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CSS Papers

*The Dilemma of Politics
and Security in Arab-Ira-
nian Relations: The Case
of Jordan*

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The Dilemma of Politics and Security in Arab-Iranian Relations: The Case of Jordan

Abstract

This paper examines relations between Jordan and Iran since the 1979 Iranian revolution within the larger context of Arab-Iranian relations. In particular it focuses on how questions of internal security both in Jordan and Iran, and external security in regard to Iraq and Israel affect current relations between the two countries. It underlines the importance of addressing these issues when considering both past, present, and future relations between both countries.

Iran-Arab relations can be divided into three separate areas of analysis including religion, geopolitics, and relations with the West. Within Iranian-Middle Eastern relations one or all of these factors influence bilateral relations with Iran. The first factor, religion, has historically been a concern of Middle Eastern countries since the 1979 revolution, and remains a concern in an evolved form today. Ruling Sunni governments, including Saudi Arabia, and the Persian Gulf States, were concerned about both the possibility of their own indigenous Shi'a populations being directly supported or indirectly inspired by Iran.

As Iran's status in the region has evolved, so has its brand of Shi'a Islam, now characterized by its sectarian nature more than its previous revolutionary appeal. Although Shi'a Iranian Islam does still possess a certain revolutionary attraction, it is distinctly contemporary in nature and has been defined within anti-Western rhetoric and Iran's response to current events in the region including the summer 2006 Israeli-Hezbollah War and the 2003 American invasion of Iraq.

The second category of analysis, geo-political, relates to those countries that are in close geographic proximity to Iran, including the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates), in addition to Turkey, Syria, and Iraq. Contemporary Iran-GCC relations are clouded by reminders of GCC countries' support of Iraq during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq War, and the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait which serves as a reminder to the GCC of its tenuous position between Iran and Iraq power in the region. Moreover, the geographic proximity of Iran to GCC countries presents serious concerns over the consequences of Iran's nuclear program in the region.

Iran's relationship with Iraq is also influenced by geopolitical realities. Although the United States has sought to mitigate Iranian involvement in Iraqi affairs, the geographic proximity of Iran to Iraq assures that it will continue to play a major role in Iraq's future. Since the fall of Baghdad Iran has sought to alter Iran-Iraq relations previously defined by the government of Saddam Hussein and the 1980-1998 Iran-Iraq War. With Saddam Hussein no longer in the political picture and the government of Iraq divided Iran is in an ideal position to fill the vacuum of power in the religious, political, and security fabric of Iraq.

In religious areas, it has sought to strengthen links with Shi'a religious groups such as the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) and its political wing the Badr Organization which is considered the core of the contemporary Shi'a Iraq. Within Iraqi politics Iran has sought to covertly infiltrate major Iraqi political and governmental organizations while publicly highlighting enhanced diplomatic relations. Through visits such as the November 2006 visit of current Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Malaki to Tehran, and multiple trips of various political and religious figures between the two countries Iran has sought to ally itself closely with the new Iraqi political elite. Finally on the level of security Iran has played a role in Iraq by supplying weaponry and funding to Shi'a groups under a pretext of confronting American forces and advancing Shi'a political power.¹

The third factor, relations with the West, describes how Middle Eastern relations with the West have evolved since the 1979 revolution, and in particular with countries that have strong relations with the United States. An example is current Iranian-Syrian relations. One of the ties that bind the two nations is their mutual distrust of the United States. In the current international climate, Syria feels threatened by the West primarily due to its forced withdrawal from Lebanon in 2005, questions over its role in the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik al-Hariri, and attention recently drawn to it during Israeli air-strikes on rumored nuclear weapons sites. Therefore Iran, in light of current tensions and historical precedent, becomes a natural ally to Syria when both nations feel Western pressure.

As illustrated, Middle Eastern relations with Iran cannot be framed from only one perspective. Indeed, the bilateral dynamic between any country in the Middle East and Iran may be defined by multiple internal and external issues at any given time, and it is in this same context that Iranian-Jordanian relations have evolved.

¹ See, Zweiri, Mahjoob, "Iran's Presence in Iraq, New Realities?," Center for Strategic Studies Iran Studies Unit, 2007. <http://www.jcss.org/SubDefault.aspx?PageId=37&PollId=246&PollType=10>

Jordanian-Iranian Relations

An analysis of relations between Jordan and Iran may be divided into three areas: history, (specifically the evolution of Jordanian-Iranian relations since 1949), questions related to larger dimensions of security in the Middle East, and questions related to current Jordan-Iran relations, particularly the role of non-state actors. Ultimately, it is the interplay of all three of these factors that characterizes the Jordanian-Iranian rapport. The evolving nature of Iranian-Jordanian relations can be traced to four separate periods beginning with the monarch period from 1949-1979, the conservative period of 1979-1991, the reformist period of 1991-2003, and finally the 2003-present day period of political malaise.

