

## **The Role of the Jordanian Army in Regional Stability: Its role in the Arab Spring as case study (2011-2016)**

*Walid Khalid Abu-Dalbouh \**

### **ABSTRACT**

The Arab Spring has changed the political dynamics of the Middle East dramatically since late 2010. Starting from the revolution in Tunisia, subsequent revolutions and political disorder swiftly swept across the so called Arab region/ the Arab uprising. Jordan also witnessed strong waves of political movements demanding various forms of reforms. Despite political frustrations, the overall political scene in Jordan appeared much more stable and much less violent compared to other Arab countries. The state security apparatus kept the domestic political situation highly under control and the riot police (Darak forces) was very active to suppress small civil uprisings in different cities within the kingdom. The Jordanian army remained unused instrument in dealing with the political movements which took place since late 2010. Since there has been no significant role taken by the Jordanian army domestically. The question worth asking here is, whether and to what extent the Jordanian army has had a relevant role in dealing with overall social and political movements in the Middle East since the spark of the Arab Spring. The objective of this research accordingly is to assess the extent to which military power in general and the Jordanian army in specific is capable to deliver peace and stability. The paper argues that the Arab Spring has enhanced the external role of the Jordanian army in the region, in particular in Arab states which have confronted social unrest and civic violence since early 2011. The paper starts with a historical description of the emergence of the Jordanian military to cast the gradual transformation of Jordanian Army duties and responsibilities to serve state's national interests at various periods of time. With its descriptive approach – along with qualitative personal interviews method in many occasions - the paper investigates how the Arab Spring enforced an external role of the Jordanian military. It examines the role of the Jordanian army in four Arab states affected by political and social uprisings: Bahrain, Libya, Egypt, and Syria using critical analysis based on empirical findings and feedback interview information. In the final section, the paper assesses the relevance of external engagement of the military for generating funds for the Jordanian kingdom and how these feed into the national security strategy in the context of enhanced regional instability.

**Keywords:** the Jordanian Armed forces, the Arab Spring, Stability, Foreign Policy, Peacekeeping Mission.

### **Introduction**

#### **I. Historical Perspective: Formulation of Jordanian Armed Forces.**

“The Arab Army constituted a second, very effective, supratribal structure, which incorporated the tribes into the state structure”(Qudat and Shboul, 2010).

##### **I.I. King Abdullah I Era**

The British colonial authorities had been directly involved in the creation of the first Jordanian (Transjordanian) regular army, the “Arab Legion”, in 1923. The Legion, which consisted mainly of public police and "mobile forces", excluded persons with Transjordanian origin from joining the army. The then Emir Abdullah of Jordan recruited most member troops of the Arab Army from senior Syrian nationalists, as he had the political ambition to rule Syria after the

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French had had to give up the dream of forming an Arab politically unified entity under the Hashemite reign. The structure of the Legion also assisted the Emir to counter domestic challenges raised from native Jordanians.<sup>1</sup>

From the onset of his reign, the Emir had faced serious security challenges. The southern part of the kingdom for instance, he suffered continued threats from the Wahhabi forces attacking Ibn Saud since August 1922. Claiming that Transjordan was the northern extension of his Kingdom, Ibn Saud managed to eventually succeed in building strong ties with some southern Jordanian tribes (Morris, 1959).

In 1924, the Ibn Saud forces were once again only nine miles south of Amman, to a point where they almost had changed the modern history of Transjordan (Lisa, 1956).

In both cases, the British used air raids via Royal Air Force (RAF) to restore political stability and preserve Abdullah's 'throne'.

The British were worried that the Wahhabi Islamic movement might endanger the future of Israel planned to be established on the territory inhabited by the Palestinians then. What is more important here, this military intervention incident is deemed the first time that a foreign power used military power to defend the Emir's throne against not only domestic outcries but against foreign threats, as well. Without British help, the Emirate could not have deterred the hostile forces nor maintained its survival. Mary Wilson contends:

"More importantly, it [the ultimatum] forcibly reminded Abdullah, in case he had forgotten, the lessons of the 'Adwan revolt' and the other massive Wahhabi attack of 15 August 1922, that he could not rule Transjordan without British military support" (Wilson, 1984).

Financial 'assistance' had played a key role in maintaining this political equilibrium. During the early era of the emirate of Jordan, patron-client relations evolved between the British authorities and the Emir, on the one hand, and the British authorities and the Jordanian tribes, on the other. Both expressed mutual interests, with the overall advantage at the donor's part. In this respect, Anne Marie Baylouny reveals:

"John Bagot Glubb, the British officer charged with subduing the bedouin, recruited the desert tribes into the Arab Legion, offering benefits unavailable elsewhere. Famines were created and then alleviated by the ruling British. Tax revolts were forcibly put down by the army, the institution which integrated and employed the local population. Initially somewhat mercenary in origin, with some hailing from outside Jordan, military personnel became regime supporters." (Baylouny, 2008).

