



# PALESTINIANS AND JORDANIANS: A CRISIS OF IDENTITY

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Since the annexation of the West Bank in 1950, the population of the Hashimite Kingdom of Jordan has been composed of two major communal groups: Transjordanians and Palestinians. Tensions between the two, a persistent if suppressed feature of domestic politics, were finally allowed more open expression in 1989, as the country embarked on a path of political liberalization. Despite the long history of the troubled relationship, however, Palestinian-Transjordanian tensions remain largely unexplored,<sup>1</sup> except, to a limited extent, as a direct function of PLO-Jordanian relations.

The interaction of both internal and external factors in sustaining or exacerbating intercommunal tensions becomes particularly apparent when examining the recent conjunction of three processes: economic reform, political liberalization, and peacemaking. The first two, by promising to alter the domestic balance of political and economic power, portend a change both in relations among citizens and between

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citizens and the state. The third process, ending more than forty years of a war that to a large extent constructed identities in opposition to an external enemy, has forced both communities to rethink who they are and who they will be in relation to each other. To date, open conflict has largely been avoided in the kingdom, but there is no question that the convergence of these three processes has greatly exacerbated intercommunal tensions.

### *Defining Communal Identity in Jordan*

In Jordan, as in other countries, national as well as subnational identities are in a state of continuous adjustment, if not reconstruction. Thus, answers to the questions, "Who is a Jordanian?" "Who is a Palestinian?" or "What constitutes Jordanianness or Palestinianness?" would be different today from what they would have been five, or certainly ten, years ago. In the absence of concrete data, what follows is an impressionistic, if informed, report based on more than a decade of general observation and study of Jordanian politics.

The presence of large numbers of Palestinians in Jordan—who today probably comprise about half the population<sup>2</sup>—dates to the 1948-49 Palestine war, when more than 700,000 Palestinians were expelled or fled from their homes. Some 70,000 went directly to the East Bank of the Jordan River, which at the time had an estimated, largely indigenous, Transjordanian population of about 440,000. In 1950, following the enactment of a series of preparatory administrative measures, Jordan's King 'Abdallah annexed the part of central Palestine, now known as the West Bank, that had not fallen to Jewish/Israeli forces during the war. 'Abdallah's extension of Jordanian citizenship to all West Bank Palestinians (440,000 of them indigenous and 280,000 refugees from the areas of Palestine that became Israel) as well as to the 70,000 who went directly to the East Bank laid the formal political basis for the "unity of the two banks."

Despite the presence of a few Transjordanian businessmen and civil servants, the West Bank remained overwhelmingly Palestinian, so the question of identity was in essence always much clearer there. It was on the East Bank that the increasing mix of population would ultimately prove more problematic for identity construction. However, at the time of the annexation, the line between Transjordanians and Palestinians was fairly easily discernible despite the presence in the East Bank of other groups. The Circassians, for example, were non-Arab Muslims who came to Transjordan from the Caucasus, largely in the 1880s. Merchant families and bureaucrats of Syrian, Lebanese, and Palestinian origin had also settled in Transjordan over the years.<sup>3</sup> While such distinctions were largely insignificant to the newly arrived Palestinians, for

the native Transjordanians these groups were all outsiders (as indeed was the ruling House of Hashim, at least in the eyes of some).<sup>4</sup>

### *Transjordanian Identity*

The few studies of Transjordanian identity that have been done focus almost exclusively on tribes.<sup>5</sup> There is no question that the *'ashira* (large clan or tribe), as a basis of affiliation and source of prestige and patronage, has played a central role in the identity of a majority of the kingdom's native East Bank citizens. Anyone who doubts the continuing, if evolving, importance of the tribe in Jordan need only examine the outcome of the 1993 parliamentary elections.<sup>6</sup> By focusing its strategies of recruitment and rewards on the *'asha'ir*, over the years the regime further reinforced the salience of tribal affiliation to East Banker identity, though not all tribes enjoyed the same level of support.<sup>7</sup>

Part of the problem in trying to construct a more complete picture of the evolution of a national identity among Transjordanians is the paucity of research on Jordanian domestic politics. In addition to the tendency of foreign analysts to see Jordan through the lens of the Arab-Israeli conflict, Transjordanians bear some of the responsibility, for, to date, they have provided little in the way of critical accounts of their own history. Moreover, in terms of the literature produced, Jordanian history itself can almost be said to have been subsumed by Palestinian history (or at least the Jordanian national movement by the Palestinian national movement) since 1967, if not since 1948. Only recently has a group of young Transjordanian scholars emerged that has begun to research, write, and thus in effect reclaim their history.

