

POLICY PAPERS

NUMBER 19

**IN THROUGH THE OUT DOOR:
JORDAN'S DISENGAGEMENT
AND THE MIDDLE EAST
PEACE PROCESS**

ASHER SUSSER

**THE WASHINGTON INSTITUTE FOR NEAR EAST POLICY
*WASHINGTON, D.C.***

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Susser, Asher, 1947 -

In through the out door: Jordan's disengagement and the
Middle East peace process / Asher Susser.

p. cm — (Policy papers ; no. 19)

ISBN 0-944029-04-3 : \$9.95

1. Jordan—Foreign relations—Palestine. 2. Palestine—Foreign
relations—Jordan. I. Title. II. Series: Policy papers (Washington
Institute for Near East Policy) : no. 19.

DS154. 16. P19S87 1990

327. 5695056—dc20

90 - 12294

CIP

Copyright © 1990 by

The Washington Institute For Near East Policy

1828 L Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 90 - 12294

ISBN 0-944029-04-3

Cover design by Jill Indyk

THE AUTHOR

Asher Susser wrote this Policy Paper while a visiting fellow at The Washington Institute for Near East Policy. He is the Director of the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies at Tel Aviv University.

The opinions expressed in this Policy Paper are those of the author and should not be construed as representing those of The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, its Board of Trustees or its Board of Advisors.

CONTENTS

PREFACE	<i>vii</i>
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<i>ix</i>
I THE HISTORICAL SETTING	1
II EVOLVING JORDANIAN PERCEPTIONS OF THE INTIFADAH	9
III THE EMERGING SHIFT IN JORDAN'S PALESTINIAN POLICY	13
IV THE PRELUDE TO DISENGAGEMENT	21
V THE SEVERANCE OF LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE TIES	25
VI JORDAN, THE PLO AND THE PNC RESOLUTIONS	31
VII JORDAN'S ROLE IN THE PEACE PROCESS IN THE WAKE OF DISENGAGEMENT	39

VIII	JORDAN'S RESPONSE TO THE ISRAELI PEACE INITIATIVE	45
IX	CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS	49

* Note: Chapters II to VII of this paper are based largely on the chapter compiled by the author for the Dayan Center's annual, *The Middle East Contemporary Survey*, 1988.

PREFACE

In past years, many Israeli and American policy-makers have maintained that Jordan may hold the key to a lasting peace in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Its participation in the 1967 war notwithstanding, the Hashemite monarchy has long been regarded by Western analysts as a moderate regime without menacing military or territorial ambitions. This moderation, combined with Jordan's heavy stake in the status quo and its fear of an irredentist Palestinian state, seemed to make Jordan a plausible partner for Israel in the resolution of the Palestinian question.

But the "Jordan option," as it became known, vanished virtually overnight when King Hussein announced on July 31, 1988, that he was breaking off administrative and legal links to the West Bank. His decision sent shock waves through the Middle East. Even the PLO, Hussein's rival for dominance in the West Bank seemed caught off guard, and the United States and Israel were left wondering what Jordanian "disengagement" would mean to the long-term health of the peace process.

In this Policy Paper, Asher Susser examines the effects—intended and otherwise—of Hussein's decision to cede full authority over the West Bank to the PLO. Chronicling the long, often bitter rivalry between Arafat and Hussein, Susser traces this

relationship from the days of open warfare in the civil war of 1970 to the days of guarded cooperation in the early 1980s.

Susser then offers a close analysis of the events leading up to the announcement of Jordanian disengagement, focusing on how this policy decision was influenced, if not forced, by the *intifadah*. The severing of Jordan's ties with the West Bank was clearly a retreat but, Susser argues, disengagement was not an abandonment of the Jordanian role in the peace process. The evidence suggests that, on the contrary, Hussein has every intention of continuing to play a major, if somewhat less central part. As Jordan sorts out this new role, the United States and Israel should do what they can to include and encourage Jordan to remain engaged.

There is little doubt that even after disengagement enduring peace without Hussein's participation is highly unlikely. Reasoned and insightful analysis of Jordan is, therefore, vital. In hope of ultimately making a contribution to an understanding of Jordan and some of the broader trends in the Middle East peace process, The Washington Institute is pleased to present Dr. Susser's paper.

Barbi Weinberg
President
March 1990

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

King Hussein's historic decision to sever Jordan's legal and administrative ties with the West Bank in July 1988 was the latest move in his ongoing struggle with the PLO to shape the future status of the occupied territories. But Jordan's geopolitical stake in the Palestine question, as well as the cultural and social links between the East and West Banks are too great for Hussein to disengage fully. The Hashemite Kingdom, as much as Israel, would be threatened by the emergence of a strong, irredentist Palestinian state. Hussein will continue, therefore, to position himself to ensure that Jordan's interests are taken into account in any negotiations to resolve the Palestinian issue.

After two decades of steadily losing ground in the fight over the political future of the West Bank, Jordan's standing was seriously undermined by the outpouring of Palestinian nationalism sparked by the *intifadah*. With Hussein's claim that the PLO leadership was forced on unwilling West Bank residents discredited, the king set the disengagement process into motion.

While Hussein claimed the move was merely acquiescence to the wishes of the PLO, West Bankers and Arab states, he clearly intended to send a message to all of the major players in the Middle East peace process. To the United States and Israel it was a signal that the traditional notion of the "Jordan option" was not viable from Jordan's standpoint. To the PLO it was a challenge to live up to its role of "sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people."

Despite the disengagement, Hussein has continued his efforts

to ensure that Jordan will not be ignored in any settlement. Thus, even after Yasser Arafat's acceptance of UN resolutions 242 and 338 and the initiation of the U.S.-PLO dialogue, Hussein has continued to maintain that an international peace conference that includes Jordan is the only means for comprehensively resolving the Palestinian issue. He has also counseled the PLO not to reject Israel's election initiative so long as it is the first step toward the realization of that conference.

The *intifadah* has forced Jordan to fundamentally reconsider its role in the peace process, not to abandon it altogether. Jordan's history, demography and national interest simply will not allow it. At the same time, Jordan's geopolitical centrality to the Arab-Israeli conflict, as well as military, political and social factors make any stable and lasting settlement of the Palestine question implausible without Jordanian participation. The United States and Israel, therefore, very much share an interest with Hussein in finding a way to keep Jordan involved in any negotiations.

"[Jordan's decision to disengage] was a detachment for the purpose of attachment."

Jordan's Minister of Information, Hani al-Khasawna (*al-Ra'y*, January 7, 1989, as translated in the Federal Broadcast Information Service: Near East and South Asia (hereafter FBIS-NES), January 11, 1989).

"[Jordan has] described [the disengagement] as an act of distancing in order to get closer."

Jordan's Prime Minister, Zayd al-Rifa'i (*al-Sharq al-Awsat*, March 3, 1989, translated in FBIS-NES, March 7, 1989).

"From the outset the problem of Palestine has had two dimensions. The first centered on the domestic scene which is focussed presently on the problem of the PLO and Israel. The second is more general and involves the Arab states and Israel."

"It is important to highlight the significance of resolving the first tier of the conflict, but it should not be pursued to the exclusion of the second. Decoupling those two tiers is not only inadvisable, it may be detrimental to the process as a whole."

Crown Prince Hasan, "Jordan's Approach to the Peace Process," speech to The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, September 12, 1989, p. 5.

I THE HISTORICAL SETTING

King Hussein's decision in July 1988, to sever Jordan's legal and administrative ties with the West Bank was of historical consequence. It set the stage for a process that would most probably culminate in the irreversible renunciation of Jordanian sovereignty over the West Bank. It was not, however, a final Jordanian withdrawal from involvement in the question of Palestine. For demographic and geopolitical reasons Jordan cannot simply dissociate itself from Palestine. Jordan still has a vital interest in any final settlement of the Palestinian problem.

Jordan's intimate association with the Palestinian question has its origins in the very founding of the Emirate of Trans-Jordan in 1921, as part of the British Mandate for Palestine. During the Mandate period, the Amir, and subsequently King Abdallah, was deeply involved in matters pertaining to Palestine. In the latter days of Abdallah's reign, during the 1948 war, Jordan occupied the area that was to become known as the West Bank, and then formally annexed it in April 1950.

Jordan's long border with Palestine, and the web of social and economic ties that have linked the populations on both sides of the Jordan River for centuries, have consistently prompted a profound Jordanian interest in the Palestine question. One could hardly imagine a settlement of the Palestine problem that would not have far-reaching

2 JORDAN'S DISENGAGEMENT

ramifications for the stability and longevity of the Hashemite regime. This is all the more so because of the very large Palestinian population now permanently residing on the East Bank. Indeed, there are more Palestinians on the East Bank today than there are on the West Bank.

In the past, Jordan had consistently sought to achieve supremacy in the Jordanian-Palestinian relationship as an essential means of preserving the stability of the Jordanian state on the East Bank, viewing Palestinian nationalist militancy as a potential threat. In reference to Jordan's interaction with the Palestinians, King Abdallah observed in 1947 that he did not support the creation of "a new Arab state [in Palestine] that would hinder my plans and allow the Arabs to 'ride me ragged.' I want to be in the saddle, not underneath it."¹

The annexation of the West Bank; the designation of the territory as the "West Bank," rather than preserving the name of Palestine; the granting of Jordanian citizenship to all the Palestinians, on both Banks; the resettlement of refugees; and the frustration of Palestinian political organization were all essential facets of a deliberate policy designed to de-emphasize the Palestinian collective identity and to "Jordanize" the Palestinians.

In these circumstances, it was only natural for Jordan to treat the revival of Palestinian nationalism, increasingly evident from the late 1950s onward, with a combination of suspicion, apprehension, obstructionism and repression. Jordan opposed the inter-Arab efforts to foster the Palestinian nationalist revival in the early 1960s. It did not take long for Jordan and the newly established PLO, the organizational incarnation of Palestinian nationalist resurgence, to enter into a prolonged political confrontation that preceded the outbreak of the Six Day War.

However, Jordan's rearguard battle against the Palestinian revival suffered a severe setback in 1967. The process of "Jordanization" was arrested after Jordan's loss of control over the West Bank. The "re-Palestinization" of the West Bankers

¹Uri Bar-Joseph, *The Best of Enemies: Israel and Transjordan in the War of 1948* (London: Frank Cass, 1987), p. 9.

(and other Palestinian communities as well) was accelerated. Jordan's efforts to stem the tide continued unabated, but with steadily diminishing returns. The PLO gradually established itself in the occupied territories and in the Arab and international arenas as the "sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people."

In these new circumstances Jordan made a concerted effort to maintain a central role in the determination of the political destiny of the Palestinian people. This was essential, the Jordanians believed, lest a situation arise in which the Palestinians might ultimately obtain the political wherewithal to determine the fate of the Hashemite Kingdom. It was this reasoning that motivated Jordanian apprehension in regard to the establishment of an independent Palestinian state under the rule of the PLO. As the "sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people," the PLO, at least in theory, was also the sole legitimate representative of about half of Jordan's population on the East Bank. An independent Palestinian state could eventually pose an irredentist threat toward Jordan and a serious challenge to Hashemite legitimacy, based on the contention—at times openly stated by PLO, Israeli and other sources—that the Palestinians had a majority on the East Bank.² Such a Palestinian challenge to the Jordanian state, if made, might be supported by certain Arab states and even by some in Israel as well. Jordan, therefore, has had in the past, and still has, a vital interest in preserving its influence over any settlement of the Palestinian issue.

