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## THE JORDANIAN POLITICAL STANCE ON THE RHODES AGREEMENT WITH ISRAEL 1949 – 1950: HISTORICAL ANALYSIS AND ARAB–INTERNATIONAL REACTIONS

**Abstract.** *The political stance of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan on the Rhodes Agreement with Israel (1949) remains a subject of analytical and documentary interest, especially considering the complex Arab-Israeli dynamics in the post-1948 war era. While several Arab states accused Jordan of pursuing a separate peace, the available diplomatic and press records demonstrate a more nuanced and cautious approach adopted by the Jordanian leadership. **The purpose of this research** is to investigate Jordan's negotiating strategy during the Rhodes Armistice talks, its interactions with Arab and Western powers, and the media discourse surrounding the agreement. **The methodology of this research** is based on a historical documentary approach that combines official U.S. and British documents with Egyptian and Jordanian newspaper accounts, in addition to scholarly interpretations from Israeli and Western historians. **The scientific novelty** consists in the reinterpretation of Jordan's motives and goals during the negotiations, shifting the analysis away from nationalist rhetoric toward a more balanced reading grounded in primary sources. The findings indicate that King Abdullah I pursued the armistice to secure political leverage over Jerusalem and the West Bank, while maintaining an Arab consensus to the extent possible. Both strategic calculations and pressure from Britain, the Arab League, and internal constraints shaped the Jordanian position. Despite accusations of unilateralism, Jordan neither aimed to conclude a full peace treaty nor acted independently of the Arab context but sought instead to consolidate its territorial gains without fully detaching from the broader Arab cause. **The conclusion of the study** shows that the Rhodes Agreement inaugurated a new phase of legal and political contestation over Palestine, reflecting the interplay between diplomacy, war outcomes, and regional rivalries.*

**Keywords:** Rhodes Agreement, Jordan, Israel, 1949 Armistice, Arab League, Egyptian Press, American Documents.

## ПОЛІТИЧНА ПОЗИЦІЯ ЙОРДАНІЇ ЩОДО РОДОСЬКОЇ УГОДИ З ІЗРАЇЛЕМ 1949 – 1950 РР.: ІСТОРИЧНИЙ АНАЛІЗ І РЕАКЦІЯ АРАБСЬКИХ ТА МІЖНАРОДНИХ КІЛ

**Анотація.** Політична позиція Йорданського Хашимітського Королівства щодо Родоської угоди з Ізраїлем (1949 р.) залишається предметом аналітичного та документального інтересу, особливо враховуючи складну арабо-ізраїльську динаміку післявоєнного періоду 1948 р. Хоча низка арабських держав звинувачували Йорданію у прагненні до сепаратного миру, наявні дипломатичні та прес-матеріали демонструють більш тонкий та обережний підхід йорданського керівництва. **Мета цього дослідження** – вивчити переговорну стратегію Йорданії під час переговорів про Родоське перемир'я, її взаємодію з арабськими і західними державами, та медійний дискурс навколо цієї угоди. **Методологія дослідження** заснована на історико-документальному підході, що поєднує офіційні документи США та Великобританії з публікаціями єгипетських і йорданських газет, а також з науковими інтерпретаціями ізраїльських і західних істориків. **Наукова новизна** полягає у переосмисленні мотивів і цілей Йорданії у ході переговорів, що дає підставу змістити аналіз з націоналістичної риторики на більш збалансоване прочитання, засноване на періодджерелах. Результати свідчать, що король Абдалла I прагнув до перемир'я, щоб забезпечити собі політичний вплив на Єрусалим і Західний берег, зберігаючи при цьому арабський консенсус, наскільки це було можливо. Позиція Йорданії визначалася як стратегічними розрахунками, так і тиском з боку Великобританії, Ліги арабських держав, і навіть внутрішніми обмеженнями. Незважаючи на звинувачення в односторонності, Йорданія не прагнула до укладання повноцінного мирного договору і не діяла незалежно від арабського контексту, а прагнула закріпити свої територіальні придбання, не відриваючись повністю від ширшого арабського питання. **Висновки** дослідження показують, що Родоська угода започаткувала новий етап правової та політичної суперечки про Палестину, відображаючи взаємодію дипломатії, результатів війни та регіонального суперництва.

**Ключові слова:** Родоська угода, Йорданія, Ізраїль, перемир'я 1949 р., Ліга арабських держав, єгипетська преса, американські документи.

**Problem Statement:** Following the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan found itself navigating an increasingly complex regional and international landscape. The urgent drive to secure territorial and political gains especially in Jerusalem and the West Bank, collided with rising expectations of Arab unity and resistance to separate arrangements with Israel. Several Arab media outlets, particularly in Egypt, accused Jordan of pursuing individual peace, fuelling widespread public suspicion and diplomatic tension (Al-Balagh, 1949, April 4, p. 1). However, archival British records suggest that Jordan's leadership, under King Abdullah I, was acting under calculated pressure from both London and the Arab League to manage a fragile balance between national interest and Arab consensus (FO 371/75436, March 1949). These contradictions between accusation and intention, between ideology and pragmatism form the central problem this study seeks to address by reexamining the motives, pressures, and strategic objectives behind Jordan's political conduct during the Rhodes negotiations.

**Review of Recent Researches and Publications.** Western academic studies have shown significant interest in the armistice agreements concluded after the 1948 Palestine War, especially the Rhodes Agreement between Jordan and Israel. Being a pivotal point in Arab- Israeli relations, this agreement induced multifarious analyses exploring the political and military aspects it entailed. Israeli historian Benny Morris, stated in his book *1948: A History of the First Arab-Israeli War*, that the Rhodes negotiations between Jordan and Israel were not the result of a military defeat for Jordan but reflected the geographic and political realities imposed by the war. The Jordanian army-maintained control over vast areas of the West Bank, which gave it a negotiating leverage allowing it to enter the armistice agreement

with relative confidence) Morris, 2008, pp. 371–385). Meanwhile, Avi Shlaim, in his seminal work *Collusion Across the Jordan*, presented a critical narrative of Jordan's role, arguing that King Abdullah had expansionist ambitions in Palestine and that his prior understandings with the Zionist movement helped define Jordanian influence after the war. However, Shlaim emphasizes that the Rhodes negotiations were not a separate peace as accused by some Arab states but a political move in the post-war context (Shlaim, 1988, pp. 407–421).

