

TITLE

How and why did Jordan evolve into a key player in the global war against violent extremism?

Researcher Name

Salim Nuqul

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

02	Abstract
02	Introduction
02	1. Research Scope
02	1.1 Religious Groups in Jordan
02	1.2 Definitions
02	1.3 Literature Review
02	2. Historical Background
02	2.1 Regional Threats
02	2.2 Local Threats
02	Socio-politics
02	Religion
02	3. Drivers and Efforts
02	3.1 Drivers to VE
02	Economic Drivers
02	Societal Drivers
02	Religious Drivers
02	3.2 State Efforts
02	Security Efforts
02	Religious Efforts
02	4. Jordanian Impact
02	4.1 Negative Impact
	4.2 Positive Impact
02	5. Conclusion
02	References

ABSTRACT

Since its creation in 1921, Jordan has been prone to myriad perils and hardships. The regional instabilities were, in many cases, detrimental to Jordan's security and sustainability. Also, the social and economic conditions kept the country vulnerable to continuous challenges. Among these challenges was the rise of Jihadism. It played a significant role in defining Jordan's trajectory of events and the corresponding measures policymakers took. Jordan became one of the key hubs for exporting Jihadis and extreme ideologies to the world, whereas it also suffered a multitude of acts of terror and plots in the past three decades. This paper scrutinises the main reasons behind this phenomenon, analysing both external and internal factors which caused such status. The paper also assesses the state's efforts to overcome these threats. The study concluded that the social structure in the country had played a major role in forming a fractured national identity, which, combined with other influences and circumstances, inevitably prompted Jordanians to become more susceptible to joining terrorist organisations, locally and abroad.

INTRODUCTION

Despite the demise of the Islamic State (ISIS) and the recent decline in terrorist attacks worldwide, the extreme narrative is still prevalent, especially in the Levant countries, including Jordan.¹ Many of the drivers that primarily enthused individuals to join violent extremist organisations (VEOs) have not been resolved, and they remain vulnerable to exploitation if political circumstances become favourable.² As such, this paper will look into violent extremism (VE), terrorism, and counterterrorism in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (henceforth Jordan), which has been featured prominently on the global scene in the past decades. In that context, the Jordanian impact on the Islamic Jihad transcended its local and regional spheres and severely affected the world. Jordan was the home of many prominent global Jihadi ideologues and terrorist organisations' leaders. Also, Jordanians were intensively prone to extreme proselytising, which, in tandem with other drivers, has resulted in the export of thousands of Jihadists to many world regions, who joined terrorist groups like Al-Qaeda and ISIS.³ Furthermore, the

¹ Anne Speckhard and Ardian Shajkovci, *Fighting ISIS In The Digital Space in Jordan* (ICSVE, 2018), P.2 <https://www.icsve.org/fighting-isis-in-the-digital-space-in-jordan/>.

² Hassan Hassan, "What The Global War On Terror Really Accomplished", *New Lines Magazine*, 2021, https://newlinesmag.com/argument/what-the-global-war-on-terror-really-accomplished/?fbclid=IwAR24q-5L43MuUubSDn4v3XtFA1o3LX3OI5MsveOdjl7_Ic9I3v1DuemjxoQ.

³ Anne Speckhard, *The Jihad in Jordan*. (ICSVE, 2017), P.11 <http://www.icsve.org/research-reports/the-jihad-in-jordan-drivers-of-radicalization-into-violent-extremism-in-Jordan/>

country has been a theatre of many bloody terrorist attacks, which inflicted massive havoc and terror. In return, the Kingdom harnessed its diversified capabilities and became a linchpin in the global efforts against terrorism.

However, it is challenging to apprehend how Jordan, a small and poorly-resourced country that preserves a balanced religious positioning officially, has occupied such a prominent international status – and become a dual hub for exporting and importing terrorism.⁴ Jordanian-related studies presented us with multiple drivers to VE. Notably, socioeconomic matters were the most common, where grievances caused by issues like marginalisation and poverty, and incompetent governance recurred in multiple studies. Furthermore, the political and societal developments resulting from regional and local circumstances have dismantled the Jordanian social structure. Gradually, this has evolved into a fragmented national identity, enabling a strenuous religious infringement, affecting, and stimulating ultimately the radicalisation and terrorism rise in the country. Additionally, the regional instability, and the continuation of conflicts, particularly the Palestinian-Israeli since the 1930s, and the wars in the neighboring states of Iraq and Syria, had perpetuated an internal tension and volatility inside Jordan, as a natural extension to the successive crises.

Based on the available literature, this essay explores the poorly researched aspect of the Jordanian impact – a twofold interpretation describing the Jordanian state and societal elements' specificity that impacted negatively and positively VE and terrorism globally. Accordingly, this paper will scrutinise the regional and local political and religious features that affected the Jordanian social structure. Thus, focusing on the chief factors and events that contributed to Jordanians' identity shaping, alongside the radicalisation rise in the country. Also, it reviews the salient drivers leading to VE within the Jordanian setting.

The paper is divided into five sections: First, it contains the research scope and definitions, and it provides a characterization of the Jordanian Islamic currents with their ideological backgrounds. The second section, is an examination of Jordan's historical background, focusing on its regional and local geopolitical and religious challenges. Next, the paper discusses the drivers of VE and the Jordanian state's efforts to combat them. The fourth section brings the discussion together to present the Jordanian impact case. Finally, the paper concludes by summarising the main discussion points and presenting recommendations for future references.

⁴ Muhammad Abu-Rumman and Hassan Abu-Hanieh, The "Islamic Solution" in Jordan (Amman: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2013). P.28

To specify the research scope, this section covers three areas: the Islamic doctrines and movements from the Jordanian perspective, the related definitions and notions, and lastly, a literature review covering radicalisation and terrorism from the Jordanian academic frame of reference.

1.1 Religious Groups in Jordan

The Jordanian religious sentiment directs the debate to look upon extremism from an Islamic Sunni perspective, the sect which most Jordanians embrace.⁵ Despite the multiplicity of Sunni branches and movements, this paper suffices to discuss two Sunni movements; Salafism, and Muslim Brotherhood (MB), as both had the most palpable implications on Jordan's political, social, and religious scenes.

Salafism is a strict Islamic dogma, imitating the life and deeds of the Prophet Mohammad and his pious predecessors (Al-Salaf Al-Saleh) to capture the purity of Islam.⁶ Salafism is traced back to old Islamic epochs, where most scholars associate it with the 14th-century prominent Islamic theologian Ibn Taymiyyah.⁷ Still, Salafism is not a cohesive school. Abu-Rumman highlighted that it lacks universal and regional unity, and diverges with vast internal differences.⁸ In Jordan, this can be noticed in the substantial dissensions upon religious application matters and political aspirations within the Salafists branches, namely Traditionalism and Jihadism,⁹ and inside Jihadism itself, like Al-Maqdisi and Al-Zarqawi groups' contentions.¹⁰ Traditionalists, also known as Quietists, adopted peaceful preaching methods to spread Salafism and evaded any political engagement, thus, forged balanced ties with the Jordanian authorities.¹¹

In stark contrast, Jihadi-Salafists, also known as Takfiris, primarily adhere to Ibn Taymiyya's interpretation of violence (Jihad) as a holy duty to fight Islam's perceived enemies, which in contemporary days consist of the near (Arab states) and far (Western States) enemies.¹² Additionally, they believe that Jihad (armed struggle), or violence, is

⁵ Sean Yom and Katrina Sammour, "Counterterrorism and Youth Radicalization in Jordan", CTC SENTINEL 10, no.4 (2017) :P.26

⁶ Quintan Wiktorowicz, "The Salafi Movement in Jordan", International Journal of Middle East Studies 32, no.2 (2000) :P.219, doi:10.1017/s0020743800021097.

⁷ Steven Brooke, The Preacher and The Jihadi (Hudson Institute,2006). P.4.

⁸ Muhammad Abu-Rumman, I Am a Salafi (Amman: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung,2014) :P.43

⁹ Ibid, P.45

¹⁰ Joas Wagemakers, "Jihadi-Salafism in Jordan and The Syrian Conflict: Divisions Overcome Unity", Studies In Conflict & Terrorism 41, no.3, (2018): P.194, doi:10.1080/1057610x.2017.1283197.

¹¹ Kirk Sowell, Jordanian Salafism, and The Jihad in Syria (Hudson Institute,2015) :P.2

¹² Colin Clarke et al., Diminished, But Not Defeated: The Evolution Of Al-Qaeda Since September 11,2001 (The Soufan Center, 2021). P:18

the optimal method to impose faith.¹³ They also practice ex-communication (Takfir) upon other Muslims, including most Islamic states leaders, whom they consider 'Kuffar' because they do not apply Islamic Laws (Sharia) in their countries, therefore, subject to Jihad.¹⁴ This charge, as Brooke noted, "makes it religiously permissible, even obligatory, for other Muslims to wage Jihad against them,"¹⁵ which explains the consistent hostility of Jihadis toward Jordan. As such, Jihadis' relationship with the Jordanian state, AS Ma'ayeh noted, was often fraught with perils.¹⁶

The second prominent Islamic group in Jordan is the Muslim Brotherhood Society (MB). MB is part of a global movement that started in Egypt in the 1920s and is very popular in Jordan.¹⁷ According to Ma'mun El-Hudaibi, the Egyptian MB's sixth General Guide, MB's global call is based on two main pillars: Sharia adoption as "the basis for controlling the affairs of state and society," and unifying the "Islamic countries and states, mainly among the Arab states, and liberate them from foreign imperialism."¹⁸ Moreover, according to Abu-Rumman and Abu-Hanieh, the prominent Society demarcates itself as "a universal proliferationist movement that works to spread Islam within a holistic and integrative framework."¹⁹ These principles are prevalent in many regional countries, including Jordan, guiding MB activism.²⁰ Comparatively, their relationship with the Jordanian authorities passed through several stages and has been mainly ambivalent. It peaked in the early decades and deteriorated later over divergent national interests.²¹

In point of fact, since the 1950s, Jordanian Islamists from different groups indulged in several social activities, grassroots services, and vigorous religious preaching.²² They successfully employed their efforts to permeate society and propagate their doctrines, ultimately influencing the Jordanian sub-communities social and political environments toward a religious culture.²³ It is worth noting, also, that religious groups' multiplicity and their extended activities in Jordan gained them noticeable ground and influence beyond the state's grasp.²⁴

¹³ Wiktorowicz, 2000. P.224

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ Brooke, 2006. P.4

¹⁶ Suha Ma'ayeh, "Jordanian Jihadists Active in Syria", CTC Sentinel 6, no.10 (2013) :P.10

¹⁷ Abu-Rumman and Abu-Hanieh, 2013. P.20

¹⁸ "The Principles of The Muslim Brotherhood," Ikhwanweb.Com, 2010, <https://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=813>.

