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European Union Foreign Policy towards Jordan

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze and explain the attitudes and orientations of the European Union's foreign policy towards Jordan. Moreover, it aims to show that Jordan's role and strong influence in the regional, security and humanitarian levels impacts the EU's foreign policy towards Jordan which works, within a framework of partnership, towards enhancing and strengthening the EU's political and economic relations with Jordan. No less important than the security interest, the economic dimension also constitutes a core axis in the relations between the two sides, where European economic support is a main determinant in the relations between the two sides. The study concludes that the Partnership Agreement between the EU and Jordan aimed to establish a proper framework for political dialogue that allows for the development of political, economic, monetary and social relations, ensuring regional stability, especially in the fight against terrorism and extremism, in addition to encouraging regional cooperation to bring about a closer understanding of political stances on international affairs by enabling each side to understand and appreciate the other's position.

Key Words: European Union, Foreign Policy, Jordan

Política exterior de la Unión Europea hacia Jordania

Resumen

Este estudio tiene como objetivo analizar y explicar las actitudes y orientaciones de la política exterior de la Unión Europea hacia Jordania. Además, tiene como objetivo mostrar que el papel y la fuerte influencia de Jordania en los niveles regional, de seguridad y militar impacta la política exterior de la UE hacia Jordania, que trabaja, dentro de un marco de asociación, para mejorar y fortalecer las relaciones políticas y económicas de la UE con Jordania.

No menos importante que el interés de seguridad, la dimensión económica también constituye un eje central en las relaciones entre las dos partes, donde el apoyo económico europeo es un determinante importante en las relaciones entre las dos partes.

El estudio concluye que el Acuerdo de Asociación entre la UE y Jordania tenía como objetivo establecer un marco adecuado para el diálogo político que permita el desarrollo de relaciones políticas, económicas, monetarias y sociales, garantizando la estabilidad regional, especialmente en la lucha contra el terrorismo y el extremismo, en Además de alentar la cooperación regional para lograr una comprensión más cercana de las posiciones políticas en los asuntos internacionales al permitir que cada parte entienda y aprecie la posición de la otra.

Palabras clave: Unión Europea, Política Exterior, Jordania

1. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The European Union (EU) introduced the concept of partnership in its relations with the Mediterranean countries due to the latter's regional historical, economic, and strategic importance. The European Union's interest in this region manifested itself in 1989 when the European Council adopted the "Redirected Mediterranean Policy", a

proposal put forward by the commission to strengthen Euro-Mediterranean partnership (Harrouch, 2019), that led to the “Barcelona Declaration”, a process that envisaged comprehensive cooperation.

The European Union’s Mediterranean policy review came in the nineties of the past century due to a number of changes on the regional and international levels, namely the rise of American ambition to play a greater role in the world, together with a European aspiration that challenges the United States in its endeavor, and the collapse of the Soviet Union, all of which led the European Union to bring about fundamental changes in its foreign policy towards the southern Mediterranean.

Consequently, the Barcelona Declaration of 1995 laid down a new framework for the European Union’s relationship with the countries of the south of the Mediterranean, with the launch of the idea of “Union for the Mediterranean,” (www.moqatel.com), that included ten Arab countries that entered into the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue: Egypt, Tunisia, Algiers, Syria Lebanon, Palestine, Jordan and Morocco as well as Libya and Mauritania. This unilateral declaration is what determined the perimeter of subsequent negotiations with Arab countries and determined its direction with countries of the European Union, Turkey and Israel (Nafia, 2010).

The core of the European Union’s strategy for this region was establishing a free trade zone with the countries of the southern Mediterranean. Another essential, and no less important, aspect was to ensure supplies of energy resources, especially gas, crucial for European industries. In exchange, countries of the southern

Mediterranean aim to bring investments from their northern neighbors to boost their economies. The result was this unique Euro-Mediterranean partnership adopted by the European Union to create strong ties between them to achieve prosperity, through promoting the security, stability and development of the southern countries.

