

Peace Negotiations Between Israel and Jordan after the 1948 and 1967 Wars: A Comparative Survey

by
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INTRODUCTION

Until President Sadat's visit to Jerusalem in November 1977, Jordan was the one and only Arab state that had conducted direct, regular and serious, albeit confidential, discussions with Israel in order to reach a peace settlement. This happened following each of the two wars in which the Jordanian and the Israeli armies were engaged in direct confrontation. The purpose of this paper is to survey some aspects of the Jordanian-Israeli talks and to examine the permanent factors among the variable determinants in the web of Jordanian-Israeli relations. Two questions are particularly relevant. Of the factors that affected the negotiations after the 1948 war, which are still relevant twenty and thirty years later, and, what prospects regarding future possible negotiations can be deduced from the dead end of the 1950 talks?

King Abdallah of Jordan had political discussions with the representatives of the Jewish agency since the early 1930s. Both parties had a common foe: al-Hajj Amin al-Husseini, mufti of Jerusalem and leader of the radical Palestinian nationalism. The contacts with the Jews became more intensive after World War II. In November 1947 Abdallah obtained the acquiescence of the Jewish agency for his ambition of many years, to take over the Arab parts of Palestine which had been allotted to the Arabs in the United Nations' partition scheme.¹

The outbreak of hostilities in Palestine and the views of the other heads of state in the Arab League, somewhat impeded Abdallah's plans, but eventually he managed to reach his goal. He controlled most of the territories that he had previously intended to control, and the Arab population of Palestine acknowledged him as their king and urged him to annex their country to his kingdom.²

When the gunsmoke faded away, Abdallah continued his talks with the Jews (by then, the Israeli government) in order to consolidate his achievement. The first phase of discussions lasted between December 1948 and May 1949, with the intention being to achieve an armistice agreement, though the Jordanian-Israeli armistice talks, simultaneously held at Rhodes under U.N. auspices, were a mere facade. Both parties planned to negotiate this agreement as a stepping stone towards a peace treaty. The second and more important phase of discussions took place between November 1949 and March 1950 but still left unresolved difficulties.

Jordanian-Israeli contacts resumed following the Six Day War. That war created new political and territorial realities, in addition to the bilateral unsolved problems of 1950. Meetings between the two

parties probably commenced in late 1967, and lasted irregularly for about ten years. In both cases the talks were clandestine, but became open secrets shortly afterwards.

THE SUBJECTS OF THE DISCUSSIONS AND THE QUESTION OF THE PALESTINIANS

There are two basic differences between the situation after the 1948 and the 1967 wars. First, following the first war Jordan controlled the West Bank. The Armistice demarcation lines bisected Jerusalem and meandered along tens of kilometers within rifle-shot distance of centres of Israeli civil population. After the Six Day War the Jordan River — once the eastern border of Mandatory Palestine — again formed the division line between the two countries.

Second, after 1948 the inhabitants of the West Bank did not constitute a national determinant that had to be taken into any consideration. The permanent residents, as well as the newly arrived refugees, under the shock of the debacle, were encouraged by Jordanian officials to discard their Palestinian national identity for Jordanian citizenship. The “Palestinian problem,” therefore, was not a decisive issue in the peace talks and hardly any reference was made to this factor.³

After the Six Day War the Palestinians’ national awareness rapidly increased. Its political expressions were demonstrated on the West as well as the East Bank and also in other parts of the Arab world. From the late 1960s onward, it was obvious that any serious discussion between Jordan and Israel must not overlook this new reality.

Accordingly, the agenda of the 1949-1950 talks were characterized mainly by territory-related topics. Abdallah was the one who stipulated his conditions in return for a peace agreement. His major demands were: a corridor to the Mediterranean coast near Gaza, the return of the Jerusalem-Bethlehem road, free port rights in Haifa, and, the return of some Israeli controlled Arab quarters in (new) Jerusalem, with repatriation of the refugees from Lydda and Ramle.⁴ The last demand implied his desire to gain considerable concessions from Israel in order to display some achievement both to the Palestinians and to the Arabs in general. Simultaneously, these demands were designed to alleviate the refugee problem that laid a heavy burden on Jordan’s meager resources and created severe social problems as well. The gravity of the refugee problem was demonstrated as early as November and December 1948. Abdallah then offered Israel the Jewish quarter of Jerusalem and withdrawal from the strategic Latrun area in return for the Israeli-held Qatamon quarter of Jerusalem and for the repatriation of Lydda and Ramle refugees.⁵

Abdallah’s *quid pro quo* proposals to Israel included free port rights in Aqaba, the Jewish quarter of old Jerusalem and access to the potash plant on the Jordanian-controlled north shores of the Dead Sea.

In January 1950 the talks were deadlocked, mainly because of the issue of the corridor to Gaza.⁶ The ice was broken by a Jordanian proposal of a five-year, non-aggression pact, as an intermediary stage until a final peace settlement was possible. The armistice lines would remain intact, the border would be open to trade and travel, and Jordan was to enjoy a free zone in the port of Haifa. Both governments were to deposit guarantees in the U.N. for the protection of holy places and for the granting of free passage to them. The Israeli cabinet approved these proposals as a proper base for further negotiations. Intensive discussions continued in February and early March and a draft was initialed.⁷

After the Six Day War the situation entirely altered. The years that had elapsed raised the price that Israel had to pay for a political settlement. It consisted by then not only of territorial components (much wider than in 1950) but also the question of the population in the relevant areas, its affiliation and its national aspirations.