¹⁹ Abu-Rumman and Abu-Hanieh, 2013. P.78

²⁰ Joshua Teitelbaum, "The Muslim Brotherhood in Syria," The Middle East Journal 65, no.2 (2011) :P.213, doi:10.3751/65.2.12.

²¹ Abu-Rumman and Abu-Hanieh, 2013. P.78

²² Scott Williamson, "Separating Islam from Politics but Not the State: Implications for Religious Policy in Jordan", Bakerinstitute.Org, 2019, P.4 <https://www.bakerinstitute.org/files/14348/>.

²³ Abu-Rumman and Abu-Hanieh, 2013. P.84

²⁴ Jacob Olidort, The Politics of "Quietist" Salafism (The Brookings Institution, 2015) :P.5

1.2 Definitions

Before delving into more details, it is crucial to set related definitions. Although the associated literature contains various interpretations, this paper will use the notions herein. As Rahimi and Graumans indicated, radicalisation is contextual and should be interpreted in apropos of the local cultural, social, and political settings.²⁵ Broadly, radicalisation can be defined as espousing extreme principles and aspirations, and justifying indiscriminate violence to attain particular pursuits.²⁶ Whereas extremism, according to Coleman and Bartoli, can be described as "activities (beliefs, attitudes, feelings, actions, strategies) of a character," which manifests as a violent engagement in conflicts.²⁷ This ideological violence, as stated by United Nations (UN), can occur in two forms: "physical violence (such as injuring or killing), or cultural or structural violence (i.e., implementing systems that deny people their rights and the opportunity to prosper)."²⁸ Indeed, the personal transformational process toward VE is a chain reaction resulting from various factors.²⁹ As discussed in Section Three, researchers presented several drivers to radicalisation and VE.

In a related vein, any society's social structure and national identity have plausible causation to extremism. As Silke noted, this structure will probably induce communal susceptibility to radicalisation and extremism when distorted, overlapped, or replaced with a religious one.³⁰ In that sense, the communal split into multiple identities weakens the association with the state and national identity, eventually turning the broader community to become the enemy.³¹ Bearing this in mind, Smith's definition of the nation further consolidates this premise. Smith defined a nation as a "named and self-defining human community . . . which create and disseminate a distinctive public culture and observe shared customs and standardised laws."³² Hence, as a socially constructed trait, national identity is the individual's belongingness to this nation.³³ However, identity is not unidimensional. Rather, it is multipronged, where it mutates following certain social contexts, as Goffman debated.³⁴ Collectively, identity's nature depends on the

²⁵ Sadeq Rahimi and Raissa Graumans, "Reconsidering the Relationship Between Integration and Radicalization", *Journal for Deradicalization* 5 (2015) :P.47

²⁶ Alex Wilner and Claire-Jehanne Dubouloz, "Homegrown Terrorism and Transformative Learning", *Global Change, Peace & Security* 22, no.1 (2010) :P.38, doi:10.1080/14781150903487956.

²⁷ Peter Coleman and Andrea Bartoli, *Addressing Extremism*, White Paper (New York: ICCCR,2003). P.1

²⁸ "Women And Violent Radicalization in Jordan", UN Women,2016. P.11

²⁹ Wilner and Dubouloz,2010. P.50

³⁰ Andrew Silke, "Holy Warriors", *European Journal of Criminology* 5, no.1 (2008): P.102, doi:10.1177/1477370807084226.

³¹ Wilner and Dubouloz,2010. P.39

³² Anthony Smith, *The Cultural Foundations of Nations* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2008). P.19

³³ Mohammed Bani-Salameh and Khalid El-Edwan, "The Identity Crisis in Jordan: Historical Pathways and Contemporary Debates", *Nationalities Papers* 44, no.6 (2016) :P.985

³⁴ Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, 1956). P.49-50

socialisation and mobilisation that the group members and individuals are exposed to, which usually results in different levels of realisation.³⁵ In addition, as Bani-Salameh and El-Edwan emphasised, national identity is a unifying factor that provides prospects for national integration to achieve progress and prosperity.³⁶ Contrarily, when identity conflicts arise within a nation, instability compounds, and security becomes elusive, providing a fertile ground for radicalisation and VE.³⁷

1.3 Literature Review

The research concentrated on two aspects: first, the religious, social, and political history and developments in Jordan, and second, VE studies. Commonly, the major available resources are research studies, academic articles, and books published by Jordanian and international agencies and research centres.³⁸ Until the early 2000s, the literature primarily focused on state-related regional challenges, mainly associated with the Arab-Israeli strife and Pan-Arabism, where conflicting views were presented based on political associations. As will be discussed in Section Two, this was based on political stances vis-à-vis the Jordanian regime. Until then, most scholars focused on political and military/security aspects, whereas the social structure and national identity formation received little attention. Later, with the Pan-Arabism demise and the peace treaty signing with Israel, the nature and source of Jordan's dangers have differed. A gradual academic shift occurred after Jihadi terrorism's global rise since 9/11, where Jordan had been repeatedly targeted by terrorist groups, mainly Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). Verily, this scholarly impetus has increased after ISIS emergence in 2014. Much ink has been spilt to study the VE phenomena' drivers and dimensions, and to provide remarks and methods to prevent and counter it.³⁹

The scholarly interest in exploring the drivers behind VE in Jordan provided considerable literature to examine. However, this review had pointed out some gaps. Most of the published studies and research focused on habitual aspects and previous literature assessments while overlooking context-specific factors and empirical evidence.⁴⁰ Generally, the methods used to obtain data were through focus groups discussions, sample polling, and experts' interviews, while disregarding investigations with imprisoned extremists or their close families. Such a lack of primary sources limits the

³⁵ Herbert Kelman, *Nationalism, Patriotism, and National Identity*:(Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1997). P.172

³⁶ Bani-Salameh and El-Edwan,2016. P.986

³⁷ Ibid

³⁸ Henrik Gråtrud, "When Insularity Becomes a Problem: The Literature on Jihadism in Jordan", *Studies In Conflict & Terrorism*, 2020, P.9, doi:10.1080/1057610x.2020.1723282.

³⁹ Leen Aghabi et al. *Social Identity and Radicalisation*:(Amman: WANA Institute, 2017). P.2

⁴⁰ Keith Proctor, *From Jordan to Jihad: The Lure of Syria's Violent Extremist Groups* (Mercy Corps, 2015a). P.10

ability to build the required database for profiling and revising countering methods. Harper also pointed out that most reports focused on the socio-economic and religious push and pull factors, while ignoring significant issues such as psychological drivers.⁴¹ Accordingly, as many researchers like Proctor confirmed, the studies and research published on VE in Jordan accentuated repetitive results.⁴² Also, Gråtrud marked that most published studies lack academic rigour.⁴³ He also alluded to the literature weakness in presenting and explaining the Jordanian specificities in the global Jihad.⁴⁴ Correspondingly, Aghabi touched on the absence of academic literature regarding the correlation between identity and radicalisation.⁴⁵ As a final point, most Jordanian-focused literature did not examine VE from a gendered lens, despite indicators of some Jordanian females' agency in VEOs.⁴⁶ Considering these shortcomings, the paper identified and examined Jordan's distinctive role in the realm of VE.

02

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

This section examines Jordan's historical background from socio-political and religious angles. Both aspects effectively describe the formation and frequent reshuffling of the Jordanian social structure and identity.⁴⁷

Jordan, a relatively stable country, located in the heart of the turbulent Middle East, and was founded in 1921, has been constantly caught in the regional crossfires.⁴⁸ Before the establishment of Jordan, it was part of the Ottoman Empire, where the Trans-Jordan area suffered from negligence and isolation for a long time.⁴⁹ For centuries, Ottoman rule in the region was nearly non-existent, and merely limited to annual tax collection visits.⁵⁰ In light of that, the inhabitants of Trans-Jordan struggled and competed among themselves for livelihoods and resources, while lacking any central rule manifestation. However, the bedouin tribes revolted several times against the Ottomans, where the latter suppressed them brutally, but with difficulty.⁵¹ Then, the Hashemites came from Hijaz to lead the

⁴¹ Erica Harper, *Examining Psychological Drivers of Radicalisation in Jordan* (Amman: WANA Institute, 2017), P.3

⁴² Proctor, 2015a

⁴³ Gråtrud, 2020. P.1.

⁴⁴ Ibid, P.2

⁴⁵ Aghabi, 2017. P.2

⁴⁶ Gråtrud, 2020. P.9-10

⁴⁷ Bani-Salameh and El-Edwan, 2016. P.985

⁴⁸ Kamal Salibi, *The Modern History of Jordan* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010). P.93

⁴⁹ Bani-Salameh and El-Edwan, 2016. P.999

⁵⁰ Eugene L Rogan and Tariq Tell, *Village, Steppe and State* (London: British Academic Press, 1994). P.37

⁵¹ Beverley Milton-Edwards and Peter Hinchcliffe, *Jordan: A Hashemite Legacy*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2009).

local tribes in what became known as the Great Arab Revolt, liberating Jordan from Ottoman rule, and establishing an independent state, later.

Consequently, the newly-formed state gathered the trans-Jordanian tribes under a common flag for the first time, presenting a nascent identity.⁵² Inevitably, this led Jordan, as early as the 1920s, and more explicitly after its independence in 1946, to disentangle from other Arab states and develop an independent Jordanian identity, while keeping the Pan-Arabism linkage.⁵³ In the ensuing years, multiple immigration waves inflowed the country and became part of the demographic fabric, creating alterations and multiple sub-identities within Jordan.⁵⁴ These communal groups had contended with each other and gradually weakened the social structure and cohesion in the country.⁵⁵ Hence, the identity classifications became an enduring dilemma for Jordan, and forming a collective Jordanian national identity stood as a key challenge for the state since then.⁵⁶

Essentially, since its creation, Jordan has witnessed various forms of perils, endangering the country's existence and exerting constant challenges to the country's socio-political fabric. These ever-growing challenges and threats emanated from regional and domestic circumstances.

2.1 Regional Threats

Broadly, the repercussions of regional conflicts originating from political disputes and expansionist aspirations of neighbouring countries, recurrently spilt into Jordan. This profoundly influenced public cognition instigating discords and divisions within the Jordanian society and affecting communal security. Many regional conflicts occurred in the past decades, three of which were identified by the conducted research as significantly affecting Jordan's socio-political matters regarding societal transformations toward radicalisation and VE.

