil society organizations (CSOs) in Jordan have played a pivotal role in advocating for political reforms and enhancing public participation. However, challenges such as limited coordination among CSOs and restrictive legal frameworks have hindered their effectiveness. Strengthening partnerships between the government and CSOs is essential for successful political reform initiatives (Center for Strategic Studies 2013).

Furthermore, internal and external factors, including social, security, economic, and political elements, have influenced Jordan's foreign policy and political stability, especially post-2011. Addressing these multifaceted challenges requires a comprehensive approach that includes reinforcing internal cohesion and expanding external relations (Al-Shbattat 2021).

This research aims to explore how regional crises, particularly the Palestinian and Syrian crises, have influenced Jordan's social and political landscape. The following questions guide the investigation:

How have the Palestinian and Syrian crises affected the political and social structure in Jordan?
What role has the Jordanian government played in responding to these crises, and have its policies been effective?
How has the interaction between Jordanian society and Palestinian and Syrian refugees impacted social stability?
What political and social reforms should be adopted to improve the situation in the future?
What role does civil society play in supporting stability and enhancing social cohesion?

This paper seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how Jordan has navigated the challenges posed by the Palestinian and Syrian crises by addressing these questions. Jordan has historically served as a refuge for displaced populations, particularly Palestinians and Syrians, significantly impacting the country's demographics, economy, and social services. The presence of over 2 million registered Palestinian refugees and approximately

1.3 million Syrian refugees has strained resources and influenced social dynamics (Ryan 2024).

In response to these crises, the Jordanian government has collaborated with international organizations to implement measures like the Jordan Response Plan (JRP) and the Jordan Compact. These initiatives aim to integrate refugees into the labor market and ensure access to essential services. However, challenges remain in terms of resource allocation and the long-term sustainability of these efforts (UNHCR Jordan 2024). The integration of large refugee populations into Jordanian society has produced both positive and negative outcomes. While the society has shown remarkable hospitality, increased competition for employment, housing, and services has occasionally led to social tensions. Civil society organizations have played a critical role in promoting social cohesion and mitigating conflicts through initiatives that foster community engagement (Beaujouan and Rasheed 2020).

To address these challenges, Jordan may consider political and social reforms that emphasize economic development, inclusive policies for refugees, and active civil society participation. Investments in education, healthcare, and employment opportunities for both refugees and host communities are essential for fostering resilience and sustainable growth (Saieq 2023). Civil society organizations have been instrumental in supporting stability and enhancing social cohesion in Jordan. Their contributions include facilitating dialogue, providing psychosocial support, and implementing community development projects that promote integration and reduce tensions. These efforts complement governmental strategies and are vital for maintaining stability amid ongoing regional crises (WVSR).

2. Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative approach to analyze the social and political transformations in Jordan influenced by regional crises, particularly the Palestinian and Syrian crises. The methodology combines historical and analytical study techniques to provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics at play.

The study employs a descriptive and analytical framework to explore how regional crises have shaped Jordan's political and social structures. Historical analysis forms a key component, examining Jordan's development since its establishment in 1946, with an emphasis on significant milestones such as the Palestinian refugee influx and the Syrian crisis. This includes investigating the evolution of governmental and societal responses to regional challenges, drawing on sources such as Salman (2010) and Al-Attoum (2018). Additionally, the research incorporates an extensive literature review, synthesizing findings from existing studies to establish a solid theoretical and empirical foundation. Scholarly works such as Beaujouan and Rasheed (2020) and Al-Zoubi (2017) are used to connect historical events with contemporary challenges.

Data for the study is primarily collected from secondary sources, including academic articles, government reports, and publications by international organizations. Key references include reports by the UNHCR and World Vision International, which focus on refugee management in Jordan, and academic studies that explore the socio-political and economic implications of regional crises on the country.

The data analysis process involves thematic and comparative approaches. Thematic analysis is used to identify recurring themes related to social cohesion, political reforms, and economic resilience in Jordan's responses to crises. These insights are grouped into categories such as the role of civil society, government strategies, and the impact of external pressures. Comparative analysis is conducted to evaluate the government's responses to the Palestinian and Syrian crises, assessing patterns and variations in policy effectiveness. Jordan's experiences are also compared against broader regional trends to highlight unique challenges and solutions. Ethical considerations are integral to this research, with adherence to guidelines ensuring proper citation of all sources and respect for the intellectual property of referenced authors. Sensitivity is maintained in discussing vulnerable populations, such as refugees, to avoid misrepresentation or bias.

