



Governance of the Jordanian Decision Regarding the Return of Syrian Refugees to their Homeland in light of European Support and the New Phase's Implications

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Abstract

Research Rationale: This research examines the governance of Jordan's decision-making on the voluntary return of Syrian refugees amid European support and regional shifts. It frames refugee return as a governance challenge shaped by humanitarian commitments, national interests, and international cooperation, rather than a purely administrative procedure.

Objective: The research analyzes Jordan's governance of the voluntary return of Syrian refugees, focusing on European support, domestic and international constraints, and the key factors shaping policy outcomes in the transitional phase.

Methodology: The research adopts a qualitative descriptive-analytical approach based on interpretive policy analysis. It relies on secondary data from official documents, international reports, and academic literature, applying the PESTEL framework to examine the political, economic, social, technological, legal, and environmental determinants of governance.

Findings: The findings indicate that refugee return governance in Jordan is a multidimensional adaptive process, shaped by political, economic, social, institutional, and legal factors. European support enhances capacities but does not remove existing structural constraints.

Conclusion: The research concludes that refugee return from Jordan is linked to stability in Syria and reflects a balanced approach integrating humanitarian commitments, national interests, and sustained international cooperation.



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حوكمة القرار الأردني المتعلق بعودة اللاجئين السوريين إلى وطنهم في ظل الدعم الأوروبي ومعطيات المرحلة الجديدة

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المخلص

فكرة البحث: تتناول هذه الوراسة حوكمة القرار الأردني المتعلق بالعودة الطوعية للاجئين السوريين في ظل الدعم الأوروبي والتحول الإقليمي. وتُقرّب عودة اللاجئين بوصفها تحدياً حوكمياً تشكّله الالتزامات الإنسانية والمصالح الوطنية والتعاون الدولي، وليس مجرد إجراء إداري.

الهدف: تحلل الوراسة حوكمة الأردن لملف العودة الطوعية للاجئين السوريين، مع التركيز على الدعم الأوروبي، والقيود الداخلية والدولية، والعوامل الرئيسية التي تُشكّل مخارج السياسات في المرحلة الانتقالية.

المنهجية: تعتمد الوراسة منهجاً وصفيّاً تحليلياً نوعياً قائماً على تحليل السياسات التقسوي. وتتركز على بيانات ثانوية مستمدة من وثائق رسمية وتقارير دولية وأدبيات أكاديمية، مع توظيف إطار بيستل (PESTEL) لتحليل المحددات السياسية والاقتصادية والاجتماعية والتكنولوجية والقانونية والبيئية للحكومة.

النتائج: تشير النتائج إلى أن حوكمة عودة اللاجئين في الأردن تمثل عملية تكيفية متعددة الأبعاد تتشكل بفعل عوامل سياسية واقتصادية واجتماعية ومؤسسية وقانونية، حيث يسهم الدعم الأوروبي في تعزيز القنوت دون رالة القيود الهيكلية القائمة.

الخلاصة: تخلص الوراسة إلى أن عودة اللاجئين من الأردن ترتبط باستقرار الأوضاع في سوريا، وتعكس مقاربة متوازنة تجمع بين الالتزامات الإنسانية والمصالح الوطنية واستقرار التعاون الدولي.

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1.1 Introduction

Jordan has had to contend with refugees for some time. I mean, it's up there as one of the top countries globally with the most refugees per capita. Presently, there are about 1.3 million Syrians there, of which 671,000 are registered with the UN. "Most are living in the local communities. This has begun to create some tension as the situation in Syria continues. The Jordanian Hashemite Kingdom has always followed certain policies for the refugees in its land to protect them and provide them with basic needs, and it exercised its policy towards them according to the international humanitarian and legal documents and standards. With limited economic means and overstretched public services, Jordan maintains its commitment to international instruments and has sought a fairer global system of burden sharing to cope with the enduring Syrian refugee crisis (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates 2024).

The war in Syria has devastated the region, including Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan. They have had to deal with the bulk of the refugees. Despite having vastly varying population sizes, wealth levels, and numbers of people, the three have all struggled to cope with the influx of Syrians. Since 2011, Jordan has been a sanctuary for Syrians, and is now home to the third largest concentration of Syrian refugees anywhere. Most live in cities, but some are in camps like Azraq and Zaatari (Alshoubaki and Harris, 2018).