In recognition of the changes in the Palestinian arena since 1967, Jordan gradually modified its own Palestinian policy. These modifications, however, were invariably intended to maintain Jordan's role in Palestinian affairs and not to relinquish it.

In March 1972, shortly after the final expulsion of the PLO forces from Jordan in the civil war of 1970-71, King Hussein

²The figures are disputed. For a brief but cogent discussion of this issue, see Valerie Yorke, "Jordan is not Palestine: the Demographic Factor," *Middle East International*, April 16, 1988.

4 JORDAN'S DISENGAGEMENT

launched a plan for a federative relationship between the East and the West Banks. On the one hand, the plan was intended to preserve East Bank supremacy in the Jordanian-Palestinian equation. On the other hand, however, Hussein recognized that a return to the centralized unitary formula that had pertained from 1950 to 1967 was no longer feasible. Hussein gave limited recognition to the distinctive Palestinian national identity by proposing the establishment of the "United Arab Kingdom." This was to be a federation between an autonomous Jordanian "region" (*quṭr*) on the East Bank and an autonomous Palestinian "region" in the West Bank (including Arab Jerusalem) and the Gaza Strip.

The federation plan was rejected by the PLO as an undesirable peace overture to Israel and as an attempt to "obliterate the Palestinian cause." Generally, the plan did not enjoy support in the Arab world and was also dismissed by Israel as an unacceptable basis for negotiations. Nevertheless, it remained the cornerstone of Jordan's Palestinian policy.

In the aftermath of the October 1973 war, an Arab consensus rapidly emerged, endorsing Palestinian rights to political independence and recognizing the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. In his effort to stem the tide King Hussein argued repeatedly at this juncture that Jordan's involvement in the Palestinian question was not a function of territorial ambition. Rather, he explained, it was an attempt to bring about an Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories and then to enable the Palestinians to exercise their right to self-determination. Hussein promised that after Israel's withdrawal to the 1967 boundaries the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza would be allowed to choose between a return to the pre-1967 formula of unity between the two Banks, federation or an independent state. Jordan thus sought to dismiss the notion that it was a usurper of Palestinian rights and to portray itself as the protector, guarantor and vehicle of the Palestinians' right to self-determination. Hussein, however, also made it clear that Jordan preferred the federative formula. He seemed to be operating on the assumption that if Jordan could maintain its

pivotal role in future negotiations, it would also be able to secure its desired outcome. That was not to be.

The Arab world and Israel rejected the Jordanian position. At the Arab summit in Rabat, in October 1974, Jordan bowed to the Arab consensus recognizing the PLO as the "sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people," as well as the organization's right to set up an "independent national authority" in any Palestinian territory that Israel evacuated. The Rabat resolutions, therefore, disqualified Hussein as the legitimate spokesman of the people of the West Bank and denied Jordan's right to re-establish its sovereignty over that territory.

Formally, Jordan accepted the Rabat resolutions, but in practice Hussein sought to undermine them. From the outset he did not believe that the PLO would actually be able to fulfill the role of sole negotiator over the West Bank and Gaza, because of the positions it held and due to Israeli and U.S. opposition to its involvement. Eventually, he surmised, the Palestinians and the Arabs in general would have no choice but to recognize Jordan's centrality to any negotiation over the occupied territories.

Systematically striving to erode the PLO's representative status, Hussein waited patiently for the first opportunity to re-establish Jordan's position as senior negotiator for the occupied territories. This opportunity arrived on the heels of the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, which dealt a severe blow to the PLO. The loss of its territorial haven, PLO internecine warfare, and growing dependence on the Arab states, forced the PLO into a protracted period of decline. Hussein took immediate advantage of the PLO's relative weakness to create a political partnership with the organization with the goal of granting Palestinian legitimacy to a renewed, high-profile Jordanian involvement in the Middle East peace process.

In January 1984, Hussein revived Jordan's parliament which had been dormant since the Rabat resolutions. The dissolution of the parliament, which also represented the West Bank, had been in ostensible compliance with the Rabat resolutions. Its revival, therefore, was an outright challenge to the PLO's exclusive representative status and a move calculated

6 JORDAN'S DISENGAGEMENT

to establish Jordan's credentials as a legitimate partner to the PLO in negotiating a Palestinian settlement.

In February 1985, Hussein and Arafat reached an agreement for political coordination, based on the understanding that Jordan and a future Palestinian state would be linked in a confederation. Hussein thus departed from his original federation plan, by recognizing the Palestinians' right to a state and not just an autonomous "region." The *quid pro quo*, at least in Hussein's view, was the PLO's recognition, in practice if not in theory, of Jordan's central role in the peace process, and Arafat's acceptance of a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation to an international peace conference.

However, the February accord was no more than yet another round in the long-standing Jordanian-PLO rivalry for supremacy in Palestinian affairs. Both parties were soon deeply engaged in efforts to co-opt, neutralize and subvert one another. Their "accord" came to nought. In February 1986, Hussein suspended the coordination and their relations deteriorated yet again into open confrontation. In March 1986, the Jordanian parliament passed a new election law designed to increase Palestinian representation, and in November of the same year Jordan launched an ambitious development plan for the occupied territories. These were moves intended to bolster Jordan's constitutional, political and economic links with the West Bank (and Gaza as well) and to expand his base of support there.

Despite the lip service Jordan paid regularly to the PLO's exclusive representative status, Palestinian representation, in Hussein's view, was actually divided among three parties: Jordan, the PLO and the West Bankers. Following the break with the PLO, Hussein sought to alter the relative weight of these components by means of a Palestinian and Arab reassessment of the PLO's role.

These were all facets of a policy that was designed to shift the balance of power in the Palestinian arena, giving greater influence to the West Bankers at the expense of the PLO. Jordan aimed to create a climate of public opinion in the occupied territories that would openly challenge the PLO's handling of their interests. This, in turn, was intended to bring

pressure on the PLO to accept coordination with Jordan on Hussein's terms.

Hussein was not prepared to enter negotiations without broad Arab backing and credible Palestinian support. He may have been willing to undermine the PLO, but not to negotiate without it, unless he could obtain Palestinian and Arab backing to do so. Jordan, Hussein said, "cannot talk on behalf of the Palestinians. We have to have a clear mandate." After his break with the PLO, the king declared on numerous occasions that Jordan would not serve as a substitute for the PLO, which remained the "sole legitimate representative of the Palestinians." But he also argued, somewhat over-optimistically, that the question of who would ultimately represent the Palestinians was still open.³

The outbreak of the *intifadah* in December 1987 turned the tables on Hussein. The minor inroads Jordan had made in the West Bank and Gaza at the PLO's expense were washed away in no time by the most sustained demonstration of Palestinian nationalist fervor since 1967. The *intifadah* did indeed provide the people in the occupied territories with greater influence than ever before in the corridors of Palestinian power, but in precisely the opposite direction that Hussein had initially intended.

The *intifadah* rapidly developed into the PLO's major political asset and the scales in the Jordanian-Palestinian equation were now tipped heavily against Jordan. The shoe was now very much on the other foot. If in the aftermath of the Lebanon war Jordan clearly had the upper hand, it was now the Jordanians who were pushed into a corner, as the PLO reclaimed center stage in the inter-Arab and international arenas.

³Asher Susser, *Double Jeopardy: PLO Strategy Towards Israel and Jordan* (Washington, D.C.: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1987), Policy Papers No. 8, pp. 54-55.

II EVOLVING JORDANIAN PERCEPTIONS OF THE INTIFADAH

From the very outset the Jordanians were wary that the *intifadah* might lead to a resurgence of PLO influence.¹ They made every effort in the first three to four months of the uprising to deny the PLO credit and to publicly discount any PLO role in the *intifadah*. The uprising was therefore portrayed as a purely spontaneous internal phenomenon.² It not only had nothing to do with outsiders, but was an expression of frustration with the Arab states and with the PLO.³ The *intifadah*, according to Hussein, had created a new situation, because the people in the West Bank and Gaza had "chosen to lessen their reliance on others outside to speak for them."⁴ The PLO, he contended, was now required to ask itself whether it still understood "the wishes and feelings of the Palestinian people. If not, new realities may emerge very soon, realities that would take the PLO and the entire Arab world by

¹*The New York Times*, January 8, 1988.

²Zayd al-Rifa'i quoted in *Jordan Times*, January 4, 1988; Hussein on Jordan TV, January 14, 1988, translated in FBIS-NES, January 15, 1988.

³*The New York Times*, January 8, 1988.

⁴Jordan TV, January 29, 1988, translated in FBIS-NES, February 1, 1988.

surprise.” There was a “new dynamism” in the occupied territories, which had given “precedence to the role of the people [there] over that of any party concerned. . .including the PLO.”⁵

The attempt to portray the uprising as an expression of popular disenchantment with the PLO soon proved to be an exercise in deception or wishful thinking. From mid-January onward, the leaflets of the Unified National Leadership of the uprising were invariably published in the name and on behalf of the PLO. Moreover, they assumed an increasingly anti-Jordanian tone, frequently accusing Jordan and its supporters in the West Bank of power-sharing and collaboration with Israel.⁶ The Jordanians were particularly perturbed by one of the versions of “call number 10,” circulated in mid-March, which appealed to the West Bank representatives in the Jordanian parliament to resign. The Jordanians correctly interpreted this as a frontal assault on the concept of unity between the two Banks. Hussein was said to have been “truly stung” by the willingness of many Palestinian deputies living on the East Bank to consider the appeal before it was partially rescinded by the PLO.⁷

This incident was a turning point. It finally dispelled any illusions the Jordanians may still have had about the nature of the *intifadah*. From then onward, the Jordanian perception and portrayal of the uprising began to change. This had an immediate effect on Jordan's perception of its own role in the peace process, culminating eventually in Hussein's decision to disengage from the West Bank. Jordan's argument made since the 1974 Rabat resolutions—that the PLO had, in effect, been imposed on the people of the occupied territories by an Arab League decision about which they had not been consulted—had clearly been disproved by the *intifadah*. Hussein now

⁵Hussein to *Der Spiegel*, February 1, 1988, translated in FBIS-NES, February 3, 1988; Marwan Dudin in *Jordan Times*, February 23, 1988.

⁶Shaul Mishal with Reuben Aharoni, *Speaking Stones: The Words Behind the Palestinian Intifada* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz HaMeuchad, 1989, in Hebrew).

⁷*International Herald Tribune*, August 12, 1988.

admitted that the Palestinian people had "elected the PLO" as their representative. "From this premise," he concluded, Jordan could "not carry any more burdens."⁸

Jordan finally accepted the fact that the *intifadah* was a Palestinian national phenomenon, founded not only on a deep sense of identification with the PLO,⁹ but also upon the rejection of Jordan as a desirable partner with the PLO in representing the Palestinians.¹⁰

⁸Radio Amman, May 3, 1988, translated in FBIS-NES, May 6, 1988; *Jordan News Agency*, May 10, 1988, translated in FBIS-NES, May 11, 1988.

