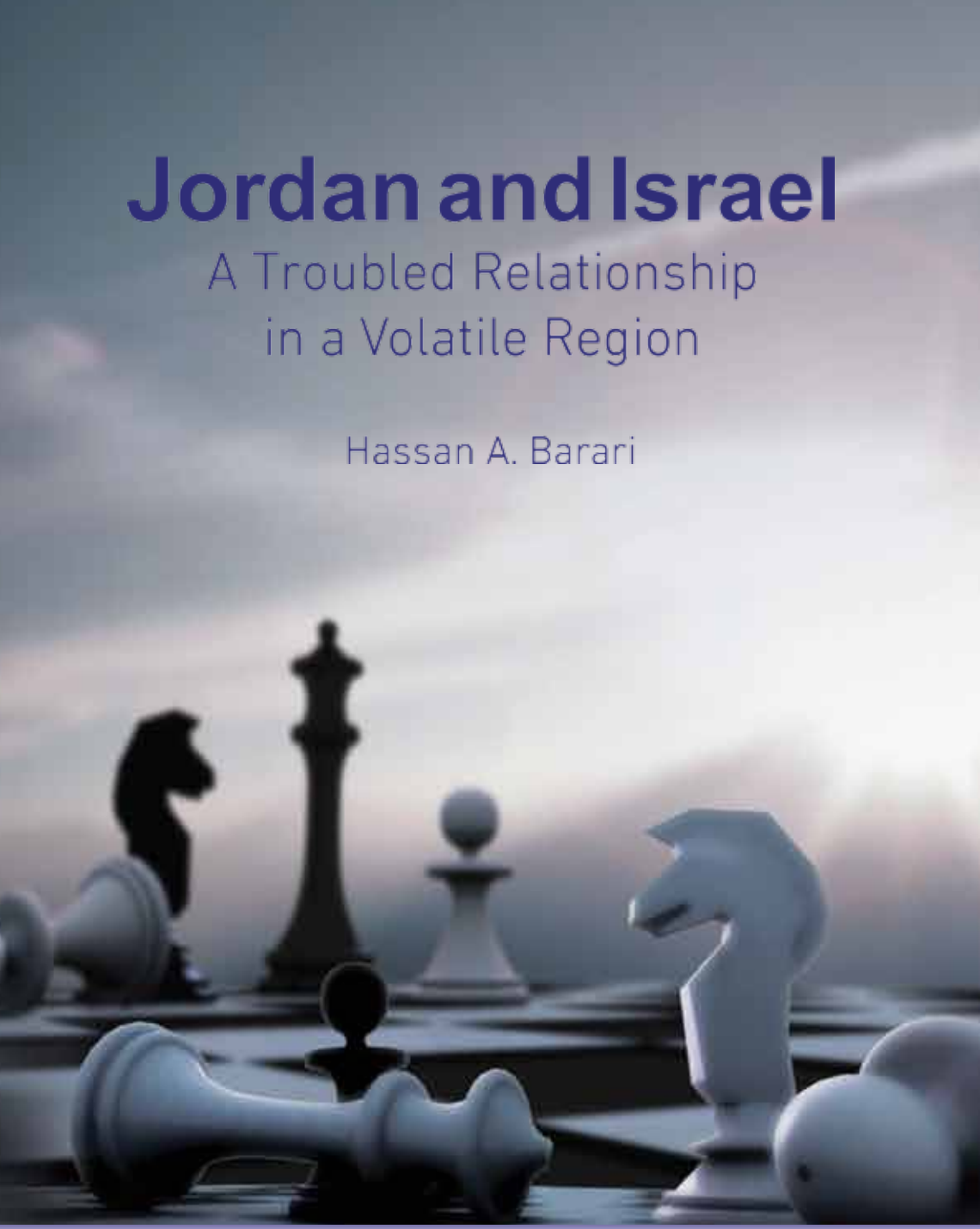
Jordan and Israel

A Troubled Relationship in a Volatile Region

Hassan A. Barari



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P.O. Box 941876
Amman 11194
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Email: fes@fes-jordan.org
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Foreword

Anja Wehler-Schoeck, Resident Director, FES Jordan & Iraq

The 26th of October 2014 marks the 20th anniversary of the signing of the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty. To this day, Jordan and Egypt remain the only two countries in the Arab world, with which Israel maintains an active diplomatic relationship. Jordan is therefore a crucial ally for Israel in the region. However, it can be regularly observed that the peace treaty and the diplomatic ties lack popular support in Jordan and are often met with outright hostility.

In a rare unanimous vote, the Jordanian Parliament called for the expulsion of the Israeli Ambassador from Jordan in February 2014, after the Knesset had started deliberations about the Temple Mount housing al-Aqsa Mosque, which – in accordance with the peace treaty – is under Jordanian custodianship. The deputies repeated this move only one month later when Israeli border guards shot Jordanian judge Raed Zuaiter. At the same time, a group of Parliamentarians signed a petition demanding for the peace treaty to be cancelled. At many occasions, protesters have taken to the street, voicing their anger with regard to Israeli policies, calling for a severance of all ties with the neighboring state and burning Israeli flags.

The 20th anniversary of the signing of the peace treaty thus marks an important opportunity to reassess the challenging relationship between Jordan and Israel against the backdrop of popular discontent in Jordan as well as the dramatic regional developments. The current situation leaves room for little optimism. Even more so, the future of the region depends on the continuation of an open and inspired dialogue both within and between the countries to address challenges and strategies to master them.

With the publishing of this book, the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Amman aims to contribute a Jordanian perspective and to promote a continued conversation on this issue, allowing for a plurality of

views and approaches. The author, Dr. Hassan Barari, provides a historical outline of the relationship between Jordan and Israel and presents his analysis of how the two countries mutually perceive each other on a political level. He discusses different scenarios and contemplates the role, which Jordan should play with regard to the peace process, thus providing an assessment of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from a Jordanian point of view.

Through its offices in more than 90 countries around the globe, the German Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) and our local partners work in promoting democracy, social justice and international understanding. In Jordan, FES opened its office in 1986 and is registered with the Royal Scientific Society (RSS). Through our activities in the Kingdom, FES strives to strengthen democratic institutions and processes, advocates open political discussion, supports the efforts of civil society organizations and furthers active participation of all groups of society.

We wish you an insightful read and look forward to your continued interest in the activities and publications of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation.

Dedicated

To my son Basel Barari

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Introduction

In Shakespeare's Henry IV, Part II, the title character sighs, "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown." This phrase thoroughly captures the story of the Hashemite monarchy's survival in an unstable region. The perennial tumult of the Middle East has left a profound and lasting impact on the mindset of the Hashemite rulers in Jordan over time. In particular, it is the persistence of the Arab-Israeli conflict that has sharpened their perception of a mortal threat.There is no way for Jordan to ignore the possible spillover effects of political and security developments on the other side of the Jordan River.

It is not unnatural therefore that the Late King Hussein of Jordan embraced peace with Israel as a means for survival. Having dealt with various challenges to his rule both from within and outside of Jordan, King Hussein opted for peace with Israel as a strategic choice. He deeply believed that the stability of his country and the survival of his regime would be better anchored by maintaining peace with Israel. He pursued the way towards peace very passionately. "There is no turning back," he said. "Whatever the pressures or difficulties, the will for peace can overcome all the obstacles."[1] Indeed, few, if any, questioned King Hussein's genuine eagerness to end the conflict with Israel once and for all. The same can be said of the current ruler, King Abdullah II.

Jordan and Israel sought to present a model of a "warm" peace between their two countries. However, a glance at the recent past reveals why, even today, genuine and warm peace between Israel and Jordan is still far from being a reality. The fanfare that accompanied the signing of the Jordanian-Israeli peace accord in 1994 proved to be short-lived. The assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin the following year altered the dynamic of bilateral relations between the two countries as the Israeli leaders who succeeded Rabin did not share his commitment to peace. As

[1] From King Hussein's address to the Summit of the Peacemakers held in Sharm el-Sheikh in Egypt on March 13th, 1996.

a result, the peace treaty has shifted from the "warm" peace model that many observers talked about into a "cold" peace model similar to the Egyptian-Israeli peace accord.

Twenty years have passed now since Israel and Jordan signed the peace treaty on 26 October 1994, yet the two countries remain fundamentally divided by the Palestinian issue. It is not that both sides have been deliberately trying to prevent peace. Nonetheless, domestic political constraints in Israel and the shift of Israeli society to the right have proven genuine peace negotiations regarding the Palestinian conflict to be nearly impossible. These changes within Israeli society – as explained in the final chapter of this book – inhibit efforts to achieve peace.

At the same time, Jordan has discarded the previous Hashemite ambitions to bring the West Bank under Jordanian rule. By the end of the 1980s, King Hussein realized that his objectives of preventing both the establishment of a Palestinian state and the annexation of the West Bank by the Likud-led Israeli government were incompatible. It was then that a new school of thought emerged in Jordan, arguing that the Hashemite Kingdom would be better off with the establishment an independent Palestinian state.

The peace treaty has survived the many strains placed upon it by regional developments, but Israeli leaders have yet to realize that the bilateral relationship cannot be insulated from the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. In other words, the ongoing impasse in the Israeli-Palestinian track has soured the Jordanian-Israeli bilateral relationship. Furthermore, there is a growing feeling among Jordanians that prospects for a two-state solution, defined by Jordanians to be in the best national interest of Jordan, are fast being eclipsed.

Therefore, if left unchecked, current Israeli policies will create facts on the ground that will prejudice the outcome of any final settlement with the Palestinians. Seen from this perspective, I argue

that the persistence of the current Israeli policies will most likely undermine the prospect of the establishment of a viable and independent Palestinian state. Failure to arrive at a two-state solution will lead to a Palestinian majority in the area between the Mediterranean and the Jordan River, a nightmare for Israel that runs against the raison d'être of Zionism. To avoid this bi-national scenario, Israel may resort to policies that could constitute a monumental strategic threat to Jordan or the survival of the Hashemite regime in Amman. Hence, this book challenges the dominant argument that Israel views the survival and stability of Jordan as a given Israeli interest. In other words, Jordan cannot take Israeli assurances at face value. In light of the unfolding demographic changes underpinning the Israeli-Palestinian-Jordaniantriangle, one should not rule out that Israel may frame its interests differently.

It is important to clarify how Jordanians perceive the threat posed by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Like the majority of Israelis – who support an independent Palestinian state as a means to ensure the Jewish character of Israel and avoid a one-state solution – Jordanians support a two-state approach in order to avoid the possibility of Palestinians taking over Jordan. It is a common argument among Jordanians that unification with Palestine (by way of confederation or federation, i.e. the "Jordanian option") would turn Jordanians into a minority in their own country and would render Jordan an alternative homeland for the Palestinians. The Jordanian monarch has made it perfectly clear that a failure of a two-state solution would pose a mortal threat to Jordan's national security. Indeed, over the last decade, a national consensus has emerged on this. However, senior Jordanian officials have failed to outline what Jordan would do if an independent Palestinian state does not materialize.

While a majority of Israelis support the idea of separating Jews from Arabs – which also means giving the Palestinians an independent state – Israeli politics has made the realization of such a scenario less likely. In fact, the shift to the right in Israeli society

over the last decade and a half has made any concessions – even minor ones – a hotly debated topic in Israel. The Israeli Prime Minister is focused first and foremost on his own political survival, which does not lend itself to the cooperation and compromise necessary to make peace. While Jordan has failed to articulate an option other than a two-state solution, many Israelis have addressed the issue and have proposed alternatives. Some prominent Israeli thinkers have promoted unconventional and radical solutions, with some going so far as suggesting that Jordan should have a role in the final resolution of the conflict and relinquish the notion of a two-state solution.

The objective of this book is twofold. The first objective is to assess the development of the Israeli-Jordanian relationship in the period before and after peace was made. The second objective is to foreshadow whether the two countries are likely to clash or whether they can continue to peacefully manage their fundamental differences in a changing region. Overall, the book will focus on the bilateral relations and account for the persistence of the "cold" peace paradigm.

Structure of the Book

The book is divided into four chapters. Chapter One is historical in nature, and presents the background of the bilateral relationship and how the two countries managed their relationship during the period that preceded the peace treaty. It traces the historical roots of the "best of enemies" relationship and examines whether the two sides were locked in a zero-sum struggle or cooperated to realize mutual interests.

Chapter Two scrutinizes the evolution of Jordan in Israeli strategic thinking over the decades. It also accounts for the failure of the "Jordanian option" as it was originally articulated. Rabin rejected

this concept in the early 1990s, a move that paved the way for peace in 1994. Additionally, this chapter investigates how various political forces within Israel see Jordan and how this has manifested in Israeli politics.

Chapter Three delves into Jordan's Israeli dilemma and the King's skillful manipulation of regional politics to stay relevant to any solution. It traces how Israel has evolved in Jordan's strategic thinking. Also, it addresses the Jordanian public's view of Israel and why the spread of anti-Israeli sentiment never influenced Jordan's foreign policy vis-à-vis the peace treaty.

Chapter Four accounts for the shift from a "warm" to a "cold" peace paradigm. The argument is made that decoupling the Israeli-Jordanian bilateral relations from the impasse in the Israeli-Palestinian peace track is simply not possible. Neither Jordan nor Israel has internalized the true meaning of achieving peace. While Israel claims to respect Jordan as a sovereign state, its intelligence services made an assassination attempt on a Jordanian citizen in 1997 in Amman. By the same token, the Jordanian monarch made peace without preparing his people for such a major shift.

In the epilogue, I argue that soon both countries will have to deal with the possibility of the two-state scenario being eclipsed. Difficult choices will have to be made in years to come. The epilogue also highlights how the breakdown of the peace process and the failure of the two-state solution will pose a difficult question for various parts of society in Israel. Finally, it reflects on the entire period and attempts to sketch out what the future holds for both countries.

Chapter 1:

From a Security Regime to Peace

1.1. Introduction

The foundation of Jordanian-Israeli relations dates back to the British Mandate period, during which Great Britain controlled both Jordan and Palestine. The two sides managed to cultivate a rare, yet complicated relationship due to their overlapping strategic interests as well as the weakness at the time of the quickly growing Palestinian nationalist movement. Though both sides fought on a number of occasions and maintained a seemingly hostile mode of interaction, their relationship was far from being zero-sum in nature. In fact, this accounts for the bilateral relationship's transformation from a de facto peace to a public de jure peace in 1994.

Unlike other surrounding countries, Jordan's geostrategic centrality has been both an asset and a liability. On the one hand, Jordan's location and its early involvement in the Palestinian question have rendered it indispensable in any solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For Asher Susser, Jordan's stability as well as its limitations derives from its geopolitical centrality.[2] Few, if any, could fathom a solution to the long-standing conflict without Jordan's direct or indirect involvement. This widespread impression was never lost on Jordanian senior officials. Jordan's monarchs, King Hussein in particular, have shrewdly exploited the country's centrality in order to secure reliable external support from the United States, the West, and Arab states.

On the other hand, Jordan's maneuverability in the region has never been easy. Lacking essential financial windfall, Jordan must balance contending political pressures from different directions. Its relationship with surrounding countries, including Israel, has therefore never been without constraints. While both King Abdullah I and King Hussein sought to create a regional order that would

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[2] Asher Susser, "Jordan: Preserving Domestic Order in a Setting of Regional Turmoil,*"Middle East Brief,* No.27, March 2008.

allow Jordan to survive and prosper, they had to take into account the restrictions caused by the country's geostrategic location, placing Jordan in an unenviable position on a number of occasions.In other words, Jordan's regional environment has offered it both risks and opportunities. On some occasions, it has even challenged Jordan's conception of regional stability. This has forced

> Jordan to contend, at different points in its history, with events initiated by regional leaders such as Gamal Abdel Nasser in the 1950s and 1960s, or by external players like the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War; with burning regional issues like the Palestinian problem; and with ideological trend and movements such as a pan-Arabism or Islamic fundamentalism – and with the constraints imposed by all of these factors.[3]

Of all of the the regional players, Israel's policy vis-à-vis the Palestinian cause has constrained Jordan's foreign policy. Though Jordan has sought Israel's cooperation in peace, Israel's expansionist and defensive policies have exhibited Jordan's relative weakness in dealing with Israel. Until today, Jordan's engagement with the Palestinians is by and large informed by Israeli policies with regards to the peace process.

This chapter is composed of three sections. Section one examines Jordan's involvement in the war of 1948 and the controversy surrounding Jordan-Israeli interaction before, during, and after the war. Section two argues that although Jordan was docile during the period between 1948 and 1967, its relationship with Israel over the first decades of the conflict could be considered zero-sum in nature. Two issues made the conflict persist: the refusal of Israel to withdraw from land and its rejection to repatriate Palestinian refugees. Section three delves into Jordanian-Israeli bilateral relations, arguing that even before Jordan signed the peace treaty with Israel, there was a de facto

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[3] *Ibid.*

peace or a security regime that developed in the aftermath of the 1967 War. Indeed, the Six-Day War profoundly changed the strategic milieu in which both Israel and Jordan operated, resulting in a more confident Israel holding Arab land that could be traded off for peace.

1.2. Conflict and Cooperation

Jordan's involvement in the 1948 War has often been considered controversial, and historians have debated the role of Jordan and Britain in the run up to the war. It is widely believed that King Abdullah I sought to strengthen his relationship with Britain in the aftermath of World War Two in order to expand Jordan's borders. This belief invited considerable Arab criticism at the time. Mary Wilson argues that Jordan's "continued close relations with Britain set Abdullah at odds with the general post-war trend of Arab affairs away from Britain's grasp."[4] Abdullah's relentless effort to appeal to the Syrians for unity and his position on the issue of Palestine's partition further distanced him from many Arab leaders who began to fear him.

During the second half of the 1940s, attention was mainly focused on the issue of Palestine. Failing to reconcile the demands of the Arabs and the Jews on Palestinian land, Britain referred the problem to the United Nations so that it could suggest an acceptable solution to all parties involved. To settle the problem, the United Nations established a special committee to issue recommendations. After visiting Palestine and meeting with various politicians, including King Abdullah, the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) reported back to the United Nations suggesting the partition of Palestine.

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[4] Mary C. Wilson, *King Abdullah, Britain and the making of Jordan* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p.151.

At this juncture, it is worth mentioning that there was no Palestinian partner who would or could accept the partition of Palestine into two states. In his seminal book and dispassionate description of the Palestinian society under the British Mandate, Rashid Khalidi argued that the Palestinian society was too weak and fragmented to effectively react.[5] Khalidi examines the actions of Palestinian leaders under the British Mandate that led to their failure to build the structures and organizations that could have facilitated the establishment of a Palestinian state. For Khalidi, the decade preceding the 1948 War was catastrophic. Unlike the Yishuv (Jewish society during the British Mandate), Palestinian leaders squandered their opportunities.

Contrary to the Zionist leaders who succeeded in building the necessary structures for establishing a state, Palestinian society suffered from harmful internal weaknesses. This imbalance was reflected clearly when the two sides fought in the wake of the partition plan. That is not to say that external powers did not play a role in helping Zionist leaders in their bid to build a state while simultaneously depriving the Palestinians from taking similar road. To be sure, the external powers, Great Britain in particular, helped create an uneven playing field in which the Zionists had the upper hand, particularly in the decade preceding the war. Nevertheless, Khalidi offers a meticulous effort to highlight the Palestinians' own problems: rivalries among Palestinians leaders in serving the colonial masters and, more importantly, leaders who mismanaged the Palestinian revolt from 1936 to 1939.[6] Explicit in the book is his anguished question about why the Palestinians society crumbled in such dramatic way in 1948. Khalidi provides an answer as to why the Palestinians have to this day failed to achieve an independent Palestinian state.

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[5] Rashid Khalidi, *The Iron Cage: The Story of the Palestinian Struggle for Statehood* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006).
[6] *Ibid.*

On the eve of the passing of the partition plan and the subsequent eruption of an armed conflict, Palestinian society was fragmented compared to a more cohesive and efficient Yishuv. Capitalizing on the divided and nearly leaderless Palestinian society, the leaders of the Jewish Agency turned their attention to King Abdullah of Jordan as someone who might agree to the partition of Palestine. Their calculations were straightforward: there was no Palestinian leader who would accept the partition of Palestine; King Abdullah and the Zionists were apprehensive about the Palestinian national movement; and King Abdullah would be tempted to expand his kingdom to include parts of Palestine. This marked the beginning of the emergence of the "Jordanian option" in the thinking of the Zionist leaders.

Zionist leaders saw Jordanian King Abdullah of Jordan as being dissatisfied with Jordan's borders and therefore believed that he would be susceptible to their scheme of partitioning Palestine. In his book, Collusion across the Jordan, the renowned Israeli historian Avi Shlaim advances a central thesis that there was an unwritten agreement between King Abdullah and Jewish Agency representative Golda Meir whereby both sides agreed to the partition of Palestine and the annexation by King Abdullah of the areas designed for Palestinians in the partition plan.[7] Shlaim, who gained access to Israeli archives, referenced a meeting in Jordan on November 17, 1947 that arguably led to the tacit understanding, just twelve days before the UN's partition plan was passed. Britain, Avi Shlaim argues, knew and approved the Hashemite-Zionist understanding.

Shlaim's thesis challenges the official Zionist narrative of the war, which portrays the Arab-Israeli conflict of 1948 as being bipolar, with a monolithic Arab side united behind one aim: the

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[7] Avi Shlaim, *Collusion Across the Jordan: King Abdullah, the Zionist Movement, and the Partition of Palestine* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

destruction of Israel. Contrary to this depiction, Shlaim makes the case that the Arab leaders were far from being united, and that their differences and rivalries prevented them from agreeing on minimal objectives, let alone the destruction of Israel.

The charge of the unwritten tacit agreement was also advanced in other two books by a Jordanian officer and an Israeli officer. Abdullah al-Tell, a prominent Jordanian officer who fought the Israelis in 1948 and was the confident messenger between the King and the Israeli leaders, published a book in which he condemned the King for his "complicity" with the Zionist leaders.[8] In the same vein, lieutenant colonel Israel Baer leveled similar charges against Ben-Gurion.[9] Not surprisingly, Jordanian historians do not touch on this particular issue at all. For instance, Ma'an Abu Nuwar hardly alludes to this controversial incident. In his voluminous book The Jordanian-Israeli War 1948-1951: A History of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Abu Nuwar did not mention anything about two famous secret meetings between King Abdullah and Golda Meir on November 17, 1947 and on May 11, 1948.[10]

A quick glance at King Abdullah's calculus can help illuminate the dilemma he had to face. As pragmatic as he could be, King Abdullah never underestimated the power as well as influence of the Zionist project in Palestine. Unlike his critics in the Arab world, he understood well the ties that Zionists enjoyed with great powers. Adnan Abu Odeh, a longtime advisor to the late King Hussein, wrote that King Abdullah's "awareness of international developments after World War II, especially the prevailing sympathy for European Jews, left King Abdullah more [certain] than ever

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[8] Abdullah al-Tell, *Karithat Filasti: Midhakkirat Abdullah al-Tell, Qa'idMa'rakat al-Quds* [The Palestinian Catastrophe: The Memories of Abdullah al-Tell, the Leader of the Battle for Jerusalem (Cairo: 1959).

[9] Israel Baer, *Israel's Security: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow* (Tell Aviv: Amikam, 1966), (in Hebrew).

