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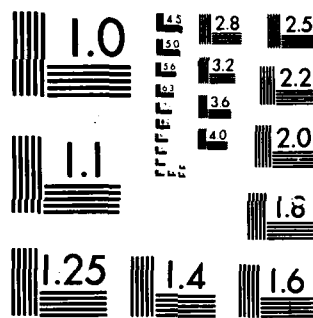
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JORDAN AND PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

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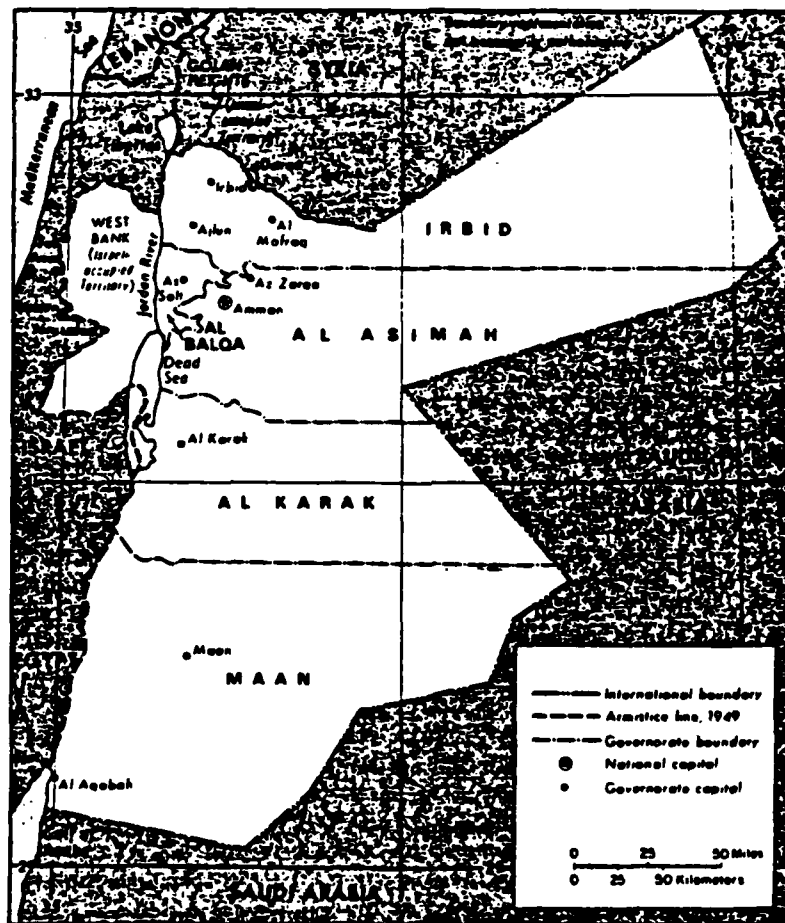


Figure 1. Jordan

Source: Nyrop, Jordan, A Country Study.

JORDAN AND PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Taken in a worldwide context, the Middle East is possibly the most contentious region on the planet. That land, extending from roughly Morocco in northern Africa to Iraq in western Asia, has been the center of conflicts since recorded time. In recent times, the main cause of hostility in the area revolves around the disputes between the state of Israel and her Arab neighbors.

This paper is going to address some aspects of the involvement of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in the Arab-Israeli conflict. The primary concern here is the contribution of Jordan to the peace process between Israel and the Arabs. Though Jordan possesses a representative form of government, the majority of critical decisions come from the country's 50-year-old monarch, King Hussein ibn Talal. This individual, the most durable leader in the region, has shaped Jordanian policy since 1952. However, it will be demonstrated that strong internal and external constraints have impeded most of Jordan's progress in the peace process. By virtue of her geographic location, historical background, and national political makeup, Jordan is considered by many, including the Reagan Administration, to be the linchpin in a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

The paper will examine the current peace maneuvers by Jordan and its leader, King Hussein. This development appears to be part of a united effort by moderate Arab

states and some Palestinian elements to solve one of the main stumbling blocks between Israel and the Arabs, specifically the Palestinian problem.

Next, a brief historical outline will be presented. Historical antecedents play an important part in political activity in the Middle East. This is particularly true in determining such issues as the "ownership" of the West Bank. Also included is a discussion of Jordan's creation and legitimacy in relation to the Zionist movement and the numerous mandates in the 1920's. King Abdullah's relations with the Jews and the new state of Israel will be examined. Additionally, the legitimacy of Jordan to negotiate for the Palestinians with Israel will be reviewed. This is at the very core of the matter of Jordan's relations with the Palestinians. An argument can be forwarded that Jordan is the appropriate homeland for the Palestinians.¹

Jordan's participation in the numerous Arab-Israeli conflicts and their impact on Jordan, particularly in relation to the Palestinian question will be covered. When viewed over time, Jordan appears to have been a somewhat reluctant combatant. The losses and gains made by the Kingdom will also be described. Continuing on, the internal and external factors affecting Hussein's motivations will be examined. The political stability of Jordan is extremely fragile. Such factors as Jordan's Palestinian majority, foreign relations, and military capability are elements in Jordan's desire to earnestly transact a peace.

