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Jordanian-Israeli Strategic Partnership in Historical Perspective

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The signing ceremony of the Israeli-Jordanian peace treaty in October 1994 made public one of the most known secrets in Middle Eastern politics: the strong bond between Israel and Jordan. It began in earnest back in the summer of 1960 as top level negotiations between military officers in the wake of a major Israeli intelligence failure in early 1960 and the assassination of the Jordanian Prime Minister in August 1960. In both cases the United Arab Republic (a union of Egypt and Syria, 1958-1961) was the clear winner. The Israeli-Jordanian channel resulting from the common threat developed into a king-prime ministers direct, secret and regular forum, which survived two wars and numerous political challenges. This history of about forty years between two public enemies, and yet two partners in a major regional strategic alliance, has been the result of a powerful sense of common aims, present interests and the realization that any future threat to any of them might in turn change the fate of the other. Thus, in assessing the components of this association one should strive to examine the national interests of the two partners bringing them together, the sphere of mutual interests, and finally, how these common interests came out to play a role in a series of regional crises.

The British mandatory authorities decreed the indivisible triangle of Israel, the Hashemite kingdom of Jordan, and the Palestinians, as early as 1920. Since the day the British decided to partition the mandated territory defined as Palestine, into two entities, Jewish and Hashemite, they in effect created the basis for cooperation and common interests between two players counting on the British for their existence, against anti-British Arab nationalism. This early historic episode has been the basis of relations discussed in this study. Israel and the Hashemite kingdom of Jordan have enjoyed many years of fruitful cooperation. Even before the establishment of the Jewish state in 1948 and the declaration of Jordanian independence in 1946, the two leaderships aimed at coordinating their policies in an attempt to minimize the mutual risk in this volatile region. Even the break in direct high level contacts between the two countries between the signing of the 1950 non-aggression pact and the resumption of direct negotiations in 1960 did not signal a major change in the basic mutual interests.

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This paper will define the mutual perceptions and interests, which serve as the basis for Jordanian Israeli strategic partnership and their interpretations and implementation throughout the years since they began in their current form. The paper, while analyzing mutual perceptions, will also address the premise that the basic interest bonding Israel and Jordan for now has been security and survival. A major question within this context has to do with the foreign and domestic risks for the two countries and regimes. Their daily fight for survival in a hostile environment cemented the ties into a solid strategic alliance, which only now begins to be uncovered. This framework is composed of three elements: national interests of the two countries, the common interests as expressed throughout history in public political moves and in secret mutual agreements.

Stages in the Historical Development of Jordanian-Israeli Relations.

In assessing mutual and national interests, let alone interplay of national interests, one should define the freedom of decision on the part of the players. Clearly, Israel, since 1948, has had to consider foreign reactions to its policy decisions, but the final decision regarding its national security rested with its leadership. In this respect the political history of Jordan should be divided into two eras: from 1946 to 1960 - when some degree of responsibility for the kingdom's security rested with Great Britain, and to a lesser extent with the US, and from 1960 on with the secret, and later the open disappearance of a clear Western guarantee for the survival of Jordan. This major change in the strategic standing of Jordan convinced young King Hussein of the need to resume secret, but top level, relations with Israel, hoping for a concerted effort at providing mutual assurances for survival in a hostile environment.

Since its declaration of independence in 1946, and to a lesser extent up to this very day, Jordan has been blamed by many of its Arab neighbors and at times by non-aligned and communist countries of being a Western stooge. The Soviet Union went as far as using its right of veto in order to reject Jordan's initial application to become a member of the UN in 1946. The reason given was that Jordan depended on Great Britain to such an extent that she could not be defined as "independent". The Soviet Union withdrew its objection upon the removal of the retired British officer who served as the [Jordanian] Arab Legion chief of Staff in 1956. However, in spite of the gradual but apparent weakening of Jordanian-Western relations in 1956, the Hashemite regime enjoyed massive Western military support, including the dispatch of British troops, after the anti-Hashemite revolution in Iraq in 1958.¹ It is almost beyond doubt that this emergency military assistance helped Jordan to overcome the anti-Hashemite tide.

The nature of the connection between the two countries has been shaped by a long series of crises always involving third parties, and always bringing to the fore the very existence of one or two of the partners. Perhaps the most impressive indication of the need to develop Israel as a major defense line for the Hashemite kingdom came in August 1960 with the beginning of significant Israeli-Jordanian military contact. From an Israeli point of view the Jordanian initiative could not at a better time. The year began with the February-March 1960 Israeli-Egyptian military tension, which bordered on the verge of open hostilities². The crisis began after a series of clashes between Israel and Syria, which at that time was part of the United Arab Republic (UAR). It deteriorated into a military buildup along the Israeli-Egyptian border. On the Israeli side, the 1960 crisis brought Israel into genuine realization that the crisis exposed Israeli weaknesses that should be corrected given the Israeli "no alternative" way of thinking. The crisis also exposed a major Israeli intelligence failure, which kept Israel in darkness for most of the crisis regarding the Egyptian presence in the Sinai. Relying on the lessons of the 1960 military crisis with Israel, President Nasser of the UAR believed that Israel did not muster the necessary qualities to transform its declared *casus belli* into an open all-out war. Thus, between February 1960 and June 1967 Nasser believed that a prolonged siege of Israel coupled with its diplomatic and military incompetence would bring about its downfall followed by the submission of the Hashemite kingdom. The King fully realized the ground rules gradually laid down by Israel and Egypt since 1960 and the Israeli need for some strategic partner. Thus, after the assassination of the Prime Minister of Jordan by Syrian agents in August 1960 (acting from the northern part of the UAR, namely: Syria), King Hussein began transforming his common interests with Israel into an alliance. While

planning a reprisal action against Syria, he realized that without some degree of an Israeli cooperation such an action would be doomed.³

Hussein's decision in September 1963 to establish his own open channel to Israel in addition to the top military channel that was created in 1960, was the result of a painful trade-off. The King had two alternatives. One was to try and mend fences with the Palestinians, giving them influence over decision making processes within the kingdom. This might have brought about, in the long range, a transformation of the Hashemite kingdom into a Palestinian state. Another alternative was to resume negotiations with Israel and cooperate in a strategic plan for the two countries in the face of the Palestinian menace. This might have afforded Israel better intelligence information to enable Israel to capture the West Bank. In the King's thinking, Israel was keen on correcting its 1948 military failure in that area. The King opted for the lesser of two evils. Clearly, his decision was sparked by the crisis in April 1963. It stemmed from the declaration of a new Arab union between Egypt, Syria and Iraq, evoking riots in West Bank to pressure the King to join it. This led to a wider Israeli-Jordanian-West Bank conflagration in April and May 1963 that threatened the existence of the kingdom and led all players to reassess their regional policies. Hussein's analysis of the April 1963 circumstances led him to the conclusion that the Hashemite basic meeting of interests with Israel might once again prove useful. Clearly, in making his decision to resume top level negotiations with Israel he was well aware of the Israeli designs on the West Bank, and yet he believed that even the threat of the West Bank taken away from him, would present a less of a danger to his kingdom than being left without any strategic partners.

In spite of growing mutual recognition of Israel and Jordan, of their shared interests and the opening of additional channels of communication, Israel launched several strikes against Jordan between 1965 and 1967 as a result of unabated terrorist infiltration. The most distressing of these attacks for Jordan was the Samu' operation of November 13, 1966, which by its large scale demonstrated Jordanian inferiority vis-a-vis Israel's military ability and prompted a reassessment by King Hussein of his policies regarding both Israel and the Palestinians.

Until 1967, Israel did not stand alone as the declared enemy of Egypt. President Gamal Abd-Al-Nasser defined a legitimate regime in the Middle East as being Arab, Sunni Muslim, Republican, socialist, and non-aligned in its foreign policy. Within this definition Jordan, along with Saudi Arabia, became the archenemies of the Nasserite Egyptian regime. Israel, obviously, was the symbol of foreign presence in the Middle East and the so-called "Zionist entity" had to be liquidated according to President Nasser. This apparent meeting of interests was reinforced with the establishment in 1958 of the United Arab Republic. This union, lacking in territorial integrity, needed to create that continuity on the account of Jordan, while posing a major security risk for Israel. Even the dissolution of the union in 1961 did not remove the exposure of the two countries to Egyptian incitement and preparations for the next round of hostilities. Thus, the outbreak of the Yemeni revolution in 1962 and the possibility that Egypt would take over the strategic Red Sea passage to the ports of Eilat (Israel) and Aqaba (Jordan) once more highlighted the need for a strategic framework for cooperation between the two countries.