Jordan is considered a strategic partner for the EU on both the regional and bilateral levels, particularly for its role in preserving regional stability and promoting moderation and tolerance among religions in the Middle East. The EU and Jordan share strong economic relations in many sectors, linked through partnership since 2002. Moreover, Jordan was the first partner country in the Mediterranean region to conclude technical negotiations leading to “advanced status” with the European Union in 2010 (Alsabagh, 2009).

In light of the above, this study aims to expand on the EU’s policies towards Jordan, especially due to the significance of relations between the two sides on the political, economic, humanitarian and regional levels. It also aims at outlining, analyzing and explaining attitudes of EU foreign policy towards Jordan, which work towards strengthening European-Jordanian political and economic relations.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Al-Hazaima (2012), the foreign policy of any state aims to ensure that its objectives and strategies are achieved to help foster the highest level of prosperity, stability and consequently national security. The foreign policy of any country is affected by its

environment and capabilities which measure its strength. Strength comes from two sources: material resources (geographical, natural and economic resources); and morale, which depends on the former and is influenced by it (i.e. cultural, political, social resources and morale of the citizens in general).

Sneider argues that the foreign policy of any country is a number of factors and conditions that lie beyond the reach of decision makers and government institutions that affect them and reflects their behavior (cited in Al-Naemi, 2010).

The EU is a key player in the international community, with its own economic, security and political interests. It represents all the European states who share a common foreign policy led by the European Foreign Affairs Council which governs its foreign and security policies. The EU's objectives on the internal level are to preserve its security interests, independence and integrity, while its objectives on the foreign front are to promote and support democracy, human rights and the principles of international law, as well as promote world peace, reduce conflicts and to provide aid to countries in cases of disaster, whether natural or due to war. (www.Eupolcopps.eu)

Al-Dulaimi's study (2012) entitled "Arabs from the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership to the Union for the Mediterranean: a Look at the Changes and Attitudes", looks at the history of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation from the nineteen nineties to 2012, where the outcomes were below expectations, even though Arab countries tried to adapt their political and economic system to EU standards to

gain investments, loans and facilities. The results were disappointing as apparent with the increase of illegal immigration, the rise of unemployment and the decrease of per capita income. These countries became an open market for European products due to their uncompetitive industries that have led to increased political dependency on their northern neighbors. The Union for the Mediterranean project came as a continuation of the Barcelona Process rather than a substitute for it, and it would have suited the Arab countries better to have searched for a new approach to deal with the European Union, since the partnership took place between unequal partners.

All previous studies dealt with the economic dimension of the Jordanian- European relations, and did not cover the political dimension. This study is unique in that it covers the foreign policy of the EU towards the Hashemite kingdom of Jordan in its political, security, strategic as well as its economic dimensions.

3. METHODOLOGY

a. Behavioral methodology:

Behavioral methodology takes behavior as a system of study, stemming from the premise that politics is a dynamic interested in the interactions with environment and attempts at adaptation to it and is not concerned only with phenomena in its static state. It also attempts to explain the behavior of institutions and political authorities as a reflection of the beliefs of the people who create them (Barakat, 1989)

b. Decision making:

Decision making is defined as a set of rules and regulations used by participants in a decision making body to choose one policy over the other or to regulate viable options and bring consensus among differences in opinion (Saleem, 1998).

4. DISCUSSION

4.1. European Interests in the Arab Region

EU interests in the Arab region are multi-faceted, and do not rely solely on petroleum resources but involve many more aspects that make the Middle East a priority. EU interests in the region can be divided into:

4.1.1. Economic interests: represented mainly in:

c. Ensuring that Arab oil supplies reach Europe, for Arab oil is characterized by its easy accessibility, low production costs, abundance and proximity to export ports. However there are many challenges ahead stemming from the use of alternative energy resources and the presence of other oil producers outside the Arab region (Abdulaziz, 2010).

d. Ensuring large markets for European goods, whether they be industrial, financial or consumer goods in the Middle East. The historical relations and mutual interests between the countries of

Europe and the Mediterranean make them look to Arab nations as a natural and strategic continuation of it. Furthermore it considers it an appropriate market for its industrial goods, with countries of the Arab gulf region representing a primary market for European exports (Rabie, 1997).