The monarch period from 1949-1979 was characterized by strong relations between the Iranian and Jordanian monarchs led by the late King Pahlavi and Jordanian King Hussein. As both shared the same style of governance and both were allied to the West, there was a natural inclination for both governments to be aligned in areas of economic, cultural, and political exchange. The 1960 agreement between Jordan and Iran for example focused on cooperation within cultural and educational areas, the 1973 agreement of commercial cooperation focused on increased cooperation between both countries, and finally the 1975 agreement focused on tourism exchange though never fully came to fruition because of the 1979 revolution.

With the 1979 revolution Jordan-Iran relations were severely affected with the overthrow of the monarch by Ayatollah Khomeini. This point marked an end to stable relations between the two countries and the beginning of the conservative period which lasted from 1979 to 1991. In addition to concern about the possible export of the Islamic revolution to its populace, Jordan also suspected Iranian support for various opposition groups operating within the country, a concern that continues to exist today. Further deepening this discord was Jordan's support of Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War both logistically and strategically through the use of the key port of Aqaba in southern Jordan.

Relations between Jordan and Iran improved several years after the end of Iran-Iraq War beginning in 1991 at the Islamic Conference in Senegal during which King Hussein of Jordan and President Rafsanjani of Iran met. This meeting gradually served to alter Jordanian-Iranian relations in a manner not seen since the 1979 revolution, resulting in enhanced cultural exchange and economic development cooperation.

Within this period and to a lesser extent present day economic exports from Jordan to Iran have included fertilizers, aluminums, potash, and phosphates. Iran exports to Jordan have included pistachio, melon seeds, machines and equipments, zinc, and sulphur. For Jordanian phosphate exports Iran has been a key importer with recent agreements (2001) totaling nearly one million tons. For Iranians religious tourist sites in Jordan bear particular significance particularly the grave of Jaafar bin abi Talib (the son of Abu Talib, the prophet Mohommad's uncle) in Mutaa, Jordan, and the site of Ahl Al Kahef, mentioned in the Qu'ran, is located south of Amman.

The reformist period coincided with major internal political change occurring within Iran with the reformist presidencies of Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani (1989-1997) and Mohammad Khatami (1997-2005) who both sought to expand diplomatic ties with Arab and Western governments through political dialogue based through conciliation than confrontation. The Jordanian government responded positively to the reformist policies of both leaders which lead to the official visit of Jordanian King Abdullah to Tehran in 2003.

The 2003 visit of King Abdullah marked both the high point and the ebb point of contemporary relations between the two countries. Several years after King Abdullah's visit the 2005 Presidential election of current President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad marked significant changes in Iranian foreign policy both in the regionally and internationally. With the American invasion of Iraq in 2003, the stalled peace process between Israel and Palestine, and Iran's pursuit of nuclear technology both Jordan and Iran have approached questions of regional and international security from opposite perspectives.

The Jordanian Iranian Relations and Middle East Security

Contemporary questions of security between Jordan and Iran have been highly colored by issues related to Israel and Iraq. Although unrelated to direct Iranian-Jordanian relations, these issues have manifested as an important part of the dynamic between both countries concerning questions of security in the Arab world.

Jordan's diplomatic relationship with Israel has evolved over two decades from the failed 1982 Middle East peace proposed by the late U.S. President Ronald Reagan to the Wadi Araba Treaty of 1994 which established a permanent peace between the two countries. From mutual distrust and enmity among the two countries Jordan has advanced to its current status as a respected negotiating partner in any eventual peace between Palestine and Israel. Jordan has always maintained its support for the Palestinian Authority and the eventuality of Palestinian statehood through both tacit support of the Palestinians and symbolic support of the Hashemites as guardian of Islam's holy sites in Jerusalem.