Egypt's gradual loss of influence among the Arab nations that had begun after the 1967 defeat became increasingly significant as Egypt became involved in a diplomatic process with Israel. Formerly, such a policy had not been acceptable to Egypt itself, much less to other Arab nations. Between the years 1973-79, as Egypt relinquished its place among the Arab nations, Saudi Arabia aspired to inherit Egypt's lost status through economic power. Moreover, despite the oil glut that had begun in 1980, the Iran-Iraq War, and Egypt's successful attempts to return to the Arab fold after 1982, Egypt has not been able to regain its position as the undisputed leader of the Arabs, assuming that such a position still indeed exists. In fact, there are now two distinct leaders in the Arab World: Syria, based on its veto power over Jordan and Lebanon, and Egypt, with its significant influence over the PLO.

Jordan also benefited from the new realities after the 1967 War. Jordan's regime, a pro-Western monarchy, had been illegitimate in pre-1967 Nasserite terms. After the war, Jordan's continued United States backing

changed from a liability into an asset for Egypt. Thus, Jordan's position shifted: from the object of Egyptian subversion and a country that up to 1967 had not fulfilled the requirements of the Arab consensus in the Nasser regime, Jordan became a country that could further Egypt's interests. This dramatic change in the character of their relations is evident in the respective attitudes of Egypt and Jordan towards the Palestinians in Jordan. Prior to the 1967 War, Egypt saw the Palestinians, especially those living in the Gaza Strip, as a useful tool in its efforts to undermine King Hussein's monarchy. Supported by Egypt, these Palestinians infiltrated Israeli territory and returned to the West Bank, thus exposing Jordan to Israeli reprisal. More than once, the kingdom endured Palestinian riots that were directly or indirectly inspired by Nasser; these sometimes ended in bloodshed. The demonstrators usually called for Arab unity, adopting Nasserite principles that naturally went against the Hashemite regime. Based on these ideological and practical policies, many verbal accusations were hurled at the King, and, on occasion, assassination attempts were made. This situation first began to change with the signing of an Egyptian-Jordanian military agreement on May 30, 1967 and with the subsequent military cooperation during the 1967 War and the War of Attrition. Still, as evidenced by the Jordanian military-political behavior during the War of Attrition (1968-1970) there was no excuse to let them tolerate any Israeli violation of their sovereignty. Thus, whatever the reasons for any such Israeli infringement (and usually, it had to do with PLO terrorist attacks on Israeli soil emanating from Jordan), Jordan would always fight for its territory. Probably, the courageous Jordanian fighting in Karameh (March 1968) sto illustrate this Jordanian stand.

The establishment of a PLO military presence in Jordan after June 1967 as well as the PLO attempt to overthrow the Hashemite government during the 1970 civil war, usually referred to as "Black September," were not significantly supported by Egypt. Furthermore, Egypt tried to mediate and seek a compromise between the Hashemite regime and the PLO leaders so that PLO troops could maintain their presence against Israel but at the same time not threaten the Jordanian government. This policy was most probably the result of the Egyptian interest to deny Israel and Jordan finding once again common grounds, which would be used against Egypt and the PLO. However, President Nasser's death during the final stages of the Egyptian mediation effort allowed Jordan sufficient time to suppress the civil war with an iron fist in spite of a simultaneous Syrian invasion. "Black September" was not only a domestic victory for Jordan but also proof that, unlike the period before 1967, Jordan was now free to act against a threat to its government without having to fear actions of any outside patrons. Further, the Jordanian-Israeli strategic cooperation strongly motivated by US efforts, bolstered the Jordanian freedom of action. Thus, Syrian attempts to widen the scope of the civil war into a regional conflict to be used in order to occupy parts of Jordan failed. This time Israel played as a major deterrent against the Syrians forcing them to acknowledge by their retreat the existence of a semi-public Jordanian-Israeli-US axis. This coalition forced the Syrian forces to withdraw from Hashemite territory after a five-day invasion. This episode not only proved the strong bond between Israel and Jordan, but also emphasized the solid foundation on which it was built: the US support stemming from its need to protect pro-Western Jordan without committing any US troops to it. Further, the combined Jordanian-Israeli-US success served to highlight the post-1967 realities: the anti-Western coalition led by Egypt or Syria did not muster the resources to destroy either Israel or Jordan.

The military endeavors of Egypt and Syria in October 1973 were no longer validated based on a concerted inter-Arab effort to defeat Israel led by Egypt, as was the case in 1967. The 1973 War was, more than anything else, the outcome of joint Egyptian and Syrian national interests aimed at gaining diplomatic benefits and emanating from six years of frustration and fatalism. Obviously, Jordan did not share these feelings. Obviously, the kingdom was not too sorry with the loss of a large Palestinian population to Israel in 1967. Jordan's worst fear in 1973 was a war that would bring the West Bank back into Hashemite hands. Furthermore, the movement of these two countries away from general Arab causes reduced the risk of punishing Jordan for not participating in an Arab move. The first indication of this emerging pattern was seen in Syria's failed attempts to interfere in the 1970 civil war in Jordan for its own interests and not for the Palestinians. These factors helped King Hussein take an unprecedented risk⁴ for himself and the Hashemite kingdom by meeting Prime Minister Golda Meir in late September 1973, on the eve of the October war and giving her an early warning of the impending Arab attack on Israel. Undoubtedly, King Hussein clearly

risked his political future and legitimacy in order to rescue his closest ally and, in line with noble Beduin tradition, pay Israel back his 1970 debt of honor when Israel had rescued his rule. Publicly, Jordan refrained from participation in the 1973 War and was content to dispatch some military forces to the Golan Heights front. Clearly, the 1970 and 1973 episodes should be seen as two sides of the same coin: the Jordanian-Israeli mutual security guarantee in action. Once again after about seven years that that mutual guarantee was not put to the test a major crisis manifesting it occurred. In 1981 Israeli airplanes on their mission to bomb the Iraqi nuclear reactor were spotted by no less than the King, but no Arab action was taken against them. This strongly suggests that once the King was under the impression that the planes were not on their way to bomb targets in his kingdom, the level of Jordanian readiness to involve itself in another military confrontation was very low.

Additional sets of political processes helped Jordan to improve its relations with Israel. That was also the result of three overlapping processes. Firstly, Israel, by defeating the Nasser led 1967 coalition caused Egypt and its president loss of tremendous prestige. This prestige which had been built on the myth of the 1956 Egyptian defeat of Israel and the French and British had served for long as the basis for Nasser's ability to define Arab legitimacy, and thus, declare the Hashemite regime illegitimate. Secondly, Nasser's death (1970) removed a charismatic leader and brought to power a weaker figure. President Sadat (1970-1981) never assumed the position of the undisputed leader of the Arabs, thus giving more leeway to other Middle Eastern leaders. Thirdly, with his first reference to a possible peace initiative in 1971, President Sadat removed a major psychological obstacle. The term "peace" was no more to be avoided. Certainly, this tendency was reinforced after the first significant public peace moves between Israel and Egypt in 1977. Egypt's changing position in the inter-Arab arena along with its improved relations with the United States and the growing legitimacy of the conservative pro-Western monarchies in Saudi Arabia and Jordan were not limited to ideological theory. These changes also catalyzed two further developments that had been nurtured by different sources: the confrontation between Saudi Arabia and Egypt over the leadership of the Arab world (1973-79) and the joint agreement among the Arab nations to keep silent regarding the contacts between King Hussein of Jordan and Israel. Moreover, the decline of Egypt within the inter-Arab circle and the rise of a conservative Saudi Arabia encouraged Jordan to pursue independent policies in regard to the Israeli question as well.

