

Conversations in Amman

by
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INTRODUCTION

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is a participant in many of the conflict systems of the Middle East. This essay examines, from a Jordanian perspective, six of the most pressing issues affecting political stability in the Arab world today. My findings are based on personal interviews conducted between December 1986 and January 1987 in Amman, Jordan. I interviewed the people, introduced below, because they represent a cross-section of official and non-official Jordanian opinion.

Dr. Abdul Salam Al Majali, president of Jordan University since 1967, has also served as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education. He has been an influential adviser to King Hussein since the early 1960s. Jordan University is the educational showplace for the Kingdom of Jordan and it is largely Al Majali's creation. He was interviewed in his office 23 December 1986.

Mofid Mobaslat, representative for the Nablus district in the Jordanian House of Delegates, travels frequently in the administered territories. He has little direct influence with King Hussein and his immediate circle, however, he does represent the thinking of many East Bank Palestinians. He was interviewed in his office in the Parliament on 31 December 1986.

Waheed Al Jaabari, representative for Hebron in the Jordanian House of Delegates, is a member of a very old Palestinian family with relatives on both banks of the Jordan River. The Al Jaabari family has been active in Hebron politics since the 1920s, and has contributed to the development of the Hashemite Kingdom. Al Jaabari has been active in politics since the 1940s and provides a direct communication link between the Jordanian government and the administered territories. He is one of the most influential members of the House of Delegates with direct access to the Royal Court. He was interviewed in his home on 31 December 1986.

Dr. Hazem Nusseibeh, currently special troubleshooter for King Hussein, has served as Prime Minister, Minister of the Royal Court, Foreign Minister, and eight years as the representative to the United Nations. He also headed the Jordanian delegation to the UN Armistice Commission in Rhodes in 1949. Nusseibeh is a well respected adviser to King Hussein on foreign affairs, and a member of a very old Jerusalem family. Members of the Nusseibeh clan have traditionally been active in Jerusalem politics. Nusseibeh travels frequently to Jerusalem and provides a link between the Palestinians on the West Bank and the Jordanian government. He was interviewed in his home on 5 January 1987.

Dr. Abdul Aziz Al-Khayat, Minister of Waqfs and Islamic Affairs, is the highest ranking Islamic religious official in Jordan. He is consulted

on theological matters and has some influence on government policy formulation. His views, especially those regarding Israel and the Jews, reflect the Islamic worldview. He was interviewed in his office on 24 December 1986.

Dr. Rifat Audeh, a former opposition figure and Ba'ath supporter, was active in politics from the late 1920s through the 1950s. Implicated in a plot to overthrow King Hussein in the 1950s, he was under a sentence of death. He is now retired, without any direct access to decision-making circles. However he is very knowledgeable about left-wing and Ba'ath politics in Jordan and Syria. His opinions, although somewhat muted, give the gist of Ba'ath thought in Jordan. He was interviewed on 7 January 1987.

George Hawatmeh was editor of the *Jordan Times* through December 1987. He is a well-known journalist with ties to many other Palestinian journalists on the West and East banks. His views reflect those of many of the "upwardly mobile" young Jordanian-Palestinians. There is speculation that he was removed from his post because of his views on democracy vs. monarchy. He was interviewed in his office on 6 January 1987.

The interviews, while following a relatively unstructured format, probe the feelings and opinions of each interviewee on six major issue areas. These issue areas were: the most important political problem facing the Arabs and what must be done to solve it; inter-Arab relations and the question of Arab unity, including whether unity is a realistic goal or an outmoded concept, and means of achievement; views of Israel; Arab attitudes toward the United States; Arab attitudes toward the Soviet Union; and the Iran-Iraq war, including the root of this conflict, and its effects on the region. Dr. Al-Khayat, Minister of Waqfs and Islamic Affairs, was asked to discuss Israeli administration of the holy places including Jews' religious ties to Jerusalem and Israeli protection of Moslem holy places.

Although these interviews were conducted almost two years ago, these issues are still vitally important. All respondents considered the legitimacy of the Jewish State and the situation of the Palestinian Arabs as central questions. This is still the case. A final settlement for the administered territories has not been found. This has been the case since 1948. The recent troubles in the administered territories simply serve to highlight the absence of a settlement. The old saying that "the more things change the more they remain the same" is particularly appropos for the Arab-Israeli situation.

CONTEXT

A short sketch of Jordan's place in the world and in the Middle East in particular and its relationship to Israel and Palestinian Arabs will help the reader place the following interviews in perspective.

King Abdullah, Hussein's grandfather, was recognized as Amir of the Emirate of Transjordan on 15 May 1923 by the British. The frontiers

of Transjordan were established in June 1925.