Tom Segev, in *The First Israelis: 1949*, further provided an insider view of Israeli society, explaining how the Tel Aviv government was divided over relations with Jordan. Some leaders preferred a pragmatic settlement with King Abdullah I, while others believed Israel should impose facts on the ground by force, especially in Jerusalem and adjacent areas (Segev, 1986, pp. 265–272).

Additionally, in his study on the Palestinian refugee issue, Yoav Gelber noted that the armistice agreements, including Rhodes, deliberately ignored resolving this issue, which upset the Jordanian leadership as the kingdom hosted increasing numbers of refugees and demanded their return or compensation within any settlement (Gelber, 2006, pp. 213–220). Meanwhile, Charles Smith, highlighted in his text-book *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, that the Rhodes Agreement exemplified arrangements imposed by the balance of power rather than political will, and that King Abdullah's position, despite its independence, remained subject to the will of major powers, especially Britain (Smith, 2013, pp. 239–245). Moreover, in the renowned study *Peace Process*, William Quandt provided an analytical background on the beginnings of American diplomacy in the region and viewed the armistice negotiations with Jordan as the first instance where the U.S. sought to manage the Arab-Israeli conflict through “calming without a fundamental solution” (Quandt, 2005, pp. 14–18).

Last but not least, Gudrun Krämer dedicated chapters in her book *A History of Palestine* to the positions of Arab states after 1948, emphasizing that Jordan was the only Arab country to emerge from the war with additional territory, which put it in political confrontation with Arab parties that saw its position as a form of unilateralism (Krämer, 2008, pp. 328–334). The collection *The War for Palestine*, edited by Eugene Rogan and Avi Shlaim, combines analytical and documentary narratives, offering a comprehensive study of Arab states' positions and showing that the media attack on Jordan after the agreement was motivated not only by nationalist reasons but also by political competition among elites in Cairo, Damascus, and Amman (Rogan, 2001, pp. 172–190).

Based on the above, it appears that the Rhodes Agreement was a pivotal moment in modern Jordanian history, revealing a complex interplay between realpolitik and nationalist positions, regional calculations, and international balances. This article seeks to analyze these dynamics based on original documents and contemporary press coverage, which serve as a rich source for monitoring political interactions and Arab positions on the negotiations. The article also contributes by uncovering understudied dimensions in Arab media discourse, especially Egyptian, which reflected internal contradictions between nationalist slogans and regional interests. By tracing editorials, news reports, and commentary in major Egyptian newspapers, the article redraws the map of Arab reception of the armistice agreement and highlights how the media helped shape a nationalist narrative of the event, sometimes detached from military and political realities.

**The purpose of the research** is to analyze Jordan's political stance during the Rhodes negotiations with Israel in 1949, and to uncover the strategic motives behind its engagement. It seeks to determine whether Jordan pursued a unilateral path or acted within the bounds of

Arab consensus. The study further examines the influence of Arab, British, and international pressures on Jordan's decisions. It draws on original diplomatic documents and contemporary media to reconstruct an objective narrative.

**Source Base of Research.** The study relies primarily on original diplomatic documents issued by the British Foreign Office (FO 371/75436; FO 800/489) and American Department of State records (FRUS, 1949, The Near East, South Asia, and Africa). It also draws on contemporary Arab press sources, especially Egyptian and Jordanian newspapers such as *Al-Balagh* and *Al-Misri*, which closely covered the Rhodes negotiations. Supplementary insights were derived from memoirs and speeches by key figures, including King Abdullah I and UN mediator Dr. Ralph Bunche. The research additionally incorporates scholarly interpretations from Western and Israeli historiography to provide a broader analytical context. This diverse source base allows for a balanced reconstruction of the Jordanian position during the armistice process.

**Research Results.** Abdullah Al-Tal, the Jordanian commander in Jerusalem, was a friend of Colonel Moshe Dayan, the Jewish commander in Jerusalem. Although Abdullah Al-Tal was not authorized for diplomatic negotiations, the informal contacts between him and Moshe Dayan, the Israeli military governor in Jerusalem, helped pave the way for direct talks under the auspices of the UN mediator Dr. Ralph Bunche. These talks began in late February 1949 in Shuna and were completed on the island of Rhodes (CIA, 1949, pp. 5–7).

The Egyptian newspaper *Al-Muqattam* reported through its correspondent in Jerusalem that a spokesperson for the Israeli government stated that Colonel Moshe Dayan informed Colonel Abdullah Al-Tal that Israel intended to conduct talks with Jordan through the United Nations. Dayan told Al-Tal that any future talks between the two states should aim at a permanent armistice leading to lasting peace. Since Al-Tal was not authorized to discuss diplomatic matters, he referred the issue to King Abdullah and the Jordanian government. (Al-Muqattam, December 13, 1948, p. 2).

Also, Dr. Bunche, the international mediator, announced that negotiations between the Jordanian and Jewish delegations to effectuate an armistice in Palestine would take place by the end of February 1948. The International Supervisory Commission stated that the Jordanian government had decided that Colonel Abdullah Al-Tal, the military governor in Jerusalem, would head the Jordanian delegation. In response, the Israeli government decided that if the Jordanian delegation was formed in this way, the Jewish delegation would be headed by Colonel Moshe Dayan, the military governor of the Jewish areas in Palestine. Dr. Bunche told the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC): "I am keen that negotiations with the Jordanian government begin by the middle of next week". (Al-Balagh, February 17, 1949, p. 1).

Obviously, the UN representative wanted both parties to agree informally on the terms of the armistice before the Rhodes talks. Therefore, the international representative saw the necessity of holding an informal joint meeting to present the final details to both delegations. The success of the Rhodes negotiations depended on the outcome of the direct talks between the Jews and Jordanians in Shuna, the winter residence of His Majesty King Abdullah. The Jews viewed the armistice as a step toward a permanent peace treaty between the Jews and the Jordanians within weeks, a position rejected by King Abdullah. *Al-Muqattam* quoted a United Press correspondent that Transjordan and Israel had reached a preliminary agreement in principle to reduce their forces in the Aqaba area. Dr. Ralph Bunche expected the armistice agreement to be completed within days, as both sides had agreed on border lines in most areas, including southern Negev and Jerusalem (Al-Muqattam, March 29, 1949, p. 1).