However, the Iranian-Israeli dynamic has only worsened in the previous two decades, resulting in current relations that are quite the opposite of current Jordanian-Israeli cooperation. Iran has not publicly recognized the state of Israel and has supported multiple non-state actors, including Hizbullah and Hamas, in their resistance against Israel. This support was most tangibly brought to public's attention during the summer 2006 War between Lebanon and Israel in which Iran supplied advanced military weaponry including the Mohajer-4 unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV), Fajr-3 and Ra'ad 1 missiles.¹ Moreover Iran publicly supported Hizbullah throughout the conflict arguing at its end that that «God's promises have come true» and that Hizbullah had managed to «hoist the banner of victory» over Israel.²

¹ "Hizbullah Rockets," GlobalSecurity.Org, July 30, 2007.

<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/hizballah-rockets.htm>

² Blair, David. "Iran and Syria claim victory over the west," The Telegraph, August 16, 2006.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/mainjhtml?xml=/news/2006/08/16/wmid116.xml>

Jordan and Iran have ultimately approached Israel from different perspectives to meet goals of self interest. For Jordan, peace with Israel is motivated primarily by geo-strategic and demographic realities; with its sizable Palestinian population and familial links with the West Bank and Gaza, events in neighboring Palestine and Israel naturally affect Jordan. Moreover, peace between Jordan and Israel comes with respect for Jordan in the eyes of the United States and an equally important guarantee of a sizeable amount of annual foreign aid.

Conversely, Iran has historically demonized Israel and used it as a rallying cry and as an ongoing threat. Since the invasion of Iraq, Iran's increased regional influence, and advancement of its nuclear program, relations between the two countries have become increasingly poor. Moreover recent statements by Iranian President calling for Israel to be "wiped off the map" and describing the Holocaust as a myth at the cost of "the innocent nation of Palestine"¹ has done little to advance relations between the two adversaries.

Indeed it is difficult for both countries in any diplomatic exchange to avoid the topic of Jordanian-Israeli relations. Although this may not play out in direct bilateral dialogue, it has always been an unpropitious backdrop as Jordan has continued to warm to Israel and the West, while Iran has never recognized Israel, and increasingly isolates itself from the international community.

Iraq too is evolving to become an integral aspect in relations between Jordan and Iran. Just as the Israel-Iran and Israel-Jordan rapport has differed in its history and contemporary nature, the Iraq-Jordan and Iraq-Iran rapport is also different, colored by opposite histories and relations. Historically, Iraq for the two countries has meant very different things. For Jordan, Iraq has been a trade partner, ally, and has now become a contemporary security problem. For Iran, Iraq has historically been a distant neighbor, an enemy, and now is a potential means of gaining power in the region.

¹ "Holocaust comments spark outrage," BBC News, December 14, 2005.
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4529198.stm

As noted, Jordan during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq War sided with Iraq by providing Saddam Hussein both moral and logistical support. During the 1991 Gulf War much to the angst of the United States, Jordanian King Hussein again allied with Iraq. Into the late 1990's and early 2000's this dynamic changed as Jordan became increasingly allied with the United States, and ultimately supported the American invasion of Iraq in March 2003. Inversely, Iran's relationship with Iraq is the result of a long history of war and antagonism, which had governed relations between the two countries up until the 2003 war in Iraq.

The American-led invasion of Iraq has led to different consequences for Jordan and Iran. For Jordan the invasion of Iraq has been a major security problem. On a humanitarian level Jordan has suffered as the host to the mass exodus from Iraq, with the number of Iraqi refugees presently within the country reaching nearly 500,000 since the war's start.¹ In humanitarian terms this represents a severe strain on both health and education infrastructure. At the level of internal security the rise of extremism in Iraq dealt a deadly blow to Jordan with the 2005 Al-Qaeda bombings of multiple hotels in Amman. However for Iran, the invasion of Iraq wiped Saddam Hussein off the political map.

Moreover, the new political system in Iraq has assured the likelihood that the Iraqi Shi'a majority government will be naturally be inclined to support Shi'a Iran as the region increasingly becomes divided by questions of Shi'a-Sunni identity.

¹ "Norwegian pollster puts Iraqi refugees in Jordan at up to 500,000" International Herald Tribune, November 13, 2007. <http://www.ihf.com/articles/ap/2007/11/13/africa/ME-GEN-Jordan-Iraqi-Refugees.php>

The inability of the international community to fully address the complexities of reconciliation among Iraqi internal factions, coupled with the lack of involvement of Iraq's Arab neighbors has allowed Iran to fill the power vacuum left in Iraq. In the years following the American invasion, Iraq's neighbors were loath to act in Iraq for several reasons. One, they did not want to appear pro-Saddam Hussein in their criticism of the conflict, two, they were unfamiliar with the new Iraqi political elite as many were exiles from Europe who returned after the American invasion, and, finally three they were overconfident in the ability of the United States to handle the ensuing civil war. The future of how Iraq plays into the Iranian-Jordanian dynamic will be largely affected by how closely Baghdad allies itself with Tehran. Jordan has not been shy to express its unease with Iran's involvement in Iraq, a concern King Abdullah highlighted when he coined the now famous phrase, "Shi'a crescent" to describe his concern over rising Iranian power in the region.¹