In the same vein, Mary Wilson depicts how British financial assistance influenced the political decision making of the Emir. She argues:

"A financial settlement set British financial assistance to Transjordan at the amount of 1500 Pounds for the year beginning 1 April 1923. Tied to that assistance were certain conditions, both financial and political." (Wilson, 1974).

The political tie was mainly conditioned with a reform of the security forces – combining the reserve forces, the police, and the gendarmerie to put them under British commander Peake. (Ibid).

In 1928, Transjordan and Britain signed a treaty that defined the parameters of bilateral cooperation, which endorsed British dominance in managing the Jordanian armed forces. Subsequently, the agreement facilitated the right for the British to deploy a contingent in the emirate, and to interfere exclusively in issues related to external defense. The number of troops in the Arab Legion was reduced to 600 men along with 300 Camel Corps. In 1931, the Bedouin corps entered the Arab Legion. (Jordan- military Heritage, 2013).

In 1946, under the Treaty of London, Jordan gained independence whereby the Emirate of Transjordan became the Hashemite kingdom of Jordan. However, despite major constitutional reforms in 1946 and 1952, the Jordanian armed forces remained under British domination until 1957. (Tell, 2004).

### **I.II. King Hussein Era**

In 1956, King Hussein had discharged the British Chief Commander of the Jordanian army, John Bagot-Glubb,

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<sup>1</sup>For further readings, read Wilson, Mary C. King Abdullah, Britain, and the Making of Jordan. Cambridge [Cambridgeshire: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

allowing Arab commanders to assume leadership posts in the army in order to ease nationalists' growing criticisms and demands. Since then, numerous native Jordanians with high ranks began to join the armed forces. The police force – later known as Department of Public Police – was declared independent from the army and embedded in the authority of the Ministry of Interior. (Massad, 2001).

By the late 1950s, the demise of British regional influence accelerated. Especially following anti-imperialist demonstrations against Jordan's joining the pro-Western Baghdad Pact. Ignited by the mounting wave of Arab nationalism inspired by President Nasir of Egypt, some high-ranking Jordanian armed officers became mobilizers for anti-royalist sentiments. A secret militant group emerged, the "Free Officers", resembling that of Egypt in 1952, headed by chief of staff General Ali Abu Nuwar, who attempted a military coup in 1957.(Ibid).

Following this event, the USA became a significant financial supporter and supplier of the Jordanian armed forces, and advanced to the main military supplier in 1967. Dependence of the Hashemite kingdom on western powers, mainly the United States, continued during the 1970s until present. During the Cold War, the scale of assistance was contingent upon the degree of fear of former Soviet influence coupled with the degree of commitment Jordan's army applied towards peace and regional stability. (Terrill,2008). The Jordanian military underwent dramatic reformation and reorganization in the context of a general institutional change during the 1960s.

The Jordanian Armed Forces (JAF) basically kept land, naval and air forces whereas the Bedouin corps were also separated and transferred to the Department of Public Police under the Ministry of Interior. A General Intelligence Department was established in 1964. In addition, a very loyal unit of personal bodyguards was created by personal instructions of King Hussein, most of whom were Circassians. Such structural and functional decentralization of military institutions along with the continuous rotation of commanders at various levels were a shrewd way to ensure the loyalty of the armed forces to the Hashemite dynasty. Personnel circulation also applied to the political establishment. This model of the relationship between the elites and leadership has remained relevant to this day. In the military, many senior posts were occupied by individuals from North Caucasus communities, Bedouins and several tribes who had proven their absolute loyalty. Depoliticization of the army and a legislated ban on the establishment of political parties and political activities of the Armed Forces were the most important conditions for its functioning and a guarantee for ideological homogeneity of the officer corps. The military service was regarded as a way to solve material-financial and social status issues, and as an institution for education. Accordingly, the most motivated individual came from middle class families as well as from Bedouin tribes of the central and southern parts of the country, which largely predetermined the social and tribal structure of the Jordanian army. A process of "Jordanization" of the army was evident with this attempt to achieve ideological consolidation by creating a structure of ethnical homogeneity.