Officially, Jordan adhered to the consensus of the moderate Arab states, according to which Israel had to evacuate all the territories occupied in 1967 and to recognize the Palestinians' rights as a precondition to any political settlement. However the information available regarding the Israeli-Jordanian talks from 1967 implies that Jordan confined its efforts, in the first years at least, mainly to the territorial aspect.

These discussions extended over about ten years. The tremendous political and military changes that took place in the Middle East during this period undoubtedly affected the positions of both parties as well as their attitudes towards counter-proposals. Israel's concept of a settlement was inspired by the "Alon Plan," which cited the return of most of the West Bank to Jordan and its subsequent demilitarization. Israel would have the right to maintain a military presence along the Jordan River and in some other strategic points and the boundary line would be modified in the regions of Tul-Karem, Latrun and the Etzion block. Jordan agreed to discuss some of Israel's conditions,⁸ but the "Alon Plan" as a whole was unequivocally rejected as "totally unacceptable."⁹ Jordan especially opposed the reunification of Jerusalem under Israeli sovereignty, insisting on total Israeli withdrawal including withdrawal from East Jerusalem.¹⁰ The focus of the discussion on territorial topics exclusively, indicated that Jordan was ready to cope with the challenge of the growing wave of Palestinian national sentiment in the West Bank and elsewhere. However during this period the Palestinian problem augmented and ramified. Between 1967 and 1971 the struggle with the Palestinian organizations constituted Jordan's primary domestic problem. At times the regime and the Hashemite establishment were practically fighting for their own survival.

After King Hussein managed to liquidate the military and political power of the Palestinian organizations in Jordan, in September 1970 and July 1971, he issued his federal scheme that was scheduled

to be executed *after* Israel's withdrawal from the West Bank. It fostered the unique characteristics of the Palestinians by promoting an autonomous unit on the West Bank within a federal framework with the East Bank. Common institutions would administer defence and foreign affairs only.

Following the disengagement of forces and agreements between Israel and Egypt and Israel and Syria in the first half of 1974, Jordan recognized the advantages of such accords and indicated its wish to reach a similar agreement regarding the West Bank. American sources reported on a meeting between King Hussein and the late Mrs. Golda Meir, then the Prime Minister of Israel, in the second half of 1974. The meeting discussed the possibility of an agreement, but no conclusions were reached.¹¹

After the November 1974 Arab summit conference in Rabat, Jordan *formally* gave up any claim regarding the West Bank. This act was the outcome of the resolution that recognized the Palestine Liberation Organization as the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, having the right to establish its "national authority" in any Palestinian territory that "will be liberated." Hussein reluctantly had to comply with that resolution. Nonetheless, Jordan sought to prove that such a resolution was impracticable without her consent¹² and even continued contacts with Israel, although she had to modify her views in accordance with the changing circumstances following the Rabat resolution.

The question of Jerusalem is another aspect which should be discussed. Ostensibly it is a territorial issue, albeit consisting of other attributes as well. As the city of peace, sacred to the three monotheistic faiths and worshipped by hundreds of millions of believers all over the world, Jerusalem became a symbol and myth with which a cool, political realism was not always able to cope.

The talks on Jerusalem, therefore, were affected by sentimental attributes. Both parties rejected the idea of internationalization (in spite of some potential mutual advantages) and preferred to deal with its future through bilateral channels. Both sides also remained more persistent and less flexible in discussing topics related to Jerusalem than in dealing with other issues.

Overall, it seems that the 1949/50 negotiations tended to be intensive and concrete. The negotiators went into specifics and discussed technical and side-issues. By comparison, the talks following the Six Day War probably did not go further than a general framework and hardly any experts at executive levels participated.

INITIATIVE, MOTIVATION AND INTERESTS OF BOTH PARTIES

In 1949 the two countries had (or should have had) a strong motivation to reach an agreement. King Abdallah emerged from the 1948 war as the Arab ruler who gained the major territorial, political

and prestigious profits. Nevertheless the Arab world refused to accept these achievements. His colleagues' opposition to the annexation compelled him to postpone the official declaration of the "unification of the two banks" until 1950. An agreement with Israel, based on Abdallah's conditions would have legalized the annexation, given him an outlet to the Mediterranean Sea and minimized Jordan's dependence on her Arab neighbors. One has to bear in mind that even in normal time Abdallah was considered the *enfant terrible* of the inter-Arab system, and his fellow rulers had severe reservations regarding his conduct. At this time they became really hostile. Peace and co-operation with Israel could ameliorate the economic conditions of the small desert kingdom that had just tripled its population but did not commensurately increase its material resources. Relations with Israel could, therefore, provide an economic *raison d'être* for the existence of Jordan and decrease its dependence not only on the Arab world but on Britain as well.

The risks seemed smaller than the prospects. Jordan certainly hoped that the inter-Arab hostility, the major source of apprehension, would turn out to be a paper tiger. Following the actual annexation in December 1948, the Arab world was infuriated. Yet, not a single state went beyond verbal protests, though some voices called for the expulsion of Jordan from the Arab League, the severing of diplomatic relations and imposition of economic and political sanctions. Both in 1948 and in 1950 the inter-Arab system was not capable of reaching a unanimous decision regarding Abdallah's activities.¹³ Moreover, the Jordanian monarch believed that if he could obtain an appropriate *quid pro quo* from Israel, it would weaken the criticism against him and halt the efforts to build up an anti-Abdallah consensus. This is also an explanation of Abdallah's adherence to the negotiations even after they were exposed and became public knowledge.¹⁴

Another risk that Abdallah had to consider was the possible deterioration of internal stability and public order due to local opposition to the idea of reconciliation with Israel. The major concern was the unpredictable reaction of the Palestinians, the new citizens of the enlarged kingdom. Despite his concerns, Abdallah underestimated the national awareness of the Palestinians and did not regard them as a factor that would jeopardize his plans (see below).

