

Jordan's Mediation Leverage in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: Making Use of the Regional Momentum

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Introduction

During King Abdullah II's visit to Washington in June 2021, the King reiterated his strategic vision for the region rooted in collaboration between allies to "do the heavy lifting" on behalf of the United States. The time is ripe for the adoption of the proposed strategy; firstly, the US is reducing its footprint in the region and adopting an approach that favors multilateralism. Secondly, the EU has prioritized promoting a "stronger Europe in the world"¹ in the upcoming years. Thirdly, China has no appetite to be entangled in the region's complexity beyond its trade relations, while Russia lacks the capability to replace the U.S. as a security guarantor. Finally, regional players are rediscovering mediation diplomacy after years of aggressive policies under Trump. Therefore, Jordan should take advantage of the regional momentum and steer it towards laying the foundation that would sustain the viability of the two-state solution,

an issue that lies at the heart of Jordan's national interest. To do that, Jordan must do what it does best: to mediate.

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Rediscovering Mediation Diplomacy

During the Trump years, the blank check from the White House has allowed regional powers to adopt aggressive policies that have exacerbated regional instability. However, with Biden taking the office and his administration's commitment to pursuing a foreign policy centered on democracy, human rights, and equality, we note that regional rivals are reevaluating the cost-benefit in maintaining these policies. The Americans seeking return to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) with Iran, has also pushed regional players for diversifying their foreign policy tools. This took the form of mediation diplomacy between traditional rivals; the Saudis

¹ Horizon Europe Strategic Plan (2021-2021): [HEU-Strategic-Plan-2021-2024.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/sites/default/files/2021-11/HEU-Strategic-Plan-2021-2024.pdf) (kowi.de)

held talks with Iranians, while the Emiratis had a “fruitful” discussion with the Turks and gradually are ending Syria’s isolation. New drivers also have contributed to the adoption of mediation diplomacy such as the fall back of COVID-19, climate change, the fiscal constraints linked to fluctuating energy prices, in addition to other concerning domestic trends like young demographic structures.

Understanding Mediation Leverage

Laying the groundwork that would sustain the viability of the two-state solution, needs to be informed by comparative analysis of Jordan’s leverage in the field of mediation which will determine the nature of the Jordanian role during different phases of the conflict cycle. Reviewing previous mediation attempts to address the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, we can differentiate between two types of leverage employed by wide range of mediators: either through capability or through credibility.

Great powers like the United States, Russia, China, Germany, and France have exercised

leverage through military, diplomatic, economic, and financial capabilities. However, none of these mediators have been credible in exercising genuine pressure on both parties and holding them accountable to influence the discourse of the conflict. Regional powers like Saudi Arabia who had authored the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative,² have employed its clout as the most influential Arab and Muslim country to broker a deal between Israelis and Palestinians only to be rejected by Israel. The Palestinians also rejected the United Arab Emirates’ calls to “benefit from normalization”³. Qatar had noticeable achievements in mediating between the Palestinian factions, but the rich monarchy’s humble understanding of the complex history and realities on the ground, holds it back from stepping up its game. On the other hand, Egypt, Norway⁴, Sweden, and Denmark have created a model that emphasizes on personal trust, confidentiality, neutrality, and long-term commitment. These states have challenged the traditional understanding that only capability determines the directions and pace of the conflict.

² The API guarantee Israel normal diplomatic relations and security, in exchange for Israel to withdraw its territorial control to the June 4, 1967 lines allowing the establishment of a Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital and to come to a just and agreed solution over the issue of Palestinian refugees. [ReliefWeb » Document » Text of Arab peace initiative adopted at Beirut summit \(loc.gov\)](#)

³ [UAE-Israeli peace treaty will bolster Palestinian cause: Yousef Al Otaiba - News | Khaleej Times.](#)

⁴ “Facilitator of the negotiations in 1992-1993 that led to the Oslo Accords. In charge of the People-to-People Program, established under the Oslo II agreement in 1995 to make the peace process more inclusive. Chair of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC), which coordinates international assistance to Palestine, since its establishment in 1993. Since the Oslo Accords, the AHLC has coordinated international financing for a large share of the Palestinian Authority’s budgets”. [Norway’s engagement in peace processes since 1993 - regjerin-gen.no](#)

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Leveraging Multilateralism

Recognizing the intractability of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has led mediators to create multilateral mechanisms to capitalize on each other’s unique capability and credibility. They have also invested in coordinating efforts between the main mechanisms, namely the Middle East Quartet⁵ (UN, EU, US, Russia), and the Arab Quartet (KSA, UAE, Egypt, Jordan). Mediators also created a hybrid structure in 2020 of the above mechanisms named the Munich Group⁶ (Germany, France, Egypt, and Jordan) in an attempt to fill the vacuum during the Trump era. To date, all these mechanisms remain ineffective, however, regional mood seems receptive to revive multilateralism and commit to reform its efficiency.

Jordanian Mediation Leverage

Jordan has a comparative advantage over other mediators; its geostrategic position, its bilateral military cooperation with Israel, intelligence sharing and joint global counterterrorism operations including as a member of the Global Coalition to Counter ISIS. This reflects Jordan’s capability to exercise pressure if needed. Jordan’s deft diplomacy and its mediation legacy adds to its capability leverage to navigate the complex dynamics between all relevant players. Being a member of the main multilateral mechanisms such as the Arab Quartet, Munich Group, and the Jerusalem Committee at the Organization for the Islamic Cooperation (OIC), also demonstrates Jordan’s capability to steer these vehicles towards ensuring the viability of the two-state solution. On the other hand, Jordan’s historic connection and contribution to resolving the conflict reflects an incomparable understanding of both

⁵ The ME Quartet served as a multilateral framework aimed at an Israeli-Palestinian negotiated solution based on UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolutions 24213 (1967) and 338 (1973)

alongside the “land for peace” principle enshrined in the Oslo process.

⁶ [Jordan, Egypt, Germany and France put emphasis on two-state solution | Jordan Times](#)

parties' needs for sovereignty and security which puts it in a position of being a sufficiently credible mediator.

Recommendations

Given the regional context and the internal dynamics in Israel and the Occupied Territories, Jordan should invest in groundwork that would maintain the viability of the two-state solution. Achieving this task requires Jordan to do what it does best; to mediate between all relevant players and build consensus around this task. To start by mapping all actors and all relevant multilateral mechanisms and understand which actors can add tangible value to the process, during which phase of the conflict cycle they can do so, and through which delivery multilateral mechanism. Hereby, it's also important to learn from failed experiences in former peace talks where the lack of efficient coordination was a major obstacle. Extensive consultation and mediation with regional and international partners are needed to conclude these tasks and sort some

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ambiguity about relevant actors such as Britain and China. The next step would be to draft a comprehensive framework for coordination between all relevant multilateral mechanisms that cover the conflict cycle. This framework should be designed in a way that achieves timely coordinated action for the implementation of measures that goes beyond confidence building, Palestinian state building, and internal reconciliation. The framework should weave measures that has common interests and threats, in addition to developing creative measures to reverse facts on the ground in regard to settlements, Jerusalem, and refugees. The systematic preparation for mediation, should include robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and the consistency of public diplomacy campaigns to manage and prepare the perception of people all along.

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Jordan. The next chapter – أفكار أردنية

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