[10] Ma'an Abu Nuwar, *The Jordanian-Israeli War 1948-1951: A History of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan* (Great Britain: Ithaca Press, 2002).

before that the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine was imminent."[11] King Abdullah calculated that Jordan would be better off if it tried to reconcile its interests with those of the Zionists.[12] It therefore seems that Adnan Abu Odeh agrees with Shlaim's argument about the tacit Jordanian-Zionist agreement. Interestingly, Abu Odeh argues that King Abdullah had two common denominators with the Zionists: "opposition to a Palestinian state and exclusion of the mufti from the future of Palestine."[13]

However, Shlaim's "revisionist" narrative should not be taken at face value. Even in Israel, there are a number of historians who take issue with this theory of collusion. Professor Avraham Sela from the Hebrew University, for instance, examines the actual events rather than the tacit agreement, following what took place during the war as opposed to any agreements between leaders prior to the war's outbreak. In his words,

> The conditions and basic assumptions that had constituted the foundations of the unwritten agreement between Abdullah and the Jewish Agency regarding the partition of Palestine as early as the summer of 1946 were altered so substantially during the unofficial war (December 1947- May 1948) as to render that agreement antiquated and impracticable.[14]

Professor Sela downplays the impact of such an unwritten agreement even if it existed, as the two sides were locked in a fierce fight when the war erupted. Whether by design or default, Jordan and Israel found themselves the recipients of a partitioned Palestine. Jordan annexed the West Bank and East Jerusalem, and the Palestinians failed to establish their own state. It is legitimate to question whether or not Shlaim's term "collusion" is appropriate to

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[11] Adnan Abu Odeh, *Jordanians, Palestinians, and Hashemite Kingdom in the Middle East Peace Process,* (Washington DC: USIP Press, 1999), p.35.
[12] *Ibid.*, p.35.
[13] *Ibid.*, p.35.
[14] Avraham Sela, "Transjordan, Israel, and 1948 War: Myth, Historiography, an Reality,*" Middle Eastern Studies, Vol.* 28, No. 4 (October 1992), p.627.

describe the interaction between the King of Jordan and the Jewish leaders. While it is true that the Hashemite leadership maintained a dialogue with the Jewish Agency, the term "collusion" can be both offensive and misleading. It is perhaps for this reason that Avi Shlaim renamed his book Collusion Across the Jordan in a later version to The Politics of Partition.[15]

While Shlaim attaches monumental importance to the interactions between the Zionist leaders and the King of Jordan, the controversy over the role of this interaction in the final outcome of the war is likely to continue. In fact, there is no empirical evidence that the final outcome of the war reflects the commitment of both sides to this tacit understanding. Both sides fought hard to attain Jerusalem and other strategically important places. Much of Jordanian historiography focuses on the main battles over Jerusalem to portray the Jordanian army's heroism in standing up to the constant onslaught of the Israeli army in this particular city.

That being said, the final outcome of the war was more important than whether the two sides had a previous arrangement at the expense of the Palestinians. The existence of the Arab Legion in parts of Palestine paved the way for the eventual unity of both banks of the Jordan. The Egyptian ploy of establishing an all-Palestinian government with its seat in Gaza under the presidency of the mufti backfired. Similarly, Egypt's attempt in September 1948 to prevent King Abdullah of Jordan from consolidating his territorial gains in the war went nowhere. Not only did Jordan refuse to recognize all-Palestinian government, but it also opted for a diligent

[15] Although he changed the title, he regretted that. In his preface to the new edition of his book, *The Politics of Partition,* he said, "Some of the criticism of my book was directed at its title rather than its substance. It was for this reason that for the abridged and revised paperback edition I opted for the more neutral title The Politics of Partition. In the preface to this edition, I made it clear that I was still of the opinion that the relationship between King Abdullah and the Zionist movement involved most of the elements usually associated with the word collusion. And I am still of the opinion that 'collusion' is an appropriate term to apply to this relationship, which spanned three decades, despite the violent interlude in the host summer of 1948."

diplomacy to secure the failure of the Egyptian scheme. In a conference in Jericho held on December 1, 1948, Palestinian notables proclaimed the unity between the West Bank and Jordan under the leadership of King Abdullah. Having undercut the power base of the mufti in Palestine, King Abdullah became the ultimate leader.

Now, the West Bank and East Jerusalem became part and parcel of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, leaving a lasting imprint on both Jordan and Israel. Notwithstanding the mix of conflict and cooperation that had characterized much of their interaction, the incorporation of the Palestinian land into Jordan turned the relationship between Israel and Jordan into a zero sum one whereby peace became nearly impossible.

1.3. A Zero-Sum Relationship

When the dust of the War of 1948 settled, Jordan followed Egypt's footsteps and signed an armistice agreement with Israel in Rhodes in April 1949. Mutual mistrust between Jordan and Egypt prevented both countries from coordinating their positions, resulting in the loss of Negev to Israel. In Mary Wilson's words, "Egypt did not want to see the aggrandizement of Abdullah's position and felt that he was too 'versatile' to be a trustworthy negotiation partner."[16] For his part, King Abdullah of Jordan was apprehensive of Egypt. He believed that the Egyptians supported the Palestinian leader Hajj Amin al-Husseini and tried their best to undermine Jordan's gains in the war.

King Abdullah's back channel negotiations with the Israelis could have resulted in peace, yet two issues stood in the way. Israel rejected the return of land to Jordan and the repatriation of refugees as a quid pro quo for peace with Jordan. On these issues, the gap between the two sides was too wide to bridge. King Abdullah

[16] Mary Wilson, *op. cit.*, p.187.

had little room for maneuverability, as he calculated that any concession would not be seen as an honorable peace and that domestic opposition would be a serious challenge. In this vein, he put an end to talks with the Israelis, hoping that the conditions would change. However, the King's assassination marked a turning point in the Israeli-Jordanian relationship.

A glance at the not so distant past reveals why peace was still a far-fetched objective. Aside from King Abdullah's wish to terminate the state of war with Israel and Israel's rejection to budge, inter-Arab relations constituted an impediment to the King's peace initiative. Constrained regional Arab relations emerged in the wake of the First World War characterized by a common Arab identity, yet it was fraught with competition and discord among ruling elites in each country. The processes of colonial rule, social change, modernization, and power politics played a role in shaping an Arab order that served to further constrain Jordan in its dealing with Israel.

With the establishment of Israel, the Palestinian catastrophe, and the obvious Arab incompetence in dealing with Israel, the Palestinian question became a key pillar of pan-Arab nationalism. While Arab regimes often paid lip service to the ideological objective of defeating Zionism, the Palestinian issue became both a divisive issue and a rallying card in inter-Arab politics. Arab regimes' policies toward this particular issue were primarily driven by self-interested considerations. If anything, the Arab fiasco in checking Israel was a clear reflection of the deep-seated inter-state rivalries, even in the face of a common enemy.

The post-war status quo looked untenable. Although many dubbed Israel and Jordan as the "best of enemies," Israel's policy toward Jordan was hostile. While members of the Israeli Knesset typically supported armistice agreements, members on both the right and left severely criticized the armistice agreement with

Jordan. Two motions of no confidence were tabled in protest of the agreement, as it was seen as an Israeli recognition of Jordan's incorporation of the Palestinian and "Israeli" land.[17]

Differences between the positions of Israel and Jordan clearly surfaced during the Lausanne conference, which was held in Switzerland between April and September 1949.[18] Yet the conference failed to bridge the gap between the Arab countries and Israel, as there were two central points of contention between them: refugees and territories. Israel insisted on its position that the responsibility of refugees rested in the hands of Arab states and that the armistice borders should be recognized as the international borders. The first Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion as well as prominent Israeli politicians argued that Israel should not make territorial concessions for the sake of peace. In subsequent talks, Jordanians insisted that King Abdullah would only agree to peace terms that he could defend in the Arab world. Such peace would entail Israel relinquishing land; a demand that was a non-starter from Israel's vantage point, rendering the issue became a zero sum conflict. Although the talks continued until King Abdullah's assassination in July 1951, they yielded no concrete progress.

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[17] Herut (the forerunner of Likud) belonged to the revisionist brand of Zionism which argued that the Jewish people had the right to claim the whole land of Palestine. Its founding father, Ze'ev Jabotinsky rejected excluding Jordan from the Balfour Declaration and established his revisionist movement in 1922. Mapam (left wing party who later on merged in the Labor Party) opposed the agreement on the ground that it acknowledge Jordan's annexation of the "Land of Israel" and open this part to Anglo-American imperialism. Mapam advocated the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank provided that it would be run by progressive leadership. Communists also and the concerned of King Abdullah's susceptibility to the Anglo-American influence. For more details on the arguments advanced Mapam and Herut, see the Proceedings of the Knesset, April 4, 1949.

[18] The Lausanne Conferencewas convened by the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine (UNCCP) in the period from April to September 1949 in Lausanne. Israel, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, and the Arab Higher Committee attended the conference to resolve disputes and differences arising from the war of 1948. It failed to bring about the desired outcome.

Meanwhile, Israel's border attacks against Palestinian infiltrators only underscored Jordan's vulnerability. The displacement of more than 800,000 Palestinians led many Palestinians to infiltrate the armistice lines, principally for economic rather than military objectives.[19] However, Israel adopted a "free fire" policy against infiltrators and employed a policy of military retaliations against any country that failed to stop infiltrators from using its borders, mainly Egypt and Jordan.

Hence, Jordan had a reason to fear Israeli retribution and tried hard to prevent intruders from crossing its borders into Israel, but this was not sufficient from Israel's perspective. Israeli leaders insisted on many occasions that Jordan was also the culprit behind the deterioration of the armistice lines, but Avi Shlaim argues that Israeli charges against Jordan were unfounded.[20] The Israeli government, due to internal political considerations and its desire to maintain domestic popularity, sought to demonstrate its ability to inflict damage on Jordan. The Jordanian government's inability to satisfy Israeli demands led to the intensification of its retaliation policy, which took a new turn when Israeli troops attacked the Jordanian village of Qibya on the night of October 14, 1953. The village was destroyed, some 45 houses were blown up, and 70 civilians were killed.[21] The massacre of Qibya brought international condemnation and the UN Security Council issued a resolution on November 25 condemning Israel for the massacre.

Although the Qibya massacre embarrassed Israel at the international level, it also exposed Jordan's strategic vulnerability.

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[19] Benny Morris, *Israel's Border Wars, 1949-1956: Arab Infiltration, Israeli Retaliation, and the Countdown to the Suez War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

[20] Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World* (New York and London: Norton and Company), p.85.

[21] In August 1953, a new small commando unit was established. Unit 101 was led by a very aggressive officer – Ariel Sharon to carry out special tasks. Sharon ordered his men to penetrate the village and blow up houses to inflict as much damage as possible.

Aggressive Israeli policies weakened the Jordanian government as Jordanian people, like much of the Arab masses, were looking for someone who could stand up to Israel. By the mid-1950s, Nasser of Egypt became the epitome of the anti-imperial and anti-Israel Pan-Arab nationalist movement. Moreover, Egypt's success in branding itself as the hub of Pan-Arab nationalism was sharpened during the struggle over the Baghdad Pact. Nasser became the hero that disgruntled Arabs were seeking after the Egypt-Iraq struggle over the Baghdad Pact and the subsequent victory of Nasser during the Suez crisis, making him the most influential Arab leader at this juncture. Nasser's ascendance ushered in a new phase in the Arab world that was dubbed the "Arab cold war" where by monarchies were pitted against republicans.[22]

Not surprisingly, Jordan's pro-West orientation became a target for the propaganda machine of Pan-Arabists. Jordan's involvement in the war of 1948, which led to the enlargement of the country in terms of territory and population, became a major source of criticism. The unity between the two banks of the Jordan led to a marked demographic transformation whereby Palestinians became the majority of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Though the Jordanian government tried to expedite the process of turning the Palestinians into Jordanians (Jordanization), a great deal of those with Palestinian origins yearned for liberating Palestine from the Zionists. Of course, Nasser of Egypt exploited this situation by appealing to the Jordanians of Palestinian descent. His powerful rhetoric about the inevitability of liberating Palestine engulfed them, thus creating a challenge for the Jordanian regime, which had difficulty countering that appealing message.

Perhaps no period in the modern history of Jordan has witnessed such a degree of uncertainty. Regional political turmoil and internal

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[22] For more details on this particular issue and Nasser's central role see Malcolm Kerr, *The Arab Cold War: Gamal 'Abd al-Nasir and His Rivals, 1958-1970* (New York: Oxford, 1971).

opposition led many observers to cast doubt over the endurance of the country, and the Jordanian government was left with no good options. On the one hand, Nasser and his ideology made Jordan a difficult place for the king to rule. On the other hand, however, Jordanian decision-makers thought of Israel as an enemy who would exploit any turmoil to occupy Jordan's West Bank. Given these factors, the Jordanian monarch followed a balancing act in which he projected an anti-Israeli attitude to placate the people, but without provoking Israel.

Meanwhile, regional developments enhanced the importance of Jordan as a buffer state. A decade of political instability in Syria marked with a series of military coups ended with the announcement on February 5, 1958 of the United Arab Republic (UAR) that included Syria and Egypt under the charismatic leadership of Nasser. To counter that Syrian-Egyptian move, Jordan and Iraq signed a unity agreement only nine days later. Israeli leaders grew concerned that these changes could lead to unfavor able implications for Israel. Three possible scenarios were considered: the UAR would turn against Israel to strengthen ties among rival Arab states; the UAR would resort to subversive tactics in both Lebanon and Jordan; or the UAR would fall into the Soviet orbit, thus rendering it a pawn in the Soviet strategy to disrupt the political stability of the Middle East.[23]

A few months later, on July 14, 1958, the Hashemite regime in Baghdad was overthrown, thus ending the Union and sending shocking waves through Jordan. Israeli officials estimated that Jordan would soon witness an internal upheaval whereby pro-Nasser forces might seize power, which was perceived as a mortal threat.[24] At this juncture, David Ben-Gurion developed his strategic doctrine with regard to the region as a whole. Although

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[23] Zaki Shalom, *The Superpowers, Israel and the Future of Jordan, 1960-63: The Perils of the Pro-Nasser Policy* (Great Britain: Sussex Academic Press, 1999), p.97.
[24] *Ibid*., p.97.

Israeli leaders across the political spectrum were still unsatisfied with the armistice border with Jordan, Ben-Gurion began to see the survival of the Hashemite regime in Jordan as an Israeli interest. Against this backdrop, Ben-Gurion wrote to U.S. President John Kennedy that the survival of Jordan was in the strategic interest of Israel. According to Moshe Zack, Ben-Gurion developed the following three-tier doctrine: first, Israel should develop a nuclear deterrent capability; second, Israel should ally with non-Arab powers in the region such as Turkey, Iran, and Ethiopia; and finally, the Jordanian Hashemite regime's survival to check Nasserism serves Israeli interests.[25]

However, a twist of regional events – namely the Arab-Israeli conflict over the division of the Jordan River, the establishment of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), the intensification of global superpowers' rivalry in the Middle East, and the deterioration of the Syrian-Israeli front – paved the way for the Jordan-Israel war in 1967, thus providing Israel with the opportunity to advance to the Jordan River, a security border for many Israeli strategists.[26] Jordanians believed Israel to be dissatisfied with the armistice borders, and felt that Israel would seek to expand should the opportunity arise. In his book on the 1967 war, Samir Mutawi quotes John Bagot Glubb Pasha saying, "ever since her repulse by the Jordan army in 1948 Israel had long for an opportunity to overrun the remaining Arab part of Palestine, but as long as Jordan was the friend of Britain and the United States and offered no pretext, Israel count not move."[27]

With Israel's escalation on the Syrian front dragging the whole region into war, Jordanian-Israeli relations reached their nadir in the second half of 1966. On November 13, 1966 in a broad daylight,

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[25] Moshe Zak, *Hussein Makes Peace* (Bar-Ilan University: BESA Center for Strategic Studies, 1996) (in Hebrew).
[26] Yigal Allon, "Israel: The Case for Defensible Borders,*"Foreign Affairs,* Vol.55 (1976), pp.38-53.
[27] Samir Mutawi, *Jordan in the 1967 War* (Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1987) p.69.

Israeli troops attacked the village of Samu, located to the south of Hebron in the West Bank. By all measures, the Israeli attack was both surprising and outrageous, and it had a destabilizing impact on Jordan. King Hussein felt betrayed by the Israelis, especially after Israel had expressed its understanding and commitment to the stability of Jordan in a tumultuous environment.

The Samu attack convinced Jordanians that Israel was a revisionist country that would take advantage of wartime instability to expand at the expense of Jordan in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. When the countdown to war started in May 1967, Jordan was in an enviable position, and the king ultimately opted to join Nasser of Egypt in a new defense pact. While Jordan never sought to engage in a military clash with Israel, the new defense pact with Egypt placed both Jordan and Israel on a slippery slope toward war. Equally important to note, the defense pact was fraught with the profound political differences that had characterized the Arab world for almost a decade; therefore, the pact succeeded in neither avoiding the war – let alone winning the war – nor fixing the political differences.

War erupted and Jordan lost the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The military defeat had a major psychological impact on Jordanian decision makers. From then on, Jordan would only pursue a diplomatic approach toward regaining the lost Palestinian territories in the context of peace with Israel. Indeed, the war and the Israeli blitzkrieg changed the entire regional milieu in which both Jordan and Israel would operate.

1.4. A Dual-Track Approach and Balancing Act

The consequences of the 1967 war, during which Jordan lost the West Bank and East Jerusalem in a matter of days, has informed Jordanian policy toward Israel to this day. Jordan's priority became

recovering the land it lost in a war in which it had never wished to engage. In the aftermath of the war, Jordan had little choice but to follow a dual-track approach, generated by the interplay of two factors. First, Jordan's ability to act freely was hindered in this new environment. Second, Jordan's attitude toward the Palestinian National Liberation (PLO) was ambivalent. The Jordanian regime thus had to contend with the challenge of establishing a framework in which the emerging and strong Palestinian national aspirations were to be incorporated, but without provoking Israeli retaliation. At the same time, Jordan faced the immediate problem of managing the PLO's militant factions, which used Jordan as a springboard to launch pinpoint attacks against Israeli targets.

Having lost badly in the war of 1967, Jordan found it extremely difficult to prevent the Palestinian factions from attacking Israel. The PLO was gaining immense popularity, especially after the battle of Karame on March 21, 1968. Despite the outstanding and decisive role played by the Jordanian army in defeating the invading Israeli forces, it was Fatah – the leading Palestinian faction – that captured the hearts and minds of the Arabs and Jordanians. The PLO's view of the situation is best articulated by Abu Iyad – the PLO's second in command after Arafat. In his book, FilastinibilaHawiya (A Palestinians without Identity), he argues that the 1967 war offered for the Palestinians a new horizon for development. In his words,

> The Jordanian regime became too weak to challenge our program. King Hussein released hundreds of Palestinian nationalists who had been imprisoned in the year preceding the conflict… Neither did we lack the support and sympathy of the local inhabitants nor the support and sympathy of the Jordanian army with whom we had established excellent relations.[28]

At this juncture, Jordan was deeply involved in efforts to regain the occupied territories. Securing Arab consensus at the Khartoum

[28] Quoted in Adnan Abu Odeh, *op. cit.*, p.151.

conference held in 1969 and the passage of Security Council resolution 242 provided Jordan with new ammunition in its bid to regain the occupied territories. Despite Israel's intransigent attitude vis-à-vis the idea of withdrawal and its military attacks on PLO's bases in Jordan, the king was both shrewd and pragmatic. Given the changing balance of power in the region and the fact that the Arabs were working at a cross purpose, the king came to the realization that he had one option: pursuing diplomatic strategy to recover the territories he had lost in the war. In doing so, Jordan threw its weight behind the American efforts to bring about an end to the conflict. Yet to the dismay of King Hussein, American diplomacy would not yield tangible results.

Interestingly, Jordan was not oblivious to the external constraints such as Israel's intransigence and inter-Arab politics. With the rise of the PLO and the popularity of its guerrilla style warfare against Israel, Jordan diplomatic strategy of regaining land proved difficult. For almost three years after the war, the Jordanian regime had to contend with the PLO. In Adnan Abu Odeh's words,

> The conflict between Jordan and the PLO transformed Jordan's satisfaction with its diplomatic accomplishments into a deep concern over its survival…While King Hussein was deeply preoccupied in the weeks and months that followed the June war with pursing his peace diplomacy in Arab and foreign capitals, Arafat was equally preoccupied with preparing the ground for guerrilla war.[29]

A chain of events coupled with the lack of discipline on the part of the PLO's factions in Jordan turned Jordan into a country of chaos and disorder. This paved the way for a showdown in September 1970, during which the Jordanian army decisively defeated and expelled the PLO. After the PLO's expulsion, Jordan hoped that it would be less constrained in dealing with Israel. King Hussein

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[29] *Ibid.*, p.153.

had one objective in his mind: to regain the territories occupied by Israel in the war as a quid pro quo for a full-fledged peace agreement. In order to realize this objective, King Hussein was in a position to accept signing a peace settlement with Israel.

In the same vein, Israel considered Jordan to be a partner for peace, and having occupied huge chunks of Arab territories, it was now in a position to concede land. Many Israeli leaders thought this way, yet this was easier said than done. The six years that preceded the October war in 1973, had been characterized by immobility in Israel's foreign policy vis-à-vis peace with the Arabs.[30] Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir turned down all of the American mediated initiatives that could have contributed to positive momentum toward peace.

Contrary to what Israeli leaders claimed, there was no Israeli partner who would make peace with Jordan. Indeed, the debate about what to do with the newly acquired territories paralyzed the government. Even within Labor Party (as will be discussed in the next chapter), there were varying positions. Therefore, it was not unnatural for Prime Minster Levi Eshkol – and indeed his successor Golda Meir – to prioritize the stability of the national unity government. Therefore, the focus on this paramount goal led the Israeli government in the decade after the war to put peace with Jordan on the back burner.

As mentioned previously, it is in this period that the formulation of Israel's foreign policy toward the peace process was driven by domestic political dynamics and came as a result of clashing perspectives and comptition among personalities within successive governments. This Israeli paralysis was a result of several factors, including the ideological affinity that some factions and parties of the government had toward the West Bank of Jordan. Amid

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[30] Avi Shlaim, *the Iron Wall*, *op. cit.,* pp.283-324.

this situation and the inherent instability, the prime minister's role was to balance the conflicting opinions and personalities within the government, which meant in practice that the government could not adopt a clear policy toward the newly captured territories. Successive Labor-led governments favored the status quo rather than adopting a policy that might lead to the fall of the government and, worse, to the fragmentation of the Labor Party and the loss of its dominance in Israeli politics.