The balance of advantages and disadvantages indicated a considerable profit. Jordan therefore had very good reasons to initiate peace contacts. A peace agreement would also serve some of Israel's best interests. First of all, it would be a break in the circle of hostility and provide Arab recognition of Israel's sovereignty and of its right to exist. Besides the political and psychological significance of such an agreement it might be the herald of similar treaties with other Arab states. Even as a bilateral agreement it included some potential economic advantages, suggesting, mutual exploitation of the Dead Sea resources, joint transportation and communication projects in the Gulf of Eliath and profits from Jordan's use of Israeli Mediterranean ports.¹⁵

King Abdallah initiated many of the meetings during the first period under consideration. As mentioned, he had a long tradition of meetings with the representatives of the Jewish *Yishuv* prior to 1948, so his initiative should not be merely perceived as an historical breakthrough but as a continuation of long-established relationships. Israel, on the other hand, had not yet fully experienced the siege and the isolation imposed upon it by its neighbors. Arab-Jewish hostility had commenced a few generations before, but its outcome was not as decisive and absolute as after the foundation of the State of Israel. Moreover, not long before 1948 there were still cordial economic and social relations between Jews and Arabs in Palestine. Jews even travelled to and traded with the neighboring countries.

The government of Israel apparently did not realize how tight the Arab blockade would be. More than a few people in Israel expected the Arab world to be realistic and concede Israel's existence following the failure to defeat it by force. Many Israelis believed that the Rhodes armistice accords would be a preliminary stage towards peace treaties as was promised. Prior to the traumatic experience of a twenty year long siege, the decision makers in Israel could not appreciate the rareness and uniqueness of the historical opportunity that the talks with Abdallah might produce. Notwithstanding this, the readiness to make concessions was limited in both parties, and Israeli persistence on certain issues stemmed from security calculations and not from tactics of negotiation.

The talks were suspended by Jordan in the spring of 1950, but Israel initiated their resumption, probably because the reality of the situation was becoming more evident. Another round of talks took place at the end of 1950 and in early 1951 but to no avail.¹⁶

When Jordanian-Israeli discussions commenced after the Six Day War, Israel's feeling of isolation together with the effectiveness of the Arab siege, influenced the attitude of both parties. At that time, contrary to the situation in the early 1950s, direct negotiations between Israel and an Arab state were nearly an international sensation, due to the experiences of the previous two decades and especially because of the unique image enjoyed by Arab-Israeli conflict.

One should bear in mind that the map of the Middle East, as well as its military and political balance of power, had been entirely changed in the second half of 1967. As in 1949 many people, and not only Israelis, believed that the results of the war would persuade the Arabs to abandon their ambition to destroy the State of Israel. This, in addition to the territorial bargaining cards that Israel obtained in the brief war, gave rise to the hope that a political settlement was on its way. The impact of Israeli society on hundreds of thousands of visitors from the West Bank and from Arab countries (via the "open bridges") was intended to aid the process of Arab acceptance of Israel. From that point of view, Jordanian-Israeli negotiation seemed almost a "natural" move.

For King Hussein, the outcome of the 1967 war was disastrous

and completely different from the results achieved by his grandfather in the previous war. He lost all the territories that Abdallah gained and annexed in 1948, almost half of his population and nearly half of the combat units of his army. The only reasonable way to regain a foothold in the West Bank was by a direct dialogue with Israel. Leaders of Western countries whom Hussein visited shortly after the war, recommended the same course of action. Dialogue would be slow, however, and the King's major apprehension was that as time passed his claim on the lost territories might be threatened by an independent Palestinian entity emerging on the West Bank either with Israel's support or with at least its acquiescence. That fear was not unfounded. On the 9th of June 1967, the Israeli prime minister, Levi Eshkol, sent an emissary to the local leadership in the West Bank to study their views with that very idea in mind.¹⁸ Hussein realized that playing the Palestinian card was a viable option for Israel. He was therefore anxious to find out through a third party what Israel's condition(s) for the evacuation of the West Bank might be.¹⁹ These indirect contacts inaugurated a ten year period of direct discussions.

Israel was interested in communicating with Jordan. Since the Israeli government perceived the Six Day War as an incentive to bring the Arab states to the negotiating table, any break in their solidarity was desirable. Hussein looked the ideal interlocutor, for the above-mentioned reasons. It was equally obvious, though, that it would be extremely difficult for him to be the only (or even the first) Arab ruler to negotiate with Israel. Israel did not make any great effort to persuade him, for precisely the same reasons that Hussein was anxious to commence dialogue. Firstly, Israel believed that time was working on its behalf and, secondly, few Israeli politicians were seriously considering the Palestinian option immediately after the war. The Palestinian organizations had yet to become considerable and vehement anti-Israeli factors.