First, rivalries with Arab countries, such as Egypt and Syria, which culminated during the Pan-Arabism era (the 1950s – 1970s), were a major source of intrigues against Jordan. Despite embracing the Pan-Arabism identity by the Jordanian state, the differing political visions with regional powers widened the gap and were often reflected locally.⁵⁷ In that era, schemes focused on overthrowing the royal regime, either directly or by

⁵² Bani-Salameh and El-Edwan, 2016 P.986-987

⁵³ Riad Nasser, "Exclusion and The Making of Jordanian National Identity", *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 10, No.2 (2004) :P.229-230, Doi:10.1080/13537110490467685.

⁵⁴ Joseph Nevo, "Changing Identities in Jordan", *Israel Affairs* 9, no.3 (2003): P.189, doi:10.1080/714003519.

⁵⁵ Nasser, 2004. P237

⁵⁶ Bani-Salameh and El-Edwan, 2016. P.985

⁵⁷ Betty Anderson, *Nationalist Voices in Jordan* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005). P.70-72

exploiting local political dynamics.⁵⁸ Several Jordanian political currents and figures were associated with regional powers and maintained animosity with the Jordanian regime throughout that period.⁵⁹ Hence, a competing Pan-Arabism identity was adopted by many Jordanians then, which inflicted political contestations among citizens as competing against monarchism.⁶⁰ In return, the authorities acted harshly, and martial law was imposed for several decades, controlling the political and social life of citizens.⁶¹ However, by the 1970s, Arab nationalists' impetus faded away and was gradually replaced by an Islamic religious narrative.⁶²

The second lens is the ongoing Palestinian/Arab Israeli conflict. This protracted war dominated Jordanian geopolitics and dragged Jordan into military confrontations against Israel, which inflicted huge losses of life, resources, and land.⁶³ However, the official enmity has settled down after the 1994 Jordanian Israeli peace agreement. Nevertheless, thus far, the peace treaty has failed to realise the political, social, and economic aspirations.⁶⁴ Therefore, the relationship continues to be marked by uncertainty, and confined to security coordination, which the Jordan authorities usually downplays due to the public's antipathy toward Israel.⁶⁵

The third source of regional instabilities is the unceasing civil wars, particularly in Jordan's neighbouring countries of Iraq and Syria, which started in 2003 and 2011, respectively. Both wars affected Jordan immeasurably, and their consequences are still strangling the country's economy and security.⁶⁶ At their peak, these sectarian wars have transformed both Iraq and Syria into failed states, where Jordan was responsible for protecting its borders in the absence of any corresponding military presence on the opposite fronts.⁶⁷ Moreover, several Jihadi terrorist groups, including AQI and ISIS, had taken advantage of the situation and emerged viciously to resurge their conflicts with

⁵⁸ Hassan Barari, "Four Decades After Black September: A Jordanian Perspective", *Civil Wars* 10, no.3 (2008) :P.233, doi:10.1080/13698240802168015.

⁵⁹ Anderson, 2005. P.183

⁶⁰ Barari, 2008. P.232

⁶¹ Anderson, 2005. P.185

⁶² Olidort, 2015. P.15

⁶³ Saad Abu-Dayeh, "The Middle East Peace Process 1948-1994: Constraints and Prospects", *Pakistan Horizon* 48, no.4 (1995) :P.27.

⁶⁴ Nur Köprülü, "25 Years of Jordan-Israel Peace-Making", *Middle Eastern Studies* 57, no.3(2021) :P.462, doi:10.1080/00263206.2021.1898381.

⁶⁵ Aaron Magid, "Israel And Jordan's Relationship Is Better Than It Looks", *Foreign Policy*, 2021, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/07/29/israel-jordan-palestine-bennett-netanyahu-abdullah-cold-peace/>

⁶⁶ Wagemakers, 2018. P.191

⁶⁷ William Booth and Taylor Luck, "Jordan Fears Homegrown ISIS More Than Invasion From Iraq", *Washingtonpost.Com*, 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/jordan-fears-homegrown-isis-more-than-invasion-from-iraq/2014/06/27/1534a4ee-f48a-492a-99b3-b6cd3ffe9e41_story.html.

Jordan and continue pursuing their religious agendas and territorial expansionism.⁶⁸

In return for the various ongoing regional threats, Jordan sought to forge alliances with Western powers to ensure sustainable protection and support. ⁶⁹ Mainly, the United Kingdom (UK) in the early decades, and later the United States (US) shored up Jordan by bolstering the latter's political, military, and economic status. Effectively, these foreign relations emphasised Jordan's subsequent regional role – as a focal point and buffer zone between warring parties, especially Israel and the Arab States. ⁷⁰ It also, in later stages, positioned Jordan as an instrumental partner in the war against terrorism, as highlighted in later sections.

2.2 Local Threats

Another source of trouble for the Kingdom is the local circumstances, which also determined Jordan's trajectory of events and influenced the socio-political environment. On the ground, the regional conflicts imposed sweeping changes to Jordan's demographic composition. Throughout the last seventy years, the Kingdom received multiple waves of compulsory migrations. Millions of Palestinian, Iraqi, and Syrian refugees fled the violence in their countries to settle in Jordan. ⁷¹ These multiple flows have resulted in exponential population growth and invariably affected Jordan's social structure. Gradually, they have reflected on the socio-political and religious developments in the country.

Socio-politics

Concerning Jordanian domestic politics, Iraqi and Syrian refugees refrained from interfering in the country's internal affairs. Conversely, the Palestinian incomers, who immigrated in multiple waves, starting 1948 through 1991, caused several issues for Jordan. Most Palestinian refugees were naturalised and became full-fledged citizens, hence, partially influencing Jordanian political, economic, and social scenes. ⁷² Indeed, there is a general agreement in the literature that Jordanian-Palestinian identity politics is one of the country's deepest socio-political cracks. ⁷³ This identity contention started as early as 1950 when the Jordanian Monarch, in the wake of Israel's declaration of

⁶⁸ Hardin Lang et al., *The Future Of U.S. - Jordanian Counterterrorism Cooperation* (Center for American Progress, 2017):P.9 <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/future-u-s-jordanian-counterterrorism-cooperation/>.

⁶⁹ Joseph Massad, *Colonial Effects: The Making of National Identity in Jordan* (Columbia University Press, 2001). P.305

⁷⁰ Jeremy M. Sharp, *Jordan: Background and U.S. Relations* (Congressional Research Service,2021). P.3

⁷¹ Diab Al-Badayneh et al., "Radical Thoughts: Fears About and Supporting ISIS Among Jordanian College Students", *NATO Science for Peace and Security Series*, 2019, P.2 doi:10.3233/nhsdp200080.

⁷² Bani-Salameh and El-Edwan,2016. P.990

⁷³ Curtis R. Ryan, "Identity Politics, Reform, and Protest in Jordan", *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 11, no.3 (2011) :P.565, doi:10.1111/j.1754-9469.2011.01135.x.

independence, annexed the West Bank to become part of the Hashemite Kingdom.⁷⁴ As a result, most Palestinians became de jure Jordanian citizens, later invigorating their involvement in Jordan's public life.⁷⁵

During the 1960s, the Palestinians formed armed groups to fight Israel from the Jordanian territories, causing acrimonious relations between all parties. Moreover, the guerrillas constantly challenged the Jordanian state's authority, resulting in multiple faceoffs and culminating in a full-scale civil war (commonly known as Black September) between the guerrillas and the Jordanian army in 1970-1971.⁷⁶ That era, which left thousands of deaths behind, resulted later in an inter-communal dichotomy and fostered the identity crisis.⁷⁷ According to many scholars, such as Hasan Barari, the 1970-1971 showdown was the central turning point in future domestic relations.⁷⁸ Indeed, it contributed to what Marianne Marar called the "dual/duel identity," in which both trans-Jordanians and Palestinian-Jordanians ambivalently coexist, but preserve a social split.⁷⁹ Since then, this division has been stalling the full integration of Palestinians in Jordan and drastically affecting the Kingdom's socio-political environment.⁸⁰ Notably, both community components constantly resisted the regime's efforts to develop a hybrid identity, each for their own motives.⁸¹ In that sense, the Palestinian issue still represents a core concern to most Palestinian-Jordanian citizens, commonly overlapping with their Jordanian national politics and identity.⁸² The persistence of self-identification as Palestinians (not Jordanians) by a big portion of Palestinian-Jordanians, had also a negative impact, where it further widened the societal divide.⁸³ In fact, according to scholars such as Laurie Brand, it is serving as a major impediment to the formulation of a cohesive Jordanian national identity.⁸⁴

East-Jordanians have also exerted continuous pressure on Jordan's policymakers. Jordanian tribes welcomed the Hashemite family, who came from Hijaz (part of Saudi

⁷⁴ Laurie Brand, "Palestinians and Jordanians: A Crisis of Identity", *Journal of Palestine Studies* 24, no.4 (1995) :P.50, doi:10.2307/2537757.

⁷⁵ Lamis El-Muhtaseb, *Jordan's East Banker-Palestinian Schism* (The Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre, 2013). P.2

⁷⁶ Bani-Salameh and El-Edwan, 2016. P.992

⁷⁷ Ryan, 2011. P.567

⁷⁸ Barari, 2008. P.232

⁷⁹ Marianne Marar, "Dual/Duel Identities: Intercultural Education 20, no.4 (2009) :P.377, doi:10.1080/14675980903352001.

⁸⁰ Iris Fruchter-Ronen, "Black September: The 1970-71 Events and Their Impact on The Formation of Jordanian National Identity", *Civil Wars* 10, no.3 (2008) :P.257, doi:10.1080/13698240802167991.

⁸¹ Brand, 1995. P.59

⁸² Bani-Salameh and El-Edwan, 2016. P.990

⁸³ Brand, 1995. P.48-49

⁸⁴ Ibid

Arabia now) to lead the Arab Revolt against the Ottomans in 1916 and endorsed their presence as their rulers. However, indigenous Jordanians have participated in multiple revolts over the years, increasing the inflammatory and divisions in the society.⁸⁵ In fact, volatilities started in the early years of ruling, where the Hashemite king faced multiple local rebellions, such as Al-Kura (1921-1923) and Al-Balqa (1923). Then, the newly formed military force, with the aid of the stationed British military, violently suppressed the rebellions, and enforced security for many years.⁸⁶ These upheavals, stemming from calls for increased political authority and economic empowerment, continued throughout the years and resulted in several clashes with the regime.⁸⁷ Indeed, they increased in the past three decades, where many cities, such as Maan in 1989,⁸⁸ and in 2002,⁸⁹ and Al-Karak in 1996,⁹⁰ had massive protests, and were also repressed by Jordanian security apparatus.