In any event, in addition to tribe, a central yet underexplored element in the identity of many Transjordanians has been their service in the state apparatus, civilian and military. Building on a pre-1948 base of military recruitment from among the indigenous population, 'Abdallah and Hussein after him viewed the Transjordanians as more loyal and reliable than the recently uprooted and newly enfranchised Palestinians. To insure continued Transjordanian loyalty, the state provided subsidies and preferentially recruited key tribes into various parts of the state apparatus. Although not all Transjordanians belonged to the favored tribes, there is no question that a central part of what it meant for many Transjordanians to be "Jordanian" was associated with employment by the state, especially in security services or the military.

### *Palestinian Identity*

Since their mass arrival in 1948, there have been a number of important distinctions among Palestinians in Jordan, which have evolved and intensified over the years.<sup>8</sup> What underlies Palestinian identity in general, however, is attachment to the village or town of origin, a sense of

loss of homeland and of gross injustice at the hands of the international community, and the centrality of the notion of return.

For the purposes of this study, the Palestinian population today may be divided into four groups. The first comprises refugee camp dwellers or those who have recently left the camps. Here, as a rule, whether one is dealing with 1948 or 1967 refugees, the sense of Palestinianness is stronger or at least of a nature that makes a concomitant sense of Jordanianness uncommon (except for the convenience of having a passport); indeed, at least until the king's July 1988 legal disengagement from the West Bank, this sector's Palestinian identity was defined in part in opposition or hostility to a Jordanian identity, although years of residence also made Jordan home, if not the homeland.

A second group comprises the Palestinian middle class of small merchants and lower-level government employees. Here again, the sense of Palestinian identity is strong, but as a group that has achieved a certain economic success and integration, hostility to a Jordanian identity has been less pronounced, except among those who played some role in the Palestinian resistance movement. In the past few years, this group has come to feel more comfortable expressing some form of attachment to Jordan (if not identifying themselves as Jordanian), or at the very least expressing loyalty to the king.

A third group includes those Palestinians who have achieved notable success in business (and, in some cases, in the upper levels of the bureaucracy). Following the fighting in 1970-71, this Palestinian bourgeoisie appears to have accepted political quiescence in exchange for the regime's provision of a stable atmosphere conducive to making money. Indeed, this group, along with the largely Transjordanian-staffed army and security forces, became a pillar of regime support, particularly as the country reaped the benefits of the oil boom in the Gulf. Many of its members are from West Bank families who threw in their lot with 'Abdallah at the time of the annexation. These are the Palestinians who tend to see no dilemma or contradiction in identifying themselves as both Palestinian and Jordanian.<sup>9</sup>

Jordanian Palestinians who went to the Gulf oil states for work constitute the final group.<sup>10</sup> These Palestinians largely viewed their Jordanian passports as a convenience, not as a basis of identity or belonging. They generally avoided Jordanian consular offices in the Gulf<sup>11</sup> and kept their visits to Jordan to a minimum. Since their return from the Gulf in 1990-91, this group, numbering perhaps 200,000,<sup>12</sup> has had difficulty adjusting to living in the kingdom. Many feel little sense of attachment to or understanding of Jordan as a country (although many express admiration for the king), and stories of their being taken advantage of by other citizens are common. They possess a strong sense of Palestinianness, but with additional elements of separate identity (not the least of

which is hatred of Saddam Hussein) that set them apart in important respects from the kingdom's other Palestinian citizens.

The importance of actual residence on the East Bank in Palestinians' sense of identity is clear from the lack of affinity toward Jordan noted in this last group.<sup>13</sup> Conversely, residence on the East Bank of the children of the Palestinian middle and upper classes has without doubt contributed to generating a sense of Jordanianness. Most are still clearly proud of their Palestinian heritage; however, whether because of length of residence or despair of a solution to the Palestine problem that would allow for their return, or both, many see their futures on the East Bank. Not surprisingly, intermarriage between Palestinians and Transjordanians of this younger generation is more common than previously was the case, if largely limited to middle and upper socio-economic strata in the capital. What it means to be a Jordanian among these young Palestinians is also very likely different from what such an identification means for Transjordanians. It may well be a kind of "Amman is Jordan" sense of identity, stemming from class background, urban background, and the concentration of the majority of the kingdom's Palestinian upper-middle and middle class in Amman.

### *The State and Identity Formation*

The annexation of the West Bank in 1950 necessitated a policy aimed at integrating the two banks. This involved remodeling the bases

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of identification with the state in a way that would, if not blur the distinctions, at least lead to acceptance of the monarchy. It also involved blocking the reemergence of a separate Palestinian political leadership. Contrary to the perception of many Palestinians, however, the evidence suggests that the state's goal was less to impose a Transjordanian identity than to

create a hybrid Jordanian identity for both communities.<sup>14</sup>

Four of the elements basic to the state's version of a Jordanian identity are examined below.