THE ARAB STATES AND THE NEGOTIATIONS

This was undoubtedly the most influential determinant of Jordan's position in both periods though each time it had a different weight. In early 1950, the Arab states, with the exception of Jordan, unanimously rejected the idea of direct peace talks with Israel, in spite of U.N. efforts to encourage them to do so. Simultaneously, the Arab League endorsed decisions to enforce its boycott more effectively and took additional anti-Israeli steps.²¹ However, due to domestic and inter-Arab considerations, the neighboring governments refrained from denouncing Jordan for its dialogue with Israel when that dialogue was in its early stages.²² Towards the end of February and the beginning of March 1950, Israel and Jordan were on the verge of concluding a non-aggression pact, a fact which was extensively reported in the foreign press. At that point the Arab states could remain imperturbable no longer. The Arab League threatened Jordan with sanctions as severe as those imposed on Israel. In March 1950 Jordan

suspended the discussions with Israel and on the 31st March its cabinet ratified the Arab League resolution to expel any member-state that would conclude a separate peace treaty with Israel.²³

Did the negotiations really fail because of inter-Arab pressure? The sequence of events leaves little room for doubt. The press disclosures regarding the contents of the discussions augmented Arab resentment, and some states, especially Syria, threatened Jordan militarily.²⁴ When the matter was discussed by the Arab League, Abdallah did not have much choice. Abdallah had miscalculated the response of the Arab world, perhaps by expecting to get more from Israel than it actually offered which would, in turn, justify the negotiations in the eyes of his colleagues. Nevertheless, in return for the suspension of contacts with Israel, Abdallah extracted a high price: a *de facto* recognition of the annexation of the West Bank which the Arab states had thus far refused to give. In the summer of 1950 the Arab League adopted a resolution allowing the Jordanian Government to declare

... that the annexation of the part of Palestine in question was a measure necessitated by practical considerations, that Jordan would hold that part on trust until a final settlement of the Palestine question was reached and that Jordan would accept in regard to it whatever might be unanimously decided by the other member states.²⁵

Arab and international recognition of the legitimacy of his rule in the newly occupied territories was Abdallah's ultimate political goal. He had tried, in vain, to obtain it in the eighteen months previous to this resolution and was by now ready to sacrifice negotiations with Israel to achieve it.

It is hardly acceptable to claim that Abdallah spun a Machiavellian web, initiating the negotiations with Israel only for the sake of their suspension in return for an Arab recognition of the annexation. Nevertheless, once it became a possibility he was obviously ready to make such a deal, especially after his maneuvering space regarding peace negotiations was drastically reduced.

When King Hussein commenced his contacts with Israel at the end of 1967, he had broken a more specific inter-Arab consensus that possessed a greater moral and institutional authority than the one his grandfather had violated. The resolutions of the Khartoum summit conference after the Six Day War stated, in part, that

... the Arab efforts to eliminate the effects of the aggression and to ensure the withdrawal of the ... Israeli forces from Arab lands which have been occupied since ... 5 June ... will be done within the framework of the main principles by which the Arab states abide namely: no peace with Israel, no recognition of Israel, no negotiation with it²⁶

While in 1950 the Arab League adopted a resolution forbidding any agreement with Israel *after* Abdallah's negotiations and practically

as a result of it, in 1967 a similar resolution was approved *before* Hussein's meetings with the Israelis. Thus, by contact with the Jewish state, Hussein deliberately violated an explicit ruling of the supreme inter-Arab body.

The Jordanian-Israeli negotiations begun in 1967 were less intensive and much more continuous than those of 1949/50. In addition, the Arab world was more polarized and internally divided than in the early 1950s. Therefore, the inter-Arab system's reaction to the 1967 negotiations was more variegated and responses of Arab governments were, by and large, relatively moderate. Since the talks never reached a conclusive phase, the Arab states were inclined to be satisfied with Jordan's denials, usually issued whenever foreign sources reported on meetings between Hussein and Israeli officials.²⁷

In February 1972 the late Egyptian president Anwar al-Sadat informed an Arab Socialist Union audience that contacts between Israel and Jordan had been in progress for some time past. A month later the editor of the semi-official *Al-Aharam*, Muhammad Hasanin Heikal, disclosed in a leading article that Hussein had met Israel's deputy prime minister Yigal Alon. In both cases the reports were informative rather than criticizing.²⁸ Moreover, since the Khartoum conference, no inter-Arab forum had adopted a resolution denouncing Jordan for negotiating with Israel.

These reactions should not, however, be attributed to a moderation of the Arab world. They stemmed rather from the polarization of the inter-Arab system and its inability even to reach a consensus on other crucial issues of the day.²⁹ Jordan was well aware of the potency of the inter-Arab factor, though its official response ostensibly did not reflect this. In at least one case King Hussein allegedly admitted that he had suspended a series of meetings with Mr. Abba Eban, Israel's Foreign Minister, because of his commitment to Arab solidarity.³⁰

It was clear to Hussein that no agreement with Israel was practicable without the concurrence or the acquiescence of at least some other Arab countries. He therefore tried to persuade his colleagues, mainly the presidents of Egypt and Syria, to join the path of political settlement. He sought a comprehensive framework of negotiations, through the mediation of the U.N., the United States or other powers, which would include and legitimize his contacts with Israel. These were probably the considerations that Hussein had in mind when he explained to his Israeli interlocutors, in late 1970, that the idea of bilateral public talks was a premature one.³¹

THE POSITION OF THE FOREIGN POWERS

Examination of the international context of the negotiations reveals a significant difference regarding the attitude of the powers in the two cases. In the early 1950s Britain was the most relevant foreign power to this question. Though in the process of losing its imperial

assets, both in the Middle East and elsewhere, as far as Jordan was concerned, Britain was still a protecting power. The British Government balanced the deficit of the Jordanian state budget and financed, trained, armed and even administered the Arab Legion, Abdallah's precious source of pride.