“Before its creation and designation as the Emirate of Transjordan in 1923, the geographical area comprising the principality east of the river Jordan, north to the Yarmouk river, south to Aqaba, and east to the undemarcated deserts, had no fixed name . . . The chief reason for this vagueness was that the territory in its entirety had never been a separate, or independent, political entity.”¹

With the support of the British, King Abdullah consolidated his rule over Transjordan. In the 1948 Israeli war of independence Abdullah occupied most of the area west of the Jordan River that had been designated in the UN Partition Resolution of 31 August 1947 to form the nucleus of a Palestinian Arab state. Egypt occupied Gaza. On 24 April 1950 Judea and Samaria (West Bank) were annexed by King Abdullah and he changed the name of his country from Transjordan to Jordan.

Since 1947 the percentage of the Jordanian population with West Bank roots has gradually increased. There were large influxes of refugees after the 1948 and 1967 wars. Today the population of the East Bank (Jordan) is approximately 60% Palestinian. Palestinian Arabs make up about 75% of the population of Amman. Thus the Palestinians and the entire issue of the Arab-Israeli conflict has been the central focus of Jordanian foreign and domestic policy: “Jordan is at the heart of the Palestinian dilemma—more than any other Arab state its life cannot be separated from the history, course, and future of the Arab-Israeli problem.”²

In 1964 the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was formed. Originally promoted by President Nasser of Egypt in his competition with King Hussein for influence over the Palestinians, it has ever since been an element in inter-Arab feuding. The PLO is viewed by the Jordanian regime as a primary threat to its existence.

“The need for struggle to overthrow the agent regime in Jordan because of its being a line of defense for the Zionist state and because of its organic link to Israel, has become just as urgent as the need for the continuation of the struggle against the Zionist occupation.”³

Almost all members of the Jordanian political establishment are against the formation of an independent Palestinian state on the West Bank because this state would have a strong destabilizing influence on the Hashemite Kingdom by virtue of its attraction to many East Bank Palestinians. The issue then “is whether the competition will culminate in the ‘Jordanization’ of the Palestinians or the ‘Palestinization’ of the Jordanians.”⁴

Jordan’s foreign policy is predicated on the belief that a unified Arab stand is necessary before official negotiations can take place with Israel. Although King Hussein formally adheres to the 1974 Arab League Council summit resolution that designates the PLO “as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinians,”⁵ he still considers them

citizens of Jordan. The West Bank Palestinians carry Jordanian passports and Jordan pays the salaries of many civil servants and school teachers. However King Hussein will not make any bold moves for peace, as did Sadat in 1977, without the backing of other Arab countries. As Jordan is militarily weak and economically dependent on other Arab countries, he refuses to move without a consensus of Arab governments. Almost 40% of Jordan's operating budget comes as direct aid payments from Saudi Arabia and other Persian Gulf monarchies. Therefore Hussein must be wary of displeasing the Saudis. He also remembers well that his grandfather, King Abdullah, and President Sadat of Egypt were assassinated for dealing with the Israelis.

The United Kingdom scheme, first unveiled by Hussein in 1972, calls for "two federated and autonomous provinces."⁶ Under this plan the West Bank (Judea and Samaria) and the East Bank (Jordan) would form a union of equals with their capital in Amman. In this manner, according to the Jordanian interpretation, the Palestinians would be accorded all their rights while still being ruled from Amman. This type of arrangement remains Hussein's goal.

THE MOST PRESSING PROBLEM FACING THE ARABS AND WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SOLVE IT

Dr. Abdul Salam Al Majali

The Palestine problem is the core of all Middle East conflicts. Until this is solved there will be no stability in the area. Israeli and Zionist aggression make the problem difficult to solve.

Only an international peace conference can devise a comprehensive peace formula. Israeli strategy is to cause divisions among the Arabs as she did with the Camp David peace accords. It is thus necessary to have an international umbrella including all parties to the conflict. The supporters are closely intertwined in the conflict and must be parties to the conference or they will undermine it. As Israel is much more powerful than any of her neighbors, direct negotiations are not possible. Israel, as a regional superpower, will dictate the terms in any bilateral negotiations. In the long run Israel must become a democratic secular state with all religions living in harmony. There will not be peace until the Moslem Arabs become a majority in Israel.

Jordan's future survival and stability are dependent on a just settlement of the Palestine problem. About 20,000 West Bankers immigrate to Jordan each year. This is a great potential source of instability. Jordan pushes hard for West Bank economic development. This will improve living conditions and reduce immigration to Jordan.