#### *Association with the Monarchy*

Focus on the monarchy in general and the king in particular as the symbol of Jordan has been central to the state's efforts to create a hybrid identity and to promote that unquantifiable commodity known as "legitimacy." Hussein's photograph is displayed in offices (government and others), shops, and even homes throughout the kingdom. Images suggesting the king's role as father of the larger Jordanian family are a regular part of television programming (along with film clips of patriotic songs, scenes of bedouin or other folk dancing from national cul-

tural events, shots of the Dome of the Rock or archeological sites such as Petra and Jerash, national development projects, and so on). The fact that Hussein traces his lineage to the Prophet Muhammad has reinforced his position among various sectors of the kingdom's population. Perhaps the most recent instance of the use of this Arab nationalist-Islamic symbolism came early in the Gulf crisis when the king asked the members of parliament not to address him as Your Majesty, but simply as al-Sharif. In this one word, the king invoked both the Prophet and his own great-grandfather, Sharif Hussein of Mecca, leader of the Arab Revolt, thus reminding the populace of his own Arab nationalist ties and the Saudis of their position as usurpers of the custodianship of the holy places in the Hijaz.

#### *Commitment to and Expression of Arabism*

Basing their rule on a commitment to Arabism rather than a more local form of affiliation is crucial for the Hashimites because they themselves are latecomers to Jordan, having arrived from the Hijaz only in the immediate wake of World War I. The regime's repeated appeal to Arabism and characterization of Jordan as a home for all Arabs is also essential given the presence in the kingdom of large numbers of citizens who, like themselves, are not rooted in the East Bank.

The emphasis on Arabism takes several forms. The first is frequent reference, in patriotic programs and accounts of Jordanian history, to the importance of the Arab Revolt, led by the Sharif Hussein during World War I, and its "principles." The second is the periodic appeal to Arab (generally synonymous with bedouin) values. A third, and broader, element is Jordan's policy aimed at greater integration among Arab states, along with Jordan's periodic role as mediator in Arab politics. The king and crown prince make regular reference to this role and to the importance of the Arab nation in their speeches.

#### *Commitment to Palestine*

Whatever problems the regime may have had with the PLO over the years, it has always stressed the sacrifices it has made for Palestine and its deep involvement in the Palestine problem as one of the most basic elements of its identity. Frequent reference is made to its defense of Jerusalem, the royal family's continued support of the Islamic holy places, the continued payment of salaries of government employees on the West Bank even after Israel seized it in 1967, and especially to its providing a haven to successive waves of Palestinians. Up until the peace treaty, it also invoked its continued military preparedness to confront the enemy.

#### *The Unity of the Two Peoples*

Ever since the legal unification of the East and West Banks in 1950 and the extension of the franchise to West Bankers, the notion of Pales-

tinians and Transjordanians as two branches of the same family has been a hallmark of official speeches and media presentations. A more concrete expression of this notion was the United Arab Kingdom plan of 1972, which proposed a confederation of the East Bank and a West Bank-Gaza Palestinian entity under the monarchy. The existence of two groups was thus acknowledged, though not as being ethnically or nationally distinct.

For all the regime's efforts, the hybrid identity has been embraced by only a limited sector of the population. Regional as well as domestic developments have influenced both intercommunal relations and acceptance of this identity. The next section briefly reviews the fluctuations in communal ties and sense(s) of identity.

### *The Bases of Communal Tension*

The existence of distinct subethnic groups is not of itself sufficient for the development of intercommunal problems. In the case of Palestinians and Transjordanians, however, there is a clear historical basis for the emergence of tensions.

King 'Abdallah's territorial designs on Palestine and his dealings with the Zionists over the final disposition of the territory have been viewed as traitorous acts by most Palestinians.<sup>15</sup> Following 'Abdallah's annexation of the West Bank, prohibition of the use of the word "Palestine" on government documents or even in the names of youth or community groups<sup>16</sup> added to the sense of alienation, although, as mentioned earlier, the goal was "Jordanization" of both communities rather than the obliteration of Palestinianism.

Many Palestinians were further aggrieved by the pro-Western orientation and antagonism toward pan-Arabism that continued under Hussein, who succeeded his grandfather 'Abdallah (assassinated by a Palestinian in 1951); Palestinians were prominent in the Arab nationalist surge and opposition to the regime's foreign policy (exemplified in Jordan's intent to join the Baghdad Pact of 1956) that eventually led to a coup attempt in 1957. The founding of the PLO in 1964 and the subsequent institutional blossoming of Palestinian nationalism provided a concrete form of alternative attachment for the many Jordanian Palestinians who had not made peace with the regime. As a result, from the very beginning the PLO constituted a challenge to Hashimite claims to Palestinian allegiance. The conflict between the institutional bases of Palestinian nationalism and the Jordanian state eventually culminated in the 1970-71 fighting that led to the expulsion from Jordan of the Palestinian resistance.