However, direct talks stalled. A UN official noted that if the parties quickly reached agreement in Shuna, it would accelerate the Rhodes negotiations. The main obstacle in the negotiations was the problem of the Arab Triangle in Palestine, occupied by Iraqi forces, which the Jordanians would oppose at Rhodes. Therefore, the international mediator formulated the final draft of the permanent armistice agreement between the Jews and Transjordan at the first informal meeting between the two delegations, chaired by Dr. Ralph Bunche. It was expected that the two states would sign the armistice. The drafting of the agreement took two days, indicating that private meetings between the delegations successfully arranged the details of the armistice lines and the reduction of forces behind those lines. This agreement would be the third signed between the Jews and Arab countries after Egypt (Al-Muqattam, March 29, 1949, p. 1).

Likely, that King Abdullah wanted to emerge from the armistice negotiations with Israel with many political and strategic gains benefiting Jordan, Palestine, and the Palestinian people. The most important of these were recognition of Jordan's role in Jerusalem and the West Bank, securing the return of refugees, and guaranteeing freedom of access to holy sites. This stance put him in conflict with Britain and some Arab states, which accused him of attempting to make a separate peace with Israel (F.O. 371/75493, 1949, pp. 147–159). This led to disagreements between King Abdullah's views and those of the British government. Attempts were made to resolve these disagreements through contact by the Transjordanian minister plenipotentiary in London, but these efforts did not succeed. It seems the reason was that King Abdullah would only change his position through direct negotiations with the British government. Therefore, the Transjordanian government prepared a seven-point program to serve as the basis for negotiations with Israel. However, this program differed from the British government's views on two points of great importance. The seven points included in the program are: The Jordanian government proposed a seven-point program as the basis for negotiations with Israel, focusing primarily on the final status of Jerusalem and securing a peaceful settlement. The program called for resolving the Latrun issue, regulating the operation of the Rutenberg power stations, and ensuring freedom of movement on key roads such as the Jaffa–Jerusalem route, along with Jordan's access to Jaffa port and the restoration of Ramla and Lydda to Arab control. It also emphasized the right of access to Jerusalem's holy sites, the return of Arab refugees to their homes, and compensation for those unable or unwilling to return (Al-Balagh, 1949, p. 1).

A fundamental question arises here regarding the nature of the disagreement between King Abdullah I and the British government. The main points of discord centered on two pivotal issues: Jerusalem and the Palestinian refugees' fate. King Abdullah maintained a clear position, believing that the interests of Transjordan lay in insisting on the return of the refugees to the Arab cities and areas occupied by Israel in Palestine, while at the same time allowing those who wished to settle in Jordanian territory to do so without government objection. The King affirmed that if this option were realized, the population of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan would double to about one and a quarter million people, compared to around 350,000 at the time. However, he stressed that the settlement of these refugees in Jordan should be accompanied by their receiving financial compensation paid by Israel as a legitimate right resulting from their forced displacement. The British perspective on this issue was that the common factor among the Arab states at the time regarding the Palestine problem was the insistence on the return of the refugees, whether their return was to areas occupied by the Arabs or the Jews. The second point, the issue of Jerusalem, was that the British opposed resolving it through direct negotiations between the Jews and Jordan, because



Britain feared that such an agreement would provoke the Arab states against British policy in the region (Al-Balagh, April 3, 1949, p. 2).

The permanent armistice agreement between the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and Israel was eventually signed on the evening of April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1949, following intensive negotiations on April 2 during which unresolved issues were addressed (Al-Balagh, April 4<sup>th</sup>, 1949, p. 1). An *Al-Muqattam* correspondent cited a United Press report from Rhodes: "The former enemies sat around a round table with Dr. Ralph Bunche, the international mediator, and signed the agreement at 7:30 p.m. on April 3, 1949. With this signing, the culmination of weeks of negotiations, Dr. Bunche's mission in the Middle East is nearly complete." Key provisions of the agreement included:

First: The agreement established between Transjordan and the Jews during the first armistice stipulated the formation of the Jordanian-Jewish committee to resolve disputes over contested lands, such as the coastal areas on the Dead Sea. The agreement did not mention the Eilat Peninsula the coast on the Gulf of Aqaba, although the Jewish occupation of it at one point threatened to halt the negotiations. The committee will be chaired by one of the United Nations representatives and will consist of three Arabs and three Jews. Its headquarters will be in Jerusalem, and the committee will hold its first meeting within no more than a week after the signing of the agreement (Al-Balagh, April 4, 1949, p. 2).

Second: The agreement stipulated that the decisions of the joint committee would be based, as far as possible, on the principle of consensus. If consensus could not be reached, the committee would make decisions by a majority of the members present at the meeting. If the committee failed to reach a decision and a dispute arose, each party would have the right to raise the issue to the Security Council to seek a solution. Dr. Ralph Bunche told the delegates of the two states that "they have signed two agreements in the form of one agreement because this agreement included the issue of areas occupied by the Jordanians as well as those occupied by the Iraqis." He added: "This agreement constitutes a non-aggression pact between Transjordan and Israel" (Al-Balagh, 1949, p. 1).

Third: Jordanian forces will be present in the Arab third in central Palestine, including Nablus, Jenin, and Tulkarm, which are the areas where Iraqi forces used to be (Al-Balagh, 1949, p. 1), on the condition that the Jordanian forces allow Israel to establish a transportation line between Tel Aviv and Haifa. On the other hand, Israel agreed to pay the costs of constructing a first-class paved road, twenty kilometers long, for Transjordan, and Israel also ceded certain privileges to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in the Dead Sea area.

Fourth: The lines stipulated by the armistice largely reflect the borders established during the ceasefire order issued on November 30, 1948. As for the Negev area, these borders matched the state of war as set by the United Nations in the previous March. Thus, Israel obtained freedom of movement on the Tulkarm-Qalqilya road, and in return, there was a change in the borders in favor of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in Hebron.