Mr. Mofid Mobsalat

The most pressing problem is to improve the political and economic situation of the West Bank Arabs. The Israelis encourage the economic situation to deteriorate to foster immigration to Jordan. Jordan's priority must be to keep the people on the land. To this end she has spent large sums since 1967 to promote economic development. Jordan pays the

salaries of most civil servants and school teachers. There is informal cooperation between Israel and Jordan on economic development. Funds are spent on projects known to both sides. Local authorities take advance approval from the Israelis and get funding from Jordan. What Israel rejects cannot be implemented. When this area reverts back to Jordanian sovereignty this abnormal situation will be removed. The ideal solution is a confederation between the East and West Banks.

Mr. Waheed Al Jaabari

The most important issues are the Israeli occupation of Arab lands and the attendant violation of Palestinian rights. Israeli settlement activity is very menacing. Immigration from the West Bank, an Israeli objective, is at alarming levels. This must be stopped through Jordanian support for economic development. As the West Bank is an integral part of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan it is natural that Jordan does everything possible to improve the lot of these people. An independent state is definitely not the solution to the problem of Palestinian rights. Confederation of the East and West banks is the best option as this is what the people want. It would have been best if a Palestinian state had been established in 1947 as per the UN Partition Resolution. However, since Israel annexed a large segment of the UN-designated state the remainder, that is, the West Bank and Gaza, are not tenable as a separate state.

Dr. Hazem Nuseibeh

The Arab-Israel conflict over Palestine is the most important conflict. A fair and just settlement entails Israeli withdrawal to her pre-1967 borders. Conditions have changed and the Arabs are reconciled to an Israel within these borders. The 1982 Fez peace plan guarantees the right of all states in the region to exist, implicitly recognizing Israel. Therefore if the Israelis are reasonable peace may be possible.

The final settlement must allow the Palestinians the right to compensation and repatriation. It is the responsibility of Morocco, Iraq and other Arab countries to offer the Arab Jews of Israel compensation. This has nothing to do with the Palestinians and is not their problem. Why should the Palestinians pay a double price? What do I, as a Palestinian, have to do with Moroccan and Iraqi politicians who were bribed to send their Jews to Palestine? Nothing injured the Palestinian cause more than the conspiracy of Arab governments who sent their Jews to Palestine where they now comprise over 50% of the Jewish population. They showed great hypocrisy toward the Palestinian cause because they shouted themselves hoarse declaring that the Palestinians must return to their homes while accepting bribes to send their own Jewish citizens to take over the homes of Palestinians.

Dr. Abdel Aziz Al-Khayat

The most important issues facing Jordan are the Israeli occupation of Arab lands and violations of Palestinian rights. The Israelis kill, imprison and kidnap Palestinians, take their land and water rights, construct illegal settlements and desecrate Islamic holy places. These

problems can best be dealt with within the framework of an international conference.

Palestinian rights will be guaranteed by reuniting the West Bank with the Hashemite Kingdom. There is no need for an independent state on the West Bank as it is an integral part of Jordan. West Bank citizens hold Jordanian passports. West Bank and Gaza farmers distribute their produce through Jordan. The Jordanian government encourages investment on the West Bank and Gaza. There is informal cooperation between Jordan and Israel about West Bank development. The PLO declaration that it represents the Palestinian people is a political statement meant to further Palestinian rights. It is nothing to do with an independent state. The Jordanian government cooperates with the PLO or any group that tries to recover the occupied lands.

Dr. Rifat Audeh

Coping with Israeli aggression is the most pressing problem. The primary cause of Israeli aggressiveness is her military might. The Arab negotiating position will remain poor as long as the military balance is so heavily in favor of the Israelis. Good faith negotiations require an even balance of military forces. Israel will negotiate when she feels the Arabs are strong and pose a military threat. King Hussein tries to retrieve the West Bank legally and is ignored. This is an example of what happens when the Arabs observe the law but have no military power to back up their reasonable requests. An international conference is the best way to find a peace settlement. Even the PLO favors such a conference. However Israel with American support is against the conference.

Mr. George Hawatmeh

Israel, as the primary engine driving all inter-Arab conflicts, is the primary problem of the Arabs. If there were no Israel, the Arab states would concentrate on internal development. Israel, by nature, is aggressive so as long as there is a Zionist state there will be no peace. Another serious problem facing Jordan and the other Arab countries is the lack of democracy which hinders political and economic development. We hope for an evolution away from one-man rule.

