

JORDAN WITHIN THE SHIFTING BALANCE OF MIDDLE EAST POLITICS

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ABSTRACT

The period between 1967-1973 was transformative for the governments of the Middle East. King Hussein and the leadership in Jordan faced many challenges on both domestic and international fronts. This case study attempts to explain how the Hashemite kingdom dealt with the pressures from military defeats, loss of territory, threats from religious fundamentalism, Marxist-Nationalist uprisings, continued tensions with Israel, and Cold War politics. This study will explore how the regime's survival and success compares with many of their neighbors who faced crisis instability and similar external and internal pressures. Jordan's strategies in the face of these challenges did not result in the bloody coups that overthrew previous 'colonial regimes' in the region. Instead of falling victim to increasing pressures from all sides, Jordan used these internal and external challenges to propel itself forward to become a stabilizing and moderate force in the region. The strategies made in those challenging times by King Hussein's government will be explored to better understand how moderation can succeed against the ever-challenging forces of radicalism and reaction.

Keywords: King Hussein, Cold War politics, The Hashemite Kingdom, Middle East

INTRODUCTION: JORDAN CONFRONTS ITS PAST AND FUTURE 1967-1973

Over 2,000 years ago Aristotle observed and stated that nature abhors a vacuum. The philosopher's understanding that every gap will eventually be filled has been as an explanation and warning across many disciplines. The endless usurping of Middle Eastern governments provides an example of this pattern in a political sense. History and current events teach us that political vacuums in the Middle East often end up being filled with autocratic rulers after periods of upheaval. However, King Hussein's decision-making process during 1967-73 provides evidence to why the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan did not go down this path. The change in Jordan's image of itself, its relation to their Arab neighbors and alliances between 1967- 1973 is of paramount importance when looking at Middle Eastern politics. The lessons learned from studying the Kingdom's relative success in confronting these challenges could offer vital information for the current problems faced by states in the Middle East.

The period between 1967 and 1973 is especially intriguing because the regime was faced with intense pressures resulting from war, displacement, hostile political movements and Cold War realities. The second flood of refugees after the 1967 Arab- Israeli conflict resulted in enormous political stress which were further inflamed by the Palestinian ambitions worsened by the Arab defeat. The largest Palestinian organizations at that time were not overtly religious and were more influenced by Marxist and nationalist ideologies. This reality created a common cause with Soviet interests in the region and organizations like the Palestinian Liberation Organization and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine found increasing support in Moscow. The eventual clash between Palestinians and King Hussein's interests in 1970 led to his decision to crush the radical, Palestinian factions which became a threat to his domestic control. The Jordanian government's war against the Soviet/Socialist aligned

Palestinian liberation movements thus led to greater alignment with the United States and its interests. Jordan's dealing with regional influences played a massive role in their decisions regarding a resolution of the 'Palestinian problem.' Jordan's post 1970 worldview influenced their strategic decisions and contributed to a more independent path in their relations with Israel and the non- Arab world during subsequent crisis. Jordan's increasing reliance on Western aid, intelligence and support and their cooperation showed their small room for negotiations in diplomatic exchanges.

Stability in the Middle East is usually equated with tyrannical regimes that maintain power through brutality and the suppression of any dissent. The results of Iranian Revolution, Arab Spring and overthrow of Muamar Quaddafi in Libya have shown us that suppression does not always lead to the long-term survival of their respective regimes. Revolutionary groups of all stripes operating below the surface can and will rise when the conditions are right. Certainly, King Hussein and his successor King Abdullah are not benevolent figureheads in a constitutional monarchy; both have been tough on dissent, but that alone does not explain how the Kingdom has not only survived but thrived in a tough and challenging neighborhood. This case study will look for answers regarding the transformative decisions made by King Hussein and how he dealt with internal, regional, and external pressures. It is necessary to look at these decisions because the existential threats to moderate, Middle Eastern governments today are increasingly evident. The patterns of aligning interests and partnerships between states may serve as a blueprint for understanding current problems.