⁹Hani al-Khasawna to *al-Dustur* (London), August 8, 1988.

¹⁰*Al-Mustaqbal*, August 6, 1988.

III THE EMERGING SHIFT IN JORDAN'S PALESTINIAN POLICY

Though unwilling to reject the peace initiative put forward in early 1988 by U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz, the Jordanians were most uncomfortable with the plan's emphasis on Jordanian centrality to the exclusion of the PLO. The Jordanians welcomed the revitalization of the peace process, but they clarified publicly that Jordan was wary of any moves designed to "defuse" or "contain" the *intifadah*.¹ The Jordanians clearly did not want to appear to be pulling the chestnuts out of the fire for the sake of Israel and the United States, by cooperating in what could be seen by the Palestinians as an exercise to frustrate their national aspirations.

On April 6, King Hussein handed Shultz a document outlining the basic principles governing the Jordanian position. These were, and still are:²

- The inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war. Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories is the basis for

¹For example, Zayd al-Rifa'i in *Jordan Times*, February 6, 1988; editorial in *al-Ra'y*, February 7, 1988.

²Reaffirmed in Crown Prince Hasan's speech to The Washington Institute on September 12, 1989, pp. 3-4.

the settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the establishment of a just and durable peace.

- The settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict requires the settlement of the Palestinian problem in all its aspects, including the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination.

- The settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Palestinian problem must be a comprehensive one. Negotiations to arrive at a comprehensive settlement can only take place in an international conference.

- The international conference will not be only a ceremonial gathering designed to launch direct negotiations. It should reflect the moral and constant weight of the five permanent members of the Security Council in assisting all the parties to the conflict to arrive at a comprehensive, just and lasting peace.

- The principles of Security Council Resolution 242 apply to all occupied Arab territories and are the basis for negotiations in the bilateral committees.

- In exercising its sovereign right, Jordan is prepared to attend the international conference with the other involved parties. Jordan will not represent the Palestinian people at the conference, nor will it negotiate the settlement of the Palestinian problem on behalf of the PLO. Jordan is also prepared to attend the conference in a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation if the concerned parties accept this arrangement.³

Particularly noteworthy was the shifting tone and emphasis in Jordan's Palestinian policy. Prime Minister Rifa'i told journalists that Jordan had "reminded the Americans" that it favored Palestinian self-determination as a "sacred and natural right." The United States, he said, had been asked to acknowledge the Palestinians' right to self-determination.⁴ Jordan had long recognized this right, but during negotiations with the Americans in the recent past they had deliberately

³*Jordan Times*, April 9, 1988.

⁴*Jordan Times*, April 9, 1988.

refrained from pressing the United States on this issue.⁵ However, remnants of Jordan's own reservations on this question were still evident. Rifa'i noted that Jordan differed with the PLO over the organization's demand that self-determination be exercised in an independent state led by the PLO. If the PLO insisted that it lead the Palestinian state "then what happens to the principle of self-determination?" he asked. "We must stop at the right to self-determination and the rest could be left for later," he suggested. As for the United States, it ought to accept self-determination "and object to a PLO-led Palestinian state if it wishes to do so."⁶ This, in essence, without Rifa'i actually saying so, was Jordan's own position. It corresponded with a distinction Jordan had been making for years between the PLO and the Palestinians' right to self-determination, which Jordan still preferred to leave ultimately to the people of the occupied territories rather than to the PLO.

The most salient shift, however, was on the question of representation. Jordan no longer insisted on a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation. According to Rifa'i, Jordan did "not insist on any particular form of representation," but Syria and the PLO had to attend any proposed international conference. Jordan was ready to attend independently, within a joint Arab delegation or in a joint Jordan-PLO delegation. It was impossible to have a conference without the PLO. "We [the Jordanians] are not the only ones to decide," he added.⁷ Indeed, so far as the joint Jordan-PLO delegation was concerned, this was now entirely up to the PLO and other Arab parties involved. In the past, Jordan had argued consistently that it would not substitute or deputize for the PLO, which had to be represented. Simultaneously, however, Jordan had applied pressure on the PLO to accept a joint delegation. This pressure had now disappeared. This change related not simply to procedure, but to substance as well. Independent Palestinian

⁵Susser, *Double Jeopardy*, pp. 49-50.

⁶*Jordan Times*, April 9, 1988.

⁷*Jordan Times*, April 9, 1988; Radio Amman, April 11, 1988, translated in FBIS-NES, April 12, 1988.

representation in the negotiations, as the PLO and Jordan well understood, could pave the way for the creation of an independent Palestinian state as the logical conclusion of any future negotiations.

Shortly after the publication of Jordan's policy principles in respect to the Shultz initiative, a flurry of Jordanian statements was issued, apparently designed to dispel any Palestinian doubts or suspicions about Jordan's position on Palestinian representation. On April 11, a "Jordanian official" clarified that it was the PLO, in its capacity as the "sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people," that would negotiate Palestinian-Israeli issues at a future international conference. Jordan was prepared to attend such a conference in a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation, but the Jordanians would take part only in negotiations to regain Jordanian and not Palestinian territories. The Jordanian territories involved, according to the spokesman, were an area of some 5 square kilometers at the confluence of the Jordan and the Yarmuk Rivers (which Israel was said to have occupied in the 1948-49 war) and another area of some 20 square kilometers, south of the Dead Sea (which Israel was said to have taken "in the wake of" the 1967 war).⁸ It would be hard to accept this disclaimer at face value. It is most unlikely that Jordan's real concerns related to these insignificant tracts of real estate. But being on the defensive, Jordan had no choice but to base its involvement in the peace process on rather flimsy pretexts.

In late April and early May, in a series of speeches at *iftar* banquets throughout the country, Hussein made an unusual effort to stress that Jordan had no ambitions in Palestine. Its involvement in the issue, he contended, was motivated solely by Jordan's sense of duty toward the Palestinians and their cause. Jordan was still willing to consider the idea of a joint delegation if this was acceptable to the PLO and the Palestinian people. But what Jordan now had in mind was a joint delegation in which half the members would be from Jordan and half from the PLO; the former team would concentrate on

⁸Radio Monte Carlo, April 11, 1988, translated in FBIS-NES, April 12, 1988.

the "Jordanian dimension."⁹ This was a far cry from previous Jordanian efforts to subordinate the PLO to Jordan's peace strategy.

As senior Jordanian spokesmen explained, the new Jordanian position was intended to convince all and sundry that Jordan was not competing with the PLO in any manner or form. Hussein's statements were designed, therefore, to "finally dispel" from the minds of Palestinians and non-Palestinians "the impression that Jordan was competing with the organization, i.e., that it had ambitions in the occupied Palestinian territory, or that it had ambitions or aspirations for hegemony over the Palestinian people."¹⁰

Jordan's new posture was accompanied by emphatic statements to the effect that Jordan had "absolutely nothing to do" with the issue of Palestinian representation,¹¹ or that it had any desire whatsoever to discuss anything concerning the Palestinian question.¹² This was a rather radical departure from previous Jordanian positions, which had tended to emphasize the need for partnership between Jordan and the PLO in matters related to the future of Palestine.

This was not, however, a Jordanian abdication from any role in Palestinian affairs. Instead it seemed to be an attempt by Jordan to establish a new mode of coordination between Jordan and the PLO that would at least appear to be founded on mutual trust and equality instead of on Jordanian supremacy and constant rivalry. At the Arab summit held in Algiers in early June, Hussein made a final effort to regain Arab and Palestinian recognition of Jordan's special status in Palestinian affairs that, at least in theory, would not undermine the representative status of the PLO. Hussein's speech at the

⁹Hussein in *iftar* speeches at Salt on May 2, 1988 and Mafraq on May 4, 1988—*Jordan Times*, May 3, 1988; *al-Ra'y*, May 5, 1988.

¹⁰*Al-Majalla*, May 25-31, 1988.

¹¹Hussein quoted by *Jordan News Agency*, May 10, 1988, translated in FBIS-NES, May 11, 1988.

¹²'Adnan Abu 'Awda in *al-Majalla*, May 25-31, 1988.

summit was a classical Hashemite exposé in defense of Jordan's historical role in Palestine from the days of the Arab Revolt in World War I until the present.

Hussein urged the Arab states to support PLO participation in an "effective international conference" that would negotiate peace in the Middle East, without "binding ourselves as to the details on the form of participation." Jordan, he said, would nevertheless abide by an Arab decision to pose the establishment of an independent Palestinian state as a precondition for such a conference just as it would accept Arab insistence on an independent PLO delegation to the conference "even if this did not lead to the convening of the conference."¹³ In other words, Jordan would bow to the Arab consensus even if it believed the consensus to be unrealistic and, therefore, undesirable. Hussein's advocacy of more flexible formulas that would not deny Jordan's role in questions related to Palestinian representation and statehood was followed up by another appeal in regard to the channeling of financial aid to the occupied territories. Hussein urged the summit to recognize Jordan as a legitimate conduit of funds to support the *intifadah*. By this he "did not mean that [Jordan] should be the [sole] channel for the delivery of this support, to the exclusion of all others."¹⁴ Aid ought to be delivered through all possible channels—international organizations, Jordan and the PLO. But Hussein went on to point out that Jordan was especially qualified for this role. Jordan, he said, had consistently been providing various forms of support to the West Bank since 1967. Moreover, Hussein thought it "useful to recall" that in "practical terms, the unity of the two Banks remained intact after the occupation." Jordanian law was still applied in the West Bank, Jordanian currency and passports were still used, Jordanian state institutions continued to function there, and Jordan still paid salaries to 18,000 civil

¹³Official Arabic Text of Hussein's speech at Algiers summit on June 7, 1988, pp. 38-39.

¹⁴Text of Hussein's speech, pp. 40-41.

servants in the West Bank and even to another 6,000 in the Gaza Strip.¹⁵

Jordan Times, commenting on Hussein's speech at the summit, highlighted the king's emphasis on the "inexorable link between the Palestinians and Jordanians." Attempts would continue on finding a permanent solution to the Palestine problem. But, in the end, Jordan was confident that "an arrangement will emerge which will express the distinct political identity of both Palestinians and Jordanians, while simultaneously affirming the close demographic, economic, social, and nationalistic impulses, which have kept Jordanians and Palestinians so deeply intertwined for so many years. The truth of this relationship shall also triumph in the end."¹⁶

If Hussein had sought to obtain recognition for Jordan's special role in Palestine, the resolutions of the Algiers summit were a sore disappointment. The resolutions reaffirmed the right of the Palestinians to independent statehood under the leadership of the PLO, stressed the commitment of the Arab states to provide the necessary aid to the Palestinian people "in all forms and by all means," and supported the participation of the PLO at an international conference on an equal footing with the other parties.¹⁷ No mention was made of Jordan, certainly not of any special role for the kingdom in matters pertaining to Palestine. Moreover, according to a PLO source, the summit had adopted a number of resolutions on the Palestine question, in addition to the final communique, in which the rejection of Jordan's plea was even more obvious. These additional resolutions clearly stated that support for the uprising would be channeled through the PLO, as the "sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people," as well as "available international channels;" and that one of the guiding principles of a future international conference would be the

¹⁵Text of Hussein's speech, pp. 41-42.