Casting aside those intra-governmental differences, a strategic consensus was developing in the wake of 1967 war that associated security with topography. For Israeli strategists, territories were the crucial component of state security. On the whole, Israeli leaders believed that Israel needed a strategic depth so that it could defend itself in future wars. Accordingly, the armistice lines meant that Israel lacked the strategic or tactical depth needed to assure its security, thus rendering Israel strategically vulnerable to a surprise attack especially from the East. In an article published in Foreign Affairs, YigalAllon, the leading Labor minister, explained the logic behind what he dubbed as defensible borders. Allon argues that Israel cannot withdraw to the pre-1967 borders for pure security and strategic considerations.[31]

The failure of the Israeli government to make peace with Jordan had a lasting impact on the development of the conflict. After the October 1973 war, the Israeli government – constrained by the imperatives of maintaining the unity of Labor Party and the coalition with the National Religious party (more on this in next chapter) – dug in its heels in rejecting to offer Jordan any territorial concessions as it did with Egypt and Syria. Despite American prodding, Rabin refused to budge. For Jordan, the Israeli intransigence was hurtful. It was not as if the King of Jordan did not warn the Israeli leaders of the grave consequences of not offering Jordan territorial

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[31] Yigal Allon, "Israel: The Case for Defensible Borders, *"op.cit.*, pp.38-53.

concessions like Egypt and Syria. And yet, all of the King's clandestine meetings with the Israeli leaders failed to generate a different outcome. At this juncture, Jordan attended the Rabat summit of 1974 empty handed. Having failed to secure Israeli withdrawal, Jordan had to accept the resolution in Rabat, whereby the Arabs would acknowledge the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

The Labor Party began to lose its power base in the wake of the October war of 1973. By 1977, the party was fraught with internal differences and corruption scandals. Therefore, it lost the 1977 general election and Likud formed the government. With Likud in power and Begin at the helm of Israeli politics, King Hussein had reasons to worry. The consequence of Likud's ascendance in Israeli politics was not lost on Jordanian officials. Some influential circles within Likud adopted the slogan "Jordan is Palestine." Although Begin surprised all observers when he accepted to return the Sinai to Egypt in the context of a peace treaty, he followed an aggressive settlement policy in the West Bank. Indeed, his objective was to build as many settlements as possible to offer them as a faitaccompli. It was a conscious policy on the part of Likud-led governments to create facts on the ground to prevent any future Labor-led government from offering Jordan any territorial concessions.

Even when Labor returned to power in 1984, it was in partnership with Likud. The national unity government was a recipe for paralysis in foreign policy. King Hussein's meticulous and persistent efforts to convince both the Israelis and the PLO to make peace reached a deadlock during the second half of the 1980s. Even when Jordan decided to circumvent the Rabat decision by working with Shimon Peres, its efforts did not materialize (more details on this particular point in the next two chapters).

With the eruption of the Palestinian Intifada in December 1987 and the failure of Shimon Peres to make good on his word with regard to holding an international conference in line with London agreement,[32] King Hussein opted for a different course of action. On July 31, 1988, he severed Jordan's legal and administrative ties with the West Bank. In a stroke of pen, the King deprived the Labor Party from its favorite slogan "the Jordanian Option." Peres had to go to general elections in November 1988 without a slogan for peace. To some extent, this helped Likud win the elections.

In the following two years, two major events with immeasurable impact on Jordan took place. The demise of the Cold War and the subsequent hegemonic status of the United States in the Middle East, coupled with the defeat of Iraq, changed Israel's regional and global environments. That is not to say that the failure to make peace was because of the Cold War. In fact, the oft-repeated contention that the rivalry between the two superpowers hampered peacemaking between the Arabs and Israel does not stand up to historical scrutiny. For instance, Egypt and Israel were able to make peace during the height of the Cold War. Hence, it would be rather simplistic to argue that the end of global rivalry would lead to peace in the Middle East. Israeli governments used the Cold War as a pretext to turn down any peace proposal that was not to their liking.

That being said, the combined influence of the demise of the Cold War and the subsequent defeat of Iraq placed Israel in a vastly

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[32] King Hussein and Israeli Foreign Affairs Minister Shimon Peres signed the London Agreement on April 11, 1987. It is a framework for the convening of an international peace conference by the United Nations with the participation of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council. The objective of the conference was to find a "peaceful solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict based on resolution 242 and 338 and a peaceful solution of the Palestinians problem in all its aspects." Equally important, the agreement stipulates that no solution would be imposed on any parties. In that conference, Palestinians would be represented by the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Both Hussein and Peres agreed that their plan would be presented to the American administration to be promoted and offered as an American initiative.

improved strategic environment. As Professor Anoushiravan Ehteshami succinctly put it

> As the radical Arab states were losing important foreign backers, Israel was improving its position in absolute terms: it was increasing the flow of European Jews to Israel, and it was doing so without disturbing its strategic alliance with the United States. On the other hand, in the absence of an all-powerful Soviet bloc, Israel's Arab adversaries were unable to find alternative influential foreign friends without compromising their pan-Arab policies and reforming their foreign policy to make them more palatable to western appetites. For the first time in many years Israel had both the strategic as well as the political edge on its Arab competitors.[33]

Meanwhile, the PLO moderated its policy toward Israel. Finally, Arafat gave in and met the conditions outlined by Kissinger in 1975 to be a partner for peace. Kissinger promised that his country would never launch talks with the PLO until the latter meet three conditions: acknowledging Israel, renouncing terrorism, and recognizing UN resolutions 242 and 338. The three conditions were included in the memorandum of understanding reached between the United States and Israel in 1975 in the wake of Israel's acceptance to sign Sinai II agreement with Egypt.

Amid talks of a new world order, the Bush administration helped and in some cased forced all parties to the conflict to attend the Madrid Peace Conference of November 1991. The launching of the Madrid process paved the way for the Oslo agreements and the Jordan-Israel peace treaty. In effect, the Oslo accord signed on September 13, 1993 was the sine qua non for peace treaty between Jordan and Israel.

1.5. Conclusion: From De Facto to De Jure Peace

The proximity of Jordan to Palestine and the internal demographic reality caused by Jordan's involvement in the 1948 war

[33] Anoushiravan Ehteshami, "The Arab States and the Middle East Balance of Power," in Games Gow (ed.), *Iraq, The Gulf Conflict and the World Community* (London, Brassey's, 1992) p.61.

made it impossible for Jordan to dissociate itself from developments that unfolded across the Jordan. For this reason, Jordan will inevitably be impacted to a great extent by the impasse in the peace process or the way in which the conflict may be resolved.

At the heart of the conflict between Jordan and Israel was the future of the Palestinian territories. Even prior to the first Arab-Israeli war, Jordan was compelled to defend parts of Palestine and to expand its territories. Though Israel and Jordan met on the battlefield, their relationship has been far from being simple. Unlike other cases in which Israel and its adversaries were locked in a deadly conflict, Israel and Jordan had to maintain a security regime. This choice was based on the cost-benefit analysis of both actors: Israel's superior military prowess compelled Jordan to dismiss the military option in dealing with Israel. Therefore, in light of Israel's rejection to meet Jordan's conditions for peace, Jordan opted for a security regime with Israel. This evolving relationship took the shape of functional cooperation for the majority of the two decades following the war of 1967.

In his clandestine meetings with Israeli leaders, King Hussein underscored Jordan's readiness to sign a peace treaty if Israel would accept a withdrawal to the pre-1967 borders. Jordan's position remained consistent; yet there was no Israeli partner who would take up Jordan's constant prod for peace. Domestic political considerations and the changing nature of the Israeli society made it impossible for Labor-led governments to seriously offer Jordan territorial concessions as a quid pro quo peace agreement. When Likud assumed power in 1977, Jordan ceased to be a favorable partner. On the contrary, Likud-led governments adopted policies that further alienated Jordan.

That being said, Jordan and Israel maintained minimum contact to ensure that the security regime remained intact. However, with the systemic changes at the international level and with the changing

regional balance of power in the wake of Iraq's defeat in 1991, Jordan sought to break with its isolation caused by its pro-Iraq stance. The Madrid process provided a golden opportunity for Jordan to regain its weight and centrality. Changes in Israel that led to the conclusion of the Oslo accord paved the way for an eventual full-fledged peace treaty signed by Jordan and Israel on October 26, 1994. In fact, without the PLO stepping in and signing the Oslo accord, peace between Jordan and Israel would have been unthinkable.

Despite the fact that Jordan has always been a country with modest capabilities and meager resources, it managed to keep its head above water. One key reason for Jordan's ability to survive in such a tumultuous environment was King Hussein's statecraft in making Jordan relevant and indeed pivotal to any solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. For decades, Jordan has occupied a central place in regional politics. In the next chapter, I will delve into how Jordan evolved in Israeli strategic thinking and how it became a pivotal state despite its strategic vulnerability.

Chapter 2:

Jordan in Israel's Strategic Thinking

2.1. Introduction

While all states have security challenges with which to contend, the case of Israel is in many ways unique. The state of Israel's survival and the nature of its security challenges derive from both its failure to gain legitimacy in the region and its expansionist policy in Palestinian land. This is hardly a new problem. During the British Mandate of Palestine, Zionist diplomacy failed to gain the Arabs' blessing of their project of statehood. Furthermore, Israel has yet to accept the Palestinians' right to self-determination, a prerequisite for any sort of historical reconciliation between the Palestinians and Israelis.

During the 1930s, when relations between the Zionists and the Palestinians reached their nadir, Palestinians resorted to a revolt against Jews and the British rule, which lasted from 1936 until 1939. For the British, it was hard to avoid the realization that coexistence between the Palestinians and Jews was simply an illusion. Equally important, from that moment onward, the Zionists internalized that war with the Palestinians was inevitable. Influenced by this new thinking, the Zionist leaders – particularly David Ben-Gurion – began to prepare for that eventuality. The Palestinians, on the other hand, were far from being prepared for such a war. As Rashid Khalidi argues, the Palestinians would feel the negative impact of their revolt a decade later[34] when Palestinian society – fraught with fragmentation and weakness after the

[34] Rashid Khalidi, The Iron Cage: The Story of the Palestinian Struggle for Statehood (USA: Beacon Press, 2006). In this book, Khalidi accounts for the Palestinians' failure to establish an independent state before 1948 and the consequences of this historical failure. In this book, Khalidi makes it perfectly clear that he is not oblivious to the role of external factors that greatly contributed to the non-establishment of the Palestinians state. He also predicted that many would ask on the same question, in his words, why concentrate on the failures or incapacities of the Palestinians to achieve independence before 1948, when the constellation of forces arrayed against them was so powerful, and in the end proved overwhelming? Why not focus on the external forces that played a predominant role in preventing the Palestinians from achieving self-determination?".

revolt, – had to face a well-prepared and more equipped Yishuv toward the end of 1947.[35]

Many have written on the Yishuv's unsuccessful attempts to establish a Jewish state in Palestine.[36] The struggle in Palestine was by and large over the same piece of land, thus it was impossible to reconcile the incompatible claims of both the Zionists and the Palestinians. All attempts made to find a peaceful solution to the conflict in Palestine failed. Not surprisingly, the passage of the partition plan of 1947 – which was intended to introduce a peaceful solution – did little to prevent the eruption of the war. The mainstream Palestinian position claimed that the partition plan favored the Jews; therefore, they dismissed it and no Palestinian politician dared to accept the partition plan.

At one point, it was clear that the Zionist leaders were desperate to find an Arab partner who would accept the division of Palestine. However, having failed to cultivate a Palestinian partner who would tolerate the Zionist project of statehood in Palestine, the leaders of the Jewish Agency looked elsewhere. Of course, Emir Abdullah was not oblivious to the events taking place across the Jordan River. He was keenly aware of the developments between the Yishuv and Palestinians society and exploited the situation in such a way to expand the borders of his kingdom. In fact, Zionist-Hashemite connections date back to the era of the British Mandate of Palestine. Driven by the ideals of the Great Arab Revolt of 1916, Emir Abdullah sought opportunities to expand his country. Thus, when the Palestinians rejected the principle of partition and instead adopted an "all or nothing" approach in the 1940s, Emir

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[35] Israeli new historians such as Avi Shlaim and IlanPappe debunked the myth of David Goliath advanced by Israel. The Jewish forces were better trained and better equipped than all the Arab armies took part in the war combined. Jewish forces outnumbered and outgunned the Arab forces at every stage of the war.

[36] On the Jews' attempt to establish a state see Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World* (London: Allen Lane/Penguin, 2000).

Abdullah came to the fore as a potential partner for the partitioning of Palestine.

The Emir's strategy was not lost on the Zionists, who realized that they would not be able to establish a state incorporating all of Palestinian land. There has been much debate over the frequency and nature of communication between Emir Abdullah and the Zionists,[37] yet most would agree that during the leadership of Emir Abdullah, Jordan became central to both war and peace in Palestine. Despite the fact that Israel and Jordan were gearing into a bloody confrontation in 1948, their relationship evolved in such a way that has defined much of the future of the conflict. One of the reasons for Israel and Jordan's unique relationship and their ability to reach a tolerable modus vivendi is the latter's centrality in the Israeli-Palestinian-Jordanian triangle. As argued in chapter one, Jordan became a pivotal state without which a solution to the conflict was unthinkable.

This chapter traces the evolution of Jordan in Israel's strategic thinking from 1948 until the 1990s. In particular, it examines the positions of the two leading political parties in Israel: Labor and Likud. The first section highlights the debate within the Labor movement until the Labor Party adopted the slogan of "Jordanian Option" and lost power in 1977. Section two examines Likud's changing view of Jordan over the span of five decades, as circumstance and time have tempered Likud's position toward Jordan. The final section discusses the dilemma that Israel grappled with after the loss of the Jordanian option, causing Labor to opt for the Palestinian option and ditch the Jordanian option once and for all.

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[37] Many books were published examining the role of Emir Abdullah in the conflict. The best two known sources are: Mary C. Wilson, *King Abdullah, Britain and the making of Jordan* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987) and Avi Shlaim, *Collusion across the Jordan: King Abdullah, The Zionist Movement, and the Partition of Palestine* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988).

2.2. The Labor Movement and the Origins of the "Jordanian Option" Slogan

In the absence of a Palestinian partner who would accept the partition of Palestine, influential Israeli leaders sought an Arab partner that was both willing and capable of accepting the partition. Thus Jordanian King Abdullah, motivated by his desire to expand the borders of his kingdom across the Jordan, fit well into the Jewish Agency's plan to divide Palestine between the Jews and the Arabs.[38] Against this backdrop, the two sides initiated behind-the-scene talks to explore possible scenarios and to work out an acceptable solution. Ironically, though the two sides agreed to the inevitable partitioning of Palestine, they went to war. Yet war did not put an end to their secret dealings. After the dust of battle settled, they resumed talks to decide on a peaceful end to the conflict.

Talks between Jordan and Israel that followed the war, however, did not result in a peace treaty, nor did they lead to a non-aggression pact as hoped. Influential figures within both the Labor Party and indeed Israel were not enthusiastic about reaching an agreement with Jordan. The possibility of Jordan being taken over by Iraq led Ben-Gurion to worry that there would be no value in conceding to Jordan in any peace agreement. Yet perhaps and even more compelling reason was Israel's dissatisfaction with the armistice borders with Jordan. Ben-Gurion was quoted asking, "do we have an interest in committing ourselves to such ridiculous borders?"[39]

Israeli leaders have often claimed that peace is a central goal of the Zionist movement, and that Israel sought peace in the aftermath of the 1948 war while Arab stubbornness has perpetuated the conflict. Recently declassified archival documents have shown, however, that

[38] Whether Jordan was part of collusion or not is hotly debated among historians.
[39] Quoted in Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, p. 67.

such claims do not withstand historical scrutiny. Indeed, as Avi Shlaim asserts, "Ben-Gurion's lack of commitment to a political settlement with Jordan was a major factor in the failure of the talks."[40] During the first decade of the conflict, Israeli leaders – Ben-Gurion in particular – were not interested in peace because an end to the conflict with Arab states would not allow Israel to expand its borders in the future. Thus, contrary to claims made by Zionists and the official narrative, Israel has practiced historical revisionism.

During this period, Israel official's policy toward Jordan was largely informed by an internal debate between two camps within the ruling Mapai party. The first camp, known as the "activists," were security minded, while the second camp was the "moderates." The activists had a fixed conception of the Arabs, and assumed that the Arabs, Jordanians included, were predominantly interested in nothing but the annihilation of Israel. They argued that Israel would inevitably exist in an environment of permanent antagonism and therefore there was little choice but to rely on raw military power for survival. This perception of Arab intentions was so robust that key Israeli leaders discussed a second round with the Arabs. Shortly after the 1948 War, David Ben-Gurion said,

> If I were an Arab leader I would never accept the existence of Israel. This is natural. We took their land. True, God promised it to us, but what does it matter to them? There was anti-Semitism, the Nazis, Hitler, Auschwitz, but was it their fault? They only see one thing: we came and took their land. They may forget in a generation or two, but for the time being there is no choice.[41]

Thus, according to this reasoning, erecting an iron wall, or a strong army to defeat the Arabs in every confrontation in order to hopefully convince them of the futility of armed clashes, was a key strategy, and one that cut party lines for decades.

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[40] *Ibid*., p. 67.

[41] Quoted in Mark Heller, *Continuity and Change in Israeli Security Policy* (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 10.

At the heart of the activists' arguments was the assertion that the Arabs understood nothing but the language of force (the physical use of force). Therefore, in order for Israel to survive, it had to demonstrate the capacity to employ force effectively from time to time. Advocates of this school contended that peace would come only when the Arabs clearly comprehend that Israel cannot be militarily beaten.[42]

In a rather stark opposition to the activist approach, the moderates believed that moderation was better than retribution and retaliation. Moshe Sharett was the champion of this approach. According to this line of thinking, Israel had to restrain its responses because reprisals would not solve its security troubles. It should be noted that security according to the Israelis was not just an issue of territories – it also involved the problem of infiltration.[43] By striking Jordanian targets, top Israeli military leaders, particularly Moshe Dayan, hoped to force Jordan to patrol its border and prevent any infiltrators from crossing to Israel for any purpose. When reprisal raids failed during the period of 1951 to 1953, Israel entrusted major Ariel Sharon to set up a professional army unit, Unit 101, to increase the efficiency of such reprisal raids.[44]

While the activists had the upper hand in decision-making, Israel's controversial reprisal policy fueled Arab anger and made a political

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[42] For a thorough analysis of this position see Benny Morris, *Israel's Border Wars 1949-56, Arab Infiltration, Israeli Retaliation and the Countdown to the Suez War* (Oxford 1993).

[43] The armistice agreements signed between Israel and the some Arab countries failed to usher in a new era of tranquility or peace between Israel and its Arab neighbors. On the contrary, during the first seven years that followed the war, low-level conflict raged with more than 10,000 acts of infiltration took place. Those infiltrations were by and large carried out by Palestinians who were driven by their desire to harvest their fields they had left behind or resettle in Israel, or visit their relatives, or even take revenge. For more details on this particular issue see Benny Morris, *Israel's Border Wars 1949-56, Arab Infiltration, Israeli Retaliation and the Countdown to the Suez War* (Oxford 1993), p. 14.

[44] David Tal, *Israel's Day to Day Security Conception, Its Origin and Development 1949-56* (Ben-Gurion University) (Hebrew), pp.1-4.

solution a remote possibility. Sir John Bagot Glubb, popularly known as Glubb Pasha and commander in chief of the Jordanian army, argued that Israeli reprisal policy was "merely increasing hatred, hastening Arab unity, fanning fanaticism and making peace more and more remote."[45] For Ben-Gurion and his camp, reprisals were rooted in the concept of deterrence, based on the assumption that Jordan was capable of patrolling its borders to prevent infiltrators from crossing to Israel. Jordan was seen by Israel as a rational actor that would do what it takes to help Israel deal with the challenge of infiltration.

However,Israelis also hoped that Jordan would be compelled to accept their terms for a peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Interestingly, the Israeli strategy of reprisals was counterintuitive: Every time Israel struck Jordan, it fueled the public anger, making it almost impossible for the Jordanian monarch to be forthcoming on peace.

Despite appearances to the contrary, the moderates were not essentially against employing force, but instead favored a more selective and measured use of force and only after taking into consideration its political implications. Seen in this way, they were arguably more subtle and sensitive to both world opinion and to Arab sentiments. Generating an atmosphere conducive to reconciliations, they maintained, required Israel not to rely solely on the use of force as this would fuel Arab hatred toward Israel and thus wreck any prospect of reconciliation.[46]

However, differences between the two approaches were rather tactical. The key bone of contention between the two camps was over how to contend with the challenge of infiltration. On this issue, Ben-Gurion's views were so strong that they shaped the core of the

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[45] John Bagot Glubb, *A Soldier with the Arabs* (London 1957), p. 309.
[46] Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall,* p. 87.

Israeli national security concept. His assumptions about security, which dominated the political scene even after he was forced to resign in 1963, formed what has been called "the Ben-Gurion Complex," signifying attempts by other leaders to make decisions based on guesses about what Ben-Gurion would say.

Despite Ben-Gurion's influence and legacy, the conquest of the Palestinian territories in 1967 generated contentious and indeed acrimonious debate in Israel over their conduct and Jordan's future role in the occupied territories. By and large, the public debate centered on the attainability of peace, Israel's future borders in the case of peace, and the political future of the occupied territories. Such divisive debate led to the emergence of doves and hawks that cut across party lines. Incompatible perspectives, accentuated by personal rivalries within Israeli government leadership, led to a degree of immobility in the making of Israeli foreign policy. For example, the rivalry between Yigal Allon and Moshe Dayan proved to be a disruptive battle and contributed to the territorial status quo (a term used here to signify Israeli indecision over the future of the occupied territories). Prime Minister Eshkol therefore realized that there was no need to come to a conclusive decision and run the risk of splitting the party when no Arab partner was prepared to accept Israeli dictates. Avi Shlaim rightly argues that this "formula, which served as the basis for Israeli diplomacy for the next six years [1967-73], simply stated Israel's maximum demands for perfect peace and perfect security. It did not [however] represent a realistic strategy for initiating dialogue with Israel's adversaries."[47]

To comprehend Israel's attitude toward Jordan, it is important to assess the interplay of three main positions within the Labor Party that came to the fore in the aftermath of the 1967 War. These

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[47] Avi Shlaim and Avner Yaniv, "Domestic Politics and Foreign Policy in Israel," *International Affairs,* Vol.56 (spring 1980), p. 242.

camps could be referred to as the reconciliationists, functionalists, and territorialists, and were represented by the Labor Party's three factions: Mapai, Rafi, and Achdut Havooda, respectively.

The dovish reconciliationist faction was clustered around two prominent political figures from Mapai: Minister of Finance Pinhas Sapir and Minister of Foreign Affairs Abba Eban. This group made a strong case that the retention of the populated Arab lands would be a disaster for Israel.[48] Supporters of this approach were concerned with the nature of the Jewish state and Israeli society, and they advanced both demographic and ethical arguments to lend credibility and strength to their position. In essence, advocates of this approach believed that the permanent retention of the occupied territories would lead to the flooding of the Israeli job market with low-priced Arab labor. This, in turn, would lead to the transformation of the Jewish state into a colonial state, or worse, given the higher Arab birth rate, it would eventually lead to an Arab majority in the area that stretched between the Mediterranean and the River Jordan. According to this scenario, Israel would become a de facto binational state and it would thus cease to be a Jewish state. To ward off such a calamitous scenario, reconciliationists contended, relinquishing the occupied Palestinian land would be in Israel's best interest.[49]

In opposition to the reconciliationist approach, the functionalist camp represented the more hawkish party members. Moshe Dayan and Shimon Peres of Rafi as well as some members of Achdut Havooda embraced the premises advanced by proponents of this approach. Given Dayan's strong pessimism toward the prospect of a peace treaty with Jordan, he backed a functionalist approach to the territories under occupation. Advocates of this policy downplayed

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[48]Samuel Roberts, *Party and Policy in Israel: The Battle Between Hawks and Doves* (Boulder CO, and London: Westview Press, 1990), p. 6.

[49] Yehuda Lukacs, *Israel, Jordan, and the Peace Process* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1997), p. 41.

the gravity of the demographic argument, claiming that any such problem could be solved through increasing Jewish immigration or by the provision of Jordanian citizenship to the inhabitants of the West Bank. They promoted ideas to raise the standard of living in the occupied territories, such as integrating the West Bank into the Israeli economy, to make the occupation more benign. Thus Dayan, in his capacity as defense minister, initiated the "open bridges" policy with Jordan. This policy, which was intended to serve as a "pressure release valve," allowed Palestinians in the occupied territories to be in touch with their brethren in Jordan. The reconcilationists, Sapir in particular, took issue with this approach and even described Dayan's policy as "creeping annexation."