The very close relations developed between Jordan and Israel misled some Israeli leaders to declare a "Jordanian Option". In sum, they believed that if Israel withdrew from the territories Jordan would return and bring again a Hashemite regime, under one name or another, and would relieve Israel of the need to take care of the Palestinian population. This approach, which reached its pinnacle in the mid-1970s, and came to an end for all public purposes with the 1977 coming of the Likud bloc to power, overlooked two main obstacles. First, Hussein's dilemma, as defined elsewhere in this paper, allowed him full cooperation with Israel only as long as it was secret; secondly, in October 1974, the Arab summit conference in Rabat, Morocco, declared the PLO "the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people". The King could not risk his newly acquired legitimacy and condemn an Arab consensus whether he liked it or not. The same advocates of the "Jordanian option" once again made the same mistake in early 1987. In April of that year the then Foreign Minister of Israel, Mr. Peres, reached an agreement with King Hussein on some procedural issues which had to do with the convening of an international conference to discuss peace in the Middle East. This agreement never served as the basis for any Israeli-Jordanian public understanding for the same traditional reasons.

Another crisis confronting the two partners occurred in 1987/88. This time, while assessing the Palestinian element as a major strategic threat, the King disengaged himself altogether from the Israeli interests. For several years, between 1987-1992/93⁵, Israel had to militarily fight the *intifada*, a popular revolt by the Palestinians in the territories, and diplomatically confront the attempts by the PLO, supported at times by European forces, to delegitimize Israel. In spite of Israeli-Jordanian twenty years of cooperation in Judea Samaria (1967-1987), the King declared, in the summer of 1988, that he was denouncing any connections with the territories, and eventually he voiced unequivocal support for a PLO led Palestinian state. Clearly, his

anxiety that the insurrection would spill over to the East Bank dictated his moves. Without open and clear endorsement of the PLO he could have expected an uprising in his territory, without having the benefit of any Israeli support, since Israel itself could not find a solution. His moves during the uprising follow the same familiar pattern in his relations with Israel: whenever a public stand is called for – take the Arab consensus lane; whenever, Israel can help, preferably secretly, he would invite this help.

A similar choice between public stand along with all-Arab legitimacy led the King in his political behavior in the two crises involving Iraq. In 1980-1988 during the Iraq-Iran war and the 1990/91 Gulf crisis he took a clear and unmistakable pro-Iraqi stand. From 1980-1988 it was the result of his need to help Iraq against the Iranian-Syrian coalition. This stand, with all probability was not contrary to the way Israel interpreted the war: Israel considered fundamentalist Muslim Iran and radical Syria during these years as a larger threat than Iraq. In 1990/91 he took a pro-Iraqi position so that he would not be implicated once more in a US led coalition. Syria and Egypt, with their leading position among the Arab countries could take this path. Jordan, with its Palestinian population and the Iraqi neighbor just could not take this risk. Secretly, however, there was no doubt whatsoever, that in spite of this position Israel did not consider Jordan an enemy, and it was evident to all parties concerned that once the crisis was over Jordan would return to its traditional political and regional standing.

In the context of the US led diplomatic process in the Middle East, which came in the wake of the 1991 Gulf War, Israel and the PLO signed the Oslo accords in 1993. This paved the way and legitimized the already existing relations between Israel and Jordan. With the signing of the 1994 Israeli-Jordanian peace treaty, the main issues between the two countries shifted significance. As much as they share the need to contain the Palestinian risk, they both believe that Iraq is by far the greatest risk to regional stability. This would explain the series of complementing military agreements with the participation of the US, Israel, Jordan and Turkey⁶, which in effect constitute a military alliance against any threat to these countries: be it Iraq or Syria.

The Development of National Jordanian Interests and Expectations towards Israel.

Three inter-related interests have shaped the Jordanian positions towards Israel. For 45 years, between the establishment of Israel, and the signing of the peace treaty Israel was the common enemy of all Jordanians. Its main purpose in this respect: bringing Palestinians and Jordanians in the (West Bank until 1967 and) East Bank closer together in an attempt to create one single Jordanian identity and Jordanian nation state. Secretly, and without any public acknowledgment until 1994 Jordan tried to create such circumstances that would bring Israel into behaving as Jordan's security shield. In spite of the harsh public language, Jordan was working hand in hand with Israel in creating a de-facto strategic cooperation framework intended to combat the outside real enemies from Nasserite Egypt in the 1960s to pro-PLO and pro-HAMAS Palestinians from within and outside. The third interest developed after the Six Day War: The Jordanian political behavior vs. Israel was dictated by the concern that Jordan would become an "alternative Palestinian state", namely: that Israel would annex the West Bank, while forcing the Palestinians into the East Bank⁷.

The Palestinian problem proved to be an important element in formulating the ideology of nation-state. The West Bank that Jordan lost to Israel is populated with Jordanian citizens who saw themselves first and foremost as Palestinians both before and after 1967. However, before 1967 they were barred from voicing these national feelings; the Hashemite regime encouraged the integration of its Palestinian citizens into the fabric of Jordanian society, denying them any explicit national expression. This attitude of Jordanization, at times forced, presented a prime political and ideological dilemma, especially after the establishment of the PLO in 1964. In a nutshell, the question is: "Where is Palestine?" and hence, "Who is the representative of the Palestinians?"

In retrospect, two main questions have faced the PLO: its military presence in the countries neighboring Israel and its diplomatic recognition concurrent with the de-legitimization of Israel. Clearly, these two challenges reflected particular Palestinian interests. At times, they contradicted Jordanian and Lebanese

interests of avoiding confrontation with Israel, and at times they involved the development of an independent foreign relations apparatus, free of any Arab involvement.

These particular interests coupled with the fact that for years the PLO has refrained from publicly defining its territorial goals make it clear why the organization tried during the initial years after the war to expand its sovereignty over Jordan. Suppression of its military presence in Jordan in the aftermath of the civil war (February 1970-July 1971) underscored a need to change tactics and emphasize the issue of international recognition. This recognition, which over the years has come on Arab, Soviet, and international organization levels, obviously added to Palestinian self-perception as a distinct people among the Arabs.

Still, it was somewhat easier to acknowledge a distinct identity under Israeli occupation than on the East Bank with a Palestinian majority but under Arab rule. Indeed, international recognition of the organization reverberated through the territories, and candidates recommended by the PLO won the municipal elections in April 1976. Despite efforts on Jordan's part to maintain its influence among the Palestinian population, the PLO was widely accepted as the Palestinian representative. These accomplishments escorted continuing attempts to achieve recognition that reached a major turning point in the summer of 1981 when Israel recognized the status of the PLO by agreeing to a cease-fire after ten days of fighting along the Israeli-Lebanese border. This new political status, in addition to the military threat, was one of the primary motivations for the Israeli incursion into Lebanon a year later that was meant to uproot the PLO from Lebanon where it had settled after having been driven out of Jordan.

Having had its infrastructure and bases destroyed and its people chased out of Lebanon, the PLO's political clout diminished. Syria and Jordan, both interested in weakening Yasser Arafat's status, encouraged the counter groups: Al-Fath, Abu Musa (May 1983) and Abu Za'yim (April 1986). The PLO, recognizing its weakness, agreed to a joint draft with Jordan that established a Jordanian-Palestinian delegation for future political processes. This approach was later adopted as the basis for PLO participation in the Madrid process. Nonetheless, King Hussein felt secure enough to discontinue his alliance with the PLO once he reached the conclusion that it was not advantageous to Jordanian interests (February 1986). At the same time, feelings of disappointment and frustration grew among the Palestinians in the territories. Although they continued to identify with the PLO's ideas, they no longer saw the PLO as the cause that would free them from Israeli occupation. In retrospect, it is small wonder that the uprising broke out in 1987 and that it led to the denouncement of Jordanian claims to the West Bank. Today for the first time the Arab population is expressing the new nature of Palestinian nationalism: limited territorial ideology, divorced from the traditional Pan-Arab idea.

The struggle between the Jordanian kingdom and the PLO was overcome by the King through military means at the end of the Civil War. Politically, however, Jordan did not. The Rabat formula was adopted at the Arab summit conference in October 1974, and recognized the PLO as the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. The resolution symbolized an Arab political reward for the PLO and represented an attempt to clear the leaders' conscience for not supporting the organization during the civil war. The support received by the Palestinians accentuated the issue of Jordanian vs. Palestinian nature of the Jordanian kingdom. Put simply, if the PLO became the sole representative of the Palestinians, then could it speak for those living in Jordan and constituting a majority in that country?