On the Transjordanian side, the influx into the East Bank of more than 250,000 Palestinian refugees in the wake of the 1967 war, less than twenty years after the first refugee wave in 1948, led to heightened

sensitivity to Israeli claims of "Jordan is Palestine" and undoubtedly fueled resentments in general. Then came the expansion of the Palestinian resistance movement, culminating in Black September. In Transjordanians' estimations, the Palestinians were not just ungrateful for the refuge that Jordan had provided them, they were also traitors, real or potential. The result was the emergence of an "East Banker first" trend<sup>17</sup>: Whether to placate Transjordanians, punish Palestinians, improve security, or some combination of the three, the government began to implement a policy of preferential recruitment of Transjordanians into the bureaucracy. This, of course, was in addition to the fact that the upper, if not the lower, levels of the army had long been a largely Transjordanian preserve.<sup>18</sup> Hence, bureaucratic procedures like obtaining a passport, a driver's license, a university fellowship, or registering a new business required Palestinian interaction with an increasingly Transjordanian bureaucracy, leading to Palestinian complaints of powerlessness in a system in which tribal ties enable Transjordanians to cut red tape.

Meanwhile, Palestinian capital earned in the Gulf during the oil boom of the mid-1970s began to pour into the country, making its most obvious mark through a construction explosion in Amman. Whatever gaps had existed between the two communities before could only widen as a result of the dramatic display of overwhelmingly Palestinian wealth. Combined with the government's post-1970 "East Banker first" policy of preferential hiring of Transjordanians, the influx of Palestinian money exacerbated a public sector/private sector divide that closely followed intercommunal lines.<sup>19</sup>

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Domestic Palestinian-Transjordanian relations, complicated in themselves, were further affected during this period by the vicissitudes of Jordan's "external" relations with the PLO and, more specifically, by Hussein's relations with Arafat. Thus, the Arab League's recognition in 1974 of the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, a move that directly challenged King Hussein's claim to the loyalty of Jordan's West Bank Palestinian citizens, not only heightened intercommunal tensions but also played a role in the king's decision to suspend indefinitely the activity of the Jordanian parliament, where half the seats had been apportioned to West Bank representatives.

Perhaps the lowest point in relations in the post-1971 period came in the summer of 1988, when Hussein announced Jordan's administrative and legal disengagement from the West Bank, depriving West Bankers of their citizenship if not their passports.<sup>20</sup> However, when the details of the disengagement clarified that mass disenfranchisement of East



Bank Palestinians was not planned (though the citizenship of some Palestine National Council members was withdrawn), some Palestinians began to view the regime in a new light. By letting go of the West Bank, the king had finally renounced his claim to the loyalty of the West Bank Palestinians (a point of contention between him and the PLO since 1964) and opened the way for the eventual establishment of a Palestinian political entity. Thus it was a move that garnered increased support for Hussein among his East Bank Palestinian subjects, a first step along a path that gradually transformed increasing numbers of East Bank Palestinians into supporters of the king, if not into full "Jordanians."

It is important to emphasize that the Transjordanian-Palestinian divide suggested by this brief summary is by no means clear-cut. Even before the annexation of the West Bank, some prominent Palestinian families had lined up as supporters of King 'Abdallah rather than al-Haj Amin al-Husayni, the leader of the Palestinian nationalist movement during the Mandate. Gradually these and other powerful families who saw no contradiction between being Palestinian and Jordanian were integrated into the governing and elite circles in Amman.<sup>21</sup>

On the other hand, just as certain Palestinians became pillars of the regime, so a number of Transjordanians of various political stripes (depending upon period) have been prominent opponents of the regime. This was particularly the case during the 1950s, when the various Arab nationalist "opposition" parties counted numerous Transjordanian members. A decade later, the Palestinian resistance movement succeeded in recruiting Transjordanians into its ranks, primarily from among leftists opposed to the monarchy or northerners, many of whom continued to identify with Syria and/or resented Hashimite rule.

Even during the 1970-71 Jordanian-PLO conflict, generally considered the lowest point in Palestinian-Jordanian relations, the battle lines between communities were not clearly drawn. For example, Palestinian members of the Jordanian army did not mutiny, and large sectors of the Palestinian community remained aloof from the fighting. Conversely, as noted above, some northern Transjordanians (with a history of hostility toward the Hashimites) and others fought with the Palestinian resistance. Whether these Transjordanians were fighting against the Jordanian regime or with the Palestinians matters less than the fact that they saw their identity and interests in opposition to the state, not in opposition to the Palestinians or the PLO.

### *Democratization and the Expression of Communal Identity*

In mid-April 1989, rioting broke out in the southern town of Ma'an when subsidy reductions on certain basic items were announced in accordance with a debt rescheduling agreement with the International Monetary Fund. As the rioting spread throughout towns and cities

viewed as bastions of Transjordanian support for the regime, it became clear that drastic action would have to be taken. The king opted not for repression but for a new course: political liberalization.

Political and economic liberalization have therefore gone hand in hand. Economic restructuring seeks, among other things, to reduce the role of the state in the economy as well as the size of the state bureaucracy through cutbacks in hiring, elimination of state subsidies, and privatization of state-owned enterprises. Political liberalization, meanwhile, with the greater respect for human rights that it implies, usually means a diminished role for the security forces.