The British did not view the course and direction of Abdallah's negotiation with Israel with favor. Some sources imply that the suspension of the discussions should be credited to Britain's efforts.³² The Israeli-Jordanian agreement that was about to be concluded in 1950, was incompatible with Britain's interests for two main reasons. First, Britain sought to preserve the Arab League as an unanimous pro-Western block and felt that any dissonance could weaken that alignment and undermine Britain's position. Second, Britain was simultaneously negotiating the withdrawal of its forces from the Suez Canal zone. The Israeli Negev was perceived as an ideal substitute site for the British bases.

Acting on the latter reasoning, British officials encouraged Abdallah, during the 1948 war, to take over the Negev.³³ Later, they tried to persuade him to lay claim to that territory in his discussions with Israel. Abdallah demurred, saying that such a claim was not a vital Jordanian interest. Moreover, a persistent demand for the Negev, by proxy, was the only *raison d'être* for Jordanian-Israeli negotiations.

Even if Britain's contribution to the suspension of the negotiations is exaggerated, it is obvious that Abdallah knew that Britain was dissatisfied with them and that he was aware that his maneuvering ability, with respect to Britain, was rather limited. It seems logical to assume that Britain's position was not a single decisive factor that put an end to the talks with Israel, but no doubt it was a supporting one.

In the 1960s and the 1970s it was the U.S. which replaced Britain as the main source of economic and military aid to Jordan. However, the involvement of foreign powers in the region had been changed since 1950. Unlike the days when Britain was the exclusive foreign power to exercise its influence in the area, no longer was the Middle East an almost monolithic pro-Western *milieu*. The U.S. had to share areas of influence with the USSR and even the American clients in the region were not unanimous. There were disagreements and conflicts of interest between, for example, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, not to mention differences between both these countries and Israel.

At this time the U.S. and Britain did not oppose direct peace talks, and to a certain extent even encouraged them. By and large, the Western bloc states could have benefitted from a political settlement between the Arabs and Israel and traditionally the West supported Israel's demand for direct negotiations with its neighbors. Thus the West did not disagree with the bilateral contacts between the two parties and tried, in fact, to promote such a settlement on various occasions.

The USSR opposed the negotiations for exactly the same reason that the West favoured them. The Soviets' ability to maintain their

influence in the Middle East was by means of radical elements and required constant tension and a hostile atmosphere. No Soviet interest would be served by an agreement between two pro-Western countries. Yet, the USSR did not try to interfere with the negotiations as such an action would require tremendous efforts and resources which were unjustified by the possible profit. The Soviet influence in Jordan was limited. Hussein visited Moscow after the Six Day War but, later, relations somewhat deteriorated. When the conflict between Hussein and the Palestinian organizations ensued, the unequivocal support of the Soviets for the Palestinians placed them in midst of an anti-Jordanian camp.

Thus, it can be concluded that, unlike the situation in 1950, the position of the external powers in 1967 and onwards in no way hindered or deterred peace negotiation between the two parties.

THE INTERNAL SITUATION IN BOTH COUNTRIES

Finally, the internal strength of the regime in each country during the time of the negotiations should be considered. How far, for example, could each resist opposing pressures if such were applied. To what extent could the heads of both countries impose their will on their subordinates and, most importantly, did any internal influences or the fear of such influences affect the positions of the respective parties or contribute to the suspension of the discussions.

Abdallah's reign over Transjordan in the 1940s was virtually exclusive. The existence of ostensibly democratic institutions such as parliament and general elections, hardly altered the supreme authority of the king. He appointed the governments and the premiers were his tools. Political public opinion was almost non-existent and the press basically reflected the views of the royal court.

After the annexation of the West Bank that state of affairs gradually changed, though more in practice than formally. The amalgamation introduced a Palestinian population into Jordan double that of the East Bank and with a higher level of political consciousness. Thirty years of British mandate and the proximity of the Jewish *Yishuv* had produced a Palestinian political elite: highly intelligent, nationalistic in its perception and strongly anti-Zionist and anti-British. This elite, which enjoyed organizational and intellectual ability, put forward, after the annexation, such demands as "sovereignty of the people" and "freedom of expression." In Abdallah's eyes even mentioning such demands was high treason.

The formal annexation and the granting of political rights to the Palestinians took place only in April 1950, after the talks with Israel actually ended. But the Palestinians had begun to accumulate political power somewhat earlier, having been integrated into the various levels of the administration, including the Cabinet, since the beginning of 1949. Their authentic political potency, however, was demonstrated in the extra-parliamentary arena. Because of the harsh line set by

Abdallah and his colleagues, clandestine Palestinian resistance followed annexation. This was only worsened by Abdallah's intention to make peace with Israel, the country which the Palestinians considered the prime source of their troubles. Although this opposition eventually led to the assassination of Abdallah in July 1951, the initial Palestinian resentment itself probably did not overly perturb Abdallah. He obviously considered it no more than a nuisance which he could disregard and it hardly influenced his decisions during the negotiations.