The Jordan Response Plan, which is the only plan led by the government in partnership with the international community for refugees, aims to tackle the needs that came up because of the Syrian situation while making its impact less bad. For thirteen years, Jordan has been facing the worst humanitarian problems. Amid economic contractions, lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and stretched national resources, Jordan still opens its doors to a massive refugee population. This chronic situation has placed enormous strain on public services, infrastructure, and labor markets, leading to fiscal and social problems that have undermined the country's ability to pursue sustainable development and provide services (Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, 2023).

1.2 Problem Statement

Recent regional and global dynamics have once again brought the issue of the future of Syria and the return of refugees to their country after more than a decade of conflict and chaos to the fore. Fefer (2025), these debates "amp up fundamental questions post-regime vis-à-vis the political territorial configuration, territorial unity, and the (re)construction of state institutions." Against the backdrop of this changing regional climate, Jordan has had to play a central role in the Syrian refugee file, which has evolved into one of the most daunting policy and governance trials it has faced in modern times.

For fourteen years, Jordan has dealt with the issue of refugees through integrated governance mechanisms of a legal, economic, and social nature. As Marks and Lang (2025) argue, Jordan's strategy was to align its humanitarian context with its institutional design to manage its national interest vis-à-vis its international obligations. This extended commitment necessitated ongoing adjustments to evolving conditions, such as changes in regional politics, fluctuations in donor aid, and increasing pressure on national resources and public services.

Although stability had been achieved, the management of the refugee file was calling for a more integrated approach that combines domestic policy planning with external cooperation, especially with European institutions, which proved essential in backing Jordan's response. As such, the paper attempts to examine the mechanisms underpinning the governance of decision-making in Jordan in the case of the voluntary return of Syrian refugees, in the context of shifting international norms and domestic limitations. Thus, the main question driving this research is: In



what manner is the governance of Jordan's decision on the voluntary safe return of Syrian refugees to their home country affected by European support and the challenges of the new phase?

1.3 Study Background and Theoretical Literature

1.3.1 European Support for Syrian Refugees in Jordan

Since the beginning of the Syrian crisis in 2011, the European Union has provided nearly 3.5 billion euros to Jordan through humanitarian, developmental, and macro-financial assistance. Out of this total, humanitarian aid exceeded 431 million euros. In 2024, the EU provided €14 million in humanitarian assistance for healthcare, education, and protection. Among those assistance packages are those to the Zaatari, Azraq, and Rukban camps, as well as to Syrian and other non-camp refugees. Also, poor Jordanians were able to receive basic services throughout the country, paid for by the EU. Children and women - who account for more than half of the refugees - were the beneficiaries of many programs. The EU also has health schemes that deliver urgent, life-saving care (mainly reproductive health) as refugees are unable to access medical attention. The European Union also invested in education by trying to provide quality schooling for vulnerable children, including those with disabilities. They tested out some innovative strategies to bring children who had dropped out of school back to class. (European Commission, 2024).

The EU remains engaged with the UNHCR and partner organizations to support Syrian refugees to access and maintain official refugee status, and to address related legal matters. Syrian refugees lacking official documentation in Jordan are particularly vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, creating an additional burden on the Jordanian government. The absence of formal documents limits their freedom of movement, prevents them from entering and participating effectively in the labor market, and restricts their access to essential services such as healthcare and education (European Commission, 2024).

Figure 1 illustrates the Proportion of Registered Syrian refugees (643,000) compared to the total number of Registered refugees (717,000) of different nationalities in Jordan, according to UNHCR statistics from November 2023.

