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Jordan's quagmire: NATO sets up shop in Amman

The Atlanticists have arrived in Amman to sharpen western influence in West Asia, raising the specter of a potential 'Arab-Israeli NATO' and efforts to counter the region's Resistance Axis.

The timing of NATO's decision to establish a [liaison office](#) in Jordan earlier this month is far from coincidental, given the extraordinary turbulence rolling through West Asia.

This move aligns with the western military organization's recent aggressive interventions in Libya and Ukraine, alongside ongoing involvement in Syria, Yemen, Afghanistan, Sudan, and the former Yugoslavia.

NATO's actions illustrate a consistent pattern of interventionist policies by its member states, often flouting international law and exacerbating regional instability.

NATO's strategic positioning in West Asia

NATO is now positioned in the heart of West Asia, specifically in Jordan, amidst the turbulence in Iraq, Syria, and occupied Palestine. Despite the robust presence of the US and western military and [intelligence](#) in the Hashemite Kingdom over the years, establishing a NATO office today suggests an urgent strategic necessity.

Many observers see this as either a preparation for a major war or a perception exercise aimed at deterrence, particularly in light of Iran's [Operation True Promise](#) against the occupation state in April. However, It is worth noting that the Jordanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced the decision to open the NATO liaison office in [July 2023](#), several months before the Palestinian resistance's Operation Al-Aqsa Flood on 7 October 2023.

But informed observers, including Jordanian analysts, could not separate NATO's infiltration into the region from the unprecedented regional clash from three months ago. When Iran decided to respond to the Israeli attack on its [consulate building in Damascus](#) by launching

missiles and drones toward Israel, the skies over Jordan essentially became a battlefield for US, British, Israeli, French, and Jordanian forces attempting to thwart the Iranian attack.

Speaking to *The Cradle*, a source close to the Axis of Resistance in Beirut questions the intrinsic value of NATO's upgraded presence, given the already extensive presence of western forces in and around Amman. The country currently hosts about 3,000 American soldiers and significant western military infrastructure, including bases and ports such as Muwaffaq Salti Air Base and [Tower 22](#) (the site of a deadly drone attack in January).

A precursor to regional turmoil

Establishing the NATO office in Jordan – a first in the region – could be seen as the initial step toward deeper involvement in West Asian conflicts. As Jordanian strategic expert Munther al-Hawarat tells *The Cradle*:

Jordan wants to strengthen a diplomatic partnership in anticipation of developments in the region and also aspires to support NATO in many logistical operations, but why at this time? I believe that there is a possibility of dangerous developments and fears of a major regional war if a confrontation occurs between the occupation state and Hezbollah, and thus, it could spiral into a major regional conflict.

Hawarat adds that, given the possibility of further Iranian intervention in this conflict, “Jordan is a target area for future military operations if they occur, and therefore, NATO wants to establish some form of deterrence.”

But the scene is broader than just Jordan. Hawarat explains:

The major, clear, and broad message that NATO wants to send is that we are here, and in any major conflict in the region, NATO as an alliance will be a part of it and will not abandon the region to any party, whether it is Iran, Russia, or even China. However, the alliance is still interested in the Middle East region and still sees it as a hotbed of regional conflicts that may lead to an international conflict. If things go towards a military confrontation, NATO will be active in this conflict, and therefore, it will stand in the face of any military challenge practiced by any regional party.

With the exception of Israel, of course.

Advancing relations with Amman

Speaking to *The Cradle*, Lebanese University professor of International Relations, Dr Leila Nicola advises not jumping to any fast conclusions:

The opening of the office in Jordan does not mean that Jordan has become protected by NATO or that it is on an equal footing with the alliance members in terms of implementing joint defense, as stipulated in Article 5 of the alliance treaty. Rather, the

office reflects the alliance’s advanced relationship with Jordan, in addition to NATO’s vision for its position in West Asia, specifically in terms of maintaining a foothold in the West Asian region and not opening new fronts.