INTER-ARAB RELATIONS AND THE QUESTION OF ARAB UNITY

Dr. Al Majali

The Arabs are one nation with no ingrained loyalty to the present state system and under the right circumstances the borders will fade away. There is no difference between a Jordanian and a Syrian. Like people from New York and Utah, the differences are slight and superficial. The Arabs share a common culture and language. The longer the present state system remains in place the more difficult it will be to achieve unity. Unity will probably have to be achieved by force. All previous attempts at unity failed but this is primarily the fault of the Israelis. Israel will invade if Syria and Jordan unite as the Israelis view Arab unity as a direct threat to their existence. There will be a rapprochement between Syria and Iraq, as between two brothers.

Mr. Mobaslat

The best way to simultaneously advance Arab unity and guarantee the rights of the Palestinian people is a confederation based on the long-term ties between the people of the two Banks. The silent majority on the West Bank supports confederation. The creation of an independent West Bank state would serve no useful purpose. Jordan will accept the intervention of Syria and other Arab countries in the affairs of the West Bank only if they serve the true interests of Arab unity, that is, confederation.

Mr. Al Jaabari

Arab unity is necessary if the Zionists are to be driven out. Arab disunity is a curse, allowing Zionists and others to manipulate events in the Middle East. Because of this disunity Arab armies were poorly coordinated during the 1984 war. When the West Bank Arabs saw how poorly the military campaign was going they asked for unity with Jordan. Jordan adopted the "Jericho Plan"—to save what they could of Palestine. The cause of Arab unity would have been set back even further had the West Bank fallen to the Zionists in 1948.

Arab countries do not give the Palestinians the right to fight the occupiers from their territory. Before 1967 the Arabs of the West Bank were not allowed to arm themselves, that is, they were disarmed by the Jordanian government. The PLO or any other force that tries to better the lot of the Palestinians should be supported. This will further Arab unity.

Mr. Nuseibeh

There is no future without Arab unity. If the forces of separatism are not tamed the Arabs will be relegated to a minor role in world history. The present division into separate states is an aberration and is anathema to Islam and Arab nationalism. For example, Iraq and Syria are one body with two heads, the two branches of the Ba'ath party. They were artificially divided by the colonial powers. The bizarre behavior of Arab Syria in aiding non-Arab Iran to destroy another Arab country is inexcusable and strikes at the heart of Arab unity. Syrian maneuvers against Arafat for control of the PLO produced the war of the camps (winter 1985-87). No Arab state lifted a finger to assist the Palestinians. This indefensible behavior shows a complete loss of decency. Because of this disunity Arab governments use the Palestinians as pawns against each other. Most Arabs are boiling mad at this state of suspended animation.

Although the twin threats of Iran and Israel have not forced Arab unity the forces for unity will eventually overcome the forces of separatism. Immediate results are unrealistic and it will be a slow, gradual process with many setbacks. Entrenched Arab state interests must be overcome. Given the current state of disarray, if Mecca were occupied tomorrow nobody would lift a finger. Nasser of Egypt came closest to achieving Arab unity. The President of Syria gave up his post to form the United Republic led by Nasser. The union fell apart because of foreign intervention and the follies of those in power. The Arabs did not yet know how to handle unity.

Dr. Al-Khayat

Arab unity is a prerequisite for the Arab world to reach its potential greatness. Arguments between Arab countries are like quarrels between brothers and are by their nature transitory. Although there are arguments between Syria and Jordan they are united in their desire to liberate Palestine. Both are opposed to the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. King Hussein has always striven for Arab unity while putting differences between Arab countries in proper perspective.

Dr. Audeh

The primary cause of Arab weakness is disunity within the Arab nation. Such leaders as Assad (of Syria) and Quadaffi (of Libya) do not represent the Arab masses. Assad supports Iran out of personal jealousy of Saddam Hussein, completely ignoring the welfare of his own country. Quadaffi is crazy and not taken seriously. He is a fanatic like Khomeini. His actions, such as the war in Chad, make no sense and harm the Arab cause.

It is difficult to be optimistic about Arab unity as the leadership groups and bureaucracies become more entrenched. Even the conflicts with Iran and Israel have not united them. There are two leadership groups in most Arab countries—one for local politics and one pan-Arab. The latter must win if the Arab nation is to achieve its former greatness.

The Ba'ath party is a force for Arab unity. There are two currents of the Ba'ath—pro-Syrian and pro-Iraqi. Before the split, the Ba'ath party was much more powerful. After the two countries are reunited the party will again be a powerful force. The Ba'ath party is banned in Jordan as all political parties are illegal.

