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Jordan, peacocking while vulnerable

The Jordanian monarchy's very survival hinges on its adept use of an anti-coup doctrine, leveraging its Bedouin heritage and foreign alliances to maintain stability and avoid too much negative notice. But amidst both internal and regional turbulence in the aftermath of Operation Al-Aqsa Flood, why is Amman drawing so much attention to itself?



Photo Credit: The Cradle

On 9 June, Jordan marked the [Silver Jubilee](#), celebrating 25 years of King Abdullah II's reign. The grand event showcased the monarch's imperial stature with ceremonial banners, cannons, an air force display, and an extravagant portrayal of the Hashemite "national heritage."

This spectacle bore a striking resemblance to the fateful, extravagant celebration of the 2,500th anniversary of the Persian Empire's founding on 12 October 1971 under the deposed Shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi.

Both events occurred amid sociopolitical turmoil and were designed to project the strength and resilience of their respective regimes. While the Pahlavi dynasty collapsed in 1979 with the Islamic Revolution, the stability of Jordan's political system remains a pressing question, with [dissenting voices growing louder](#) near the royal palace in Amman.

Manufacturing Jordanian national identity

The Silver Jubilee reveals critical insights into Jordan's national identity, taking pains to highlight the [Bedouin heritage](#) as a cornerstone of Jordanian culture, a concept cultivated by British General [John Glubb Pasha](#) who organized the Bedouin East Jordan forces and led the first Jordanian army.

This "heritage" was further shaped by British High Commissioner for Palestine [Herbert Samuel](#), who founded Bedouin and tribal forces to secure British interests in 1920. The narrative of "national identity" in this context serves as an institutional tool to marginalize anti-hegemonic and anti-colonial identities.

Decolonial theory critically examines this phenomenon: how "national identity" is used to control and fragment societies from within. [Bernard Lewis](#), an influential orientalist thinker, noted this in the Ottoman Empire's last century, emphasizing how such identities undermine resistance to domination and colonialism.

This pattern is observable in post-independent Jordan, Egypt, and Syria, where national discourses aligned with western, often European, interests.

In his book [Journey through the Embers](#), Palestinian author and thinker Munir Shafiq recounts his experiences with the Jordanian Communist Party post-1948, detailing how Jordanian identity surged after the Nakba and solidified under prime minister Wasfi al-Tal in 1962.

This identity played a pivotal role in the political scene following the September 1969 crisis between the Jordanian state and Palestinians. Amman's policy has consistently aimed to mitigate the burdens of the Palestinian issue and its political repercussions.

Joseph Massad's [Colonial Effects: The Making of National Identity in Jordan](#) explores how colonial identity was crafted in the region. The Jordanian-born Palestinian academic argues that Glubb Pasha's creation of the Jordanian Armed Forces was rooted in a "hidden orientalist" concept, positioning the Arab Legion as a model for Bedouin demonstrations aimed at western tourists. Consequently, Jordanian identity was built on the institutionalization of nomadism and the perpetuation of colonial parades.

Jordan, weathering the imperial storm

The year 1953 marked a pivotal shift from British to US dominance, with the US takeover of Greek and Turkish debt management from the British the year before. [The 1953 CIA-engineered coup in Iran](#), which reinstated the Shah, further exemplified Washington's new strategies in West Asia. The 1956 Suez Crisis, involving British, French, and Israeli aggression against Egypt, solidified the decline of European influence in favor of US hegemony.

The CIA strategies for Jordan, Iran, and Morocco focused on ensuring the loyalty of the kingdom's more powerful air forces rather than relying on infantry to prevent sudden coups. This anti-coup doctrine characterized the Hashemite Kingdom, with its stability rooted in air force loyalty and US-entrusted security services.

However, the royal palace's endurance also depended on the lack of serious opposition efforts to overthrow it. The trilogy of Palestinian historian Kamal Khalaf al-Tawil, [A New Visit to Arab History](#), explained many of the policies of that period.

Revolutionary leaders like Egypt's Gamal Abdel Nasser, Iraqi Abdul Karim Qasim, and even the Baathists (Iraqi and Syrian) were not serious about their hostility to Jordan and overthrowing the monarchy there. Indeed, the success of the Jordanian monarchy in maintaining its existence can be attributed to a lack of serious will on the part of its opponents to overthrow it.

Amman has exploited the contradictions of its adversaries, leveraging situations to its advantage. This is evident in how it utilized the Afghan jihad to align with western interests and, later, the Iraqi jihad post-2003 to counter resistance forces and the Iranian anti-US presence in Iraq.

Al-Aqsa Flood and its ripple effects on Jordan

Jordan's strategic engagements have consistently involved the Syrian and Iraqi arenas, as noted in Richard Perle's [analysis of Likud policies](#) and the overthrow of the Iraqi Baath government, in addition to Jordan's role in these geopolitical shifts.

The Hamas-led Palestinian resistance operation Al-Aqsa Flood – beyond being a severe blow to Israel's national security – has reignited the glorification of liberation movements and is reshaping the role and position of the Arab people. The echoes of that operation, launched from Gaza on the morning of 7 October, have quickly spread to Amman and Cairo.

And yet Jordan took a front seat in Israeli air defense operations against Iranian retaliatory strikes on 13 April. And today, Amman is the first Arab capital to [inaugurate a NATO office](#). Why is Jordan, a politically and economically vulnerable state that benefits from

staying out of the regional fray, suddenly peacocking itself in service of Israel and the west, when Jordanians are seething over Gaza?

Tel Aviv's war on the Gaza Strip is also [essentially a war on the occupied West Bank](#), a region administered by Jordan until the 1967 Arab–Israeli war. The West Bank is the linchpin of the current conflict and the ultimate prize for both Israelis and Palestinians. Since Israel's ill-fated 1982 invasion of Lebanon, the West Bank has been a primary target for settlement, displacement, and replacement.

For example, immediately after the Beirut invasion, the Israeli government of Menachem Begin attempted to establish village and neighborhood committees in the West Bank to create a separate security and legal paradigm separate from the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO).

It is no exaggeration to say that events post-Al-Aqsa Flood are fundamentally a struggle first over the West Bank and then over the entire Palestinian territory.

The occupation administration's rapid implementation of repressive and settlement measures in the West Bank from the first day of its attack on Gaza highlights this strategic importance.

But Israel's actions, facilitated by surplus force and [collaboration](#) from Palestinian Authority security services, would not have succeeded without Jordan's long-standing role in blocking resistance supply routes to the West Bank – a [long-term goal](#) of the region's Iran-led Axis of Resistance. This fact is acknowledged by all major decision-making capitals today and is what makes Jordan an important target – for both sides – to sway.

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