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Explaining the behaviour of small states: an analysis of Jordan's nuclear energy policy

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Abstract *Conventional analyses claim that small states bandwagon with leading international powers. The dominant view is that small states' vulnerabilities and limited power hinder their ability to pursue policy goals. This study critiques this position by investigating why and how Jordan continues to pursue a nuclear energy programme despite objections from the United States—its principal ally. By using theories of small states, this study analyses discursive practices in Jordanian policymaking. This approach is used to describe Jordan's nuclear energy policy and posit a logic of the effects that energy insecurity has on the government's perception of Jordan as a 'small state'. I use this to create hypotheses concerning the conditions under which small states may not simply bandwagon with key international allies, but may have more freedom to pursue their goals than traditional analyses predict. Explanations that assume small states always have limited freedom to pursue policy goals without the backing of key allies are not supported by the evidence considered here.*

Introduction

This study considers several questions pertaining to small states: first, what constitutes a small state? Second, do small states simply bandwagon and comply with their great power allies or can they independently pursue their own goals, even if the great powers make objections? Third, to what extent is nuclear energy proliferation a viable policy for small states? By analysing Jordanian nuclear energy policy in the face of objections by the United States (US), this article analyses the impact of discursive securitization and agency on small states' behaviour. Like Lee and Smith (2010, 1095) this study sees 'discourses as constitutive of material reality'. Specifically with regards to Jordan, this project seeks to understand the ways in which discursive elements impact on the creation of self-perceptions of Jordan as a small state and how this, in turn, informs policymaking with regards to energy security. The argument presented here is that small states in the contemporary Middle East are created by dominant discourses of smallness and that, as a result of the dynamic nature of this

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discourse, can pursue independent policies rather than simply bandwagon with great powers. Conclusions are drawn on the conditions in which small states may pursue a more independent policy direction rather than simply bandwagon with their great power allies.¹ It is important to note here that this article does not seek to assess whether small states *always* or *never* bandwagon with great powers; it simply investigates whether pursuing an independent, 'can do' policy is possible in at least one issue area. Furthermore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the specific interests underpinning Jordanian policy with regards to nuclear energy by examining the government's pursuit of nuclear energy. As such, the following analysis does not seek to assess the impact of a policy outcome, such as post-implementation.²

This study develops another avenue for research into small states and their domestic and foreign policies by bringing the Middle East into the debates—and the debates into research on the Middle East. During its formative years, international relations (IR) as a discipline was focused on relations between great powers during the inter-World Wars period, and then superpowers during the Cold War era (Amstrup 1976, 163–164). The post-Cold-War environment, however, encouraged interest in the foreign policies of small states and their roles in the emerging international system (Simpson 2006, 649; Hey 2003, 1–2). Paul Streeten (1993, 197–202), Jeanne Hey (2003, 75–94), Baldur Thorhallson and Anders Wivel (2006, 651–668) and Christopher S Browning (2006, 670–684) have been key in furthering this area of investigation. However, these and other scholars have focused on Western small states, often in the context of the European Union or other Western-dominated organizations. The risk here is that IR may have developed to the point where small states are seen as relevant and worthy of study, but only where they are either in the West, or are studied in relation to the interests of Western states. This study examines domestic and foreign policies pertaining to nuclear energy development in Jordan as a small state and sees this as an area of investigation worthy of consideration to further our understanding of both Jordanian policymaking and also small states situated outside of Europe/the West. Here the work of Ian Taylor (2014, 187–201), Alan

¹ Here, global/systemic-level processes (related to nuclear technology proliferation and its management) are considered alongside regional-level processes (of, for example, stability/instability in hydrocarbon producers like Iraq and Egypt). This study thus takes account of theoretical assumptions found in sub-system dominance approaches (see Kaplan 1957) to an extent.

² It is acknowledged here that there is a difference between the two types of analyses, yet neither should necessarily be seen as more valuable than the other in terms of their intellectual contribution to the discipline. The key limitation with this type of study is that policy changes can occur in response to changes in international relations. However, this study considers the importance of energy insecurity experienced by Jordan as reflected in Jordanian decision-making and state discourse, which has emerged out of the experience of relying on external sources for energy. In this way, examining policy as opposed to policy outcome offers insight into the interests, capabilities and decision-making processes that can provide us with conclusions about state behaviour—something that analysing policy outcomes often cannot adequately achieve. For example, even if a favourable change in Jordanian imports of energy were to arise this would not provide the country with energy security nor would it reverse the government's experiences of previous favourable cases—such as oil from Iraq and gas from Egypt as discussed below—that did not provide Jordan with energy security.

Chong (2014, 202–222) and Timothy Shaw (2014, 223–240) offer useful examples of research on non-European small states.

Discussions of nuclear technology proliferation that often consider nuclear energy development within the context of nuclear weapons proliferation/non-proliferation (Sagan 1996; Fuhrmann 2009; and Gartzke and Jo 2009) have largely been restricted to proliferation in great powers, middle powers and regional powers. In the Middle East context this has included a body of research on nuclear programmes in Iran, Israel, Saudi Arabia and Egypt (Kamrava 2012). Current nuclear technology proliferation trends in the Middle East and elsewhere, however, are no longer limited to these categories of states. Jordan, Yemen and Oman among others, which have traditionally been understood as small states, are now pursuing nuclear energy programmes (some with more vigour and success than others) suggesting a new area of consideration to understanding nuclear technology proliferation. It is now quite certain that the potential to develop nuclear capabilities (whether peaceful or otherwise) is no longer limited to 'large states'—of course, in the case of small states the development of these capabilities will continue to rely on the ability of these actors to access the necessary knowledge, technologies, resources, training and finances from external actors. This study is part of a broader effort to understand the nature of small states' nuclear technology proliferation. In particular, the study examines nuclear energy, but looks at some implications for the weaponization of nuclear technologies. The study examines the development of uranium enrichment capabilities and the production of heavy water—both of which are necessary for the production of nuclear fuels for use in energy production facilities, as well as for nuclear weapons.