In the middle of the dovish and hawkish stances of the reconciliationists and the functionalists were the territorialists. The prominent spokesman of this group was Deputy Prime Minister Yigal Allon of AchdutHavooda, who was backed by the majority of his faction. Documenting the territorialist stance in what is known as the Allon Plan, he tried to balance Israel's security needs with the requirements of maintaining its Jewish character.[50] Advocates of this school of thought contended that territory was a critical component of security, and they sketched out which land should be retained and which should be given to Jordan in the context of a peace settlement. Therefore, in the immediate aftermath of the 1967 War, Allon envisaged establishing settlements in the Jordan valley, retaining a strategically vital strip along the river Jordan for security considerations, and conceding densely populated areas to Jordan in return for a peace treaty. The Allon Plan was never formally adopted for fear of breaking up the national unity government, yet it should not be disregarded. Indeed, the plan acted as a guideline to the pre-1977 labor party government's settlement policy, which envisioned cooperation with Jordan to avert the

[50] Gershon Kieval, *Party Politics in Israel and the Occupied Territories* (West Port, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983), p. 10.

possibility of an independent Palestinian state and became the core of the so-called "Jordanian option."

At this stage, Dayan and the other hardliners were a minority within the Labor movement, yet they held disproportionate power vis-à-vis the moderate majority. If Dayan and his supporters had walked out of the ruling coalition to join the opposition, it could have led to the fall of the government and might have provided Dayan the chance to lead a Rafi-Gahal bloc. Therefore, had Dayan, with his brilliant military record and general popularity, decided to leave Labor, he might have greatly diminished Labor's chances of electoral victory. To make matters worse, the moderates had no potential partner to their left and thus were scared of losing power if Dayan decided to defect.[51]

The Labor-led government's susceptibility to Dayan's implicit threat to defect if his demands were not met was validated on numerous occasions. Prior to the 1969 elections, the Labor Party was compelled to concede to Dayan's demand of establishing the Jordan River as Israel's security border. Moreover, during the 1973 elections, Dayan won yet another momentous victory when the Labor Party adopted the Galili document in its electoral platform, calling for the development of the economy and infrastructure of the occupied Palestinian territories, the growth of economic ties between the Palestinian territories and Israel, the encouragement and development of Jewish rural and urban settlements in Gaza and the Jordan valley, and the continuation of the open bridge policy. Here again, the hawkish minority was able to force a course of action against the wishes of the moderate majority within the Labor movement.

Nonetheless, the saga of influences and the often-clashing perspectives within Labor alone could not explain Israel's inability

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[51] *Ibid*., p. 77.

to decide on the future of the occupied territories. To fully understand Israel's policy preferences for the territorial status quo in the West Bank, one must take into account the transformation of the "historical partnership" between the Labor Party and the National Religious Party (NRP). The NRP had participated in all Labor-led governments since the state's establishment up until 1977. Before the 1967 War, the NRP focused exclusively on religious matters and followed Mapai in all national security and foreign policy issues without much debate. However, the occupation of Palestinian lands triggered a change within the NRP, which accordingly became more hawkish and increasingly sought to impact foreign policy.

This policy shift within the NRP, which could also be ascribed to changing influences within the party, endangered its partnership with Labor. The party's youth, who had more hawkish inclinations, became more effective and influential and were more concerned with the retention of the West Bank.[52] Consumed by the fear that the youth might take over should the party fail to thwart a future Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank, NRP veterans conditioned their party's participation in the government on the retention of the occupied territories. This position coincided with Gush Emunim'sestablishment in 1974 as a pressure group within the NRP.[53] The bloc derived its ideology from the teachings of the late Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook, who emphasized that the primary purpose of the Jewish people was to attain both spiritual and physical redemption by dwelling in and building up the land of Israel.[54] Gush Emunim therefore focused on the issue of settlement.

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[52] Many of the youth studied at Merkaz Harav in Jerusalem, and were taught by Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook, a son of Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak Kook. He succeeded his father and took over the leadership of the adherents of the messianic ideology.

[53] Gush Emunim was established in March 1974 at a meeting at Kfar Etzion near Hebron. It was set up in reaction to the territorial concession Rabin made to the Egyptians within the framework of the first disengagement agreement signed in January 19974. The group enjoyed the support of the NRP who threatened at the time that any territorial concessions in the west bank would force them to leave the government. Rabin, who had not yet consolidated his authority, conceded.

[54] For more details, see Israel Shahak and Norton Mezvinsky, *Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel* (London: Pluto Press, 1999) .

Given these developments, the Labor Party could no longer take the support of the NRP for granted, particularly with regards to a peace agreement with Jordan. This explains the NRP's conditioning of their government participation on Prime Minister Golda Meir's commitment to not enter into negotiations over the West Bank following the December 1973 elections. Meir, recognizing the indispensability of the NRP in coalition formation, yielded, as did Rabin in 1974.

Faced with a volatile domestic political environment, Rabin chose not to deliver an interim agreement with Jordan. Domestic opposition to territorial compromise in the West Bank, particularly from within the NRP and hawkish Labor Party members, proved to be robust; therefore any concession in that effect toward Jordan could have likewise alienated the NRP. For political survival, Rabin ruled out any settlement with Jordan following the 1973 War despite Kissinger's request that Israel concede Jericho for a disengagement agreement with Jordan. Clashing perspectives further marred Israeli negotiating efforts, rendering talks with Jordan pointless. Meanwhile Peres, representing the functionalist approach, argued that there was no urgency to come to a final agreement as Jordan and Israel maintained a tacit understanding over the management of West Bank daily affairs.

Hence, Peres advocated for the continuation of the status quo and argued that Jordan and Israel could arrive at a peace treaty "if the status quo became untenable."[55] Yet Yigal Allon, at the other end of the ideological spectrum, favored an agreement with Jordan. According to Allon, such an agreement would help prevent Arab forces from amassing troops on both sides of the River Jordan and would thus avert a war between Jordan and Israel. Rabin, who espoused an agreement with Egypt, refused to withdraw from the West Bank and instead offered Jordan the responsibility of civil administration in the West Bank. Haunted by his archrival Peres,

[55] Yehuda Lukacs, *op. cit.,* p. 130.

Rabin feared that any concession to Jordan would only strengthen Peres' political standing. As a result, talks with Jordan ultimately and somewhat surprisingly failed.

While it is true that Jordan assumed a historically central role in Labor's policy making, and it maintained the "Jordanian option" slogan, domestic considerations and the party leadership's priority of Labor's political survival diminished the opportunities for peace with Jordan. In fact, successive Labor-led governments never offered Jordanian King Hussein a territorial concession that might have made the "Jordanian option" a realistic possibility. Indeed, King Hussein made it perfectly clear in many of his clandestine meetings with the Israelis that nothing short of restoring his lands lost in the war would compel Jordan to sign a peace treaty with Israel.

With the rise of the messianic right in the aftermath of the 1967 War, it was simply not possible for Israeli governments to take Israel on the road toward peace. Labor would soon lose its hegemonic status in Israel and thus the position of Jordan in Israel's calculus would change. In 1977, Likud assumed power in Israel, triggering fears and misgivings throughout the region.

2.3. The Likud Party and Jordan

To King Hussein's dismay, the Labor Party lost its dominance in the making of Israel's foreign policy toward the second half of the 1970s. The general elections of May 1977 brought about a dramatic turnabout in Israeli politics when, for the first time, Menachem Begin became prime minister and formed a right-wing government.

Unlike the Labor Party, the Likud Party was not committed to the survival of the Hashemite monarchy in Amman. In fact, Menachem Begin was renowned for his revisionist Zionist ideology that saw Jordan as an integral part of the "land of Israel." He was a

great believer in the teachings and legacy of Ze'ev Jabotinsky and had a deep-seated commitment to the idea of the Jewish historical right to all of Palestine. For him, the West Bank was "Judea and Samaria," the heart of the biblical land of Israel.

Therefore, it was not unusual for him to discard both the UN partition plan of 1947 and the 1949 armistice agreement with Jordan. Moreover, he believed that Israel should have "liberated" the West Bank of Jordan during the 1948 War. Just one day after the declaration of the establishment of the state of Israel, Begin said indignantly, "We shall remember that the homeland has not yet been liberated." He continued to say,

> "The homeland is historically and geographically an entity. Whoever fails to recognize our right to the entire homeland does not recognize our right to any of its territories. We shall never yield our natural and eternal right. We shall bear the vision of a full liberation."[57]

In line with his rhetoric surrounding Jordan, Begin called for a no-confidence vote in order to unseat Ben-Gurion over the armistice agreement with Jordan.[58]

To better comprehend Likud's position on peace with Jordan, it is necessary to outline the evolution of Likud's perception of Jordan through the twentieth century. Initially, the Revisionist Movement, the intellectual source of Likud, refused to acknowledge the 1922 League of Nations decision to exclude Jordan from the Balfour Declaration. This refusal was observable in the emblem and anthem of Herut, Likud's predecessor. The emblem displays a hand holding a rifle imposed over a map of Jordan and Palestine, while the anthem contains the words "two banks has the Jordan; this one's ours, the other too."[59] To the disciples of this brand of Zionism, Jordan was seen as a key component of the land

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[57] Menachem Begin, *The Revolt* (New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1977) (Originally published 1951), pp. 433-34.
[58] *Ibid.,* p. 31
[59] Robert Bookmiller, "Likud's Jordan policy," *Middle East Policy* - September 1, 1997, p. 91.

of Israel and should therefore be liberated.

Indeed, Herut incorporated the goal of Greater Israel in its founding document, which asserts that "the Hebrew Homeland, whose territory extends on both sides of the Jordan, is a single historical and geographical unit," and "the role of the present generation is to restore to the bosom of Jewish sovereignty those parts of the homeland that were torn from it and delivered to foreign rule."[60] Thus, when Jordan declared its unity with the West Bank and East Jerusalem in the first half of 1950, Menachem Begin was furious. He disregarded Jordan's decision and criticized Ben-Gurion's inaction, considering it a tacit agreement with Jordan, or "another Munich." Herut and Begin in particular continued to push the government to occupy Jordan through the 1950s.[61]

Time and new regional and internal developments tempered Herut's ideological stance. Begin and his coterie realized that for them to be influential in foreign policy, they had to shift away from their entrenched right-wing positions. The need to build a coalition with other political parties pushed Herut to adopt a less hawkish position with regard to Jordan. In 1965, Herut merged with the General Zionists to form the Gahal bloc in 1965, a move that pushed Herut to abandon its insistence on conquering Jordan. Though Menachem Begin was ideological, he realized that his slogan "Amman too shall be ours" was unrealistic, and Herut discarded Jordan from its ideological conception of the borders of Eretz Israel. As a result of their changed strategy, Herut then viewed Jordan as a part of Palestine.

Furthermore, the Six-Day War brought about a radical shift in the movement's approach to Jordan. In the aftermath of the war, Herut was satisfied with the war's territorial gains, particularly in the

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[60] Herut document quoted in Sasson Sofer, *Begin An Anatomy of Leadership* (New York: Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1988), p. 126.

[61] See Mohammad Ibrahim Faddah, *The Middle East in Transition: A Study of Jordan's Foreign Policy* (New York: Asia Publishing House, 1974), pp. 107-108.

West Bank of Jordan. Motivated by the war's outcome, Herut began to advocate for policies that sought to consolidate Israel's grip in the occupied territories. Its participation in the national unity government from 1967 to 1970 was primarily intended to preclude any settlement with Jordan entailing a territorial compromise.

To make matters worse for the state of Jordan, some voices in the Likud Party, such as Ariel Sharon, Yitzhak Shamir, and Benjamin Netanyahu, endorsed the idea that "Jordan is Palestine." In 1970, during a period known in Jordan as "Black September," Sharon, then a general in the army, argued for the overthrow of the Hashemite regime and the establishment of a Palestinian state in Jordan. This, he believed, would change the conflict from one over the legitimate existence of Israel to one over borders.[62] Sharon maintained this policy when he became defense minister under Begin's second government. In fact, during the war in 1982, Sharon's military plans were designed to realize this far-fetched objective. Most would agree that one of Sharon's veiled aims during 1982 war with Lebanon was to force a mass exodus of Palestinian refugees into Jordan in order to put an end to the Hashemite regime. Sharon hoped that the demographic pressure of refugees coming from Lebanon would sufficiently undermine the Hashemite regime so that Jordan would become an alternative homeland for the Palestinians.

Sharon's insistence that "Jordan is Palestine" was likely intended to justify and rationalize Israel's possible annexation of the West Bank. Yitzhak Shamir made a similar point when he wrote,

> The state known today as the Kingdom of Jordan is an integral part of what once was known as Palestine (77 percent of the territory); its inhabitants therefore are Palestinians – not different in their language, culture, or religious and demographic composition form other Palestinians … it is merely an accident of history that this state is called the Kingdom of Jordan and not the Kingdom of Palestine.[63]

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[62] Ariel Sharon with David Chanoff, *Warrior: An Autobiography* (New York: Touchstone, 1989), p. 247.
[63] Yitzhak Shamir, "Israel' Role in a Changing Middle East," *Foreign Affairs, Vol.* 60, no. 4 (Spring 1982) p. 791.

Such Revisionist ideology played a significant role in framing Likud's concept of society and peace, one that was starkly different from that of Labor. While both Likud and Labor certainly prioritized security and the state's survival over peace, they had different views of security matters, which led to a fundamental divergence in foreign policy outlooks. Unlike the pragmatic Labor Party, which gave primary importance to security over other values such as land, Likud was committed to an ideology that bestowed a precedent of territory over other values such as peace.[64]

Representing the territorial school (which, according to Shlomo Avineri, gives primacy to land over peace), Likud was motivated by an ideology that led to an aggressive settlement policy in the occupied territories.[65] This policy meant, inter alia, creating political facts (settlements) that would preclude future Labor-led governments from exchanging land for peace with Jordan or even with the Palestinians.[66] The majority of Israelis viewed those settlements as irreversible facts, a fundamental conviction that was inherited from the pre-state period when the Yishuv leaders thought that the borders of their state would be demarcated by the settlements.

Since assuming power for the first time in 1977, Likud has not adopted an official public position with regard to Jordan. However, influential circles within the party, chief among them being Yitzhak Shamir, voiced their deep faith that Jordan was a key to the resolution of the Palestinians' problem. Hoping that Palestinians would turn Jordan into an independent state, these voices advocated for Palestinians exercising their political rights in Jordan. Both as foreign minister in Begin's government and later as a prime

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[64] Avi Shlaim, *Israel politics and Middle East Peace Making,Journal of Palestine Studies,* Vol. 24, No. 4, (Summer 1995), pp. 21-31, p. 21.

[65] Shlomo Avineri, "Ideology and Israel's foreign policy," *The Jerusalem Quarterly,* Vol. 37 (1986), p. 6.

[66] Valarie Yorke, *Domestic Politics and Regional Security: Jordan, Syria, and Israel, the End of an Era* (Aldershot: Gower, 1988), p. 189.

minister, Shamir endorsed Benjamin Netanyahu's efforts in the United States to create the impression that Jordan was Palestine. During the 1980s, Netanyahu, in his capacity as deputy chief of mission at Israel's Washington embassy, created a network of "Jordan is Palestine" committees to distribute information about this slogan abroad.[67]

These committees were established in various countries to counter the Arab efforts designed to empower the Palestinian people and grant them the right to self-determination. Their work rested on four main premises that were used to make the case for the "Jordan is Palestine" myth: First, they argued that Jordan was historically part of Palestine; second, that Jordanians and Palestinians are alike in terms of language, religion, and culture; third, the Palestine Mandate, in its original version, included both Jordan and Palestine so that the two-state solution had already materialized; and finally, they asserted that top Palestinian and Jordanian leaders always talk about Jordanians and Palestinians as one people.[68]

These committees featured many slogans, including: "Two peoples need two states – not three," and "Good fences make good neighbors – the Jordan River is a fence for safety and peace." During the 1980s and the first half of the 1990s, this argument was the dominant narrative for a solution to the long-standing Arab-Israeli conflict. Key Likud figures, such as Sharon, Netanyahu, Benny Begin, and Moshe Arens, were proactive in their advocacy of the "Jordan is Palestine" slogan.

During the 1980s, Likud fought hard to prevent any solution with Jordan. Hence, Jordan's twin objectives of preventing the

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[67] Jordan is Palestine Committees were established in Australia, Brazil, Canada, Germany, France, Holland, Mexico, New Zealand, South Africa, South Korea, Sweden, the UK and the US. Netanyahu's articles on the subject were frequently included in Committee packets.

[68] See Daniel Pipes and Adam Garfinkle, "Is Jordan Palestine? *"Commentary,* October 1988, pp. 35-42.

establishment of an independent Palestinian state and preventing Likud from annexing the West Bank became incompatible. Therefore, Jordan severed its legal and administrative ties with the West Bank and opted for a different strategy. With Jordan's decision to disengage from the West Bank administratively and legally, the slogan of the "Jordanian Option" lost its relevancy. In fact, King Hussein's decision forced a policy shift in both Likud and Labor. While a "Palestinian Option" instead of a "Jordanian Option" began to surface within Labor, Likud began to see Jordan as a partner in forestalling the establishment of an independent Palestinian state.

However, Likud's intransigent position vis-à-vis the peace process emasculated the party in early 1990s. Eventually, it lost power in 1992, thus losing much of its impact on Israel's foreign policy. The "no inch" policy embraced by Shamir and his cronies in Likud gave way to a Rabin-led government, which embraced the Palestinian option. With Likud in the opposition, Labor steered Israel's foreign policy in a different direction. In September 1993, Rabin and Arafat signed the Oslo agreement, a step that sent shock waves throughout Israel. Key Likud figures considered the Oslo agreement between Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) as a "crime against Zionism." Likud as a whole opposed the Oslo agreement, and launched a campaign against it and its architects, thus creating an atmosphere of incitement that eventually led to the assassination of Rabin.

Also in the wake of the Oslo accord, Likud engaged in another reorientation in its foreign policy. Netanyahu disassociated himself from the slogan of "Jordan is Palestine" and fully supported the peace agreement between Jordan and Israel. In his words,

> That may have been the position of some in the past, but it was never a formal Likud position. It is very much neither the formal nor informal position of the Likud today...I believe the Palestinian problem should be resolved in the context of the two states, Jordan and Israel...We view

> the stability of Jordan and its government as an important aspect of the Likud's foreign policy, and I'd say Israel's foreign policy.[69]

Of the 120 Knesset members, 105 voted in favor of the peace treaty with Jordan, with the right-wing Moledet Party being the only members who voted against the treaty.[70] Three days later Sharon wrote an article in which he explained why it was difficult for him to support the peace treaty with Jordan. For Sharon, Article 9 in the peace treaty, which acknowledges Jordan's rights in the holy places of Jerusalem, was the key reason for abstaining from supporting the treaty. Even so, Jordanian senior officials were upbeat to see Likud voting for the treaty. To them, Likud's support of the treaty was tantamount to legitimizing Jordan, and they welcomed the changes that the party had undergone. Indeed, the widespread impression in Jordan that Likud sought to transfer the Palestinians east of the Jordan was a nightmare that haunted King Hussein for almost 15 years.

Nevertheless, Benjamin Netanyahu, who had just assumed the leadership of Likud after Shamir left politics, sought to exploit the treaty in such a way that undermined the Oslo accord. Netanyahu believed that both Jordan and Israel had a common interest in chipping away at the possibility of an independent Palestinian state. For Netanyahu, an independent Palestinian state could become irredentist, thus posing a mortal threat to both Jordan and Israel. According to this mode of thinking, it "was therefore incumbent upon Jordan to join Israel in quelling Palestinian irredentist claims and to arrange a 'strategic convergence' regarding Judea and Samaria that created a link between the population and Jordan."[71] Netanyahu continued heaping praise on Jordan as a model of what real peace means.

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[69] Interview with The Star, July 21-26, 1994.

[70] Five of the six abstentions however did come from Likud members. They were Dov Shilansky, Mikhael Eytan, Ron Nahman, Ariel Sharon and LimorLivnat.

[71] Robert Bookmiller, *Likud's Jordan Policy.*

That being said, King Hussein was disappointed by Netanyahu's failure to continue the foreign policies of Rabin. Netanyahu's attitude and behaviors in his first term were wrenching for the King, thus the honeymoon between Hussein and Netanyahu was short-lived. In a record time, Netanyahu managed to lay the groundwork for a cold peace between the two sides (more on this in chapter four), thus threatening Hussein's dream of peace.

2.4. Conclusion: The Rise of the Palestinian Option

Such in-depth accounts of how Jordan has evolved in Israel's strategic thinking and how it has fit into Israel's interests reflects one key point: Israelis across the political spectrum are driven by the goal of maintaining a Jewish state. In other words, policy is founded in the belief that Jews should be the vast demographic majority in Israel. However, this framework that unites Jews in Israel does not lead to a unified strategy among the various political parties with regards to both Jordan and the occupied Palestinian land. On many occasions, as outlined in this chapter, Israeli politicians worked at a cross-purpose. Indeed, the perennial rivalry between Peres and Rabin and between Dayan and Allon crippled the Labor Party, leading to immobility in Israel's foreign policy toward both Jordan and the Palestinian occupied territories.

Jordan tried painstakingly to recover its lost land in the 1967 War, but to no avail. King Hussein's vigorous attempts to persuade Labor leaders to make peace with Jordan went nowhere. Labor leaders put the blame on the Arabs by insisting that there was no Arab partner who was willing to negotiate.[72] Nevertheless, this blame game was a smokescreen employed in order to disguise the inability of successive Israeli governments to resolve the inherent debate within Zionism over the exact physical borders of

[72] See Yossi Beilin, *Israel: A Concise Political History* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1992).

the Jewish state. Hence, Labor's adoption of the "Jordanian option" policy should not be perceived seriously.

With Jordan's decision to sever administrative and legal ties with the West Bank in July 1988, the Labor Party's slogan lost its appeal. Hence, Labor went to the polls in 1988 without this slogan and appeared to have no policy whatsoever with regard to the occupied territories. Up until the late 1980s, the party was controlled by a few leaders who were in unchallenged positions, such as Peres and Rabin, making the party hierarchically structured and centralized in the hands of a few. These leaders largely determined who would be a candidate for the Knesset elections by choosing the most loyal deputies to form a nomination committee. This committee then prepared a list of candidates, and the central committee gave its final stamp of approval. This selection method secured the selection of candidates who were clients of the top leaders; therefore, without being a client of one of the patrons, one's chance of being a candidate would be significantly diminished.

With the collapse of the factional system after 1974, two camps emerged surrounding two patrons, Peres and Rabin. The patrons fought to ensure that their key clients were placed in good positions in order to strengthen their own stature among the elite. As a result of this patron-client relationship, it was inconceivable for clients to voice ideological or political preferences different from those of their patrons without running the risk of reducing their chances in future elections.

However, the introduction of internal reforms liberated clients from their patrons and as a consequence, clients were able to seek ideological change. On many occasions, those who were patrons had to adjust to the increasing demands of clients for change. Shimon Peres for instance became more attentive to the views of his protégé Yossi Beilin. This change indeed helped the party adopt an increasingly dovish line. The new youth such as Yossi Beilin, Avraham Burg, and Haim Ramon – to name but a few – opted for

a Palestinian option. This development gave impetus to Labor's ultimate defection from the Jordanian option.