Fifth: The forces will be designated as defensive forces within ten days after the demarcation of the dividing borders, and the Jordanian forces will replace the Iraqi forces in the central area for a period ranging from five weeks to fifteen weeks. The Jordanian government accepted full responsibility for all Iraqi units. Sixth: The special committee will work to make the necessary arrangements to grant the right of entry to all holy places, ensure freedom of movement and passage on all vital roads, and allow hospitals to resume their work on Mount Scopus in Jerusalem (Al-Muqattam, April 4, 1949, p. 2).

The upcoming section analyzes the prudent and pragmatic approaches of Jordan and Israel toward the 1949 Rhodes Agreement, emphasizing Jordan's limited negotiation strategy

to safeguard Jerusalem and Israel's focus on territorial consolidation. Drawing on U.S. and British sources, it highlights the divergence in priorities and the absence of unified Arab coordination. This divergence is further illustrated by a secret telegram sent by the U.S. Vice Consul in Amman, Wells Stapler, dated February 24, 1949, reveals that the Jordanian government was cautious in its approach to the Rhodes armistice negotiations. It instructed its delegation not to engage in a comprehensive settlement but to limit negotiations to technical matters related to the ceasefire. The document also indicates that Amman preferred a gradual approach toward a final settlement under the auspices of the International Conciliation Commission (PCC) and considered rushing into comprehensive peace talks a "mistake." The telegram further notes that the Jordanian delegation was prepared to verbally inform Israel that the agreement would also apply to Iraqi-held areas, despite lacking written authorization from Baghdad, reflecting weak Arab coordination and absence of a joint official commitment. The document conveys a pessimistic Jordanian assessment of upcoming Arab meetings in Beirut and Cairo, with Amman placing little hope in the effectiveness of a collective Arab stance at that stage (F.R.U.S., 1949, pp. 768–769).

*Al-Muqattam* newspaper cited a political analysis from the British Times regarding King Abdullah's desire to implement the Rhodes armistice agreement. The Times noted that King Abdullah understood that the understanding with Israel under the Rhodes Agreement did not mean a permanent peace treaty but viewed it as necessary for Jordan, the Arab world in general, and the entire political and economic future of the Middle East. The newspaper explained that King Abdullah's vision stemmed from his strong desire for Jerusalem to remain under his rule rather than under international trusteeship, thereby preventing Israeli control. Consequently, both sides would benefit from a non-aggression pact that would make the Rhodes armistice a practical, lasting solution (Al-Muqattam, April 25, 1950, p. 1).

To gain a broader understanding of the nature of the negotiations, it is also important to consider the Israeli position as reflected in U.S. documents, which reveal diplomatic and strategic orientations different from the prevailing stereotype. U.S. State Department documents show that the Israeli negotiator at Rhodes handled the armistice file with limited flexibility but with a strategic determination to consolidate the military situation after the war 1948. Diplomatic memoranda from the American negotiating team indicate that then Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Sharet described the agreement with Jordan as a "strategic turning point in Israel's foreign policy" (F.R.U.S., 1949, pp. 928–930). Both Moshe Dayan and Reuven Shiloah played pivotal roles in the negotiations under the supervision of UN envoy Ralph Bunche, with Israel considering fixing the status quo through a bilateral agreement with Jordan preferable to facing collective Arab diplomatic opposition (Bunche, 1948–1949, pp. 212–219).

A report from the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv to the State Department further stated that "the Israeli position was firm on some points but did not reject engagement, recognizing the importance of ending regional isolation" (F.R.U.S., 1949, pp. 935–937). This reflects a pragmatic Israeli stance at the time, with the new government seeking to consolidate military gains through a partial settlement that secured implicit recognition without making concessions on refugees or Jerusalem. Notably, this approach was not unanimously supported within Israel; some U.S. diplomatic reports showed that the military establishment pressured against accepting permanent border understandings, while the Foreign Ministry sought to cement regional recognition, even if indirectly (F.R.U.S., 1949, pp. 921–924).

Egypt was inevitably among the first Arab countries to sign an armistice agreement, yet it incited the Arab League states against Jordan through a media campaign led by the

Egyptian press targeting Jordanian policy. This campaign was fueled by reports alleging that the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan was preparing to sign a separate peace agreement with Israel. Evidence of this can be seen in what was published by the newspaper *Al-Balagh*, which ran an article titled “Al-Ayyam Investigates a Secret Document Published by *Al-Balagh* on March 7, 1948”. The document contained a classified letter from Brigadier Charles Clayton, the head of the British intelligence at the British Embassy in Cairo, dated December 14, 1947, regarding Jordan’s approval of the partition of Palestine into two states and its intention to conclude a permanent peace with Israel (*Al-Balagh*, April 30, 1950, p. 2). Notably, Egypt and some Arab countries, such as Syria and Saudi Arabia, used this document as a pretext for political and media attacks against the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan within the Arab League.

Since Jordan considered the media reports about direct negotiations with Israel to be mere false claims and malicious propaganda, King Abdullah I convened a meeting with members of the Jordanian government and Bahā’ al-Dīn Ṭūqān, the Jordanian minister plenipotentiary to Egypt, to clarify the facts and respond to these allegations from an official perspective. Following the meeting, Ṭūqān returned to Cairo and held a press conference attended by several Egyptian journalists. He was asked about the truth of rumors regarding secret negotiations between Jordan and Israel for a separate peace. Ṭūqān categorically denied these reports, noting that the Jordanian government had previously issued an official statement refuting such claims. He affirmed: “I once again strongly deny these reports and confirm that there are no negotiations between us and Israel, except for what takes place through the United Nations Conciliation Commission in Geneva”. When asked by a journalist from *Al-Masri* newspaper about efforts to persuade Jordan to change its opposition to the internationalization of Jerusalem so as not to diverge from the Arab consensus on the need for internationalization, Ṭūqān responded: “I am not aware of such efforts, and our position on the internationalization of Jerusalem remains as it is opposition to internationalization”. He added, “We have previously presented our position to the Arab League’s political committee, and they did not object. As for Jerusalem, by which we mean that part of Palestine containing the holy sites, if Transjordan were to accept the internationalization of Jerusalem, the United Nations might then say: since Israel insists on opposing internationalization, we will give it New Jerusalem and place Arab Jerusalem under guardianship. This is precisely what the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan does not want” (*Al-Masri*, February 9, 1950, p. 2). When asked if the Jordanian army could defend Jerusalem, Ṭūqān replied that this question should be directed to military men, but added: “In any case, the Jordanians are always ready to shed every drop of their blood in defense of Jerusalem” (*Al-Masri*, February 5, 1950, p. 3).