Previous Discourse

Jordan's decision-making process during the Cold War has been covered extensively, however this study will explore a new perspective within context of domestic upheavals and

rivalries. The authors included in this literature review lack research on how Jordan fits within the context of a constantly changing Middle East. This study will approach the topic from three perspectives: how Jordan aligns themselves internally, externally, and regionally to survive. By looking at patterns and clues from the past, this research may provide answers to the geopolitical dynamics of an ever-changing Middle East today.

Nevo and Pappéⁱ provide a collection of articles describing the country's role in the conflict with Israel and the balance of power between Palestinians and Jordanians. They provide insight into Jordan's formation and how it impacts the region. Discussing their initial plans for ruling, and their western desires. Shalimⁱⁱ additionally offers answers to why Jordan developed the way that they did detailing Jordan's unique relationship with the British after the break of the Ottoman empire. Per Shlaim, the characteristics of Jordan were determined by the initial assumption of Palestinian populations after the creation of the state of Israel in 1948. Joffeⁱⁱⁱ discusses their origins and how the British and the French aligned with the Arab world to weaken their Ottoman adversaries. He additionally describes the impact this behavior had on the future of the Middle East.

The tremendous losses that Jordan faced after the 1967 war are extremely important when looking at why Jordan made the decisions they did. Jordan was put under enormous internal pressures, because of the rise in the Palestinian population. The losses they suffered along with the rise of refugee populations became the perfect recipe for upheaval. Mutawi^{iv} looks at the effects of the war in the Middle East from the Jordanian perspective. Mutawi utilized Jordanian records and conducted interviews with many of the political and military leaders of the Jordanian side. Mutawi describes the Jordanian official position on the war, why it started, why Jordan was obliged to fight it and the tremendous losses suffered. There is no discussion of issues related to

the strategy or the tactics. This research will utilize the facts and figures provided by Mutawi, but dive deeper into the strategies employed by King Hussein after this tremendous loss.

The name King Hussein signifies a survival story and he is known as the great survivor of Middle East politics. The way he dealt with the tumult of the region through the Cold War as well as his balancing act between Israel and the West is unique in its nature. Scholars including Shlaim and Ashton look specifically at his behavior in this time.

Overall, Shlaim^v and Ashton^{vi} investigate how Hussein plays his hand, being that he was dealt a difficult one, with the geography and conflicts that erupted during this time. They show how Hussein was always far more than a clever opportunist, both Shlaim and Ashton study his behavior during this time intensively in their biographies. Shlaim focuses more on Hussein's relations with Israel and the Palestinians, while Ashton focuses on Hussein's relations with the Arab world. Shlaim additionally looks at Hussein's approach and methods for Middle East peace, with a substantial emphasis on his secret and eventually open meetings with Israel. Ashton differs from this by paying greater attention to Hussein's policies toward neighboring Arab states.

Shlaim and Ashton discuss how the 1967 War was the largest calamity of King Hussein's reign, however Ashton is more forgiving in his descriptions. Ashton specifically looks at papers from King Hussein to back up his arguments on Hussein's behavior. These papers provide new perspectives that flesh out our ideas of Hussein's relationship with leaders in the Arab world. Both authors attribute Hussein's ability to survive to his empathy and pragmatism in dealing with internal and external factors.

Assaf David^{vii} looks at the strategic participation of Jordan during Yom Kippur war. Specifically, he looks at the lack of participation by Jordan looking at their symbolic

participation as a method to appease all sides. He provides accounts from western and Arab leaders during 1973 as a testament to king Hussein's behavior.

The previous discourse on the subject matter creates a blueprint for why Jordan acted the way it did and the implications of these decisions. However, more research is needed to apply this discourse in a modern and international context.

THE ORIGINS OF JORDAN: ITS STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT AND DOMESTIC POLITICS 1916-1955

To fully assess how the regime survived the events of 1967-73 we must first look at the elements that influenced Jordan's behavior in relation to their moderate policies. The formation of the Kingdom after the collapse of the Ottoman empire and subsequent British rule provide key evidences to the long-term survival of the Hashemite regime is still in power today. King Hussein also benefited from his strong religious and nationalist bona fides as a direct descendant of the Prophet, and that his grandfather, Hussein bin Ali, had raised the standard of Arab revolt against the Ottoman Empire in 1916. Therefore, Jordan emerged as a champion of Arab nationalism.