In closing, an assessment of Jordan's role in further peace negotiations will be provided. This assessment will include the various options open to King Hussein and the probability for their success.

CURRENT JORDANIAN PEACE MANEUVERS

The most recent events along the peace trail in the Arab-Israeli conflict revolve around the activities of Jordan's King Hussein. Though this initiative extends back several years, it has only been formalized recently. The new ingredient in this package is the "Jordanian-PLO Plan of Joint Action" approved by Jordan's King Hussein and PLO leader Yasser Arafat in Amman on 11 February 1985. Perhaps the most significant aspect of this agreement, aside from the rapprochement of the two Arab leaders, is that it signifies an important change in PLO policy since the National Charter amendments in 1968. The new agreement pointedly fails to mention the PLO's old policy plank stating that "the armed struggle is the only way to liberate Palestine." This agreement relies on resolutions within the framework of the negotiations. Godfrey Jansen, writing for the Middle East International, contends that the PLO, or at least Yasser Arafat, finally accepts the United Nations Security Council Resolution 242.² Also, in taking this stand, Arafat, without mouthing the words, concedes Israel's existence under the 1947 UN partition resolution and accepts the pre-1967 borders.

There appears to be several variations of the Hussein-Arafat Joint Agreement in circulation. The key elements of the agreement can be paraphrased to include the following points:

Recognizing the Fez Summit resolutions and the UN resolutions on the solution of the Palestine question, Jordan and the PLO agree to work together toward a peaceful settlement with Israel to include "termination of the Israeli occupation of the Arab territories, including Jerusalem, in accordance with the following . . . principles:"

1. Land in exchange for peace--as per the UN resolutions.
2. The Palestinian People's right to self-determination.
3. Solving the Palestinian refugee problem in accordance with the UN resolutions.
4. Solving all aspects of the Palestine question.
5. Basing the negotiations at an international conference to include the five UN Security Council permanent member-states, all confrontation states, and the PLO, "as the Palestinian People's sole legitimate representative," in a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation.³

The document carries more significance than just the principles written in it. It illustrates the latest maneuvers by moderate Arabs to start new movement in the peace process. These prior actions should be examined as examples of typical Arab "Real Politik" in the 1980's. It could also be noted that the significance of a joint Jordanian and Palestinian state is proposed as the vehicle for Palestinian self-determination. This will be examined in a later portion of this paper.

The expulsion of the PLO combat units from Lebanon, as a consequence of the Israeli invasion in the summer of 1982 could be considered a starting point for this latest peace initiative. By May 1983 Arafat was claiming a political victory. He indicated that the action allowed for increased opportunities in other Arab countries, specifically Jordan.⁴ This turn of events weakened Arafat's standing in the Arab community and perhaps made him more amenable to accepting a more moderate bargaining position and coupling his organization with Jordan in some form of joint peace bargaining coalition.⁵

Hussein continued to demonstrate a desire to move the regional peace process along by establishing diplomatic, economic, and social relations with Egypt. Jordan became the first Arab nation to do this in the five years since the Camp David Accords in 1979. Though this move drew considerable criticism from Syria and other radical Arab pressure groups, Amman was quick to point out that this did not signify a link between the American-sponsored peace efforts and Jordan's divergent views.⁶ Jordan, it must be remembered, refused to participate in the negotiations at Camp David between President Carter, Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Egyptian President Anwar Sadat. Hussein professed inability to participate in a unilateral solution to questions concerning the occupied West Bank and its Palestinian inhabitants. Coincidentally, Jordan was also

the first Arab state to break relations with Egypt after Camp David.⁷

It is interesting to note that the Jordanian move came less than one year after Yasser Arafat's visit to Cairo. That acceptance by the PLO leader was a key step in returning Egypt to the Arab fold.⁸

From an international viewpoint, this was probably a shrewd move by King Hussein. Though angering hardline Arabs, it demonstrated that the King was not a weak political player willing to "sit on the fence." It also had the benefit of sending a message to the Israelis and the Americans that Jordan "tacitly" recognized Egypt's separate peace with Israel.

An additional message may have been sent to PLO's Arafat that the time was ready to close internal PLO divisions and work within the framework of a united moderate Arab front.⁹ Finally, discounting problems in the recent past, Egypt still retains a reserve of respect on the international diplomatic scene. With her contacts in Washington and Jerusalem (albeit currently weak), Egypt can only be an asset to any overtures the Hussein-Arafat team makes in that direction.

After the diplomatic realignment between Egypt and Jordan, and the Joint Agreement by the King and PLO leader Arafat, probably the most noticeable movement by Arab peace makers, involves almost shuttle-like diplomacy by moderates to Washington. Aside from high-level ministers, three of

the main moderate Arab leaders have been seen in Washington ostensibly trying, among other things, to enlist US diplomatic pressure on Israel to be "realistic" concerning the Jordanian-PLO agreement hammered out in Amman.

Following closely on the heels of a high-level Egyptian visit, Saudi Arabia's King Fahd arrived for talks with Reagan early this year. With him he carried the essential elements of the Jordan-PLO agreement to be discussed with the President. It appears the Saudis were frustrated by Reagan's intransigence even though he publicly voiced optimism at the Amman prospect. Along with Egypt, Saudi Arabia is also trying to take part of the credit for facilitating the accords between Arafat and Hussein.¹⁰ This appears to be a continuation of a long-standing power struggle in the area and reinforces the latent prestige carried by Egypt.