According to Dr Nicola, the Atlantic alliance’s [statement](#) about the office’s objectives in Amman indicates that it “does not see the Middle East [West Asia] as a new area of operations. Rather, since the beginning of the Ukraine war, the alliance prioritizes the threats emanating from the Ukrainian–Russian war and the growing global influence of China.”

But Nicola adds, “Jordan’s importance comes in this context for two reasons: its geographical location as a country neighboring both Syria and Israel, in addition to NATO’s acknowledgment of the importance of Jordan in preserving Israel’s security.”

The idea of a growing regional–international conflict intersects with the analysis of Jordanian journalist Rania al-Jaabari, who views the NATO initiative as:

An additional step as part of the conflict related to the establishment of a multipolar world, which began in Syria, is connected to the current Gaza war, the special Russian military operation in Ukraine, and extends to the region not only through the Gaza war but also through the great conflict between Israel, Hezbollah, and Ansarallah in Yemen and Syria.

Jaabari continues, “If we acknowledge that Israel is just an American aircraft carrier in our region, we will understand that NATO needs to strengthen its foundations here in many ways. The matter may not be limited to establishing a NATO office in Amman; the effectiveness of this office in the coming days will show what is at stake as long as the unipolar system retreats in the world.”

By setting up shop in Amman, Hawarat argues that “NATO is announcing a new balance of power, a balance of deterrence, and a balance to ensure stability within the framework of certain limits of balance and rules of engagement in the region, which must not exceed the limits of regional war. With its enormous military power, great capabilities, and ability to intervene logistically and militarily in an influential manner, NATO stands against any party it sees as an enemy.”

He explains the “Jordanian–Atlantic” step by pointing out certain inevitabilities: The move “comes in the context of a long-term strategy. Jordan was part of NATO alliances, but now it seems there is a process of stabilizing this alliance institutionally. This depends on Jordan’s stability in a volatile region with many conflicts.”

Jordan is geographically between Israel, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Iraq. Additionally, Jordan is in contact on its borders with about 72 organizations, present on the northern

borders of Jordan and the southern borders of Syria, where Iran might intervene through them.

Paving the way for an ‘Arab–Israeli NATO’

In a press conference last week, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg [announced](#) the office opening on the side-lines of the alliance summit held in Washington, stating, “Jordan is a long-standing, highly valued NATO partner.”

He pointed out that the alliance’s liaison office in Amman will expand the partnership and elevate bilateral relations to a new level. NATO is now working more closely with its regional partners, including Jordan, and alliances in Iraq, Tunisia, and [Mauritania](#), as well as various neighboring Mediterranean and Persian Gulf states.

However, Jordan’s status, strategic location, and desired role differ from the alliance’s other partners.

Diplomatic sources in Beirut tell *The Cradle* that the NATO move is not surprising. Jordan already maintains exceptional relations with the countries that belong to this western military alliance, which realizes the importance of the kingdom’s geographical location and the different roles the Jordanian monarchy can play.

But there are limits to how far NATO can push its agenda in Amman. Jordanians remain highly concerned about possible developments in Palestine, with increasing Israeli attempts to displace Palestinians not only from Gaza but also from the [West Bank](#) and Jordan Valley region toward the kingdom.

In light of these worries, questions arise about what logistical support the kingdom will need to manage any such emergency. What kind of administration or civil crisis management will be required? Is the region truly preparing for a major conflict, especially if Israel continues its [aggressive actions](#) and threatens to escalate its northern front with Lebanon?

Has Jordan’s King Abdullah bin Hussein finally realized his long-standing vision of establishing an “[Arab–Israeli NATO](#),” which he advocated for years following his alarmist theory of a “[Shia Crescent](#)” forming in West Asia? The establishment of the NATO liaison office in Amman could be just the first step toward Amman’s deepening and potentially more perilous involvement in the region’s complex conflicts.

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