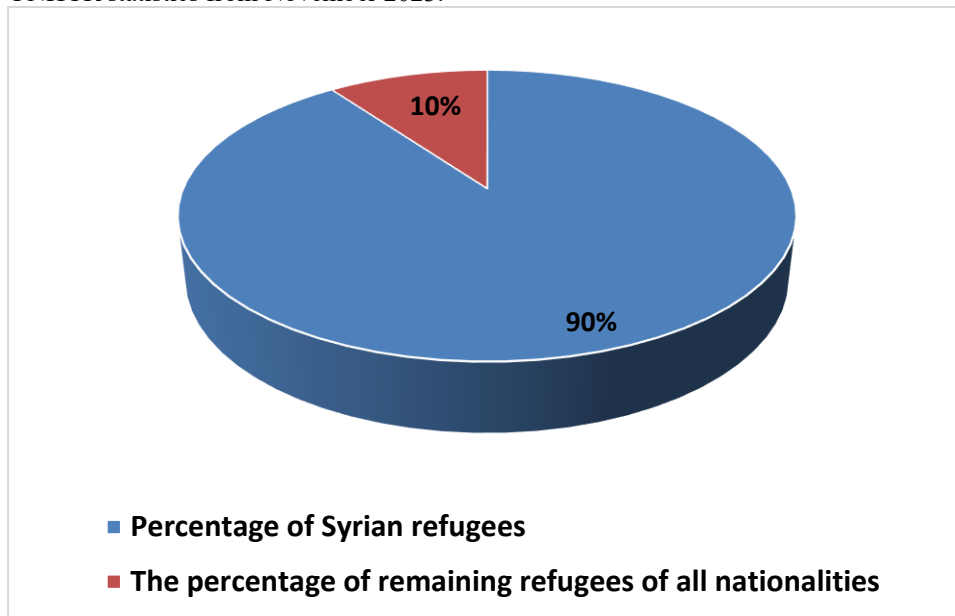


Figure 1: Proportion of Registered Syrian refugees

European Union humanitarian aid funding in Jordan reached 14 million euros in 2024, and 431 million euros for Syrian refugees and host communities since 2011.

1.3.2 Jordan's Official Position and the Syrian Refugee File

The legal presence of Syrian refugees in Jordan is governed by the Memorandum of Understanding signed between the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in April 1998. This memorandum constitutes the political framework for the presence of Syrian refugees and includes Jordan's commitment to international protection standards for refugees. His Majesty King Abdullah II (may God protect him) affirmed before the United Nations General Assembly in September 2023 that Jordan "has neither the capacity nor the resources" to host and care for additional Syrian refugees, stressing that "the future of Syrian refugees is in their country, not in host countries. But until they can return home, we all must do the right thing for them" (The Official Website of His Majesty King Abdullah II, 2023).

The Middle East countries, Jordan among them, are confronted by severe economic, social, and environmental problems. And these are challenges that the states can anticipate the arrival of, but not easily steer away from, meaning that they must be ready for them. Turning the crisis of Syrian refugees into a development opportunity is the new collective mantra of all the supporting and donor agencies. Jordan has emerged as the face of this solution, offering Syrians a chance for social and economic integration in Jordan, primarily via official channels in Jordan and in cooperation with international advisers. The method is a mitigation of the economic pain endured by Syrians and a galvanization of international support for Jordan by bolstering the latter's economy in general. This said political equation is troublesome in itself, but also, it has been proven as more complicated is To gauge the significance as well as the dangers of these tectonic political shifts in the segregation Syrian refugee file management in Jordan, it is crucial to assess humanitarian (refugee) policies and their effects on, as well as on, in Jordan, and on the, followed by a review of the key tools in the strategy to, through the prism of the political currents which have become, in shaping Jordan's policy approach (Lenner and Turner, 2019).

I know and can attest that the language agencies for the crisis now are Syrian professional and competent information handlers. The Jordanian authorities have indeed been able to contain this crisis – and its ripple implications – to an almost unimaginable degree in Jordan, achieving unprecedented coordination among all state institutions, the formation of work plans and schemes, the establishment of national coordination committees, and the formation of specialized units to deal with this file (Mencütek, 2023).

From Jordan's perspective, the unparalleled crisis of Syria's refugees is a multi-dimensional and politically dynamic, growing, geopolitical, regional, and global crisis. It thus needs regional and international pressuring actors to address it and its profound implications for host communities. In pursuing this humanitarian and ethical path, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan also attempts to strike a balance by protecting its political, economic, and social interests. Jordanian and national security interests continue to be paramount, ensuring that Jordan remains an 'island of security and stability'. On this basis, the Jordanian government's stance on the Syrian crisis = has been that a political solution that would preserve the unity and cohesion of Syria, restore its security and stability, and thus allow the safe and voluntary return of Syrian refugees to their homeland is of prime importance (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, 2024).