This article is divided into three sections. The first section offers a review of relevant discussions on how small states can be defined and what is assumed about the impact of smallness on behaviour. Assertions that the definitional problem can be resolved by observing material realities are critiqued in favour of the discursive approach that sees smallness as a perceptual rather than material issue. The second section provides an overview of Jordanian nuclear energy policy by considering firstly, Jordan's energy security, its internal and external roots and its nuclear energy policy. The final substantive section in this article analyses the evidence provided in section two using the discursive approach to understanding small states set out in section one. Final conclusions are then drawn about what constitutes a small state in the Middle East, whether we can expect small states to simply bandwagon with great powers and whether the proliferation of nuclear technology for energy production is a viable policy for small states.

Defining smallness and explaining small states' behaviour

As discussed below, earlier literature on small states was concerned with the problem of defining smallness and, therefore, small states. More recent research, however, has discussed the methodological difficulties and intellectual limitations of defining the material constraints placed on small states by their inherent smallness. As Browning (2006, 670) notes, identifying 'what counts as a "small state" [is] notoriously difficult. Attempts to formulate "objective" markers of smallness by referring to things like the absolute size of a country's resources,

whether in terms of territory, population, size of gross domestic product (GDP), military capacity, etc have been common.' Adopting this methodology encourages us to look at smallness as relative to power capabilities, where the latter consist of materially measurable phenomena such as 'numbers of guns, planes, soldiers or size of GDP' (2006, 670). There are a number of problems with this approach, but of particular importance to this study is the view of power as relative to certain military factors and their economic/industrial foundations. Furthermore, as noted by Baldur Thorhallsson and Anders Wivel (2006, 652), there are substantial challenges in systematically theorizing power, and 'in attempting to systematise what we already know and to identify what we need to know' about small states' behaviour.

A discussion of whether or not Jordan can be classified as a small state according to more traditional methodologies that focus on measurable, material realities is unnecessary and unhelpful here for two reasons. First, previous studies such as Paul Streeten's 'The special problems of small countries' (1993, 197–202), which rely on a rather arbitrary assessment of population size (with ten million people being the cut-off point for small states), or Tom Crowards's (2002, 143–179) work on defining the small-state category (which considers population size, land area and total income) have already concluded that Jordan is a small state (if we advocate these approaches). Second, this study is premised on the belief that the material-based methodologies are inherently flawed and ultimately do not help us to explain the behaviour of small states (using Steeten's or Crowards's approaches, for example, results in states like Jordan and Israel with similar population sizes but wildly different domestic and international capabilities being in the same category and therefore presumably expressive of the same patterns of behaviour).

Niels Amstrup's survey of research efforts (1976) offered a clear starting point for investigations in the late 1970s and early 1980s which sought to consider definitions of small states and the impact that smallness (as an independent variable) has on behaviour (as a dependent variable). The majority of research in this field since the late 1990s and early 2000s has moved beyond questions of definition and independent–dependent variable relations vis-à-vis foreign policy, instead furthering the line of investigation originally developed by Robert L Rothstein (1968) and Wilhelm Christmas-Moller (1970). This approach formed what Amstrup (1976, 166) summarized as a body of literature that 'concentrates on size as a *perceptual* problem'.

By the mid-2000s the literature had moved away from attempting to resolve the definitional debate and had also largely moved away from methodological approaches that focus on a set of measurable indicators. The small-states research agenda is perhaps now dominated by considerations of broader questions relating to the discursive roots of smallness and the social constructs of what can and cannot be done in policy terms by small states. This constructivist approach has led Ole Wæver (2001, 20) to conclude that '[a]n analysis of domestic discourses on "we" concepts like nation, "people" and Europe can explain—and up to a point predict—foreign policies' of small states. Lee and Smith (2010, 1091–1105) explore smallness as a result of discursive practices and conclude that the discourse surrounding small states constructs their reality as opposed to simply describing it. It is possible to test this conclusion to see if it applies to the case of Jordan's nuclear energy policy and the government's decision to pursue an independent

policy driven by self-interest (in particular, in this case, ensuring national energy security) as opposed to adopting a policy of 'bandwagoning' (see Walt 1987, 29) with US policies. It is important to note that this study does not seek to offer a simple critique of realist notions of the balance of power/threat. This work does acknowledge the assumption that states are expected to bandwagon if they do not have the capabilities to meet a security challenge on their own as viable and offers an analysis of the extent to which capabilities are determined by discursive practice and not just material factors.

One limitation that has hindered research on small states can be found in one of the core assumptions generally accepted about what is seen as the *unchanging* relationship between small states and great powers. Here small states are seen as 'power consumers' while great powers are regarded as 'power suppliers' and bandwagoning/the cooperation of small states with great powers represents the former consuming common goods (including international and domestic stability and security) provided by the latter (Amstrup 1976, 170). This assumption dates back at least to George Liska's *International equilibrium* (1957), can be found as a core principle of Steven L Spiegel's *Dominance and diversity* (1972) and is a theme in Robert Keohane's 'Lilliputians' dilemmas' (1969, 291–310).