Four centuries of rule by the Ottoman Empire over the land that would become the modern nation of Jordan ended during World War One when the Hashemite army of the great Arab revolt gained control of the Transjordan territory from the Turks. The revolt was led by Hussein bin Ali, Sharif of Mecca and the success was credited to the rise in Arab nationalism along with growing disdain toward Ottoman rule. Hussein bin Ali's religious authority was derived from his supposed descent from Muhammad and he originally agreed to lead the revolt in exchange for British recognition of him after the war. The Allied Powers of Britain and France supported the Arab revolt to weaken their Ottoman adversaries.^{viii} After the dissolution of

the Ottoman Empire, the newly formed League of Nations divided the newly liberated Middle Eastern territories among the victorious allied powers, namely Britain and France.

The colonial powers gave promises of future independence and self-rule to their territories based on wartime alliances and nationalist ambitions. In 1921 the United Kingdom rewarded King Abdullah for his alliance against the Ottomans by installing the Hashemite dynasty as the ruling power in Transjordan. Abdullah's reign from that point forward was characterized as authoritarian but not totalitarian.^{ix} The regime began with a stress on adherence to orthodox Sunni Islamic values, however, Western values have been evident since the creation. The UK found this extremely attractive and began to strengthen the Hashemites as a buffer against Saudis strict Wahabi influences, which professed a stricter adherence to Islam.^x The British saw this stricter adherence a threat to their influences on the region and Jordan became a more important player as a result.

After Jordan's independence, Jordan continued to develop and continuously align with the West, while adapting to the domestic and regional contexts.^{xi} Jordan officially gained independence from Britain in 1946 but relied on assistance that continues today.^{xii}

In 1948, the UN proposed resolution 181 for the creation of a Jewish state and an independent Palestinian state for when the British mandate of Palestine expired. The rest of the Arab community surrounding Jordan were nowhere near ready to accept the proposals of the controversial resolution which ratcheted up tensions in an already tumultuous region. One of the first instances of Jordan's reasonable nature was on November 17th, 1948, when King Abdullah held a secret meeting with Golda Meir, The director of the Jewish agency's political department and future Prime Minister of Israel. Purportedly, they discussed dividing Palestine between Arabs and Jews aligning with the UN borders previously set for them. Abdullah went into the

meeting with the goal of creating a greater Transjordan, along with the allocation of areas to the Arab states.^{xiii} This meeting was one of the first indications of Jordanian foreign policy and seen as a testament to Jordan's capability to remain constant in the face of chaos. According to Rogan and Shlaim the meeting was an “explicit agreement between the Hashemites and the Zionists to carve up Palestine.”^{xiv} Other political scientists such as, Ilan Pappé, question importance of this agreement by stating that it was simply a ‘tacit agreement’ regarding how they want to divide up the holy sites.^{xv} For Scholar Efraim Karsh, however, these distinctions are of no importance. In his view, there was simply no agreement.^{xvi}

Jordan’s cooperation with the UN resolution led to Kingdom's entry to the UN in 1955. During this time, the Jordanians were faced with the difficult decision of challenging the British, whose support was sealed in the formation and sustaining of Israel, was an anathema to fellow Arab countries. Jordan continued to develop moderate policies to appease the benefactor. Hence Jordan possess moderate policies in relation to its neighbors today, especially with regards to Israel and the West. A study conducted by Mancur Olsen Jr and Richard Zekhaser theorized that a nation's military or international alliance is governed by a nation's national interest. This provides evidence that nations tend to become allies with counties that share similar values. Therefore Jordan models its moderate behavior after Western nations such as the United Kingdom to maintain a stable and healthy alliance.^{xvii}

The overall impact of Jordan’s relationship with the United Kingdom is undeniably unique since relationships with a colonial power often did not end well for Middle Eastern countries. It has been assumed that since Iraq and Jordan were cut from the same colonial cloth that they would perhaps have a similar outcome as well. Yet, it is not surprising that the Hashemite kingdom in Iraq ended in a bloody coup. While Iraq’s Regime ended abruptly,