In answering the Palestinian challenge, King Hussein needed to redefine the ideological *raison d'être* of his kingdom, which extends over three-quarters of the former British Mandate over Palestine. His response came in the form of nationality and nationalism as the basis for his country. In fact, since the 1967 War, and more recently since the 1974 Rabat summit, the King has confronted this issue many times. According to King Hussein, Jordanian nationality is based primarily on the principle of territorialism. As both Jordanians and Palestinians reside within the borders of the Hashemite kingdom on the East Bank, this makes them a people of one nation. Geographically, the terms of reference are no longer those connected with one Pan-Arab nation, as was accepted before the 1967 War. The King accepts the existing borders between the Arab countries and sees them as a starting point in defining individual nationality. Moreover, to accent the limits

between “Jordan” and “Palestine”, the King asserts that despite the loss of the West Bank, the inhabitants of the two banks continue to belong to the same family—a nation composed of two peoples, the Jordanian people and the Palestinian people, each maintaining its own identity and sharing a similar history. However, when it comes to a prescription for the future, the King offers none.

These examples prove that the Jordanian monarch sees himself as head of a nation state based on a particular national ideology. He still pays lip service to the idea of Pan-Arab unity and makes references to past concepts of Nasserite solidarity, yet there is no doubt that Hussein has long broken away from this policy.

If King Hussein, whose Pan-Arab status was unstable until the 1967 War, adopted such policies, it is not surprising that other Arab leaders, less shackled to the Arab consensus, did so as well.

The signing of the 1994 Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty marks the disappearance of an element so often found in most Arab national ideologies: the foreign enemy embodied by Israel. The new vocabulary regarding Israel signaled a dramatic change in the King’s public expressions. This positive language was not the one used for the very long time of secret contacts accompanying what appeared at times to be tense relations between two hostile countries. Yet, this positive view of Israel was outweighed by a very long succession of expressions used to present a composite sketch of Israel as a very negative entity in the Middle East. This attitude is quite understandable. With continued rumors of clandestine diplomacy with Israel, and the ongoing competition with the PLO, the King had to present himself, in line with his grandfather, King Abd Allah’s political behavior, as the champion of Arab nationalism against Israel. Indeed, the terminology applied for so long was not addressed at Israel, but at the Jordanian public. After all, Israeli leaders knew the exact nature of relations. The right audience was the Jordanian people, including East Bank Palestinians and the Arab world at large. This way the King provided them with a ready enemy to move their attention from the Hashemite crown and create for his own people a source of national pride by confronting the enemy. It serves Hussein’s purpose of promoting the notion of one united Jordanian people and a united Arab people to heighten Israel’s position as the ultimate enemy. This is also the explanation for the fact that the available speeches and interviews shed no light on any positive relations between the two countries until the actual signing of the peace treaty.

In spite of the very harsh language used at times in regard to Israel, one major seed of recognizing Israel in the pre-1967 borders has not been missing from the King’s ideology. Whenever referring to the 1948 war he explained that Jordanian involvement was intended “to rescue the West Bank” and to “the redemption of the lion’s share of Palestine which remained Arab”,⁸ He said further that “Jordan never received the West Bank from the PLO.”⁹ These expressions are exceptionally important since they define the conflict with the neighbor to the west simply as a territorial one. In this approach King Hussein became the first Arab leader to trace back the roots of the conflict to what he saw as the usurping of Palestinian rights. This way Jordan has no quarrel with the existence of a Jewish-Zionist political entity in the Middle East.

Yet, even before the beginning of the public phase of the Israeli-Egyptian peace process in 1977, Hussein had already crossed the psychological barrier of an indirect recognition of Israel. Obviously, one of the reasons for his rather pragmatic approach was the 1946-1950 process of negotiations between his grandfather, Abd Allah, and representatives of the Zionist leadership.

These early encounters only signaled the prelude to the conflict. However, it really began in earnest only in 1948. In his speeches the King divides the Israeli-Jordanian conflict into three distinct chapters: 1948-1967; 1967-1974; and 1974-1994. During the former two, Jordan (with and later without the West Bank), was on the forefront of powers dedicated to the rights of the Palestinians. After the 1974 Rabat formula Jordan had to relinquish this responsibility to the PLO.

During the initial period after the 1967 war and until the suppression of the civil war in Jordan in 1970, the harsh language is evident. Israel was portrayed in very radical terms and clearly served as a common enemy of all Jordanians. During that time the King continually demonstrated via his speeches and interviews that Israel was to blame for all acts of aggression in the region and that he is bitter about the fact that Israel received more positive media coverage and United States arms support than any other Middle Eastern

country. This way, the King could not be blamed by other Arab players led by Egypt which launched a war of attrition against Israel, nor by the armed Palestinian organizations within the kingdom which claimed to replace the monarchy by a more national regime. Likewise, by joining ranks with other belligerent regimes, Jordan boosted its legitimacy and added to its own acceptance by the people living on the East Bank.

As explained the concept of “enemy” is strongly connected with issues of territory and the Palestinian rights. Yet, unlike many Arab leaders the King has not doubted the legitimacy of the existence of Israel. In spite of Hussein’s depicting Israel as an imperialist, land-grabbing, aggressive nation, he never forgets to send a message to his fellow Arab leaders and his Jordanian countrymen recognizing Israel’s right to exist in one way or another. More than once he has stated that despite all that has happened to Jordan and all the wrongs the kingdom has suffered, the world capitals feel that Israel is there to stay. His main argument in this context is that since the world recognizes Israel against the wishes of the Arab countries in the Middle East, the local leaders should not confront world opinion.

Limiting the conflict with Israel basically to these two issues assumes a possible solution once they are solved. Further, the King’s hidden acceptance of Israel did not stem only from his security concerns as explained elsewhere. After all, the declaration of a British mandate over Palestine has served as the initial legal basis for establishment of a Jewish state, a Hashemite kingdom in the territory of former Palestine. Thus, repeating the traditional Arab cliché regarding the British giving away territory to the Jews could be interpreted as an attempt to nullify all political developments stemming from that declaration including the establishment of the kingdom.

These positions, dictated in part by the King’s attempt to fight not only for the survival of his kingdom, but also for its legitimacy, have demonstrated themselves many times. Even during the worst days of Palestinian-Jordanian relations around 1970-71, he used to portray himself and his kingdom as working hand in hand with the Palestinian organizations against Israel. Yet, he was careful enough to continue his limiting attitude speaking of the battle for Arab territory. This way, he ignores the Palestinian organizations’ attempts to find their way to Tel Aviv by way of Amman, as they used to express their political aims at that time, and presents himself as the unrecognized ally of the Palestinians in their fight for land. Obviously, nowhere is there any agreement with them on the need to liquidate the so-called “Zionist entity”. Moreover, a recurrent motif in his public expressions those days was the presentation of himself as cooperating with the better part of the Palestinian people against Israel, implying that the PLO was really helping the enemy by weakening Jordan. In an addressing his nation, Hussein repeated his description of Jordan as united in the struggle against Israel, with “honest” Palestinians and Jordanians working together. This way, at least verbally, he did not segregate Palestinians from Jordanians, but blamed the instigators of the continual aggression as “criminals” who are undermining the unity that exists for the most part. Hussein continually propagates the idea of a united Jordan to his people, using Israel as a means: “My nation will realize... even more when it comes to know itself and to believe in its ability, and when it determines who its enemies are...”¹⁰ With Israel as the enemy, Hussein declares that it is time to stop the internal clashes and fights for power in order to stay devoted to the higher cause for which all Arab countries are working. Years later, in 1980, Syria, the closest ally of the Soviet Union in the Middle East, massed troops and threatened Jordan with a new invasion. Again, a parallel Israeli concentration of troops along the Syrian- Jordanian-Israeli border removed the danger. In a speech given at the Kremlin several months later, in June 1981, Hussein repeats these ideas while actually going as far as saying that the main problem in the Middle East is “Israel’s seizure of the entire territory of Palestine, expulsion of its people and occupation of other parts of our Arab land adjoining Palestine.”¹¹

Besides limiting the confrontation of Israel to several clear cut elements, the King has made a consistent effort throughout the years between 1967 and 1994 to legitimize his unique approach to Israel, and perhaps to pave the way to acknowledge his relations with Israel if and when forced to do so. Thus, there has been a connection in his ideology between the Palestinian-Israeli issue and the question of Arab unity. In the wake of the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon he spoke of “divisions...which were the cause of the collapse of Arab solidarity” and which will “remain an omen of evil and bad luck and as logical preludes which Israeli

aggression will deploy against Lebanon and the Palestinian people".¹² If indeed this is the status of inter Arab relations, then each country is entitled to formulate its policy. Such an expression indicates not only his need to formulate a Jordanian position, but rather to signal that without an Arab consensus the only way to solve the problems of Palestinian rights and Palestinian territory (and thus prevent the idea of an alternative Palestinian homeland) is through the legitimate Jordanian approach.