A problem with this assumption, however, is that it ignores the potential for states to perceive themselves as small (and therefore be small according to the theoretical assumptions made here) yet still possess the ability to transform their ability to 'supply power' for themselves. It is unhelpful to assume, first of all, that 'power' should be understood as constant/unchanging, applicable to varying contexts across space and time and as having the same impact on providing security/stability regardless of the specificities of even comparable actors. Further, *change* in perceptions, discourse, capabilities—be they economic, political, human/socio-cultural, security, or some combination thereof—and their role/position in the international system are evident throughout history. International relations scholarship has long accepted *change* as a feature of IR (for example, Kennedy 1989).

A key policy response that small states can pursue in order to change their status as merely 'power consumers' is to utilize membership in international organizations and the increasingly globalized institutional frameworks that impact international relations such as the United Nations (UN) system, the World Trade Organizations and International Atomic Energy Agency regimes. Building on earlier work by Annette Baker-Fox (1965), scholars including Neill Nugent (2006, 51–71), Donna Lee and Nicola J Smith (2008) and Amrita Narlikar (2006, 1005–1029) have studied small states' membership in international organizations. Lee and Smith (2010, 1091–1105), in particular, highlight the importance of collective action in institutional settings to transform the discourse and practice of small states' interests and capabilities (agency). Thorhallsson and Wivel (2006, 655) note that '[w]e could expect small states to favour institutionalization of interstate relations in regional and world politics, because all members of international institutions are usually subject to the same rules and face the same sanctions if they break the rules.'

Yet it is still important to consider the possibility that small states can act independently, albeit within a multilateral framework and with multiple stakeholders involved, to provide security for themselves without having to rely on the provision of power from one or more great power allies. Hans

Mouritzen (1991; 1994) has argued that understanding small states' foreign policies requires us to consider their position in the international system (the 'constellation that the weak power belongs to, being understood as its basic set of relationships to the strong powers in its salient environment' (Mouritzen cited in Browning 2006, 671). Here, small states can be classified as being aligned to one pole in a bipolar system, be it a satellite of a great power, be it symmetrically positioned between great powers, or be it adaptive/flexible in its alliances (2006, 671). It is not entirely clear how applicable this method of analysis is in the contemporary international system when small states prioritize institutional engagement through embedded international organizations in a multipolar system (see Browning 2006, 672–673).

David Vital (1967), Robert Rothstein (1968) and Robert Keohane (1969) all claimed that perceptions of smallness are essential to the identity of and, therefore, the reality of small states—with perceptions of weakness, vulnerability and lack of power as the over-arching identifying factors. Keohane (1969, 296) claims that 'a small power is a state whose leaders consider that it can never, acting alone or in a small group, make a significant impact on the system'. However, this position reinforces the view that small states share a similar (perhaps even identical) 'mentality and set of preferences' (Browning 2006, 673) and it discounts the potential for small states to react and adapt to changing international conditions. Peter Katzenstein (1985, 2003) concludes that a key characteristic of small states is, in fact, their adaptability. In this study, this assumption is taken further to consider *discursive adaptability* in Jordanian decision-making. Furthermore, we need to consider the validity of analyses that place emphasis on realist notions of power and the provision of security. Olav Knudsen argues that there are

six key variables that are central to preserving the autonomy of smaller states: strategic significance of geographic location, degree of tension between leading powers, phase of power cycle for nearest great power, historical record of relations between small state and nearest great power, the policies of other great powers and the existence of multilateral frameworks for security cooperation. (Knudsen cited in Thorhallsson and Wivel 2006, 656)

However, this focus is called into question when one considers the emphasis that the Jordanian government has placed on energy security, which is not accounted for in realist discussions of small-state behaviour—largely because it is seen as a domestic issue and secondary to considerations of national survival in the international system. This study adopts the widely acknowledged definition presented by David Deese (1979, 140), where energy security is 'a condition in which a nation perceives a high probability that it will have adequate energy supplies at affordable prices' over the long term. As discussed below, Jordanian nuclear energy policy demonstrates these assumptions to be incorrect, even if survival and the capabilities to ensure security are primary policy concerns. This study then seeks to help us better understand how both material variables and discursive practices can have an impact on the behaviour of small states—in particular by examining the relationship between the two variables where *perceptions of capabilities* create discursive realities in small states, even with regard to security issues (this position differs from that presented by Thorhallsson and Wivel [2006, 657–658], who argue that the relevant variables affecting small states' policymaking will vary depending on 'spatio-temporal context').

Contrary to neorealist assumptions, the distinction between international and national levels of analysis is increasingly blurred and the relationship between processes traditionally seen as distinct to one or other level has intensified. There is now significant reason to view international relations and the international political economy as not entirely separate levels or spheres of activity, but as reinforcing and impacting on each other. As such, this study adopts the position taken by Miriam Elman (1995, 171–217) in her assessment of small states' choices in periods of crisis. She argues 'that whether international or domestic factors matter more is an empirical question and should not be assumed a priori. In contests between levels of analysis, neither domestic nor international arguments automatically win' (1995, 175). Elman (1995, 172) demonstrates the opportunity that analysing small states' foreign policy behaviour can offer to scholars interested in domestic-level processes and notes that '[small] state foreign policy presents a crucial test for domestic-level theory. It is precisely in such cases where the conventional wisdom suggests that international factors can adequately account for state policy.'

This study considers foreign and domestic policy as closely connected and as reinforcing each other. In other words, Jordanian nuclear energy policy has foreign and domestic characteristics and exists as part of a broader policy construct where the traditional distinctions between foreign and domestic do not entirely apply. Here, the work of Gvalia et al (2013) is built upon to consider the importance of domestic-level factors, in particular elite perceptions of the state. The difference being, however, that while Gvalia et al criticize that '[w]hen researchers do focus on small states, the emphasis has been on external and international factors' (2013, 98), this study combines both external and internal processes and sees them as reinforcing each other.