There were however other forms of internal dissatisfaction that affected Abdallah. On 2 March 1950, the Jordanian Prime Minister Tawfik Abu al-Huda resigned over his opposition to the conclusion of the non-aggression agreement with Israel. Abu al-Huda, who headed seven cabinets since 1938, was considered "a strong man" and one of Abdallah's closest friends. The King nominated in his stead Samir al-Rafa'i, also a veteran Prime Minister, who was probably in favour of the agreement. Following the failure of al-Rafa'i in forming a cabinet, Abu al-Huda was requested to withhold his resignation. A month later he was replaced by Sa'id al'Mufti.³⁴ In the meantime, however, the negotiations had been suspended and Jordan had supported the Arab League resolution that threatened to expel any member state that would conclude a separate peace with Israel.

Abu al-Huda's resignation, like the inter-Arab pressure and Britain's position, was a factor that is practically impossible to measure quantitatively. One cannot say how much Abu al-Huda's views contributed to the suspension of the negotiations. It was a segment in an elaborate series of determinants and causes. Nonetheless, the fact that one of Abdallah's loyal mainstays so vehemently opposed the idea of negotiation indicated strong criticism and serious reservations within the King's inner circle. The doubts probably influenced Abdallah's final decision.

The question of the internal constitution of Hussein's regime after 1967 is rather complicated. Firstly since the duration of the second period of negotiations was much longer than the first one, one can more easily observe ups and downs in Hussein's position. Secondly, Hussein's status was different than that of his grandfather both theoretically and in practice. The Jordanian constitution of 1952 (with some later amendments) defined the status of the monarch more clearly than was done in Abdallah's time. Moreover, Hussein was the product of another era and of a different culture than his grandfather. He was not an oriental absolutist who regarded the kingdom and the citizens as his private domain, but a young man with western upbringing and education, who was more open than his predecessors to the values of a modern society. Because of these differences, Hussein was challenged by more numerous and more varied opposition activity than that with which Abdallah had to cope. However, most of the opposition groups, though representing different forces and interests, were usually interwoven.

The Palestinians generally constituted the major reservoir of frus-

tration and resentment and the main source from which the various opposition groups received their rank and file members. During 1968-1970, the Palestinian *fidaiyun* organizations formed the main threat to the regime and enjoyed the sympathy of a considerable portion of the Palestinians in Jordan (refugees and non-refugees alike). They were also backed by some politicians and by some members of the establishment. In spite of the strengthening of the various political forces and regardless of the supposed vulnerability of the regime, the internal criticism had a very little influence on Hussein's decisions regarding the discussions with Israel. Parallel to the increase and variegation of the opposition forces, the supporters of the regime also gained more power and influence with the emergence of an "Hashemite establishment" which included members of the royal family, politicians, and army officers whose personal and sectarian interests were interwoven with those of Hussein. They regarded the preservation of the current regime as the best alternative both for themselves and for Jordan. That establishment was, and apparently still is, strong enough to secure the survival of the regime even if Hussein ceased to be the monarch. Further, it created efficient security and intelligence instruments that have, thus far, successfully coped with both external and internal threats. After the Palestinian organizations were crushed in summer 1971, the other opposition forces remained as a sort of semi-official opposition with the tacit consent of the King. This obviously did not constitute a serious menace to Hussein and therefore did not affect his contacts with Israel.

In Israel there was not much difference between the governments after the 1948 and the 1967 wars. In both cases, the state was run by a coalition of parties most of which had "a left of centre" orientation corresponding to the social democrats and the socialists in Western Europe.³⁵

Israel's search for any opening for contacts with the Arab world and her idealization of direct negotiations, was popular with Israeli opposition groups who welcomed discussions with Jordan. After 1967 the contacts with Jordan should be observed a wider context, namely, that of the public debate in Israel regarding the future of the territories occupied in the Six Day War. The right-wing *Gahal* (which participated in the government between June 1967 and July 1970 and was thus a part of the national consensus), rejected any possibility of handing over the West Bank to foreign rule. It justified Israel's control over this area not only for reasons of national security but because of religious and historical affiliation. Therefore, *Gahal* opposed even specific schemes of the government, such as the Alon Plan that was introduced to Hussein as a basis for negotiation. Talks with Jordan, however, took place when *Gahal* members were cabinet ministers; they probably did not categorically oppose the talks since the negotiations never reached a stage at which a government decision was required. One can say, though, that the right-wing element inside and outside the cabinet, contributed to the shaping of Israel's ultimate compromise

regarding a political settlement with Jordan. They viewed the Jordan River as the eastern security border, opposed the establishment of a third state between Israel and Jordan, and were prepared for territorial compromise in the West Bank. Israeli public opinion favoured most of these ideas but the *Maarach* (alignment of labour parties) emphasized the security aspect, supporting Israel's demand for a military position along the Jordan River and on the mountain tops of the West Bank.

Thus, it can be inferred that the opposition did not directly influence the talks with Jordan. Indirectly, however, it affected the crystalization of the government's territorial concept. This perception is supported by the fact that even after *Gahal* left the government in 1970 there was no breakthrough in the ongoing negotiations with Jordan.

CONCLUSIONS

The Hashemite kingdom of Jordan had, from 1948, the best reasons among the Arab states, for seeking peace with Israel. Its geographical location, its weak economic base, its dependence on neighbors for an outlet to the Mediterranean, its vulnerability within the inter-Arab system and the Palestine problem — all these were factors whose influence upon Jordan did not weaken and may even have been aggravated by the passage of time. Peace in the Middle East and normal relations with Israel might mitigate them. That being the case, Jordan had not much to lose once peace prevailed in the area (in comparison for example, with Lebanon, where some circles expressed their apprehension lest, in case of peace in the Middle East, Tel Aviv and Haifa collect the lion's share of the financial and economic profits that Beirut enjoyed).