Since both Israel and Jordan have belonged for years to the same global block, opposing Israel necessitates a little more than gaining legitimacy on the Palestinian track. Thus, while portraying Israel in a negative nature the King has an additional audience: American media and decision-makers. In this context the King is careful to use terminology acceptable to them, including an indirect recognition of Israel's right to exist, while attempting to present Israel as a violator of international law and precedents. It is clear that until the peace treaty, Israel used to be seen by the King as a clear competitor for the same source of political and diplomatic support.

In this context Israel is presented as an anti-peace entity, aggressor, imperialist, expansionist and manipulator. The expression "Israel is not interested in peace," is repeated time and again in the King's speeches. Years later, after the historic visit of Egyptian president Sadat in Jerusalem, but before the agreements reached at in Camp David, King Hussein prepared the groundwork for not participating in the process due to his lack of legitimacy in representing the Palestinians. In a January 1978 interview with the BBC Hussein, in response to the question of why he had not given Sadat his wholehearted support, clearly said

But I have. I tried my best to help with the rest of the Arab world, to try to bring it together. But I have made it very clear from the beginning that President Sadat's initiative was a very brave, courageous one.

He later goes on to applaud the Arab effort at peace and includes himself in that effort by saying:

I don't think that anyone could have done more for the cause of peace, and if it fails it is not on *our* heads, on *our* shoulders, in terms of the blame, but on Israel.

Hussein also says that Sadat has "represented the world and the Arab view and the Arab aspiration and feeling before the world."¹³

That realistic approach by the King cannot hide the aggressive and imperialist nature of Israel,¹⁴ which is an aggressor not abiding by international instruments. Obviously, this is an antithesis to the Hashemite kingdom, which is careful in keeping its international commitments, and therefore should be rewarded by the traditional supporters of Israel. Time and again, Hussein publicly repeats his orders to his armed forces to act only in defense of their country and not to prepare any attack against Israel. This line of action has characterized Jordanian political and military behavior since the early 1960s.¹⁵ The implication of this approach is that Jordan does not really have a war with Israel. It is a confrontation imposed by Israel, and could be removed once Israel decides to change its ways.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the policy of publicly criticizing Israel while secretly cooperating with her reached its peak. While bearing the largest burden of fighting the Israeli forces in Karamah (March 1968) the King did not stop his continued dialogue with Israel. Furthermore, his secret visit to Israel in September 1973, warning Prime Minister Golda Meir of the imminent Arab attack on Israel served to highlight the King's dilemma: how to stabilize his internal scene by emphasizing Israeli aggression against Jordan and the Palestinians in order to gain the support of his Palestinian citizens while preparing for a military showdown until 1970 and political confrontation until 1993, and yet how not to alienate Israel so that it would continue to serve as the most stable pillar of Jordanian stability. This dilemma accompanied Jordanian policy for the entire period of secret negotiations.

With the changing times, after the 1970 expulsion of the PLO from Jordan, the 1974 Rabat formula and the 1976 Israeli "Jordanian option", the challenge facing the King was somewhat different: how to avoid participating in a public diplomatic process with Israel similar to those of Egypt and Syria (which produced several interim agreements) without any diplomatic damage to the kingdom? Nevertheless, in spite of the

changing diplomatic and military environment, the rhetoric almost never changed. His basic premise was that Israel had to make the critical decision between peace and land. The King made it clear to Israel that it could not have peace and land together. Likewise, Israel must recognize the rights of the Palestinian people and withdraw completely from the West Bank. Parallel to this policy Hussein stated

Israel must rid itself of the siege mentality. The world does not know yet if Israel has chosen security or continued occupation of Arabs because it's impossible to have both.¹⁶

The close acquaintance between King Hussein and successive Israeli prime ministers did not rid the King of some, albeit, sporadic expressions which are reminiscent of the difficult Jewish history. On a more emotional level, such expressions rare as they are present a major slip of tongue of the King. In reference to the situation in Lebanon, under Israeli occupation, the King portrays himself as the humanitarian, concerned for the "half a million citizens who are besieged" and "liable to extermination" which "brings to mind the worst images of the Nazi atrocities recorded in books and historical documents."¹⁷

Of less serious nature, but still unacceptable to the Israeli state of mind, is the description of Israel as a manipulative country. This element ties with his attempt to win over Western support for his kingdom on the account of Israel. Such references are made repeatedly during the period 1967-1994. Until the collapse of the Soviet Union, Israel used to be blamed for trying to widen the scope of the local conflict and make it into an East-West conflict. Time and again he mentioned that Israel received better support in arms; that the Jordanian army always excelled given the limited resources available. On speeches commemorating the battle of Karameh he usually mentioned that the Jordanian soldiers fought relying completely on themselves and realizing that the battle was theirs alone. In 1981, he said once again, in line with his previous statements, that:

Unlimited US aid and absolute support for Israel, as well as US approval of all that is done by Israel make me feel frankly that the United States no longer possesses the freedom to maneuver.¹⁸

In a March 19, 1983 London Press conference¹⁹ the King is critical of the manipulative power that Israel had gained over the US Congress. The conclusion is crystal clear: Israel is capable of manipulating the US, and therefore this superpower should not give Israel the right to do so.

King Hussein's public views of Israel in the period 1967-1994 are consistently clear and negative. During this period, Hussein seems to have adopted a public hard line stance towards Israel and the peace process while secretly intensifying his negotiations with successive Israeli prime ministers. However, as noted, these expressions were only the public part of the political and diplomatic glass. Their aim was clearly to win over Western public opinion, and consequently, to bring the US to a larger degree of support for the kingdom. Apparently, until the Israeli-Jordanian relations became public, the King interpreted US treatment of the Middle East as a zero sum game: whatever is given to Israel is taken away from Jordan. This approach disappeared overnight with the signing of the peace treaty. Since the two countries could become strategic allies in public, Israel could and willingly did, make its strong connections in Washington available to Jordan. Since this could not be done prior to 1994, it was a zero sum game, with the cementing of the open ties it became another dimension of the strategic cooperation.

One of the major interests of Jordan after the 1967 War was the elimination of the West Bank as a source of incitement and subversion against the Hashemite regime. In this respect the transfer of responsibility in 1967 helped Jordan maintain its East Bank cohesion as long as Israel took care of the security in the territories gained in 1967. Thus, the Palestinian uprising which broke out in 1987 with the prospects of spilling over to the East Bank left no alternative to the King but to renounce the remnants of his claim to the territory, lest he would have once again to take care of his Palestinian time bomb.

The Development of National Israeli Interests and Expectations towards Jordan

In a country which is not very well known for its methodical preparation of policy decisions, Israel did outdo itself in the period between the Samu' raid in November 1966 and the June 1967 Six Day War in relation for

formulating policy towards Jordan. In early December 1966, the Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs, Abba Eban, presented in a discussion at his office, several questions relating to Israeli relations with Jordan and Egypt. Based on his remarks a top secret inter-departmental committee was formed in order to make policy recommendations on future relations with the two countries.²⁰ The forum was composed of the heads of research for the military intelligence, the secret services (*Mossad*) and the Foreign Ministry as well as the desk officers of these bodies. The Deputy Director General of the Foreign Ministry, M. Gazit, chaired the committee. Its mandate was clear. Define the operational and foreign policy course to be taken by Israel in the years to come. In spite of the many passing years the basic definitions still hold true.

The basic Israeli interest since the mid-1960s has been the continued existence of King Hussein's regime. Israel has stated publicly many times its willingness to defend the regime if necessary.²¹ This approach represents Israeli hope of the existence of non-hostile, preferably: friendly regimes on as many fronts as possible. From this Israeli viewpoint the Hashemite kingdom of Jordan has always topped the list of such countries. In terms of daily security, Jordan and Israel have always shared a long border: 336 miles between 1949-1967, and 150 miles since 1967.²² These borders have seen throughout the years many armed clashes, many times triggered by Palestinian military provocations.