Likud's ascendance to power in 1977 was a watershed in Israel's politics and history, and made the ideological inputs in Israeli foreign policy more salient. Likud, under the leadership of Menachem Begin and later Yitzhak Shamir, was driven by a revisionist Zionist ideology that views the West Bank and East Jerusalem as an integral part of the "biblical land" of Israel. The practical translation of their ideology was the construction of many settlements in the heart of the West Bank.

Likud's ultimate goal while in power was to prevent future Labor-led governments from conceding territories to Jordan even in exchange for peace. For Likud, peace was a euphemism for conceding land. On top of that, Likud leaders – who adopted the "no-inch policy" until the 1990s – loathed democracy if this would bring peace for the cost of land. Even Israeli Arabs were not seen as full citizens who had a say on issues of peace and land. Likud was furious that the Arabs helped Rabin in establishing a blocking majority in 1992. Sharon expressed this sentiment in an article published by Yediot Aharanot on July 3,1992, in which he argued,

> The genuine political upheaval in the State of Israel did not occur in 1977 but in 1992, since the rise of the Likud just replaced one Jewish political block by another. In the 1992 elections a completely different thing took place and it was worrisome and scary: for the first time in the history of the state [Israel], the Arab minority – in particular the anti-Zionist part amongst it – has determined who will be in power in the state of Israel and who will shape its future.[73]

In a nutshell, the underlying difference between Labor and Likud was their views of land. Labor considered that any territorial concession to Jordan in exchange for peace would keep Israel both Jewish and democratic. Labor's insistence on territorial

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[73] *Yediot Aharanot* on July 3,1992.

compromise stemmed from fears of a demographic nightmare, which is why Labor adopted the Jordanian option. By contrast, Likud seemed unfazed by the demographic threat and insisted that Israel had a historical right to claim sovereignty over the West Bank and Gaza. They placed the value of territory over all other values including peace.

By design or default, successive Israeli governments have charted a course for collusion with Jordan (more on this in Chapter Five). Ironically, over the last few years, many Israeli strategists have begun to float the idea of a Jordanian option as another scenario for resolving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. As we will see in chapters three and five, the notion of Jordanian option is detrimental to Jordan's interests and an anathema for a majority of the people.

Chapter 3:

Jordan's Israeli Dilemma

3.1. Introduction

In his book, "Our Last Best Chance," King Abdullah II warns that almost "everyone in the region fears that we will soon be plagued by yet another devastating war…Israeli politics are mainly to blame for this gloomy reality."[74] To be sure, King Abdullah is not alone in this thinking. An overwhelming majority of Jordanians agree with the statement that Israel poses the greatest threat to their country.

Neither Jordan's officials nor its citizens have faith in Israel, and their fear is widely reflected in Jordanian media. A quick glance at the daily newspapers in Jordan – even after the successful conclusion of the peace treaty – reveals that the fears of Israel's policies and its consequences are both genuine and ubiquitous. Over the past three years, a plethora of articles have appeared in Jordanian media that express a fear that Israel's policies and schemes put Jordan in jeopardy.

The prevailing Jordanian narrative is that since the War of 1948, Israel has been a permanent source of threat to Jordan's stability and well-being. This perception is fueled by three sources: the persistence of the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land and Israel's insistence on denying Palestinians the right to self-determination; chronic regional instability; and finally, the teetering Jordanian economy. This chapter focuses on the first source, which is the most persistent threat from the Jordanian perspective.

Israel's policies vis-à-vis the Palestinian question, and by extension toward Jordan, have posed a substantial challenge that Jordan has grappled with since 1948. Jordanian officials have had difficulty predicting Israel's actions. Yet despite the uncertainties

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[74] King Abdullah II of Jordan, *Our Last Best Chance: The Pursuit of Peace in a Time of Peril* (New York City: Viking Press, 2011).

involved in this relationship, the two sides have succeeded in keeping their relationship manageable. In fact, King Hussein did the most of any official to steer the relationship with Israel in such a way that would avert a military clash. It was the Israel dilemma that haunted much of King Hussein's thinking and actions.

Much has been written on Jordan's relationship with Israel, or what one Israeli scholar dubbed as the "best of enemies."[75] However, the bulk of previous writing has focused on the two competing narratives to account for the evolution of the Jordanian-Israeli relationship and to analyze Jordan's Israeli dilemma. A mainstream Arab perspective states that Jordan has worked meticulously to prevent the establishment of a Palestinian state, cultivating Israel as a partner in the materialization of this desired outcome.

According to this narrative, Jordan's political strategy of arriving at a peace settlement with Israel since the Six-Day War had been designed to regain the lost Palestinian land and to extend Jordan's sovereignty across the Jordan at the expense of the PLO. Jordan's policy therefore clashed with the mainstream Arab preference for an independent Palestinian state and placed Jordan on a fierce collision course with the PLO and its supporters in and outside of Jordan.

In contrast to the widespread Arab narrative, the official Jordanian perspective states that the PLO and the Arab public, far from fulfilling and shouldering their responsibilities, accuse Jordan of expansionism – and in some occasion of collaborating with Israel – when Jordan's aim has been to recover the land for the Palestinian people so that they can practice their right to self-determination. King Hussein believed that Jordan had a better chance of restoring the West Bank than the PLO, a non-state actor

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[75] For instance see Uri Bar-Joseph, *The Best of Enemies: Israel and Transjordan in the War of 1948* (London: Frank Cass, 1987).

that was recognized by neither Israel nor the United States. For Jordan, the West Bank and East Jerusalem were territories that the Jordanian army managed to save from an otherwise inevitable fall into Israeli hands during the War in 1948.

While both perspectives provide somewhat compelling evidence to substantiate their positions, this chapter argues that both narratives contain elements of truth; therefore, the reality lies in between. Nonetheless, Jordan's Israeli dilemma has been often overlooked. This chapter thus focuses on Israel's place in Jordan's strategic thinking over the decades and how Jordanians view Israel and the impact of its policies on Jordan's strategic interests. Indeed, Jordanians have engaged in a robust public debate over what they need from Israel. I argue therefore that Israel has posed a monumental challenge for both the Hashemite regime and Jordanians alike.

At the heart of the complex Jordanian-Israeli relationship has been the role of Jordan in both war and peace. Interestingly, although all players in the conflict understand that there is a role for Jordan, there has been dissonance over what kind of role Jordan is expected to play. Missing in this debate, however, is how the conflict's persistence has divided rather than united Jordanians. Over the decades, the acute threat perception has in fact perpetuated internal differences over how best to approach Israel.

This chapter contains three sections. Section one addresses the changing strategic environment within which Jordan operates. Given the constant changes of this tumultuous region, Jordanians suspected that their chances of regaining the West Bank and East Jerusalem were increasingly dim. This has produced a shift in Jordan's strategic thinking with regard to the idea of the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. Section two examines the evolution of the two schools of thought within Jordan with regard to the notion of a Palestinian state independent of both Israel and Jordan. The final section sheds light on the debate over what role Jordan can play in settling the conflict.

3.2. Jordan's Changing Strategic Milieu

Jordan's current Israeli dilemma stems in part from its involvement in the Palestinian question even before the establishment of the state of Israel. Like other Arab countries, Jordan entered the war, yet the Arab regimes had different, and sometimes contradictory, agendas. To the chagrin of the Arab regimes, the Jordanian army fought the war in 1984 and managed to control large swathes of the land assigned to the Palestinians in the partition plan. Thanks to its geopolitical reality, Jordan has remained a sought-after partner for war and peace in this part of the region.

Two different yet intermingled outcomes surfaced from Jordan's involvement in the 1948 War. First, Jordan ended the war with territorial gains – the West Bank and East Jerusalem – which indeed laid the foundation for the unification of the two banks of Jordan. Second, and as a product of the first, the demographic composition of Jordan was fundamentally changed, as hundreds of thousands of Palestinians became Jordanian citizens.

The resulting geo-strategic position and King Abdullah's assassination in 1951 hampered Jordan's room to maneuver and clearly exposed its strategic vulnerability, not only vis-à-vis Israel but also in relation to other Arab countries. Jordan's effort to craft an Arab order in line with its non-confrontational benign foreign policy was then dealt a blow by the sweeping tide of pan-Arabism in the second half of the 1950s and Israel's aggressive reprisal policy. The emergence of Egypt's Nasser in 1956 after his victory over the combined forces of Israel, Britain, and France transformed him immediately into an undisputed pan-Arab hero who managed to successfully stand up to foreign invasion and imperial schemes. To the dismay of Jordan's monarch, Nasser's ensuing grandstanding, propaganda, and pretentious statements against Israel and Western imperialism bred hope among Palestinians in Jordan. Nasser became a source of inspiration among increasing numbers of Palestinians and Jordanians, creating a feeling of

antipathy toward the Jordanian monarch, who was seen as a docile and submissive pro-American leader susceptible to Western and Israeli pressures.

The challenge for the young Jordanian monarch was then how to appease the masses and avoid the negative repercussions of Nasser's anti-Jordan propaganda by projecting himself as a genuine Arab nationalist. At the same time, however, he had to behave in such a way that would not invite Israeli aggression. King Hussein learned the hard way that provoking Israel might lead to a military confrontation for which his army was ill-prepared. And as the Arabs failed to come to Jordan's assistance every time Israel struck, Hussein had to strike a balance.

The institutionalization of the Palestinian national movement was a troubling development for Jordanian officials. To the vexation of the Jordanian regime, Nasser helped establish the PLO in 1964, thus undercutting Jordan's position. Jordan's bilateral relations with the PLO before the 1967 War were troubled, and the war triggered a shift in their relations to the advantage of the PLO. As a direct consequence of the war, the Fatah program in Jordan was boosted. This new power challenged the Jordanian regime's ability to successfully control the organization's policies and activities. As Adnan Abu Odeh succinctly put it, "after the devastating war, Jordanian authorities were in no position to prevent the landless Palestinians from organizing and carrying weapons in order to resist the Israeli occupation."[76]

At the time, Jordan differed from the PLO in two respects. First, Jordan's strategy in recovering the lost lands was based on diplomacy and working with the international community to bring about an end to the Israeli occupation. Contrary to Jordan's strategy, the PLO resorted to guerilla tactics, which brought havoc to the

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[76] Adnan Abu Odeh, *Jordanians, Palestinians, and Hashemite Kingdom in the Middle East Peace Process,* (Washington DC: USIP Press, 1999), p. 152.

Jordanian official policy as the regime had to bear Israel's harsh reprisal. The PLO's insistence on launching attacks against Israeli targets from within Jordanian territories and the subsequent Israeli retaliation against vital Jordanian civilian infrastructures further complicated Jordan-PLO relations. The second difference between the Jordanian regime and the PLO was their end goal. While Jordan was anxious to arrive at a settlement that would secure the recovery of the land lost in 1967, the PLO sought to mobilize every possible means to liberate all of Palestine. Seen in this way, one could argue that a major clash between the two sides was inevitable given their fundamental differences, coupled with mutual mistrust.

The eventual expulsion of the PLO from Jordan could have demonstrated Jordan's strength to finally reach a deal with Israel. By defeating and ejecting the PLO, King Hussein felt relieved from the internal constraint that he thought would have complicated his room for maneuverability vis-à-vis a peaceful settlement with Israel. Yet the Israeli government – as discussed in the first two chapters – did not live up to the King's expectations and failed to offer the King terms for a peace agreement. The inability or unwillingness of Labor to meet Jordan's demand for peace emasculated Jordan's stance in inter-Arab politics. Not only did Jordan loss the battle for Palestinian representation in 1974 to the PLO, but the political turnabout in Israel in 1977 that brought Likud to power convinced King Hussein that Israel was neither willing nor capable of making peace with Jordan. Likud's revisionist Zionist ideals frightened Jordanians, causing them to worry about the future of not only the West Bank and East Jerusalem, but also Jordan proper.

Jordan's political defeat in Rabat – when the PLO won the battle over who would represent the Palestinians – did not discourage King Hussein in his quest for peace with Israel during the 1970s and 1980s. Yet his efforts in the 1980s to bring about a lasting and comprehensive peace did not pay off. The PLO failed to moderate

its position vis-à-vis Israel and thus hindered the King's endeavor to enlist international support for peacemaking in the Middle East.[77] To make matters worse, the regional environment was looking increasingly volatile. Israel was ruled by a Likud-led government in which some influential circles advocated for the slogan "Jordan is Palestine" and Iraq, a strategic ally of Jordan, was bogged down in a deadly and inconclusive war with Iran.

King Hussein's idea of an international conference that would help him remain within the limits of inter-Arab consensus while offering an umbrella for directs talks with the Israelis was held hostage by the political tug of war between Shamir and Peres and thus became a remote possibility. Both the United States and Israel ultimately opposed it, thus weakening the King's attempt to get the PLO on board. The King's discontent with Shimon Peres, who was unable to carry out the London Agreement of 1987, and the failure to cajole Shamir's government into fruitful diplomatic were a further blow to the King's attempts to bring about peace.[78]

Jordan's influence in the West Bank was further weakened as the Intifada erupted in December 1987. Israel meanwhile intensified its settlement activities, a measure designed to create a fait accompli on the ground that could prejudice the outcome of any future negotiations. By 1988, the King realized that his twin objectives of thwarting both Israel's annexation of the West Bank and Palestinian statehood were incompatible with one another. In other words, Hussein's wheeling and dealing with the PLO, Israel, and the United States was fruitless. With the outbreak of the Palestinian Intifada, the King's attempts to garner support in the West Bank also failed. Against this backdrop, the King turned to

[77] During the first half of the 1980s, two rounds of talks between the Palestinian leadership and the Jordanians with the purpose to come up with a common action plan to regain the lost territories peacefully failed due to Arafat's evasive tactics and the fierce differences within the PLO's factions.
[78] The London agreement mentioned in the previous chapter went nowhere. Shamir and Peres – the two pillars of the Israeli cabinet disagreed with each other over the plan. Their constant bickering and indeed competition did not help. Therefore, the plan was shelved.

"a preemptive strategy to protect his vital interests and disengage administratively and legally from the West Bank, particularly after the Palestinian leadership proved to be evasive regarding cooperation with Jordan in settling the conflict."[79]

In the period between the decision to sever ties with the West Bank in 1988 and the signing of the Oslo accord in 1993, the regional and global environments were drastically altered, presenting Jordan with new opportunities and constraints. The end of the Cold War, the disintegration of the Soviet Union, and the defeat of Iraq in 1991 created a new balance of power that further enhanced Israel's strategic position. Around the same time, roughly one million Russian immigrants moved to Israel, which created fears in Jordan that a Likud-led government would transfer Palestinians from the occupied territories to Jordan in order to create room for the new immigrants, effectively establishing Greater Israel. Toward the end of the 1980s and the early 1990s, Jordan's nightmare was population transfer.

3.3. Two Schools of Thought

Over time, King Hussein, who tightly held the reins of his country's foreign policy toward Israel, managed to strike a balance that helped insulate Jordan from the fallout of regional turmoil. His determination to make recovering the lost Palestinian land the apex of his career and his unshaken belief in himself to carry out a one-man diplomacy were reflected in the scope and frenetic pace of his outreach to the outside world. In almost all of his interviews with western media outlets, he reiterated the mantra "land for peace." In fact, King Hussein could not have hoped for any concessions beyond land for peace, and even that was easier said than done.

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[79] Hassan A. Barari, *Jordan and Israel: Ten Years Later* (Amman: Center for Strategic Studies, 2004), p. 24.

During this new strategic environment, two schools of thought dominated the thinking of the Jordanian elite. The first opposed the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, a position that was popular within the Jordanian security establishment. According to proponents of this mode of thinking, Jordan should play a key role in the West Bank. Furthermore, the establishment of an independent Palestinian state would be detrimental to Jordan's security, as it would be radical in nature and would pose a credible threat to Jordan by radicalizing Jordanians of Palestinian origin, subjecting Jordan to uncertain levels of instability. This view was shared by the Israeli right, which maintained that an independent Palestinian state would become irredentist and a danger to both Jordan and Israel.[80] That said, the Israeli right employed this argument to justify expansion at the expense of the Palestinians.

The second school of thought made the case that an independent Palestinian state would actually be a positive development for Jordan. It would put an end to the notion of an "alternative homeland," which was ardently opposed by Jordanians. Advocates of this school employed the demographic-security argument to support their position. They argued that the lack of a two-state solution might lead to a unification of the West Bank and Jordan or worse, the migration of the Palestinian population to Jordan. Should this materialize, Palestinians would be a clear majority, thus enabling Palestinians to establish a Palestinian state supplanting Jordan. They maintained that the failure to establish an independent and viable Palestinian state should be seen as a bad omen for the future stability of Jordan. Furthermore, an independent Palestinian state would help demarcate the lines between Palestinians and Jordanians, and thus crystallize a distinct Jordanian identity.

King Hussein was, for an extended period of time, in favor of the first school of thought. He did his best to regain the West Bank and

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[80] Efraim Inbar and Shmuel Sandler, *The Risks of Palestinian Statehood, Mideast Security and Policy Study* (Tel Aviv: Begin and Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, 1997).

East Jerusalem under Jordanian sovereignty. For some time, King Hussein played a double game. He seemed to align with the idea of an independent Palestinian state, while, at the same time, he sought to bypass the PLO. Yet despite Israeli preferences to deal with him rather than the PLO, Israeli leaders knew that Hussein would not sign a peace treaty unless he regained the 1967 border with a mutual and minor land swap, a price that no Israeli government was willing to entertain.[81] The inability of both sides to conclude a peace treaty opened the door widely for the PLO to champion the right of Palestinians to self-determination. After the signing of the Oslo accord in 1993, the ruling elite in Jordan began to adjust to the notion of an independent Palestinian state and the second school of thought then prevailed.

In the first half of the 1990s, Hussein's diplomacy developed quickly as he cultivated a personal and trusting relationship with Rabin. He was instrumental in convincing the Israelis to take Jordanian interests into account in the final status talks with the Palestinians. Once Hussein was sure that Rabin and Israel would take Jordan's interests into consideration, the king threw his weight behind the notion of an independent Palestinian state despite the position of the Israeli right. In a letter to Prime Minister Abdel Salaam al-Majali, the king explicitly makes his position known:

> Recently, we have noticed that some Israeli circles go far in presuming to speak in the name of Jordan by claiming that our security will be compromised in the event of the rise of a Palestinian state…these claims are baseless and they are categorically and unequivocally rejected. We felt that this needed to be clarified, not at the national level, for Jordanians are fully aware of our positions, but at the international level in order for the truth to be highlighted, lest it be distorted in any way, shape or form. Jordan does not fear anyone in this neighborhood.[82]

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[81] For more details on Israeli-Jordanian dialogue, see Moshe Zak, *Hussein Makes Peace* (Bar Ilan University: Begin and Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, 1996) (in Hebrew).

[82] A letter sent to Prime Minister of Jordan, Abdel Salaam al-Majali on December 4, 1997, online at: www.kinghussein.gove.jo (Accessed on June 2, 2014).

Interestingly, a closer look at the internal debate in Jordan reveals that since the king became outspoken in favor of a Palestinian state, there has been a near-consensus in Jordan that the establishment of a Palestinian state is in the best interest of Jordan. For this reason, Jordan threw its weight behind the Arab peace initiative[83] of March 2002 and once again in March 2007. Jordan sought to bring about an Arab consensus surrounding peace talks with the Israelis, and has been instrumental in garnering international support to bring about a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. To do that, Jordan played a key role in convincing President Bush of the importance of having a roadmap to implement his two-state vision.[84] Indeed, Jordan played a key role in convincing President Bush of the importance of having a roadmap to implement his two-state vision.[85] Jordan's diplomacy has focused on the American role in a possible peace settlement, as King Abdullah II believes that the United States can put the necessary pressure on Israel to concede to the terms for peace outlined in the Arab Peace Initiative.

After decades of the Palestinian struggle for self-determination, the relative success of the Palestinian national movement in establishing a foothold in parts of the West Bank and Gaza, and, more importantly, Israel's realization that its chronic demographic predicament compels it to pull out from the land occupied in 1967, it seems that the Palestinian dream of statehood must be closer than ever to realization. However, the Palestinians have never been more divided than they have been over the past several years. Hamas staged a military coup in Gaza in 2007, thus expelling the

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[83] The Arab Peace Initiative was adopted by the Arab League Summit took place in Beirut in March 2002 where the Arab leaders endorsed the then Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah's ideas of peace with Israel whereby the latter relinquish the land it occupied during the 1967 War as a quid pro quo for peace and normalization with the whole Arab world. It also stipulates a just and an agreed on solution to the Palestinian refugees.

[84] From the author's discussion with Jordan's former deputy Prime Minister Marwan al-Muasher during his brief stay at the Center for Strategic Studies at the University of Jordan in June and July 2006.

[85] *Ibid*.

Palestinian secular national movement and marking a step backward in the Palestinian quest for independence and perhaps laying the ground for chaos.

For this reason, the expected chaos in the Palestinian territories is a key source of concern for Amman. Hence, Jordan has frequently offered to help the Palestinians in their bid for security and stability; however, Jordan's faith in both the Palestinians' ability to seize the historic moment created in the aftermath of the Lebanon war (July-August 2006) and in the realization of the two-state solution has been eroding gradually. The time will soon come when Jordan is expected to do something. Recently, in light of the Palestinians impasse and chaos, calls for Jordan to play a role have increased.

In this volatile atmosphere, some have begun to ponder the inevitability of Jordan's involvement in the West Bank. Jordanians may indeed find it exceptionally costly to stand aside while the Palestinians fail to rise above factional and partisan differences to assume their historical responsibilities.[86] Therefore, some influential Jordanian elites have begun to see the Palestinians' failure to establish a functioning government as contributing to the postponement of a two-state solution, which decreases the overall likelihood of an eventual two-state settlement.[87]

The Jordanian option in its traditional sense is ruled out. Jordan no longer seeks to rule over the Palestinians, as it would then be seen as an occupying power and would be fought tooth and nail by Palestinians seeking their independence.[88] In other words, it is inconceivable at this stage that the Palestinians would accept becoming Jordanians.

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[86] The author's interview with Abdel Salaam al-Majali, Amman, July 15, 2006.

[87] *Ibid*. Also Oreib al-Rantawi – a leading columnist in Jordan – made a similar point. Additionally, there have been a number of public statements and article in the Jordanian dailies that support this reading.

[88] There is a consensus in Jordan regarding this point. During my interviews with high-level politicians in senior officials in Jordan, they voiced their adamant opposition of even contemplating the idea of a Jordanian option, which to them is tantamount to political suicide.

There is a divergence of views among Jordanians regarding the nature of a future Jordanian role in the West Bank. For his part, King Abdullah has given up all of Jordan's past ambitions in the West Bank. For a range of reasons, including historical distrust between the Jordanian regime and the PLO, Jordan has been wary in its approach toward the West Bank lest it be seen as undermining the Palestinian stance. The official Jordanian position is that, despite historical sensitivities, Jordan can still assume a limited security presence in the West Bank. Yet such a Jordanian role in the West Bank would certainly be controversial and probably ill-received among some Palestinian groups.

Nonetheless, Jordan may still find that it is in its best interest to become indirectly involved in the West Bank due to fears of a possible spillover effect of violence there. For this reason, Jordan offered to train Palestinian police and send the Palestinian Badr brigade, stationed in Jordan, into the West Bank to assist the Palestinian Authority in its bid to stabilize the security situation. According to senior officials, any Jordanian involvement should come as the result of demands made by the Palestinians themselves via close coordination with the Palestinian Authority, and should be confined to a limited security role. Equally important, Jordanians believe that it is necessary to rehabilitate a Palestinian partner as the only method of preempting reckless measures and to bring the peace process back on track.