Jordan's association with its colonial power ended gradually. The Hashemites in Iraq were dealing with the rise and fall of Arab secular nationalism while Jordan was ruled by a Hashemite Kingdom invested with explicit religious mission, the ownership of the holy sites in Jerusalem. The socialist one-party state was inspired by the Egyptian revolution in 1952.^{xviii} Comparable to Egypt, the Iraqis became frustrated by western, in particular British influence. Unlike Nuri Al Said of Iraq, King Hussein portrayed himself as an Arab nationalist. Hussein earned his title of Arab nationalist in 1956 when he expelled the British officers from Jordan and reclaimed the army. His strong ties with Egypt additionally helped verify his credentials as an Arab nationalist.

An additional cycle of upheaval that is important to note when looking at regimes created from the break of an empire is Libya. When Italy lost control of Libya it created political upheaval and instability that arguably it is still trying to recover from today. Successive authoritarian governments after independence have led to a series of rebellions, which instead of leading to self-rule and democracy, instead created political vacuums that have been filled with even more repression. Libya, beginning with its occupation by Italy in 1911, has seen this pattern repeated until the present day. Empires often create resentments among the occupied peoples because they oppress political rights, usurp resources and create generational animosities. Colonial rule that ends abruptly often descends into chaos and internecine conflicts resulting in new "strongmen" who promises to restore order in the guise of nationalism and economic restructuring. The movement to gain freedom from the Italian Empire led to the rise of the dictator Muamar Qadhafi in 1969. The damage to the Libyan people from this brutal dictatorship are being felt in the streets of Tripoli today and may take a generation to recover. Libya followed a different path than.^{xix} Upon severing ties with Italy King Idris' association with the West allowed for increasing questioning of his legitimacy as a leader. He was viewed as just

another western puppet, allowing room for growing resentment in the kingdom. Again, what we see in Libya is what we saw in Iraq. The monarchies allowed themselves to be seen as just another western puppet and therefore opened themselves up to potential overthrow.

HOW 1967-1973 TESTED THE HASHEMITE MONARCHY: POTENTIAL THREATS TO REGIME SURVIVAL

The 1967 Arab- Israeli war

British Historian, Albert Hourani, stated “Defeat goes deeper into the human soul than victory.”^{xx} The Jordanian people experienced that maxim firsthand between 1967 and 1973. How the Jordanians addressed the challenges that rose from the series of military, economic and political setbacks did not lead to a greater disaster but ensured Jordan’s place as a stable and moderating force in the Middle East. Jordan was able to navigate through two major conflicts in the shadow of the Cold War, the rise of terrorism as a popular form of national liberation, a growing refugee crisis and an existential challenge to its political foundation. Historically post - colonial governments descend further into chaos and extremism when faced with these pressures. How Jordan was able to avoid this pattern bears closer examination.

The loss of the West Bank after the 1967 war hurt Jordan economically which only exacerbated the difficulties it was already facing. The West Bank comprised approximately six percent of the total area of Jordan, provided one third of Jordan’s currency earnings, a quarter of its cultivable lands, and half of its industrial establishments. Before the war, Jordan’s economy was showing signs of growth posting a 9.4% increase in the gross national product. However, Jordan suffered a 30 - 40% decrease in the GNP after the loss of the West Bank.^{xxi}

Agriculturally, the loss of the West Bank was devastating, it accounted for 65% of Jordan’s vegetables, 60% of their fruit, 80% of their olives, and 30% of their livestock. Most

considerably, Jordan lost 90% of its tourism. The loss of East Jerusalem and many pilgrimage sites in the West Bank ceded to Israel the designation as the “Holy Land” among many Europeans and Americans.^{xxii}

Additionally, Jordan’s military was crushed, and King Hussein had to rationalize how to rebuild after suffering devastating losses. The measurable losses included 179 tanks, 53 armored personnel carriers, 1,062 guns, 3,166 vehicles, and nearly 20,000 assorted arms.^{xxiii} Syria’s Military was least affected by the 1967 war which allowed them to assist Jordan soon after. Only 4 of 11 brigades were operational after the War including an 80% decrease in armor.^{xxiv}

Jordan lost close to 6,000 soldiers killed and missing with 550 held as prisoners of war in Israel.^{xxv} The size of the army went from 50,000 men to 30,000.^{xxvi} Since Israel held captive so many soldiers it illustrated the power that Israel possessed in comparison to the surrounding Arab nations. During the conflict there was a substantially high military loss and low civilian loss-even though there was serious fighting along the Israeli border. Immediately after the war, 250,000 Jordanians fled the West Bank and 175,000 Israeli Palestinians fled to Jordan as a result.