Jordanian nuclear policy and governmental discourse

This section considers the main components of Jordanian nuclear energy policy and then analyses the discursive practice of creating Jordan as a small state. This is done by analysing primary evidence from the following elite sources in Jordanian policymaking: King Abdullah II (hereon referred to as King Abdullah),³ the Jordanian Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources⁴ and the Jordan Atomic Energy Commission.⁵ This evidence is supported by a review of Jordanian and international media coverage of Jordan's nuclear energy policy. Alan Henrikson (2008, 1–20) has studied Jordanian diplomacy and Jordan's role in several international processes, including the Israeli–Palestinian peace process and

³ Transcripts and videos of interviews conducted with Jordanian and international media; transcripts of the King's speeches given to the Jordanian Parliament; the King's letters of designation to prime ministers and other ministers; the King's op-eds in international media; and press releases issued by the Hashemite Royal Court. All of this material has been accessed via the King's personal website (<http://www.kingabdullah.jo/>). Personal correspondence with a representative of the Royal Hashemite Court is also used here.

⁴ The Ministry's Annual Reports and Master Strategy for the Energy Sector 2007–2020.

⁵ Reports to the government and private sector actors, along with personal correspondence with the JAEC Chairman.

international environmental management. Henrikson argues that '[t]he international significance of some small countries, including the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, is much greater than their size might suggest' (2008, 1) and that '[p]erhaps no other small country is more governed by the importance that other, stronger countries place upon it' (2008, 1). The following analysis adopts this assumption and develops it to take into account both internal and external perceptions of Jordan's roles and abilities. Likewise, this analysis expands on Curtis Ryan's (2003, 135–155) assessment of Jordanian foreign policy, which 'examines the sources of Jordanian foreign policy in an effort to move beyond explanatory models that see Jordanian foreign policy as either a pawn of the great powers or simply the whim of a king' (2003, 135).

Jordan's nuclear policy

Jordan faces two key challenges with regards to energy security. First, due to a near total lack of hydrocarbon resources, Jordan imports between 95 per cent and 97 per cent of its energy at a total cost of approximately 20 per cent of its gross domestic product (GDP) (World Nuclear Association [WNA] 2014). Second, reliance on an undiversified energy importing regime has left the country subject to economic shocks and vulnerability caused by unreliable supplies of oil from Iraq (after 2003) and gas from Egypt (since 2011) (El-Anis 2012, 27–31), which have forced the Jordanian government to buy hydrocarbon fuels on the global market at a much higher cost, thus increasing the budget deficit and hindering development. As a result of the government's views on the country's energy situation, King Abdullah implemented a new energy strategy in 2007. This strategy includes the overall diversification of energy supplies to include a range of external sources, but more importantly the development of domestic sources including renewable and nuclear energy (Government of Jordan [GoJ] 2007). **Figure 1** summarizes the government's plan for energy diversification.

Jordan's nuclear energy policy began in earnest on 1 April 2007 when Energy Minister Khaled Sharida announced that Jordan was going to tender bids to build a nuclear power plant to produce electricity by 2015 (subsequently changed to 2021) (Stern 2007). The Jordanian government plans to build up to five nuclear reactors to produce electricity over the next 20 years in order to meet growing electricity demand, which is expected to increase from just under 3000 MWe (megawatts electrical) to 8000 MWe by 2030 (Jordan Atomic Energy Commission [JAEC] 2011, 1). The government is seeking to build its first nuclear reactor with a generation capacity of 1100 MWe at a cost of US\$5 billion by 2021, 'with the option to build two nuclear reactors ... at a price of \$9.4 billion and a total generation capacity of 2200MWe' (2011, 1). Jordan's Committee for Nuclear Strategy, established in 2007, plans to provide 30 per cent of its electricity from nuclear energy by 2030 (2011, 1).

A number of international private sector actors have been involved in developing Jordan's nuclear energy programme. In 2008 the JAEC signed an agreement with the French nuclear company Areva (World Nuclear News [WNN] 2008) to look for uranium deposits in Jordan. This was followed in 2009 by an agreement with the Australian firm Rio Tinto for further uranium exploration (WNN 2009a); an agreement with the Belgian firm Tractebel to conduct a site

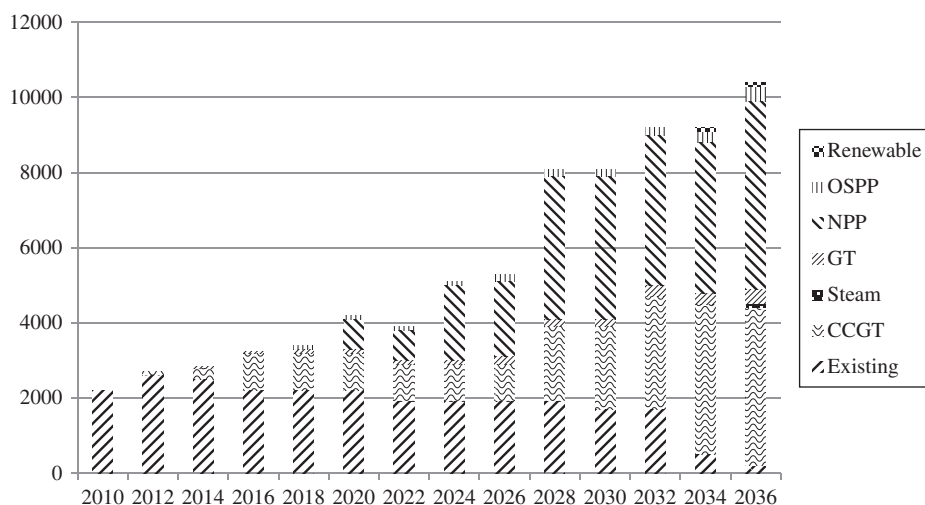


Figure 1. Jordanian goals for energy diversification–generation plan (MW), 2010–2036.
Source: JAEC 2011, 2.