At the request of Syria, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia, the Arab League’s political committee convened to discuss what they called “the Transjordan issue” and to consider taking action against Jordan regarding rumors of a separate peace with Israel. However, some countries, such as Iraq and Lebanon, suggested that no decision be taken before the arrival of the Jordanian delegation to the League. When a journalist from *Al-Masri* asked Riyadh Al-Solh about the issue of Palestine’s representation in the League and Jordan’s position, Al-Solh replied: “I say that the issue of Palestine’s representation, despite its importance, comes second. The first issue for me is East Jordan’s position in the League. Before the League discusses this or any other topic, it must resolve the East Jordan issue in light of what has been broadcast, rumored, and published, and find a correct and clear solution. I sincerely hope that the Jordanian delegation comes to Cairo to properly explain all these issues that



have been broadcast and rumored and published, and which Mr. Ṭūqān has previously denied completely” (Al-Masri, March 27, 1950, p. 1).

Although some countries requested the political committee to postpone any decisions, Egypt insisted on a resolution stating: “The Palestine issue concerns all Arab League member states, not just one, and any harm caused by Israel affects all Arabs. Therefore, any separate peace negotiations by a League member state are outside the Arab League and must result in immediate expulsion. The resolution also stipulates that no negotiations of any kind regarding the Palestinian issue may take place except by agreement of all member states” (Al-Masri, March 27, 1950, p. 2).

Accordingly, *Al-Masri* newspaper predicted that if relations between Jordan and Israel were a fundamental cause of strong conflict between Jordan and the Arab League, the League’s decision to impose sanctions on any state violating the Charter by negotiating a separate peace with Israel made it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to consider a peace agreement between Israel and Jordan at that time (Al-Balagh, April 17, 1950, p. 1). In light of the reports circulated by the Egyptian press on this matter despite Israel’s official denial through its foreign minister and before its parliament (Al-Masri, March 18, 1950, p. 3).

Despite these two denials, as well as the denial issued by Ṭūqān, the Jordanian minister plenipotentiary in Cairo, political circles within the Arab League continued to believe the story was true. Syria and Saudi Arabia adopted this position when Khalid al-Azm raised the issue before the League Council, considering Jordan’s move to conclude an agreement with Israel a violation of the Arab League Charter. At the same time, there were armistice negotiations scheduled to take place between Syria and Israel (Al-Muqattam, March 29, 1949, p. 1), which were expected to address the exchange of prisoners, reduction of forces, and border demarcation. For this reason, Brigadier William Riley, Chief of Staff of the United Nations, and Monsieur Henri Vigier, assistant to Dr. Bunche, the UN mediator, traveled from Haifa to Damascus to conduct negotiations between Syria and Israel.

The Syrian delegate to the Arab League insisted strongly on affirming these falsehoods, giving a special statement to the Egyptian newspaper Al-Masri in which he said: “The Syrian government will support all joint measures taken by Arab governments regarding Transjordan, and I have already declared from Damascus that my government cannot stand idly by in the face of any peace treaty signed between Israel and Transjordan, because national duty requires us to strengthen Arab solidarity against Israel” (Al-Masri, March 27, 1950, p. 1).

Saudi Arabia adopted similar stances, working behind the scenes to provoke a political crisis in the Jordanian Foreign Ministry. This was evident when Jordan’s minister plenipotentiary to Saudi Arabia, Muhammad Fahmi Hashem, who had previously served as chief judge, sought political asylum, leaving his post without notifying his government. Strikingly, Egypt granted him asylum. When asked about his reasons, Hashem stated: “I left my post because King Abdullah negotiated with the Jews, information I obtained from diplomatic sources in Saudi Arabia and from reports in the Egyptian press” (Al-Masri, 1950, March 27, p. 1).

In summary, the media and political campaign against Jordan within the Arab League was largely based on unsubstantiated information. Despite official denials from Jordan and some Arab and foreign parties, some states continued to escalate tensions rather than seek Arab consensus. The Egyptian press played a central role in fueling the dispute, complicating Jordan’s relations with the Arab League. British documents suggest that ongoing Arab pressure on Jordan had strategic consequences for Arab unity, making this crisis a real test of

the Arab League's ability to manage internal disagreements away from rumors and political strife amid this Arab tension, U.S. State Department documents revealed that Washington was closely monitoring King Abdullah's moves during the Rhodes negotiations. A telegram dated March 3, 1949, indicated that "the Jordanian leadership is acting cautiously but is prepared to enter into a comprehensive armistice if it obtains guarantees regarding Jerusalem and the refugees". Other American reports noted that King Abdullah was regarded in Western circles as a more reliable partner compared to other Arab leaders (F.R.U.S., 1976, p. 1239).

Therefore, the U.S. administration was closely following the developments of the armistice between Jordan and Israel, considering that the success of these negotiations could establish a model applicable to the rest of the Arab states. In a telegram sent by the American ambassador in Amman on March 3, 1949, it was stated that "King Abdullah seems inclined toward a settlement that keeps Jordan in a position of strength in the West Bank, provided the arrangements include guarantees regarding Jerusalem and the refugees". Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, Loy W. Henderson, also indicated that Washington viewed King Abdullah as a more pragmatic leader compared to other Arab leaders, and that "Jordan could represent a conduit for quiet American influence in the region" (F.R.U.S., 1976, pp. 1238–1240).