Given the above-mentioned Palestinian private sector/Transjordanian public sector divide, and given the fact that economic liberalization targets, among other things, a shrinkage in the state sector and an encouragement of the private sector, it is not surprising that Transjordani-ans felt threatened by the economic restructuring from which the Palestinians seemed poised to benefit. At the same time, the political liberalization (which entailed the retreat of the largely Transjordanian security apparatus) offered new opportunities for freedom of expression, which both communities utilized to give more public vent to long-standing resentments and more recent anxieties, often framed with reference to the other.

In terms of "organized" political activity in the wake of liberalization, some of the splits that occurred within existing or newly formed parties when the thirty-two-year-old ban on political parties was lifted appeared to be directly or indirectly related to the intercommunal divide. Even among the Islamists, who emerged as the strongest bloc in both the 1989 and 1993 parliaments, the Muslim Brotherhood (perceived as having a preponderantly Palestinian membership) reportedly has an uninstitutionalized Transjordanian-Palestinian divide.<sup>22</sup>

The liberalization and legalization of political parties also raised questions about the course of action to be adopted by the PLO factions, which had continued to play a domestic political role despite their expulsion in 1971. In the end, in part because of Transjordanian sensitivities regarding PLO-sponsored political activity in Jordanian domestic politics, and in part because of both communities' concern that overt Palestinian political activity would energize the "Jordan is Palestine" argument in Israel, Jordanian branches (at least in name) of the resistance organizations were established. Only Fatah, the Palestinian organization with the clearest Palestinian nationalist message, did not attempt to establish a Jordanian counterpart.<sup>23</sup>

During the Gulf crisis, support for the king's anticoalition stance transcended the communal divide, with Palestinians and Jordanians marching side by side in demonstrations. However, the demographic and socioeconomic fallout from the 1991 Gulf War soon heightened divisive trends. Inflation adversely affected all, but took a particularly

heavy toll on the fixed wages of the largely Transjordanian state sector. The influx of some 200,000 Jordanians (most of them Palestinian) mainly from Kuwait exacerbated what was already a serious unemployment problem, strained state services, and drove up food and housing prices. These developments strengthened the perception among many Transjordanians that they were gradually losing control of their country to successive waves of "outsiders" seen as possessing the kingdom's *wealth and therefore poised to acquire more and more power.*

The result has been the gradual development of a much broader sense of Transjordanianness reminiscent of the "East Banker first" surge in the wake of Black September. This emerging sentiment, expressed outside the state, most often takes the form of opposition to the role of Palestinians and Palestinian institutions in Jordanian affairs. Representative of this view is 'Abd al-Hadi al-Majali, the former secretary general of the Public Security Department and head of the 'Ahd party, who has stated his party's position in the following terms:

We seek to distinguish between our Jordanian brothers of Palestinian origin who belong to our joint political identity in the framework of the constitution and who worked to establish and crystallize it in the framework of national unity . . . and between those who are demanding a separate identity and a separate state . . . . What is between us is not defined by national (*watani*) unity, but by relations in a pan-Arab (*qawmi*) framework. . . . The Palestinian who lives among us and wishes to maintain . . . his Palestinian political identity, has the right to live without discrimination . . . he does not have the right to work in Jordanian political institutions.<sup>24</sup>

Some elements within the Palestinian community form a counterpart of sorts to these Transjordanian nationalists,<sup>25</sup> although they lack a Jordanian organizational framework and media outlets. These Palestinians often view Transjordanians and Jordanian institutions with an air of disdain, but given the continuing uncertainty about the future of the Palestinian entity are unwilling to relinquish the political advantages of Jordanian citizenship. The continued involvement in Jordanian domestic affairs of some whose primary allegiance is elsewhere is another source of Transjordanian anti-Palestinian sentiment.

### *The Peace Process*

Concomitant economic and political liberalization processes, never easy to manage, are further complicated in Jordan's case by the peace process. Following the Madrid conference in 1991, the Jordanian delegation served as an umbrella for the Palestinians, who had been denied by the Israelis and the Americans the right to a separate team. However, as the Palestinians began to operate as a separate delegation, reports of dissatisfaction over lack of coordination were increasingly voiced on

both sides. This situation continued until mid-August 1993, when the Israeli-PLO Oslo agreement was announced.

King Hussein was clearly angry about not having been informed of the sensitive Oslo negotiations. By the end of the year, tensions between the two sides were so high that the king, in a 1 January 1994 speech to a group of military officers, in effect issued the PLO an ultimatum on coordination.<sup>26</sup> Thereafter, each time the king, crown prince, or prime minister complained of lack of coordination following a new development, and each time the PLO leadership changed its mind on what was thought to be a “done deal,” tensions at the state level quickly found expression at the popular—or at least the op-ed—level.