study for the first nuclear reactor (WNN 2009b); a deal with Australian firm Worley Parsons for pre-construction consultancy (WNN 2009c); a second agreement with Areva in 2010 for rights to mine uranium discovered (WNN 2010); and, finally, a 2013 initial agreement with Russia’s AtomStroyExport⁶ to build Jordan’s first nuclear power plant (WNN 2013). The uranium exploration carried out by Areva and Rio Tinto yielded estimates of over 120,000 tonnes of uranium deposits in Jordan, which would provide it with a domestic source of fuel for its nuclear programme. This has further encouraged the Jordanian policy, the Chairman of the JAEC, Dr Khaled Touqan, stating that Jordan would only need up to 500 tonnes of uranium ore to fuel its programme for 150 years, thus increasing energy security through self-reliance and providing an export commodity.⁷ Uranium mining is expected to begin in the coming years (Ghazal 2014).

A key component of the Jordanian government’s nuclear policy is to secure international support in the form of technology, capital and infrastructure from state and non-state actors through bilateral and multilateral cooperation. To date, 11 bilateral cooperation agreements have been signed between Jordan and the

⁶ This agreement and the selection of AtomStroyExport demonstrates the multilateral approach adopted by the Jordanian government. US-based corporations were not included in the bidding process, as the absence of a ‘123’ agreement (see note 9 for an explanation of ‘123’ agreements) prohibits their involvement. Given the nature of the selection process (and that actors from Canada, France and Japan also submitted bids), the Jordanian selection of AtomStroyExport should be seen not simply as an attempt to balance against the US but as an extension of the urgency placed by the Jordanian government on achieving energy security (in short, Jordanian multilateralism in the pursuit of nuclear energy technologies and capabilities is founded on the government’s belief that domestic energy production is needed as soon as possible and that concerns for costs and over-reliance on any one actor (state or non-state) are important.

⁷ Khaled Touqan, interview conducted in Amman, Jordan, 5 March 2012.

following: Argentina, Canada, China, France, Japan, Romania, Russia, Spain, South Korea, Turkey and the United Kingdom (El-Anis 2012, 34). Jordan also joined in 2007 the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership (GNEP)—a US-led initiative to increase cooperation in nuclear technology proliferation (ostensibly technologies related to energy production but which can also have further use in the development of nuclear weapons, and to manage sensitive technologies such as enriching uranium). Jordan is a member of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and a signatory of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT) and also signed the Additional Protocols to the NPT in 1998. However, despite initial positive overtures made in 2007, the US has not supported Jordan's nuclear energy policy. Negotiations were ongoing from 2008 to 2011 for a bilateral '123'⁸ nuclear cooperation agreement but these were suspended in March 2011 over US objections to Jordanian plans to enrich uranium in Jordan. The Jordanian government insists that in order to increase its energy security it needs to rely on domestic energy sources more, and with three per cent of the world's uranium deposits, mining and enriching uranium in Jordan would vastly decrease its vulnerability to external disruptions. The US, on the other hand, has a broader non-proliferation policy that rests on managing sensitive technologies such as uranium enrichment to ensure weaponization is limited—this entails current nuclear capable states enriching uranium ore and then selling it to Jordan (El-Anis 2014). It is puzzling how, given the dominant small-states narratives that conclude that small states should bandwagon with great power allies, Jordan has chosen not to accept US policy prescriptions here. We now turn to an analysis of Jordanian discourse for an explanation.

King Abdullah's discourse

There is little doubt that ultimately Jordanian decision-making begins and ends with the King (see: Milton-Edwards and Hinchcliffe 2009; Robins 2004; Alan 2005; Joffe 2001; Salibi 1998). Jordan's nuclear energy policy centres on King Abdullah's directives and any change in this policy is either instigated by the King or has to be approved by him. It is possible to identify three key themes in King Abdullah's policies. The first theme is that Jordan is a vulnerable developing state that faces serious economic, developmental and other security challenges, and that it has limited ability to impact on external processes to address these. Therefore, domestic responses are to be focused on, for example, developing nuclear energy to supply domestically produced energy. It is worth quoting the King at length here:

the coup de grace was the energy crisis at a time of unprecedentedly increasing energy and food prices. Nothing could be worse for a country that imports 96% of its energy and 87% of its food. Then we lost our gas supply from Egypt—the gas pipeline in the Sinai was blown up over 14 times since February 2011—and Egypt this year [2012] has been pumping only about 16% of contracted quantities, and only around 30% last year. This unforeseen development doubled our energy bill and made our budget deficit sky-rocket.

⁸ So named after Section 123 of the United States Atomic Energy Act of 1954 titled 'Cooperation with Other Nations' which establishes the conditions for any nuclear cooperation between the US and other countries.

I want to say this as plainly as possible, the number one reason for the unprecedented budget deficit and extraordinary increase in national debt was the continuous interruptions in the gas supply from Egypt, at a time of historic highs in energy and food prices globally.

Energy has historically been a choke point for Jordan. We need to break free and increase our self-reliance. The only way out of our vulnerability is to diversify our energy sources. We are exploring for gas in the East. Jordan is also the perfect country for solar, and we started tapping into it; wind is another potential source. Another part of the solution will be our peaceful nuclear energy programme ... Jordan has 3% of the world's uranium resources. So we have a natural resource that makes nuclear a viable option for us, and would grant us some degree of self-reliance.