In fact, due to the continuation of economic hardship and political aspirations, these widespread demonstrations continued and peaked in the last decade, during the Arab Spring, which swept through the Middle East after 2010.⁹¹ Commonly, various components of society, participated in recent protests, expressing anger and frustration over rampant corruption and successive governments' failure to address numerous challenges. Notably, newer protests constituted mainly of youth Jordanians of various origins, with a slight majority of East-Jordanians.⁹² In addition, the cleaved societal groups were demanding more rights and benefits to their advantage, which contributed to additional pressures on the regime and further endorsed communal contestation.⁹³ Undeniably, these unresolved polarisations consolidated fragmentations within successive generations, reinforcing grievances and a general sense of exclusion and marginalisation among different societal segments.⁹⁴

It is worth mentioning, however, that despite the revolts and protests, the relationship

⁸⁵ Yom and Sammour, 2017. P.28

⁸⁶ Salibi, 2010. P.104

⁸⁷ Red Alert In Jordan: Recurrent Unrest in Maan, Middle East Briefing (Amman/Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2003), P.4-5
<https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/eastern-mediterranean/jordan/red-alert-jordan-recurrent-unrest-maan>.

⁸⁸ Ryan, 2011. P.565

⁸⁹ Red Alert, 2003. P.1

⁹⁰ Lamis Andoni and Jillian Schwedler, "Bread Riots in Jordan", Middle East Report, no.201 (1996): P.40, doi:10.2307/3012771.

⁹¹ Speckhard, 2017. P.13

⁹² Luigi Achilli, "Disengagement from Politics. Critique Of Anthropology 34, no.2 (2014) :P.235. doi:10.1177/0308275x13519276.

⁹³ Ryan, 2011. P.564

⁹⁴ Yitzhak Reiter, "The Palestinian-Transjordanian Rift", The Middle East Journal 58, no.1 (2004) :P.74, doi:10.3751/58.1.14.

between the Hashemite rulers and the local Jordanians has been enduring on solid foundations. For a long time, this symbiotic relationship served as a shield to confront external and local pitfalls. It represented a strategic alliance against other threats, such as Pan-Arabism, Communism, Palestinian insurgents, and terrorism. Essentially, this bedrock was reinforced post-Black September, and continues to play a primary source for the political and social legitimacy of the ruling family.⁹⁵

Religion

Similar to political and social aspects, the religious dimension played an instrumental role in Jordanian society and identity's developments. Generally, this religious presence had various impacts and is divided into two phases. In the early decades, religious movements were peripheral at the social and political levels in the country. On several occasions, the regime considered them practical tools for countering rival regional sentiments and serving the designed political strategies.⁹⁶ The second phase coincided with regional dynamics' transformations and the Jihadi-Salafism rise in the 1990s. Since then, religious movements have become a threat and burden to Jordan.

Since Jordan's creation, Islamic religious practices and proselytisation, including those associated with political movements, were tolerated and sometimes encouraged and embraced by the Jordanian state.⁹⁷ Essentially, despite its rulers' continuous emphasis on state secularity, the religious guise served the regime in many ways.⁹⁸ Essentially, it was employed to develop a parallel collective identity, a religious one, in the absence and inability to forge a coherent national one.⁹⁹ Also, it served to enhance the ruling family's legitimacy and thus consolidate its powers locally.¹⁰⁰ Being the direct descendants of the Prophet Mohammad earned the Hashemite royal family the support and respect of Jordanians, hence, the religious presence was a necessary complement.¹⁰¹ Furthermore, in several regional and local turning points, such as the rise of Pan-Arabism, and the 1970-1971 civil war, together with local tribes as previously noted, religion was a bulwark for the Jordanian regime against rivalling political ambitions.¹⁰²

⁹⁵ Bani-Salameh and El-Edwan, 2016. P.991

⁹⁶ Michael Robbins and Lawrence Rubin, "The Rise of Official Islam in Jordan", *Politics, Religion & Ideology* 14, no.1 (2013): P.62, doi:10.1080/21567689.2012.752359.

⁹⁷ Ibid, P.65

⁹⁸ Abu-Rumman and Abu-Hanieh, 2013. P.30

⁹⁹ P.R. Kumaraswamy, "Who Am I? The Identity Crisis in The Middle East", *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 10, no.1 (2006) :P.64

¹⁰⁰ Robbins and Rubin, 2013. P.63

¹⁰¹ Kumaraswamy, 2006. P.64

¹⁰² Emile Sahliyeh, "The State and The Islamic Movement in Jordan", *Journal of Church and State* 47, no.1 (2005) :P.128, doi:10.1093/jcs/47.1.109.

Furthermore, to bolster their legitimacy, the Jordanian Hashemite monarchs sustained, for over a century, an honorary position as the custodians of East Jerusalem's religious sanctities, a religious-contested area with Israel, including Al-Aqsa Mosque, a sacrosanct Islamic site.¹⁰³ This religious/political role has also allowed for a greater margin of manoeuvre among the regional political complications, where it presented prominence to Jordan on religious and political aspects in relation to the Palestinian question.¹⁰⁴

Jordanian authorities' emphasis on religion and religious figures served as an entry point to multiple Islamic movements. Gradually, their presence evolved from religious to socio-political activism, where they actively permeated Jordanian society. The MB was one of the early beneficiaries of state support since the society's establishment in 1945.¹⁰⁵ They developed their societal and political engagement amid the prohibition and prosecution of other parties, which officially ended in 1989 after political life resumption.¹⁰⁶ Unequivocally, this exclusivity contributed to MB's ensuing pervasiveness and the spread of their religious dogma. They candidly joined Jordanian political life and participated in most of parliamentary elections.¹⁰⁷ Also, some of their leading figures were appointed in significant ministries, such as Education and Religious Affairs, which helped them pitch their doctrine implicitly.¹⁰⁸ For instance, in 1991 Mudar Badran's government, five Islamic ministers were appointed, and according to some accounts, they sought to implement conservative measures within their ministries.¹⁰⁹ In this regard, many scholars, such as Speckhard, accuse Islamists of official position exploitation, where they secured many positions for like-minded preachers.¹¹⁰ Also, they gradually inculcated conservative content in educational curriculums, and replaced the national and civic syllabus with more religious characterization.¹¹¹ These radical pedagogical inputs contributed to society's transformation into conservatism, where it entrenched and remained immutable to date.¹¹² Additionally, some reports, such as the 2016 Madison Springfield, Inc. (MSI), noted through analytical polling and field interviews, an association between Jordanian MB activities and the spread of sectarianism, political zeal, and the promotion of VE and Jihadism.¹¹³ However, as previously mentioned, the

¹⁰³ Köprülü, 2021. P.460

¹⁰⁴ Robbins and Rubin, 2013. P.64

¹⁰⁵ Sahliyah 2005, P.113

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, P.114

¹⁰⁷ Muhammad Abu Rumman, Abdulla Jboor and Wael Khateeb, A'la A' tab Al-Tahawwol, 1st ed. (Amman: Politics and Society Institute, 2022).

¹⁰⁸ Williamson, 2019. P.4

¹⁰⁹ Rana Hussein, Years of Struggle – The Women's Movement in Jordan (Amman: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2021).

¹¹⁰ Speckhard, 2017. P.37

¹¹¹ Hussein, 2021. P.296-297

¹¹² Sean Yom, The Social Terrain of Islamist Radicalization: Insights from Jordan (Lawfare, 2016),

¹¹³ Factors Impacting Propensity and Influence Pathways Toward Violent Extremism In Jordan –Executive Summary (MSI, 2016), P.6 <https://jordankmportal.com/collections/countering-violent-extremism-in-jordan>.

relationship with the Jordanian authorities deteriorated, especially after the peace treaty with Israel in 1994.¹¹⁴

The second group that blatantly advanced its religious doctrine was Salafism, which was imported from regional states to the Kingdom in the early 1970s.¹¹⁵ Contrary to MB, Jordanian Traditional-Salafists did not participate in politics or official policymaking, and confined their engagement to informal social activities, specifically missionary lessons within similar-minded Muslim networks.¹¹⁶ In 1979, Jordan granted sanctuary to Naser-Al-Dine Al-Albany, a prominent Salafi ideologue who precipitated Salafism's mushrooming in Jordan.¹¹⁷ He was allowed to practice his proselytisation to endorse and occasionally compete with MB's influence.¹¹⁸ Effectively, Jordan, in Olidort words, "has become the nerve center for Albany's legacy."¹¹⁹ As a result, Salafi literature, doctrine, and religious centres became more widespread in many Jordanian cities like Zarqa and Maan.¹²⁰ In spite of that, Al-Albany and his cohorts maintained a fine line between religious devotion and radicalisation and sustained, therefore, the synergy with the regime.¹²¹

Nevertheless, the case was not the same with extreme Jihadi-Salafists. As emphasised in Section One, the Jihadi-Salafi movement, which deserted from the mainstream Salafism, had adopted violence as a chosen path to impose religious rules. As a result, Jihadists came into conflict with virtually anyone not embracing their ideology, especially the Arabic ruling regimes. In Jordan, Jihadi-Salafism has roots in the youth impetuosity to join the Afghani Muslim-Jihad against the Soviets in the 1980s.¹²² These exertions were under the auspices of the Palestinian-Jordanian Abdalla Azzam. Azzam, a former member in the MB, known as 'the father of global Jihad', for his efforts in facilitating and urging Muslims worldwide, including Jordanians, to partake in the Jihad's duty in Afghanistan.¹²³ He also served as a mentor to notorious Jihadists like Osama bin Laden, where Jihadists used his literature as their religious guide.¹²⁴ Seemingly, Jihadis' reluctance to interfere in Jordanian domestic affairs during the 1980s, kept them safe from the Jordanian security stranglehold. Therefore, the Jordanian government

¹¹⁴ Joby Warrick, *Black Flags* (London: Penguin, 2015). P.54

¹¹⁵ Wiktorowicz, 2000. P.222

¹¹⁶ Wiktorowicz, 2000. P.219

¹¹⁷ Joas Wagemakers, "Contesting Religious Authority in Jordanian Salafi Networks", *Perseverance of Terrorism: Focus on Leaders* 117 (2014a): P.114. doi10.3233/978-1-61499-387-2-111

¹¹⁸ Sowell, 2015. P.3

¹¹⁹ Olidort, 2015. P.20

¹²⁰ Wiktorowicz, 2000. P.233

¹²¹ Abu-Rumman and Abu-Hanieh, 2013. P.20

¹²² Speckhard, 2017. P.10

¹²³ Ibid

¹²⁴ Ibid

overlooked their activities and recruitment.¹²⁵

The relationship between the Jordanian regime and Jihadists underwent a paradigm shift, after the end of hostilities in Afghanistan and the return of hundreds of Jordanian foreign fighters.¹²⁶ Armed with insurgency experience and extremist ideology, some returnees formed a few small Jihadi clusters, like Mohammad's Army group, and actively plotted to execute terrorist attacks in Jordan and schemed to topple the 'secular' regime.¹²⁷ Fundamentally, They intended to replace man-made laws and apply Islamic Sharia instead.¹²⁸ According to many scholars, this thorny advent is linked to the Palestinian-Jordanian Abu Mohammad Al-Maqdisi, the Jihadi theorist, who arrived from Kuwait in 1992, and laid the movement's foundations in Jordan.¹²⁹ Later, Al-Maqdisi became a renowned ideologue in Jordan and other regional countries.¹³⁰ Notably, he mentored plenty of Arab Jihadists, including the East-Jordanian Abu Mosab Al-Zarqawi, the founder of AQI and the fierce enemy of Jordan.¹³¹ Remarkably, after Al-Zarqawi fled to Iraq in 1999, where he later formed AQI, the Jihadi threats and confrontations with the Jordanian authorities reached a whole new level. Jordan became a prime target, and multiple plots and terrorist attacks occurred. Furthermore, Jordan continued to suffer from terrorism, even after Al-Zarqawi died in 2006. Undeniably, the conflict escalated after the emergence of ISIS in 2014, where the latter pushed its terrorist operations and Jihadi ideology even further.