3. Literature Review

The existing body of research contributes noteworthy perspectives about the social and political transformations in Jordan, particularly in the context of regional crises. These studies collectively highlight the intricate interplay between historical events, societal changes, and governmental responses, providing a rich foundation for understanding the challenges Jordan has faced over time.

Saleh Salman (2010) provides a foundational perspective by exploring Jordan's modern and contemporary

history, emphasizing the profound impact of regional crises, such as the Palestinian and Syrian crises, on the nation's internal dynamics. He underscores how these events have shaped Jordan's social and political structures, laying the groundwork for further exploration into these transformations. Expanding on this, Fayez Abu Ria (2005) delves deeper into the social dimensions of these crises, focusing on the demographic shifts triggered by the 1948 influx of Palestinian refugees. His work highlights how this migration reshaped the fabric of Jordanian society, emphasizing the role of ethnic and religious diversity in forming the country's social structures.

The effects of regional conflicts are further examined by Khalid Al-Zoubi (2017), who analyzes Jordan's interactions with both internal and external political crises. His study sheds light on the economic and social pressures these crises have created, particularly in relation to Jordan's proximity to conflict zones. This theme is echoed by Hani Al-Jabri (2016), whose research focuses on the Syrian crisis and its profound economic and social repercussions. Al-Jabri offers a detailed account of how the Jordanian government has managed the influx of Syrian refugees, illustrating both the successes and limitations of its policies.

In addressing Jordan's political landscape, Fahd Al-Shaeibi (2018) examines the role of democracy within the context of ongoing crises. He argues that the nation's political system requires significant reforms to effectively respond to future challenges, emphasizing the link between governance and crisis management. This perspective is complemented by Mohammad Al-Kilani's (2020) analysis of Jordan's economic vulnerabilities. Al-Kilani highlights persistent issues such as unemployment and poverty, which are exacerbated by the strains of regional instability, making economic reform a critical component of national resilience.

Mohammad Al-Attoum (2018) provides a historical lens, focusing on the Palestinian crisis and its influence on Jordanian politics. He examines the interactions between Jordan, Arab nations, and the Palestine Liberation Organization, with a particular emphasis on the Black September conflict of 1970 and its lasting political implications. Finally, Mahdi Al-Sadiq (2019) shifts attention to the role of civil society in shaping Jordan's response to crises. His work illustrates how unions and civil associations have supported governmental efforts, fostering social cohesion and addressing the challenges posed by regional instability.

4. Historical Context and Social Transformations in Jordan
4.1 The Establishment of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the Development of Jordanian Society

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan gained independence in 1946 following the end of the British Mandate over Jordanian territories. This independence came at a time when the Middle East was undergoing profound political and economic transformations. The region was experiencing significant upheavals, including the redrawing of borders for Arab states and considerable challenges arising from regional conflicts.

The Kingdom of Jordan was founded on the unification of the Emirate of Transjordan with Palestinian territories after the declaration of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the signing of the independence treaty with Britain. These foundational steps were not only pivotal in Jordan's history but also introduced substantial political and social challenges, particularly regarding the distribution of ethnic and religious power within the kingdom.

This diverse social composition necessitated solutions to address the challenges posed by the coexistence of various ethnic and religious groups in a newly established society. The integration and management of these diverse elements became a defining feature of Jordan's early social and political development (Salman 2010, pp. 45–67).

In its early stages, Jordan reflected significant ethnic and religious diversity. The country experienced a large influx of Palestinian refugees following the 1948 Nakba, alongside other ethnic groups such as the Circassians and Druze. This ethnic and religious plurality profoundly influenced the development of Jordanian society, creating a complex interaction between these groups that became the foundation of Jordan's social structures.

As a result, the Hashemite Kingdom faced significant challenges in achieving national unity and social cohesion, particularly given this diversity. These challenges became a starting point for governmental efforts to build an inclusive national identity characterized by cooperation and understanding among the various components of society (Salman, 2010 pp. 45–67).

On the political front, Jordan played a pivotal role in the Arab region, particularly concerning the issue of Palestinian refugees, who had a significant presence within the kingdom. Jordan also actively participated in

the Arab-Israeli wars and the Iraq wars during the 1970s. During this period, the Hashemite Kingdom served as a central hub for Arab politics in the region, enabling it to address both domestic and regional challenges with flexibility and responsiveness to the political issues shaping the area.

This distinctive political role had a profound impact on the development of the Jordanian state, influencing its domestic and foreign policies. It also contributed to strengthening Jordan's regional standing, ensuring its active engagement in addressing critical regional concerns (Abu Ria, 2005 pp. 99–112).