The Jordan Response Plan 2020–2022 was expanded to include the Jordan Response Plan 2023. The 2023 plan retains the same requirements as the 2022 plan and continues with the same participatory approach and guiding principles. The total requirements of the Jordan Response Plan 2023 amount to 2,276,523,453 US dollars, divided as shown in the following table (Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, 2023).



Table 1: Requirements of Each Component in the Jordan Response Plan 2023

	(USD)	
Cost		
Priority		
Development and Institutional Capacity of the COVID-19 Pandemic		

Source: Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, 2023

Jordan has dealt with a long trajectory of challenges associated with the Syrian refugee file. The complexities of the crisis in Jordan intersect at the local level and are surrounded by several constraints, three of which are most prominent at this level (Abu Ayadeh, 2024).

First, the challenge begins with calculating the number of Syrian refugees. Statistics announced by the Jordanian government, which estimate more than 1.3 million refugees, differ from those issued by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which reports more than 600,000 refugees. Furthermore, Jordanian data suggest that since 2011, the births among Syrian refugees in Jordan have reached the 230,000 mark. This population growth has no doubt intensified the strain on resources, particularly since Jordan is one of the highest refugee-hosting countries in the world as a proportion of its population size (Karasapan, 2021).

Second, the shrinking of international support poses a fundamental problem for the Jordanian state and for refugees alike – particularly so in an environment of economic hardship impacting the two. The funding for the Jordan Response Plan for the Syrian crisis was the lowest at only about 29.2 percent of the plan’s requirements in 2023. This is in tune with the rhythmic nature of international donor funding organizations, which are understood to peak their levels of funding commitment after around ten years of a crisis – a stage labeled by researchers as the “Peak Point.” At this stage, donors decide on the short-term viability of supporting host countries, but the Syrian refugee crisis has now gone beyond this, both symbolically and in reality. This reality makes the call for international responsibility to address the core issue of refugee financing so much more urgent (Marks, 2024).

Third, according to the *UNHCR’s Ninth Regional Survey on Syrian Refugees’ Perceptions and Intentions on Return to Syria (2024)*, approximately **97 percent of Syrian refugees residing in Jordan** expressed no intention to return to Syria within the following twelve months. This finding highlights the persistence of unfavorable conditions for return, mainly related to security concerns and lack of livelihood opportunities inside Syria (UNHCR, 2024). The rise in return visitors, particularly from Lebanon and Turkey, has been explained by various factors. In Turkey (where, earlier this year, a series of violent attacks and riots directed against Syrian refugees prompted many to flee back to areas inside Syria), the rise of right-wing nationalist movements with anti-refugee messages has been instrumental. In Lebanon, extortions and forced deportations of Syrian refugees have also been on the rise, fuelled by political currents advocating for the ‘necessity’ of refugee return, however, not of the voluntary kind (Michaelson and al-Omer, 2023).

Within this context, the increasing returnee numbers have raised issues of causes and incentives, especially vis-à-vis Jordan. While the number of those returning from Jordan is still very small, the Jordanian context has been somewhat more permissive at the regional level when it comes to refugees. It has to do with societal values that protect refugees from animosity as opposed to the pushing factors found in other host nations. In addition, the security and

economic conditions in Syria are still not conducive to the return of refugees. This is in line with Jordanian policies, which seek not to mirror the practices of other states but rather to stress the principle of voluntary return.

1.3.3 Jordanian Society and the Syrian Refugee File

The Syrian crisis, which in 2024 will start its thirteenth year, has become the world's highest refugee crisis, with over 6.8 million Syrians sprawled across Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt. Jordan is host to approximately 1.3 million Syrians, the majority of whom live in cities and depend on existing urban infrastructure and social services. Economic strains on Syrian refugees in Jordan have been exacerbated by a myriad of external shocks to the nation's economy over the last decade, including the COVID-19 pandemic. Hence, Jordan's economy could not provide sufficient productive jobs to absorb an ever rapidly growing youth population (World Bank, 2024).