¹⁶June 9-10, 1988.

¹⁷Algiers TV, June 9, 1988—BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, June 11, 1988.

establishment of an independent Palestinian state under the PLO.¹⁸

The *intifadah* had had a telling effect on Jordan's inter-Arab stature. Jordan's humiliation at Algiers stood in stark contrast to Hussein's sense of satisfaction at the previous Arab summit held in Amman, only weeks before the outbreak of the *intifadah*. After years of decline, the uprising had clearly re-established the PLO's inter-Arab position, very much at Jordan's expense.

Jordan now faced Arab censure, orchestrated by the PLO, for seeking to "impose itself" on the Palestinian people.¹⁹ For Hussein, the Algiers summit was "the last straw."²⁰

¹⁸Voice of Palestine, San'a, June 10, 1988—BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, June 13, 1988.

¹⁹*Al-Mustaqbal*, August 6, 1988.

²⁰*International Herald Tribune*, August 12, 1988.

IV THE PRELUDE TO DISENGAGEMENT

After the summit, Crown Prince Hasan was particularly outspoken in his criticism of the Arab states' handling of the Palestinian question. He said that the way it had been dealt with "was ineffective and impractical in terms of chances of implementation."¹ During the summit, Jordan and the PLO had clashed over two issues: Palestinian representation and the channeling of aid to the occupied territories. The Jordanians took exception to the PLO claim that it represented the Palestinians inside and outside the occupied territories, i.e., in Jordan as well. It was agreed to delete from the summit resolutions any specific reference to Palestinians outside the occupied territories.² The Jordanians, however, had no satisfaction on the aid issue. Hasan spoke of a "genuine feeling of resentment" that no explicit recognition was given at the summit to Jordan's role in this matter.³ Moreover, "for Jordan to shoulder such responsibilities [for providing aid] and be

¹*Jordan Times*, June 15, 1988.

²*Al-Dustur* (London), June 13, 1988; *al-Qabas*, June 16, 1988.

³*Jordan Times*, June 28, 1988.

attacked sometimes by the same people who ask for our support, is something we totally reject."⁴

Jordanian indignation was compounded by a sense of humiliation. In Algiers, Hussein had been on the receiving end of the kind of humiliating treatment he had given Arafat at the Amman summit in November 1987. Arafat had taunted Hussein several times, repeatedly rubbing in the Rabat resolutions on the PLO's exclusive representative status. He reminded the king at one point that only three countries, Britain, Pakistan and Iraq, had ever formally recognized Jordan's annexation of the West Bank.⁵

Pique and resentment were clearly a factor in the creation of the mood that eventually brought about the decision to disengage from the West Bank. However, the king and those included in his "political kitchen" (Prime Minister Zayd al-Rifa'i, Chief of the Royal Court Marwan al-Qasim, Minister of Court 'Adnan Abu 'Awda, Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces Zayd bin Shakir and Foreign Minister Tahir al-Masri),⁶ appear to have gone through an agonizing process of internal debate and deliberation that reflected a sense of reluctance, uncertainty and even confusion, before finally making their historic decision. Palestinians close to the king argued that he could not relinquish his role in Palestinian affairs, primarily because of the large Palestinian community on the East Bank and the need to keep the moderate wing of the Israeli Government engaged in some form of peace process. Hard-line East Bankers contended that the king had already stuck his neck out far enough for minimal political gain and it was time the government turned its attention to its East Bank constituency and its own domestic problems.⁷

Crown Prince Hasan, however, publicly criticized the "parochial school of East Jordanianism," noting that Jordan

⁴*Jordan Times*, June 15, 1988.

⁵*International Herald Tribune*, August 12, 1988.

⁶*Al-Mustaqbal*, August 6, 1988.

⁷*Financial Times*, May 25, 1988.

had a fundamental interest in “safeguarding the geopolitical stability of the area called the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan,”⁸ i.e., both the East and West Banks. It was particularly significant that these statements were made at this juncture by Hasan who, in the more distant past, had himself been described by some Arab and other observers as a leading figure in this “parochial school of East Jordanianism.” Jordan, Hasan said, had a responsibility for the West Bank by virtue of Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. Forfeiting this responsibility could play into the hands of those Israelis who claimed the territory for themselves. At the same time, he was fully aware of the fact that the majority of Palestinians in the occupied territories did not look to Jordan for political leadership. But Jordan, Hasan said, was “not in the business of currying favor with the young, justifiably angry population.” He personally would not be at all perturbed, he said, even if support for Jordan “was zero per cent” in the West Bank and Gaza.⁹

According to the crown prince, the PLO and Israel could very well handle “partial and bilateral issues” between them at a future international conference. However, in an apparent allusion to the large Palestinian population in Jordan, he suggested that they alone could not deal with the “demographic dimension” of the Palestinian question. Jordan would remain the “window to the east” for the occupied territories,¹⁰ and would have to be involved in the ultimate political settlement of the Palestinian question.

By mid-July there were clearer indications that Jordan was about to adopt some extraordinary measures. Addressing the fourth annual conference of Jordanian expatriates, Foreign Minister Tahir al-Masri referred to Jordan’s long-standing fear that Israel might attempt in the future to solve its demographic problems by expelling Palestinians to Jordan, as part of the

⁸*Jordan Times*, June 15, 28, 1988.

⁹*Jordan Times*, June 28, 1988.

¹⁰*Jordan Times*, June 15, 1988.

“alternative homeland” philosophy, according to which Jordan was in fact Palestine. Masri noted that this Israeli thinking compelled Jordan to take some “daring steps” that would “emphasize the Palestinian identity in Palestine.”¹¹

Hussein’s apparent wavering was a function of the inherent tension between short-term and long-term considerations. There were a number of such short-term considerations: the mood of resentment toward the Arab states and the PLO, particularly after the Algiers summit; Hussein’s deeply felt disappointment with the Israelis and the Labor Party in particular, for having failed to make more of an effort to achieve a peaceful settlement before the outbreak of the *intifadah*;¹² disillusionment and frustration with the United States for not having applied sufficient pressure on Israel and for having expected Jordan to negotiate instead of the PLO,¹³ at a time when the Jordanians were convinced that they were unable to do so; the final realization that nothing could be gained by overt competition with the PLO and that Jordan had to lend credibility to its declared abandonment of such competition; that the aid to the West Bank and Gaza was not producing any political advantage; and that, in light of the political stalemate, Jordan had to make an extra effort to finally put to rest the notion of the Israeli right wing that it could become the “alternative homeland” for the Palestinians. For the long term, Jordan still remained interested in some form of special link to a future Palestinian entity or state. It was the short-term calculations that prevailed, but in Hussein’s words and deeds one can detect a concerted effort to reconcile the two.

¹¹*Al-Dustur*, Amman, July 13, 1988.

¹²*International Herald Tribune*, August 11, 1988.

¹³Hussein at press conference on August 7, 1988, Jordan TV, August 7, 1988, translated in FBIS-NES, August 8, 1988; Hani al-Khasawna quoted by *Middle East News Agency*, August 20, 1988, translated in FBIS-NES, August 23, 1988.

V THE SEVERANCE OF LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE TIES

On July 28, the government cancelled Jordan's not very effective development plan (1986-1990) for the occupied territories. Two days later, a royal decree dissolved the Chamber of Deputies. On July 31, in a speech to the nation, Hussein announced his intention to sever Jordan's legal and administrative ties with the West Bank. The speech was followed by a series of measures designed to implement the disengagement decision. On August 4, the government decided to retire almost all the Jordanian civil servants employed in the West Bank. The decision came into effect on August 16 and affected 18,000 civil servants in the various government departments and institutions. It applied mainly to teachers, health workers and municipal employees, most of whom also received salaries from Israel. They were all to receive different forms of pension and compensation depending on the length of their service. However, the decision did not apply to over 3,000 employees of the Ministry of Religious Endowments (*Awqaf*) and Religious Affairs, including the Islamic religious court system. These, according to the government statement, embodied the "Islamic cultural

presence in the occupied Palestinian territory” and would therefore be exempted.¹

On August 6, the king issued a royal decree abolishing the Supreme Committee for West Bank Affairs, a body that had been formed in 1980 to formulate administrative, financial and social policy on the West Bank. On the same day, the Ministry for Occupied Territory Affairs, also established in 1980, was similarly abolished. The duties of the ministry were now transferred to a newly formed department for Palestinian Affairs in the Foreign Ministry.

However, the most significant immediate step taken by the Jordanian authorities to implement the disengagement decision related to the rights of citizenship of the West Bank population. On August 20, the prime minister issued new instructions to the Ministry of Interior's Civil Registration Department and the Department of Passports, according to which all Jordanian citizens residing in the West Bank prior to July 31, 1988 would henceforth be considered Palestinians and not Jordanian nationals. West Bankers would still be allowed to obtain “temporary” Jordanian passports. These, however, would be valid only for renewable two-year periods, as opposed to the regular five-year duration. They would be considered solely as travel documents, which would neither entitle the bearer to the rights of citizenship nor require him/her to fulfill the obligations deriving therefrom, such as military service. This placed West Bankers on a par with people from the Gaza Strip who had received such “temporary” passports in the past, without becoming Jordanian citizens. Residents of the Gaza Strip who had previously obtained Jordanian passports would be allowed to renew them for two years, but no new passports were to be issued in the future to Gazans.²

Various restrictions on West Bankers taking up residence on the East Bank had already been in force prior to the disengagement. However, the new regulations, being more

¹Radio Amman, August 4, 1988, translated in FBIS-NES, August 5, 1988; *Financial Times*, August 5, 1988; *Jordan Times*, August 6, 1988.

²*Jordan Times*, August 21, 1988; *Sawt al-Sha'b*, August 30, 1988.

stringent, were clearly designed to make Palestinian emigration to the East Bank all the more difficult. Palestinians who were not actually residing on the West Bank prior to July 31, 1988, such as those working in the Gulf and elsewhere, would have to return to their "natural place of residence." This meant the West Bank, for all those who had originally left from there to seek employment outside the country.³

The measures adopted were unprecedented and far-reaching, but not all of Jordan's ties with the West Bank were severed. According to Minister of Interior Raja'i al-Dajani, Jordan had no intention of erecting a "Great Wall of China" between the two Banks.⁴ The bridges across the Jordan were to remain open as before, and West Bankers were still allowed to cross without having to obtain visas or present passports. Jordan maintained an overt administrative, and no doubt political, link with the West Bank through the West Bank religious establishment. This was of particular importance because of the ties between the local religious establishment and the Islamic fundamentalist movement in the West Bank and Gaza—Hamas.