Israel has had a vital interest in three processes in Jordan since the late 1950s.²³

Keeping the Hashemite dynasty intact, and if it falls attempting to preserve at least the territorial integrity of this entity. Put differently, the actual survival of the regime in its current *modus operandi*, namely: not taking part in any anti-Israeli activity, and maintaining close relations with Israel be it secret or public. This element emphasizes the continuation of the current status quo. Considering the alternatives, which range from a Syrian type (the most probable scenario in the 1960s) to a radical Muslim regime (the theoretical alternative in the 1990s), Israel has always turned a blind eye to a limited degree of anti-Israeli activity in Jordan: PLO activities in the 1960s, and the HAMAS headquarters in the late 1990s. Even the failed Israeli attempt at assassinating Khalid Masha'al, one of the top HAMAS leaders, can be seen as a local action intended to be kept secret in terms of any Israeli involvement (hence the usage of slow acting poison, rather than the more traditional small arms). A similar operation in Lebanon in April 1973 was given much publicity and was portrayed by Israel as a large operation against the leadership of the PLO.²⁴

1. The emergence of the Jordanian nation-state; i.e.: the appearance of Jordanian awareness and unique and local national feelings limited to the territory under Hashemite regime. The more Jordanian citizens are inclined to define themselves in Jordanian terms the less they would use pan-Arab terminology and tend to press the regime into taking part in Arab coalitions, which might jeopardize Israel's security. In the past these coalitions might have been centered on Nasserite Egypt; today, the potential threat of such a coalition comes from Syria or Iraq.
2. The assimilation of the Palestinian population into the Jordanian political infrastructure may contribute to the stability of Jordan while limiting Israel's burden regarding the resolution of the Palestinian problem. This is especially true in regard to the Palestinian refugees within Jordan (both banks until 1967 and the East Bank since 1967).

Mutual Interests in the Test of Changing Political Environment.

Perhaps the most significant interest of the two parties has always been the preservation of the existing *status quo* and the elimination of any prospects for a new Middle Eastern war.²⁵ A conflict of such magnitude would have to confront the King with the dilemma of being loyal to his fellow Arab regimes or to stick by his understandings with Israel, which have helped him to survive for so long. In keeping the status quo the two countries had to face three common predicaments. First, and foremost, any Israeli-Jordanian coalition had to depend to some extent on US backing. This used to be an absolute taboo for most of the Arab countries at least until the US formed a coalition in the context of 1991 Gulf crisis and war. This coalition included many Arab countries, among them: Egypt, Syria and Saudi Arabia. Secondly, countries, which have

at one point or another attempted to confront the Hashemite regime would have found any Israeli-Jordanian cooperation an appropriate excuse to portray the King as a traitor. For most of the period under discussion the radical Arabs could agree only on the need to fight the Hashemite monarchy and the Jewish state. Thirdly, the Palestinian threat has bothered the countries ever since they both were established, and perhaps even before that.

These inherent interests, which provided the solid basis for cooperation, have been subject to at least two major decisions: one Jordanian and one Israeli, which changed the stream of history. These changes had to do with the Palestinian menace: The Jordanian decision to go to war against Israel in 1967 and the Israeli 1993 decision to reach an agreement with the PLO, the common enemy of Israel and the Hashemite kingdom. Additionally, the two shared enemies have traditionally shaped Jordanian-Israeli relations since the beginning of their direct dialogue in the new era. Regionally, there has always been an Arab enemy: Egypt until 1967 and the potential Iraqi threat of the 1980s and 1990s.

This dilemma began to be solved in two stages with the signing of two different documents, between Israel and Egypt in 1979 and Israel and the PLO in 1993. These agreements represent a late 1970s' Israeli departure from traditional policies of "periphery coalitions", namely alignments with Turkey, Iran and Ethiopia to "central diplomacy", that is, recognizing the mainstream Arab powers and negotiating with them. This Israeli change in policy only added to a series of previous events that stressed the different paths taken by Israel's Arab neighbors: the Civil War in Jordan and the attempted Syrian invasion (September 1970) that demonstrated all but publicly acknowledged mutual Israeli-Jordanian security interests and concerns; the 1974 Israeli-Syrian disengagement agreement; and Egyptian dependence on American financial aid, for the sake of which Egypt initiated diplomatic relations with Israel, another so-called "client" of the United States.

As noted, Israel's relations with the kingdom of Jordan underwent a fundamental change. Jordan shifted from being a member of the Arab coalition in the conflict to becoming Israel's closet Arab ally, as evidenced by the 1994 peace treaty. Even the ill-fated attempt on the life of a leading HAMAS figure in Amman in late 1997 do not look, almost a year later, as changing this basic approach. This coalition is based on the fact that both nations are eager to contain any potential threat to their respective national entities stemming from the Arab territories west of the Jordan River. This way, even the public calls by the King for the resumption of a meaningful Israeli-Palestinian political process cannot hide the threat that a Palestinian state, a possible outcome of the process, might pose to Jordan.

The issue is not only one of security. The Palestinian population in the territories, numbering over a million, could jeopardize the demographic balance in Israel as well as in Jordan. Consequently, the shared interests of Jordan and Israel dictate using all means at their disposal to prevent Palestinian emigration to Jordan and at the same time to bring any Palestinian unrest in the territories to an end and prevent its spilling over to the East Bank. In the past, this had been achieved by both parties by preventing the PLO from setting foot in the territories, or, at least, by denying the organization the status of an independent partner in any diplomatic measure concerning the Palestinian question. Israel, by modifying its traditional policy of the "Jordanian Option" and its strict adherence to the Rabat formula, as reflected in the September 1993 Declaration of Principles with the PLO, also put an end to efforts to give the kingdom a larger foothold in the territories. This policy commenced after King Hussein dissolved relations with the PLO in his speech on February 19, 1986. Joint Jordanian-Israeli rule began to develop in the territories, only to come to a violent end with the outbreak of the Palestinian uprising in December 1987. Nonetheless, the events in the territories as well as the agreement with the PLO have not deterred Jordan from continuing and strengthening relations with Israel, which continue to be based on the same generations-old mutual interests.

Closely connected to the Israeli-Jordanian complex is the Palestinian issue. It has changed from being merely a passive tool in the hands of the Arab nations to a focus of action with a life of its own. The PLO, founded in 1964 as a result of an Egyptian need to divert attention from its own inter-Arab difficulties, became an equal participant in Arab summit conferences starting in 1969 and was recognized by the Arab and international communities as "the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people" (1974). Along

with their efforts to gain lawful recognition, the PLO and its member organizations have never stopped their attempts to destroy Israel's legitimacy and to undermine the morale of its citizens. Specifically, they resorted to methods of assault on civilian and military targets in the Middle East and abroad that in the past had enjoyed immunity. Since the late 1960s, the organization has cooperated fully with international terrorist organizations whose global network has flourished and become a worldwide menace since the 1980s. Indeed, the fact that some of these organizations did not belong to the PLO as well as their ability to capture worldwide attention made the Palestinian question one of the most acute issues the international community had to reckon with. It is obvious, in retrospect, that the Israeli decision to open formal negotiations with the organization was the cumulative outcome of years of Palestinian armed struggle in Israel proper, in the territories, and outside the Middle East.

Added to these processes are the immediate triggers that arose in the aftermath of the Gulf War of early 1991. The PLO, along with Jordan, sided with Iraq. The immediate result of this alignment was an end to all subsidies from the oil-rich countries led by Saudi Arabia. Moreover, some of the remaining US support for the organization was eroded. This came on top of the suspension of talks between the two in the summer of 1990 as a result of a Palestinian attempt to land on an Israeli beach and attack civilians. For the first time since its inception, the PLO was on the verge of disappearing from the Middle Eastern map. At this critical juncture, the Israeli government opted for the "devil you know" policy. Israel, fearing disintegration of the organization and its replacement by smaller more radical organizations, the most important of them the radical Muslim HAMAS, initiated negotiations between the two parties. It is evident that the agreement between the two represents a major victory for the PLO. Its policy of armed struggle combined with diplomatic means finally convinced Israeli officials to recognize it without having to relinquish its National Charter and without demonstrating its control over its member o. Thus, the Rabin-Arafat handshake on the White House lawn represents a victory for Arafat and an unmistakable indication of the changing nature of the conflict from the Palestinian viewpoint as well.