In its early years, Jordan relied heavily on British support in various fields, particularly in military and political affairs. Over time, however, the kingdom began to take significant steps toward strengthening its independence and establishing its own political identity. This process required Jordan to confront numerous crises and conflicts in the region, which played a crucial role in shaping the country's national identity and enhancing its society's ability to adapt to diverse challenges.

This era, marked by wars and regional conflicts, had a profound impact on the cohesion of Jordanian society. It contributed to the development of social structures as the nation responded to these challenges, laying the foundation for a more resilient and unified society (Salman, 2010 pp. 45–67).

5. Historical Context and Social Transformations in Jordan
5.1 The Palestinian Crisis and Its Impact on Jordanian Politics

Since the establishment of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in 1946, the Palestinian issue has been a central focus of its political agenda, posing an ongoing political and social challenge. The 1948 Nakba marked a turning point, as Jordan adopted decisive political stances on the Palestinian cause, most notably by hosting large numbers of Palestinian refugees within its borders. This response placed significant social and economic burdens on the Jordanian state.

Jordan's approach to the Palestinian issue was deeply intertwined with its internal strategies to achieve stability and maintain national security. The government implemented policies that balanced the management of the refugee crisis domestically while playing a pivotal role in the broader regional dynamics of the Arab-Israeli conflict. This dual strategy underscored Jordan's commitment to addressing the immediate implications of the refugee influx while asserting its influence on the regional political stage (Salman, 2010 pp. 45–67).

The Palestinian crisis imposed multifaceted challenges on Jordan due to the dual responsibilities shouldered by its government. Domestically, the Jordanian state had to address the repercussions of the refugee crisis by striving to provide essential services, such as healthcare and education, to Palestinian refugees. Simultaneously, Jordan played a crucial role in the Arab-Israeli conflict, engaging in political negotiations between Arab states and Israel. These overlapping challenges created a complex political landscape, as Jordan's relationship with other Arab countries, particularly the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), experienced continuous fluctuations due to differing political orientations during that period (Al-Attoum 2018 pp. 122–135).

The Palestinian crisis had a profound impact on Jordan's political system. A defining moment occurred in 1970 with the "Black September" crisis, triggered by the escalation of armed Palestinian activities within Jordan. This led to a violent conflict between the Jordanian army and Palestinian organizations. The conflict significantly influenced Jordan's policy toward the Palestinian issue, resulting in a realignment of its relationships with the PLO and other Arab states (Al-Attoum 2018, pp. 122–135).

This period also intensified tensions between Palestinians and Jordanians within the kingdom, straining social cohesion and exacerbating ethnic tensions. These internal divisions highlighted the broader societal challenges Jordan faced in balancing its domestic stability with its regional political commitments (Salman 2010, pp. 45–67).

From an economic perspective, the Palestinian crisis posed an additional challenge to the Jordanian government. Beyond the social burden of hosting refugees, the government faced increasing economic pressures due to heightened spending on public services such as education and healthcare. This strain came at a time when the kingdom heavily relied on economic aid from Arab and international donors to meet its growing needs (Abu Ria 2005, pp. 99–112).

5.2 The Syrian Crisis and Its Impact on Political and Social Stability

Since the onset of the Syrian crisis in 2011, Jordan has faced an unprecedented influx of Syrian refugees, with over 1.5 million refugees hosted by the kingdom by 2020. This massive influx placed immense pressure on Jordan's essential services, including education and healthcare, which struggled to accommodate the substantial increase in demand. Additionally, unemployment rates rose significantly as refugees entered the labor market, competing for the limited job opportunities available. The resulting economic pressures further strained Jordanian households, deepening the country's economic challenges.

In response, the Jordanian government adopted cautious positions toward the Syrian crisis, focusing on maintaining national stability and preventing any security escalation that could destabilize the country. These strategies included reinforcing military defenses along the borders and implementing strict security policies to ensure that the situation did not deteriorate (Al-Jabri 2016, pp. 145–160).

The Syrian crisis not only strained Jordan's economic infrastructure but also had profound social and political implications. The significant influx of refugees led to increased tensions between Jordanians and refugees, particularly in areas with high refugee concentrations such as Zarqa and Amman. These tensions arose from economic pressures, including heightened demand for public resources and services like education and healthcare, as well as increased competition for jobs and social assistance. These challenges exacerbated negative sentiments toward refugees in some areas, further fueling social tensions between different groups within the kingdom (Al-Jabri 2016, pp. 145–160).