Similar to the previously discussed matters, the fluidity of the Jordanian social structure and identity enabled the Jihadi movements to pervade in local societies. Throughout the years, Jihadi-Salafism thrived in many Jordanian cities, namely Irbid, Zarqa, Balqa, and Ma'an, significantly yielding thousands of extreme-inculcated mindsets in the Kingdom.¹³² Incontrovertibly, the surrounding environment played a crucial role in fostering this leverage. The rise of religious zeal, which commenced, according to many scholars, after the 1979 Iranian Islamic Revolution, gradually transformed Jordanian social and religious norms.¹³³ This rise was further augmented by regional events, such as the Palestinian Intifada and the occupation of Iraq.¹³⁴ Inter alia, these watershed events encouraged an

¹²⁵ "Compass Media, Arab Veterans of Afghanistan War Lead New Islamic Holy War", 1994, https://irp.fas.org/news/1994/afghan_war_vetrans.html.

¹²⁶ Robbins and Rubin, 2013. P.67-68

¹²⁷ Nachman Tal, *Radical Islam in Egypt and Jordan* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2005). P.172

¹²⁸ Joas Wagemakers, "A Terrorist Organization That Never Was", *The Middle East Journal* P.67, no.1(2014b): P.61, doi:10.3751/68.1.13.

¹²⁹ Sowell, 2015. P.2

¹³⁰ Brooke, 2006. P.3

¹³¹ Wagemakers, 2018. P.193

¹³² Ibid, P.195

¹³³ Speckhard, 2017. P.38

¹³⁴ Sahliyah, 2005. P.123

Islamic rhetoric expansion as a vigorous alternative to Jordan's moderate policies, hence challenging the state authority and position.¹³⁵

Moreover, the high prevalence of extreme ideologies in neighbouring states, such as Saudi Arabia's Wahhabism, and Iraq's 1990s Islamic 'Faith Campaign',¹³⁶ strongly resonated in Jordan and further intensified the conservative Islamic environment.¹³⁷ Ignited by sectarian enmity between Sunnis and Shia, the regional religious setting triggered further devastating discords.¹³⁸ This antagonism charged hatred and radicalisation, and laid the way for VE to triumph in the region, turning it into multiple warzones. Jordan was not spared this mayhem. The sectarian civil wars in both Iraq and Syria galvanised a momentum for violence, hence urging thousands of Jordanians to enrol in transnational Jihadi groups, influencing the country's security and social life as a result.

In sum, the aforementioned religious manifestations, which were amplified by the state's acquiescence, and regional effects, invariably nourished the society's Islamic identity. Arguably, the Islamic overt presence and influence have formalised and familiarised the conservative Islamic concepts in public awareness. Unlike the historically ruptured national identity, the religious rapport presented an adequate shelter based on impartial equality and unity between Jordanian Muslims. Concurrently, it provided well-crafted channels to address acquired grievances, as discussed later.

Thus far, the paper argued that the regional and local circumstances and events had contributed to Jordan's socio-political and religious transformations, which had a dire impact on the Jordanian national identity and, therefore, the high propensity for VE. The following section explores the related literature to analyse the main drivers that pushed thousands of Jordanians to become violent extremists and the corresponding state's efforts to counter them.

¹³⁵ Robbins and Rubin, 2013. P.68

¹³⁶ Speckhard, 2017. P.11

¹³⁷ Sowell, 2015. P.3

¹³⁸ Clarke et al., 2021. P.16

Globally, the Jihadi-Salafism ideology has further advanced in the last decade. With the development of online communications, mainly social media platforms, and the ability to connect with Muslims from all around the world, Jihadis' ideologists broadened their propaganda.¹³⁹ They have successfully exploited Muslim youth needs and grievances, and recruited thousands worldwide to join their movements.¹⁴⁰ Notably, the Jordanian-related literature did not focus much on the direct role of digital platforms in recruitment, while some reports noted that most engagements happened in person, not online.¹⁴¹ Nonetheless, given the proliferation of internet usage in Jordan, many reports indicated the media's significant role in driving and promoting radicalisation.¹⁴² Perceptibly, the enabling environment, where economic and socio-political challenges kept growing, coupled with religious saturation, served as a fertile ground to recruit young Jordanians.¹⁴³ However, the key question is, what exactly impels Jordanians to become violent extremists?

3.1 Drivers to VE

There is a near consensus in the literature that defining the exact drivers to extremism is a vexed matter.¹⁴⁴ For instance, Wilner and Dubouloz argued that comprehending what drives VE is "perhaps the most challenging aspect of confronting homegrown terrorism."¹⁴⁵ Akil Awan presented similar ideas, where he wrote that the paths and motivations are "many and varied, with no simple cause and effect calculus."¹⁴⁶ As Silke also noted, the drivers that played a pivotal role in one's decision to join VEO are not necessarily the same for others.¹⁴⁷

In that regard, Jordanian research and academic studies substantiated the lack of a typical drivers' list. For example, the International Republican Institute (IRI)'s 2018 report documented multiple potential sources of vulnerability to VE while also stressing that the

¹³⁹ Fares Braizat et al., *Determining Youth Radicalization in Jordan* (ICSVE, 2017). P.13

¹⁴⁰ Peracha, Et al., "Development and Validation of Indigenous Violent Extremism Beliefs Scale (VEBS)", *Journal Of Psychology And Behavioral Science*, 2017, doi:10.15640/jpbs.v5n1a7. P.55

¹⁴¹ Mhadeen, Et al., 2021. P.11

¹⁴² UN Women, 2016. P.21

¹⁴³ Speckhard and Shajkovci, 2018. P.2.

¹⁴⁴ Ghimar Deeb et al., "A National Strategic Framework for Countering Violent Extremism in Jordan", *Journal of International Affairs* 69, no.2 (2016). P.117

¹⁴⁵ Wilner and Dubouloz, 2010. P.38

¹⁴⁶ Akil Awan, "Antecedents of Islamic Political Radicalism Among Muslim Communities in Europe", *PS: Political Science & Politics* 41, no.01 (2008) :P.16, doi:10.1017/s1049096508080013.

¹⁴⁷ Silke, 2008. P105

journey is "non-linear and highly Individualised."¹⁴⁸ Speckhard indicated likewise that the Jordanian "individual motivations and vulnerabilities for terrorism are always contextual and local."¹⁴⁹ Similarly, the MSI report acknowledged the profile's diversity of Jordanians embracing VE ideologies and maintained that there are "no standard models."¹⁵⁰

Many theories and concepts were presented to explain this multi-faceted process. Notably, Speckhard presented a fourfold classification of the drivers leading to extremism; "Exposure to a group, its ideology, social support, and individual vulnerabilities and motivations."¹⁵¹ Correspondingly, as Harper stated, individuals' journey to VE passes through three stages: vulnerability, radicalisation, and opportunity — where extreme groups exhort radicalisation by offering both an ideology and social support.¹⁵² According to Peracha et al., most published literature characterised the drivers as psychological features induced by economic and political marginalisation and developed by religiosity adoption.¹⁵³ Nascent academic literature sees the push and pull factors' interplay as the basis for violence.¹⁵⁴ Essentially, push factors, within a social-structure context, motivate individuals to abandon their existing circumstances, while the pull factors, which represent an individual motivation, lure them toward the VE activities or environment.¹⁵⁵

Building on that, the paper scrutinised the literature's recurring vulnerabilities in the Jordanian context. Accordingly, it perceived that the grievances stemming from Jordanian social and economic challenges, in which the existing societal divisions widened the fissure, have enabled vulnerable individuals to adopt extreme ideologies. This radicalisation is typically coupled with the proliferation of extreme religious ideologies and groups, that are promoting violence to realise their pursued ends. With that being noted, Jordanian economic, societal, and religious drivers are examined next.

¹⁴⁸ Violent Extremism in Jordan: Local Governance, Tribal Dynamics and Forced Migration (Washington, DC: International Republican Institute (IRI), 2018). P.9

¹⁴⁹ Speckhard, 2017. P.63

¹⁵⁰ MSI, 2016. P.7

¹⁵¹ Speckhard, 2017. P.9

¹⁵² Harper, 2017. P.3

¹⁵³ Peracha et al., 2017. P.54

¹⁵⁴ Keith Proctor, Youth & Consequences: Unemployment, Injustice And Violence (Mercy Corps, 2015b), P.32 <https://www.mercycorps.org/research-resources/youth-consequences-unemployment>.

¹⁵⁵ Brandy Cochrane and Debra Smith, "The Push and Pull: Women And Violent Extremism", Academia Letters, 2021, doi:10.20935/al2997. P.2

Economic Drivers

Jordan has been mired in challenging economic circumstances for many years. Indeed, Jordan's dire straits made it largely depends on the financial support of various Western and Arab sources.¹⁵⁶ Essentially, the exponential population growth resulting from successive migration waves has strained already-meagre natural resources, such as water and energy.¹⁵⁷ Furthermore, they have been putting immense pressure on public services and impacting Jordanians' household requirements, livelihoods, and employability.¹⁵⁸ In recent years, the Syrian crisis added excessive burdens to Jordan at many levels. According to official figures, Jordan hosts around 1.4 million Syrian refugees (14% of the total population), added to a few other millions from other nationalities who arrived years earlier, making Jordan one of the largest hosts of refugees globally.¹⁵⁹ The burden of hosting all these refugees has increased Jordan's financial and security liabilities, which the Kingdom could not cover alone.