All these interests stem from a clear Israeli security policy. Before the nuclear age in the Middle East, and certainly after its inauguration, the distance between the Israeli and Jordanian main population centers have been very close. Before the Six Day War, Jordan had the potential military capability to cut off north Israel from its south at the narrowest point of Israel, north of Tel Aviv. In the wake of the establishment of the PA both Israel and Jordan find themselves in a similar risk: the main Palestinian military presence might turn into an army if and when the PA would change into a Palestinian state. Its army would be deployed exactly where the Jordanian army was stationed until 1967, namely: it might pose the same danger of disconnecting Israel given the necessary military assistance from other Arab countries. This is where Jordan is becoming threatened. It might be put under tremendous Arab pressure to let Arab expeditionary forces cross through its territory into the PA areas in order to fight Israel. As explained elsewhere in this study, Iraq not only sees Jordan as a buffer zone between itself and Israel, but President Saddam Hussein and Yasser Arafat have demonstrated their strategic alliance during the 1990-1991 Gulf crisis and war, and again during the 1998 military tension in the Gulf. Considering the small distance involved, would still explain the significance in a conflict contained in a small territory, which cannot allow the usage of any mass destruction weapons, and imposes on all parties concerned the usage of less spectacular weapons. Under these circumstances, and given the slim chances of any Palestinian entity to survive on its own, both Israel and Jordan have a clear interest in keeping positions overlooking the PA, and certainly make any effort conceivable to eliminate the smuggling of even small arms in to these areas.

Changes in the Palestinian and Egyptian positions since the 1970s allowed the continuation of contacts between Jordanian officials and Israeli decision-makers that had begun in 1963. These contacts led to a de facto two-tier Israeli policy regarding the Jordanian role in Palestinian politics. On one hand, Israel recognized Jordan's role in the territories in spite of the 1974 Rabat formula; on the other hand, after Israeli attempts to create local leadership (the Village Leagues in the territories) collapsed and Israel and the PLO began indirect negotiations in the summer of 1981 to put an end to the fighting, Israel behaved as though it accepted de facto the Rabat formula by defining the PLO as the partner to negotiate a cease fire in southern

Lebanon. That policy never changed, even after the start of the *intifada* (1987) and the change in Israeli government (1992). Regarding Jordan and the PLO as Siamese twins has become widely accepted both by the two parties themselves and by other Arab actors; this close relationship led to the 1994 Jordanian-PLO economic agreement recognizing the contribution of the two parties to the Israeli-PLO agreement regarding part of the territories.

The common interests of Egypt and Jordan made them close allies, beginning in 1979 and the peace treaty making contacts with Israel acceptable, through 1990 when Jordanian concerns over Iraqi expansion in the wake of the Kuwait invasion led the kingdom to change its orientation. That eleven-year coalition was resumed after the 1991 Gulf War, and even though it was not put to the test, it proved its existence during the 1998 Iraq-US crisis. This is due to a large extent to the existence of some similar policies: open channels with Israel, pro-American orientation in foreign policy and a shared fear of Syria's obvious aspiration since 1979 to become the foremost leader in the Arab world.

In the last generation since the Six Day War the Middle East region lost its image as one geo-political unit. One of the most important regional systems replacing the traditional Middle East is comprised of Israel and Jordan. This system has undergone a change that became evident as a result of the 1991 war in the Gulf. In the past, this system was directly related to the political processes in the territories. More specifically, the diplomacy tying Israel to the Palestinians and the Hashemite kingdom of Jordan was the essential issue. In the system's former setting, it was difficult to clearly separate questions of internal and external existence. A decision concerning the status of the Palestinians would have to be reached through external mediators, yet any such decision would force all actors to redefine their nationality: for Israel as a Jewish state or a bi-national state; for Jordan as a Jordanian national entity or a Palestinian state ruled by the Hashemites; and for those living in the territories, who had been fostering independent Palestinian nationalism that was nothing more than a political territorial vision. The interests and strategies of the two main actors reflected a different pattern of political behavior than in the northern system: neither Israel nor Jordan was interested in fully and officially taking over the West Bank. Thus, each side tried to transfer responsibility for the Palestinian West Bank to the other side. Even the most right-wing coalitions in Israel continued to recognize the partial sovereignty of Jordan, while Israel was the caretaker government, attempting to create facts that would affect the final settlement of the sovereignty issue many years into the future. The continuation of Jewish settlement activity never meant a full takeover of responsibilities from Jordan. These considerations, along with the outbreak of the Palestinian uprising (*intifada*) in December 1987, led King Hussein to deliver his famous July 31, 1988 speech, in which he announced an end to all Jordanian ties with the West Bank, fearing the spilling over of Palestinian sentiments and violent activity into his country. Israeli reaction to that policy came more than five years later in the form of a two-tiered policy. First, the Israeli-PLO accord was signed in September 1993 in what seemed to be an abandoning of the "Jordanian Option", a traditional pillar of Israeli and Zionist Middle Eastern policies since 1946. Second, with the Palestinian issue partially resolved, at least in the eyes of Israeli and Jordanian officials, the October 1994 Israeli-Jordanian Peace treaty was signed as the clear outcome of Israeli-Palestinian rapprochement. However, these two agreements were reached only after the entire system underwent a major change: no longer Jordanian-Israeli rivalry through peaceful coexistence but fierce competition between Israel and a new actor, Iraq. The 1991 Gulf War and the missile attacks on Israel led the leadership in Jerusalem to realize that Jordan and the Palestinians together had fallen into the category of the weak player in this regional system. The true issue at stake was the future of the Arab territories between Israel and Iraq as a buffer zone between the two enemies. For that purpose, Israel needed a pro-Western, preferably friendly, Arab presence between itself and Iraq achieved through traditional contacts with Jordan and the newly consummated accord with the Palestinians. This policy was first pursued under a right-wing coalition government and was reflected in the decision to open bilateral negotiations with a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation with the realization that the Palestinian side did indeed represent the PLO.

An Israeli-Iraqi confrontation over the East Bank is more likely than ever before. However, the signing of the Israeli-Jordanian and Israeli-PLO agreements might lead to the formation of a new anti-Iraqi axis. This new

coalition is a product of the 1991 war in the Gulf as well as the outcome of some additional factors. The existence of a well organized Islamic opposition cannot be denied in spite of the fact that Jordan is gradually changing to a democratic political society and in spite of minor degrees of state intervention. This opposition is already playing a significant role in Jordanian politics and would not shy away from collaborating with external forces. All Jordanian parliamentary campaigns since 1989 demonstrated the existence of significant opposition and the need of the regime to make some compromises with it. Furthermore, the uncertain life expectancy of ailing King Hussein and the future of Jordan in the post-Hussein era have become another major source of concern for all countries and powers neighboring the kingdom. These traditional and new sources of weakness might tempt Iraq to look to the West for a new unifying cause for its own nationals.

Syria, Saudi Arabia and Israel would obviously watch any changes in the Jordanian system with great interest and with an eye to possible political and military response. Thus, the Jordanian political entity and the Palestinian presence, suspicious of Syria and Iraq and concerned with a possible Saudi long-term takeover of the Muslim holy places, are already sharing their survival concerns with Israel rather than voicing support for Iraq and indirectly helping it against Israel, as they both did during the 1991 War. In accepting the new realities, Jordan was merely responding to the question of the survival of its kingdom as an independent Hashemite entity on the East Bank in view of new domestic threats exposed in April 1989 (the food riots), November 1989 (the Muslim radicals' victory in the national elections), and May 1990 (the Palestinian riots). Whatever their eventual stand, the leaders of Israel, Jordan and the Palestinians made a calculated gamble in the fall of 1993 and the fall of 1994.