A secret political document issued by the U.S. State Department on April 17, 1950, also revealed a comprehensive assessment of Jordan's position on the armistice agreement with Israel. The document considered Jordan to be one of the Arab states most ready to accept a realistic settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict. It noted that King Abdullah began the annexation of the West Bank at the beginning of 1949 with the British support, and that Washington cautiously encouraged his stance. The document recorded that Jordan conducted bilateral talks with Israel from November 1949 to March 1950, resulting in a preliminary agreement that included a ceasefire for five years and a free trade zone in Haifa. However, it was not implemented due to objections within the Jordanian government and Palestinian pressure. The U.S. State Department considered that supporting Jordan in this direction carried political risks for its relations with Arab states, as a separate peace could lead to further Arab isolation for Jordan. Nevertheless, it remained a realistic option that could help reduce regional tensions in light of the prevailing Arab rigidity at the time. Washington also saw Jordan's economic stability through refugee integration and cooperation with UNRWA as a strategic priority to limit Soviet influence in the region (F.R.U.S., 1950, pp. 1095–1097).

As for the British assessment, it is clear from a secret telegram sent by the American chargé d'affaires in London to the U.S. State Department on January 3, 1950, that the British Foreign Office, despite announcing a policy of "non-intervention" in the Jordanian-Israeli negotiations in Rhodes, was closely monitoring the negotiations. It provided its envoy in Amman, Sir Alec Kirkbride, with secret instructions if his advice was sought. These instructions included undisclosed British strategic advice, the most important of which were: taking advantage of Israel's desire for a settlement, especially regarding Jerusalem; avoiding hasty concessions; rejecting unrealistic corridors such as those proposed by Israel toward Gaza; demanding direct access to the Mediterranean north of Gaza; and proposing the annexation of Arab neighborhoods in Jerusalem to strengthen the agreement diplomatically and facilitate refugee resettlement. Although the Jordanian government did not officially request London's advice, this British perspective reflects a high level of monitoring and indirect influence on the course of negotiations, at a time when London was keen to maintain its influence in the region without appearing as a direct mediator (F.R.U.S., 1950, p. 677).

Political circles in the British government, meanwhile, believed that Arab states could reach agreements with Israel; they did not expect friendship or affection between the disputing parties, but they wanted stability in the Middle East. These circles also believed that the Arab states were losing more from continued hostility with Israel than they were gaining. It was also common in London's political circles that Egypt, which opposed any understandings with Israel, had powerful elements inclined toward this approach understanding with Israel but they also believed that Egypt's shift in this direction would be slow and that Egypt, which opposed Jordan in the Arab League, would be encouraged to take a similar step if it saw any Arab state reaching an understanding with Israel (Al-Masri, 1950, April 22, p. 1).

Certain political factions within the British Foreign Office, responding to accusations made by some Arab League member states against the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan – accusations stemming from a negative press campaign in Egypt – stated that the British government favored any Middle East agreement to be made between Israel and a unified Arab front, represented by the Arab League. This approach was considered preferable to Israel reaching separate agreements with individual Arab states. They added: "For this reason, it cannot be said that Britain encouraged King Abdullah and Israel to enter into direct negotiations, nor can it be said that King Abdullah would have entered those negotiations if Britain had objected" (Al-Muqattam, 1950, April 25, p. 1).

Britain's view was that bilateral agreements might increase tensions rather than ease them, and it expected increased agitation and anger among Arab peoples if a peace treaty between Jordan and Israel (Al-Masri, 1950, March 18, p. 2) were signed. In this context, British Foreign Office documents showed a pragmatic view of Jordan's position. A secret memorandum dated April 10, 1949, stated that "the accusations of a separate peace directed at Jordan are not based on conclusive evidence, and continued Arab pressure on Amman by other Arab states could push King Abdullah toward a policy closer to the Western powers". The memorandum also included a warning that "ignoring Jordan's interests will increase divisions within the Arab ranks and weaken the Arab League's position in confronting Israel". The British Foreign Office emphasized the importance of stable Jordanian-Israeli relations for its interests in Palestine and the Eastern Mediterranean (F.O. 371/75493, 1949, pp. 150–151).

On the other hand, the idea of concluding a non-aggression pact between the two states emerged as one of the arrangements resulting from the Rhodes Armistice Agreement. Al-Masri newspaper, quoting *The New York Times*, reported that the latter had learned from diplomatic sources in Washington that a meeting was held between the delegations of Israel and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan at King Abdullah's private palace in Ash-Shuneh. King Abdullah himself chaired this meeting, which was intended to conclude a non-aggression pact and resolve all outstanding issues. The two delegations spent six hours without reaching an understanding, leading King Abdullah to leave after instructing the Jordanian delegation to reach an agreement. After further discussions, the head of the Israeli delegation declared it impossible to reach an agreement, and the Israeli delegation returned to Tel Aviv (Al-Masri, March 18, 1950, p. 2).

Thus, the negotiations failed at their first stage due to King Abdullah's and the Jordanian delegation's insistence on achieving the objectives of this agreement.

The second stage of negotiations came when fifty Jordanian and Israeli officers met in the demilitarized zone in Jerusalem to discuss proposals presented by General Riley, the chief armistice observer, aimed at strengthening cooperation between the two sides in dealing

with border incidents such as looting and shooting. The aim was to exchange views to select the most effective means to improve conditions in the border area, organize communication between the parties' posts, and facilitate joint patrols with armistice observers. Indeed, a conference was held at the United Nations observers' headquarters in Jerusalem, attended by the commanders-in-chief of the Jordanian and Israeli forces, as stipulated by the armistice agreement. General Baden represented Israel, and General Glubb Pasha represented Jordan. Both sides attempted to implement measures to combat border theft, infiltration across the armistice lines, and smuggling, but these efforts also failed due to the Jordanian delegation's objections to the Jewish conditions (Al-Balagh, 1950, April 20, p. 2).

Israel denied signing any agreements or treaties with the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. When the Israeli parliament convened on March 14, 1950, to discuss a request by members of the Herut Party (one of the opposition parties in Israel) to address rumors of peace negotiations between Jordan and Israel (Al-Muqattam, March 15, 1950, p. 4), Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett stated in parliament that no non-aggression pact had been signed between Israel and any other state and that Israel was not prepared to enter negotiations with the Arabs. No draft agreement had been submitted to the cabinet. Sharett emphasized: "The agreement with Transjordan has existed for a year; it is the armistice agreement signed on the island of Rhodes and strictly and amicably implemented by both contracting countries". An opposition member from the Herut Party responded to Sharett, asking: "Does this mean that the Israeli government does not intend to reach an agreement with Jordan or work toward such an agreement?" Sharett pledged that the Israeli government would not sign any agreement before consulting the parliament and also pointed to the difficulty of negotiating with King Abdullah, who insisted on preserving Jerusalem and Palestine before any agreement. After Sharett's statement, both opposition proposals were put to a vote and rejected by a majority of 54 to 29 (Al-Muqattam, March 15, 1950, p. 1).