In the 1980s, a process of displacement of national minorities, in particular the North Caucasian diaspora, from the important posts in the army and the king's security forces started. They were replaced by the Bedouin tribes.(Ibid). The leadership percentage of Palestinian officers above rank of captain was maintained at about 10%. This also pertained to the Ministry of Interior and the military courts. At the same time, to avoid charges of discrimination, the Jordanian leadership directed the Palestinians into the Liberation Army of Palestine. This attracted a number of Palestinians into officers' positions in the Jordanian military, as well as created Palestinian military personnel, trained in Jordan and other Arab countries, which was loyal to the Hashemite Kingdom.

New to Jordan was the fact that members of the royal family began to serve in the military. In the 1960's and 1970's, only distant relatives of the King had served in the Jordanian Armed Forces, such as sheriffs Nasser Bin Jamil, Seid Bin Shaker, Ghazi Hamed bin Saad al-Din and Mohammed Ghaleb al Hashme Mohammed. In the 1980's and 1990's, children of King Hussein came to serve in the Jordanian military. In addition, the current monarch, King Abdullah Bin Al-Husseini spent on active duty almost 18 years from 1981 to 1999, serving from lieutenant to major general and commander of the Special Forces. His brother, Prince Faisal, became combat pilot, and in the beginning of March 2002, commander of the Jordanian Air Force. Their sister, Princess Aisha, holds the rank of colonel and in 1995 headed the Jordanian Women's section of the armed forces. Tribal loyalty of the Army has remains sincere and exclusive to the

Hashemite throne until today.

## **II. The path towards external role of the Jordanian Army: A Historical Glance.**

Starting in Angola in 1989, the Jordanian military participated in peacekeeping missions in former Yugoslavia, 1992-1997 (15346 soldiers), East Timor, 2000-2002 (2994 soldiers) Ethiopia and Eritrea (2000 – present), Kosovo 1999 – 2001 (208 soldiers), and Tajikistan, 1998-2000, where Jordan sent a medical team in addition to 28 military observers. The Jordanian military supported peacekeeping missions in Angola, 1996 -1997, (3 officers and 14 military observers), the Democratic Republic of Congo, 2000 – present (28 officers) (Ghadi, 2010).

In order to optimize the operational connection of the Royal Armed Forces in peacekeeping operations, in 2001 the law of 1964 was amended and a new provision stated that Jordan could "send troops abroad to help the troops of other countries at the request of its legitimate leadership to save victims of war and natural disasters"(Ibid 2010). This is an indirect indication that in the 1990 and 2000s, the foreign policy of Jordan evolved toward greater openness to the outside world and focused on issues of regional and international security. In the period following September 11, 2001, the Jordanian military took part in one special operation in Afghanistan, executed paratroopers' missions, provided medical services and security activities (Ibid, 2010). Since 2003, the Jordanian army has helped Iraqis by providing them with military and police training as well as donating military and police equipment. The armed forces trained tens of thousands of Iraqi troops and policemen after the U.S.-led invasion. As far as counter terrorism activities are concerned, the Jordanian army established special forces operation units (elite troops of the Jordan army), which are armed with very advanced weapons of a high technology and undergo sophisticated trainings for specific missions outside the kingdom. Some of these units took actions in Iraq in 2006, where they participated in Zarqawi's assassination, who had been the leader of Al Qaeda in Iraq (Ajarmeh, 2013).

From 1999 to 2008, the authority and role of the armed forces had steadily increased. This can be related to the lengthy military background of Abdullah II. This also has strengthened the prestige of military service, which is valued as an important attribute for career advancement. The Jordanian military provides military and medical training and assistance to the militaries of other states. Jordanian military hospitals have been established in war zones such as Afghanistan and Iraq. The Jordanian military also has provided help and relief in countries which had been affected by natural disasters or any other type of catastrophe (Sharp, 2012). Today, the Jordanian army is considered to be one of the most professional and well organized armies in the world.

The military's strong beliefs in the Arab-Islamic values and its tribal-based structure enabled it to play an important regional and international role (Brand, 1995:45). This was verified in the constant Jordanian military participation in peacekeeping operations, which expanded during the reign of King Abdullah II. The Jordanian military's active role in regional and international arenas can be understood, in the first place, as a regime survival strategy, where Jordan's army has been an effective means for preserving the kingdom (Bligh, 2001). Jordan's basic problem arises from its geopolitical situation, being surrounded by countries that are militarily stronger or richer than Jordan. In the context of a 'troubled region', Jordan has adopted a moderate policy to safeguard for its national security interests. The kingdom never had had the plan to attack any of its neighbors, but Jordan's Army has adopted a defensive doctrine to ensure the safety and security of the country (ibid). Against this background, the Jordanian kingdom strives to participate in international peacekeeping missions and to enhance its image as peace-loving nation, that would not hesitate to play humanitarian roles within its modest capabilities.