Conclusion

Direct Israeli-Jordanian relations are approaching their 40th anniversary. It is clear that both sides have benefited from this relationship. Israel shared the burden of Egyptian enmity in the 1950s and 1960s with Jordan, while in the 1980s and 1990s found in Jordan a buffer state separating Iraq from Israel. Jordan found in Israel a trustworthy ally: in 1967 under circumstances not yet clearly discussed Israel relieved the Hashemite kingdom of the Palestinian threat to its very existence by taking over the West Bank. Again, in 1970 and 1980 Israel stood guard and deterred Syria from taking aggressive measures against the kingdom. In addition to these mutual strategic benefits Israel has gained access, though indirect, to the Arab world, and Jordan used Israeli connections in Washington to convey the message that Jordan is now a stable and moderate state in a region which had been known for its political instability. However, any political alliance must provide the participating parties some very tangible benefits, especially if this is a secret alliance and there might be a high political penalty to be paid once the alliance is publicized. Since the price in this instance was to be paid by Jordan, it is evident that she benefited the most from this connection. Clearly, the Israeli-Jordanian block, with constant US backing in the background has contributed significantly to the survival of the monarchy and King Hussein as the head of the regime. King Hussein's aforementioned actions in 1973 war and 1981 bombing of the Iraqi nuclear reactor suggest that he has always been rather grateful to Israel for the contribution to him and his kingdom.

All these crises (1960, 1967, 1970, 1973, 1980, 1981) follow one clear pattern of political and strategic behavior by the two partners: assisting each other against a third Arab player, usually the Palestinian menace and threat. The Jordanian action has always been secret, the Israeli one, even though intended to help out King Hussein, has been either public or became public later. This difference in the *modus operandi* had a lot to do with the different attitudes and expectations from the same constituency: the Arab world. Israel did not have any meaningful relations with any Arab country until the post-Gulf War period (1991) and attempted, mostly to no avail, to build legitimacy among Arab countries for such relations. In the Israeli mind, relations with Jordan might have brought about such recognition, but only the signing of agreements between the PLO, the most vehement and murderous enemy of both Israel and Jordan, provided that legitimacy. The same issue of legitimacy deterred the King from making public his relations with Israel. His grandfather was assassinated in 1951 by a Palestinian for reaching a breakthrough with Israel; unlike him, King Hussein

widened by far the scope of secret agreements with Israel, but made sure he would be around to implement his understandings, and develop them into a full scale peace treaty.

In spite of the long standing friendship between Jordan and the US, their relations have not always been very close and friendly. The Camp David process, which led to what the King termed “separate peace” and later the King’s siding with Iraq during the 1990/91 crisis necessitated a go-between, or rather, a trustworthy ally who could stand by Jordan at times of tension, and also convey to the US some secret messages at times of need. Even though during times of financial crisis Israel has never been significant for Jordan, Israel did provide Jordan with every security umbrella there is. Even during the Iraqi Scud missiles attacks on Israel in 1991, Israel refrained from any action against Iraq, in part in order not to violate Jordanian sovereignty.

During these almost 40 years of negotiations Jordanian foreign policy has been based on two pillars: a constant - a strong coalition with Israel, and a variable - a short term coalition with one of the Arab neighbors of Jordan. This way, publicly, Jordan has paid its dues to the cause of Arab solidarity, while secretly the kingdom based its very survival on the identity of interests with the Jewish state. This duality has also characterized the Jordanian position vs. the components of the final settlement in the Middle East. In the King’s opinion the establishment of a Palestinian state is a must, even though it would not serve his national interests. Taking this position, and indeed believing in it, would bring the king more acceptance among his Palestinian East Bank citizens, while secretly counting on Israel or the Israeli-Jordanian security cooperation to remove any danger to any of the two countries emanating from the creation of a Palestinian state. ■

Endnotes

- ¹ Michael Oren, “Israel and the Question of Overflights to Jordan, 1958”, **Israel Studies**, Volume 1, 1991.
- ² Moshe A. Gilbo’a, **Six Years – Six Days; Origins and History of the Six Day War** (in Hebrew). Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1968, p. 23; **Yizhaq Rabin, Yoman Sherut** [Service Memoirs] (Hebrew), Tel Aviv: Ma’ariv Library, 1979, vol. 1, p. 106. All along his narrative of these events Gen. Rabin refers to them as happening in January. Only the date of the Israeli raid is correct. However, when replacing February for January the description is correct; Avner Yaniv, **Politics and Strategy in Israel** (Hebrew), Haifa: Haifa University, 1994, p. 155; Eli Zeira, **The October 1973 War: Myth Against Reality** (Hebrew), Tel Aviv: Yedioth Ahronot, 1993, p. 26.
- ³ Moshe Zak, **King Hussein Makes Peace** (Hebrew), Ramat Gan: Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, 1996, p. 40.
- ⁴ This secret visit has become public knowledge in recent years. A senior Israeli figure, who was privy to all policy contacts at the time, Mr. M. Gazit, publicly confirmed the existence of this meeting and its significance. **Ha’aretz** (Israeli Daily, Hebrew), May 26, 1998.
- ⁵ Some believe that the *intifada* came to an end with the accession to power of the center-left coalition in Israel in 1992; others believe that it ended with the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993.
- ⁶ For an analysis of Turkey’s position in the Middle East in the 1990s see: Bulent Aras, “US-Central Asian Relations: A View From Turkey”, **Meria Journal**, Issue #1/January 1997, a publication of the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies. Amikam Nachmani, **Israel, Turkey and Greece: Uneasy Relations in the East Mediterranean**, London: Frank Cass, 1987; Alon Liel, **Turkey in the ME: Oil, Islam and Politics**, Dayan Center and Kibbutz Ha’mouchad, 1994, (Hebrew), has a chapter on Israel-Turkey.
- ⁷ Cf. **Christian Science Monitor**, February 18, 1982.
- ⁸ See the Jordanian coverage of the King’s public appearances on April 13, 1974; August 29, 1974; and August 17, 1982.
- ⁹ See the Jordanian coverage of the King’s public appearance on August 29, 1974.
- ¹⁰ **FBIS**, June 2, 1981, Hussein speech at Kremlin, May 27, 1981.
- ¹¹ **FBIS**, June 2, 1981, Hussein speech at Kremlin, May 27, 1981.
- ¹² **FBIS**, March 31/April 1, 1982, “Al-Ufuq Interviews Hussein on Mideast Issues”.

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- ¹³ **FBIS**, January 24, 1978, Hussein interview by BBC correspondent (January 21).
- ¹⁴ *al-Majmu'ah al-Kamilah li-Khutab Jalalat al-Malik al-Hussein bin Talal al-mu'azzam* (Arabic), [the full collection of HM King Hussein b. Talal's speeches], Amman: 1985?, vol. 3, pp. 39-47; the King's speech of June 5, 1968.
- ¹⁵ Ambassador Findley Burns, Jr., (US Ambassador to Jordan, 1966-1968), oral history interview, Georgetown University Library, November 3, 1988, p. 11.
- ¹⁶ **FBIS**, February 9, 1977.
- ¹⁷ **FBIS**, August 12, 1982, "King Hussein Grants Interview to French TV", August 13, 1982.
- ¹⁸ **FBIS**, September 9, 1981, Hussein interview: Paris, Arab paper, September 5, 1981.
- ¹⁹ **FBIS**, March 21, 1983, King Hussein's London Press Conference, March 19, 1983.
- ²⁰ Israel State Archives, FM 4092/13, minutes of the committee's session of December 12, 1966.
- ²¹ Israel State Archives, FM 4092/14, recommendations of the committee as presented on January 9, 1967 to the Foreign Minister of Israel.
- ²² Israel's borders: Egypt 255 km. (in miles: 160), Gaza Strip 51 km. (32), Jordan 238 km. (150), Lebanon 79 km. (50), Syria 76 km. (47.5), Judea and Samaria 307 km. (192); Jordan's border: Iraq 181 km. (113), Israel 238 km. (150), Saudi Arabia 728 km. (455), Syria 375 km. (234), Judea and Samaria 97 km. (60).
- ²³ The following discussion is based on ISA/FM 4092/13, minutes of the committee's session of December 19, 1966.
- ²⁴ A similar Israeli action in April 1973 in Beirut ended up with the assassination of the three leading terrorists of the PLO. The 1973 action, unlike the one in 1997 in Amman, was intended to warn the government of Lebanon while eliminating some of the terrorist leaders and to curtail the PLO ability to carry terrorist activities, it was much larger and Israel did not take any particular measures to hide its activities.
- ²⁵ ISA/FM 4092/13, minutes of the committee's session of December 12, 1966.