Mr. Hawatmeh

While recognizing the importance of Arab unity it is necessary to realize that individual Arab countries will continue to develop within their present boundaries. A confederal arrangement between the East Bank and West Bank will simultaneously contribute to Arab unity and solve the Palestinian problem. The creation of another Arab state that is not economically viable will only increase instability. Jordan cannot take any foreign policy initiatives unless she is backed by a strong Arab consensus. Therefore a top priority of Jordanian foreign policy is Arab unity. All Arab states must cease squabbling and support King Hussein's peace initiatives. Only through such unity will the occupied territories be regained.

VIEWS OF ISRAEL

Dr. Al Majali

Israel is an expansionist state. Her goals are to expand to the borders of non-Arab Iran while ridding the West Bank of all Arabs and Judaizing it as they are doing to Jerusalem. Israel enforces policies that force Arabs to leave their land. The population of the West Bank has substantially decreased to around 350,000. The Israelis expropriate the best land

and water rights. Israel fosters the development of universities on the West Bank to encourage immigration. They know the graduates will not be able to find jobs and will therefore leave.

Israel is not interested in peace, as exemplified by the Camp David accords. Sadat was humiliated and received nothing in return—only worthless desert and even then he did not get all of it back, as, for example, Taba. The Israelis had no attachment to Sinai so it was easy for them to return. This treaty achieved their goal of detaching Egypt from the Arab world and causing great dissension among the Arabs. All Israeli arguments about the need for defensible borders are false. As she is a regional superpower it is the Arabs who need defensible borders.

Mr. Mobaslat

Israel is an expansionist state not interested in peace. She has the opportunity to achieve peace by withdrawing from land occupied in the 1967 War. When speaking of “occupied territories” 99% of Arabs mean what was occupied in 1967. Although pre-1967 is also Palestinian land the Arabs realize that the situation has changed and accept the existence of Israel. This acceptance gives credence to King Hussein’s statement of “land for peace.”

Mr. Al Jaabari

Zionism and Israel are the cause of most Arab problems. Jews, Moslems and Christians lived peacefully together before the arrival of the Zionists. The Zionists stirred up much hatred. Through their oppression of the Palestinians they cause instability on the West Bank, in Jordan and in other Arab countries. Israel is depopulating the West Bank and erasing all traces of Arab culture; Arab neighborhoods were eradicated in Jaffa, refugee camps leveled in Jericho. The land given to European refugees is taken from indigenous Arabs. Israeli occupation policies are very severe and are aimed at ruining the West Bank economy, making the Palestinian situation untenable.

Mr. Nuseibeh

Israel meddles in inter-Arab affairs, fostering Arab disunity. Their policy of forcing Palestinian immigration to Jordan will destabilize Jordan. General Sharon said that Israel should solve the Palestinian problem by creating a Palestinian state in Jordan. This unacceptable to Jordan.

The alien ideology of Zionism fosters oppression and expansionism. As Israel expands, its Arab population will increase. If Israel does not come to terms with the Palestinians, she will end up with a situation similar to South Africa. Arabs and Jews lived peacefully together before the Zionist arrival. Zionist agents were responsible for the anti-Jewish riots in Arab countries. The Zionists with their stockpile of atomic bombs and unlimited American support have a very militaristic philosophy. Israel will live in peace when she becomes a binational state where the rights of all are guaranteed.

Dr. Al-Khayat

Israel has no right to exist as a Jewish state and the Jews have no legitimate ties to Jerusalem. Arabs were in Palestine long before the arrival of the Jews. This is proven by the Jewish Torah which states that the Jews were always fighting the dominant people of Palestine, such as the Caananites who were the predecessors of the Palestinians. Arabs view the Israelis the same way they viewed the Crusader Kingdom. Their presence is temporary. All of Palestine belongs to the Arabs and temporary occupiers such as the Crusaders and Zionists will be expelled.

Dr. Audeh

The Zionist state illegally occupies Arab land. Zionists respond only to force and are not interested in living in peace with their Arab neighbors. Zionist strategy is to seize and Judaize Arab lands. She tries to erase all traces of the Arab character of the land by expelling the inhabitants and repopulating the land with Jews, changing place names and forging the results of archeological expeditions. Israel is turning Jerusalem into a Jewish city. She has not yet digested the territory occupied during the 1967 War. After she does she will try to seize more Arab land, expanding to the Euphrates River. Israel allows Moslem holy places to fall into disrepair and prevents maintenance.

Mr. Hawatmeh

Israel's expansionist and intransigent behavior provokes the Arabs. For example, the Israeli occupation of the Golan Heights is a grave provocation to Syria and explains much of Syria's harsh anti-Israel rhetoric. If the Golan Heights were returned the Syrians would not fire on Israeli settlements. If the Israelis were not so intransigent they would realize that the situation has changed since 1967.