Jordanian Islamists and leftist opposition groups have voiced their adamant rejection of even a limited role for the country in the West Bank prior to the establishment of a viable and independent Palestinian state.[89] They make the case that any Jordanian involvement in the Palestinian territories before the establishment of a Palestinian state would be detrimental to the Palestinian cause. Such critics, however, fail to explain how this would be the case

[89] The author's interview with Zaki Beny Rsheid, the Secretary General of the Islamic Action Front, Amman June 30, 2006.

or offer any alternative course of action. In fact, a growing number of Jordanians believe that Israel is seeking to revive the concept of the Jordanian option, which, if it ever materialized, would chip away at any chance for the establishment of a Palestinian state. In such a climate, the reaction of the Jordanian public to the rumors of a Jordanian role in the Palestinian territories has been predictably negative. Opposition parties have warned against participating in a "conspiracy against the Palestinian people." Jordanian nationalists, meanwhile, have spearheaded the criticism of a security role in the West Bank by reiterating their frequently aired mantra that such a return would mean national suicide.[90] Across the board, the Jordanian public sees little to gain and much to lose from Jordan assuming a role in the West Bank.

That said, Jordan's rejection of becoming entangled in Palestinian affairs can not be assumed. Its geo-strategic location, the perceived threat of a lack of a peace settlement on the Palestinian track, and the deterioration of the regional environment may compel Jordan to play an assertive role in the Palestinian territories in the not too distant future.

The breakdown of the peace process in the aftermath of the Camp David Summit of 2000 and the subsequent emergence of Sharon's unilateralism triggered a sporadic debate in Jordan regarding the possible outcome of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Notwithstanding the support of the mainstream Israeli public for a two-state solution,[91] Jordanians on the whole remained unmoved. There is a widespread perception that Israel is only paying lip service to the idea while it creates a set of fait accompli (settlements) to pre-empt the possibility of the establishment of a Palestinian state. Yet some circles in Jordan find Israel to be serious about

[90] Nahid Hattar, "Shall we Face Confederation on our Own," *Ammonnews*, a Jordanian Electronic website, online at www.ammonnews.net (Accessed on June 7, 2014).

[91] For an in-depth understanding of Israel's evolved position with regard to the idea of establishing an independent Palestinian state, see the series of polls conducted by the Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research, Tel Aviv University, online at http://peace.tau.ac.il/ (Accessed on May 25, 2014).

separating itself from the Palestinians in order to maintain its Jewish-democratic nature. Implicit in this position is the argument the Israel could help establish a Palestinian state provided that the Palestinians cease violence, but those in support of this argument cast doubt on the viability of the expected borders.[92] In sum, the debate surrounds three main issues: the ability of the Palestinians to create an independent state, the continuing role of Jordan, and the likelihood of a confederation.

Thus far, the official position in Jordan has been unequivocally in support of a two-state solution, and Jordan's diplomacy is committed to bringing about this outcome. The bottom line in Jordan is that any future political unity arrangement with the Palestinians can only be considered after the Palestinians realize their aspirations of statehood. For the most part, Jordanians support a two-state solution in order to preserve Jordan's core national interests. There are many reasons for this position, among them the fear of strategic consequences of a possible Palestinian migration should the two-state solution fail and the Jews become a minority in the area that stretches from the Mediterranean to the Jordan River.

Jordan defines its national interests in terms of a two-state solution, and the king warned in 2006 that if this solution did not happen within two years, there would never be a Palestinian state.[93] The king did not explain the two-year time frame, but two things are implicit in his statement: the existence of a roadmap and Bush's departure from the White House by January 2009. The king feared that American efforts would soon be distracted by other issues, chief among them being the Iranian nuclear threat. An indefinite delay, from the king's perspective, would change reality

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[92] The author's interview with Fayez Tarawneh, Amman, July 20, 2006. He insisted that the Palestinian state was in place and all needed to be done would be to announce it. Leading columnists in Jordanian dailies such as Oreib Rantawi and Fahd Fanik have widely written that Israel supported the establishment of a Palestinian state. The author of this book has also written that Israel sought separation from the Palestinians.

[93] An Interview King Abdullah of Jordan gave to *Time Magazine*, September 10, 2006.

in the Palestinian territories so that a Palestinian state would no longer be viable. The king evidently attaches importance to time as an actor in the conflict, and one that is not necessarily in the interest of the Palestinians or the Jordanians.

Yet apart from this warning, Jordanian officials have not said much about Jordan's options in the case that a Palestinian state fails to be achieved. It remains to be seen how Jordan would contend with the scenario of the Palestinian territories slipping into anarchy and missing the opportunity to establish their own state. Will Jordan then interfere to help the Palestinians put their house in order? What form might this interference take? Can Jordan really play a role? Will the Palestinians perceive a Jordanian role negatively? Will it enjoy internal support? In other words, how can Jordan protect its interests of stability and security?

3.4. The Confederation Scenario

No single issue in the post-Oslo era has frightened Jordanians as much as the confederation scenario. On the whole, Jordanians loathe this phrase and many view it as a euphemism for solving Israel's demographic dilemma at the expense of Jordan. Mainstream Jordanians see the idea as an Israeli scheme to compel Jordan to adopt a confederation plan for their own self-interest. Though the plan has been on the back burner for nearly three decades, the controversial ideas of a Jordanian-Palestinian confederation have once again emerged in public debate over the past several years. As many see the plan bringing no benefit to Jordan, the idea does not resonate well among the majority of Jordanians.

Time and again, the Jordanian monarchy has made it clear that a confederation between Jordan and the Palestinians is a matter that can only be decided on after the Palestinians establish an

independent state and according to the wishes of the two peoples.[94] This scenario is only possible with creative arrangements whereby the national aspirations of the Palestinians are fulfilled while Jordanians are assured that they are not going to be a scapegoat for the sake of the Israelis and the Palestinians. A confederation arrangement would transform trans-Jordanians into a minority in their own country. The public debate in Jordan regarding this issue is not conclusive; some have fewer problems with the phrase and instead take issue with the timing. They see the confederation as a viable political arrangement, but remain aware that any call for federation or confederation before a Palestinian state is established would not be received well by Jordanians. Thus, Jordanian officials stress their insistence on a certain sequence of events: a Palestinian state first, then a confederation if the terms are accepted by both sides.

Interestingly, some Jordanian elites are not convinced that a Palestinian state will ever be established, but they nevertheless propose an innovative kind of confederation or federal union between a Jordanian state and an autonomous Palestinian entity without formal state status.[95] This new position is spearheaded by none other than former Prime Minister Abdel Salaam al-Majali, the man who was prime minister during the signing of the peace treaty with the late Yitzhak Rabin in 1994. In his words, "It is neither confederate nor federate; it is both." According to advocates of this proposal, King Abdullah II would lead this new United Hashemite State due to his status as a descendent of the Prophet.[96] The state would have legislative and executive authorities, which would be held by Palestinians and Jordanians on a rotating basis.

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[94] Late King Hussein publicly declared on various occasions that confederation was not in his political lexicon. A few weeks after his death in February 1999, Palestinian President Arafat floated the idea of confederation once again. King Abdullah saw it as an early test of his resolve, and therefore he restated the position of his late father.

[95] The author's interview with Abdel Salaam al-Majali, Amman, July 15, 2006. The interview came after Hamas won election in Palestine. But also al-Majali is on record making similar views even before Hamas won elections in 2006.

[96] *Ibid.*

According to Majali, this arrangement would resolve the Palestinians' obsession with the issue of identity. The Palestinian nationality would be something like "a United Hashemite State-Palestine" and for Jordanians it would be "a United Hashemite State-Jordan." Majali believes that such an arrangement is the best mechanism to bring about a two-state solution, as Israel needs and wants security and that the Palestinians cannot provide it. Such a state that incorporates the Jordanians would provide Israel with security it desires, and might make Israel more willing to give up land to Jordan.[97]

Majali based his position on his understanding that Israel seeks both security and disengagement from the Palestinian issue. He argues that the Palestinians are "militant" because they are besieged, which not only affects Israel, but also Jordan. Majali asserts that his strategy is something that both Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood could support, and that the Americans have an interest in the plan as well because it would lead to a peaceful settlement in the Middle East. Finally, it would give Israel – which does not want to agree to a Palestinian state for fear that it would become militant and harbor terrorism – a security guarantee. Majali is convinced that Israel's position would be different if Jordan were a partner in the solution. He summarized it succinctly when he said, "this is the only win-win practical arrangement." To preempt any possibility of portraying this new scheme as a Jordanian-Israeli plot to revive the Jordanian option, Majali argues that Jordan should not play a proactive role and that the Palestinians should introduce the initiative themselves.[98]

Majali's strategy is based on the assumption that Israel would withdraw to the 1967 borders with a minor land swap. Reality, however, is much more complicated. Given the internal political dynamics in Israel, it is hard to imagine any Israeli government

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[97] *Ibid.*
[98] *Ibid.*

surviving the political repercussions if it were to embrace the idea of a withdrawal to the 1967 borders without a substantial territorial swap.[99] Even if we assume for the sake of argument that there is an Israeli partner willing and capable of taking Israel back to the Green Line, Jordanians themselves do not agree on the concept of a confederate or federal solution or on the content of such a landmark development.

The key Jordanian group in disagreement with this idea is the trans-Jordanian nationalists, who see nothing to gain from any kind of unity with the Palestinians. This group makes the case that a Palestinian state already exists as it emerged during the Oslo process, but is has yet to achieve independence. They view any attempt to bring this scenario to fruition as an attempt to enfeeble the Jordanians. As former Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh put it, "During important junctures of the Arab-Israeli conflict, some Israeli forces and some Palestinians tried to solve the Palestinian cause at the expense of Jordan."[100] Nationalists even go a step further by arguing that entering into such arrangement before the Palestinians exercise their right to self-determination in Palestine would be interpreted as a conspiracy against the Palestinians.

Jordanian nationalists argue that if Jordan stalls on the confederation strategy, Israel and the Palestinians might come to an agreement that meets the minimum demands of the Palestinians, thereby enabling them to establish an independent, contiguous, and viable state bordering Jordan. Tarawneh is convinced that Majali's ideas are harmful to Jordan and would "cancel the Kingdom of Jordan at the formal level." He goes on to say that "King Hussein proposed the United Kingdom in 1972 and was opposed by the Arabs. The conditions then were different. Hussein was trying to restore the West Bank to Jordan. Now, there is a Palestinian state

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[99] Hassan A. Barari, *Israeli Politics and the Middle East Peace Process, 1988-2003* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 2.
[100] The author interview with former Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh.

and it has become independent. So why confederation?"[101]

Apparent in the Jordanian opposition to a confederation with the Palestinians is the fear of the demographic imbalance that might result; specifically, that demography would allow Palestinians to overpower the Jordanians. Tarawneh warns that Yasser Arafat sought confederation at Shimon Peres' suggestion because Arafat "thought that demography and democracy would enable him to take over Jordan."[102] The confederation, therefore, would solve the refugee problem, but it would favor the Palestinians demographically, allowing them to gain the upper hand in a democratic way, something the PLO failed to accomplish in 1970.

A key figure, who supports the idea of confederation, is Adnan Abu-Odeh, a former political advisor to both King Hussein and King Abdullah. According to Abu-Odeh, a confederation would serve the interests of both Palestinians and Jordanians, yet he warns that Israel would never accept such a final resolution.[103] Israel, according to Abu-Odeh, is prepared to create unbearable hardships for the Palestinians in the hopes that they will leave their towns. In his words, "A Palestinian state should be established first and then we can talk about confederation between Palestine and Jordan on equal footing."[104]

This logic was echoed by Taher al-Masri, a prominent politician and a former prime minister who also supports the notion of a confederation. Masri argues that it is not possible to establish a Palestinian state because Zionist thinking is still a dominant influence on Israeli politics, therefore Israel is looking for a way to gradually expel Palestinians via Jordan. For this reason, according to Masri, Jordan is now more threatened than ever despite the

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[101] *Ibid.*
[102] *Ibid.*
[103] The author interview with Adnan Abu Odeh, Amman, July 23, 2006.
[104] *Ibid.*

existing peace treaty, which offers no political guarantee to protect Jordan's interests and rights.[105] Interestingly, the Islamists in Jordan support the concept of a confederation with Palestine, but only after it has achieved its independence.[106]

In a nutshell, the concept of a confederation is not new in Jordanian political discourse. Yet given the current situation in which Palestinians are denied their own state, there is a legitimate fear that the Palestinians will only accept such a proposal in the short term and that hey may turn against Jordan in the long run. Additionally, Jordanian's fear of being outnumbered by the Palestinians is a serious fear and indeed an obstacle for the realization of such an option.

3.5. Conclusion

Given the historical and geopolitical considerations discussed in this chapter, Israeli policies will continue to impact Jordan both positively and negatively. Therefore, as Jordan's support for the two-state solution is intended to serve Jordan's interests, the realization of such an outcome lies to a great extent in Israel's hands.

The Palestinian national movement's ascendance, coupled with Israel's policies in the occupied Palestinian territories, has forced Jordan to reconsider its historical objection to a Palestinian state. Indeed, since the signing of the Oslo accords, Jordan has officially advocated for the establishment of a viable independent Palestinian state. Yet, given the latest developments caused by Palestinian infighting and the domination of the right-wing parties in Israeli politics, it is widely believed among Jordanian elites that any two-state solution will long be postponed. According to such groups,

[105] The author interview with Taher al-Masri, Amman, July 15, 2006.
[106] *Ibid.*

the failure of the Palestinians to establish a functioning regime and Israel's stalling tactics such as the establishment of new settlements further minimizes any hope for a two-state solution.

As a result, Jordan has frequently offered to help the Palestinians in their bid for security and stability. However, Jordan's faith in the prospect of a two-state solution is waning as time goes on, and the time will soon come when Jordan is approached as a more active actor in the conflict. As there is a divergence of views among Jordanians over the nature of a future Jordanian role in the West Bank, the government has been both cautious and vigilant. Most recently, King Abdullah has withdrawn from all of Jordan's previous ambitions in the West Bank. For various reasons, including historical mutual mistrust between the Jordanian regime and the PLO, Jordan has been cautious in its approach lest it be seen as undercutting the Palestinian effort to realize independence.

That said, it remains to be seen how Jordan will react and respond to calls for unity or a confederation with the Palestinians. Like Israel, Jordan fears the demographic problem inherent in any future political ties with the Palestinians. Almost half of Jordanians are of Palestinian origin, and though friction between the communities has not led to serious disturbances, it remains a looming possibility.

Chapter 4:

The Failure of the Model: From Warm to Cold Peace

4.1. Introduction

After decades of talks between Jordan and Israel accompanied by foot-dragging and quasi-normal, though secret, relations, a peace treaty was finally signed on October 26, 1994 and was greeted with widespread fanfare. Indicators suggested that both Jordan and Israel would take a more measured stance for the sake of peace going forward. King Hussein made it clear that his peace with Israel was for the sake of his own people, while Rabin similarly promoted peace with Jordan in Israel as his initiative and took pride in this achievement. Rabin sought to go down to history as a peacemaker by signing a peace treaty with Jordan, a popular move in Israel.

Amid this atmosphere of optimism, high hopes for a warm peace were ubiquitous among decision makers on both sides of the divide. In his bid to build public support for the peace treaty with Israel, King Hussein reiterated one line: the expected dividends of peace. From the outset, Hussein understood that his people's support for peace was not unconditional. On the contrary, many in Jordan hoped for peace with Israel in order to alleviate Jordan's economic hardships. When this failed to materialize, people began to turn against the peace treaty.

Over the past twenty years of the peace treaty being in place, Jordanian public support for the peace agreement has diminished. Indeed, it will prove increasingly difficult for healthy relations to continue while the Palestinians are denied the right to establish an independent Palestinian state. Therefore, a warm peace between Jordan and Israel will become incompatible as the impasse in the Israeli-Palestinian talks wears on.

Jordan's insistence that the two-state solution is the only game in town has been received with a degree of cynicism in Israel. Indeed, in order for Israel to enjoy warm peace with Jordan, it must pay a great deal of attention to the Palestinian problem. Israel's policies – such as the attempt on Khalid Mash'al in 1997,

unilateral policies in Jerusalem, Israel's reaction to the Palestinian Intifada, the wars in Lebanon in 2006 and in Gaza (in 2008, 2012, and 2014), and the increased level of settlement activities – gave impetus and further ammunition to the anti-normalization forces in Jordan, making normalization with Israel difficult. Additionally, the lack of economic benefit in Jordan further lessened the public's support for the peace agreement. Thus far, rather than fostering a warm peace since the agreement was signed, one could argue that peace between Jordan and Israel has been "Egyptianized."[107]

This chapter examines the failure of the model of warm peace. It is composed of two sections and a conclusion. The first section addresses the failure of the warm peace model. Three main reasons are widely seen as impeding the success of this model: the modest peace dividends; Jordan becoming insulated from the Palestinian track; and the shift in Israeli society toward the right after 1996, particularly after Ariel Sharon became prime minister and initiated his unilateral foreign policy. Section two examines the impediments to normalization between the Israelis and Jordanians. Finally, the conclusion reflects on the past twenty years, and the shift in Israeli society toward the right.

4.2. The "Warm" Peace: The Failure of a Model

Most observers agree that Jordanian-Israeli relations were on the right track for the better part of the first year and a half after the peace agreement was signed. However, after Benjamin Netanyahu became prime minister in 1996, warm relations never recovered. A number of factors contributed to the deterioration of the Jordanian public support for the peace treaty: the peace dividends did not materialize, the Palestinian-Israeli track has reached its nadir,

[107] Egyptianaization of the bilateral relations between Jordan refers to the Egyptian-Israeli model of cold peace.

Israel's 1996 "Grapes of Wrath" operation in Lebanon, Israel's unilateral steps in East Jerusalem, the attempt on Hamas leader Khalid Mash'al in September 1997, the vigorous anti-normalization movement in Jordan, and the events that followed the eruption of the al-Aqsa Intifada until today.

Jordan's senior officials were in fact enthusiastic for warm peace with Israel, and had high hopes that peace would be in Jordan's best interest. Immediately after the Madrid Peace Conference in November 1991, King Hussein began to prepare and indeed manipulate the domestic political scene for peace with Israel. The first important step was to ensure that the Muslim Brotherhood would not achieve a notable victory in the parliamentary elections scheduled for November 1993. For this reason, the government amended the electoral law to the single non-transferrable vote, a clear strategy to diminish the Islamists' prospects for electoral victory. Although Islamists initially protested the new electoral law, they eventually acquiesced and took part in the elections;[108] therefore, the King's gambit paid off. The amended electoral law had its desired effect: the Islamists lost seats in the parliament while the tribal and pro-government candidates won the parliamentary majority. Thus, in one stroke, the King succeeded in eliminating the internal obstacle to a peace treaty with Israel.

A few months prior to signing the peace treaty, the Jordanian government mounted a media campaign intended to sway Jordanians to support the idea of a peace agreement with Israel. In light of the absence of a comprehensive peace between Israel and the Arabs, it was not easy to garner public support for such an agreement. Additionally, Jordanians were not prepared to accept peace with Israel at a time when Israel was still occupying Palestinian territories. For this reason, the King personally took the lead in rallying public support for the treaty, and took full responsibility for the

[108] Russell E. Lucas, *Institutions and Regime Survival Strategies: Collective Action and Path Dependence in Jordan, Ph.D. dissertation* (Georgetown University, 2000) pp.126-136.

initiative. In doing so, any opposition to the pending treaty would thus be seen as opposition to the King himself.

Three main arguments asserting that the peace treaty with Israel was good for Jordan were widely circulated by officials who thought that the treaty would prop up Jordan in the tumultuous region.[109] First, some argued that signing the agreement would allow Jordan to regain all of its claims. According to the official position, the peace treaty would settle all of its outstanding issues that were behind the conflict with Israel. In a quest to get the treaty ratified by the parliament, Prime Minister Abdel Salaam al-Majali encouraged the parliament to ratify the agreement so that Jordan could "regain the Jordanian rights to land and water, to protect the country from threats and conspiracy and to ascertain the Kingdom's borders."[110] According the official narrative, Jordan would regain its right to water resources of the Jordan River and Jordanian land would be returned to Jordanian sovereignty. The official argument also emphasized that Israel had explicitly recognized that Jordan was not Palestine and that the idea of the "alternative homeland" for Palestinians was buried once and for all.[111] Explicit in this narrative was the provision of multilateral negotiations, which would cover regional issues such as refugees and economic cooperation.

The second important argument advanced by the regime was that the peace treaty with Israel was the only strategic option. Jordan was isolated due to its pro-Iraq position in the Gulf war of 1991, thus Jordan's foreign policy was designed by the King to be able to accrue strategic rent. Furthermore, Jordan's isolation following the Gulf war had its toll on the Jordanian economy. Yet the King's statecraft and his restrained, balanced foreign policy helped

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[109] Paul Scham and Russell E. Lucas, "Normalization and Anti-normalization in Jordan: the Public Debate,*"Middle East Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (September 2001), pp.54-70.
[110] *The Jordan Times*, 31 October, 1994.
[111] Marc Lynch, *State Interests and Public Spheres: The International Politics of Jordan's Identity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), pp. 166-197.

insulate Jordan from the fallout from its conflict-ridden neighbors. Amid this context, the peace treaty was presented as a wise option that could help Jordan contend with the challenges ahead. Proponents of the treaty often charged critics with devising a better alternative, leading popular Jordanian columnist Tariq Masarweh to write that there was a noose around Jordan that could dry up the country.[112]

More often than not, the regime employed the expected peace dividends as a carrot to sway the public to stand behind its peace with Israel. With the economy in shambles, this kind of arguments resonated well among many Jordanians. The government argued that the expected peace dividends would help Jordan bring in foreign direct investments and create jobs, especially in the tourism industry.[113]

On the other hand, Jordanian opposition groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood's political wing, the Islamic Action Front, and Arab nationalists and leftists advanced a number of arguments to substantiate their firm opposition to the peace treaty.[114] They argued that signing a peace treaty with Israel would indicate Jordan's abandonment of Arab coordination. Leftists and Arab nationalists argued that the treaty itself was in violation of the principles of the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 242, 338, 237, and 194.

At the heart of the opposition's criticism of the treaty was the issue of the right of return for Palestinians refugees. Article 8 of the treaty states:

"Recognizing that the above human problems caused by the conflict in the Middle East cannot be fully resolved on the bilateral level, the Parties will seek to resolve them in appropriate forums,

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[112] Quoted in Paul Scham and Russell E. Lucas, *op. cit.*
[113] Hassan A. Barari, *Israel Jordan: Ten Years Later* (Amman: Center for Strategic Studies, 2004).
[114] Paul Scham and Russell E. Lucas, *op. cit.*

in accordance with international law, including the following:

A. In the case of displaced persons, in a quadripartite committee together with Egypt and the Palestinians;

B. In the case of refugees,

(i) in the framework of the Multilateral Working Group on Refugees;
(ii) in negotiations, in a framework to be agreed, bilateral or otherwise, in conjunction with and at the same time as the permanent status negotiations pertaining to the Territories referred to in Article 3 of this Treaty;

C. Through the implementation of agreed United Nations programs and other agreed international economic programs concerning refugees and displaced persons, including assistance to their settlement."

The opposition found this article to deprive the Palestinian refugees of their right to return to their homeland. To them, the refugee problem represents a core cause for conflict and should not be dealt with as a humanitarian problem. Furthermore, many opposition groups accused Jordan of implicitly accepting the settlement of refugees in Jordan instead of finding ways to help them practice the right of return.