By March 1985 Egyptian President Mubarak had met with officials in Washington testing the waters for further US influence on Israel to respond positively to the Jordan-PLO Accords. As with Fahd, Egypt's President came away with Washington's assurances but no real progress in the dialogue. President Mubarak added his own suggestion that Washington could invite the joint Jordan-PLO delegation for talks. This concerned King Hussein because it was an indication that Egypt was determining actions for Jordan. While visiting Amman after his talks in Washington, Mubarak and Hussein traveled together to Bagdad, ostensibly to show

support for Iraq. This leads to interesting speculation that Iraq could become a more active player in the Arab-Israeli peace process.¹¹

King Hussein completed the trio of Arab leaders with his visit to Washington in May. As with the two previous leaders, the King received assurances but no concessions on the American position. Hussein returned to Amman "disappointed and shocked by the lack of objectivity in the US stands" This after he personally carried the details of the new position by Yasser Arafat regarding Palestine.¹²

Thus we see the most recent peace initiatives as a loose confederation of moderate Arab leaders working for a compromise to present to the U.S. (and by default, the state of Israel).

Jordan, in an arrangement with elements of the PLO, has presented what it believes to be viable concessions regarding the Palestinian question. It would be valuable to examine the joint Jordanian-PLO agreement and determine what specifically the Palestinians and Jordanians are requesting in a dialogue with Israel.

An analysis of the Jordanian-PLO peace plan indicates that it contains many of the points outlined in the 13 September 1982 Fez Resolution. The Hussein-Arafat agreement, however, is more loosely worded in some respects; but it also illustrates modifications or concessions made by the Palestinians to reach the accord. The primary point of

the Amman agreement is the long-standing call for land in exchange for peace.¹³

Where the Fez resolution stipulated the specific solutions (from an Arab point of view) to the Palestinian problem, the Amman Agreement only glossed over these by reiterating a desire to solve the Palestinian refugee problem in accordance to UN resolutions and solve all aspects of the Palestine question. The Amman Plan diverges from the Fez Resolution by having a joint representation by Jordanian and Palestinian negotiators. The Amman Agreement voices an additional requirement that peace negotiations would be held within the framework of an international conference, including the Soviet Union. This principle has had strong support throughout the Arab camp. Though most Arabs concede that the Soviet Union is not a major player per se in the Arab-Israeli peace negotiations, they feel its inclusion is necessary to balance the obvious alliance between the United States and Israel.¹⁴ In addition, Soviet diplomatic pressure may be necessary to bring Syria into the negotiations. Interestingly, although it is almost universally voiced that the United States is dragging its heels, friends and foes alike in the region concede that any chance for peace must include efforts by Washington.¹⁵ At the same time, by joining other Arab states in recognizing the need for international conferences, the king has distanced himself from Washington. The Amman Accords should

not be viewed, as a US Bloc stand but rather as a non-aligned Pan-Arab coalition.¹⁶

Reactions on both sides of the conflict have been mixed toward the "confederation" of the PLO and Jordan. To say that it is a fragile agreement would be an understatement. Even before the formalization of relations between Hussein and Arafat, elements of Fatah were voicing dissenting views. Shortly after King Hussein hosted the Palestine National Council (PNC) in November, a senior Fatah official was quoted rejecting most of the elements of the 11 February agreement.¹⁷ Even after the agreements were concluded, members of the PLO voiced disapproval. Faruq Qaddumi, the de facto foreign minister for the PLO, adamantly rejected Resolution 242 and insisted that the PLO was the sole representative in any negotiations.

Radical factions, mainly based in Syria, denounced the framework agreement unequivocally. George Habash, the Secretary General for the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, called the agreement "a decisive deviation from the revolution's national course."¹⁸

This Arab rejection appears to have manifested itself with an increase in terrorist acts against Jordanian officials and the Jordanian national airline Alia. In one example, Ziad Sati, the acting Jordanian ambassador to Turkey, was gunned down in Ankara. Shortly after the murder, Islamic Jihad took credit for the action. Since the

accords, at least eight incidents involving Jordanian targets have been reported.

Additional evidence indicates that these terrorist acts are warnings from radical Arabs, and possibly Syria, to Hussein and Arafat. Other incidents have been claimed by members of Black September and Abu Nidal. Abu Nidal is an anti-Arafat element of the Palestinian movement.¹⁹

To the Israelis, the accords do not appear to have been successful as a compromise. Their negative reaction was almost as swift as that of the radical Palestinians. Foreign Minister Yitzhaq Shamir stated, "we do not regard this agreement as any opening whatsoever for peace in the region." He continues, "what it is lacking is good will and readiness on the part of the Arab countries to make peace." Earlier Shamir reiterated many Israelis' feelings that the PLO was a terrorist organization with which Israel would not bargain.²⁰ Some analysts believe that, concerning exchanging land for peace, former Israeli Defense Minister Sharon echos the sentiments of most Israelis that Gaza, and Samaria and Judea (the West Bank) are Israel's. He views the gains of the 1967 War as liberation, not occupation; the Israeli lands were previously occupied by Jordan and Egypt.²¹

The Washington reaction to the agreement continues to be somewhat of a puzzle. Hopes were high in Amman that the re-election of Reagan would be a good opportunity to make a new thrust towards restarting talks on peace in the region.