The Kingdom is overwhelmed with numbers, not only in the camps but outside of the camps, and this has pressured a lot of sectors, said the officials from Jordan. But only around 10 percent live in camps, and more than 150,000 Syrian students attend schools in the formal education system. So now more than 200 schools are run on morning and afternoon shifts. Over 320,000 have so far used health facilities. In defiance of high unemployment levels amongst Jordanians, more than 370,000 work permits have been registered for Syrians in a system that most describe as exploitative. The birth rate among refugees is a pressing issue, with an estimated 200,000 children born since the beginning of the crisis. For Syrians, that means a fertility rate of 4.7 per cent, nearly twice that of Jordan's 2.6 per cent. More than half of the refugees are under the age of fifteen, highlighting that the needs of the refugees go well past basic relief with food and water (Bebars, 2023).

Since the escalation of the war in Syria in 2011, Jordan has opened its doors for Syrians seeking refuge, and at present it ranks third globally as a host country for Syrian refugees and second in the world in terms of the number of refugees relative to its population. The key issue confronting Jordan is the consequence of dwindling support and shrinking aid, both in and outside camps within host communities. Diminishing aid and commodity availability mean greater risk of hunger, poverty, and unemployment among refugees and hosts alike, which invariably manifests in further threats to security and on social and economic levels.

After thirteen years of occupation by the Syrian regime, Jordanians still exhibit high levels of compassion toward Syrian refugees. In an unprecedented move, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has documented. While Jordan is experiencing economic strain and resources are limited, these have not hindered the integration and development of a relationship based on tolerance and acceptance, predominantly founded on shared history and tribal relations between the two nations. Concerning crisis response, Jordanian society at large has so far proven capable of delivering a wide array of assistance in support of Syrian refugees over the past years. Since 2011, Jordan has received nearly 1.3 million Syrian refugees, regardless of their legal status as defined by international agencies (Migration Policy Institute, 2023).

1.4 Study Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative analytical research methodology aimed at examining the governance of the Jordanian decision regarding the return of Syrian refugees to their homeland in light of European support and the implications of the new phase. Given the complex and multidimensional nature of the research problem, the study relies on an interpretive policy analysis approach that focuses on understanding decision-making processes within their broader political, economic, social, legal, and regional contexts.

The research is grounded in a descriptive analytical design, which allows for a systematic examination of the factors influencing policy governance without isolating them from their real-



world interactions. This approach is particularly suitable for studies addressing public policy and governance, where decisions are shaped by overlapping structural and contextual variables rather than by linear causal relationships. The study draws on secondary data sources, including official Jordanian government documents, reports issued by European institutions, international organization publications, and relevant academic literature on refugee governance and policymaking.

To operationalize the analysis, the study employs the PESTEL analytical framework as its primary methodological tool. PESTEL is used to structure the examination of the external and internal environments influencing the Jordanian decision-making process. The political dimension analyzes regional developments, international pressures, and diplomatic considerations related to the Syrian crisis. The economic dimension examines financial capacities, European aid mechanisms, labor market implications, and fiscal sustainability. The social dimension addresses societal cohesion, public perception, demographic pressures, and community resilience. The technological dimension considers administrative capacity, data management, and institutional coordination mechanisms. The legal dimension focuses on national legislation, international refugee law, and bilateral and multilateral agreements. Finally, the environmental dimension explores resource constraints, infrastructure pressure, and spatial sustainability related to refugee presence and return.

The selection of the PESTEL framework is justified by its ability to capture the interconnected nature of governance variables affecting policy decisions in transitional and post-conflict contexts. Unlike single-focus analytical models, PESTEL enables a holistic assessment of how diverse forces collectively shape governance outcomes. In this study, PESTEL is not employed as a predictive model, but rather as an analytical lens that organizes complex information and enhances the coherence of the governance analysis.

By integrating qualitative policy analysis with the PESTEL framework, the study provides a structured yet flexible methodological approach that aligns with its objective of evaluating governance as a strategic and adaptive process. This methodology allows for a nuanced understanding of how the Jordanian government navigates uncertainty, balances national interests with international obligations, and formulates policy responses to evolving regional realities.

1.4 Discussion and Analysis

The use of the PESTEL tool (Pan, Chen, and Zhan 2019) allows for a better understanding of the governance of Jordan's management of the Syrian refugee dossier through a multi-layered perspective. Thus, this broad-based approach can help to identify the overall nature of the political, economic, sociocultural, technological, environmental, and legal systems surrounding the formulation of a state's policies and its choices of long-term options.