We have to also consider that Jordan is the world's fourth water-scarcest country and desalination will very soon be a priority. Nuclear energy will be the cheapest reliable way to desalinate water. (HRH King Abdullah II 2012a)

Moreover, development and security (at the domestic and international levels) are intertwined. He views the government's goal as being 'to aggressively develop the competitiveness of our economy, to ensure more rapid growth and to decrease the economy's dependence on foreign grants, thus helping us to graduate from reliance on aid to trade-led growth' (HRH King Abdullah II 2007a).

Third, energy security is central to both Jordanian development and overall security. In three (2007, 2008 and 2013) out of 13 speeches given by the King to open parliamentary sessions—so-called 'speeches from the throne'—energy security and energy policies feature prominently. In 2007 King Abdullah highlighted that the government had 'made a strategic choice to diversify our energy resources and rationalize consumption so that neither citizens nor the homeland will remain hostage to the fluctuation of oil prices on the international market' (HRH King Abdullah II 2007b). This was reinforced in 2008 when the King highlighted that, '[i]n the energy sector, successive rises and fluctuations in oil prices impose upon us the need to quickly identify renewable and alternative energy sources and to expedite the implementation of the nuclear energy for peaceful purposes project' (HRH King Abdullah II 2008). In 2013 the King expressed his increased concern that '[t]he government should expedite efforts to diversify energy sources, relying on alternative and renewable sources, and accelerate the implementation of ... energy mega-projects to strengthen our national economic security' (HRH King Abdullah II 2013).

Since coming to power in 1999 King Abdullah has focused on energy security in six letters of designation to prime ministers in 1999, 2007, 2009, 2011, 2012 and 2013, and most recently a letter to the Prime Minister in 2014—although the latter is not a letter of designation. Notable here is the lack of focus on energy security in the early 2000s when supplies of oil from Iraq and then the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) were guaranteed at low prices. In his 1999 letter of designation to Abdul Raouf Rawabdeh the King stated, '[w]e must intensify our search for new sources of energy' (HRH King Abdullah II 1999). In 2007 the King's attention had returned to energy security and in his letter of designation to Nader Dahabi he wrote that '[t]he scarcity of natural resources, especially energy and water resources, is the major challenge to sustainable development. We deem it necessary to work on ensuring energy security by efficiently utilizing energy resources, searching for new sources of renewable and alternative energy and

supporting all efforts to accelerate the realisation of the atomic energy programme for peaceful purposes' (HRH King Abdullah II 2007c). By 2012 we can see evidence that King Abdullah was increasingly concerned with energy insecurity and the challenges it posed for other governmental policies. In his letter of designation to Abdullah Ensour the King wrote,

[e]nergy is at the heart of the economy. We were amongst the first countries in the region to realise the importance of gradual diversification of energy sources to protect our country against fluctuations in international market prices, and thus entrench the sovereignty and stability of our economic and development-related decision-making. The seriousness of such challenge is apparent in the steady rise in the energy bill and related subsidies, which have been affected by rising international prices and disruptions in the Egyptian gas supply. Accordingly, it is imperative for your government to expedite the implementation of programmes and policies that ensure the diversification of energy sources The government is expected to accelerate strategic energy projects, as responding to this challenge is a national responsibility. (HRH King Abdullah II 2012b, emphasis added)

The fourth policy theme identified through this research is that the King sees Jordan as able to develop nuclear energy and is within its rights to do so as a transparent, cooperative and stabilizing actor. King Abdullah has argued that Jordan is capable of affording the cost of developing nuclear energy in collaboration with international private sector actors. He has stated that nuclear energy 'is one of the cheapest energy sources around. As for plant construction costs ... [t]he nuclear power plant that the government is looking at would cost about JD3.5 billion for a plant that would constitute one-third of the total power capacity generated in Jordan today. The attacks on the Egyptian gas pipeline over the past two years have cost us already JD2.8 billion. That could have paid for almost one reactor' (HRH King Abdullah II 2012a). Furthermore, a recurring theme in several of his statements on nuclear energy is that Jordan is acting as a model of transparency for other states in the Middle East to emulate: 'Jordan is in favour of the peaceful use of nuclear power as manifested in the model of the nuclear programme we seek to build. Transparency when presenting the project to the world and nuclear safety are key in the Jordanian nuclear model' (HRH King Abdullah II 2012c). A number of the central initiatives developed by King Abdullah (as found on his official website) centre on energy security: 'The target as stated by the King is to achieve security of energy supply, to relieve pressure on the Jordanian economy and the general budget [and] to raise dependence on local energy sources from 4 per cent as of 2007 to 25 per cent in 2015 and then to 39 per cent by 2020' (HRH King Abdullah II 2014). Furthermore, he 'has confirmed that Jordan will be a model in the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes and will pursue its nuclear choice in harmony with the international standards and criteria relevant to uses of nuclear energy' (2014).

The Ministry of Energy, mineral resources and JAEC discourse

By analysing documentation published by the Ministry of Energy and the JAEC it is possible to identify three themes that overlap with King Abdullah's visions. The first theme is that Jordan is a vulnerable developing country that faces significant developmental, economic and other security challenges due to its smallness and lack of resources. The JAEC notes that

Jordan is one of the ten most water-deprived countries in the world. Individual water consumption stands at ~ 160 cubic metres annually, compared to a global average of 7000 cubic metres. Reliable sources of clean water are necessary to support economic growth. As existing sources are depleted, large-scale water desalination capability is likely to be needed to increase the water supply. Because desalination is very energy-intensive, this will only further increase demand for energy. The supply gap is quite severe even today. The Ministry of Water and Irrigation is working intensively to develop new sources of water, including deep aquifers, but it is likely that desalination will need to be a part of the future water supply mix. (JAEC 2011, 2)

In the 2007 'Master Strategy of [the] Energy Sector in Jordan for the Period 2007–2020' the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources (MEMR) identified a series of challenges to energy security for Jordan. A total of six pages out of the 26 page document are dedicated to these challenges, notable among which are the heavy reliance on energy imports, the limited number of external sources that are relied upon and the underdeveloped nature of domestic energy production (MEMR 2007, 2–7).