It was felt that Washington would take a more unbiased attitude toward the Arab-Israeli problem after the elections. Hussein is well aware of the pressures of the pro-Israeli lobby during an election year. In addition, Reagan had made statements signifying a desire to step up the negotiation process. Also there appears to be a genuine rapport between King Hussein and Presiden Reagan.²²

The Arab leaders left Washington somewhat confused about the position of the Reagan administration on their Mideast peace proposals. They did, however, have assurances that the Washington diplomatic bureaucracy was taking the problem under advisement.²³

It appears that there are three primary points being mentioned subjectively in Washington as stumbling blocks between the Reagan Administration and the King. Much of the resistance stems from the Reagan Administration's understanding that the coalition government in Israel will reject the points, regardless of US pressure.

The Fez Resolutions state it specifically: the Arabs expect to see a return of the West Bank, Gaza, and especially East Jerusalem to Palestinian (or confederation) ownership. Israel has repeatedly rejected the return of Jerusalem, and the almost daily development of settlements on the West Bank is a strong indicator of her reluctance to give up the West Bank and Gaza.

The passage concerning the International Conference including the five permanent members of the Security Council and all parties to the conflict, including the PLO, is

another major stumbling block. This situation, it is argued, would leave the United States and Israel alone against moderates susceptible to Arab pressure. Fears concerning the Soviets' indifference to see a positive settlement in the region are also mentioned. Finally, opponents of an international conference say that a consensus bilaterally agreed upon has a better chance for success than one brought out of a committee.

Thirdly, Washington understands that any peace initiative involving the PLO will be rejected out of hand by Israel. As was mentioned earlier, the coalition government refuses to deal with that terrorist group. This is a difficult position for all involved. Any Israeli dealings with Palestinians outside the PLO have led nowhere.²⁴

Washington's reaction, according to some, was not totally negative. An editorial in The Jordan Times (2 June 1985) was optimistic that progress could be made. The Times notes a shift in the Reagan Administration's position on an international peace conference. The US, the editorial continues, still does not agree on the inclusion of the PLO and the Soviets. Additionally, the editorial hints that some in Washington would like to meet with a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation. The editorial also credits the King's visit with Reagan's desire to speed up the peace process.²⁵

In retrospect, Washington's attitude should not have come as a great surprise to the Arabs. Less than three years prior to the Jordan-PLO Joint Agreement, President Reagan offered his Fresh Start Initiative, which adequately outlined his administration's policy toward a Middle East peace settlement. It is perhaps unrealistic of the moderate Arab leadership to expect the President to embrace its initiative and broker it to the government in Jerusalem when his solution, with many of the same general positions, was rejected by the Israeli government in 1982.²⁶

FACTORS INFLUENCING JORDAN

To appreciate Jordan's position in the Middle East peace process, it is necessary to understand those factors which influence the decisions of her leaders. Though King Hussein has ruled his country for over thirty years, his regime is surprisingly fragile. In this section we will examine what effects such elements as history, demographics, foreign relations and military capability play in the process of decision making.

History

In many respects, the history of Jordan parallels that of Israel. Both had their origins in the post-World War I settlement of affairs following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, and the early history of both is closely associated with British policy concerning the Palestine Mandate. In each case, the borders were somewhat arbitrarily derived. In addition, the legitimacy of both countries has been scrutinized and questioned.

When British Forces, aided by her Arab allies, ousted the Turks from the area which is now Israel and Jordan after World War I, the Arab community envisioned the creation of a large self-ruled Arab state, to include much of Syria and Saudi Arabia. Among those contemplating an Arab Empire were the Hashemites. This family, descended from the male line of the prophet Mohammed's daughter, held high positions of influence in Mecca. After a short period of independence under King Faysal, the greater Syrian nation was brought under the divided control of Britain and France. The San

Remo Agreement in 1920 ceded control of what is now Syria, and Lebanon to the French, and Palestine, Jordan and Iraq to Great Britain. This decision was later confirmed by the League of Nations in 1922.²⁷ It is interesting to note that the terms Palestine and Jordan did not exist in the Ottoman Empire's administrative structure.²⁸ The mandate caused much dissension among the local residents. The British, in setting up administrative regions, gave that area east of the Jordan River to the Hashemite Abdullah in part as a concession for his service to the Allies during the War. In actuality, the formation of Transjordan was in part a bribe to stop Abdullah's attacks on the French mandated territories to the North.