Since the officials of the Ministry of Religious Endowments (*Awqaf*) and Religious Affairs continued to receive their salaries from the Jordanian Government, they now assumed a series of new functions as the remaining representatives of the Jordanian Administration in the West Bank. Only documents endorsed by the Department of *Awqaf* in the West Bank were to be accepted by the Jordanian authorities for the purpose of issuing temporary Jordanian passports. The Department of *Awqaf* was similarly to endorse documents for purposes of land registration. Birth, death, marriage, divorce and inheritance certificates would be accepted by the Jordanian authorities only when endorsed by the office of the Chief Islamic Justice in the West Bank and by the newly established Department for

³Interview with Minister of Interior Raja'i al-Dajani in *al-Ra'y*, September 10, 1988.

⁴Raja'i interview in *al-Ra'y*, September 10, 1988.

Palestinian Affairs at the Jordanian Foreign Ministry.⁵ The religious courts in the West Bank were to register all forms of power of attorney for the conduct of transactions on the East Bank.⁶

Reports in August 1989 that Jordan planned to sever its ties with the West Bank religious establishment were strongly denied by the Jordanians.⁷

In the economic sphere, Jordan was to continue to import agricultural and industrial products from the occupied territories. The Agricultural Cooperative Union in the West Bank and the Gaza Charitable Association would continue to issue certificates of origin (i.e., that the produce was not from Israel). Branches of the Cairo-Amman Bank reopened in 1986 were also to continue their operations.

Schools in the West Bank, until such time as they or the PLO chose otherwise, were to continue to follow the Jordanian system and curriculum. The Jordanian Ministry of Education would continue to arrange matriculation (*tawjihi*) examinations for West Bank schools and issue the necessary certificates.

The disengagement measures left a series of constitutional questions in abeyance. In his speech of July 31, Hussein spoke of severing Jordan's legal (*qanuni*) and administrative (*idari*) ties with the West Bank. He made no mention of Jordan's constitutional (*dusturi*) links, which were actually left intact, at least initially. No amendment was made to the constitution even though Article One, as formulated in 1952 (i.e., after the annexation of the West Bank), specified that Jordan's territory was "indivisible" and that "no portion of it" could be ceded.⁸ Indeed, Minister of Information Hani al-Khasawna denied reports that Jordanian maps were to be modified to exclude the

⁵*Jordan Times*, August 21, 1988.

⁶*Al-Nahar* (E. Jerusalem), December 1, 1988.

⁷*Sawt al-Sha'b*, August 10, 1989.

⁸For text of constitution see Muhammad Khalil (ed.), *The Arab States and the Arab League*, Vol. 1 (Beirut: Khayats, 1962), pp. 55-75.

West Bank.⁹ In early 1990, Jordanian television still showed on the evening news the map of Jordan that included the West Bank.

The resolution adopted by the Jordanian parliament in April 1950 on the unification of the East and West Banks was neither amended nor abrogated. The Chamber of Deputies did not even discuss the matter; Hussein dissolved the chamber the day before his disengagement speech, thus effectively avoiding any such debate. He preferred not to use unambiguous terms, such as abrogation or nullification, in response to questions on this issue. In a press conference on August 7, he was only prepared to say that the 1950 resolution had been "affected in one dimension" when the PLO opted for an independent state, a desire to which Jordan had responded positively. When asked whether Jordan had irrevocably renounced sovereignty over the West Bank he replied with a question of his own: "Did I say that?"¹⁰ The Minister of Information flatly denied that the disengagement meant the abolition of the 1950 resolution.¹¹

Another issue of constitutional significance was related to the Chamber of Deputies and the question of future elections. The king had a number of constitutional options following the dissolution of the chamber: to call for new elections within four months, to postpone elections indefinitely, or do neither and have the dissolved parliament automatically reconvened four months after the dissolution. On October 2, a royal decree was issued, indefinitely postponing parliamentary elections.¹² General elections were to be held after the amendment of the 1986 Election Law, which, like its predecessor of 1960, included representation for the West Bank. The Election Law could

⁹*Middle East News Agency*, August 31, 1988, translated in FBIS-NES, September 1, 1988.

¹⁰Jordan TV, August 7, 1988, translated in FBIS-NES, August 8, 1988.

¹¹*Sawt al-Sha'b*, August 3, 1988.

¹²Radio Amman, October 2, 1988, translated in FBIS-NES, October 3, 1988.

easily have been amended in time to hold elections in November 1988. Hussein, however, chose to bide his time. He was in no rush to hold elections for a parliament that would only represent the East Bank and thus lend a stamp of finality to the disengagement. He seemed to be waiting for the results of the forthcoming meeting of the PLO's Palestine National Council (PNC), as well as the results of the elections in Israel, before making any decisions of this nature.

In August, a committee was set up in the Interior Ministry to draw up recommendations for the revision of the Election Law. In early November, Minister of Interior Raja'i al-Dajani revealed that the committee had already covered most of the material related to the amendments. What remained was the part that was "the state's [i.e., the king's] decision." However, as Dajani himself observed, to have "a decent law," there was no need to hurry.¹³

Following the November 1988 PNC, the declaration of Palestinian independence and the initiation of the U.S.-PLO dialogue, there was no longer any purpose to further procrastination on the election issue. The PLO had effectively met Jordan's challenge (see below), at least in the short term. In mid-April 1989 a Royal Decree was issued approving the amendment of the electoral law.¹⁴ In November 1989, general elections were held on the East Bank for the first parliament since 1950 to have no West Bank representation. Despite certain lingering ambiguities, one could now say that constitutionally, the West Bank was no longer part of Jordan. Indeed, Hussein had already stated previously that, in effect, Jordan had "ceded sovereignty over the West Bank."¹⁵

¹³*Jordan Times*, November 10-11, 1988.

¹⁴Radio Amman, April 15, 1988, translated in FBIS-NES, April 17, 1989.

¹⁵*Jordan Times*, July 17, 1989.

VI JORDAN, THE PLO AND THE PNC RESOLUTIONS

Jordan's disengagement was a move directed at all the key players in the Middle East peace process, primarily the PLO, Israel and the United States. As far as Israel and the United States were concerned, the Jordanian objective was to finally convince them that the "Jordan option" as they perceived it, i.e., a negotiating process that would circumvent the PLO, was unrealistic.¹

But it was the PLO and the Palestinians who were the main target of the Jordanian decision. Jordan explained that it had now removed once and for all any remaining doubts and suspicions about its intentions regarding the West Bank and Jordan's commitment to the PLO's representative status. The Jordanians were, however, quick to point out that the PLO would henceforth be solely responsible for the consequences of the measures taken.² After all, as Hussein had noted repeatedly, and quite contemptuously, in his disengagement

¹*Jordan Times*, July 31, 1988; 'Adnan Abu 'Awda in *al-Majalla*, August 10-16, 1988; Rifa'i in *al-Anba*, September 10, 1988.

²*Sawt al-Sha'b*, July 29, 1988; Hani al-Khasawna quoted by Radio Abu Dhabi, July 30, 1988, translated in FBIS-NES, August 1, 1988 and *Sawt al-Sha'b*, August 3, 1988.

speech, Jordan's decision had been made according to the wishes of the PLO. This was not really the case. It could be argued, as the Jordanians did, that Jordan was simply abiding by the Arab consensus on the PLO, as reaffirmed at the behest of the PLO during the June summit in Algiers. Hussein, however, had not consulted the PLO on the disengagement decision. Indeed, Hussein subsequently admitted that, since this decision pertained to Jordanian sovereignty, there was no need to consult anyone else about it.³ Zayd al-Rifa'i remarked, with noticeable disdain, that Jordan had only offered the PLO what it had always insisted upon. "Consultation about what? Had we consulted the organization would [the PLO] have refused?"⁴

The Jordanians were obviously challenging the PLO to prove its diplomatic mettle and "live up to" its responsibility as the "sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people." In the words of *Sawt al-Sha'b*, Jordan would support the PLO "as long as it faithfully and honestly served the Palestinian cause. But [it] would not do so if the PLO became a burden on the people of Palestine."⁵ Hussein expressed the hope that "the pressure of the events, particularly in the occupied territories, and the responsibilities that [Jordan had] chosen to give" the PLO, would contribute to the organization's "ability to come up with the right answers."⁶ Jordan, he said, was waiting for the PLO's response to the disengagement decision. There would be "no quarter to blame but the PLO, if they fail to make up their minds and assume their responsibilities."⁷

³*Sawt al-Sha'b*, August 12, 1988.

⁴*Al-Anba*, September 10, 1988.

⁵*Sawt al-Sha'b*, July 29, 1988; *Jordan Times*, July 31, 1988.

⁶Hussein's press conference, August 7, 1988, Jordan TV, August 7, 1988, translated in FBIS-NES, August 8, 1988.

⁷Jordan TV, September 20, 1988, translated in FBIS-NES, September 21, 1988; Radio Amman, October 21, 1988, translated in FBIS-NES, October 24, 1988.

The "right answers" from the Jordanian perspective were those that would give momentum to the peace process. These were the acceptance by the PLO of the principle of partition, the acceptance of UN Resolution 242, and the recognition of Israel.⁸ Shortly before the convening of the Palestine National Council (PNC) in Algiers, a Jordanian official let it be known that Jordan expected a "positive attitude" from the PLO, especially in reference to UN Resolution 242.⁹

Jordan's position toward the PLO remained ambiguous after the disengagement. On the one hand, the Jordanians had resigned themselves to the PLO's reinforced status created by the *intifadah*. On the other hand, they resented the rejection and denial of Jordan's role in Palestinian affairs by the PLO, by the leadership of the *intifadah* and, consequently, by the Arab summit in Algiers.

The lack of consultation with the PLO before a decision as momentous as the disengagement was as clear an indication as any of Jordan's ingrained hostility toward, and mistrust for, the Palestinian leadership.

This duality in the Jordanian position led to inconsistencies which suggested that the Jordanians themselves were of two minds about the desired response of the PLO to the challenge of disengagement. Meeting Jordan's challenge, by adopting the kind of resolutions that would pave the way for PLO involvement in the peace process, seemed to be as welcome to the Jordanians as the PLO's failure to "live up to" its new responsibility. The first could lead to a breakthrough in the peace process and a corresponding alleviation of Jordanian anxieties resulting from the prolonged stalemate. The second would portray the PLO as an ineffective empty vessel and give the Palestinians and the Arab world reasons to reconsider their support for the organization.

Hussein had already expressed his doubts about the wisdom of the Arab consensus at the Algiers summit. After the

⁸Tahir al-Masri in *al-Dustur* (Amman), September 24, 1988.

⁹*Agence France Presse*, November 6, 1988, translated in FBIS-NES, November 10, 1988.

disengagement, senior advisors to the king expressed similar reservations and "strongly hinted they had little faith in the ability of the PLO to do the job of negotiating an Israeli withdrawal or arriving at the creation of an independent Palestinian state."¹⁰

Though Jordanian-PLO relations remained strained in the first few months after the disengagement decision, Hussein had an obvious interest in renewed coordination with the organization, albeit on a new, more symmetrical foundation than he had previously envisaged. The disengagement was also intended to induce the PLO to recognize the relevance of Jordan to the day-to-day affairs of West Bankers, the peace process and the ultimate solution of the Palestinian question.