This dual impact—economic and social—illustrates the far-reaching consequences of the Syrian crisis on Jordan, highlighting the delicate balance the kingdom must maintain in addressing the needs of refugees while safeguarding its own stability and cohesion.

From a political perspective, the Syrian crisis significantly influenced the Jordanian government's relationships with international and regional powers. Jordan played a critical role in safeguarding the stability of its borders, overseeing a volatile border region that posed a broader security threat to the area. This role led to the formation of alliances with countries such as the United States and the European Union, which provided financial and humanitarian aid to help Jordan manage the burden of hosting Syrian refugees. Additionally, Jordan strengthened its security coordination with neighboring countries to ensure border control, adopting strict security policies. Military defenses along the borders were fortified to combat illegal smuggling of weapons and fighters and to prevent unauthorized border crossings by refugees (Al-Jabri 2016, pp. 145–160).

Despite the international support Jordan received during the Syrian crisis, the situation remained a persistent economic and social challenge. The healthcare and education systems faced intense pressure, with resources reaching their capacity limits, forcing the government to delay many national development projects. Furthermore, poverty rates increased in some regions due to rising living costs and the heightened demand for essential services.

In this context, the Syrian crisis underscored the need for economic and social reforms to address the growing burdens. These challenges highlighted the necessity of developing infrastructure and providing adequate support to improve basic services for both citizens and refugees. The crisis served as a catalyst for directing greater attention to enhancing healthcare, education, and other public services to mitigate its long-term impact on Jordan's stability (Abu Ria 2005, pp. 99–112; Al-Kilani 2020, pp. 112–130).

6. State and Society Interaction Amid Crises

6.1 The Jordanian Government's Response to Regional Crises

The Jordanian government has responded to regional crises through a series of domestic and foreign policies aimed at maintaining internal stability and enhancing the state's capacity to address escalating challenges. In response to the economic difficulties arising from regional turbulence, the government implemented comprehensive economic reform programs designed to improve fiscal conditions and strengthen the national economy.

One of the key strategies during this period was reducing dependence on foreign aid and grants, shifting toward greater economic self-reliance by developing local productive sectors and encouraging foreign investment. This shift was essential for alleviating the financial burden on the state and ensuring long-term economic sustainability.

Additionally, the government introduced policies to improve the efficiency of the public sector. These included reducing certain government expenditures and enhancing transparency and accountability in resource management. By focusing on these measures, the government sought to optimize resource allocation and build a more resilient and sustainable economic framework (Al-Zoubi 2017, pp. 75–90).

On the political front, the Jordanian government launched several political reform initiatives, including amending election laws and expanding the base of political participation. These efforts aimed to achieve internal political stability amidst escalating regional crises, which had a direct impact on governmental policies. These reforms were part of a long-term strategy to strengthen democracy and broaden citizen involvement in decision-making processes, thereby fostering national cohesion and maintaining state stability in the face of growing external challenges (Al-Awad 2015 pp. 150–165).

In parallel with political and economic reforms, the government implemented various social policies designed to strengthen social cohesion among the diverse components of Jordanian society, particularly between Jordanians and Palestinians. The government focused on improving education and healthcare services for all societal groups, especially in areas that experienced a significant influx of Palestinian refugees following the 1948 Nakba. Social programs were established to provide essential services in these regions, aiming to enhance the quality of life for both citizens and refugees.

These policies were integral to the government's strategy for achieving social stability amidst the demographic challenges posed by refugee influxes and ongoing population growth. By addressing these issues, the government sought to build a more unified and resilient society capable of withstanding the pressures of regional crises.

6.2 The Role of Civil Society during Crises

Civil society in Jordan has played a vital role in influencing domestic policy by directly engaging with the government on various social and economic issues. It has been particularly active in addressing the challenges posed by the Syrian refugee crisis and its accompanying economic and social impacts. Trade unions and charitable organizations worked collaboratively with the government to provide social and humanitarian support to Syrian refugees, organizing awareness campaigns to highlight the crisis's effects on Jordanian society.

Additionally, several grassroots movements emerged, advocating for political reforms, particularly in areas such as expanding political participation and broadening civil rights. These movements extended beyond economic and social demands, calling for greater transparency and accountability within Jordan's political system. In doing so, they raised social awareness about the importance of political and social change in fostering a more inclusive and equitable society (Al-Awad 2015 pp. 150–165).