The extent of Abdullah's domain encompassed approximately 80 percent of the Palestine mandate, the barren region east of the Jordan River. The Mediterranean side of the river was conditionally reserved for a Jewish homeland. This homeland had been promised to the Zionists by the British in what is now known as the Balfour Declaration in 1917.²⁹

Sidney Zion, writing in the New York Times, quotes Sir Alec Kirkbridge, England's Ambassador to Jordan and later advisor to King Abdullah, as indicating that Transjordan was "intended to serve as a reserve of land for use in the resettlement of Arabs once the National Home for the Jews in Palestine, which Britain was pledged to support, became an accomplished fact. There was no intention at that

stage of forming a territory east of the River Jordan into an independent Arab state." Zion continues by pointing out that Winston Churchill persuaded Zionists contemplating immigrating to Palestine to settle on the western side of the Jordan River.³⁰

Abdullah's kingdom was primarily a barren expanse of dessert populated by semi-nomadic tribesmen. A small and somewhat urbanized (i.e. an area with permanent towns and villages) strip was along the east edge of the River Jordan.

The East Bank population was more culturally linked to the Arab population on the West Bank than to the desert vduins. Though culturally similar, the West Bank Arabs were generally considered more urbane, cultured, and prosperous. It should be noted that during this period, all residents of the area traveled under Palestinian passports.

Transjordan achieved "independence" in 1923, but the mandate still remained in effect. Britain wielded considerable control through its high commissioner. The late 1920's and 1930's saw Amir Abdullah consolidating the people under his rule. Jordan was (and still is) a relatively poor country. So Abdullah accepted administrative, military, and financial aid under the continuation of the mandate.

There was considerable turbulence in the area as conflicting nationalisms developed. The agitation was in part due to the arrival of the East European Jewish settlers among the Arabs in Palestine. As the tension increased,

various administrative partition schemes for the Palestine mandate were forwarded. The majority of these were unacceptable to the Jews and Arabs alike. The basic tenet of each of these partition plans was the separation into a Jewish Palestine and an Arab Palestine. In part due to the cultural tie between East Bank Arabs and the Arabs on the West Bank, and also because of Pan-Arab nationalist tendencies, Abdullah showed an enduring interest in the developments to the immediate west.

Jordan was recognized as a fully independent state on 22 March 1946. Jordan became a constitutional monarchy shortly thereafter; but she still retained political and military ties with the United Kingdom. In fact, Jordan's military force, known as the Arab Legion, continued to be trained and led by British officers.

The late 1940's were a period of constant agitation in the region. Pressures for a Jewish state in Palestine caused concern throughout the region. Though Abdullah was not pro-Jewish, he did recognize their plight. Unfortunately, he was under pressure by neighboring Arab states to demonstrate opposition to the partition of Palestine.

The end of the British mandate and the creation of Israel in May 1948 brought on an Arab invasion of the Jewish state. During this war of Israeli independence, Abdullah's Arab Legion was the only effective fighting force on the Arab side. By the end of the war, Israel had won her

independence; but Jordan retained, by force of arms, a significant portion of the land on the west bank of the river.

Though Arab residents on the West Bank had mixed feeling about Jordanian rule, Abdullah annexed the area in April 1949. Jerusalem became a divided city, surrounded by Arab territory. Only Britain and Pakistan formally accepted the annexation of the West Bank by Jordan. The members of the Arab League were strongly opposed to the annexation. There was concern that this area would be the Arab Palestine, thus indicating the acceptance of Israel as a legitimate state. Pressure from the Arab League finally persuaded Jordan to compromise and accept the West Bank as a temporary trust; although in essence, the west Bank became a province of Jordan.

With the acquisition of the West Bank, Abdullah was obligated to take a large number of Palestinian Arab refugees. In retrospect, his handling of the situation is admirable. Jordan was the only state to grant citizenship to any Palestinian refugee. In addition, Abdullah made space in his administrative cabinet for the residents of the West Bank.

Abdullah was murdered in 1951 by a Palestinian assassin. Early in 1953, his grandson, Hussein, took the throne. Almost immediately, the young Hussein was faced with Arab pressure. Traditional kingdoms like Jordan were threatened by the forces of Pan-Arab nationalism, which had

a strong anti-monarchical component. As a relatively weak nation politically, King Hussein relied on his country's strong ties with Britain and the still effective Arab Legion to maintain his throne.

The period prior to the 1967 War witnessed times of economic development and prosperity as well as Palestinian demonstrations for action.³¹ The political tangle in the area took on almost Byzantine proportions as countries moved in and out of alliances and spheres of influence. During this time, Jordan was generally considered to be a moderate, stable Arab regime with Western leanings. Support from Western powers was provided because Jordan's situation helped preserve the status quo in the region.³²

The region became increasingly volatile in the mid-1960's because of increased dissatisfaction between the confrontation states. Such problems as the creation of the PLO and their terrorist activities and Israel's disproportionate use of fresh water from the Jordan River increased tensions. The PLO was an especially irritating problem for Hussein. Since two-thirds of his population had Palestinian ties, a quasi-governmental political structure was seen as a genuine threat. In addition, the PLO terrorists, operating out of Jordanian territory, staged raids into Israel, which brought Israeli retaliation on Hussein's subjects.