In the aftermath of the disengagement, the Jordanians frequently noted the need for Jordanian-PLO political coordination. This, they explained, would be necessary for channeling support to the people in the West Bank and Gaza, but more so "for the sake of the Palestinian cause" and "the common destiny" of the Jordanians and the Palestinians.¹¹

The disengagement caught the PLO by surprise. It took the organization a few days to regain its composure before it dispatched a delegation to Amman to consult with the Jordanians on how to proceed with the implementation of the new decision. The delegation, headed by Mahmud 'Abbas (Abu Mazin) of the PLO Executive Committee, held talks in Amman from August 11-14 with the king, Rifa'i and other cabinet ministers. Agreement was reached with relative ease on the measures to be taken with regard to such matters as passports, the open bridges, the freedom of travel, the export of goods from the West Bank to Jordan and other administrative matters relating to the daily life of the people in the occupied territories. It was also agreed that the Jordanian-PLO Joint Committee to Support the Steadfastness of the Occupied

¹⁰*The New York Times*, August 8, 1988.,

¹¹For example, Hani al-Khasawna in *Sawt al-Sha'b*, August 3, 1988 and *al-Ra'y*, December 8, 1988; *al-Ra'y*, August 23, 1989.

Territories would continue to function.¹² Jordan had obtained PLO sanction not only for the disengagement steps to be taken, but also for the residual ties Jordan was to maintain with the West Bank.

One important and very sensitive problem, however, remained unsolved—the status of Jordanians of Palestinian origin who lived on the East Bank. In 1978, when Jordan and the PLO first resumed their formal dialogue after the Rabat resolutions, they arrived at an understanding according to which the PLO had agreed to respect “the principle of the state’s sovereignty over its territories and people.”¹³ To whom the Palestinians in Jordan owed their ultimate allegiance—to their government or to the PLO, their “sole legitimate representative”—was a latent question that arose yet again after the disengagement. Jordan and the PLO agreed that Jordanians of Palestinian origin were to be regarded as full Jordanian citizens in terms of rights and duties. This agreement, however, only papered over what remained a thorny and potentially explosive issue. For the PLO this understanding with Jordan was essentially a temporary arrangement. It did not infringe upon the Palestinian identity of these people, upon their right to return to Palestine, or to exercise self-determination—a right which applied to all Palestinians wherever they were, and not only to those in the occupied territories. Accepting the “Jordanization” of these Palestinians, in the PLO view, was tantamount to acquiescence in their permanent resettlement (*tawtin*) outside Palestine and the abandonment of their national rights. As for Jordan, despite the lip service it paid to the notion that Jordanian citizenship for these Palestinians did not compromise their legitimate rights as Palestinians, it regarded their Jordanian identity and

¹²*Middle East News Agency*, August 15, 1988, translated in FBIS-NES, August 17, 1988.

¹³See *Middle East Contemporary Survey*, 1978-79, p. 640.

loyalty to the Jordanian state as a permanent and essential prerequisite for its national unity and domestic stability.¹⁴

This was quite understandable considering some mainstream Palestinian thinking on this issue. References to the Palestinians in Israel and Jordan as the “strategic reserve” for the establishment of a democratic state in all of Palestine and for the democratization of Jordan¹⁵ are presumably as disturbing to the Hashemite establishment as they are to the Israelis.

Following the disengagement, the Jordanians gave unprecedented publicity to the fact that Palestinian refugee camps were being integrated into the cities. The policy itself was not new, but the publicity was a novelty, which lent added emphasis to the Jordanian line that all Palestinians in Jordan were Jordanian citizens in the full sense of the word. In April 1989, the Minister of Interior Raja’i al-Dajani explained that Jordan’s new election law had not only abolished the seats for the West Bank but also the 11 seats allotted to Palestinian refugee camps on the East Bank. These were now cryptically referred to as “the populated centers called Palestinian camps.” They were to be incorporated into other electoral constituencies and their residents were to vote and run for election like all other Jordanian citizens.¹⁶

Both Jordan and the PLO preferred to avoid open conflict over this delicate question. They therefore agreed to disagree and to let the matter rest for the time being.

¹⁴Jordan TV, August 14, 1988, translated in FBIS-NES, August 15, 1988; *al-Mustaqbal*, August 20, 1988; *al-Majalla*, August 24-30, 1988, September 21-27, 1988.

¹⁵Hasan al-Batal, “Thawra-Dawla-Risala (Revolution-State-Mission),” *Filastin al-Thawra*, August 21, 1988; Hanna Siniora, one of the prominent pro-Fatah spokesmen in the West Bank, expressed the hope that “all the states of the region will evolve toward democracy once peace has been established—first and foremost Jordan. . .It will be up to King Hussein to support completely democratic institutions in his country.” *Le Nouvel Observateur*, April 1-7, 1988, translated in FBIS-NES, April 15, 1988.

¹⁶Radio Amman, April 17, 1989, translated in FBIS-NES, April 18, 1989.

Though Jordan and the PLO still had their differences, the resolutions of the PNC, held in Algiers in November 1988, and the declaration of Palestinian independence were well received in Jordan. The PLO, according to Hussein, was "shouldering its responsibilities" and had demonstrated its willingness to join in an "historic reconciliation between Arabs and Israelis."¹⁷ Jordan immediately declared its support for the resolutions and recognized the independent Palestinian State¹⁸ and, in early January 1989, the PLO office in Amman became the Embassy of Palestine.¹⁹ The PNC, according to Hussein, had finally accepted the U.S. conditions for the incorporation of the organization into the peace process. The initial U.S. response, which described the PNC resolutions as inadequate, and the subsequent American refusal to grant Arafat an entry visa to the United States, were condemned by Hussein as an attempt at "stifling the voice of Palestinian moderation."²⁰

In late November 1988, Arafat held talks with Hussein in Amman and, at the same time, Jordan and Egypt agreed to spearhead a collective Arab bid to move the session of the UN General Assembly from New York to Geneva to enable Arafat to address the UN body.²¹ Following Arafat's Geneva speech and press conference, and the U.S. decision to enter into a "substantive dialogue" with the PLO, Jordan, with certain justification, claimed credit for having played a major role in bringing this new reality into being.²²

¹⁷*Jordan Times*, December 4, 1988.

¹⁸Radio Amman, November 15, 1988, translated in FBIS-NES, November 16, 1988.

¹⁹*Al-Ra'y*, January 8, 1989.

²⁰*Jordan Times*, November 28, 1988.

²¹*Jordan Times*, November 28, 1988.

²²*Sawt al-Sha'b*, December 16, 1988.

Hussein maintained that relations with the PLO were now "extremely close" and "probably better than they [had] ever been, without the suspicions and doubts of the past."²³ This was probably more than a slight exaggeration, yet it truly reflected Jordan's fears of exclusion from the peace process and its desire for coordination with the PLO. Such coordination, according to the Jordanian daily, *al-Ra'y*, was imperative because of the "bonds uniting the two peoples" and because both Jordan and the PLO were essential parties to any peace settlement.²⁴

²³Jordan TV, December 16, 1988, translated in FBIS-NES, December 19, 1988.

²⁴*Al-Ra'y*, December 28, 1988.

VII JORDAN'S ROLE IN THE PEACE PROCESS IN THE WAKE OF DISENGAGEMENT

In his disengagement speech, Hussein made it quite clear that the severance of Jordan's legal and administrative ties with the West Bank ought not to be construed as Jordanian dissociation from the Palestinian question and the Arab-Israeli peace process. Hussein repeatedly made the point that the disengagement was not of Jordan's own choosing, but rather a response to the Palestinian and overall Arab consensus on Palestine.¹ It was the PLO, he noted, that had decided on secession (*infisal*) from Jordan in an independent Palestinian state, as part of the Palestinian and overall Arab tendency to highlight the Palestinian identity. Jordan, for its part, had never imagined that the preservation of its legal and administrative ties with the West Bank could be an impediment to the liberation of the occupied territories. In light of the Arab consensus Jordan was simply fulfilling its duty by doing "what [had] been demanded" of it.² At the Algiers summit in June 1988, Hussein had already expressed his reservations about this Arab consensus and its lack of realism

¹For the the full text of Hussein's speech see *al-Ra'y*, August 1, 1988.

²Hussein's speech in *al-Ra'y*, August 1, 1988.

(see above). But he was now indignantly suggesting that if this was what the Arabs wanted, then so be it.

Jordan, however, would not "relinquish its commitment to participation" in the peace process, in accordance with the six points³ it had presented to George Shultz in April.

Jordan, Hussein continued, was a "major party" to the Arab-Israeli conflict and it would consequently assume both its particularly Jordanian and overall pan-Arab (*al-wataniyya wal-qawmiyya*) responsibility on that basis.⁴ The Jordanians flatly rejected the notion that they had lost their role in the peace process because of the disengagement.⁵

Jordan had been a long-standing supporter of an international conference as the only suitable forum for negotiations for a comprehensive settlement. This support remained the case following the disengagement. The Jordanians repeatedly reaffirmed their position that Jordan, as a confrontation state with the longest border with Israel, still had an indispensable role, which it was "prepared to play to the fullest extent" under the auspices of such a conference in the future.⁶

The option that Jordan would speak in the name of, or along with the Palestinians did not exist "at the moment," according to Hussein. Jordan's efforts to form a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation had not led anywhere; that effort, the king said, was "behind us now." Jordan and the PLO would both have to attend any future peace conference, but they

³Hussein's speech in *al-Ra'y*, August 1, 1988.

⁴Hussein's speech in *al-Ra'y*, August 1, 1988.

⁵*Al-Ra'y*, January 7, 1989.

⁶For example, *al-Dustur* (Amman), August 4, 1988; Hussein at press conference on August 7, 1988, Jordan TV, August 7, 1988, translated in FBIS-NES, August 8, 1988; Jordan TV, February 25, 1989, translated in FBIS-NES, February 27, 1989; *al-Dustur* (Amman), August 7, 1989.

would each do so independently unless the PLO "categorically" requested a different formula.⁷

In the wake of the *intifadah* and Jordan's disengagement, the international conference assumed a significantly different role in Jordan's strategy regarding the Middle East peace process. Previously, the international conference had been intended by the Jordanians to serve as a vehicle for Palestinian, Arab and international support for the central role that Jordan expected to play. If in the not too distant past the Jordanians had seen the conference as a useful framework for the necessary inclusion of the PLO alongside Jordan, it was now becoming a vital mechanism to prevent a PLO monopoly of the negotiating process and possible Jordanian exclusion.

The Jordanians admitted that they no longer pursued their former dualist approach, which held that Jordan's role in the peace process, as a state whose territory in the West Bank was occupied, did not conflict with the PLO's role as the "sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people."⁸ The Jordanians now reaffirmed, time and again, their lack of territorial ambition and their acceptance of the PLO's recognized representative status. Simultaneously, however, they also consistently condemned the notion of bilateral Palestinian-Israeli negotiations. This, they contended, was a form of "unilateral action" that contradicted the Arab consensus. Only negotiations in an international conference, where both Jordan and the PLO would be represented, were likely to "remove any possible apprehensions."⁹ In the aftermath of the PNC, Jordan welcomed the notion of direct

⁷Hussein at press conference, Jordan TV, August 7, 1988, translated in FBIS-NES, August 8, 1988, and in an interview with *The Christian Science Monitor*, quoted on Jordan TV, September 20, 1988, translated in FBIS-NES, September 21, 1988; *Jordan Times*, October 23, 1988.