4.1.2. Security interests

The EU's security interests lie within three main concerns (Muawad, 1991). First, is its belief that Europe's prosperity and ability to play a bigger role in the new world order is organically related to its relation with the Mediterranean and Middle East, with the belief that the strategic and economic interests of Europe are related with ensuring the political and economic stability of those regions. Thus Europe's interest in achieving stability in the region is increasing, for any instability can compromise the economic stability of Europe as well as its political, social and psychological stability, as was seen in Iraq's invasion of Kuwait that showed how a radical power can control the oil resources and the effects it had on prices and investments (Elwi, 1991).

Second, is that no super power controls the Middle East, as it would endanger European interests, as shown by the 1973 October war, which showed that when European interests conflicted with American interests, then the latter's took precedence, and America has long overlooked Europe's interests in the middle east in support of Israel and of its own interests (Rabie, 1997). That is why Europe in the

meantime is trying to prevent such control on the Middle East where European countries have worked together with Arab countries in a courageous effort to stall American influence, for Arabs as well as Europeans feel they represent great economic forces and are seeking independent and sovereign policies.

Finally, European- Arab cooperation in countering terrorism and extremism in light of its threat to the stability and security of both Arab and European countries, by respecting international agreements and abiding by treatises of demilitarization and nuclear nonproliferation (Abusaud, 1999). In order to achieve this, reaching a final solution to the Arab - Israeli conflict through a comprehensive and equitable solution is a must.

4.1.3. Cultural interests

Europe's cultural interest in the region stems from its attempts to integrate European culture and traditions into the Mediterranean and Middle East in order to secure this vital region that represents a bridge to Africa, a place of traditional European influence.

4.2. Jordanian- European Relations

The history of diplomatic relations between the EU and Jordan date back to 1977 when the agreement for mutual cooperation was signed and implemented. It was a multi- dimensional deal regulating their bilateral relations, to ensure an ambitious long term policy and to enhance cooperation between the two.

The nineties is a crucial period in the cooperation project between the EU and Middle East. It was established through a series of conferences most important among which was the Barcelona Conference of 1995, which witnessed the launch of a united strategy aiming to create a stable and peaceful region based on mutual respect, human rights and democracy as well as deepening the mutual understanding between the two people and peaceful coexistence, as well as creating an area of economic prosperity through the gradual creation of a free trade zone by 2010. The treaty for European - Jordanian cooperation was signed in 1997 and was implemented in 2002 after it was signed by all European as well as Jordanian parliaments. The treaty which comprises (107) items, (7) appendices, (4) protocols, and (12) mutual declarations, included the principles proposed by the European side, like the principle of mutual commitment and the preparation of a framework for dialogue and cooperation that allows for developing strong political ties between the two parties. As well as supporting balanced social and economic relations between Jordan and the EU. The treaty also included the three dimensions of economy by preparing necessary conditions for the liberation of trade in goods, services and capital; establishing a free trade zone within 12 years; and enhancing cooperation with the kingdom in all domains especially in technology, infrastructure and culture, as well as giving financial and logistic aid aiming to strengthen Jordan's industrial and economic basis.

Paragraph (2) of section (1) of the treaty holds the following goals:

1. Creating an appropriate framework for political dialogue, allowing for the development of close political relations between the two parties.

2. Setting conditions for the gradual liberalization of trade in goods, services and capital.

3. Sponsoring the development of balanced economic and social relations between the two parties through dialogue and cooperation.