The signing of the Declaration of Principles (DOP) was a kind of watershed. The prospect of a Palestinian entity put the question of who would be citizens squarely on the table. In Jordan, where the Palestinians hold citizenship, the issue of Palestinian political allegiance, first raised in more general terms in 1964 by the establishment of the PLO, had suddenly become very real.

With Jordan’s parliamentary elections having been scheduled for November, just two months after the signing of the DOP, the DOP’s provision concerning elections on the West Bank was of most immediate concern. By implicitly raising the possibility of East Bank Palestinian dual voting, the provision in effect called into question the right of East Bank Palestinians to participate in the Jordanian political system as full citizens. As a result of the tensions engendered by the ensuing debate, the idea of postponing the elections was floated and received substantial support from Transjordanians. In the end, the elections were held as scheduled, although Palestinian participation was not as great as had originally been expected, in part because of the extremely negative reaction to Palestinian participation expressed by Transjordanians during the postponement discussions.<sup>27</sup>

It should be mentioned that the problem of intercommunal tensions—which during the subsequent period took the form of often acrimonious exchanges in parliament and elsewhere<sup>28</sup>—is not entirely beyond regime control. Anecdotal evidence over the years suggests that the regime is not above exploiting such tensions (generally by encouraging the expression by Transjordanians of various forms of anti-Palestinianism) when it sees fit. By the same token, and despite the erosion of some of the state’s control over public expression as a result of the liberalization, the regime is equally capable of conveying the message to curb such expressions when they risk getting out of hand. Thus, when tensions had reached new heights in mid-June 1994 just prior to the arrival of U.S. Secre-

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tary of State Warren Christopher in Jordan, King Hussein railed against those working to plant “seeds of discord in this country among its people” and vowed that “any person who attempts to harm national unity will be my enemy until Judgment Day.”<sup>29</sup> A survey of the press following the king’s speech revealed that the “inflammatory” articles and topics of the previous periods immediately ceased.

But tensions increased again when it became clear that Jordan was moving ahead on its own to sign a peace agreement with Israel. The Washington Declaration signed by the king and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin on 25 July ended the state of belligerency between Jordan and Israel, prompting the PLO to express its own “concerns” about lack of consultation. The article in the Washington Declaration giving the Hashimites a special role in the Islamic holy places in Jerusalem, combined with rumors of an impending royal visit to that city, greatly angered the PLO and many Jordanian Palestinians.<sup>30</sup> Palestinian expressions of anger triggered Transjordanian wrath, and the cycle began anew.

It is difficult to assess at this stage the Transjordanian and Palestinian reactions to the peace process, much less its impact on intercommunal relations. Certainly the business community (both Palestinian and Transjordanian) has been one of the most enthusiastic backers of the process it hopes will result in greater foreign investment in Jordan.

On the specifically Transjordanian side, concerns about the peace process in its early stages included fears that Jordan might ultimately be the site for the permanent resettlement of Palestinians from Syria and Lebanon as part of a final settlement,<sup>31</sup> and that, in the event of a Palestinian-Jordanian confederation, Jordan would be swallowed up in a Palestinian-dominated political system. Such fears have been allayed by the treaties and by the fact that confederation is no longer being discussed. Transjordanian malaise over the king’s enthusiastic embrace of the peace with Israeli is mitigated for them by the fact that Arafat was the first to conclude a deal, opening the way for the king to make the best deal possible for Jordan.

On the Palestinian side, of course, the announcement of the Oslo Accord—the separate deal all the Arab parties had vowed not to conclude—caused shock and consternation. Displeasure with Arafat, especially among the 1948 refugees who saw nothing in the agreement for them, led almost by default to increased sympathy for the king. Despite the near postponement of elections mentioned above, support for the king remained strong, at least until Jordan’s own deal with Israel was formalized: while the Palestinians could hardly criticize Hussein for the Israeli-Jordanian treaty after Arafat had led the way, they were dismayed by the speed of subsequent developments. The continuing movement on the Jordanian-Israeli front, in contrast to the stagnation and indeed

deterioration on the Palestinian-Israeli front, only generated further resentments.

In general, it is no secret that dissatisfaction with the peace process among both communities has been increasing since late fall, although no public survey has been conducted since August 1994.<sup>32</sup> Support of the business community, both Palestinian and Transjordanian, likely remains constant. But many others who were initially either supportive of the process, or skeptical but silent, appear to have moved into opposition because of the lack of tangible benefits. Dissatisfaction has been most visible in calls by various professional associations to fight normalization, in numerous attempts by Islamists and leftists to hold anti-normalization rallies, and by opposition attempts by members of parliament to block legislation that in effect recognizes the peace treaty.