## **III. Doctrine, Structure, and Operations of the Jordanian Army**

### **III.I. Introduction**

Since 1977, the Jordanian army has consisted of four divisions: two armored, and two mechanized. Until 1994, the main spoken objective of the Jordanian army (Arab Legion) had been to protect Arab land and preserve its sovereignty. Between 1970 and 1984, more than 4,000 officers and 7,000 enlisted personnel from Arab states attended military

institutions in Jordan” (Mohan, 1989).

After signing the Wadi Araba Peace Treaty with Israel, the main declared objective changed the focus towards defending king and kingdom from internal challenges and external threats. (Bligh, 2001). This implied a shift from the general orientation of protecting the land of the Arabs towards the territory of Jordan within the kingdom's boundaries. The King of Jordan is the Supreme Commander of the land, naval and air forces;(The Jordanian constitution, art x). he can declare war, conclude peace and ratify treaties and agreements.(The Jordanian constitution, art 33/1). The generals of the armed forces serve as the Ministry of Defense, whereas the Prime Minister serves as the Minister of Defense. The Chief of the General staff commands 90,000 active troops – distributed in six major commands -along with nearly 60,000 militants in reserve. Despite the shift in focus, the Jordanian military continued to supply the Arab Gulf states with advisers, mostly personnel in reserve status, who had completed their active duty, and combat troops to assist the governments in the Gulf in confronting security threats. Besides its defense tasks, the Jordanian army runs businesses and has formed military companies in various sectors, among them defense products such as (in the King Abdullah II for Design and Developing (KADDB). It is a joint venture between the state and private business (KADDB, 2012).

The Jordanian armed forces own ten percent shares in KADDB, the rest of the shares are mainly owned by Jordanian, Asian or other foreign companies from the UAE, Malaysia, Saudi-Arabia, Belgium, and Turkey. Jordanian military officers run the national companies involved in KADDB in construction (national Arab Company for Constructions and Contracting), in food and catering (Al-Wala’ Company), and in medical and health services (Royal Medical Services).

After the end of the Cold War, the Jordanian armed forces began to take an active part in peacekeeping operations under the auspices of the UN. This was an important factor in increasing the international political status of the Hashemite Kingdom and the mechanism of a broader integration into the global security framework. Since 1993, the Jordanian military's presence in the UN peacekeeping missions has included Cambodia (UNTAC), Somalia (UNOSOM), Angola (UNAVEM), former Yugoslavia (UNTAES, UNMIBH, UNPREDEP, UNMOP), Tajikistan (UNMOT), Georgia (UNOMIG), Sierra Leone, Liberia (UNOMIL), Rwanda (UNAMIR), Mozambique (UNUMOZ), Haiti (UNMIH), Indonesia (East Timor), and Afghanistan (Jordanian armed forces).

### **III.II Regional Role**

In addition to providing domestic and border security for the country, the Jordanian armed forces in general, and the Jordanian army in specific, assumed a prominent regional and international role as provider of humanitarian assistance and military training. Jordan dispatched several field hospitals to conflict zones and areas affected by natural disasters across the world such as Iraq, the West Bank, Lebanon, Afghanistan, Haiti, Indonesia, Congo, Liberia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sierra Leone, and Pakistan. The Kingdom's field hospitals extended aid to about one million people in the West Bank and 55,000 in Lebanon.(JAF, 2013). In international peacekeeping missions, the Jordanian military provides observers, international police, liaison officers, multi-national standby forces / high radiance brigade, peacekeeping and protection forces, arapid reaction force, and a military stabilization force. Secondly, Jordan participates in activities related to humanitarian and diplomatic missions sending electionobservers and humanitarian assistance escorts, supporting diplomatic efforts and running military field hospitals.(International Engagement, 2014). In close cooperation with the United States Enhanced International Peacekeeping Capabilities (EIPC) and The Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI) programs, the Jordanian army established the Jordan Peace Operation Training Center (JPOTC). “New training facilities were built along with improved course material covering the myriad the United Nations peacekeeping sphere of influence”(Ibid). The total number of Jordanians participating in the international peacekeeping operations in various areas of the United Nations peacekeeping troops and staff, hospital and international observers, reached nearly 66 thousand soldiers(Ibid). So far Jordan has participated in twenty three different states internationally. Jordan has become one of the most recognized nations in fostering principles of peace, stability and justice at regional and global levels.

Whereas Jordan had suffered economically throughout the period between 2003 and 2008 was a period of an economic boom for Jordan. By2008, running parallel to the war on Iraq, Jordan had moved from the 20th to the 4th most

militarized nation in the world. During 2009, when most countries around the world, including Jordan, struggled to recover from the global financial crisis, the Kingdom ranked 5th (“Jordan: One Of The Most Militarized Nations On Earth”).