4. Improving living and working conditions, and enhancing productivity and financial stability.

5. Encourage regional cooperation with the aim of promoting peaceful coexistence and political and economic stability.

Jordan has been and continues to be a major partner of the European Union in the Arab region, and its role has been emphasized through mutual commitments between the two. This was affirmed by the European-Jordanian agreement and the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, which aim to strengthen relations between the EU and Jordan and contribute to the Jordanian state's ability to become self-reliant in the medium term (Fontana, 2019).

In line with the revised European Neighborhood Policy, the European Union and Jordan adopted the principles of partnership, cooperating in three main areas that are mutually reinforcing: (Aljazy, 2016)

1. Comprehensive economic stability and sustainable growth that is knowledge based.

2. The promotion of democratic governance, rule of law and human rights.

3. Ensuring regional stability and security, including counter-terrorism.

The EU and Jordan share common values, and they share common interests, including the promotion of peace and stability, and social and economic development. The advanced relations between the European Union and Jordan are reflected in regular meetings at the highest levels, including frequent visits by European Union Presidents to Jordan. 2017 witnessed the successful launch of the “EU Support to Jordanian Democratic Institutions and Development” program (EU-JDID), with a contribution of (12) million euros and an additional (2) million from the Spanish Cooperation Office. In 2018, this program achieved, in partnership with democratic institutions in Jordan (Parliament, Ministry of Political and Parliamentary Affairs, and the Independent Electoral Commission), parliamentary support activities, electoral assistance, and support for the political multi-party system. In the House of Representatives, a system of video, audio and electronic polling was implemented to ensure more transparency in voting. In addition, staff benefited from training activities and workshops including parliamentary oversight, legislative drafting and human resources management. The Independent Electoral Commission is supported in the preparation and implementation of election administration and benefits from capacity building at the administrative levels.

Other activities include supporting the political parties in terms of formulating programs and building the capabilities of young political and civil activists to participate in the political process. The program also focuses on inclusion and promoting the active participation of women. It provides civic education and public awareness activities to civil society organizations and will increase their abilities to monitor local elections (Independent Electoral Commission, 2019).

4.3. Financial Cooperation with Jordan

Within the framework of strengthening the partnership between Jordan and the European Union, a program was signed to outline assistance to Jordan for the period from (2011-2013), at a value of (223) million euros. It is worth mentioning that 60% of this aid will go to support the budget. The Partnership Agreement between Jordan and the European Union has contributed greatly to advancing Jordan's wheel of progress in various economic, social and political fields through programs to support democracy and freedom as well as development projects. It also contributed greatly in encouraging and developing trade through removing and reducing restrictions and customs duties imposed on goods. The success and feasibility of this partnership has been proven by the increase in the percentage of aid provided by the European Union to Jordan (Al-Hadidy, 2010).

Jordan has also signed an agreement with the European Union (EFTA), which includes Switzerland, Norway and Iceland, to provide for the establishment of a free trade area between the two sides on the 21th of June 2001 to promote and develop trade and economic cooperation. The agreement was put in place on the 1st of January 2002 with the Swiss side until the completion of the constitutional and regulatory procedures in Norway and Iceland (Al-Tarawneh, 2006).

Stemming from their strategic vision, Jordan and the European Union, in December of 2016, agreed on a number of priorities around certain concepts (Al-Shalaby, 2017):

1. Strengthening cooperation with regard to the stability and security of the region, including countering terrorism.
2. Strengthening Jordan's economic capabilities by promoting social and economic development.
3. Augmenting efforts aimed at strengthening good governance, the rule of law, and strengthening democracy and respect for human rights.

Since 2014, the European Union has provided financial assistance to Jordan under the European Neighborhood Instrument, the main financial mechanism, on a bilateral and regional basis. Jordan benefits from this Policy in areas of priority, i.e. economic development, energy, education, employment, trade, private sector development, security, youth empowerment, women's rights and human rights.