Furthermore, civil society in Jordan has served as a crucial link between citizens and the government. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have played a key role in providing social and humanitarian aid during major crises, such as the Syrian conflict and the Palestinian refugee crisis. These organizations organized food and medical assistance programs, as well as psychosocial support for refugees affected by these crises.

The collaboration between the government and NGOs has been particularly significant in maintaining social and political cohesion during crises that threatened the stability of the Jordanian state. Moreover, these organizations have promoted values of social solidarity by involving the community in assisting vulnerable groups, thereby strengthening national unity during challenging times (Al-Zoubi 2017, pp. 75–90).

6.3 Impacts on Social and Political Cohesion

Jordan has faced significant challenges in maintaining social and political cohesion, particularly amidst the political and economic disruptions caused by ongoing regional crises. The direct effects of these crises have placed immense pressure on national resources and heightened social tensions in certain areas. Despite these substantial challenges, Jordan has managed to maintain relative stability and remains one of the most stable countries in the Middle East. This stability is attributed to the prudent policies and measures implemented by the Jordanian government to prevent internal conflicts among the various components of its society. Government institutions have played a pivotal role in preserving social harmony, working to strengthen ties among different societal groups, which has been instrumental in ensuring internal stability (Al-Zoubi 2017 pp. 75–90).

The government's response to these challenges included promoting political openness and legislative

reforms aimed at broadening political participation. These measures ensured that all social groups could express their opinions and contribute to national decision-making processes. Although Jordan's political adjustments have been gradual, these reforms were essential for bolstering political stability, particularly under the continuous pressure of regional changes.

Through these initiatives, Jordan's political system has sought to support the principle of peaceful coexistence among citizens from diverse backgrounds, including both Palestinians and Jordanians. The economic and social policies adopted by the government aimed to guarantee equal rights for all citizens, fostering national unity and creating an environment of cooperation and understanding among the various components of Jordanian society (Al-Awad 2015 pp. 150–165).

Additionally, the government has worked to improve public services and raise social awareness through programs aimed at strengthening social cohesion. These initiatives have played a crucial role in mitigating the impacts of regional conflicts on internal relations. By fostering unity and addressing social tensions, these measures have been instrumental in preserving Jordan's social and political stability.

The Jordanian society has managed to navigate numerous crises thanks to its commitment to share national values and the promotion of peaceful coexistence among its diverse components. These efforts have reinforced the country's resilience, enabling it to withstand the challenges posed by regional turmoil while maintaining internal harmony and stability.

7. Future Challenges for Jordan

7.1 Political Challenges

Jordan faces numerous political challenges that significantly impact the stability and development of its political system. These challenges arise within a volatile and complex regional environment, requiring the kingdom to take serious steps to bolster its political stability and implement necessary reforms. Strengthening democracy through the enhancement of various political institutions has become a key priority. This includes ensuring the separation and balance of powers to improve the effectiveness and functionality of the political system.

In this context, increasing citizen participation in national decision-making processes has become imperative. Emphasis must be placed on promoting political rights and civil liberties, which are foundational pillars of any democratic system. Such measures not only support internal stability but also help the kingdom adapt to the evolving demands of its citizens and the pressures of the regional environment (Al-Shaeibi 2018 pp. 60–77).

One of the most pressing political challenges facing Jordan is the need to reform its electoral system to achieve more equitable and transparent representation for its citizens. Despite recent political amendments, the Jordanian society continues to struggle with the absence of comprehensive reforms that can ensure a proper balance between the legislative and executive branches of government.

The current electoral system does not fully reflect the diversity of Jordanian society or its political needs, highlighting the necessity for mechanisms that guarantee fairer representation. Such reforms are essential to fostering greater trust in the political process and ensuring that all segments of society feel adequately represented in decision-making. Addressing these shortcomings would not only strengthen public confidence but also contribute to the overall stability and democratic development of the kingdom (Al-Shaeibi, 2018 pp. 60–77).

Addressing this political challenge requires sustained and comprehensive efforts to improve transparency and accountability within governmental institutions, as well as to foster a culture of democracy and political participation among citizens. The Jordanian government must work to develop legal and legislative frameworks that ensure justice and equality across all segments of society.

Furthermore, it is essential to activate the role of political parties and civil society in the political process, thereby contributing to a more open and flexible political environment. Adopting these reformist policies would not only strengthen the kingdom's stability but also provide a solid foundation for progress on both the political and economic fronts (Al-Shaeibi 2018, pp. 60–77).