Jordan and Iran Today and the Role of Non-State Actors

King Abdullah's comments speak both to the real and perceived threats which Iran poses to Jordan and the region today. For Jordan, relations with Iran have most recently concerned Iran's involvement in internal affairs and the development of Iran's nuclear program. Jordan's unease over Iran's involvement in its domestic affairs dates back to the Iranian revolution, yet today concerns possible links between select members of the Jordanian wing of the Muslim Brotherhood, The Islamic Action Front (IAF), and Hamas. Concerning Hamas its relationship with the Jordanian government was sorely affected by Hamas' sweeping victory in the January 2006 Palestinian parliamentary elections. Hamas' electoral gains created a new dynamic which challenged Jordan's previous policy of balancing good relations with the West which was largely anti-Hamas versus Jordanian public opinion which supported Hamas. This relationship underwent further strain in 2006 when a weapons cache was found in north Jordan. The Jordanian government claimed these weapons belonged to Hamas, and officials insisted that they posed a serious threat to national security.²

¹ "Iran offers Hamas financial aid," BBC News, February 22, 2006. http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/middle_east/4739900.stm
² "Jordan arrests Hamas militants," BBC News, April 25, 2006. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4942832.stm

It seems that another factor that has notably contributed to changes in Jordanian public opinion was Hamas' isolation in the international community. In the face of this pressure Hamas sought the help of Iran. In a publicly touted February 2006 meeting between Iranian and Hamas officials Iran pledged financial support to the party despite the international community pulling its own funding. Ali Larijani, former head Iranian nuclear negotiator argued that "the US decision to stop financial aid shows that they are not seeking to promote democracy in the region, contrary to their claims on the Middle East [road-map] proposal".¹ Consequently, Iran and Hamas established a strategic partnership, one manifest in their pariah status in the international community and linked by their mutually advantageous anti-American foreign policies.

However, as widespread fears of political Shia'ism linked to Iranian influence in the Middle East persists among many Arabs the popularity of Hamas has significantly suffered, particularly in Jordan. This unpopularity has been used to the advantage of the Jordanian government which has highlighted loose ties between Hamas and the IAF which may have contributed to faltering public support of the organization. For example, in recent Jordanian parliamentary elections the IAF won just six seats in the fifteenth Jordanian representative council. Although these results may point to the ebbing popularity of the IAF in Jordan it should still be underlined that Hamas, which receives far greater regional and international attention, will continue to be "monitored by Islamists in the Arab world (who will) closely follow any achievements and failures of a potential Hamas government",² and continue to cast a shadow on governments throughout the region. Yet in the same token this threat should not be overblown as seen in recent statements that Hamas may "try to forge coalitions with national, leftwing, and other powers in order to secure weight in parliament by securing the blocked one third, and by copying the experiences of Hamas in Gaza and Hizbullah in Lebanon".³

1 "Iran offers Hamas financial aid," BBC News, February 22, 2006. http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/middle_east/4739900.stm

2 Zweiri, Mahjoob. "The Hamas Victory: Shifting sands or major earthquake," *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 27, No. 4, pp 675-687, 2006.

3 "Jordan: Government Fears Increasing Syrian, Iranian Influence in Islamist Circles," *Al-Hayah*, September 30, 2007.

The second non-state actor linked to Iran with which the Jordanian government continues to be uneasy, Hizbullah, recently came under criticism from both Jordan and other Arab nations during the 2006 summer war with Israel. During the conflict King Abdullah II and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak released a joint statement that condemned Hizbullah for its “adventurism that does not serve Arab interests”. The statement went on to condemn Hizbullah for “exposing Arab nations ... to grave dangers without these nations having a say in the matter”¹, highlighting the unease of both Egypt and Jordan with the rising popularity of Hizbullah in the region.