⁸Khasawna in *Sawt al-Sha'b*, August 5, 1988; Tahir al-Masri in *Sawt al-Sha'b*, October 4, 1988.

⁹*Sawt al-Sha'b*, June 25, 1988; *al-Dustur* (Amman), August 10, 1988; Radio Monte Carlo, March 2, 1989, translated in FBIS-NES, March 3, 1989; *al-Ra'y*, March 15, 1989; *Jordan Times*, March 27, 1989.

dialogue between the United States and the PLO, but only as a necessary preparatory step for an international conference, and certainly not as a substitute for it.¹⁰ The Jordanians, therefore, continued to urge the United States, the Soviet Union, the European Community and the Arab states to work for the convening of an international conference, which, in their view, was "the only way to proceed" to establish comprehensive peace in the Middle East.¹¹ They were equally concerned to remind all and sundry of Jordan's "pivotal" role in the maintenance of regional stability, because of its proximity to the West Bank.¹²

Jordan's unique association with Palestine continued to be highlighted after the disengagement in much the same terms as before. In his disengagement speech, Hussein stated that Jordan would never give up its support for the Palestinian cause, since "no one outside Palestine had, or could have," a closer association with Palestine than Jordan or the Hashemite family.¹³ The Jordanians still maintained that a "special historic relationship," or "sacred historic unity" bound Jordan and the Palestinians, to the extent that it would be difficult even to contemplate separating the two peoples.¹⁴ This immutable link would remain intact, because Jordan was a "natural demographic and geographic extension of the West Bank" and

¹⁰Rifa'i quoted in *al-Dustur* (Amman), December 12, 1988; *al-Ra'y*, December 16, 1988.

¹¹Hussein quoted in *Jordan Times*, December 4, 1988; Tahir al-Masri in *Jordan Times*, December 14, 1988; Marwan al-Qasim in *al-Dustur* (Amman), January 22, 1989; Zayd bin Shakir in *Sawt al-Sha'b*, June 15, 1989.

¹²Hasan to *Jordan Times*, December 11, 1988.

¹³*Al-Ra'y*, August 1, 1988.

¹⁴*Sawt al-Sha'b*, July 29, 1988; Hani al-Khasawna quoted by Radio Abu Dhabi, July 30, 1988, translated in FBIS-NES, August 1, 1988; *Jordan Times*, August 1, 1988; *al-Dustur* (Amman), August 10, 1988.

because Jordanians and Palestinians were "one people regardless of what is said."¹⁵

Moreover, the unity between Jordanians and Palestinians in Jordan's pluralistic society was, in Hussein's words, "a living example of the fusion (*indimaj*) between different Arab groups," which gave credence to the belief in the inevitable attainment of Arab unity. In the modern era, as the European model suggested, national self-expression (*al-dhat al-wataniyya*) did not conflict with the realization of "formulas of institutional unity" that could eventually unite all Arabs.¹⁶ A draft of Jordan's new National Pact that was intended to govern the political life of the country included a reference to the continuous efforts of the Palestinian and Jordanian peoples to "unite both Banks."¹⁷ Hussein's vision of the future was based on the establishment of a "very close relationship" between Jordan and a Palestinian state and certainly did not exclude a Jordanian-Palestinian confederation.¹⁸ However, in their hour of relative weakness, the Jordanians refrained from committing themselves in advance to the confederation formula.

The idea of confederation between two independent states was not a Jordanian idea but a PLO proposal. According to Raja'i al-Dajani, this was a concept that encouraged regionalism rather than unity and Jordan believed only in "unionist formulas."¹⁹ Since confederation was a contractual agreement between two states, detailed discussions of the matter would only be possible after the establishment of the independent Palestinian state.²⁰

¹⁵Raja'i al-Dajani to *al-Ra'y*, September 10, 1988.

¹⁶*Al-Ra'y*, August 1, 1988.

¹⁷*Jordan Times*, July 31, 1989.

¹⁸Hussein on "Face the Nation," November 20, 1988—U.S. Information Service Wireless File, November 20, 1988.

¹⁹*Sawt al-Sha'b*, August 30, 1988.

²⁰Rifa'i quoted on Jordan TV, November 1, 1988, translated in FBIS-NES, November 2, 1988.

Zayd al-Rifa'i noted that Jordan and the PLO had not reached any agreement on the details of a future confederation. Even though "special and distinguished relations" linked the Jordanian and Palestinian peoples, the Jordanians argued that it was premature to propose confederation, until the Palestinian state was actually established²¹ and the Palestinian people had expressed themselves freely on the matter.²²

One could not, of course, exclude the possibility that Jordanian reticence on the confederation question was also designed to impede the PLO's efforts to make the idea of an independent Palestinian state more acceptable to the United States and Israel.

Whether or not Jordan would enter into a confederation with a Palestinian state depended on the future balance of power between the two entities. Regardless of Jordanian statements in favor of independent Palestinian statehood, and emphatic denials of the contention that such a state posed a threat to Jordan,²³ it would be safe to assume that Jordanian reservations and apprehensions in this regard had not disappeared. Jordan would presumably prefer a federation or confederation with an emasculated Palestine rather than with a fully independent state, which could pose a serious irredentist threat to the kingdom.

The effect of Hussein's disengagement, however, was to shift the major onus of preemption and containment onto the shoulders of Israel and the United States. Israeli desiderata and PLO interest in an association with the East Bank could still dictate the formation of some kind of special relationship between Jordan and a future Palestinian entity or state.

²¹*Al-Ra'y*, February 6, 1989.

²²Marwan al-Qasim in *al-Ittihad*, March 12, 1989, translated in FBIS-NES, March 15, 1989.

²³For example, Hussein in *Jordan Times*, July 17, 1989.

VIII JORDAN'S RESPONSE TO THE ISRAELI PEACE INITIATIVE

As far as the Jordanians were concerned, the PLO's acceptance of resolutions 242 and 338 had finally paved the way for the convening of an international conference.¹ There was no need for any new initiatives aside from pressure by the United States and the permanent members of the Security Council to agree to an authoritative international conference that would convene to negotiate an Israeli withdrawal in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions.² Initially the Israeli idea of elections in the West Bank and Gaza was dismissed as a tactic designed to play for time; to drive a wedge between the Palestinians in the occupied territories and the PLO; and to evade the convening of an international conference.³

¹Rifa'i quoted by *Jordan News Agency*, December 15, 1988, translated in FBIS-NES, December 16, 1988.

²*Al-Ra'y*, January 31, 1989; Rifa'i in *al-Ra'y*, February 6, 1989; Hussein quoted on Radio Amman, February 17, 1989, translated in FBIS-NES, February 13, 1989.

³*Al-Ra'y*, January 31, 1989; Hussein to CNN quoted on Jordan TV, February 25, 1989, translated in FBIS-NES, February 27, 1989.

What really disturbed the Jordanians was not so much Israel's intended circumvention of the PLO, but the notion of a process designed to establish an interim Palestinian-Israeli settlement, in which Jordan's role would at best be marginal.

However, after the Israeli plan had been officially communicated to the United States in April and finally published in May 1989, the Jordanian position mellowed somewhat. The U.S. acceptance of the Israeli initiative as the basis for a reinvigorated peace process, coupled with the realization that the convening of an international conference was not a feasible option in the near future,⁴ prompted the Jordanians to adopt a more positive approach. Though not the optimal process, from the Jordanian perspective it was better than no process at all. Moreover, the Jordanians may well have appreciated the possibility that elections could lead to the elevation of a West Bank leadership with a moderating influence on the PLO.

The Jordanians still rejected the elections as an end in themselves. But, as Hussein clarified during his visit to the United States in April, they accepted elections in the occupied territories provided they would be part of an integrated process leading to a comprehensive settlement,⁵ i.e., one that would not exclude Jordan. According to Jordan's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Marwan al-Qasim, Jordan had urged the PLO not to reject the principle of elections as part of a "sound and healthy process,"⁶ which would have to be crowned by an international conference. It was only there that a comprehensive settlement could be negotiated, with the PLO negotiating with Israel on the Palestinian settlement and Jordan addressing the "Israeli-Jordanian dimension of the

⁴Zayd bin Shakir quoted in *Sawt al-Sha'b*, June 15, 1989, translated in FBIS-NES, June 16, 1989.

⁵Hussein quoted on Jordan TV, April 20, 1989, translated in FBIS-NES, April 21, 1989.

⁶*Al-Dustur* (Amman), July 10, 1989, translated in FBIS-NES, July 11, 1989.

conflict.”⁷ As Crown Prince Hasan put it, the resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli tier of the conflict ought not to be pursued in isolation from the second, Arab-Israeli, tier. “Decoupling those two tiers is not only inadvisable, it may be detrimental to the process as a whole.”⁸ The elections had to be linked to negotiations over the final outcome. They could then become “an important element as part of interlocking moves toward a comprehensive settlement.”⁹

Jordan endorsed the ten-point plan put forward in the summer of 1989 by Egypt’s President Mubarak, as it provided for precisely such an interlock between the elections and final status negotiations. The Jordanians, however, still found it necessary to reiterate that the “most appropriate vehicle” and the “only venue” for direct negotiations for a comprehensive settlement was an international conference to be attended by both Jordan and the PLO.¹⁰

The fact that the PLO was now “in the driver’s seat” did not “exempt [Jordan] of responsibility.”¹¹

⁷Marwan al-Qasim in *al-Hawadith*, April 28, 1989, translated in FBIS-NES, April 28, 1989.

⁸Hasan in speech at The Washington Institute, September 12, 1989, p. 5.

⁹Hasan speech, September 12, 1989, p. 6.

¹⁰Hasan speech, September 12, 1989, pp. 6-7.

¹¹Hasan to *Wochenpresse*, May 12, 1989, translated in FBIS-NES, May 18, 1989.

IX CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

• In dealing with the Palestinian question, Jordan faces an intractable dilemma rooted in the changes that have taken place in the Arab world since 1967.

The defeat inflicted by Israel on Egypt, Jordan and Syria in the Six Day War was not only a military debacle but also an ideological setback from which the messianic and revolutionary pan-Arabism of the Nasserite or Ba'thi strands never fully recovered. The "end of Pan-Arabism"¹ paved the way for a new era in the Arab world. The dichotomous division between "progressive" and "reactionary" regimes became increasingly irrelevant. Ideology lost its importance as a factor in inter-Arab relations as well as in the relations between Arab states and the superpowers and even to a certain degree, in Arab attitudes toward Israel.

In some respects, these developments bode well for Jordan. The loss of pan-Arab ideological fervor brought an end to the "Arab Cold War."² The "end of pan-Arabism" enhanced the legitimacy of the nascent nation states of the Arab Middle East,

¹Fouad Ajami, "The End of Pan-Arabism," *Foreign Affairs*, Winter 1978-79.

²A term coined by Malcolm Kerr in *The Arab Cold War: Gamal Abd al-Nasir and his Rivals, 1958-1970* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971).

including Jordan. The Hashemite regime has consequently enjoyed more room for maneuver in the generally more flexible network of inter-Arab relations.