7.2 Economic Challenges

Numerous studies indicate that economic challenges will remain a significant barrier to achieving sustainable

development in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. The Jordanian economy faces several structural difficulties, primarily a lack of natural resources, which limits the country's ability to maximize the potential of various economic sectors. Additionally, high unemployment and poverty rates pose a genuine threat to social and economic stability. Unemployment is particularly acute among youth, many of whom struggle to find suitable job opportunities, exacerbating social tensions and economic disparities (Al-Kilani 2020 pp. 112–130).

Looking ahead, Jordan must adopt more diverse and innovative economic strategies to strengthen its national economy in the long term. Key among these strategies is the need to attract foreign investments, which can create new job opportunities and bolster local economic sectors. Sustainable development should also be a central focus of any economic strategy, emphasizing the preservation and efficient use of natural resources to benefit future generations (Al-Kilani 2020, pp. 112–130).

Amid escalating economic challenges, Jordan is grappling with a deep financial crisis that necessitates the adoption of innovative economic policies. These policies should aim to stimulate economic growth without excessive reliance on foreign aid or loans, thereby enhancing the independence of Jordan's economy. The current economic situation has significantly widened social inequalities, with poorer segments of society suffering disproportionately, while disparities between different social classes continue to grow.

Youth unemployment, in particular, remains a significant threat, underscoring the urgent need to restructure the national economy to ensure greater flexibility and support for productive sectors. This shift would reduce overreliance on domestic consumption or imported goods and prioritize the development of robust local industries.

Addressing these challenges requires the implementation of new strategies focused on improving the local business environment, strengthening domestic industries, and enhancing education and vocational training. Such efforts aim to equip the workforce with the skills needed to contribute effectively to diverse and dynamic sectors of the national economy (Al-Kilani 2020, pp. 112–130).

7.3 Social Challenges

Jordan faces growing social challenges, primarily characterized by widening gaps between social groups and rising poverty and unemployment rates. These issues present significant barriers to achieving sustainable social development in the country. Under these circumstances, improving access to essential services, such as education and healthcare, is critical to reducing social disparities and ensuring equal opportunities for all citizens to improve their living conditions (Al-Shaeibi 2018 pp. 60–77).

Economic and social inequalities are among the primary drivers of increased tensions within society, as individuals in poorer areas often feel marginalized, leading to widespread frustration and resentment. To address these disparities, the Jordanian government must prioritize the provision of high-quality educational and healthcare programs, particularly in underprivileged regions. This includes investing financial resources in improving the infrastructure of schools and hospitals in these areas and providing logistical and financial support to educational and healthcare institutions to ensure better services for citizens. For instance, rural schools could benefit from trained teaching staff and modern educational technologies that enhance the quality of education in these regions (Al-Shaeibi 2018, pp. 60–77).

Additionally, fostering innovation and establishing entrepreneurial projects in the poorest areas stand out as key solutions to creating new job opportunities and improving economic conditions. Such initiatives can attract local and international investments and offer training opportunities for youth in remote areas, contributing to long-term economic and social development. This could include projects in agricultural, industrial, and service sectors tailored to the needs of these regions, thereby increasing individual incomes and improving living standards.

Regarding refugees, who constitute a significant portion of Jordan's population, it is vital for the government to enhance healthcare and educational facilities that cater to this group. Accommodating refugees requires creating a supportive environment that ensures access to proper healthcare and quality education, which in turn reduces social and psychological pressures on local communities. Enhancing the state's capacity to integrate refugees also demands greater international cooperation to provide financial and technical support, enabling Jordan to deliver these services more effectively (Al-Shaeibi 2018, pp. 60–77).

Ultimately, addressing social issues in Jordan is a shared responsibility among the government, civil society,

and the private sector. By intensifying efforts and allocating resources to implement effective developmental programs, Jordan can achieve comprehensive social development that improves citizens' lives and narrows social gaps.

8.   The Role of Civil Society Organizations in Enhancing Social Cohesion

8.1 The Role of Civil Society Organizations

Civil society organizations in Jordan serve as a cornerstone in promoting social cohesion, particularly during the political and economic crises the country has faced. From the Palestinian crisis to the ongoing Syrian crisis, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have played a pivotal role in providing social support and essential services to local communities and refugees. These institutions act as a bridge between citizens and the government, alleviating economic and social pressures, especially during times of crisis that heavily impact the social fabric. By engaging in these activities, civil society organizations complement state efforts in delivering humanitarian, educational, and healthcare assistance, thereby contributing to the maintenance of social stability during periods of tension and conflict (Al-Awad 2015, pp. 150–165).