The increased tensions eventually culminated in the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. Jordan, though a reluctant

participant, took a beating. Like the other Arab combatants, it lost most of its military strength. In addition, however, Jordan also lost its annexed territories on the West Bank of the Jordan River. To make matters worse, the Kingdom was obligated to receive an additional 200,000 Palestinian refugees. Though the East Bankers and Bedouins had been a minority since Israel's independence, this new influx of Palestinians put a real strain on the delicate balance in the country. A portion of the refugees were absorbed into the Jordanian society; however, many others were situated in UN operated camps in the North and West. These camps became breeding grounds for discontented individuals who were accepted into the armed commando units of the PLO.³³ The formation of an armed, extra-governmental force of Palestinians within the borders of Jordan could not be tolerated for long by the King. During a short but bloody civil war, the "fedayeen," PLO guerrilla units, were wiped out. The civil war threatened to bring a Syrian invasion force into the country. In response, America supplied much needed support and Israeli units went on alert. Hussein's swift but brutal action avoided outside interventions; however, the loss of Palestinian life caused deep-seated distrust toward the monarchy among many Palestinians and eventually led to the formation of Black September, an even more militant PLO group. The war was finally mediated by Egyptian President Gamal Abdul Nasser, shortly before his death.³⁴

In reconstructing the socio-political order in the country, Hussein granted amnesty to those imprisoned during the civil war and restructured the government. To mollify the Palestinians somewhat, Hussein federated the Kingdom to include the East Bank and the West Bank (this is an interesting concept since the West Bank was under Israeli military and administrative control).

During the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, Jordan refused to open a third front in concert with Syria on the north and Egypt to the south. Among other reasons, Hussein rightly argued, Jordan lacked an effective air defense. He did, however, put units on alert along the border to occupy Israeli forces and sent some combat brigades north to the Syrian front. Internally, the country remained quiet.

The 1970s closed with a continuation of efforts by all parties in the region to solve the Palestinian problem. After the war, Sadat and Assad took up the Palestinian issue once again. This came as a moderate affront to Hussein who saw himself as representing the interests of the Palestinians. The final decision ^{taken} ~~resolved~~ at the Rabat Summit Conference in 1974 allowed the PLO to be considered the "sole authorized representative" for the Palestinian people.

General prosperity, coupled with generous aid from the United States and other Arab countries has allowed Hussein the opportunity to investigate avenues for peace in the region. The existence of a strong, though small, military

force, coupled with his understanding of regional politics, has allowed Hussein the freedom to be pragmatic in his foreign policy.³⁵

Jordan and the Palestinians

Perhaps the most vexing problem created by the Arab-Israeli conflict deals with the Palestinians. Jordan is central to the issue in two main respects. Initially, there is a large majority of Palestinians residing in the Kingdom. Also, the Palestinian Arabs, in their desire for territory, must resolve this problem in or near Jordan, with some sort of Jordanian approval. The majority of the land claimed by the PLO was at one time under Hashemite rule.³⁶

Even simple concepts develop into complex issues concerning the Palestinians. A good case in point involves defining specifically who are the Palestinians. This is not as easy as it seems since the territory was, like Jordan, artificially created after World War I. For purposes of this paper, a Palestinian can be defined as an individual or descendant of one who resided in the territory which is now Israel. To further refine this in the context of this problem, one can narrow this definition down to only include non-Jews. Some Jews, like the author Sidney Zion, would argue that Jordan is Palestine, an Arab homeland.³⁷

The changing demographics of Jordan are a constant concern of the Amman administration. After the 1948 Palestine War, Jordan almost doubled its population with the annexation of the West Bank and acceptance of refugees. Graciously, Hussein granted Jordanian citizenship to all Palestinians desiring it. Taking into consideration the number of Palestinians already in Jordan, this was a

politically wise move. No other Arab country made this offer. By 1967 Jordan's population was roughly divided between the East and West Banks of the Jordan River. After the Arab-Israeli conflict in 1967, 150,000 to 200,000 additional Palestinians flooded into Jordan.³⁸ In all, Palestine has provided approximately two-thirds of the population in Jordan. This has been a mixed blessing. Prior to the 1948 war, Jordan was a relatively underdeveloped and, unsophisticated monarchy. The annexation provided the country with a more educated, industrious, and urbanized class of people. Jordan's socio-economic level was raised considerably. Palestinians formed the base of a new middle class and generally adapted to their situation. This is not to dismiss a large number of Palestinians who are stifled in the UN refugee camps. Hussein's government made a concerted effort at "Jordanizing" the Palestinians. The refugee problem was exacerbated when Israel captured the West Bank in 1967. It is roughly at this time that "the Palestinian Problem" surfaced as a critical issue.

The combination of East Banker and West Banker has not always been ideal. The East Banker generally consists of old line, mostly homogeneous Arabian Bedouin descendants. It is no secret that Hussein favors this minority over the Palestinians and has employed them almost exclusively in critical military, intelligence, and ministerial positions. To the credit of the Hashemite dynasty, both Hussein and his

grandfather, Abdullah, gave reasonable representation to the Palestinian citizens.