History is on the side of the Arabs. They will overwhelm Israel. As Israel was founded on stolen land it is her responsibility to work out an arrangement with the Palestinians that will restore their rights and give them just compensation. Israel's prolongation of the Palestinian conflict has a strong negative impact on Jordan's social fabric. Some Israelis, such as General Sharon believe that destabilizing Jordan and establishing a Palestinian state on the ruins of Jordan is a solution. This will cause more conflict in the region and will not resolve the problem of the West Bank.

ARAB ATTITUDES TOWARD THE UNITED STATES

Dr. Al Majali

The Jews have absolute control over the American media and only very pro-Israeli messages get through, for example, the film *Exodus*. After traveling widely in the U.S. I know Jews have so much power that nobody dares oppose Israel. All who oppose the Jews are publicly discredited. In a meeting with former President Jimmy Carter, Carter stated that the Israel lobby is the most powerful lobby in the U.S. He further stated that the Arab perception of the Arab-Israeli conflict is often correct but he dared not admit this publicly because it would have caused

him intolerable political problems. The U.S. will be acting in an evenhanded fashion when she ceases support of Israel. The Arabs were gravely disappointed with the U.S. because of Irangate and Israeli involvement in the plot. That Arab countries such as Syria and Libya also sell arms to Iran is understandable and excusable because it falls within the context of inter-Arab politics.

Mr. Al Jaabari

The Arabs are against the U.S. because of her strong support of Israel. Without the American support the Zionists would have to be reasonable. The U.S. replaced Great Britain as the primary patron of the Jews. The U.S. is an imperialist power willing to use any means to further her aims. The U.S. views Arab disunity as in her interest.

Mr. Nuseibeh

American support of Israel is an act of hostility against the entire Arab world. American intervention in the Middle East is a primary cause of Arab disunity. It is not in America's interest to support Israel but because of Jewish control over U.S. foreign policy formulation the American government does not follow its true interests. As verified to me by such people as Dean Acheson, no U.S. politician can take an anti-Israeli position and survive. Charles Percy, J. William Fulbright and Paul Findley took anti-Israel positions and were defeated. After living in the U.S. for ten years I believe Jewish influence is pervasive. Although the U.S. is a superpower it is not independent in the Middle East. I cannot explain how Jews obtained this stranglehold over U.S. foreign policy formulation. "Can curse God, the President of the U.S., but nobody dares criticize Israel."

The American press offers poor coverage of the Arab world. The media is silent about atrocities committed by Arab governments against their own citizens. There was poor coverage of the massacres committed by the Syrian government in Hamma in 1982. Likewise there was almost no press coverage of the attempted takeover of the Grand Mosque of Mecca in 1979. The American press focuses exclusively on Israel. Arthur Ochs Sulzberger Jr. of the *New York Times* told me he was afraid to provide more coverage of the Arab world for fear of incurring Jewish wrath.

Dr. Al-Khayat

The U.S. lost its credibility among the Arabs because of her strong backing of Israel. Jordanians are particularly upset with the U.S. because she supports the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Jerusalem.

Dr. Audeh

America is losing its credibility among the Arabs, especially after the Iran arms deal. The American media always portray the Arabs in a negative fashion. The U.S. vetoes pro-Arab resolutions at the UN. The U.S. has strong interests in the Arab world which outweigh the importance of her ties to Israel. Eventually the Arabs will become fed up with American behavior and ally themselves with the U.S.S.R.

American foreign policy is conducted in an amateur fashion, never looking below the surface to see what the people really want. For example, while working as a government adviser in the 1950s I advised the Americans not to back Nuri as-Said so closely. Nuri as-Said jailed his opponents so by identifying with him so closely American interests were harmed. The U.S. has not taken the trouble to meet Saudi opposition groups. I cannot give specific operational details of how the U.S. is supposed to meet Saudi opposition groups without being accused of interfering in the internal affairs of Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Hawatmeh

Israel manipulates the U.S. The Israelis tricked the Americans into the Camp David accords with Egypt. They traded Sinai for the West Bank and the Golan Heights but were able to convince the Americans that they wanted peace and a just settlement of Palestinian grievances. Media reports start from a pro-Israel bias so even objective coverage starts from this initial slant. The Israel lobby, greatly resented by the Arabs, emphasizes Arab terrorism. The lobby discourages discussion of the root causes of terrorism because this would give credence to Palestinian grievances. The Irangate scandal was engineered by the Israelis. They pushed the U.S. into selling weapons to Iran; then the pro-Israeli media exposed these dealings.