At the same time, however, Jordan's room for maneuver in the Palestinian question has been steadily curtailed. The decline of pan-Arabism and the entrenchment of the nation state have legitimized the idea of Palestinian particularism and the Palestinian demand for independent statehood. Coupled with the Palestinian national resurgence that came in the wake of the 1967 defeat, these developments pose a potential challenge, in the long run, to Jordan's domestic stability and to the legitimacy of the Hashemite Kingdom. It is these contradictory processes that are at the heart of Hussein's Palestinian dilemma. In order to maintain the inter-Arab legitimacy of the Jordanian state, in the short term, Hussein has had little choice but to acquiesce in an Arab consensus on the Palestinian question that is potentially detrimental to his own stability and legitimacy, in the longer term.

• Jordan is a relatively weak actor in the Arab arena and in the Arab-Israeli conflict. It possesses neither the power nor the Palestinian legitimacy to play a decisive role without the overt backing of other key parties. Commenting on the finality of Jordan's disengagement, an Israeli political scientist noted quite correctly that, "The tactics, strategies, and, often, even ultimate objectives of states and their leaders are determined by opportunities, interests, and the assessment of alternatives. In the game of states, no move is final; each has a specific context, and, with a change in the context, is subject to revision and reversal."³ Unfortunately for Jordan, however, it has little influence on the creation of the political context in which it operates. It is heavily dependent on the interests of other parties such as Israel, the PLO, Egypt and the United States for the creation of a political environment that would provide the opportunities for Jordan to actively re-engage in the peace process.

Jordan's present economic woes and some indications of domestic political ferment are not conducive to the alleviation

³Gerald Steinberg, *Jerusalem Post*, August 26, 1988.

of Jordan's dependence on other parties. These factors will therefore tend to restrict even further Jordan's influence in shaping its political environment.

- Jordan, however, is situated at the geopolitical core of the Fertile Crescent and of the Arab-Israeli conflict. For better and for worse, Jordan is therefore at the crossroads of many crucial regional developments. This creates a variety of constraining liabilities as well as important political assets. On the one hand, Jordan is surrounded by more powerful neighbors. Syria, Iraq and Israel are all capable of inflicting political, subversive, economic or military punishment for Jordanian challenges to their respective strategic interests. Saudi Arabia, Jordan's most reliable Arab source of financial aid, is also able to impose restrictions on Jordan's capacity for independent decision-making.

On the other hand, Jordan's territory and population (much of which is Palestinian) are all crucial components of any Arab coalition for either war or peace with Israel. It is impossible for Syria to form an effective eastern front against Israel that would not include the active involvement of Jordanian forces as well as the deployment of Iraqi and possibly Syrian or other Arab forces along Jordan's long border with Israel.

Jordan's geopolitical centrality is not relevant solely to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Jordan also proved to be of great importance as a logistic hinterland for Iraq during the Gulf war. Despite the cease-fire between Iran and Iraq, these two Gulf powers have yet to reach historical reconciliation. The potential Iraqi need for Jordanian logistical support remains therefore intact. The Saudis, for their part, have a vested interest in the stability of the Hashemite monarchy on their northern border. The potentially radical alternatives, whether Palestinian nationalist or Muslim fundamentalist, are hardly appealing to Saudi Arabia. Nor would Syrian, Iraqi or Israeli expansion at Jordan's expense be any more attractive from the Saudi perspective.

All these are examples of the kind of factors that lead Jordan's neighbors not only to impose constraints but also to

show consideration for Jordanian interests, albeit, for different, and often conflicting reasons, but consideration all the same.

- Jordan's geopolitical centrality in the Arab-Israeli conflict is of particular importance. A stable solution of the Palestinian question would have to span both Banks of the Jordan River for demographic and strategic considerations. It is difficult to imagine a lasting solution to the Palestinian question or to the wider Arab-Israeli conflict that would not include the large Palestinian population on the East Bank or that would fail to address Israel's strategic concerns in respect to the East Bank and the eastern front.

A Palestinian entity or state in the West Bank and Gaza would include only about one third of the Palestinian people. This miniscule territory would hardly suffice as a homeland for the entire Palestinian people. A Jordanian-Palestinian entity, including both the East and West Banks would incorporate approximately two thirds of the Palestinian people and provide a much larger territorial base for the possible resettlement of Palestinian refugees from other countries such as Lebanon and Syria.

From the strategic-military standpoint, the East Bank has always been important in Israeli thinking.⁴ Because of the East Bank's proximity to vital Israeli objectives and population centers, Israel considers the East Bank to be the most sensitive link in its eastern front. Consequently, Israel has for long been particularly sensitive about Jordanian military power and the deployment of foreign Arab forces in Jordanian territory.⁵ The military arrangements of any peace settlement would therefore have to include Jordan; otherwise Israel would be compelled to maintain large concentrations of forces in the West Bank indefinitely.⁶

⁴Ze'ev Schiff, *Security for Peace: Israel's Minimal Security Requirements in Negotiations with the Palestinians*, (Washington, D.C.: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1989), Policy Papers No. 15, p. 59.

⁵Ze'ev Schiff, *Security for Peace*, pp. 60-63.

⁶Ze'ev Schiff, *Security for Peace*, pp. 65-66.

- Jordanian involvement in a future settlement is not only required as a function of Israeli strategic concerns, but for Jordan's own long-term political well-being. Jordan, as opposed to other Arab states, is directly affected by both dimensions of the Arab-Israeli conflict—the communal conflict between the Palestinian Arabs and the Israeli Jews and the inter-state conflict between Israel and its Arab neighbors. The political and demographic consequences of the Jewish-Arab struggle in Palestine have had more far-reaching ramifications for Jordan than for any of the other Arab states. In the Jordanian state that spanned both Banks of the Jordan river the Palestinian population was twice the size of the original East Bank population (just over 400,000 in 1948). Over the years, a steady flow of Palestinian migration from the West Bank to the East Bank, and the influx of some 250,000 refugees from the West Bank in 1967, transformed the East Bank state into a Jordanian-Palestinian entity.

In contrast to the inter-state Arab-Israeli conflict, in which the military balance is a decisive factor, the Palestinian-Israeli communal conflict is largely determined by the demographic component and its political ramifications. The demographic, and concomitant political challenge of Palestinian nationalism poses a potential threat to both Israel and the Hashemite regime in Jordan. In such circumstances Hussein could hardly afford abstention or exclusion from an influential role in the ultimate determination of the political fate of the Palestinian people.

- Historically, Jordan and Israel have shared common interests in regard to the Palestinian question. Hashemite Jordan and Israel developed an interest in each other's survival based largely on the role that both states played in containing the challenge of Palestinian nationalism. If either Jordan or Israel ceased to fulfill this role both states might lose the interest they had in each other's survival. This could set the stage for regional havoc as the stabilizing effect of mutual Jordanian-Israeli interests, in the core area of the Arab-Israeli conflict, gave way to hostility and fear of the other side's intentions.

- Jordan's involvement in the peace process is still an important component for a stable final settlement. The difficult

question is how to re-engage Jordan in the present circumstances. Jordan's re-engagement would depend very much on the extent of linkage or interlock between interim and final arrangements. In negotiating an interim settlement involving Israelis and Palestinians it would be incumbent upon the parties to keep in mind the contours of the desirable final settlement and the future relationship between the two Banks of the Jordan, that would have to be part of any future final status negotiations. Procedure has an obvious bearing on substance and a consultative role for the Jordanians, even in interim negotiations, would presumably correspond with Jordanian interests. Through the vehicle of the Arab Cooperation Council (including Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and North Yemen), Jordan has obtained a legitimizing framework for ongoing consultations and possible coordination with Egypt on the Palestinian question and the peace process, despite Jordan's disengagement from the West Bank. Through the ACC Jordan can continue its involvement without having to fear accusations of encroaching upon the PLO's representative status.

Jordanian domestic stability is, however, a fundamental precondition for an effective Jordanian role in any negotiations. At present, Jordan's severe economic and social troubles coupled with a visible Islamic fundamentalist challenge (most impressively expressed in Jordan's parliamentary elections in November 1989) confront the kingdom with its most severe internal crisis since the civil war of 1970. There are indications of a certain weakening of Hussein's previously firm grip of affairs in the country. It goes without saying, that unless Hussein has his own house in order, the debate on Jordan's role in the peace process might become increasingly irrelevant.

POLICY PAPERS SERIES

Editors:

Martin Indyk

John Hannah

18. John Hannah – At Arms Length: Soviet-Syrian Relations in the Gorbachev Era
17. Patrick Clawson – Unaffordable Ambitions: Syria's Military Build Up and Economic Crisis
16. Martin Kramer – Hezbollah's Vision of the West
15. Ze'ev Schiff – Security for Peace: Israel's Minimal Security Requirements in Negotiations with the Palestinians
14. W. Seth Carus – The Genie Unleashed: Iraq's Chemical and Biological Weapons Production
13. Barry Rubin – The PLO's New Policy: Evolution Until Victory?

FORTHCOMING PUBLICATIONS

- Eliyahu Kanovsky – An Oil Shock in the 1990s: Another Case of Crying Wolf?
- Mike Eisenstadt – Iraq's Strategic Weapons
- Galia Golan – The Soviet Union and the PLO
- Barry Rubin, Itamar Rabinovich, Ami Ayalon, et al – The Future of the Arab Regimes

Policy Papers may be purchased for \$9.95 from The Washington Institute, 1828 L Street, N.W., Suite 1050, Washington, D.C. 20036 (202) 452-0650.

**THE WASHINGTON INSTITUTE
for Near East Policy**

*A private, educational foundation
supporting scholarly research and informed debate
on U.S. interests in the Near East*

Executive Committee

Secretary/Treasurer

Walter P. Stern

Vice Presidents

Charles Adler

Michael Stein

David Steiner

President

Barbi Weinberg

Members

Richard Borow

Max Fisher

Robert Goldman

Cheryl Halpern

Fred Lafer

Bernard S. White

Board of Advisors

Stuart Eizenstat

Jeane Kirkpatrick

Robert C. McFarlane

Richard Perle

Alexander Haig

Samuel Lewis

Walter Mondale

James Roche

Mortimer Zuckerman

Max M. Kampelman

Edward Luttwak

Martin Peretz

George P. Shultz

Institute Staff

Adjunct Scholars

Hirsh Goodman

Joshua Muravchik

Daniel Pipes

Itamar Rabinovich

Harvey Sicherman

Joyce Starr

Executive Director

Martin Indyk

*Deputy Director
of Research*

John Hannah

Senior Fellow

Barry Rubin

Fellows

W. Seth Carus*

Michael Eisenstadt

Robert Satloff*

Associates

Ze'ev Schiff

Ehud Yaari

Bronfman Fellow

Vladimir Rybakov

Administrator

Carole Stern

Senior Research Analyst

David Segal

Assistant Administrator

Laura Goldberg

Research Assistants

Andrew Petricoff

Andrew Shapiro

Executive Secretary

Dana Berger

Executive Assistant

Rena Bruckman

* on leave



THE WASHINGTON INSTITUTE FOR NEAR EAST POLICY

ISBN 0-944029-04-3