Jordan's opposition did not buy into the government's argument that Jordan would regain all of its rights to water and land. In reality, Jordan agreed to leasing the lands returned to Jordanian sovereignty to the Israelis, representing a deterioration of Jordan's sovereignty.[115] Finally, the opposition asserted that the peace treaty would lead to a narrowing of the political public space and political liberties. The opposition accused successive Jordanian governments of reversing

[115] Hamzah Mansour, *Jordan Times,* 6 November, 1994.

the process of political liberalization.[116] Despite numerous demonstrations against the signing of the agreement, after the peace treaty was signed, the government denied permits to marches.

During the first half of the 1990s, it seemed that the peace process at all levels was progressing, and the Jordanian-Israeli bilateral relationship was perceived to be going smoothly. Arguments that Jordan and Israel offered a new model of peace highlighted the fact that the political leadership on both sides prioritized their country's relationship with the other. Indeed, King Hussein was a great believer that Yitzhak Rabin was both brave and trustworthy. On the other hand, Israelis on the whole believed that King Hussein was a genuine partner for peace in the Middle East. For instance, in July 1994, 86.8 percent of Jews in Israel supported a visit by King Hussein to Jerusalem. On the other hand, the percentage of those who supported a visit to Jerusalem by Arafat was only 36.3 percent.[117]

Of course, in small countries such as Jordan and Israel, personality plays a key role in decision making. In this vein, the personal factor did play a role in propping up the relationship between the two countries. The running argument among Jordanian officials was that Rabin was a man who would honor his word. Rabin took Jordan's interests into consideration while dealing with other diplomatic tracks. There was a genuine mutual trust between Rabin and Hussein, which was demonstrated on a number of occasions. For instance, after the conclusion of the peace treaty, the Israeli cabinet voted to confiscate some land in Jerusalem. King Hussein was furious, and sent his Chief of Royal Court, Marwan al-Qassim, with a letter to Rabin protesting Israel's unilateral decision in Jerusalem. Not surprisingly, Rabin summoned his cabinet and reversed the decision.

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[116] Laurie Brand, "The Effects of the Peace Process on Political Liberalization in Jordan," *Journal of Palestine Studies,* Vol. 28 No.2 (Winter 1999), p. 52-67. 45.

[117] Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research, Peace Index, July 1994, http://www.tau.ac.il/peace/index.html.

Indeed, it was during Rabin's tenure that both Jordan and Israel laid the groundwork for cooperation, reconciliation, and coexistence. There were plentiful provisions and addenda in the peace treaty that urged for bilateral cooperation. However, with the assassination of Rabin in November 1995, it was clear to King Hussein that Rabin's heirs did not have similar resolve and therefore the bilateral relationship began to deteriorate. Many have since referred to this degradation as the "Egyptianaization" of the Jordanian-Israeli peace process, which begs the question of what went wrong.

There is a host of factors that could account for demise of the warm model of peace. First of all, Israel has yet to understand the multifaceted regional context in which Jordan operates. Israel erroneously thought that the Jordanian-Israeli relationship could be separated from the Palestinian cause. As Israel continued to take policies against the Palestinians, its relations with Jordan became increasingly strained. Relations are currently at their lowest point since the agreement and many in Jordan suspect that Israel does not truly want peace.

Initially, senior Jordanian officials were apprehensive about the Oslo agreement. Years of mutual mistrust between the PLO and Jordan took their toll, and secret negotiations between the Palestinians and the Israelis in Oslo surprised Jordan. Jordanians felt deceived by the PLO as no details were revealed to Jordan during the back channel negotiations between the PLO and Israel.[118] Soon afterward, King Hussein moved swiftly to cultivate a personal relationship with Rabin, who promised that Israel would take Jordan's interests into account. Hence, Jordan and Israel accelerated the bilateral track until they signed the peace treaty.

Jordanian leaders and their Israeli counterparts alike thought that peace between Jordan and Israel would be different from the

[118] *Middle East Mirror,* 2 September , 1993.

Egyptian model. The buzzword they used was "warm peace." And indeed, over the first year and a half of the peace treaty, the bilateral relations were one of warm peace. Robert Satloff of The Washington Institute for Near East Policy praised the treaty as a remarkable document. In his words, "cooperation is the hallmark of the Jordan-Israel treaty. Not just a technical agreement to establish formal diplomatic relations, this treaty provides a detailed blueprint for ongoing political, economic, social, cultural, and human interaction. The Egypt-Israel treaty contains but a single reference each to "cooperation,""mutuality," and "joint" efforts,while the Jordan-Israel treaty has twenty references to "cooperation," eleven references to "mutuality," and ten references to "joint" efforts."[119]

However, after Rabin was succeeded by Shimon Peres, Jordanians grew apprehensive. In his seven-month ruling, Peres gave priority to the Syrian track and declined to coordinate with Jordan over the Palestinian track. To make matters worse, Jordanians suspected that Peres was engaging in clandestine meetings with the Palestinians. Jordan, a country that had and still has paramount interests in the final status agreement, did not trust Peres. From King Hussein's vantage point, Peres had proven himself to be untrustworthy and he preferred Rabin for his honesty and reliability. Not surprisingly, the king underestimated Peres' role in the peace treaty with Jordan and gave all credit to Rabin. In an interview with Haaretz, the king made a point of saying that Jordan had dealt with Rabin alone and that a similar result might not have occurred had a different person been in power.[120]

In the years after Rabin's death, it has been nearly impossible to disassociate Jordanian-Israeli bilateral relations from Israeli-Palestinian interactions. The deterioration of the security situation in

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[119] Robert Satloff, "The Jordan-Israel Peace Treaty: A Remarkable Document*"Middle East Quarterly* March 1995, Vol. II, No.1 (March 1995) pp. 47-51.
[120] *Haaretz*, 5 August, 1996.

the run-up to the elections emasculated Peres, who felt compelled to do something to enforce his image as a resolute leader, especially as a more militant Netanyahu was gaining popularity. Hence, he ordered the Israeli army to launch Operation Grapes of Wrath in Southern Lebanon, which ended in a fiasco and an international outcry, particularly over the IDF's killing of over 100 civilians at a UN peacekeeping base, which was allegedly being used as a cover by Hezbollah.

After winning the 1996 elections, Benjamin Netanyahu formed a right-wing governing coalition, including Likud, in which seven of the eight party members rejected the Oslo agreement. As such, Netanyahu was given a mandate to undo the Oslo agreement, and his pursuit of reckless policies quickly soured Israel's bilateral relationship with Jordan.[121]

Driven purely by domestic political considerations and extremely constrained by his coalition of right-wing parties, Netanyahu understood that the preservation of his position as prime minister, made possible by his coalition with hardliners, and the implementation of the Oslo Accords were incompatible. He put his political survival first, therefore there was never any attempt made toward peace making. King Hussein, who previously pinned hope on Netanyahu, was disappointed. Netanyahu, who became unpredictable an untrustworthy, never appreciated the centrality of the Palestinian cause in Jordanian politics and therefore unwittingly embarrassed King Hussein by his unilateral policies.

Shocked by Netanyahu's policies, particularly those concerning Jerusalem, King Hussein began to realize that Netanyahu was not a genuine partner for peace, much less one who could fill the shoes of Rabin. For instance, only three days before the Hasmonean Tunnel incident of September 1996, Netanyahu sent his political

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[121] Neill Lochery, *Difficult Road to Peace: Netanyahu, Israel and the Middle East Peace Process* (Reading: Garnet, 1999) p.197.

advisor Dore Gold to meet the King. In his meeting with the King, Gold did not even refer to, let alone consult with the King about, the tunnel. When Israel opened the tunnel, Hussein felt betrayed by what he saw as affront to Jordan's special role in Jerusalem referred to in the peace treaty. Another example of Netanyahu's lack of sensitivity to Jordan's interests was when the Israeli government decided to start building a new settlement in Jabal Abu Ghneim (HarHoma). This decision was clearly taken so that Netanyahu could assure his right-wing partners who were not happy when Netanyahu signed the Hebron agreement in January 1997. In his bid to maintain his governmental coalition, Netanyahu felt the need to offer something in return to his right-wing constituency.[122] Again, however, this decision enraged King Hussein.

Moreover, Netanyahu grew insensitive to King Hussein's genuine desire to have a peace partner. Hussein tried to find a common ground with Netanyahu to no avail. Netanyahu was reluctant to respond positively to even minor Jordanian demands. In 1997, the King requested Israeli permission to fly the PLO's Chairman Yasser Arafat to Gaza in his own plane. Shockingly from Hussein's perspective, the Israeli government refused. Having lost trust in Netanyahu, King Hussein sent him a letter on March 9, 1997, scolding him sharply for his provocative and reckless policies. He wrote,

> My distress is genuine and deep over the accumulating tragic actions which you have initiated at the head of the government of Israel, making peace-the worthiest objective of my life-appear more and more like a distant elusive mirage. I could remain aloof if the very lives of all Arabs and Israelis and their future were not fast sliding towards an abyss of bloodshed and disaster, brought about by fear and despair.

He adds,

> Your course of actions seem bent on destroying all I believe in or have striven to achieve with the Hashemite family since Faisal the First and Abdullah to the present times. You cannot send me assurances that you would not sanction any further construction of settlements and tell me

[122] *Ibid.*

> of your decision to construct two roads to help all concerned Israelis and Palestinians alike and then renege on your commitment. In pushing matters to the point of securing a US veto at the Security Council, you have ill served the image and interest of your major ally and benefactor and our partner in peace making as the honest balanced peace broker.

Nevertheless, another incident would soon overtake the letter. Only three days after the letter was leaked to the press on March 13, a Jordanian soldier, Ahmed Daqamseh, opened fire, killing seven Israeli schoolgirls who happened to be visiting al-Baqura (Naharayim) in the Jordan Valley. The timing of the incident could not be more confusing as some right-wing Israelis linked the incident and the King's letter. When the King visited Israel to offer his condolences to the bereaved families, many in Jordan and in the Arab world did not understand the King's human gestures.[123] They mockingly questioned whether Netanyahu would have done the same had the situation been the reverse. Yet with the King's public diplomacy and human gesture, the incident disappeared from Israel's public debate.

Nevertheless, the Jordanian-Israeli relationship would soon reach a low point. In September 1997, Israel tried to assassinate Khalid Mash'al, head of the Hamas political bureau in Amman. This incident marred Jordan's political relationship with Israel and brought it to its lowest point since both countries signed the peace treaty. Ironically, the abortive assassination of Mash'al – a Jordanian citizen – occurred on the same day that a senior civ-il-military Israeli delegation held a meeting with the King. Not surprisingly, the King was furious and offered Israel two options: first, were Mash'al to die, Jordan would reveal the identity of the Israeli agents and they would be tried publicly and executed in Amman. Alternatively, the King asked Israel was to admit its guilt, offer an official apology, and provide the treatment that

[123] Interestingly, Jordanian people were surprised by the King's move. On the whole, Jordanians were oblivious to the Jewish customs when it coming to offering condolences to the bereaved families. It seemed as if the King was kneeling to the Jews and humiliating himself. For many Jordanians and indeed Arabs, the King denigrating the dignity of his country and his office.

could save Mash'al's life. Netanyahu opted for the second option and sent the Chief of Mossad, Danny Yatom, to Amman with the required antidote.[124] Of course, the attack on Mash'al was a violation of both the peace treaty, in which the security clause prevents either country from taking hostile acts against the other,[125] and of Jordan's sovereignty.[126] Israel's action clearly proved that there were some circles in the right-wing camp that had not yet internalized the meaning of having peace with Jordan.

A few months later, a major water crisis erupted between the two sides and was only warded off after Israel acquiesced to Jordanian demands. Israel, facing massive water shortages and a dwindling supply in the Tiberias, was reluctant to provide Jordan with water as stipulated in the peace treaty. In Jordan, they interpreted this reluctance as further proof that this government was both unpredictable and untrustworthy. This incident also drove many more Jordanians to believe that Israel was not sincere in living up to the commitments made in the peace agreement.

Through Netanyahu's first stint in power, Jordanians became increasingly disenchanted with his leadership and policies. Therefore, King Abdullah II was very pleased when Ehud Barack won the election of 1999. Labor's return to power brought Jordan some hope that the change would be positive. However, it seems that Israel had changed more fundamentally and its position on peace has not been aligned with Jordan's interest (see next chapter).

4.3. Normalization and Its Critics

The phrase "normalization" was not new in the context of the

[124] *The Jerusalem Post*, 10 October, 1997.

[125] See Article 4 of the peace treaty.

[126] For more details on this incident and how it perplexed the Israeli establishment see Efraim Halevy, *Man in the Shadows: Inside the Middle East Crisis with a Man Who Led the Mossad* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2006).

peace treaty. Indeed, in the mid-1970s, Mohammed Sid-Ahmed, a left-wing and prominent Egyptian journalist, wrote a book entitled After the Guns Fall Silent[127] in which he offers a vision of the accommodation of Israel after signing a peace agreement. He wrote that the "tacit acknowledgement that the existence of Israel within secure and recognized borders is un avoidable after the Arab recover their occupied territories and after the establishment of some Palestinian entity."[128] His call for peaceful accommodation with Israel did not resonate well with the Arabs and his controversial book was widely criticized.

In the first two years after Jordan and Israel signed the peace treaty, Jordanian media buzzed with articles discussing the issue of normalization. At that stage, there was a very tiny minority who openly advocated normalizing relations with Israel. Nevertheless, once Netanyahu assumed the premiership and undertook provocative policies, the discussion on normalization disappeared. In fact, the words normalization or normalizer carried negative connotation, and became a kind of opprobrium.

Yet for the first two years of the treaty, Jordanian popular attitudes seemed to be in flux and many thought that the Jordanian public was susceptible to change. Despite the initial optimism, however, most of such promised benefits of peace did not materialize. While trade grew slowly, the benefit of Israeli tourism was slow in making an appearance. Israeli tourists came for one or two-day trips, but did not stay in Jordan. Jordanians criticized them by saying that they bring their sandwiches with them and do not even buy souvenirs. Also, Jordanians complained that Israeli tourist agencies attracted tourists from all over the world to Israel and then added a day or two in Jordan while spending the whole time in Israel. Thus, Jordanians were quick to argue that there was an Israeli plot to promote Petra for the sake of the Israeli economy and at the expense of Jordan's interests.

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[127] Mohammed Sid-Ahmed, *After the Guns Fall Silent* (London, 1976).
[128] *Ibid.*, p.67.

It was soon obvious that the "King's peace" was losing popular support. In Jordan, public attitudes are defined in part by the fact that almost half of Jordanians are of Palestinian descent, while the other half is sensitive to Israeli policies and what they see as Israel's dishonesty when it comes to making peace with the Palestinian people in the occupied territories. Therefore, the Palestinian cause is an internal Jordanian issue as well.

Interestingly, it seems that everyone was caught very much by surprise by the peace treaty. Therefore, it took a while for Israel's leaders to grasp that Jordanian perceptions of peace were significantly different from their own. In fact, Jordanians were not aware of the clandestine meetings or the understanding reached by the King with Israel. Just a few years before peace, Jordanians had largely supported Saddam Hussein when he fired 39 missiles at Israel. Moreover, Israel still had a negative image in Jordanian press and even in some textbooks.[129]

For many years, the peace treaty has in fact remained a primary point of contention between the Jordanian government and the opposition. Some political forces criticized normalization as part of their ideological opposition to the peace process as a whole and the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty in particular. For an extended period of time, Islamists, for instance, fought tooth and nail against the concept of normalization. A plethora of statements and sermons by Islamist forces have stressed this particular point. Normalization, according to anti-normalization forces, is understood by Israel to be a tool for hegemony and domination of the region, stemming from the traditional religious concept that that highlights the Jews as the elite among nations. To them, normalization is a blatant penetration of the Arab culture. This last point was perhaps the most effective in frightening people from normalizing relations with Israel. It played on the Arab fear of Western, Zionist influence

[129] For more details on how the Arabs view Israel, see Hassan A. Barari, *Israelism: Arab Scholarship on Israel, a Critical Assessment* (London: Ithaca, 2009).

that is dominant in much of the Arab world. Anti-normalization forces in Jordan stressed that there was an Israeli plot to invade the Arab world culturally and economically through Jordan. This argument has been reiterated by many spokespersons who represent the anti-normalization movement.

Indeed, opposition to both peace and normalization came even before Israel and Jordan finalized the treaty. The Islamic Action Front joined by seven leftist and Arab nationalist parties formed the Committee for Resisting Submission and Normalization (CRSN). Despite the fundamental ideological differences of these parties, they all remained united by their adamant ideological commitment to fighting normalization with Israel. Professional associations also joined the committee and started taking disciplinary measures against any of their members who were reported to have engaged in normalization with Israel. Interestingly, even those Jordanians who were not ideologically committed were doubtful. The running argument during the second half of the 1990s was that Jordanians should wait to see if Israel could make good on its promises.

The fundamental difference in the perceptions of Jordanians and Israelis was evident. On the one hand, many Israelis used the treaty to advance the argument that there were no sticking issues between the two sides. To them, peace was long-overdue. On the other hand, Jordanians were seeking reassurance from Israel. To a vast majority of Jordanians, Israel has been an inherently expansionist and militant state. Israelis in large part do not share this view with Jordanians, thus Israelis never felt the need to reassure Jordan.[130] Though the vast majority of the Israeli public supported the peace treaty as was the case with the Oslo agreements,[131] they never saw Jordan as a stepping-stone to wider regional reconciliation,

[130] United Press International, 17 July 1994.

[131] Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research, Peace Index, http://www.tau.ac.il/peace/index.html.

especially in the Arab world. To the vexation of Jordanian officials, Israeli policies underscored that Jordan would not be the key lynchpin of Israeli policy in the region.

Evidently, the bilateral relations have been held hostage to the Palestinian-Israeli interactions. In February 1996, two Israeli buses were blown up killing and injuring scores of Israeli civilians. To be sure, Jordanian officials condemned these Palestinians attacks, and the official media reflected this sentiment. The Jordan Times daily opined,"The bombs are aimed at peace."[132] With only a few months before the general elections in Israel, the Palestinian attacks and Hezbollah rockets took their toll on Shimon Peres, who was thought to have a better chance of winning. However, Peres' popularity took a sharp nosedive, and he felt the need to react and demonstrate resolve. In April 1996, he launched the Grapes of Wrath operation against Hezbollah in Southern Lebanon. In the course of fighting, the Israeli air force killed civilians, a fact that enraged Jordanians and gave the anti-normalization forces further ammunition. The Jordanian press was filled with articles reiterating the line that peace was being shattered in Lebanon. The Jordanian parliament joined the public in condemning Israel and issued a statement stating that Israeli actions only revealed the true face of Zionism and the Jewish state. Jordanian rage at Israel's actions reached a crescendo, as the majority believed that the technically advanced Israeli military in fact intended to kill the civilians in the Qana massacre. Few Jordanians could believe that the Israeli military had hit the compound accidentally, and detailed post-mortems rejected Israel's insistence that it had been unintentional. As previously discussed, increasingly right-wing Israeli policies weakened the peace camp in Jordan and empowered the anti-normalization forces.

Israel, on the other hand, viewed the situation from a different angle. Israelis felt that the Arabs should understand that security

[132] *The Jordan Times,* 4 March 1996.

is a paramount issue for Israel and one that is central to the Jewish psyche. In his book, Michael Brecher, discusses the Jewish prism[133] and the Arab responsibility to stop "inciting" terrorism. The centrality of security in Israel is evident although some argue that the Israeli right use security as a pretext for immobility on making peace with the Arabs. Nevertheless, the popular Israeli argument is that if the Lebanese government could not stop Hezbollah from attacking Israel, then Israel place a huge price tag on the Lebanese government. Even those Israelis who supported the Oslo process remained faithful to this argument.

In sum, Jordan tried its best to find common ground with Israel. And indeed, before Netanyahu's provocative policies, normalization remained a neutral word for many Jordanians. It had not yet become a stigma, but rather a position that could be either opposed or supported. However, after the attempt on Mash'al life, Jordanians ceased to have faith in normalization All along, however, it seemed that King Hussein did not give up on peace and normalization with Israel. Toward the end of his life, it became clear that the battle for Jordanian acceptance of the Jewish state was lost, yet the king was disappointed not by the lack of true peace, but by Israeli actions.

The peace process itself had run aground and more than anytime before, the Jordanian public had seemingly stopped believing in the possibility of peace and coexistence with Israel. The image of Israel would be severely affected with the eruption of al-Aqsa Intifada and the persistence of Israel's unilateral policies.

4.4. Conclusion

A few months after King Abdullah's ascent to the throne, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barack and Yasser Arafat met at Camp David

[133] Michael Brecher, *The Foreign Policy System of Israel: Setting, Images, Process* (London: St Martin's Press, 1972).

ostensibly with the objective of making a comprehensive and lasting peace. Their efforts failed, and attempts to save the talks by President Bill Clinton yielded nothing but frustration. The collapse of the Camp David summit ushered in two interrelated events with paramount importance to Jordan's relationship with Israel. First, the Palestinians resorted to al-Aqsa Intifada. Second, Israeli society shifted further to the right.

By and large, Jordanians suspected that Israel was acting in bad faith. To a majority of Jordanians, the Israeli side has been interested only in managing the conflict rather than resolving it. To them, Israel was determined to expand its territory further at the expense of the Palestinians. Having concluded that Israel was not serious in peace negotiations, particularly after Sharon became the prime minister of Israel, the Jordanian public adopted the cause of the Palestinians. If there was a shred of hope left that Israel and Jordan could have a warm peace, the Intifada and Israel's reactions ended it.

There has been no shortage of peace initiatives. In fact, Jordanian King Abdullah has been working meticulously to bring both sides of the conflict together to make peace. In March 2007, the king addressed a joint session of the American Congress and he dedicated the entirety of his speech to the idea of a two-state solution. From a Jordanian vantage point, events unfolding since the outbreak of the Palestinian Intifada have proven beyond doubt that it is simply not possible to make peace with Israel. At present, the forces of anti-normalization in Jordan have the upper hand, and most see Israel as being against peace.

Indeed, the anti-normalization camp has a strong case. They argue that Israel has been building settlements relentlessly and present them as a faitaccompli. Even the government of Jordan has been systematically criticizing the settlement activities and told Jordanians that Israel's settlement policy and the separation wall were meant to derail the peace process. On more than one

occasion, the king addressed the Israeli public to pressure the government to make peace.

The argument that Israeli society has shifted toward the right is widespread in Jordan. Jordanians from across the spectrum have reached the conclusion that there is no longer an Israeli left to speak of. Indeed, the Israeli political landscape over the past two decades has not provided an impetus for peace.

With the benefit of hindsight, perhaps the only way an Israeli-Jordanian peace could have led to positive achievements was if an Israeli-Palestinian peace had done so first. This was clear to the Jordanians, but much less so to the successive Israeli governments, and indeed not to the Israeli public. This conclusion begs the following question: what does the future hold for Jordanians and Israelis in this changing environment? This will be the theme of next chapter.

Epilogue

Despite the fact that the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty has survived the regional vicissitudes, the relationship between the two countries is far from warm. At all levels of society, Jordanians are critical of Israeli policies and they see Israel as an expansionist and dangerous state. In his book "Our Last Best Chance," King Abdullah of Jordan warns that almost everyone in the region "fears that we will soon be plagued by yet another devastating war… Israeli politics are mainly to blame for this gloomy reality."[134] While the King has criticized Israel on many occasions, it seems that Amman has no choice but to maintain its relationship with Israel.