The Palestinians, however, have expressed political and social frustration with the regime. Though many have succeeded in adapting to the Jordanian lifestyle, many more realize the disparity between the East Bankers and themselves. A Palestinian is usually aware that he will not be allowed to fill a sensitive position in the army or the government.³⁹

Aside from a general distrust for people of a different cultural background, the Jordanians still remember vividly the civil war in 1970. Though most of the combatants were from the fedayeen groups out of the refugee camps, many resident Palestinians in strategic positions revolted. This has left the monarch reluctant to place his trust in the Palestinians. The increased internal security measures implemented after the civil war are an additional burden on the relationship between the East Bankers and the Palestinians. Even with Hussein's conciliatory amnesty shortly after the war, some Palestinians do not trust the King.⁴⁰

Even in a regional context, Hussein's relations with the Palestinians are mixed. Shortly after the 1967 War, Hussein projected himself as the spokesman for the Palestinians in efforts to achieve a settlement for the refugees on the West Bank. As time progressed, and other Arab leaders became involved in the process, Hussein's role

was reduced. For a number of reasons, including distrust of the King's motives and increased power in the PLO, Hussein lost the right to represent the Palestinians. At the 1974 Rabat Arab League Summit, the Sadat-backed PLO became the sole, legitimate representative for the Palestinian people.⁴¹ The latest peace initiative, centered around the Joint Jordanian-PLO confederation, appears to be a continuation of the on-again, off-again relationship Hussein has with the Palestinians.

Foreign Relations

For such a small country, Jordan is relatively active in international affairs. This is evident for two main reasons. Primarily, Jordan's location as a neighbor and confrontation state with Israel makes her vitally important in any dealings in the Middle East. Whether peace or war is contemplated in the region, if it involves Israel, Jordan is involved.

The second criteria for Jordan's international recognition is her leader. King Hussein is one of the most durable players in international politics. His ties with the United States (and obliquely Israel) and his standing as a faithful Arab allow him a unique position between the East and West. Judith Miller remarks in the New York Times that "only Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko, 74, has been involved in international affairs as long as he." He has worked with seven American Presidents and numerous regional leaders.⁴² In the ever-changing milieu of regional

political relations, Hussein has been assailed as a pro-Israeli puppet of American imperialism. At another point in time, he has been described as a staunch defender of Arab rights. This dichotomy illustrates both the capriciousness of regional alliances and Hussein's own flexibility. While always remaining a moderate pro-Western diplomat, the King is not adverse to slighting the United States and dealing with the more radical Arab states or the Soviet Union.

Jordan's relations with the other Arab countries in the region is paradoxical. Though the monarchy has demonstrated solidarity with the Arab states, it still has a grudging understanding of Israel and her problems. Even the most casual glimpse of the Kingdom's history will reveal a multitude of on-again, off-again relationships with her Arab neighbors. This condition is witnessed in most of the Arab Middle East and should not be considered solely as a capriciousness on the part of the Hashemites. Alliances in this region are very fragile and are often bogus. From the beginning of his reign, Hussein has been alternatively wooed and pressured into alliances and pacts with Egypt and Syria. Eventually, the relationship sours and ill feelings, or at least cautious indifference sets in.⁴³

One factor in these spastic relationships is a distrust among other Arab nations toward the Hashemites. As late as the 1950's, King Hussein's kin ruled in two Arab nations, Jordan and Iraq, and had annexed a chunk of Palestine.⁴⁴

Abdullah repeatedly made references to a "greater Syria." This tendency often ran counter to the greater Pan-Arabic nationalism popular with other Arab leaders after the end of Ottoman rule. King Hussein's efforts to mediate a peace with Israel are viewed by some as an attempt to return the West Bank under Hashemite rule.

If Israel can be said to have a friend in the Middle East, Jordan is a good candidate. Historically, Jordan has recognized the inevitability of Israel's survival. Repeatedly Abdullah, then Hussein, has, within the confines of Arab unity, signaled a desire to strike a deal with Israel. This aptly illustrates the Hashemite pragmatism. Hussein is justifiably aware of Israel's military capability. His reluctance to enter the last two regional conflicts demonstrates this.⁴⁵

In the 26 March 1984 issue of Time Magazine, William Smith characterized King Hussein as one of Washington's best Arab friends.⁴⁶ If Jordan is not the most pro-Western Arab state, it is possibly, with the exception of Saudi Arabia, the most enduring.

After the decline of the United Kingdom as an outside influence in the Middle East in the late 1940s and early 1950s, Jordan turned to the United States as an ally in insuring her independence in regional politics. Washington has, and still does, provided Jordan with military supplies, economic assistance, and international support and prestige. Jordan, to the extent possible in her situation, acts as a

conduit for American foreign policy among the less moderate Arab states.

As with any relationship, however, there are strains. In many cases, Hussein has disagreed with Washington's policies and procedures in the Mid-East; just as Washington has found some of Amman's political dealings detrimental. Hussein was particularly upset with the emphasis Carter and Sadat placed on Jordan in an effort to pressure the King into joining the Camp David Accords. In the same respect, Jordan's verbal attacks against Israel were looked upon with disfavor in Washington.

Jordan's relationship with Washington is in some ways similar to Israel's. Though both countries rely heavily on the United States for international and regional prestige and support, both are independent nations who are determined, to as great an extent as possible, to chart their own courses. Pressures from Arab neighbors, security considerations, and Amman's own belief in Arab rights often conflict with what the US believes should be Jordan's course. Jordan, on the other hand, like most of her neighbors, finds, among other things, America's hesitancy to get involved in the peace process frustrating. Amman still considers that peace can only come to the Mid-East through American mediation and support. It appears that the United States is the only country with the international prestige (and clout) to move the negotiations along.