In the realm of politics, Jordan is walking a tightrope between its humanitarian obligations and its own national security, and is still pushing for the voluntary, safe return of the displaced and, thus, preserving regional stability. On the economic side, the refugee influx caused fiscal strain on the national budget, with spending on education, health care, and infrastructure surging; the Jordan Response Plan 2023, for example, gauged total funding requirements at more than USD 2.27 billion (Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, 2023).

The social level also demonstrates the adaptability of the rest of the Jordanian society in a situation where they have been required to live closer to refugees than ever before, while suffering escalating unemployment and resource limitations. The technological aspect relates to the development of administrative procedures, such as biometric enrolment and digital files maintained by the Ministry of Interior and UNHCR to manage and track refugee status and the provision of assistance.

In terms of environment, the model draws attention to how population growth in some host communities has heightened demands on water and the solid waste system, particularly in northern governorates like Mafraq and Irbid. In the end, the legal aspect of this complex puzzle at two levels is that of the institutional arrangements based on the 1998 Memorandum of Understanding between Jordan and UNHCR, which still governs the refugees' legal status and access to protection mechanisms. This multidimensional framework enables policymakers to connect governance reform to concrete actions, laying the groundwork for evidence-based decision-making and stronger harmonization between national institutions and their international counterparts (Civil Society Center, 2022).

Just as crucial is the economic analysis, which considers how the problem has impacted Jordan's economy and the strains therein. Tensions, or political and economic convergences in the governance of the Syrian refugee file in Jordan, must be interrogated.

The social aspect must also be dealt with by way of understanding how the Jordanian host community accommodates Syrian refugees, at the same time that political and economic factors are considered and analyzed for their impact upon society.

Such analysis has to be applied to the technological aspect concerning the technological infrastructure necessary to administer the refugee file. It also includes the environmental component, evaluating the consequences of refugees on the environment of Jordan. Finally, the legal aspect must be addressed as well if there is to be a sound handling of the legal issues attached to this file.

1.4.1 Governance of the Jordanian Decision on the Return of Syrian Refugees in Light of New Developments

In view of recent developments and following the fall of the Syrian regime and the gradual disappearance of the causes of displacement, the return of refugees to Syria now depends primarily on the evolution of the security and political situation in their homeland, as well as the availability of conditions that allow for a voluntary and safe return (UNHCR, 2025). Syrians are active individuals, and during their years in Jordan, they have established business interests and become economically connected to the country, beyond the matter of displacement itself. These interests require time to be either liquidated, transferred to Syria, or managed through coordination between Syria, its new government, and Jordan. Consequently, the Syrian refugee file in Jordan will not witness a rapid resolution until political stability is restored in Syria and a political authority emerges with whom arrangements for return can be discussed. At that point, the legal status of Syrians in Jordan will have shifted from refugees to individuals seeking a better life.

The stability of Syria is a strategic interest for Arab states and for the entire region, particularly Jordan. The governance of the return of Syrian refugees to their homeland as a voluntary and safe process requires Jordanian decision-makers to adhere to the following considerations:

1. Supporting the process of peaceful political transition in Syria.
2. Restoring the momentum of diplomatic relations based on mutual respect and trust between the Jordanian government and the incoming Syrian government.
3. Engaging in communication and dialogue with the incoming Syrian government to obtain assurances regarding the voluntary and safe return of Syrian refugees from Jordan to Syria.
4. Continuing to provide educational and health services, material and logistical support, and managing the file as though the causes of displacement still exist until a safe transition is guaranteed.
5. Continuing to support and sustain the business interests of Syrian refugees established in Jordan, since these interests have become economically linked to the Jordanian economy, ensuring that they contribute positively at the local level.



Accordingly, in light of the recent developments following the fall of the Syrian regime and the disappearance of the causes of displacement, the return of Syrian refugees to their country now depends primarily on the progression of the security and political situation in Syria, along with the availability of the appropriate conditions for voluntary and safe return (UNHCR, 2024). Therefore, the governance of this file by the Jordanian government requires supporting the process of peaceful political transition in Syria, restoring the momentum of diplomatic relations between the Jordanian government and the new Syrian government, and opening channels of communication and dialogue with the new Syrian government to obtain reassurances and guarantees regarding the voluntary and safe return of Syrian refugees from Jordan to Syria, all while ensuring security guarantees for the country.