ARAB ATTITUDES TOWARD THE SOVIET UNION

Dr. Majali

The Russians are not a threat as they do not covet Arab land. They support Arab countries in international forums and sell them weapons. That the U.S. also sells them weapons is negated by her strong support of Israel. Israel poses much more of a threat to the Arabs than Russia. Moslems are treated well in Russia. They have full rights as citizens and there is no dissatisfaction with the central government in Moscow. The U.S. worries a lot about Russia but this is not an Arab problem.

Mr. Al Jaabari

As the primary threat is the Zionist menace, the U.S.S.R. is of secondary importance.

Mr. Nuseibah

Jordanians cannot afford the luxury of thinking about Russia, as Israel is the primary threat. The Russians have consistently supported the Palestinians since 1948. Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, which has caused five million refugees, should be condemned. If there were no Arab-Israeli conflict all Arab and Islamic attention would be on Afghanistan. Afghanistan appears to be part of the superpower conflict so the Arabs are reluctant to get drawn in.

Dr. Al-Khayat

Although Russia expansionism is a problem it is secondary to solving the Palestinian problem. Russian occupation of Afghanistan is evil, as is any foreign occupation. The superpowers instigated this war. The

Arabs are reluctant to come out strongly against Russian expansionism in Afghanistan because they would then be viewed as siding with the U.S. in the superpower conflict. Americans tend to view the whole world through their conflict with Russia.

Dr. Audeh

Russia is a secondary problem. As she supports the Arabs in most international forums against the Zionists she is viewed more favorably than the U.S. by most Arabs. Russian intervention in Afghanistan is an outgrowth of the superpower rivalry. Neither superpower is interested in the welfare of the Afghan people.

Mr. Hawatmeh

Russia poses no serious threat to the Arabs. The Russians are viewed favorably as they support Arab causes in all international forums. The threat to Arab stability posed by the Soviet Union pales in comparison to the threat posed by Israeli occupation of Arab land. The Soviet Union is more an American problem than an Arab problem. The Arabs oppose the Russian invasion of Afghanistan but do not take seriously the American condemnation of it because the U.S. does not condemn the Israeli occupation of the West Bank.

IRAN-IRAQ WAR

Dr. Al Majali

The Zionists instigated the Iran-Iraq War because they view a stable and powerful Arab world to be against their interests. The superpowers will not allow either Iraq or Iran to win. The war will cease after both sides are totally exhausted. It will take thirty years to rebuild their strength.

The Arabs were thrilled when Khomeini took power and humiliated the U.S. Many Arabs took this to mean that Islam was ascendant and had defeated the West. Arab opinion supported Iran at the start of the war. Their support shifted to Iraq after the war dragged on and it became apparent that an Iranian victory would open the floodgates of fundamentalism, sweeping every Arab country all the way to Morocco.

Mr. Mbaslat

Iran, with Israeli collusion, provoked this war. Iraq has stated on numerous occasions that she wants peace. The Israelis want the war prolonged because it saps Arab strength and diverts attention from the Palestinian question. The Israelis sell weapons to Iran and encourage other countries, such as the U.S., to aid the Iranians. The Iran-Contra scandal shows the web of U.S.-Israel support of Iran.

Mr. Al Jaabari

Israel and Iran are acting in collusion to dilute Arab power and divert attention from the struggle for Palestinian rights. If the Iranians cared about the Palestinians they would end the war so the Arabs could focus on Israel. The longer the conflict lasts the more remote are the

chances that a just solution will be found for the Palestinian problem and the holy places in Hebron and Jerusalem will be wrested from the Jews.

Mr. Nuseibeh

This unnecessary war, which has been causing a horrendous loss of life and depletion of resources, is the worst catastrophe to befall the Middle East in many years. Like the American civil war, the psychological scars will remain for many years. If Iran wins the entire map of the Middle East will be redrawn with disastrous consequences for the Arabs. An Iranian victory will abort the Arab renaissance and recreate the situation of the Ottoman Empire with the Arabs ruled by Iranians instead of Turks. In the name of Islam the Iranians try to export revolution and force their beliefs on others. They want a theocracy while the Arabs strive for a more humanistic interpretation of doctrine.

Dr. Al-Khayat

This war between two Moslem states came about for political reasons. Khomeini wants to make it look like a conflict between Sunnis and Shi'ites. His real goals are to gain control of the Arab world and make Shiism the dominant form of Islam. Jordan supports Iraq to halt this diabolical assault on the Arabs. All Arab states should support Iraq. While Khomeini claims to uphold the banner of Islam and fights to free Palestine he works in league with Israel and the U.S. Through this cooperation the Iranians enlarge the conflict at the same time they claim to want to expel all foreign influence from the area. Their deeds do not correspond to their words.