For example, many humanitarian organizations in Jordan have offered free educational and medical services to Syrian and Palestinian refugees, helping to alleviate the burdens borne by the state. These initiatives are not limited to providing basic aid but are part of a broader strategy to support both local communities and refugees, easing pressure on the nation's limited resources. Furthermore, these organizations have fostered humanitarian values by reducing the suffering of refugees while simultaneously helping to maintain social stability. They have also played a critical role in strengthening cohesion between refugees and host communities, fostering mutual understanding and cooperation (Al-Awad 2015, pp. 150–165).

In addition, Jordanian civil society has been instrumental in upholding human rights and protecting vulnerable groups, such as women and children. Through campaigns and humanitarian initiatives, these organizations have enhanced awareness of human rights and social issues, providing greater protection for those most at risk, particularly during major crises. These efforts have demonstrated the resilience of Jordanian civil society in addressing challenges, raising social and humanitarian awareness among citizens, and strengthening social bonds within Jordanian society (Al-Awad 2015, pp. 150–165).

8.2 Civil Society in Political Advocacy and Reform

The role of civil society in Jordan has extended beyond promoting social cohesion to include active advocacy for political reforms. In recent years, numerous grassroots movements have emerged, calling for improvements in political and social spheres. These movements are part of a broader effort to develop the political system in the kingdom and enhance political participation for all citizens. Their demands have gone beyond anti-corruption campaigns to include electoral reforms aimed at ensuring fair representation for all segments of society and improving mechanisms for political participation to guarantee transparency and accountability in governance (Al-Awad 2015, pp. 150–165).

Labor unions and charitable associations have been key components in organizing these popular movements. Through these entities, civil society has exerted significant pressure on the government to expand democracy and encourage active political participation for all citizens without exception. These movements have acted as an interactive channel between the government and citizens, helping to mitigate social and economic tensions that might arise from a lack of social or political justice (Al-Awad 2015 pp. 150–165).

Through such activities, civil society has played an effective role in engaging with the government to achieve desired reforms. This collaboration has been instrumental in preventing social escalations that could result from political and economic crises by providing a platform for dialogue and fostering understanding among the various stakeholders. As a result, civil society has contributed significantly to enhancing political and social stability in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, underscoring its vital role in supporting democratic development in the country.

9.   Regional Dynamics and the Concept of Polycrisis

The Middle East in the early 21st century has been characterized by a convergence of conflicts and crises that are deeply interlinked. Jordan's domestic transformations cannot be separated from this regional context, where

multiple emergencies overlap and reinforce one another. Recent scholarship has adopted the term polycrisis to describe such situations: a condition in which distinct crises become causally entangled, so that their combined impact exceeds the sum of each part (ESCWA, 2024; Belhaj, 2024). In other words, economic shocks, wars, forced displacement, and governance failures in the region do not occur in isolation – they converge and intensify each other, creating a complex system of cascading stresses. These interwoven challenges pose systemic threats that undermine livelihoods and social cohesion across national boundaries. A polycrisis lens is therefore useful for understanding how Jordan and its neighbors are jointly affected by the overlapping crises in the Middle East. Over the past decade, the Arab region has grappled with a mounting number of interwoven challenges spanning security, political, and socio-economic domains. In 2023 alone, countries in the region experienced simultaneous crises: surging food and fuel prices amid global inflation, debt and fiscal strains, large waves of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), natural disasters (from earthquakes to droughts), and a resurgence of violent conflict (ESCWA, 2024). Crucially, these pressures have been interconnected – one crisis often triggers or amplifies another. For example, war can spur mass displacement and humanitarian strain; economic collapse can ignite social unrest; and drought can exacerbate resource conflicts. As a World Bank policy analysis notes, the Middle East and North Africa is now beset by "a profound polycrisis of interlinked challenges – energy insecurity, water scarcity, conflict, migration, and socio-political fragmentation – that combine to destabilize the region" (Belhaj, 2024). Not every state is affected in the same way or to the same degree, but no country is entirely insulated from the region's turbulence. High-income Gulf states have more buffers, whereas lower- and middle-income countries like Jordan, Lebanon, and Iraq find their domestic stability continually tested by the ripple effects of regional turmoil.