The Jordanian army is equipped with Grade A weapons, supplied from the West, and the military expenditure has increased, representing about a quarter of the entire state budget. In 2010, Jordan had maintained the position of the fifth-most militarized nation in the world according to the 2010 Global Military Index (BICC). Only Israel, Singapore, Syria and Russia were ahead of the Kingdom. However, it is worth noting that there is ambiguity and secrecy surrounding military expenditures. Tell contends:

“As far as the security sector is concerned, its reliance on external aid limits the authority of the parliamentary supervision. In addition to this, the Ministry of Defenses’ budget is presented to parliament as one block item, meaning that the parliament is denied any knowledge of what the expenditure of the Ministry of Defense will be spent on. The budget for the police force, on the other hand, is itemized, but still remains very ambiguous. As far as the General Intelligence Department is concerned, its expenditures cannot be traced in the state budget at all” (Tell, 2004).

In short, with the aid of the U.S., the Jordanian military has been able to transform itself into one of the most powerful forces in the region, playing a significant role internationally, as well. Nevertheless, the primary objectives of the Jordanian armed forces include protecting the borders from any invasion, protecting the people and their rights, protecting the King, maintaining law and order, and maintaining the internal security of the country.

#### **IV. The Role of the Jordanian Army in the Arab Spring Uprisings**

"Following the Arab Spring, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan seems to have faced less instability than its neighbors, much like monarchies across the region. Analysts agree that the regime has navigated the demands of its population in a manner that has preserved its own control" (ElKurd, 2017).

This section seeks to shed light on the roles that Jordan’s Army has taken in a number of Arab states which encountered waves of the Arab Spring uprisings with special reference to Libya, Yemen, and Syria. The main factors shaping the Jordanian army's stance towards the Arab Spring were its long-established regional presence, its responsiveness towards the interventions of the international community, and its professionalism.

##### ***IV.I. The Jordan Armed Forces in Libya***

Inspired by the success of the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt, the Libyan uprising began on February 15 when protests erupted in the Eastern city of Benghazi and quickly spread towards the capital city of Tripoli. (Silverman, 2012). Peaceful protests quickly turned into a bloody crackdown by Colonel Gadhafi's military forces. The protests spread across the country and anti-Gadhafi forces established a provisional government based in Benghazi to overthrow the government in Tripoli. As a response to the killing of thousands of Libyans, on 17 March 2011, United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973 authorized a no-fly zone over Libya, and "all necessary measures" to protect civilians (Nuruzzaman, 2013). Jordan took over an active role within this military campaign, supporting the NATO mission in Libya (Pentagon Chief, 2011). On 4 April 2011, two Royal Jordanian Air Force fighter jets arrived at a military airbase in the European Union to support the coalition. (Jordanian fighters protecting aid missions, 2011). According to Foreign Minister Nasser Jude, they would provide "logistical support and help escort Jordanian transports making use of the humanitarian corridor to deliver aid and supplies confirming that the Jordanian government was prepared to pursue efforts at all levels to help protect civilians and end the crisis (Jordanian fighters protecting aid missions, 2011). After ousting Gadhafi, Jordan’s army offered to participate in the international efforts to restructure the newly established military and security forces in Libya. Jordan trained Libyan forces at KASOTC (King Abdullah Special Operations Center), besides other security and police troops which enrolled in training courses run by the Jordanian police forces. In an interview with one of the Jordanian fighter pilots who participated in the Libya mission, Maj. Aballah Haddad explained:

“Basically the role of the Royal Jordanian Air Force was to provide logistical support for the mission, besides

participating with six F-16 jets to impose a no-fly zone mission” (Haddad, 2014).

Moreover, Jordan actively supported the new government in Libya. On 19 January 2012, it was announced that Jordan would train 10,000 revolutionary militiamen in order to integrate them into the Libyan National Army (Mustafa, 2013). Those forces were trained later on in Jordanian military training centers. In addition to that Jordan offered to participate in restructuring the Libyan defense establishment and expressed its willingness to train Libyan policemen on security and police-related issues in order to incorporate them in the new Libyan defense and security establishments (Ibid).