One assumes that dissatisfaction would be strongest among Palestinians, but it is difficult to be certain in the absence of more concrete data. It also seems likely that growing Palestinian dissatisfaction with the peace (combined with their reaction to the growth in Transjordanian nationalism described above) could undermine the regime's progress over the last few years in "Jordanizing" them. For if the dealings between Jordan and Israel appear to compromise further Palestinian rights in Palestine, old memories of Jordan's pro-Western/anti-Arab nationalist orientation may once again alienate these Palestinians both from the polity and from the monarch who over the last few years had won their affection and respect; already the increasingly unpopular treaty with Israel is being referred to as "the king's peace."<sup>33</sup> What seems certain is that as disillusionment grows, it will feed into existing anxieties that most often take the form of intercommunal tensions.

## *Conclusions*

The regime's efforts since the early 1950s to develop a hybrid identity encompassing both Transjordanians and Palestinians have been resisted by each community in its own way. At the same time, there are strong indications that the regime itself did not hesitate, when it served its interests, to stir up or exploit intercommunal tensions.<sup>34</sup> Complicating an already complex situation is the impact on Transjordanian-Palestinian relations of the concurrent processes of economic and political liberalization and peacemaking, processes that in and of themselves have rekindled long-suppressed tensions.

Each process has led to the implementation of policies that affect the existing economic and political balance between the two groups. Changes in the intercommunal balance of power have particular resonance insofar as this balance itself has contributed in the past—despite the regime's efforts—to forming each group's identity, with the

Transjordanians seeing themselves as linked to the state and the Palestinians seeing themselves as outside it.

The combined effect of the economic restructuring and political liberalization seems to have led the two communities in opposite directions: With the sense of threat to their power position that has accompanied developments of the past few years, Transjordanians have expressed more clearly a discourse that can best be described as "Transjordanian nationalist." Many Palestinians, on the other hand, seeing an opening up of the political and economic system since 1989 and being more sympathetic to the king since the Gulf crisis, had begun to feel that they had more of a stake in the system, at least until recently. The anxieties and fears of both communities have only been exacerbated with the growing malaise and unhappiness over recent developments in the peace process, making the past ambiguity in the intercommunal relationship seem more comfortable than the greater clarification that has followed the liberalization. The solidarity between the two communities that followed Israel's announcement in April 1995 of new confiscations of Palestinian land in annexed Jerusalem should not obscure the continuing, underlying tensions.<sup>35</sup>

Thus, as of mid-summer 1994, the situation began to parallel that of autumn 1991 when the kingdom first entered the peace process: responding to popular dissatisfaction, the regime began curtailing freedom of expression. By early 1995, average citizens and analysts alike were speaking about the retreat of the liberalization.<sup>36</sup> One can only speculate as to whether the retreat will continue and what effect it will have. Whatever the outcome, tensions between the two groups are certain to continue and figure prominently in domestic politics as this current stage in the redefining of Jordanian identity unfolds.

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#### NOTES

1. For some of the recent discussions of the question of intercommunal relations in the Jordanian press, see Tahir 'Adwan, "Al-Ghayra al-Qatila," *al-Dustur*, 20 June 1994; Hamadah Fara'nah, "Muntada al-Shabab w-al-Watan al-Jamil," *al-Dustur*, 20 June 1994; Muhammad al-Subayhi, "F-il-'Alaqa bayna al-Urdunniyyin w-al-Filastiniyyin," *al-Dustur*, 11 July 1994; and the speech of the crown prince to a meeting of the Council of Higher Education, *al-Ra'y*, 21 June 1994.

2. In the absence of publicly available census figures, estimates have varied widely. East Bankers have tended to claim figures as low as 35 percent, while Palestinians have put the number at 60 to 70 percent. Since the disengagement of the West Bank in 1988, it is likely that the population is split about 50-50, with the Palestinians having a slight edge since the return of Jordanian nationals (most of them Palestinian) during the Gulf crisis.

3. For details regarding the Syrians in Transjordan see Mary Wilson, *King Abdullah, the British and the Making of Transjordan* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 64-65, 72, 91.

4. See Wilson, *King Abdullah*, chapters 5 and 6.

5. Perhaps the most extensive work done on this topic to date in English is that of Linda Layne, *Home and Homeland: The Dialogics of Tribal and National Identities in Jordan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994). See also Schirin Fathi, *Jordan—An Invented Nation?: Tribe-State Dynamics and the Formation of National Identity* (Hamburg: Deutsches Orient-Institut, 1994); and Andrew Shryock, "History and Historiography Among the Belqa Tribes of Jordan," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Michigan, 1993.

6. A summer 1993 change in the electoral law from a system that allowed multiple vote-casting to a one-person, one-vote system led to the end of vote ex-

change deals and led many to cast their single vote for a representative of their 'ashira.

7. While the importance of tribal affiliation is not questioned here, existing studies tend to take the concept of tribe as unproblematic and, despite the fact that various tribes and regions have had very different relationships with the regime over time, assume that by appropriating various forms of bedouin symbolism the state thereby secures broad-based tribal identification with it.