To compound the situation, particularly since 2011, the international community have not committed sufficient financial assistance to Jordan. The allocated funds in 2014, for instance, did not exceed 39% of the required amounts,¹⁶⁰ which were estimated at four billion USD annually at the time.¹⁶¹ According to various reports, such as the RAND Corporation, the lack of financial means has negatively affected Jordan on several fronts.¹⁶² Mainly, it aggravated the budget deficit, where most indicators, including the World Bank's, has shown a sharp fall in the economic growth rates in the past decade.¹⁶³ Over and above, the Jordanian population is considerably young, where 70% of the population is under 30.¹⁶⁴ According to World Bank records, the unemployment rate has severely increased, especially among the youth, reaching 37% in 2019.¹⁶⁵ Most experts cited the lack of financial means and unemployment as salient vulnerability drivers.¹⁶⁶ Although many reports have underlined the lack of evidence for financial compensation to

¹⁵⁶ Sharp, 2021. P.4

¹⁵⁷ Deeb et al., 2016. P.120

¹⁵⁸ Wagemakers, 2018. P.191

¹⁵⁹ Deeb et al., 2016. P.120

¹⁶⁰ David Schenker, "Syria's Good Neighbors", The Washington Institute, 2015,

<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/syrias-good-neighbors-how-jordan-and-lebanon-sheltered-millions-refugees>.

¹⁶¹ "King Outlines Jordan's Future Vision At Clinton Global Initiative", Jordan Times, 2014,

<http://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/king-outlines-jordan%E2%80%99s-future-vision-clinton-global-initiative>.

¹⁶² Ben Connable, From Negative to Positive Stability: How The Syrian Refugee Crisis Can Improve Jordan's Outlook (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2015), https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1069.html.

¹⁶³ The Fallout of War: The Regional Consequences of The Conflict in Syria (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2020). P.155

¹⁶⁴ Braizat et al., 2017. P.7

¹⁶⁵ "Unemployment, Youth Total (% Of Total Labor Force Ages 15-24)", Data.Worldbank.Org, 2021, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.1524.ZS>.

¹⁶⁶ Speckhard, 2017. P.52

Jordanian foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq,¹⁶⁷ the resulting social diminution and low self-esteem, as Speckhard stressed, have often shown significant susceptibility towards VE.¹⁶⁸ As stated in IRI's 2016 public opinion survey, most Jordanian respondents (85%) pointed out financial hardships, including poverty, unemployment and corruption, as the country's biggest problems.¹⁶⁹ Congruently, nepotism, injustice, and social divisions have also been reported as recurring stimuli to radicalisation in Jordan.¹⁷⁰ Typically, VEOs tap into such issues and propose alternative paths.¹⁷¹

Societal Drivers

Theoretically, the social exclusion could take various forms, as many scholars conferred. One of its defining characters is discrimination that breeds a sense of alienation, anger, frustration, or "loss of significance," according to a study by Kruglanski and Webber.¹⁷² The aforementioned study presented the 'significance quest theory', which was substantiated by numerous empirical and experimental evidence, as a solid driver to VE.¹⁷³ The theory noted that all individuals have a fundamental need for significance, which is to be important or to matter; such significance is undermined or wholly eliminated when an individual experiences social exclusion or any discrimination.¹⁷⁴ Additionally, according to Barrett, many recruits joined VEOs in reflex to "persistent and obdurate local conditions of poor governance and social stagnation."¹⁷⁵

In a comparable context, while examining the exact correlation between radicalisation and the national identity's decoupling, Wilner and Dubouloz emphasised the alienated individuals' vindication for violence.¹⁷⁶ They also cited the lack of socio-political integration and the failure to proper association with other society components as the most common precursor of radicalisation.¹⁷⁷ In a report about VE, the UN pointed similar

¹⁶⁷ Proctor, 2015a. P.3

¹⁶⁸ Speckhard, 2017. P.54

¹⁶⁹ "Survey of Jordan Public Opinion", IRI.Org, 2016, P.6

https://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/wysiwyg/2016_jordan.pdf.

¹⁷⁰ Speckhard, 2017. P.43

¹⁷¹ Lydia Wilson, "Gone to Waste: The 'CVE' Industry After 9/11", New Lines Magazine, 2021, https://newlinesmag.com/argument/understanding-the-lure-of-islamism-is-more-complex-than-the-experts-would-have-you-believe/?fbclid=IwAR2cUMdk1a9vzVsNj3DmlQB1A2MP6Yim2_POTnwoRAQ%E2%80%A6.

¹⁷² Arie Kruglanski and David Webber, The Psychology of Radicalization (Zeitschrift für Internationale Strafrechtsdogmatik, 2014). P.380

¹⁷³ Roberto Lobato et al., "From Oppression to Violence", Frontiers in Psychology 9 (2018), P.2 doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01505.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, P.3

¹⁷⁵ Richard Barrett, Beyond the Caliphate: Foreign Fighters and the Threat of Returnees (The Soufan Center, 2017). P.6

¹⁷⁶ Wilner and Dubouloz, 2010. P.39

¹⁷⁷ Ibid, P.38

drivers while adding national discrimination and violations of human rights to the list.¹⁷⁸In a broader perspective, Hans-George Betz contends that “politics does not operate in a vacuum; it reflects as much the state of society as it seeks to influence and shape its direction.”¹⁷⁹ Furthermore, Laqueur corroborated that terrorism is almost always mirroring the society in which it is active.¹⁸⁰ Hence, society operates as an incubator and a supportive environment where terrorism can breed and flourish. Terrorism, as described by Horgan, represents “the tip of an iceberg”, while the remaining is a part of a larger indispensable social network of ‘legal’ activities and communal backing.¹⁸¹Without it, as Horgan maintained, terrorist operations cannot develop, evolve, or sustain over time.¹⁸²

In Jordan, multiple reports, such as MSI, stated that one of the primary pathways to VE is socio-political uncertainty, where issues like identity discord and the need for belonging, self-actualisation, and redemption have been signalled.¹⁸³ Most related research focused on identity and poor governance as tipping points to VE.

For instance, the 2018 IRI report emphasised the roles of identity and socio-political exclusion and the proliferation of radical narratives as the most significant catalysts.¹⁸⁴Similarly, Harper underlined social schisms, injustice, and multiple identity dynamics, among the salient drivers to VE in Jordan.¹⁸⁵ Despite the official obfuscation, several sentiment analyses and reports, such as the 1995-survey conducted by the Amman-based Center for Strategic Studies, which was endorsed in 2012 by the same centre, confirmed the societal cleavage and the mutual distrust in the country.¹⁸⁶ The report corroborated that the division extends to critical aspects of life, such as political representation and labour market anomalies.¹⁸⁷ In fact, Palestinian-Jordanians are underrepresented in the parliament and the government, whereas East-Jordanians dominate the public sector and security apparatus.¹⁸⁸ On this ground, Palestinian-Jordanians geared their efforts toward the private sector, where they own

¹⁷⁸ “A World Against Violence and Violent Extremism”, Undocs.Org, 2017, P.3

<https://undocs.org/pdf?symbol=en/a/72/621>.

¹⁷⁹ Hans-Georg Betz, *Radical Right-Wing Populism in Western Europe* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994). P.2

¹⁸⁰ Walter Laqueur, *No End to War: Terrorism in The Twenty-First Century* (New York: Continuum, 2004).

¹⁸¹ John Horgan, “From Profiles to Pathways and Roots to Routes”, *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 618, no.1(2008) :P.86, doi:10.1177/0002716208317539.

¹⁸² Ibid, P.86

¹⁸³ MSI,2016. P.9

¹⁸⁴ IRI,2018. P.2

¹⁸⁵ Harper,2017. P.4

¹⁸⁶ “Jordanian-Palestinian Relations “The Internal Dimension””, Jcss.Org, 2012,

<https://jcss.org/en/918/jordanian-palestinian-relations-the-internal-dimension/?lang=en>.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid

¹⁸⁸ Sharp,2021. P.3

and control a significant portion of the Jordanian market and maintain substantial workforce concentration.¹⁸⁹ This socioeconomic split has impaired social cohesion and belonging to the country, causing contending sub-identities to germinate, and eventually resulting in a more radicalised nation. Additionally, as discussed below, religious sentiment's pervasiveness strongly intensified this propensity to radicalisation and VE in Jordan.

Religious Drivers

Globally, as reported by many research studies, including the 2007 New York Police Department intelligence division report,¹⁹⁰ religious self-identification paves the way for many to radicalise.¹⁹¹ As debated by Wright-Neville and Smith, this radicalised religiosity is usually consolidated by group identification, providing a quasi-family environment within the broader notion of the Ummah, the global family of all Muslims.¹⁹² Also, many researchers like Renström indicated that socially-excluded individuals seek to familiarise themselves with an including group, where the latter offers them opportunities to restore their threatened needs and realise a better social status within the new family.¹⁹³ In Jordan, the religious influence of MB and Salafists have played a significant role in inciting individuals to adopt religious approaches mainly by acknowledging their grievances and dissatisfaction.¹⁹⁴ To some degree, Jordanian Islamists had overstepped the State's presumed boundaries and created a parallel social structure governed by religious doctrines. As Yom and Sammour highlighted, VEOs and other religious movements attracted many young Jordanians to their ideologies by utilising existing schisms.¹⁹⁵

Moreover, terrorist groups, such as Al-Qaeda and ISIS, have constantly promoted their ideologies on victim-based notions.¹⁹⁶ Their doctrines are based on alluring all Muslims, as one nation, to join their Jihad in defending other Muslims, particularly Sunnis. They insistingly described Islam as under attack by the West, the Islamic apostate regimes, and Shia militias.¹⁹⁷ Indeed, VEOs exploited events like the US-led occupation of Iraq and the Western support to Israel, to extend their publicity and the necessity of Jihad as a

¹⁸⁹ Ibid

¹⁹⁰ Mitchell Silber and Arvin Bhatt, "Radicalization in The West". Brennancenter.Org, 2007, <https://www.brennancenter.org/sites/default/files/legacy/Justice/20090000.Radicalization.in.the.West-Statement.of.Clarification.pdf>.

¹⁹¹ Rahimi and Graumans, 2015. P.40

¹⁹² David Wright-Neville and Debra Smith, "Political Rage: Terrorism and The Politics of Emotion", Global Change, Peace & Security 21, no.1 (2009) :P.95-97, doi:10.1080/14781150802659390.