#### ***IV.II Engagement of the Jordanian Armed Forces in Yemen***

The relations between the Jordanian army and its Yemeni counterpart go back years before the Arab Spring. The Jordanian military served as a reliable partner in supporting Yemen to counter the spread of Al-Qaida-linked organizations. It provided counterterrorism training at the King Abdullah II Special Operations Training Center (KASOTC) and teaching courses for Yemenite troops how to address security problems with minimum force being directed at the population in conflict areas. Because of the Jordanian involvement in international peacekeeping, the Jordanian military is able to apply some of the principles used in an international environment in places such as Sa’ada province and various trouble spots in southern Yemen. The Jordanian army also maintains a Peacekeeping Operations Center based in Zarqa (Terrill, 2011). After the Yemeni spring, Jordan continued to support the Yemeni military through the transitional period. In 2013, a Jordanian military committee was created to provide reorganization recommendations to the Yemeni Ministries of Defense and Interior. The Jordanian committee includes a broad range of security experts who are specialized in reorganizing public sector and military systems. It is the second Jordanian team working in Yemen after President Hadi declined a strategy plan proposed by the European Union (Qaed, 2013). According to General Riyadh Al-Qirshi, the Head of the Restructure Committee in the Ministry of Interior, “once the Jordanian team concludes its work and presents recommendations, a joint Yemeni-Jordanian committee will work on implementation” (Ibid).

In addition to that, the Yemeni Brig. Gen. Ali Naji Obaid, the head of the Military Studies Center General, stressed that the Ministry of the Interior was keen to benefit from Jordan’s military experience. Their structuring should be in line with an integrated project to constitutionally develop the Ministry of the Interior by changing the organization’s structure and responsibilities, training people in effective work techniques and focusing on human resources. Obaid asserted that improving these three areas could result in a quantum leap in the performance of the police force and contribute to building trust between the local population and the police. He highlighted that the current organizational structure of the ministry included too many areas of responsibility such as prisons, civil unrest, public security, ports and logistical facilities, which consume the efforts of security officers. Reorganizing the Ministry of the Interior would allow them to focus on specific areas (Ibid). One of the senior Jordanian officers who was dispatched to Yemen to help restructuring the Yemeni military, Col. Ahmad Dwairi, stated:

“During my tour of duty which lasted for one year, we tried to help out his Yemeni counterparts on how to establish a modern disciplined military away from tribal links and affiliations. Our mission was difficult at the beginning; however after a while we have seen reasonable progress” (Dwairi, 2015).

During a recent visit of the Jordanian Prime Minister Abdallah Al-Nsourin Yemen, the Yemeni Prime Minister Basendwa praised the renaissance and progress Jordan had witnessed in all aspects of life despite limited resources. He thanked the Kingdom for its role in restructuring the Yemeni armed forces after the revolution. He described the Jordanian army as being organized, disciplined and professional. Basendwa said that he was interested in benefiting from Jordan's reform expertise which, he said, was on the right track. (Petra News Agency, 2014).

#### ***IV.III Border Protection in the Context of Civil War in Syria***

Since 2011, the conflict in Syria has devolved from anti-government protests to a full-scale civil war with regional spillovers, resulting in the deaths hundreds of thousands, and millions of refugees (Abushakra, 2013). As a response to the deteriorated security situation in Syria and other neighboring countries, the JAF established a military force to

maintain the security and safety of all Jordanian borders from increasing threats. Besides other vital security missions, the Border Guards Forces played an important role in dealing with the Syrian refugees coming to the Jordanian borders. Brigadier General Hussein Zyoud, the commander of the Border Guards Forces, stated that the Syrian refugees were crossing the border from several unofficial points along the Jordanian-Syrian border, which extends for more than 370 kilometers. He added:

“Nearly 1.3 million refugees crossed to Jordan since the outbreak of the crisis, nearly 570.000 of them have crossed the borders from unofficial crossing points, representing the majority of them entire families of children, women, and the elderly”(Mrayat, 2013).

Besides this, hundreds of those refugees were wounded, and some of them were severely injured, and required immediate medical treatment. Captain Ahmad Salameh, who is working as a paramedic at one of the refugees' crossing points into Jordan, explained that specialized military teams from the Royal Medical Services were dispatched to the main refugee-crossing points to deal with such cases (Salameh, 2015). He added that there was an increasing number of casualties among the Syrian refugees requiring an increase in The ambulances help facilitate evacuation of the wounded to hospitals and medical centers, both military and civilian nearby. According to Salameh, the issue of receiving refugees was quite complicated and required additional efforts from the Jordanian armed forces, taking into consideration that some of them might have nefarious intentions toward Jordan such as smuggling arms and drugs to Jordan. Besides other constraints like extreme weather conditions, he noted that the armed forces had provided transportation means from crossing areas into front shelters up by the armed forces for this purpose and then to the refugee camps prepared for their stay. Salameh said that the headquarters of the JAF was working to provide all forms of logistical and technical support, as well as medical and administrative preparations. He stressed that this added a heavy burden on the budget of the armed forces. Another aspect of the Jordanian military's role in the Syrian conflict was participation within the UN observer mission in Syria.