8. The classification system used here builds on that originally presented by Peter Gubser in *Jordan: Crossroads to Middle Eastern Events* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1983), pp. 16-17.

9. The word *Urdustiniyya*, a combination of *Urdunniyya* (Jordanian) and *Filastiniyya* (Palestinian), has been used by some from this group to define their identity.

10. Statistics on Jordanians in the Gulf did not distinguish between Transjordanians and Palestinians. The percentage of Palestinians among the Jordanians listed in Kuwait, the largest community, was estimated at 85-95%. See Bilal al-Hasan, *al-Filastiniyyun f-il-Kuwayt* (Beirut: PLO Research Center, 1974), p. 11.

11. From the author's interviews with Palestinians in Kuwait in spring 1984 and fall 1986.

12. This estimate is based on a number of factors including reparation claims. See National Center for Educational Research and Development, "The Socio-Economic Characteristics of Jordanian Returnees: Part 1, Statistical Analysis and Indicators" (Amman: Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, July 1991).

13. From the author's personal experiences with Palestinians during research trips to Kuwait, spring 1984 and fall 1986.

14. I am grateful to Jamil Mahadin, a Transjordanian architect, for the kernel of this idea. Mary Wilson provides additional evidence for such an argument: "The designations *Palestinian* and *Transjordanian* were discouraged, and finally outlawed in official usage just before the 1950 elections, in an effort to weld a single Jordanian identity." King Abdullah, p. 190 [emphasis added].

15. Although the scholarly confirmation of such contacts did not come until decades later [see, most prominently, Avi Shlaim, *Collusion Across the Jordan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988)], there had long been rumors about 'Abdallah's dealing with the Zionist leadership.

16. See Laurie Brand, *Palestinians in the Arab World: Institution Building and the Search for State* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), pp. 163-65.

17. See Arthur Day, *West Bank/East Bank: Jordan and the Prospects for Peace* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1986), p. 61.

18. Universal conscription was not introduced until 1976. Fathi summarizes the extent of Palestinian participation in the Jordanian armed forces over the years in *Jordan—An Invented Nation?*, p. 140.

19. Although a number of Transjordanian families are prominent in the country's industrial sector, this categorization is by and large valid.

20. According to the kingdom's disengagement from the West Bank, those Palestinians who resided in or whose normal residence was the West Bank as of 31 July 1988 could continue to carry Jordanian passports (renewable at two-year intervals) but were no longer Jordanian citizens.

21. See Pamela Ann Smith, *Palestine and the Palestinians 1876-1983* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984), pp. 75-111.

22. This division, which had been mentioned to me by a number of observers, was confirmed in general terms in a discussion with an analyst close to the Ikhwan, Bilal al-Tall, May 1993.

23. The Democratic Front established *Hizb al-Sha'b al-Dimuqrati* (Hashd), and the Popular Front established *Hizb al-Wihda al-Sha'biyya*.

24. "Fi Nadwa Hawla Mafhum al-Wataniyya al-Urdunniyya 'ind al-Ahzzab," *Al-Dustur*, 11 May 1993.

25. These groups are sometimes referred to as the Jordanian and Palestinian Likud.

26. FBIS-NES, 3 January 1994.

27. Wafa 'Amr, "Sense of Alienation Casts Shadow on Palestinian-Jordanians' Will to Vote," *Jordan Times*, 8 November 1993.

28. One example is the trading of accusations between certain Palestinian and Transjordanian deputies following the *haj* season, in late May 1994, over whether or not Jordan had provided sufficient support services (toilets, water, etc.) to the Palestinian pilgrims from Israel who had crossed into and out of Jordan on their way to and from Saudi Arabia.

29. *Al-Dustur*, 10 July 1994. Author's translation.

30. See The Washington Declaration, paragraph B.3, as reproduced in *JPS* 24, no. 1 (Autumn 1994), p. 129.

31. There were those who, in 1992 and 1993, at the time of initial discussions of developing the Badia areas in the northwest of the country (see *Jordan Times*, 24 May 1993), contended that this project aimed as paving the way for the resettlement in Jordan of the Palestinians of Lebanon.

32. The poll was conducted by the Center for Strategic Studies, Jordan University.

33. Reuters, 10 May 1995.

34. While the instances cited here suggest that the intent was to put pressure on the Palestinians and the PLO as well as to garner Transjordanian support, I have argued elsewhere that in the past, the regime has stoked intercommunal tensions in order to prevent the emergence of horizontal (class-based) solidarities between the two groups that might have threatened the regime. See Brand, *Palestinians in the Arab World*, pp. 180-85.

35. On 17 May, responding to the announced expropriations, over 60 of the 80 members of the Jordanian parliament, including deputies who had approved the Jordanian-Israeli treaty, asked the government to recall Jordan's ambassador to Israel and to expel Israel's ambassador to Jordan. Reuters, 17 May 1995.

36. Author's discussions in Amman, 27 December 1994-7 January 1995.