Economic governance, rule of law, social sectors, and stronger security cooperation with Jordan are political priorities that are

reflected in the framework of individual country support as part of the multi-year planning document for the period 2017-2010. European support increased from (567) million euros to (693) million euros during the period from 2014-2020, in addition to bilateral based allocations. Jordan also benefits from regional programs and external actions within the framework of several European Union programs, such as Erasmus Plus (Higher Education Mobility) program and the European Union Research and Innovation Program (Horizon 2020) and PRIMA (Partnership for research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Region). The European Union, along with a number of international financing institutions launched the program “EU Jordanian Democratic Institutions and Development” in May of 2017, in partnership with the Ministry of Political and Parliamentary Affairs, the Independent Election Commission, and the House of Representatives to support Jordan’s reform process (Ministry of Political and Parliamentary Affairs, 2019).

The European Union provides Jordan with total financial assistance to support its economic recovery and to help offset the impact of regional instability on the Jordanian economy in the form of soft loans. The first memorandum of understanding for the total financial aid program worth (180) million euros was signed in March of 2014, with full payment of funds in 2015. The influx of Syrian refugees in 2015 and 2016 increased the need for more support. At the request of Jordan in March of 2016, the European Commission proposed to provide additional total financial assistance to Jordan in the amount of (200) million euros. A memorandum of understanding

was signed between the European Union and Jordan on September 19, 2017 and the first payment of (100) million euros was made in October of 2017. The second installment will be provided once the conditions are met, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs program completes the implementation of the Jordan agreement with the International Monetary Fund within the framework of the expanded fund facility allowing additional funds from the European Union to meet the balance of payments financing needs in the country.

In 2019, the European Union committed to grants to the amount of (183.65) million euros to support the implementation of programs in the areas of social security, the development of the private sector, support creativity for enterprise growth, provide employment and education opportunities, support youth, economic reforms and integrated border management (Al-Waqfy, 2019).

The European Union has also helped the Jordanian government improve its performance and enhance its accountability in public financial management. EU programs have helped the Ministry of Finance and its departments through capacity building initiatives to improve their performance, and become more transparent and accountable. EU support has in addition facilitated the implementation of the strategy of the Department of Public Finance in Jordan, especially with regard to internal control, audit, external audit and economic revenue mobilization. Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability Assessment (PEFA) (2016) was conducted with the support of the EU to assess progress in managing public finances. The EU also supports the Jordanian public administration in enhancing

transparency, accountability and performance for the benefit of Jordanian citizens, so that they can enjoy effective public services. Jordan received a grant of (50) million euros allocated to the rule of law support program as sectoral support through the public budget in 2018. EU support of Jordanian public services is provided through several tools: (Petra, 2019)

1) Twinning projects that provide public sector expertise from EU member states to Jordanian public institutions through counterpart activities. During the past six years, more than 10 twinning projects have been successfully implemented with a total value of 15 million euros, as they have provided assistance to various government institutions such as the Public Security Department, the Jordanian Gendarmerie, the Jordan Standards and Metrology Organization (JSMO) and the National Electric Power Company.

2) The EU currently supports two different interventions in the field of technical assistance to the Jordanian government. The first program aims to support implementation of public administration reforms to improve service delivery in Jordan. The second is to establish a sound delivery system at the center of the government to accelerate the implementation of the reforms needed to boost economic growth.

4.4. Jordan and the Syrian Refugee Crisis

The Syrian crisis and the resulting influx and protracted presence of refugees caused not only the disruption of traditional trade

routes for Jordan, but have created challenges for the Jordanian economy. To mitigate the negative effects on employment, investment and job creation, the European Union and Jordan agreed on July 19, 2016, to use a unique value-based initiative that provides Jordan with a value-based business response to a humanitarian crisis. The agreement included a targeted and time-limited simplification of the rules of origin that Jordanian exporters must fulfill in order to benefit from the generous preferential access already provided for under the Association Agreement between the European Union and Jordan. The agreement, which was revised in December 2018, aims to enable Jordanian companies in the manufacturing sector to diversify its exports beyond its traditional markets and create incentives for new and decent jobs for Jordanians and Syrians. The simplified rules of origin statute applies only until December 2030, and covers products in (52) categories; this includes both the elements that Jordan exports in small quantities to the European Union and others where there is currently no trade. In order for exporters to benefit from these alternative rules of origin, the production lines exported to the European Union must employ at least 15% of Syrian refugee workers in decent working conditions subject to International Labor Organization (ILO) monitoring. 15 Jordanian companies applied for the agreement, 13 of which were granted license to export to the European Union, including (6) export companies with a value of (19.26) million euros since July of 2016. The total assistance provided by the European Union to Jordan in 2018 amounted to more than (200)