Jordan's relationship with the Soviet Union is cordial but not close. Hussein has considered procuring arms from the Soviets when denied them by the Americans. This action is possibly a ploy to elicit a more favorable response from the US, though there are indications that the material requested is indeed needed by the Jordanian defense forces. However, Hussein still distances himself politically from the Moscow regime and is cautious of Soviet influences on the PLO and the radical Arab states.⁴⁷

Military Capability

Jordan's current armed forces are probably the most stable institutions in the country. The competence of the combat units has helped Hussein remain in power for the past thirty-plus years. Though their effectiveness in a large scale engagement is questionable, its professionalism would make it a worthy opponent in any conflict. As witnessed in the 1970-71 civil war, they can aptly serve as an internal security force and are staunchly loyal to King Hussein.

Jordan retains a strong military tradition which dates back to the days of the Arab Legion. The British trained and maintained Arab Legion was used by the United Kingdom to maintain control throughout their mandated territories until independence in 1946. During Israel's war of independence following partition in 1948, the Arab Legion fought better than any other Arab units.⁴⁸ Jordan's acquisition of the West Bank, with Iraqi aid, was the only territorial victory in the 1948 war for the Arabs. The prowess of the Legion

raised the ire of Egypt's Nasser, especially since it remained unswervingly loyal to Hussein.⁴⁹

During the 1967 War, Israel defeated the Jordanian army with little difficulty and destroyed its small air force. During the 1973 Middle East war, an elite unit saw combat along the Syrian front. Additionally, some Israeli units were tied down along the Jordanian border even though that country did not officially enter the war.⁵⁰

The strong military tradition within Jordan is based heavily on the intensely loyal Bedouins. Though there is a conscription system, political loyalty is a requirement for military service. Palestinians are members of the armed forces in some numbers. They are normally utilized in services other than army combat units. Palestinians can also be found in the officer corps, but not in upper command positions.

Hussein appears to have learned a lesson during the 1970 civil war and aims to insure the loyalty of the army to the throne.

In the event of hostilities in the future, the Jordanian armed forces can be relied upon by the King to do well in combat. In a war with Syria, the larger, better equipped Syrian army would not easily defeat this well-trained, motivated force.

Hussein is well aware of the military capabilities of his armed forces. This awareness is one of the factors in his desire for peace with his neighbors. Though an

acceptable force in the role of internal defense and sufficient as a deterrent against most aggressors, the army is not a strong offensive weapon.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

The current joint venture between Hussein and Arafat is a continuing effort by interested parties to formulate a lasting and just peace in the Middle East. As illustrated in the first section of this study, many factors influence Jordan's involvement in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Those elements, or elements similar to them, affect every policy decision.

Even considering the joint agreement, there is not much hope for a settlement any time soon. The Israeli and Arab positions are still too far apart.

Hussein, like other Arab leaders seeking regional stability, continues to strive within the framework of the options available to him for a solution to the Palestinian question. The joint agreement was perceived to be a cornerstone of a moderate Arab proposal where Jordan and the PLO would construct a platform on which to base a peace plan.

Additional Arab support would be demonstrated by such countries as Iraq, Morocco and Algeria. States capable of working with Syria, possibly Saudi Arabia, would try to draw her into the process. Soviet support would be sought to mollify Syria and balance the US in the negotiations.

As it now stands, the moderate Arab states are disappointed that the joint initiative has not made any progress. Additionally, Saudi efforts to moderate Syria's

opposition have been unsuccessful. Moreover, the US has not fully endorsed the initiative. 51

Perhaps the joint agreement is a step in the right direction. It indicates that the moderate Arabs are at least attempting to move toward a compromise position. A similar compromise, probably on a grander scale, will have to be made by Israel. One of the main points on which Israel stands firm can be discussed here--the West Bank.

Most of the reasonable peace plans, including the Allon Plan, favored by the Israeli Labor Party, describe the creation of an independent state or confederated state between Jordan and Israel. This appears to be the best compromise solution. The problem stems from Israel's inability to relinquish the West Bank. Internal pressures would make this a difficult thing to accomplish for any government in Jerusalem. The new state would, at least in the beginning, have to rely on Jordan for administrative and security support. The "Jordan Option" describes this confederation of the East and West Bank regions as the United Arab Kingdom.⁵² As stated earlier, the Israelis and the Arabs will be worlds apart at the bargaining table. If a solution is not arrived at soon, Israel will settle in on the West Bank to such an extent that it will be beyond its capabilities to relinquish the territory for peace. If that occurs, the moderate states may not be able to control those radical Arab forces who would attempt to force concessions

from Israel. In all probability this would lead to further armed conflict, not peace for the Middle East.

NOTES

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5. Ibrahim Abu Nab. "The Marriage is Arranged," Middle East International, 9 March, 1985, p. 7.
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7. "Hussein Support Sought for Mideast Peace," The Middle East, (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly, 1981), pp. 171-175.
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12. "Husayn Reportedly 'Disappointed' by U.S. Stands," Foreign Broadcast Information Service, MEA vol. 5, n. 104, p. F1.
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