Inversely, just as Jordan is concerned over Iranian involvement in its own affairs, Iran is concerned about Jordanian involvement in its own internal affairs. The Iranian Chairman for the Committee for Foreign Policy and National Security of the Iranian parliament Alaeddin Boroujerdi recently suggested that Jordan was offering haven to members of the Iranian opposition group, the Mujahedin-e Khalq, or the People’s Mujahedin of Iran, an organization devoted to the overthrow of the current Iranian government. Chairman Borojerdi stated that previous MKO leadership, including Massoud and Maryam Rajavi, who were in Iraq and Europe had been transferred to Jordan.² Moreover in an open letter to King Abdullah Borojerdi stated that the MKO leadership was a “cult” and needed “to be tried in a court of justice to answer for their role in terrorist activities in Iran, Iraq, and European countries”.³ For its part the response of Jordanian Government Spokesperson Nasser Judeh to the Borojerdi accusations was that they were “utterly baseless” and moreover that their aim was “attacking the Kingdom and casting doubts on its stands”.⁴ Moreover, Judeh went on to state that “publishing such reports contradicts King Abdullah’s efforts to boost the ties between the two nations on the basis of understanding and respect.”

1 Murphy, Dan and NaGuib, Sameh, “Hizbullah Winning Over Arab Street,” Christian Science Monitor, July 18, 2006. <http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/0718/p01s03-wome.html>

2 “MP: Mojahedin Khalq Organisation (Rajavi cult) leaders in Jordan, Press TV, September 11, 2007. <http://www.presstv.ir/detail.aspx?id=22624§ionid=351020101>

3 Khodabandeh, Massoud, “Open letter to King Abdullah of Jordan,” September 13, 2007. <http://iran-interlink.org/?mod=view&id=3165>

4 “Jordan offers no haven for opposition group: spokesman,” People’s Daily Online, September 25, 2007. <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90777/6270871.html>

The second contributing aspect of tensions between the two countries concerns Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons. Ultimately Jordan is concerned about the destabilizing effects of Iran's weapon program in the region. For its part Jordan has remained largely within the orbit of the West vis-à-vis Iranian nuclear technology, by supporting the United States and several key European states in their assertion that Iran must not be allowed to acquire nuclear weapons, yet it supports diplomacy over any military confrontation.

Jordan is a member of the most recently coined coalition of "6+2+1" which includes GCC member states, Egypt, and the United States. It is through this coalition that much of the debate over Iran's nuclear program has been framed. The close pairing of Egypt and Jordan to the United States in terms of political and financial support assures that both countries will continue to support the United States in terms of self-interest, and matters of larger regional security yet will likely resist the prospect of direct military confrontation considering the region's already delicate security situation.¹

Concerning nuclear technology exchange between Jordan and the United States, the two recently agreed upon a memorandum of understanding in Vienna that they "will work together to develop requirements for appropriate power reactors, fuel service arrangements, civilian training, nuclear safety, energy technology and other related areas".² From a strategic perspective for Jordan and those countries which recently announced their interest in pursuing nuclear technology, including Algeria, Egypt, Morocco and Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, and the UAE, Iran's pursuit of nuclear technology is not only unacceptable but has also led them to pursue their own nuclear programs. Although these countries are advancing their programs at differing degrees with Egypt leading the way as with a recent announcement³ that they expect to have four fully working nuclear substations by 2022 the shadow of nuclear technology is rapidly spreading across the region.

1 "More than dialogue needed," Al-Ahram Weekly, Issue 865, 4-10, October 2007. <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2007/865/eg2.html>

2 Davlak, Gale. "Jordan, U.S. Sign Nuclear Agreement," The Associated Press, September 16, 2007

3 "Egypt unveils nuclear plants plan," BBC News, October 29, 2007.
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7067378.stm

As stated by Mark Fitzpatrick, a nuclear proliferation at the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), the drive for nuclear expertise in the region has been motivated by Arab interest in maintaining a “security hedge” over Iran. Moreover, Fitzpatrick stated “if Iran was not on the path to a nuclear weapons capability you would probably not see this sudden rush”.¹ Although the advancement of energy technology will help advance Jordanian interests; the pursuit of nuclear energy by both Jordan and other Middle Eastern countries is ultimately the result of the inability of the international community to mitigate the crisis over Iranian nuclear technology. Security within the region therefore has irreversibly been affected even before possible military strikes against Iran.