million euros through the regional trust fund to respond to the Syrian crisis and bilateral aid. (Al-Loubany, 2019).

EU support of and cooperation with Jordan is also taking place on issues such as migration and mobility as well as the economic, social and political inclusion of vulnerable groups, including youth and women. Partnership priorities also depend on Jordanian national strategies, particularly “Jordan 2025: A National Vision and Strategy,” which is a ten-year socio-economic plan designed to improve the welfare of citizens and the basic services provided to them. The charter aims to improve the living conditions of refugees and their host communities. The efforts to achieve this goal were strengthened in two consecutive conferences in 2017 and 2018 in Brussels on “Supporting the future of Syria and the region.” The conference formed a strong effort on behalf of the international community and strengthened the political, financial and humanitarian commitment to support the Syrian people, refugees and host countries most affected by the crisis.

The aim of the Jordanian-European Charter is to directly address the Syrian crisis, in terms of improving the humanitarian conditions for refugees and the host communities. The charter includes a mutual commitment to respect the pledges that were made in February of 2016, at the London Conference on supporting Syria and the region (Aljazy, 2016). These commitments were reinforced at the Brussels Conference of April 5, 2017, on supporting the future of Syria and the region, especially with a view to enhancing resilience through supporting job creation opportunities and stimulating inclusive economic growth.

5. CONCLUSION

The European Community focuses mainly on bilateral interaction with the countries of the Arab region, sometimes adopting a regional level formula for cooperation with some Arab countries, while avoiding collective interaction through the Arab league. This approach is facilitated by the absence of political coordination between Arab countries, some of which seek to conclude individual agreements with the European Community regardless of the interests of other Arab countries. This limits the Arabs' abilities to extract a strong political stance in support of Arab rights from the European Union countries.

The European initiatives in the Middle East region focuses on intensifying ties of cooperation and mutual dialogue after the European Union put forward the idea of joint cooperation, and this was crystalized through bilateral contacts between the European and Arab groups represented in the Arab League.

The European Union aims to create a European reality that aims to ensure security and political stability in the Arab region, to preserve mutual interests and to bridge points of view. It also aims at finding appropriate mechanisms to achieve mutual cooperation and dialogue with the specific goal of resolving any political disputes between the two parties.

The study concluded that the European Union has strategic ties with Jordan, therefore it has worked to be a major partner of Jordan in various fields, including supporting its efforts to promote social and economic development in harmony with Jordan's vision of 2025. It has also worked on the strengthening of governance and the rule of law,

democratic reform and human rights, which were included in the European-Jordanian Agreement signed in July of 2016, as well as its efforts in dealing with the repercussions of the Syrian refugees. European financial support to Jordan from 2011 to 2018 amounted to 2 billion euros.

6. RESULTS

- Strategic and security interests constitute a major determinant of European-Jordanian relations, as Jordan plays an important role in regional stability and in combating terrorism and extremism.

- The economic dimension forms an important axis in European-Jordanian relations, as European economic support constitutes a major determinant in the relations between the two sides.

- The Jordanian-European Partnership Agreement aimed to provide an appropriate framework for political dialogue, allowing the development of closer political relations between the two parties and fostering the development of parallel economic and social relations between them through dialogue, cooperation, improving living and working conditions, enhancing productivity and financial stability, and finally encouraging regional cooperation with a view to promoting peaceful coexistence and political and economic stability.

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