The second theme evident in JAEC discourse is that energy security is a pressing challenge for Jordan, and it undermines broader developmental goals. A key benefit of nuclear energy highlighted by the JAEC is that it would 'constitute a certain and reliable generation source of electricity for Jordan decreasing the dependence of the country on fossil fuel and natural gas, strengthening Jordan's balance of payments, stimulating its economic growth and expanding employment opportunities' (MEMR 2007, 1). The MEMR states that the government's plan is to reduce the 'contribution of foreign sources in the primary energy mix [from] 96% in 2007 to 75% and 61% in the years 2015 and 2020 respectively' (MEMR 2007, 14). According to Khaled Touqan, the JAEC sees developing a domestic supply of fuel for its planned nuclear power stations as essential to reducing Jordanian vulnerability and energy insecurity—which he sees as amongst the most important 'security concerns facing Jordan'.⁹

A third theme is that Jordan's nuclear energy programme is, and will continue to be, entirely transparent and based on an international multi-stakeholder approach. The JAEC argues that the Jordanian government 'has fully recognized the prime importance of safety and security ... and works in very close cooperation with the IAEA and considers the IAEA's active participation as assurance that all international IAEA safety and security standards will be [met]' (MEMR 2007, 5). The nuclear project has been presented to multinational corporations and foreign governments as being based on a build operate own (BOO) basis with potential ownership of 26–51 per cent for the Jordanian government and 49–74 per cent owned by strategic partner (2007, 7). The MEMR's recent annual reports include nuclear energy as a key component of Jordan's future energy sources, reinforcing the view that Jordan's pursuit of nuclear energy is certain to continue. Furthermore, Touqan has claimed that developing domestic energy sources, including nuclear energy, is essential for Jordanian security and development in the short, medium and long term and this is clear for all external actors to observe due to Jordan's transparency on this issue.¹⁰

⁹ Touqan, interview.

¹⁰ Touqan, interview.

Redefining smallness and small-state behaviour: Jordanian nuclear policy as 'can do' behaviour

Observers would not be criticized for assuming that Jordan should, according to traditional accounts of smallness, bandwagon with the dominant US policies towards non-proliferation (of sensitive technologies that can be used for both energy production and weaponization), which, in this case study, could mean abandoning nuclear energy altogether. Yet this has not happened, raising an interesting set of questions about why this policy direction has been chosen and how it is being implemented. Perhaps the answer lies in the 'relationship between political discourses and small states' identities based around specific practices of "smallness"' (Smith et al 2005, ii).

The constructive role of self-perceptions in the discursive process in Jordanian decision-making bodies reinforces the awareness of material vulnerabilities faced by Jordan in terms of energy security. But it also informs the reality of Jordanian smallness by framing the self-interested pursuit of energy security within a regional system in which the Jordanian government lacks the relative and/or structural power to impact the stability of energy supply from neighbouring states. In other words, narratives within Jordanian decision-making bodies end with Jordan being incapable due to material (military, political and economic) constraints to promote security and stability in Iraq and Egypt (Jordan's principal energy suppliers since the early 1990s). Furthermore, Jordan is unable to secure favourable terms (such as heavily discounted prices) for hydrocarbon trade with suppliers in the GCC as a result of the government's inability to promote narratives both within Jordan and in GCC states that it would be in the interest of the latter.

Through reviewing Jordanian policy, governmental statements relating to nuclear energy and other policies and the elite interviews conducted with decision-makers in Amman, a discursive picture emerges. The Jordanian discourse is dominated by the following perceptions of Jordan as: (1) politically stable, but subject to increasing domestic pressures to *provide* public goods from an increasingly disquieted public; (2) a developing state (that is, pursuing: industrialization, increased overall economic productivity, the maintenance and enhancement of a business-friendly and open economy, regional and international economic integration, improved per capita income and living standards, improved education and training for its population and the creation of jobs); (3) hindered in its pursuit of economic development by a lack of natural resources (in particular fossil fuels, freshwater and arable land); (4) economically vulnerable to external market processes (including disruption to capital flows, fluctuations in hydrocarbon markets and increasing global competition for existing Jordanian export markets); (5) militarily capable of indefinitely defending Jordanian sovereignty against non-state actors but not against concerted efforts by one or more neighbouring states; (6) a stabilizing force in regional politics (especially with regard to Arab–Israeli and Palestinian–Israeli relations); (7) a close regional ally of the US and the West in general; (8) a transparent and law-abiding member of the international community; and (9) a sovereign state with equal rights within embedded global institutional frameworks (such as the NPT).

This discourse helps to maintain smallness as perhaps the most important characteristic of Jordanian reality. But rather than encouraging Jordan to

bandwagon and adhere to the US view of nuclear energy proliferation the construction of Jordan as a small state has encouraged the Jordanian government to prioritize energy security over bandwagoning with the US. Here, perceiving and reinforcing the reality of Jordan as a small state encourages policy independence when a vital national interest is perceived as being better served by not deferring to the policy goals of the small state's principal international backer. As Lee and Smith (2010, 1097) highlight, there is an emerging logic that concludes that 'for small states to succeed, they must take responsibility for their *own* fates. While the international community may wish to support them in doing so, smallness is ultimately a problem that small states themselves must overcome.'