1.4.2 Results of the PESTEL-Based Analysis

The application of the PESTEL analytical framework to the governance of the Jordanian decision regarding the Syrian refugee dossier yields several significant findings that collectively illustrate the complexity and interdependence of policy determinants shaping this file. The analysis demonstrates that governance in this context is not driven by a single dominant factor, but rather by the continuous interaction among political stability, economic capacity, social resilience, institutional readiness, legal frameworks, and environmental constraints.

Politically, the results indicate that Jordan's decision-making remains highly sensitive to regional developments, particularly the evolving political and security conditions in Syria. While the fall of the Syrian regime has altered the geopolitical landscape, the analysis reveals that Jordan continues to prioritize stability, gradualism, and risk mitigation over rapid policy shifts. This reflects a governance approach grounded in precaution, where political normalization and refugee return are contingent upon verifiable guarantees rather than symbolic political change.

Economically, the PESTEL analysis confirms that prolonged refugee presence has exerted sustained pressure on public finances, infrastructure, and service delivery systems. However, the results also highlight a shift in governance logic from emergency response toward economic integration and burden-sharing mechanisms, especially through European support. Refugee-linked economic activities have become structurally embedded within the Jordanian economy, rendering abrupt policy reversals economically disruptive rather than beneficial.

Socially, the findings underscore the adaptive capacity of Jordanian host communities, alongside growing vulnerabilities related to unemployment, resource scarcity, and social cohesion. Governance responses have therefore balanced social stability with humanitarian obligations, recognizing that societal tolerance constitutes a critical pillar of sustainable policy management.

From a technological and institutional perspective, the analysis reveals that advances in digital registration, biometric systems, and inter-agency coordination have significantly enhanced the state's administrative control over the refugee file. These tools have strengthened governance efficiency, transparency, and policy monitoring, reducing institutional uncertainty and improving decision accuracy. Legally, the persistence of the 1998 Memorandum of Understanding with UNHCR continues to define the parameters of refugee governance, reinforcing Jordan's commitment to international norms while preserving national sovereignty. The legal framework acts as a stabilizing anchor amid political transition. Environmentally, the results confirm that resource constraints, particularly water scarcity and waste management pressures, remain structural limitations influencing long-term policy choices.

Overall, the PESTEL-based analysis reveals that the governance of the Syrian refugee return is best understood as a calibrated, adaptive process, where strategic patience, institutional coordination, and external support converge to shape evidence-based decision-making under conditions of regional uncertainty.

1.5 Conclusions

This research investigates the rollout in Jordan of the decision to return Syrian refugees with European support and in a context directly affected by the collapse of the Syrian regime. The findings illuminate the notion that the refugee file in Jordan has been managed in a way that combines the humanitarian, national, and international cooperation discourses. Jordan has hosted millions more Syrians in the past thirteen years than any other country, and yet it is still a demographic giant in terms of population share amongst hosts. This has strained public services, infrastructure, and the economy to breaking point – yet Jordan has been resolute in its humanitarian commitments.

Applying PESTEL analysis provides a good lens to understand how Jordan might respond to this complex issue. Political: Stability in Jordan In A Turbulent Region. The economic part reveals the pressure on the Jordanian economy, and the societal element reveals the challenges and opportunities for integration and coexistence. Technology, environment, and legal aspects also demonstrate the multiple layers of refugee-related challenges in appropriate governance.

European support has been crucial in bolstering Jordan's capacity to host refugees, providing billions of euros for humanitarian, education, health, and infrastructure aid. The aid contributed somewhat to alleviating the strain, but it still sat heavily on Jordan. "For its part, the official line has consistently been that the end for Syrian refugees is in their own country, while waiting to call the principle of voluntary and safe return.

The research concludes that the return of Syrian refugees will be neither immediate nor simple. It depends, on the international level, on the restoration of political stability and security in Syria, on the success of a peaceful political transition, and on diplomatic relations conducive to safe repatriation. "For now and until everything changes, Jordan has to go on treating this file as if the drivers of displacement were still very much controlling the flow of people, delivering minimum services to those who stay, and making preparations for possible solutions.

At the end of the day, the refugee file management is a national affair and an international duty. Jordan's policy highlights the ephemeral balancing act between humanitarian values and strategic interests. The way forward on this issue lies in sustained international support, political solutions in Syria that make return voluntary, safe, and sustainable.

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