Due to the failure of the Jordanian-Israeli negotiations to sign a non-aggression pact following the Rhodes Agreement in their previous stages in Shunah and Jerusalem, General William Riley, the chief United Nations observer, attempted to start the third stage of these talks. He met in Jerusalem with the commander of the Jewish army and planned to travel to Amman to meet Brigadier Glubb Pasha, commander of the Arab Legion. The aim of these talks with senior officials in both countries was to put an end to border incidents, which had recently claimed lives on both sides. (Al-Balagh, 1950, April 27, pp. 1–2).

The two parties agreed to meet on May 2, 1950, for this purpose. It is worth noting that the Jordanian-Israeli Joint Armistice Commission met before the May 2 talks to discuss border incidents at Beit Jibrin, west of Hebron, due to a landmine explosion that killed some Israeli soldiers. An official statement regarding this incident announced that local commanders from both sides in the border area between Tiberias and Aqaba would meet to discuss border incidents in general to prevent their recurrence in the future and reinforce the armistice framework (Al-Balagh, April 27, 1950, p. 2). *Al-Masri* newspaper, quoting *News Chronicle*, reported that the latter published a political analysis of these talks, attempting to link the approval of the representatives of the two states Jewish and Jordanian to these discussions with Britain's recognition of the annexation of the Arab parts of Palestine and its legal recognition of Israel. The newspaper stated that this British recognition paved the way for the meeting between King Abdullah's representatives and those of David Ben-Gurion, Israel's Prime Minister, to lay out the main lines for demarcating the border between the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the Jewish state (Al-Masri, May 2, 1950, p. 1).

*Al-Masri* also reported, quoting *The Times* of London, that Britain's recognition of the annexation of the Arab part of Palestine to Transjordan and its legal recognition of Israel was a step the British government could not avoid. The newspaper welcomed the British Foreign Office's understanding of the true situation in the Middle East, noting that the situation in the region may not be exaggerated, but that Britain had clarified its position. There was no doubt, however, that many problems remained to be resolved before tensions could be eased, not least among them the issue of supervision over the holy places and the dispute between Jordan and the Arab League.

Obviously, the Jews were not serious in the recent talks regarding border demarcation and non-aggression but rather sought to bargain with King Abdullah and the Jordanian government and to enter into final talks with the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. *Al-Masri* commented on the repeated border incidents by quoting a memo from its correspondent there: "Border incidents continue to increase, and there is no reason to believe they will stop simply by having joint patrols guard the border". The memo suggested that Israel was trying to force Jordan to achieve its goal of concluding a permanent peace with Jordan, arguing that all these border arrangements were insufficient and that there was an urgent need to replace the armistice agreement with a permanent, final peace settlement – something King Abdullah always refused.

Moreover, the Jordanian government lodged a protest with international observers over Israel's violation of the sanctity of the Mamilla Islamic Cemetery in the heart of Jerusalem. The sacred cemetery is respected by Muslims as it contains the remains of religious figures and the graves of martyrs who fought in the Crusades in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. In its official protest to the chief observer, the Jordanian government stated that Israel was building a road through the cemetery, contradicting previous Israeli statements about respecting holy places. Radio Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan reported after this protest was submitted to international monitors that a recent Jewish attack had occurred on a village in the Hebron area near the village of Jibril (*Al-Masri*, May 2, 1950, p. 2).

Meanwhile, the Israeli government has repeatedly declared its desire to enter into peace negotiations with the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, but King Abdullah considered this a danger, as it would mean separating from the other Arab countries and concluding a separate peace – unless he was prepared to sever his ties with the Arab League, which King Abdullah always refused. At the same time, he believed he could conclude a non-aggression pact based on the Rhodes Armistice Agreement, which could bring significant economic and social benefits and serve the interests of annexing the West Bank to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (*Al-Muqattam*, 1950, March 25, p. 1).

It is noteworthy that Israel was insistent on violating the Rhodes Armistice and the recent talks regarding the implementation of this agreement and the non-aggression pact between the two parties. It seems that Israel wanted to force King Abdullah to sign a permanent peace agreement, which he refused. Thus, a Jewish military detachment attempted to kidnap several residents of the Arab Turi area on the pretext that they had killed an Israeli soldier, but the Jordanian patrols stationed there prevented this, forcing the Jews to withdraw from their positions after the Jordanian forces arrested an Israeli corporal from the detachment. For this reason, the Jordanian government submitted a protest to General Riley, the chief international armistice observer in Palestine, regarding the Jews' violations of the terms of the Rhodes Armistice Agreement. According to a correspondent for the Arab Agency, the Jordanian protest memorandum referred to the Jewish mobilizations on the Jordanian border



and repeated attacks on those borders and the inhabitants of neighbouring areas (Al-Balagh, 1950, May 27, p. 2).

Yet, the Jews did not stop at violating the terms of the Rhodes Armistice by continuing to attack the inhabitants of the border areas. They also resorted to forging the map agreed upon in the armistice agreement signed by both parties. According to a statement broadcast by the Jordanian government, there was an Israeli attack on a strip of land along the Jordan River. The statement considered this aggression a severe blow to stability throughout the Middle East. The area of this strip is about one square kilometer and is located at the confluence of the Yarmouk and Jordan rivers. The Israeli government occupied it on August 28, claiming that the United Nations map authorized it to seize the land.

According to the terms of the Rhodes Armistice Agreement, if either party breaches the armistice, the other party should refer the matter to the United Nations. Initially, Dr. Youssef Heikal, Jordan's Minister Plenipotentiary, submitted a memorandum to the U.S. State Department and met with the official in charge of Middle Eastern affairs. The memorandum did not mention Israel by name because Jordan does not recognize it as a state. The memorandum stated that the Jewish actions continued to raise Arab fears that the Jews were pursuing a policy of expansion at the expense of the Arabs. The New York Times documented a direct breach of this armistice in August 1950, noting that Israeli forces penetrated a border area near the Jordan River, claiming that the armistice map entitled them to control the land. In response, the Jordanian government accused Israel of forging the official maps signed at Rhodes and informed the United Nations that Israeli actions "involve an intentional aggressive intent to impose a new fait accompli on the ground" (The New York Times, 1950, August 29, p. 3).