As has already been pointed out, some of the basic factors had altered between 1950 and 1967, albeit their influence upon the possibility of a peace settlement did not always change accordingly. The territorial map was, for example, completely different in 1967. Further, the 1960s saw the Palestinian question gain more and more importance whereas in 1950 it had not constituted a considerable factor in the calculations of either party. Israel's awareness of its enforced state of siege and isolation, too, was much stronger in 1967 and had an obvious psychological and practical influence that diminished, in one way, the value of Israel's territorial bargaining cards as it raised the price that the Arabs demanded in return for a settlement. Finally, the inter-Arab system also went through conspicuous changes in the decades after 1950. Regardless of these changes, Jordan's commitment to (or fear of) the inter-Arab system was probably among the major attributes of the failure of the negotiations.

What did a peace settlement require of Israel and Jordan in both periods? In 1950 Israel was required to make certain territorial amendments and to take some security risks. Jordan was required to make similar territorial amendments and to recognize Israel. This last

point, considered a breach of a formal and practical inter-Arab consensus, might have resulted in the deterioration of relations between Jordan and its neighbors to the point of crisis. After 1967 Israel was required once again to take security risks and to give up nearly all the territories occupied in the Six Day War. These concessions were far more difficult and painful than those demanded in the first period for two reasons. First, as the years passed since 1967, the occupied territories began to be perceived by increasing segments of Israel's public opinion as more significant than their sheer security value would indicate. Second, due to the advancement of military technology and the sophistication of current weaponry, the risks that Israel was required to take in the second period were much higher than before. The deployment of a hostile army less than ten miles from the Mediterranean, near Nathanya, was in 1950 a grave defence problem. The same situation in the 1970s, many would agree, placed Israel on the verge of national suicide. For Jordan the difficulties, after 1967, were just as painful. Besides the recognition of Israel, it had to cope with the Palestine question in all its human, territorial and inter-Arab aspects. Since most of the factors since 1967 are still valid,³⁶ it is worthwhile to observe their relevance to any future Israeli-Jordanian arrangement.³⁷

As has already been pointed out, the position of the inter-Arab system was the major cause that foiled any possible settlement. In comparison to it, most of the bilateral questions were of minor importance.

Two related recent phenomena associated with the inter-Arab system should be considered because they will have an important influence in any future negotiations. First, the Arab world has been polarized. Countries such as Libya, Algeria and South Yemen have grown more radical and unequivocally reject any reconciliation with Israel, even if the latter consents to withdraw from the 1967 occupied territories and to the establishment of a Palestinian state. Simply, they demand Israel's liquidation. Such views guarantee that an inter-Arab consensus for a political settlement with Israel is highly improbable in the foreseeable future. There may be two or three (possibly more) Arab countries willing to reach an agreement with Israel, or at least concur that Jordan may do so. This may make an Israeli-Jordanian settlement feasible. Nevertheless, if radicalization continues, the weakening Arab backing for Jordan will precipitate a higher and higher price for Israel to pay in return for peace. The risks that stem from the resentment in the Arab world could easily push Jordan into asking for the maximum amount. Second, there was the late President Sadat's peace initiative, basically a public repetition of Hussein's clandestine negotiations. Reactions were not encouraging. Certainly, the peace treaty between Israel and Egypt has not so far helped persuade Jordan to enter the peace process and, the hostile Arab reaction to the Egyptian-Israeli negotiations and peace treaty did not encourage Hussein to follow suit.

Of all the determinants that have been discussed, two affected (and are still affecting) the possibility of a peace settlement between the two countries more than the others. First the *inter-Arab system* in its various combinations remains the dominant factor, casting its shadow over the negotiations since 1949. The second factor, that became decisive only after 1967, is the *Palestinian question* with all its various facets. Anyone who strives for a peace treaty between Israel and Jordan must take these factors in account and, there are many indications that any future settlement will succeed or fail depending on how these Mid-East realities are handled.