¹⁹³ Emma Renström, "Exploring A Pathway to Radicalization", Group Processes & Intergroup Relations 23, no.8 (2020): P.1225, doi:10.1177/1368430220917215.

¹⁹⁴ Sahliye, 2005. P.118

¹⁹⁵ Yom and Sammour, 2017. P.26

¹⁹⁶ Clarke et al. 2021. P.15

¹⁹⁷ Harper, 2017. P.4

countermeasure.¹⁹⁸ In that context, Jordanians closely identified with such propaganda and joined VEOs to defend Sunni brothers and sisters living in Afghanistan, Balqan, Syria, Iraq, and other states.¹⁹⁹ As Zelin noted, these conflicts, notably in Syria, incited multiple calls and Fatwas (religious edicts) for the obligatory duty of Jihad worldwide, from various Islamic figures, including Yusuf al-Qaradawi, "the world's best-known living Islamist ideologue."²⁰⁰ Several Muslim ideologues and movements in Jordan, including MB, and Jihadists like Al-Maqdisi and Al-Tahhawi, issued similar Fatwas.²⁰¹ Eventually, this created an unprecedented Jihadi momentum in Jordan, where thousands of Jordanians joined ISIS, Al-Nusra and other groups.

In sum, the prevalence of religious sentiment served VEOs' agendas in exploiting existing grievances to recruit individuals within the Jordanian society. Jordanians subscribed to such calls to fulfil the religious duty of Jihad. They also found in VEOs an alternative socio-political umbrella to venting their social and economic grievances.

Having discussed the drivers, next will move to the Jordanian state efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism (P/CVE).

3.2 State Efforts

The elevated threats by foreign VEOs and the proliferation of home-based extreme doctrines have urged a robust involvement by the Jordanian state. On that basis, different state-affiliated institutions have worked relentlessly to curb the emerging powers of different Islamists' movements and the continuous threats of VEOs.²⁰² Indeed, Jordan's efforts were concentrated on two aspects: security and religion.²⁰³ However, these endeavours were proved insufficient, as they were prone to multiple feats and setbacks.

¹⁹⁸ Speckhard, 2017. P.46

¹⁹⁹ MSI, 2016. P.7-8

²⁰⁰ Aaron Y. Zelin, Syria at The Center of Power Competition and Counterterrorism (Washington, DC: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2021). P.3

²⁰¹ Sowell, 2015. P.11

²⁰² Robbins and Rubin, 2013. P.60

²⁰³ Barik Mhadeen et al., Drivers of Radicalisation and Violent Extremism in The Light of State Dynamics in Jordan (European Institute of the Mediterranean, 2021), P.12

Security Efforts

The security-oriented approach relied on the use of reasonable force, sometimes brutal, to limit the influence of Islamic movements. As described by Nesser and Gråtrud, the Kingdom maintained a 'calibrated repression policy' against extremists.²⁰⁴ Aggressively, the state alleviated the infiltration of foreign fighters to its borders, frequently clamped down local terrorist cells, and kept tight surveillance procedures on other extremists.²⁰⁵ In concert, the state sustained co-optation channels with some radicals to 'calibrate' and organise the country's religious environment and its related pursuits.²⁰⁶ As such, prominent Salafi-Jihadis, like Al-Maqdisi Abu Qatadah, and others, maintained their overt socio-religious activities, where the state determined and delimited the threat's threshold of these activities to national security.²⁰⁷

As previously mentioned, the Jordanian state's efforts surged in the 1990s in conjunction with the Jihadists' rise. The Jihadis suspicious activities elicited furious responses by the Jordanian security apparatuses, where the latter cracked down on multiple groups and foiled many plots, resulting in the incarceration and prosecution of hundreds of Salafi Jihadis.²⁰⁸ During the 1990s to 2000s, several plans to target security apparatus, shopping centres, foreign embassies, Christian religious sites, and other targets,²⁰⁹ including plots to assassinate the Monarch, were foiled.²¹⁰ These plots, such as the 1999-2000 Al-Qaeda-planned Millennium Plot, and the 2004 AQI chemicals-loaded trucks plot, could have inflicted many casualties and severe damage, had it not been for the Jordanian intelligence's timely interventions.²¹¹

However, this feud persisted despite these repressive measures. Penetrating local cells proved hard at times, where many of those groups were family tied and maintained a low-profile presence.²¹² Jordan suffered relatively heavy losses of life and properties in multiple terrorist attacks, such as the hotel bombings in 2005 that killed over sixty people. Jordanian authorities considered this attack a defining moment to step up their combating efforts.²¹³ Moreover, this conflict reached an unprecedented level with the rise

²⁰⁴ Petter Nesser and Henrik Gråtrud, "When Conflicts Do Not Overspill: The Case of Jordan", *Perspectives on Politics* 19, no.2 (2019) :P,492, doi:10.1017/s153759271900389x.

²⁰⁵ Ibid

²⁰⁶ Sowell, 2015. P.25

²⁰⁷ Nesser and Gråtrud, 2019. P.502

²⁰⁸ Ibid, P.500

²⁰⁹ Wagemakers, 2014b. P.61

²¹⁰ Abdulla II Of Jordan, *Our Last Best Chance* (London: Penguin, 2012). P.245&289

²¹¹ Ian Black, "Jihad Versus the Knights of Justice: Inside Jordan's War on Al-Qaida", *The Guardian*, 2007, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/feb/08/alqaida.terrorism>.

²¹² Mhadeen, Et al., 2021. P.5

²¹³ Abdulla, 2012. P.251

of ISIS in the 2010s. In the last decade, more intensively during 2015-2017, several terrorist attacks were carried out, causing the death of many Jordanians and foreigners.²¹⁴ These string of attacks, such as Al-Karak and Al-Ruqban, in addition to many more foiled plots, appalled the state and the citizens prompting further measures to ensure borders' integrity and the safety of public institutions, citizens, and foreigners on Jordan's soil.²¹⁵

In that sense, the Jordanian state enacted multiple legislative laws to strengthen its position, including the 2006 Anti-terrorism Law, the 2014 Law's amendment, and the 2019 Cybersecurity Law.²¹⁶ These laws were designed to expand terrorism's definition and further enhance the government's authority to act against it, facilitating the prosecution of extremists and their sympathisers.²¹⁷ Furthermore, these acts allowed for closer monitoring of traditional and social media platforms, maintaining scrutiny over mosques and religious sermons, and accountability against extreme narratives and dubious acts.²¹⁸

In addition to its local efforts, Jordan partnered with Western powers, primarily the US, to bolster its security and intelligence capabilities.²¹⁹ This nexus started in the 1990s and was gradually strengthened in the face of terrorism rise after 9/11.²²⁰ The foreign aids facilitated setting multiple training centres and capacity-building programs to help Jordan counter VE.²²¹ In addition, Jordan annually receives in-kind military assistance to divisions like border guards, special operations, and air force, to better combat terrorism, inside and outside the country.²²² Outside its borders, Jordan has been a significant partner to the West in the War Against Terrorism, where its armed forces participated in multiple military campaigns.²²³ Jordan also facilitated intelligence coordination with the US and other countries.²²⁴ Indeed, Jordan's geopolitical position, particularly bordering Iraq and Syria, prompted the state to play a pivotal role in fighting transnational terrorist groups and execute multiple pre-emptive attacks on foreign soils.²²⁵

²¹⁴ Ma'ayeh, 2013. P.10-11

²¹⁵ Lang et al., 2017. P.1

²¹⁶ Mhadeen, Et al., 2021. P.11

²¹⁷ "Jordan: Extremism and Terrorism", Counter Extremism Project (CEP), 2021, <https://www.counterextremism.com/countries/jordan>.

²¹⁸ Saud Al-Sharafat, "Assessing Jordan's National Strategy To Combat Violent Extremism", The Washington Institute, 2018, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/assessing-jordans-national-strategy-combat-violent-extremism>.

²¹⁹ Ronen Yitzhak, "The War Against Terrorism and For Stability of The Hashemite Regime", International Journal Of Intelligence And Counterintelligence 29, no.2 (2016) :P.229, doi:10.1080/08850607.2016.1121038.

²²⁰ Lang et al., 2017. P.7

²²¹ MSI, 2016. P.5

²²² Lang et al., 2017. P.6-7

²²³ Ibid

²²⁴ Ibid, P.1

²²⁵ Sowell, 2015. P.1

Religious Efforts

Besides the security approach, Jordan strived to counter the extreme narrative's proliferation by developing multiple religious yet sporadic steps. After 1979, the state empowered religious institutions such as the Religious Affairs Ministry and Dar al-Ifta' (the Department of issuing Fatwas), which were further strengthened after the Jihadists' rise.²²⁶ Royal patronage also amplified these measures by different means, like setting a huge international Islamic scholars' conference in Amman, followed by the Amman Message, a published letter endorsing Islam's tolerance and moderation.²²⁷ Likewise, in recent years, the government reinforced its control on the religious narratives by setting guidelines for mosque sermons and filtration of appointed imams.²²⁸ Nonetheless, the state was not able to govern all religious-related activities. Multiple reports, such as the UN's 2016 report, highlighted Jordanians poor confidence in the official religious institutions.²²⁹ Also, a significant portion of the country's mosques are out of the state's control and operated by volunteering imams, where some are associated with extremists and the spread of radical narratives.²³⁰

In tandem with the aforementioned security and religious efforts, the state attempted to crystallise comprehensive Countering Terrorism (CT) and Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) strategies.²³¹ These policies, which saw multiple versions, were designed to incorporate all related governmental bodies, reinforcing security and religious measures. Despite that, as described by some reports, these strategies were shallow and lacked clarity on the designed tools to combat VE.²³² As Mhadeen et al. noted, the policies re-emphasised the typical dual-mechanism of the security/religious approach as the perceived panacea to VE, while disregarding other effective state and non-state actors and instruments.²³³ Wilson also agreed that these policies were palatable to the Jordanian government and were endorsed unchanged by the foreign donors' community and other international-related parties.²³⁴ Even with that, the state failed to consolidate the scattered programs and form an adequate grand strategy. As a result, the planned policies have not borne fruit, and have been kept on ice thus far.²³⁵

²²⁶ Robbins and Rubin, 2013. P.60

²²⁷ Wagemakers, 2018. P.197

²²⁸ Yom and Sammour, 2017. P.26

²²⁹ UN Women, 2016. P.14

²³⁰ MSI, 2016. P.41

²³¹ Al-Sharafat, 2018.

²³² Mhadeen et al., 2021. P.6

²³³ Ibid. P.7

²³⁴ Wilson, 2021.