In April 2012, after 13 months of conflict at a point where the Syrian crisis reached unprecedented levels of violence and destruction, the Syrian government had accepted a UN-brokered ceasefire agreement. The UN Security Council's passage of Resolutions 2042 and 2043 established and deployed an observer mission called the United Nations Supervision Mission in Syria (UNSMIS) headed by Norwegian Major General Robert Mood (Sharp, 2012). According to its mandate, the mission for the operation was to monitor the cessation of all armed violence and to monitor and support the full implementation of the Six Point Plan created by Special Envoy Kofi Annan. UNSMIS was one of the most rapidly deployed missions in UN peacekeeping history. There was no ceasefire in place, fighting was going on throughout the country, no security guarantees had been granted and there was no proper communications network in place. Jordan had decided to participate in the mission in Syria with twelve military observers. According to Maj. Ennab, who is a Jordanian army major and participated as military observer in this mission, one of the main tasks of his team was to monitor the ceasefire and report any violation. Ennab stated that whenever they patrolled, they were being followed by some regime security elements especially in the regime-controlled areas.

“In the first few weeks of our arrival, things seemed to be quite and calm. We were able to negotiate truces and ceasefire with fighters from both sides at local level. However, the situation changed, as the population in the areas controlled by the opposition became frustrated when the UN was unable to achieve anything concrete with regard to security and humanitarian needs” (Ennab, 2015).

Ennab elaborated that people started to be aggressive towards UN personnel, crowding around their convoys, damaging vehicles. After the security situation changed and became extremely threatening to the UNSMIS patrols, the Head of Mission decided to suspend active operational activities on 15 June 2012. Few weeks later the mission was suspended. Jordan is reinforcing its northern border, sending thousands of additional troops to the frontier, not only to protect fleeing Syrians, but also to prevent terrorist infiltration (Shenker). Jordanian and Syrian forces reportedly exchanged fire near the Ramtha border crossing. Besides that, during clashes between Syrian rebels and regime forces near the borders with Jordan, several mortar shells and rockets fell within Jordanian territories, causing chaos and fear

among the population of the Jordanian border towns. According to a security official (preferring not to mention his name), the protracted war and the security vacuum in Syria have led to the spread of Al-Qaeda-linked groups in Syria, with a potential to spread into neighboring countries including Jordan (ANON, 2015). Those terrorist groups might direct illicit activities such as smuggling people, weapons, and drugs towards Jordan in order to destabilize the country. As a response to these serious developments, Jordan's army is very keen to remain vigilant on maintaining the safety and security of Jordanian territories. As the violence in Syria is affecting Jordan, the Jordanian government also may indirectly aid certain parties to the conflict. Several press reports alleged that Jordan was serving as conduit for weapons purchased by the Gulf States to support rebel factions within the armed opposition in Syria (Sharp, 2012). In addition to that, and despite Jordanian official denial of any covert involvement in supplying armament, some media reports suggested that Jordan was training Free Syrian Army (FSA) fighters in Jordanian military installations with the supervision of American instructors.

#### ***IV.IV Military Cooperation with Bahrain***

Jordan and Bahrain historically have had extraordinarily strong relations, which were unique compared with Jordan's relations with the other Gulf countries. (Hussein 2012). The military of the two countries has established longstanding cooperation, whereby Jordanian military servicemen played a vital role in building the Bahraini military forces. Besides that there are hundreds of Jordanian retired military officers who contracted with the Bahraini military establishment mainly in training and military education programs. Since the beginning of riots in Bahrain in 2011, Jordan has called for a peaceful settlement of the tensions between the government and the opposition in Bahrain. One week after the beginning of protests in Bahrain, the Jordanian Government invited the Bahraini opposition for a dialogue with the government and urged them to respond positively to an initiative launched by the Bahraini Monarch. Jordan also expressed its absolute rejection of foreign interference in Bahrain's internal affairs. (Official statement for Jordan's foreign minister, 2011). Despite official denials, reports persist that Jordan sent nearly 500 soldiers (one battalion) for the Gendarmerie to support Bahraini Forces. It is worth mentioning, that those forces are not part of the Jordanian army. The Gendarmerie Forces are part of the security apparatus that belongs to the Ministry of Interior. Several press reports indicated that those Jordanian Gendarmerie troops had taken part in the Bahraini government crackdown against the opposition. In al-Qabas journal published in Kuwait, it was written that, according to Jordanian sources, three Jordanian gendarmes had been injured in Bahrain while assisting in returning security and stability to Bahrain. This was denied by a Jordanian government spokesman and the Jordanian Gendarmerie which emphasized that there had been no Jordanian gendarmes or police in Bahrain (Hussein, 2012). However, informants confirmed that retired officers and personnel of the Gendarmerie Forces had made contracts with Bahrain to serve in the military or work in civilian jobs using their previous experience to fulfil their new tasks (interview). Bahrain requested Aljazeera shield to sustain the stability and security there and to interfere in the mass protests of the opposition in Bahrain based on the joint defense agreements of the Gulf states treaties signed by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) members. Please comment on the role of JAF in Bahrain in comparison with the other MENA states.