Highlighting this reality were recent comments by the European Union (EU) foreign policy Chief Javier Solana that the region’s “ambitious nuclear programmes would have been unthinkable just two years ago.” In addition to proposing a multilaterally monitored international nuclear enrichment centre he underlined that the present international nuclear control system, based on a “subtle balance” between non-proliferation, technological transfers and disarmament, was under threat”² in part because of the inability to address Iranian nuclear technology. In addition were starker comments recently made by Avigdor Lieberman a senior Israeli cabinet official in charge of Israel Strategic Affairs that the pursuit of technology by multiple players in the region and in particular Egypt and Saudi Arabia would be “an apocalyptic scenario upon us”.³

1 Beeston, Richard. “Six Arab States join rush to go nuclear: Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, UAE and Saudi Arabia seek atom technology,” The Times, November 4, 2006. http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/middle_east/article624855.ece

2 “EU’s Solana suggests ‘international enrichment centre,” Agence France Presse, November 9, 2007. <http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5jVILuEAY6HLirQKh8Q1YIJh0M7dg>

3 “Apocalyptic scenario if Egypt and Saudi Arabia go nuclear: Israel minister,” Agence France Presse, November 9, 2007. <http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5j9qYXMsHRbsLG0YMIUK9d-up9qvQ>

As stated Jordan has stayed within the diplomatic arena with its assertions against the development of Iranian nuclear arms yet a recent report in the Sunday Telegraph¹ described how the Jordanian Air Force in addition to other GCC military forces were being trained by American Air Force personnel at an American military base in the UAE. In the same report a special assistant to the Chief of Staff of the Jordanian armed forces in a highly unusual direct quote stated that «concern about Iran's attempt to establish itself as a regional superpower» had led to greater co-operation, «not just at the inter-service level but also at the political level». Moreover, he went on to state that the UAE warfare center had allowed them to «exchange information and exercise together». Although training exercises do not necessarily mean that Jordan would partake in a strike on Iran, particularly in light of its potential consequences, it does point to the seriousness of how the Jordanian governments is approaching questions about the development of Iran's nuclear program and the rise of Iranian power in the region.

Conclusion

Although the influence of Iran in the Arab world is undoubtedly on the rise, it is important to frame Iran's power in a context that also acknowledges its limitations both in Jordan and the region. With the uncertainty over Iran's involvement in the region come unfounded fears. The opaque nature in which the Iranian regime presents itself to outside players enables it to maintain uncertainty over its actual intentions, gain the world's attention, massive incentive packages, and drives an internal propaganda campaign which argues that the West and its allies seek to target Iran.

The Jordanian government will likely remain concerned about links between the IAF and Hamas with Iran. However, Hamas is less concerned about exerting external power than addressing issues over its own security in Gaza in relation to Israel, and reconciliation with Fatah in the West Bank. Iran's capacity to exert influence among Hamas is also limited because of the potential consequences of Hamas being linked to Iran. Moreover, as seen in the Mecca agreement in February 2007 Hamas has shown its interest in working directly with Arab governments over any inclination to work with Iran.

¹ Shipman, Tim. "U.S. trains Gulf air forces for war with Iran," The Sunday Telegraph, October 2, 2007. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2007/09/30/wiran130.xml>

Iran-Jordan relations will continue to evolve in a context highly influenced by internal and external questions of Iranian and Jordan security and by the self-interest of both Amman and Tehran. Any change within this dynamic will be determined by internal political changes occurring within the Iranian political sphere. In the past Jordan has previously warmed to reformist political change within Iran as seen in enhanced diplomatic and economic exchange during the reformist period of 1991-2003 with former Iranian Presidents Rafsajani and Khatami. Ultimately it is both in the economic and diplomatic interest of Jordan to maintain strong relations with the West yet also maintain balanced relations with Iran particularly in light of Iran's growing influence in neighboring Iraq and the region.

The isolation of Iran only works to the advantage of the Iranians. Iranian power, both internally and externally, finds its strength in this isolation. Internally the threat posed from the West provides the Iranian government a rallying cry despite domestic concerns over social and economic malaise. Externally, uncertainty about not only Iran's nuclear program, yet also its role in Iraq and the rising Sunni-Shi'a divide create a sense of power in the region that defies Iranian abilities.

To deprive Iran of this isolation will stymie its ability to ignore Western and regional concern over its nuclear program and help advance other pressing questions of security of which Iran and Jordan are both involved in the Middle East. Since current diplomatic efforts have largely faltered and military confrontation seeks increasingly likely it may be in the interest of all parties involved to develop a two-track effort among academics and policy experts that seek alternatives to military confrontation. As King Abdullah has recently stated "no country in the region appreciates a military solution for Iran's crisis... because that will constitute a new tragedy for the Middle East"¹.

¹ "Jordan urges diplomacy with Iran," Iran News Agency, November 5, 2007.
<http://www.presstv.ir/detail.aspx?id=29833§ionid=351020206>