Almost twenty-three years have passed since the initiation of the Madrid peace process in 1991. And yet, it does not seem that a final agreement between the Palestinians and Israelis is within reach. The current grim reality – beset with mistrust, enmity, and uncertainty – offers little hope. Although all conflict parties talk about the centrality of peace for a more prosperous and stable future, there are four factors that still impede a genuine move towards peace.

First, Israeli leadership does not believe that it is both necessary and possible to reach a peace agreement with the Palestinians. Israeli leaders feel no sense of urgency on this matter. Many of them put the Palestinian cause on the back burner as their threat perception focuses mainly on Iran. Ever since Benjamin Netanyahu first came to power in 1996, his paramount objective has been to undo the Oslo agreement. Now with the current pace of settlement activities, many even think that the two-state solution is no longer possible. The number of Jewish settlers in the West Bank and East Jerusalem has exceeded half a million, which has led to the current political reality that no Israeli government can survive if it takes policy stances against settlers. Put differently, the power dynamics in Israeli society constitute a marked obstacle for peace.

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[134] King Abdullah II of Jordan, *Our Last Best Chance: A Story of War and Peace* (New York: Penguin Group, 2011).

Second, the incumbent Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas does not enjoy the status of his predecessor, the late Yasser Arafat. During Arafat's time, it was unthinkable for any Palestinian movement to successfully outbid Arafat. He was widely seen as the epitome of the Palestinian national movement. The situation has since changed. The split between Gaza and the West Bank and the ascendance of Hamas make President Abbas a lame duck. Israeli leaders suspect that Abbas is in no position to reach an agreement with Israel, let alone to implement it. Hamas has attained a regional status and indeed a capacity to torpedo any political settlement not to its liking. Hence, the disunity among Palestinians and their persistent rivalry have led many in the region to suspect that Abbas may not be a capable partner for peace.

Third, the U.S. administration is more interested in managing rather than resolving the conflict. Unlike President Bill Clinton, who took political risks and got personally involved in details, President Bush – who assumed power in 2001 – adopted a "hands-off" policy. For the first seven years of his administration, President Bush was part of the problem rather than of the solution. His support of the right-wing governments in Israel let them pursue negligent policies and diminished hope in the region that the United States could be an honest broker. Wittingly or not, President Bush viewed Sharon's anti-peace policy within the context of the global war on terror. Sharon felt comfortable ditching the peace process and continuing his unilateral policies vis-à-vis the Palestinian territories. Even when President Bush worked with Sharon's less hawkish successor, Ehud Olmert, to convene the Annapolis process in 2007, it was too little, too late.[135] Bush's successor, President Barack Obama, tried his best

[135] See Hassan A. Barari, The Annapolis Meeting: Too Little Too Late! *CSS Papers*, November 2007. This study sheds light on the dynamics that will determine the success or failure of the Annapolis Meeting regarding the Israel-Palestine conflict. The history of the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians suggests that domestic factors are key to understanding the ability of both sides to implement their agreements. For this reason, the author concludes that a mutual appreciation of the internal dynamics on each side of the conflict is essential to the success of the peace process.

to broker a peace agreement in his first term and failed. In his second term, President Obama seems to be preoccupied by other more important problems that prevent him from investing in a peace process.

Finally, the trust gap between the Palestinians and the Israelis is detrimental to the peace process as a whole. Since the outbreak of the al-Aqsa Intifada in September 2000 and the subsequent ascendance of Hamas, the two sides of the conflict have not taken the security or political risks necessary to achieve peace. It is true that some circles in Israel employ the issue of lack of trust to change the facts on the ground to favor settlers, but it is also true that the vast majority of the Jewish population in Israel does not trust the Palestinians. This applies vice versa to the Palestinians. To them, Israel is not serious about peace and uses time to bring the Palestinians to the brink of capitulation.

Indeed, there is a paradox in the current political realities on both sides. On the one hand, resolving the conflict is urgent for both sides, but on the other hand, the maximum offer that any Israeli government can make to the Palestinians in exchange for peace while surviving politically is far less than the minimum any Palestinian government can accept and survive politically. This reality has thus led many observers to propose paradigms other than a two-state solution.

Jordan's Threat Perception

The seeming failure of the peace process has led many analysts to ponder what role, if any, Jordan can play in the West Bank. Many also question whether Jordan should intervene and, if so, under what conditions? Such questions tend to link Jordan's moves in the region to the changing dynamics in the Palestinian political arena. For some Israelis, the failure of the Palestinians to unite

behind one strategy should lead, inter alia, to direct or indirect Jordanian involvement in the West Bank. However, this view shows a lack of appreciation regarding how Jordan's strategic thinking has evolved over the last two decades. Projecting Jordan as a fence-sitter, waiting to step in should the Palestinians fail in their state-building endeavor, fails to capture the complexity of Jordanians' threat perception.

Most Jordanians argue openly that a two-state solution is the best option. Over the years, a national consensus has emerged that the failure of the two-state paradigm would pose a threat to Jordan's national security. Ironically, Jordanians have yet to outline what their country would do if an independent Palestinian state does not materialize. In other words, what is Jordan's "Plan B" for dealing with the West Bank if the Palestinian Authority (PA) collapses and mayhem ensues – or worse, if Hamas takes over in the West Bank? Or what if the status quo continues unchecked for years to come? In any case, various outside observers have put forth answers of their own. As a result, two troublesome ideas have resurfaced after having been discussed on and off for the past three decades: namely, a confederation between Jordan and the Palestinians, and the so-called "Jordanian option," in which parts of the West Bank would be returned to Jordanian control.

These two ideas being proposed in large part by Israeli analysts do not reassure Jordanians. Therefore, it has become a habit for Jordanians to repeat that their country faces one threat: Israeli policies toward the peace process. Indeed, a plethora of articles have been published to emphasize this particular point. Now it is important to clarify how Jordanians perceive the threat posed by the persistent Israeli-Palestinian conflict or by any alternative to a two-state solution. Like the majority of Israelis who support an independent Palestinian state as a means to avert a one-state solution and to ensure the Jewish democratic nature of Israel, Jordanians support a two-state approach in order to avert the possibility of Jordanian-Palestinian unification. It is a common

argument among Jordanians that unification with the remaining parts of Palestine would render Jordanians a minority in their own country – a gloom-and-doom scenario for many. The running argument in Jordan currently is that Israel aims to resolve its demographic nightmare at the expense of Jordan.

Jordan has discarded the previous Hashemite ambitions to bring the West Bank under Jordanian rule. By the end of the 1980s, King Hussein realized that his objectives of preventing both the establishment of a Palestinian state and the annexation of the West Bank by the Likud-led Israeli government were incompatible. It was then that a new school of thought emerged in Jordan arguing that the Hashemite Kingdom would be better off with the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. This thinking drove King Hussein's decision to sever administrative and legal ties with the West Bank.

Marwan Muasher, former Deputy Prime Minister and the first Jordanian Ambassador to Israel, has chronicled the two-state solution's rise in popularity among Jordanians.[136] As he put it, the old school of thought – which considered a Palestinian state a threat to Jordan because it would inevitably be irredentist – gave way to those who deemed a Palestinian state to be in Jordan's best interest. There are many reasons for this major change, but suffice it here to cite demographic concerns as the main catalyst of the rise of the two-state school of thought. These concerns had become particularly distressing in the 1980s and early 1990s, when many in Jordan feared the Likud's "Jordan is Palestine" slogan.

Hence, over the past several years, King Abdullah II has been instrumental in promoting and creating momentum behind the two-state approach. Specifically, Jordan has played a leading role in two different tracks of the peace process. First, Jordan contributed to the formulation of the Arab Peace Initiative, an attempt to

[136] Marwan Muasher, *The Arab Center: The Promise of Moderation* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2008), pp. 26–30.

resolve the conflict with Israel, and has passionately promoted it. The Initiative calls on Israel to withdraw to the pre-1967 borders as a quid pro quo for peace with the Arabs, and demands a mutually accepted solution to the refugee problem. Israel dismissed the initiative altogether. Second, Jordan worked closely with the Bush administration to develop the Quartet Roadmap aimed at implementing Washington's two-state vision. In order to keep the pressure on his U.S. partners, King Abdullah addressed a joint session of Congress in March 2007, asking U.S. lawmakers to help implement a solution in accordance with the Arab Peace Initiative and the Roadmap.

Despite the efforts of Jordan and others, the two-state solution has recently been losing momentum. For example, Giora Eiland, former director of Israel's National Security Council, recently published a study emphasizing the need to rethink the two-state model, and other observers have questioned it as well.[137] The mere discussion of such ideas in Washington worries Jordanians, who themselves began to debate the issue anew during summer 2008.

This renewed Jordanian debate revealed that the overwhelming majority of Jordanians strongly oppose even considering the idea of unification with the Palestinians before the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. A number of journalists of Palestinian origin called for Jordan to rethink this position. They made the case that the West Bank was a part of Jordan, and that unification was therefore not only inevitable, but also advantageous. The majority of Jordanian writers and officials, however, were quick to criticize these arguments, accusing them of proposing notions, which can only serve as a precursor for the much loathed idea of an alternative homeland, and contending that such argument plays

[137] See Giora Eiland, *Rethinking the Two-State Solution* (Policy Focus no. 88) (Washington, D.C.: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, September 2008); available online (www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC04.php?CID=299). See also Nathan Brown, *Sunset for the Two-State Solution*? (Policy Brief no. 58) (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, May 2008).

into the hands of the Israeli right. As a result, those proposing unification were forced to give ground in the national debate and later became apologetic.

The brief debate proved that it was not easy for Jordanians to publicly express ideas linking their country to the Palestinians. King Abdullah II put an end to it by assuring his people that the two-state solution is the only option that could serve the interests of both Jordan and the Palestinians. On different occasions over the past few years, he has repeated the mantra that "Jordan is Jordan and Palestine is Palestine." Nevertheless, the dispute raises the question of whether Jordan should pursue a more proactive form of diplomacy to help the Palestinians organize their affairs. Clearly, the establishment of a Palestinian state requires a single, reliable Palestinian negotiating partner. Unfortunately, the Palestinians have failed to unite behind one strategic objective. The dissonance between the moderates in the West Bank, who are seen as weak, and the rejectionists (Hamas) in Gaza, who were supported by Iran and Syria, has only intensified the Palestinian predicament and disheartened the increasingly disgruntled Palestinian people.

From this perspective, one is compelled to reconsider whether Jordan was right to bet on PA president Mahmoud Abbas in the first place. How can Jordan push for a two-state solution when the emergent political force on the ground – Hamas – continues to subvert it? And if a Palestinian state does not materialize – a scenario that would be detrimental to Jordan's national security – what is Jordan's alternative approach? To avert the strategic consequences of this scenario, Jordan has mounted a three-pronged campaign that requires a delicate balancing act. First, Amman has gradually reengaged with Hamas albeit for a short period of time. Given the deep divide between Hamas' and Jordan's respective strategies, this approach sounds perplexing. How would working with Hamas, which has never hesitated to sabotage peace efforts, help Jordan achieve its ultimate objective of an independent Palestinian state? The answer is precisely that Jordan is now

experimenting with an attempt to help "moderate" or at least contain Hamas, on the assumption that it may be too entrenched to ignore. Jordan's alliance with Abbas, which isolated Hamas, was designed not to punish Hamas, but rather to bring about a change in the organization's attitude regarding the peace process and the Quartet's conditions. For relatively weakened moderate Arab regimes such as Jordan, the international siege on Gaza and Hamas is difficult to justify, particularly when the Jordanian public views the United States as retreating from the region and the peace process as running out of steam. Jordan's new openness toward Hamas is therefore not a change of strategy but of tactics. It reflects Amman's calculation that, in the near future, Hamas could be the dominant player in Palestinian politics.

At the same time, it seems that Jordan has begun to question whether Abbas is an effective leader. As mentioned earlier, many Jordanians argue that he is both weak and hesitant and therefore the wrong horse to bet on. The logical conclusion is that the West Bank will at some point either degenerate into anarchy or fall into the hands of Hamas. The working assumption in Amman was that Abbas would be challenged soon after the end of his tenure in January 2009. Hence, Jordan could not afford to stay out of contact with an organization that might soon take over the territory. Over the last few years, Amman has been seeking reassurances and commitments that the group will not interfere in Jordan's internal politics if it assumes control in the West Bank. However, with the advent of the Arab Spring, Jordan turned inwards for fear that the country would experience instability.

During Mubarak's tenure, Jordan viewed Egypt's efforts to mediate between Fatah and Hamas favorably. It was thought that it would be in Jordan's best interests if this mediation succeeded in a way that could meet the Quartet's three conditions for engaging Hamas diplomatically. This, in Jordan's calculation, would rehabilitate the Palestinian partner and allow for an aggressive push to strike a deal with Israel before it was too late. The only pitfall for Jordan

was that it did not play a vital role in the tandem with Egypt. For this reason, Jordan had less influence in Palestinian political circles. Indeed, Jordan must be more assertive if it hopes to influence the changing Palestinian dynamics.

The second prong in Jordan's approach has been to maintain its support of Abbas in the hope of realizing a two-state solution. Although no such solution seems imminent, Jordan cannot afford to be seen as opposing what it has championed all along. The question remains whether or not it can play an effective role in the West Bank. It is no secret that Jordan offered to help the PA in its bid to assume security responsibility in the territory. Specifically, Amman offered to train Palestinian police forces and to send the Palestinian "Badr Brigade" – a Jordan-based force loyal to Abbas – to help the PA in the West Bank. Beyond this limited involvement, it is difficult to imagine any future political role for Jordan in the West Bank, mainly due to Amman's fear of a Palestinian reaction or an internal Jordanian backlash. For example, a recent poll conducted by al-Najah University's Center for Opinion Polls and Survey Studies revealed that 66.8 percent of Palestinians reject the idea of a union with Jordan,[138] and Jordanians vehemently reject any such role as well. Added to this is the historical mistrust between Jordan and the PLO. And yet, many in Jordan may rethink their position if a Palestinian state comes into being. As I have written previously:

> The Islamist and leftist opposition in Jordan has voiced its adamant rejection of even a limited role for the country in the West Bank before the establishment of a viable and independent Palestinian state. It makes the case that any Jordanian involvement in the West Bank before the establishment of a Palestinian state will be detrimental to the Palestinian cause.[139]

However, the predicament that both Israel and Jordan have to contend with, albeit for different reasons, is that the demographic

[138] *The Jordan Times*, September 25, 2008.

[139] Hassan Barari, "Can Jordan Play a Role in Palestine?" *BitterLemons-International.org,* Vol. 3, edition 40 (November 10, 2005), http://bitterlemons-international.org/previous.php?opt=1&id=107#432.

time-bomb is ticking West of the Jordan River. The lack of a solution will lead to a Palestinian majority in the area between the Mediterranean and the River, thus converting Israel into a bi-national state. According to this line of thinking, Israel might go so far as to force the transfer of Palestinians to Jordanian territory in order to uphold a Jewish majority in Israel. Such an act, if it ever comes into fruition, will clearly tip the delicate demographic balance in Jordan. Still, such a pessimistic scenario, logical as it may sound, can be averted only by establishing a Palestinian state within the 1967 border. For this reason, Jordan has meticulously and scrupulously lobbied world leaders, the U.S. in particular, in favor of a two-state solution as the only recipe for stability and security of Jordan in the changing region.

Israel's Threat Perception

As is the case in any state, strategies and interests are firmly linked. No sound analysis of the future of Jordanian-Israeli relations can be made without examining the threat perception dominant among Israelis. In 2000, Israeli elites launched a series of annual conferences – called the Herzliya conferences – to discuss the sources of threats facing Israel by the turn of the new century. Israeli elites from the economic, political, military, and security spectrum reconfirmed the definition of Israel as a Jewish State.[140] During the first conference, some fifty senior figures addressed the audience and agreed that Israel was facing a strategic juncture or a defining moment in its history.[141] They came up with what could be termed as the Herzliya Consensus, which represents an agreement among Zionists regarding the grave demographic threat embodied in the looming Palestinian majority in the area stretching from the Mediterranean to the Jordan River. Professor Arnon Soffer

[140] For more details, see *The Herzliya Document* (The Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya, March 2001).
[141] *Ibid.*

of Haifa University played a crucial role in articulating the demographic picture. His main thesis is that Jews will constitute only 42 percent of the population of historical Palestine with a total population of 15.2 million by the year 2020.[142] The main recommendation of Soffer's study is that, in order for Israel to survive as a Jewish state, it will need to demarcate the borders of the state in such as way as to secure a Jewish majority. This means that granting the Palestinians a state should be an outcome of a demographic reality and not the Israeli belief in the Palestinians' right to self-determination. Professor Soffer warns that without disengagement, Israel will disappear in two decades. Soffer presented a summary of his study to members sitting on the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee in the Knesset, which was then presided over by Dan Meridor.[143]

Given Israel's adamant rejection of the idea of a bi-national state, as floated by some Palestinian academics and intellectuals, Israel may do what it takes to preempt what some perceive as a terrifying development. On the whole, Israelis perceive bi-nationalism and security as one of the most pressing challenges that Israel is facing. The working assumption among Israelis is that maintaining Israeli control over the Palestinian territories in the absence of a political two-state solution will result in a de facto bi-national state with Jews constituting a minority. Some 67 percent of Israeli Jews say that they fear such a scenario, whereas only 6 percent back the ideas of a bi-national state and 78 percent favor a two-state solution.[144] That said, Israel has yet to take the necessary steps to facilitate the establishment of a Palestinian state. However, as long as Israeli policies toward the peace process are held hostage by the demands of the settlers, any chance of taking such a logical step is low.

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[142] Arnon Soffer, *Israel, Demography 2000-2020: Dangers and Opportunities* (Haifa University: Center for National Security Studies, 2001) (in Hebrew).
[143] Haaretz, 19 August, 2003.
[144] The Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research, Tel Aviv University, Peace Index, October 2003.

The second immediate perceived threat is security. Israel's approach to security is strongly influenced by the persistence of the Arab-Israeli conflict. During the 1990s, for instance, Israel's perceived sense of security was a function of the emerging benign security environment made possible by the end of the Cold War and the defeat of Iraq in 1991. Taken together, these two developments left many Israelis to think that the "eastern front" – meaning the scenario in which Iraqi troops would enter Jordan to attack Israel – was no longer a realistic threat. The security provisions in the peace treaty with Jordan further assured Israel that the idea of the "eastern front" was buried once and for all.

This situation has changed over the last decade. Israel's unilateral withdrawal from Gaza has brought Israel neither peace nor security. Israel gave up the Philadelphia Corridor separating the territory from the Egyptian Sinai, thus enabling Hamas to smuggle in weapons into Gaza. Since Hamas took power in 2006, Israeli forces have attacked Gaza on three occasions. Israeli strategists argue that a future withdrawal from the West Bank is influenced by the experience Israel has been having since its unilateral withdrawal from Gaza. For this reason, the idea of annexing the Jordan Valley by Israel has gained currency over the last few years. If this were to happen, there would be no contiguity between Jordan and the future Palestinian state.

In recent years, some Israelis have suggested a new, more troubling paradigm for resolving the conflict with the Palestinians. The new argument is that given the recent developments over the last decade and a half, chances for a viable Palestinian state are dim. Reflecting this new thinking, Giora Eiland published a study promoting what he calls the "regional solution."[145] According to this scenario, the West Bank would be ruled by Jordan. He argues that if Israel were to pull out from the West Bank, Hamas would

[145] Giora Eiland, *Regional Alternatives to the Two-State Solution* (Bar-Ilan University: The Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, 2010).

take over in a short period of time. Indeed, a Palestinian state in the West Bank run by Hamas could pose unbearable security challenges for Israel. He based his argument on the notion that if secular Palestinians living in the West Bank were to choose between Hamas or Jordan, they would certainly choose Jordan.

Giora Eiland provides the rationale for the regional alternative to a two-state solution. From an Israeli perspective, Giora Eiland mentions four advantages to such a solution.[146] First, the conflict would be transformed to one between two states, Jordan and Israel, rather one between the Palestinian people and their occupiers. Hence, the international community may lessen the pressure on Israel to offer concessions on each issue. Second, unlike the Palestinians, Jordan can compromise on territory. Furthermore, Israel would have to ask for the demilitarization of the West Bank, a demand that sounds more reasonable if the agreement is reached between Jordan and Israel. Third, Israelis have more trust in Jordan than in Palestinians. In a two-state solution, Israel would be asked to concede assets as a quid pro quo for the Palestinian promise of security. There is huge risk in such a deal. However, when it comes to Jordan, Israel can take those risky steps. Finally, Israelis suspect that an independent Palestinian state would be inherently weak and could thus be a burden on Israel. According to Giora Eiland:

> It is not clear that the territory between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea is sufficient for two viable states. The problems of the future state (lack of infrastructure, shortage of employment, division between the West Bank and Gaza, etc.) will fall on Israel's shoulders. Moreover, the international community will say it is Israel's "moral obligation" to help the new state after so many years of occupation. Indeed, doing so will also be an Israeli interest since it is to Israel's advantage that the Palestinian state is not beset by despair, poverty, and frustration. That will not be the case if the West Bank is part of the "greater" Jordanian kingdom.[147]

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[146] *Ibid.*, pp. 26-27.
[147] *z,* p. 27.

It is hard to find an explicit or implicit advantage for either the Palestinians or the Jordanians in such regional solution. While Giora Eiland thinks that this is the best alternative to the two-state solution, he seems not to comprehend well Jordan's internal sensitivities to such a solution. In fact, a more activist Jordanian role in the Palestinian territories is very likely to have grave ramifications for the kingdom's domestic equilibrium. The bottom line is that Jordanians will not accept anything short of a two-state solution and any other solution will always be viewed in Jordan as another strategic threat to Jordan's long-term well-being.

In conclusion, it is hard to avoid the realization that Jordan and Israel – despite having a peace treaty – have two different perspectives about what constitutes a stable solution to the conflict. On the whole, Jordanians view Israeli unwillingness to proceed with the two-state solution and its stalling tactics as a threat to Jordanian national security for years to come. In fact, Israeli policies, if left unchecked, will chip away at the prospects of the realization of the two-state paradigm.

Hence, the perpetuation of the status quo coupled with new demographic realities and settlement activities will perhaps mean looking for a solution at the expense of Jordan's interests. Seen in this way, Jordan and Israel have opposing strategies that may put the two countries on a collision course in the future. Continued contact between officials on both sides and the complimentary words exchanged by the leaders of both countries are in fact nothing but a smokescreen concealing profound disagreements and mistrust.

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Interview with former Prime Minister Adel Salaam al-Majali, Amman, July 15, 2006.

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Twenty years have passed since Israel and Jordan signed a peace treaty, yet the two countries remain fundamentally divided by the Palestinian issue. Jordan and Israel sought to present a model of a "warm" peace. However, a glance at the recent past reveals why, even today, genuine and warm peace between Israel and Jordan is still far from a reality.

The peace treaty has so far survived the many strains placed upon it by regional developments. Nevertheless, Israeli leaders have yet to take in the fact that the bilateral relationship with Jordan cannot be isolated from the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

The objective of this book is twofold: Firstly, it assesses the development of the Israeli-Jordanian relationship in the period before and after the signing of the peace treaty. Secondly, it analyzes whether the two countries are likely to clash or whether they can continue to peacefully manage their fundamental differences in a more and more challenging region.

Hassan A. Barari is an Associate Professor in the Department of International Affairs at Qatar University.

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