Dr. Audeh

This war is an Arab-Persian conflict. Iraq is not just fighting for herself but to uphold Arab independence. The Iranians only want Arab regimes in power whom they can manipulate. Their war aim of replacing Saddam Hussein proves this point. Therefore King Hussein's decision to back Iraq is correct. Iran started the war and the Iraqis have always been in a defensive position. Iran staged numerous border raids while Iraq wrote notes to the United Nations Security Council. The Iraqi people insisted that their leaders respond. The leaders had no choice but to order military action to avoid further embarrassment.

Mr. Hawatmeh

Israel is responsible for this war, viewing it as a way to keep the Arabs disunited and weak. Syrian and Libyan assistance to Iran is insignificant while American and Israeli assistance is pivotal. After the war is settled the Israelis will have to contend with a greatly strengthened Iraq so it is in their interest to reach a peace agreement as soon as possible.

ISRAELI ADMINISTRATION OF THE HOLY PLACES

Dr. Al-Khayat

The Ministry of Waqf and Islamic Affairs is responsible for all Moslem holy places on the West Bank. The shrines are regularly visited by representatives from the Ministry. The Ministry spends over

\$12 million per year for maintenance of the holy places and pays 85% of the salaries of the administrators.

All religious shrines in the area of the Temple Mount are Moslem. There are no Jewish ruins. There is no "wailing wall." All Jewish claims are fabrications. Solomon's Temple, if it ever existed, was not near the Temple Mount. The so-called "wailing wall" is part of the old Roman wall that surrounds Jerusalem. It was rebuilt by Suleyman the Magnificent. The Jews changed "Suleyman" to "Soloman." Jewish archeologists are undermining the Moslem holy places on the Temple Mount. The fires in the Al-Aqsa Mosque were the fault of the Israelis. The Moslem holy places are not safe under Israeli rule.

CONCLUSION

In the midst of the many areas of conflict in the Middle East there are some areas of agreement. There was unanimous agreement among the interviewees that an independent Palestinian state would be a source of instability. This corresponds to the Israeli and Syrian positions. This agreement stems from the desire of each party to control the West Bank and eliminate PLO influence. The PLO's concept of self-determination poses a serious threat to Israel. The threat to Jordan is even more serious as the Palestinians form an overwhelming majority of the population. The PLO formulation of the right of the entire Palestinian people to self-determination "is an ominous reminder to both countries of the PLO's political designs. In PLO strategy, self-determination is the essential mechanism to overturn any future settlement based on a two-state solution, by raising irredentist claims against Israel and Jordan."

The respondents tended to blame most of the ills of the Arab world on the Israelis and Americans or other external factors. Israel is vilified and blamed for most everything that goes wrong. There was some criticism of the way Arab governments manipulate the Palestinians in the arena of inter-Arab politics. There was also criticism of the lack of democracy and the human rights abuses committed by some Arab governments, notably Syria, against their own citizens. *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* is on sale in many Amman bookstores and the Arab worldview of Jews and Israel seems to follow some of its themes. They tend to view the entire world through the prism of their conflict with Israel. This makes it difficult for them to understand the complexities of American politics and foreign policy formulation. The Soviet Union is not considered as much of a threat to stability as Israel.

The most hopeful sign was the high degree of informal cooperation between Israel and Jordan in the administration of the West Bank. Some of the interviewees alluded to this cooperation which is fairly extensive in the economic and political spheres. Members of the Jordanian House of Delegates, such as Mobaslat and Jaabari, as well as government officials such as Nusseibeh, travel frequently between Amman and the West Bank. There is regular day-to-day contact between Jordanian and Israeli officials over such questions as road paving, salaries of civil servants and the content of school textbooks. A top priority of the Jordanian

government is the economic development of the West Bank. The Israelis usually cooperate except where they believe their security interests are threatened. This day-to-day cooperation, which is not given much media attention, may evolve into an acceptable de facto peace without the great drama of a formally negotiated settlement. Time and patience are required. It is hoped that the recent troubles on the West Bank will not cause the Israelis and Jordanians to lose sight of their many common interests.

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Endnotes

1. Vatikiotis, *Politics and the Military*, p. 33.
2. Jureidini and McLaurin, *Jordan*, p. 1.
3. Harkabi, *The Arabs and Israel*, p. 184.
4. Susser, *Double Jeopardy*, p. 6.
5. Day, *East Bank/West Bank*, p. 41.
6. Mishal, *The PLO Under Arafat*, p. 101.
7. Susser, *Double Jeopardy*, p. 58.