Therefore, their recent actions threaten the security and stability of the entire Middle East at a time when all people should be mobilizing their efforts to coordinate international relations and foster harmony and concord. It is worth mentioning that Jordan had previously submitted a memorandum to the United Nations. The Jordanian Minister Plenipotentiary in Washington reported that he came to present his government's perspective on the aggressive act orchestrated by the Jews on August 25, 1950, and their occupation of Jordanian territory (Al-Muqattam, October 5, 1950, p. 1).

The Jordanian legation, however, stated that the Jews claimed their seizure of these lands was based on a map drawn in Rhodes under the terms of the armistice to end the fighting between the Arabs and the Jews. In reality, however, the Jews had forged the map and did not use the genuine original. The question remains: How did the Jews use a forged map? Jordan protested Israel's use of a forged version of the armistice map, accusing it of altering agreed boundaries to justify new territorial claims. In the end, the Jordanian minister in Washington asked the United Nations not to recognize the reduced map that the Jews had forged and to rely on the original, first map (Al-Muqattam, October 5, 1950, p. 2).

In reality, Israel had a different position from Britain regarding the annexation of Arab Palestine to Jordan, as it linked recognition of this annexation and its non-objection to the conclusion of a peace agreement between it and Jordan. This was evident when an Israeli government spokesperson indicated that his government considered the annexation of East Palestine to Jordan a hostile act unless the Hashemite Kingdom established a peace settlement with Israel, and that this annexation was a unilateral act that did not bind Israel in any way nor imposed any legal obligations on it in this regard, stating: "We signed the armistice agreement with the Hashemite Jordan and we are determined to adhere to it. However,

this agreement does not require a final settlement, and establishing such a settlement is not impossible without entering into negotiations and approving a peace treaty between the two parties; therefore, it should be clear that the status of the Arab areas west of the Jordan is a matter open to negotiation as far as Israel is concerned” (Al-Muqattam, 1950, April 25, p. 1).

*Al-Muqattam* newspaper published an analytical article on this matter, noting that Israel was keen to retain full freedom of action regarding the incorporation of the Arab part of Palestine into East Jordan, and that it neither rejected nor accepted this incorporation (Al-Muqattam, 1950, April 28, p. 1). It is clear from this that the Israeli government believes that King Abdullah’s step cannot become legitimate except within the framework of a general peace settlement between the two states and the signing of a non-aggression pact, which was under negotiation. Otherwise, Israel may consider the annexation of Palestine a hostile act against it.

*Al-Balagh* newspaper ran that the statement by the Jewish spokesperson was interpreted as meaning that Israel might demand some of the lands allocated to Jordan under the armistice agreement, and that what was said in the Jewish statement about the status of the Arab areas west of the Jordan being negotiable indicates Israel’s intention to exert pressure on Jordan (Al-Balagh, 1950, April 25, p. 1).

On the domestic level, the Herut Party, formerly known as the Irgun Zvai Leumi organization, distributed leaflets in Tel Aviv denouncing Jordan’s annexation of the Arab section, which the party called the Jewish homeland. The party urged the residents of Israel not to give up any part of their heritage, as they claimed. The party’s leaflets also accused the British government of supporting the king in establishing his kingdom on both banks of the Jordan, as they alleged (Al-Balagh, 1950, April 25, p. 1).

Besides, the Israeli spokesperson added that the Jewish objection to the annexation of Arab Palestine to Jordan was not merely about Jordan’s supervision over Arab Palestine, as the Jews preferred its official annexation to Jordan rather than entrusting its fate to Hajj Amin al-Husseini. However, Israel’s main concern was that the extension of Jordanian rule over Arab Palestine would facilitate the entry of the British military forces into it under the joint defense agreement annexed to the Jordanian-British treaty (Al-Balagh, 1950, April 25, p. 3).

Israel’s position came after the British Parliament warmly welcomed and fully recognized both union of the two banks of the Jordan and the State of Israel. The spokesman for the House of Commons, Mr. Kenneth Younger, added: “The Jordanian-British treaty concluded in 1948 now applies to that part of Palestine that was united with Jordan; this means that any Israeli attempt to undermine Jordanian authority in East Palestine by force will immediately lead to the use of the British forces in support of Jordan”. This led the Israeli government spokesperson to express his astonishment that the eastern part of Palestine had entered the scope of the British-Jordanian treaty (Al-Balagh, 1950, April 28, p. 1).

From the above, it is concluded that Israel’s rejection of Jordan’s annexation of Arab Palestine reflects its expansionist intentions, which led King Abdullah to pursue Arab League support as a defensive response. Western sources confirm that Jordan adopted a pragmatic approach aimed at safeguarding its military gains without seeking a separate peace. Meanwhile, Israel relied on legal reinterpretations of the armistice terms, turning the Rhodes Agreement into the starting point of a prolonged diplomatic struggle rather than a final resolution.

**Conclusion.** This study shows that the Rhodes Agreement between Jordan and Israel was not merely a military ceasefire, but a turning point that reflected the complex balance between

political pragmatism and national sensitivities in the region. While King Abdullah sought to consolidate Jordan's control over the West Bank through negotiation, he also aimed to preserve a degree of Arab coordination to avoid regional isolation. In contrast, Israel viewed the agreement as a strategic tool to formalize territorial gains without addressing key issues such as Jerusalem and refugees, with backing from global powers like the U.S. and Britain.

The analysis of American and British documents, alongside Arab media discourse particularly from Egypt reveals a discrepancy between public rhetoric and actual political dynamics. The Egyptian campaign against Jordan fuelled regional tensions and distorted receptions of its intentions. Ultimately, the study concludes that the Rhodes Agreement marked the start of a prolonged diplomatic struggle, as Jordan navigated between defending its strategic interests and responding to accusations of unilateralism. This research highlights the need to reassess Jordan's position through primary sources and press coverage that expose the realities behind the negotiations.

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