Jordan's experiences are emblematic of how a polycrisis in the Middle East produces cross-border pressures. The civil war in Syria, now in its 14th year, has not only devastated Syria itself but also imposed lasting burdens on neighboring countries. Over 5.6 million Syrians have been displaced into the surrounding region and about 654,000 Syrian refugees are officially registered in Jordan alone. (Actual Syrian refugee numbers in Jordan are higher when including unregistered migrants, with estimates exceeding 1.3 million.) This influx — alongside refugees from other conflicts — makes Jordan one of the world's top host countries per capita, placing enormous strain on its economy, public services, and infrastructure (UNHCR, 2025). The refugee crisis has intertwined with Jordan's own development challenges, contributing to higher unemployment and poverty in host communities and stretching state capacity. Moreover, the Syria conflict disrupted regional trade and mobility: the closure of the vital Nasib border crossing during the war "severed critical supply chains and dealt a heavy blow" to Jordan's economy, cutting off export routes to Lebanon, Turkey, and Europe (Anani, 2025). Thus, the fallout of the Syrian war – from humanitarian to economic – cascaded into Jordan, illustrating how one country's conflict can transmit instability throughout the region.

The ongoing Palestinian crisis continues to exert a powerful influence on Jordan's internal dynamics. As the host of over 2.3 million registered Palestinian refugees (UNRWA, 2023), Jordan has been shaped demographically and politically by successive refugee waves since 1948. Events in Palestine frequently resonate within Jordanian society, as seen during the Gaza conflict of October 2023, which triggered widespread protests and political pressures (Tell, 2024). Jordan's government, bound by a peace treaty with Israel, was forced to navigate a delicate balance—condemning violence while striving to prevent domestic unrest. This highlights how the Palestinian issue functions not only as a bilateral concern but also as a transnational crisis with regional political reverberations (Ryan, 2024).

Other Middle Eastern states reveal similar patterns of interconnected crises. Lebanon's collapse since 2019—driven by economic implosion, political paralysis, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the 2020 Beirut explosion—illustrates how layered shocks can destabilize a country even without war (World Bank, 2023). Iraq, too, grapples with post-conflict governance failures, sectarian divides, and environmental degradation (Human Rights Watch, 2024; UN Climate Security Mechanism, 2023). These crises, though distinct, form a broader polycrisis—a web of mutually reinforcing disruptions that transcend national borders (ESCWA, 2024). Jordan's challenges, including refugee pressure, economic strain, and regional instability, cannot be fully understood in isolation. Viewing them through the lens of polycrisis offers a more accurate framework for understanding how regional turmoil collectively impacts state-society interaction in Jordan and across the Middle East (Belhaj, 2024).

10. Conclusion

Since its establishment in 1946, Jordan has undergone significant social and political transformations, facing substantial challenges due to the regional crises that have shaped the Middle East. From the outset, Jordan played a pivotal role in regional politics, particularly in issues like the Palestinian cause, which left clear imprints on the kingdom's social and economic structures. This research analyzed the role of the state and society in addressing these crises and examined their impact on Jordan's stability and its social and political frameworks. The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan developed a complex social system due to its diverse ethnic and religious composition, which posed early challenges to national unity and social cohesion. The influx of Palestinian refugees into Jordan significantly affected the kingdom's social and economic structures, imposing a considerable burden on the state to provide essential services such as education and healthcare. At the same time, this influx fostered the development of new economic sectors and contributed to forming a multifaceted social and political identity characterized by ethnic and religious diversity.

Major regional crises, such as the Palestinian crisis and the Syrian conflict, have had direct impacts on Jordanian politics. The Palestinian crisis compelled Jordan to adopt specific political stances to secure its position in the region, while the Syrian conflict emerged as one of the most pressing challenges in recent years. The arrival of hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees placed enormous pressure on Jordan's economy and exacerbated social tensions, particularly in areas hosting large numbers of refugees.

Despite these challenges, Jordan has managed to maintain political and social stability through various strategies at both governmental and societal levels. The Jordanian government implemented economic and political reforms to address internal challenges and strengthen social cohesion. Civil society played a pivotal role in raising social and political awareness, supporting those affected by crises—such as refugees—and providing humanitarian aid and social services.

Looking ahead, the political and economic challenges Jordan faces necessitate ongoing deep reforms. Enhancing citizen participation in decision-making processes and implementing genuine political reforms, such as improving the electoral system and expanding political freedoms, are essential. Economically, Jordan must focus on diversifying its economy and reducing dependence on foreign aid by encouraging foreign investments and developing productive sectors.

In conclusion, social and political cohesion remains a cornerstone of Jordan's future stability. By strengthening the role of civil society organizations and promoting political and economic reforms, the Hashemite Kingdom can continue to address the challenges posed by regional crises and achieve sustainable development, fostering a more stable and prosperous society.

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