²³⁵ Mhadeen et al., 2021. P.6

The paper has highlighted the Jordanian political and social transformational backgrounds. Also, it discussed the drivers of radicalisation and efforts to combat them. The final section will summarise and outline these elements that formed a salient Jordanian impact on global terrorism and counterterrorism.

04

JORDANIAN IMPACT

As previously noted, multiple factors and circumstances played different roles in Jordanian society's transformations towards extremism. With multiple regional conflicts and wars flanking Jordan, the geopolitical environment has created a vulnerable domestic milieu to radicalisation and VE. In return, the volatile regional environment compelled Jordan to become an integral part of the global counterterrorism efforts. Therefore, the Jordanian impact can be clarified in twofold; the negative impact of exporting Jihadi fighters and radical ideologies, and the Kingdom's positive efforts to combat them.

4.1 Negative Impact

Jordan's impact has left salient traces on many regions, where Jordanian ideologues and fighters were always in Jihad's first lines. As noted by Munif Samara, a leading Salafi figure in Jordan, "Wherever there is Jihad, there are Jordanian fighters," where many of them "have become the backbone of global Jihad."²³⁶ Indeed, the Jordanian society has brought the world some of the most radical religious figures. Those Jihadis, such as Al-Zarqawi, Abu Gelebebe, and Sami Al-Uridi, had occupied senior leadership positions in notorious terrorist groups like Al-Qaeda and ISIS.²³⁷ Moreover, many Jordanians, such as Abdalla Azzam, Al-Maqdisi, and Abu Qatadah, became prominent global theorists and legal references to Jihadists worldwide.²³⁸ As Harper debated, this presence has inspired Jordanian youth to search for alternatives to society's prevalent marginalisation and despair.²³⁹

Jordanians' general culture is heavily associated with national and Islamic issues. Particularly, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict has occupied a predominant place in Jordanian people's conscience. Despite the lack of exact figures, researchers, such as Speckhard, using interviews and sentiment analysis, identified that many Jordanians, mainly of

²³⁶ "Why Jordanian Jihadists Prefer Yemen", Ammon News, 2012, <https://en.ammonnews.net/article/16637>.

²³⁷ Gråtrud, 2020. P.7-8

²³⁸ Ma'ayeh, 2013. P.12

²³⁹ Harper, 2017. P.7

Palestinian origin, maintained their association with the Palestinian cause.²⁴⁰ Indeed, the lukewarm Jordanian Israeli peace and the recurring Israeli-Palestinian bloody confrontations have triggered much tension and grudges within Jordanians and became a radicalisation driver to many.²⁴¹ This had led to relentless calls by opposition political parties and the populace to sever the relations, and became part of the constant censures against the Jordanian regime.²⁴² Also, Iraq was a close ally to neighbouring Jordan prior to 2003. Similarly, Jordanian citizens developed close social and political sentiments toward Iraq and the Iraqi ousted regime, which still enjoys high popularity in Jordan up to the present time.²⁴³ Accordingly, the 2003 American occupation of Iraq increased local pressures. It amplified antagonism stances, where Jordanians perceive the occupation as a continuation and a resemblance of past colonial mandates in the region.²⁴⁴

In parallel, Jordanians also linked strongly to contemporary Islamic Ummah's issues, which surged during the Afghan War, and later swept through other areas like Chechnya, Bosnia, and Iraq.²⁴⁵ Afterwards, with the spread of social media platforms, the public exposure of the Islamic nation's matters have increased vigorously. Accordingly, with the high number of social media users (69% of the total population in 2017),²⁴⁶ and the proliferation of atrocities' imagery on media outlets during the sectarian wars in Iraq and Syria, more Jordanians joined transnational VEOs to support their Sunni brothers against their enemies.²⁴⁷

The prevailing religious atmosphere in Jordan, and the region, plays an essential role in fostering individual compassion toward VEOs. As noted, Jordanian society has become immersed in religious identity, which has become the society's most noticeable feature in lieu of a comprehensive national one. Thus, many people resorted to religion as a safe haven, that helped obtain the missing psychological refuge and social respect. Indeed, the active presence of many popular Islamic figures, and religious movements like MB and Salafists, had transformed the Jordanian society toward radical thoughts and practices.²⁴⁸ Some of these figures and groups were allowed to spread their extreme ideologies throughout Jordan and successfully recruited thousands of followers and

²⁴⁰ Speckhard, 2017. P.11

²⁴¹ Ibid, P.26

²⁴² Sowell, 2015. P.2

²⁴³ Jason Ruffin, "The Country That Still Considers Saddam Hussein A Hero", Atlas Obscura, 2020, <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/saddam-hussein-lebanon>.

²⁴⁴ Harper, 2017. P.14

²⁴⁵ Sowell, 2015. P.12,18

²⁴⁶ "Digital 2017: Jordan", Datareportal – Global Digital Insights, 2017, <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2017-jordan?rq=Jordan>.

²⁴⁷ Speckhard, 2017. P.26

²⁴⁸ Braizat et al., 2017. P.17

disciples.²⁴⁹ As a result, Jordan became one of the main exporters of Jihadis to the world. With estimates of over three thousand foreign fighters, during the rise of ISIS, Jordan ranked the first or second country globally while topping the list with the largest number of fighters per capita.²⁵⁰

■ 4.2 Positive Impact

Jordan's positive contribution was also significant. This can be noted in the state's long-standing commitment to combating VE and terrorism through advancing its law enforcement and military capabilities. As previously noted, the Kingdom forged alliances with global powers to achieve these strategic goals. The Jordanian military and intelligence forces became integral players within the global efforts. They have performed relentless onslaughts and infiltrated terrorist cells in Afghanistan, Syria, and Iraq, to name a few.²⁵¹ Noteworthy, the General Intelligence Directorate (GID) is considered among the most adept in the region.²⁵¹ They had foiled dozens of plots and schemes against Jordan, and their influence extended beyond borders.²⁵² It can be debated that GID's domestic efforts had protected the Kingdom and were integral in preventing more Jordanian Jihadis from leaving. Externally, the Jordanian agency constantly shared intel with other agencies regarding transnational cells and plots, by infiltrating many local and global Jihadis.²⁵⁴ Notably, Jordanian intelligence where the first agency to penetrate Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan.²⁵⁵ Also, they collaborated with the Americans in locating Al-Zarqawi in Iraq, which resulted in his assassination.²⁵⁶ In tandem, the Jordanian military efforts were also tremendous, as they served with other global forces in conducting military attacks and operations in different world regions. Remarkably, together with the US, Jordan conducted more missions than all other coalition members against ISIS in the past years.²⁵⁷ As such, Jordan's dedication and collaboration ranked the Kingdom among the most important actors against terrorism.

Noticeably, the Jordanian state efforts, particularly joining Western countries in the war on terrorism, were unwelcomed locally.²⁵⁸ Together with political and Islamic movements, public calls repeatedly requested total disengagement from the war against

²⁴⁹ Speckhard, 2017. P.22

²⁵⁰ Harper, 2017. P.7

²⁵¹ Warrick, 2015. P.199

²⁵² Nesser and Gråtrud, 2019. P.492

²⁵³ Ibid, P.495

²⁵⁴ Yitzhak, 2016. P.229

²⁵⁵ Abdulla, 2012. P.256

²⁵⁶ Warrick, 2015. P.8

²⁵⁷ Ibid, P.10

²⁵⁸ Warrick, 2015. P.93

fellow Muslims.²⁵⁹ However, these calls had waxed and waned upon political and social circumstances. For instance, the burning of a Jordanian military pilot by ISIS in 2015 caused a paradigm shift in public sentiment toward supporting the state's efforts in combating ISIS and similar groups.²⁶⁰ But then again, such national unity incidents were not enough to limit the surge of radicalisation in the country. ²⁶¹ Despite the high percentage of Jordanians considering ISIS as a terrorist organisation (89% according to the 2016 IRI poll), ²⁶² many others described groups like Al-Qaeda and Hamas as legitimate resistance movements.²⁶³

To sum it up, the dualistic impact of Jordan had prompted the country's specificity. Despite the demise of terrorist groups, the country had still suffered some terrorist attacks in the past few years, indicating the persistence of drivers to VE in the country and the necessity of changing the tools and methods used to counter it. ²⁶⁴ Globally, the efforts put by the international community to counter terrorism and VE needs to be further consolidated to adapt to VEOs strategic and operational changes, where the latter became more dependent on lone-wolf attacks rather than paramilitary operations.²⁶⁵

²⁵⁹ Sowell,2015. P.20

²⁶⁰ Nesser and Gråtrud,2019. P.497

²⁶¹ Yom and Sammour,2017. P.28

²⁶² IRI,2016. P.42

²⁶³ Speckhard,2017. P.23

²⁶⁴ Saud Al-Sharafat, "Sustained Counterterrorism Efforts Remain Key to Preventing Attacks in Jordan", The Washington Institute, 2021,

<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/sustained-counterterrorism-efforts-remain-key-preventing-attacks-jordan>.

²⁶⁵ Hassan,2021.

Insofar, Jordanian authorities successfully, but painstakingly, have navigated the country away from the local and regional minefields and emerging threats. Nevertheless, the Kingdom is still in the storm's eye, and the enormous difficulties it is facing are still present. Issues such as the stagnant economy, high unemployment rates, and decaying social fabric are among the most significant challenges Jordan is encountering nowadays. To make things worse, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the economic difficulties and the associated grievances.²⁶⁶

In that regard, the Jordanian impact on VE and terrorism had affected the world, as the paper highlighted that social divisions and economic difficulties led many Jordanians to adopt an Islamic identity. These circumstances created susceptibility towards VE, where the regional settings paved the pathway for over 3,000 Jordanians to join transnational VEOs.

On the other hand, the state's efforts to combat VE's rise had managed to mitigate the risks. It was noted that the state measures need to be more diversified and orchestrated. Particularly, the state must put some changes to the measures used to address the existing grievances, and not limit the efforts towards countering VE and religious narrative's prevalence.²⁶⁷ Also, the state needs to empower and include all related parties to achieve tangible results to face radicalisation and VE in the country.²⁶⁸

Finally, the literature review indicated several gaps. As such, academic research must use other measurement and analytical tools to study VE in Jordan. Most importantly, future research should focus on profiles of the imprisoned extremists to develop a better understanding and provide context-specific recommendations to the authorities of the adequate tools for P/CVE.

²⁶⁶ Mhadeen et al.,2021. P.16

²⁶⁷ Yom and Sammour,2017. P.28

²⁶⁸ Preparing Adolescents in Jordan For Productive, Engaged, and Resilient Adulthood (UNICEF, 2020), <https://www.unicef.org/documents/preparing-adolescents-jordan-productive-engaged-and-resilient-adulthood>.

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