Jordan's nuclear energy policy, therefore, is part of a broader group of policies that aim to achieve energy security through increasing domestic supplies of energy. The Jordanian policy elite use the discourse of smallness to advocate an independent and pro-active response to the country's perceived/real vulnerabilities to external processes that undermine its energy security. This practice is not necessarily specific to Jordan and its nuclear energy policy. Instead, as Smith and Lee (2010, 1098) note, small-states discourse no longer sees small states as 'weak and vulnerable but [as] "won't do" countries'. In this case, Jordan will not adhere to US policy restrictions on its nuclear energy programme—the difference here being that the shift to 'won't do' attitudes are usually taken as part of a collective of small states 'acting small' together in a unified front against larger and more powerful actors. The case study of Jordan's nuclear energy policy, however, suggests that in at least some cases small states can be 'won't do' countries on their own without acting collectively with other small states.

This finding is supportive of earlier conclusions drawn by analysing small states' foreign policies. Christmas-Moller was one of the earliest scholars to conclude that small states use the discourse of being a small state 'as a legitimating argument for the policy being pursued' (Amstrup 1976, 166). In particular the discourse of Jordan as a transparent, stabilizing and pro-Western member of the international community combined with the narrative of its economic (especially energy) vulnerability has been important in mobilizing international state and non-state support for Jordan's nuclear energy policy.

Jordanian nuclear energy policy also demonstrates an interesting analytical insight with regards to how different levels of analysis impact on small-state behaviour. Some scholars (see: Jervis 1978, 167–217; Snyder 1993; Schweller 1992, 235–269) suggest that small states are more exposed to the problems of international anarchy, security dilemmas and vulnerability, and so conclude that international-level processes hold the key to understanding small states' behaviour. Yet the domestic factors such as resource scarcity, public pressure from the citizenry, national market demand for energy and discursive practice in Jordan that are driving its nuclear energy policy are not synonymous with the international-level processes that these scholars insist are exclusively relevant. The counter-argument (that domestic-level processes are most relevant in informing small-state behaviour) has also been made. El-Anis (2014)v, 171–217) has challenged analyses that merely focus on international-level processes; however, this was done by considering domestic-level *political* processes. What Jordanian nuclear energy policy suggests is that both political *and* economic processes are relevant in determining small state behaviour. Thus a political

economy approach that incorporates both international and domestic processes is perhaps more valid.

Conclusions

This paper has sought to make a modest contribution to two distinct but increasingly related areas of investigation. It has sought to further our understanding of small states and their behaviour in the Middle East by asking two questions: first, what constitutes a small state in the Middle East? Second, do small states simply bandwagon and comply with their great power allies or can they also pursue their own goals even given objections from great powers? This study has also attempted to contribute to discussions on nuclear proliferation (primarily in relation to nuclear energy proliferation but also broader nuclear proliferation in terms of dual use/sensitive technologies) in the Middle East and beyond by asking: to what extent is nuclear energy proliferation a viable policy for small states?

In answering the first question, this paper has found that empirical definitions of smallness that rely on measuring material realities are not helpful in defining Jordan as a small state. Furthermore, more recent interpretivist approaches in their current form that rely on understanding discursive practices may also not be suitable to this case. We need to interpret discursive practices that not only create and reinforce realities of insecurity and vulnerability but also result in a 'can do' attitude. Jordan is a small state because its decision-making elite's discourse is dominated by concepts of vulnerability, underdevelopment, insecurity and limited capabilities to influence external processes. But this discourse also represents Jordan as a transparent, stabilizing actor with legitimate sovereign rights and the capabilities for domestic action.

With regards to the second question, this article finds that we cannot simply expect small states to bandwagon with the policies of their great power allies, nor can we expect them to adopt a 'can't do' or 'won't do' attitude. Another possible behavioural outcome is for small states to respond to perceived challenges and threats with a 'can do' attitude—they act because they are small, not in spite of it. This study demonstrates that in the case of nuclear energy proliferation in Jordan, bandwagoning with US policies does not take place. Yet this study does not claim that Jordan *never bandwagons* with the US in other areas. Assessing the likelihood of bandwagoning in other policy areas is not within the remit of this study—and, indeed, Jordanian bandwagoning with US policies in other issue areas is common. This study has only sought to demonstrate that we cannot simply assume that small states *always bandwagon* with their great power allies.

In addressing the third question about the extent to which nuclear proliferation for energy generation is a viable policy for small states, we can conclude that in the case of Jordan (and therefore, likely other small states in the Middle East) rather than being limited by the dominant domestic and external discourse of 'smallness', the Jordanian government continues to pursue a nuclear energy programme *because* it perceives Jordan as being a small state. It is the understanding of vulnerability, limited capabilities and other features of its smallness that has promoted nuclear energy as a solution to respond to Jordan's small-state insecurities. Perhaps Browning (2006, 674) offers a salient summarizing point when he states that '[a] small state *identity* need not always be equated

with weakness and limited capacities of action'. Nuclear energy proliferation in Jordan and other small states is likely to continue.

Of course, this article is limited to one policy area in only one state in the Middle East. Furthermore, this case study and the core research questions being addressed are to an extent still open-ended as the implementation of the Jordanian policies studied here is yet to fully materialize. This offers us the opportunity to develop and test hypotheses about small states' behaviour, but in order to further understand the ways in which discursive practices influence realities of smallness and what this means for the behaviour of small states it will be useful to consider other policy areas both within Jordan and other states. These areas for future study could include looking at nuclear energy policies in other small states in the Middle East as well as specific defence/military, development and economic policies. This would allow us to expand our sample and compare findings for similarities and contradictions to strengthen or disprove the findings made here.

Notes on contributor

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