#### **Conclusion**

The chaos brought by what is called the Arab Spring has put all states affected by dominos spillover effects into serious pressure. Although the use of force was the last resort to counter mounting uprisings and restore stability, it became apparently imminent in most cases. Accordingly, the role of Arab armies have been profoundly been invested in by most Arab regimes during the Arab Spring so as to restore stability to their own regimes and states alike.

Even though severe security and political turmoil that ignited different areas in Arab world since early days of 2011, Jordan has so far managed to overcome such similar repercussions emanated from Arab Spring. The kingdom is considered to be one of the most stable countries in the region particularly when compared to the Levant, and North Africa regions.

Accordingly, the Jordanian experience demonstrated different story from those of Arab states who underwent the forces of the Arab Spring. Indeed, the security conditions were not alarming enough to pose danger to the monarchy; yet it has not been tested so far. Accordingly, the Jordanian Army played no genuine role whatsoever in the domestic front as internal mobilizations and forces were deemed not alarming enough to demand such high level forces to intervene. However, the paper has demonstrated that the Jordanian army has been much more active at regional level than at the domestic one. The overall role of the Army evolved mainly in non-combat missions and activities to sustain stability and security. Thus the paper examined the role of Jordanian army in four different Arab states affected by waves of Arab Spring. The paper concluded that the Jordanian army was important factor in providing political stability - to either maintain survival of existing Arab regimes (Bahrain) or fostering the establishment of newly established political regimes (Libya).

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## دور الجيش الأردني في الاستقرار الاقليمي: الربيع العربي كحالة دراسية (2011- 2016)

وليد خالد أبو دلبوح \*

### ملخص

كان للربيع العربي أثر كبير في التحولات السياسية التي شهدتها منطقة الشرق الأوسط منذ عام 2010. منذ اندلاع شرارتها الأولى في تونس شهد الأردن تباعاً موجات من المظاهرات والاحتجاجات الشعبية مطالبة لاصلاحيات شاملة. ولكن بالرغم من تعاظم هذه الموجات الاحتجاجية، بقي الأردن الى حد ما في حالة من الاستقرار خاصة عند مقارنته بالدول المجاورة التي عاصرت ارتدادات الربيع العربي. وقد اكتفت الدولة الاردنية باجهزتها الأمنية استخدام قوات الشرطة والدرك لمواجهة الاحتجاجات الداخلية، أما الجيش فقد بقي بعيداً عن المشهد في الشارع كون المظاهرات في أوجها لم ترتقى الى حالة الدفع بالاستناد بالجيش للتدخل لكبحها على نقيض الحالات المجاورة في الوطن العربي والتي شهدت تدخلاً واضحاً من جيوشها لسيطرت الأمن والاستقرار في بلدانها. ولكن يبقى السؤال الرئيس يتمحور في أهمية دور الجيش الأردني خلال الفوضى السياسية وحالات عدم الاستقرار ابان الربيع العربي؟ وتهدف هذه الدراسة الى تقييم دور القوة العسكرية بشكل عام ودور الجيش الاردني يوجه الخصوص هام في ارساء الاستقرار والسلام. وقد توصلت الدراسة في منهجها الوصفي - استعدت في كثير من الاحيان اجراء مقابلات شخصية مع المسؤولين المعنيين - الى أن الجيش الأردني كان له دور مهم خارجياً (اقلية) في بسط الأمن والاستقرار في جل الدول التي شهدت فوضى سياسية وأمنية. وقد استعرضت الورقة - قبل الولوج في دور الجيش الاردني ابان الربيع العربي - البعد التاريخي في دور الجيش الاردني سياسياً وكيفية تغير أدواره عبر العقود وتوظيفه في خدمة المصالح العليا الوطنية اقليمياً وعالمياً.

**الكلمات الدالة:** الجيش الأردني، الربيع العربي، الاستقرار، السياسة الخارجية، مهمات حفظ السلام.

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