Footnotes

1. Central Zionist Archives (CZA), Jerusalem, S-25 4004.
2. On 1 December 1948, a congress of several hundred of Palestinian notables was held in Jordanian-occupied Jericho. Their demand from King Abdallah, to annex Palestine to his realm, provided the grounds for the formal incorporation of the West Bank into Jordan. See: Joseph Nevo, "Abdallah and the Arabs of Palestine," *The Wiener Library Bulletin*, vol. XXXI, new series nos. 45/46 (1978), pp. 51-62.
3. However, one should bear in mind that the assassination of King Abdallah was an outcome of a Palestinian plot. The conspirators charged that the King, *inter alia*, endeavoured to reach a peace agreement with Israel.
4. Moshe Dayan, *Story of My Life* (Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, 1976), p. 106; James G. McDonald, *My Mission in Israel 1948-1951* (New York, 1951), p. 193; U.S. Charge d'affaires, Amman to the Secretary of State, 7 February, 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1950*, vol. V, p. 727 (FRUS); and, Israel State Archives, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, vol. 3, pp. 336-339, 350.
5. Dayan, p. 104.
6. Israel had agreed to grant that corridor to Abdallah. However he thought of its width in terms of kilometers (eight-ten), while Israel was thinking in terms of meters (two hundred to three hundred, wide enough for a railroad). *FRUS*, 1950, vol. V, pp. 665, 671, 675, 745.
7. Dayan, pp. 104-115; McDonald, pp. 124-125, 193-194; Walter Eytan, *The First Ten Years: A Diplomatic History of Israel* (London, 1958), pp. 38-41; A.H.H. Abidi, *Jordan - A Political Study 1948-1957* (London, 1965), pp. 26-38; Ernest C. Dawn, "Pan Arabism and the Failure of Israeli-Jordanian Peace Negotiations, 1950," in Gir-darhi L. Tikku (ed.), *Islam and its Cultural Divergence* (University of Illinois Press, 1971), pp. 27-51; *FRUS*, 1950, vol. V, pp. 665 ff.
8. *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 20-26 March, 1972.
9. Moshe Dayan, *Avnei Derech* ("Mile Stones") (Tel-Aviv, 1976), p. 542. See also: *Arab Reports and Record (ARR)*, London, 1974, p. 561.
10. *The Middle East Record (MER)*, vol. 4, 1968 (Tel Aviv, 1973), pp. 221-222; *MER*, vol. 5, 1969-70 (Tel Aviv, 1977), p. 92; *ARR*, 1969, p. 118; *ARR*, 1972, pp. 589, 610; *ARR*, 1974, pp. 331, 561; *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 20-26 March 1972; *L'Express*, 26 March 1972; and, *Time*, 23 November 1970.
11. *Newsweek*, 17 June 1974; NBC report, 2 August 1974; and, quoted by *ARR*, 1974, p. 333. See also *ARR*, 1974, pp. 223, 236.
12. Jordan ostensibly obeyed the Rabat resolutions, trying to create the impression of dissociating itself of the Palestinian issue, first, by a drastic reduction of Palestinian representation in governmental and public organizations, then by abolishing the ministry for the "occupied territories" affairs. There were also reports that the government initiated a new nationality law, designated to deprive all residents of Palestinian origin of their Jordanian citizenship.

13. Hussein H. Hassouna, *The League of Arab States and Regional Disputes: A Study of Middle East Conflicts* (New York, 1975), pp. 29-40; and, Dawn, pp. 32 ff.
14. Dawn, p. 35; and, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, vol. 3, pp. 329-330, 345.
15. Assessment regarding the ardent willingness of both parties to reach an agreement see: *FRUS*, 1950, vol. V, p. 665 ff.
16. *ibid.*, pp. 796, 873-874, 877, 941, 950, 1021-1022; McDonald, pp. 207-208; and, Marie Syrkin, *Way of Valor, A Biography of Golda Myerson* (New York, 1955), p. 220.
17. David Kimche and Dan Bawly, *Sofat Ha'esh* ("The Fire Storm") (Tel Aviv, 1968), p. 214; and *MER*, 1967, pp. 267-268, 404.
18. Kimche and Bawly, p. 182.
19. *ibid.*, p. 214.
20. See sources in note 10.
21. Dawn, p. 28.
22. For the reasons, see Dawn, pp. 33-34.
23. *ibid.*, pp. 50-51.
24. *ibid.*, p. 38; McDonald, p. 194; and, *FRUS*, 1950, vol. V, p. 787.
25. Hassouna, p. 40.
26. *MER*, 1968, p. 264.
27. *MER*, 1968, pp. 221-222; *MER*, 1969/70, p. 92; *ARR*, 1970, p. 636; *ARR*, 1971, p. 138; and *ARR*, 1974, p. 321.
28. *ARR*, 1972, pp. 80, 136. One should not overlook, however, that Hussein's federation plan, of March 1972, aroused a very hostile response leading even to the severance of diplomatic relations between Jordan and several Arab states. (*ARR*, 1972, pp. 157-158). The angry reaction was mainly because the plan indicated the return of the West Bank to Jordan, if and when Israel withdrew, and not to the Palestinians, rather than stemming from the possibility of further Jordanian talks with Israel.
29. Such as: The Jarring mission, the Rogers initiative and the 1970 cease-fire agreement between Israel and Egypt to put an end to the bloody war of attrition along the Suez Canal.
30. *International Herald Tribune*, 26 March 1969.
31. *ARR*, 1970, p. 653.
32. Jon Kimche, *The Second Arab Awakening* (London, 1970), pp. 168-169; *FRUS*, 1950, vol. V, pp. 665-666. Sir Alec Kirkbride, then the British Minister in Amman, admits in his memoirs (*From the Wings* (London, 1976), p. 91) that Abdallah's initiative towards direct talks with Israel was contradictory to his own advice. See also: *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, vol. 3, p. 345.
33. Kimche and Bawly, p. 214.
34. Dawn, p. 35; Kirkbride, p. 91; *FRUS*, 1950, vol. V, pp. 777-778.
35. Except for the period between June 1967 and July 1970 when Israel was governed by a national coalition that included the right-wing block in *knesset*.
36. This paper was written in 1981, before the war in Lebanon.
37. The meaning of the political change in Israel in 1977 and the formation of the *likud* government was not discussed since this survey deals mainly with previous period. One must, however, take into consideration two possible implications of that change upon a Jordanian-Israeli agreement:
 - a) The political and emotional commitment (beyond defence considerations) of the *likud*, with regard to Israeli control in Judea and Samaria, is much deeper than that of the previous governments.
 - b) As far as the internal political system in Israel is concerned, it might be easier for the *likud* to make territorial concessions, because the main opposition block, the *Maarach*, already advocates a territorial compromise in the West Bank in order to bring Jordan to the negotiating table.