^{xxvii}

Jordan lost some Western support after 1967 and received no military aid except for a few western tanks given to them by Iraq. Egypt and Syria were backed by the USSR and Jordan was wary of aligning with the Soviets. Oil rich, Arab nations helped Jordan with a 100-million dollar grant which enabling Jordan to receive tanks and combat aircraft. Jordan’s rejection of a Soviet alliance encouraged the United States to send 300 Patton Centurion tanks, 18 F-108 interceptors and 24 Hawker Hunter fighter bombers in 1969. The aid was theoretically meant to offset Israeli military superiority but was needed for King Hussein to remain strong in the face of growing domestic instability and Soviet influence in the region. Adopting a moderate diplomatic

and military position was King Hussein's method to attract the guardianship of powerful outside powers and this is a situation commonly pertinent to small states.^{xxviii}

These devastating losses as well as the rise in refugees led to economic recession in Jordan, high unemployment, and additional internal political pressures. All these developments augmented the radical, Palestinian organizations within Jordan. The Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) moved their bases to Jordan and stepped up their guerrilla attacks resulting in retaliatory raids by the Israeli Defense Forces in the Jordan valley. While the Jordanian people were largely sympathetic to the Palestinian cause, their tactics labeled them as terrorists in Israel and the West. As the number of attacks grew, King Hussein foresaw increased reprisals from Israel, which he knew that his military and government could not withstand. By 1970, the Fedayeen had all the components to make their own state as a separate entity in Jordan. Additional division and tension in the region was exacerbated by the split between the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), while they differed in political philosophy they were united in seizing the opportunity to overthrow a perceived weakened monarchy and create an independent Palestinian state. They believed that monarchy had to be overthrown and these elements could not accept any kind of federated autonomy under Hashemite rule.^{xxix} Does King Hussein allow the Palestinians to grow in power or does he crush them? Either way his legitimacy was threatened.

The Palestinians took full advantage of the state of chaos that followed Arab defeat in 1967 and by the summer of 1970 the Palestinians had created a virtual "state within a state" in Jordan. This reality endangered the regime more than ever before. The popularity of the PLO increased significantly after the Karameh incident in 1968. Jordanian troops fought alongside the PLO against Israeli Defense Forces. The Jordanians and the Palestinians both regarded

Karameh as a victory against Israel, however the PLO took a majority of the credit thus boosting the movement's popularity and increasing their confidence in taking on King Hussein's military. The increasing power of the movement made the international community uncertain of Hussein's capability to control the radicalized factions within Jordan. Thus, bringing Hussein to yet another stalemate with regime stability and survival.

The 1970 Black September Uprising

This uncertainty in the stability of the regime triggered increased pressure from all sides as well as increased tensions internally. Intense pressures had been building since the tremendous losses in 1967 and boiled over in September of 1970. A sequence of events in September resulted in conflagration that would change Jordan's destiny. September 1st, 1970 was the second assassination attempt of King Hussein in three months. Clashes took place in Amman between the military and Palestinian fighters as a response.^{xxx} On September 6th, three planes, including Swiss Air and TWA jets, were hijacked by the PFLP. The hijackers threatened to blow up two planes with 310 passengers unless Jordan would negotiate the release of Fedayeen prisoners. Only three days later a flight from Bahrain with 115 passengers was hijacked in Jordan and taken to Zarqa. The PFLP terrorists then removed the passengers and televised the blowing up of the planes to bring attention to the "Palestinian problem."^{xxxi}

By September 16th, King Hussein's government chose military action to finally crush the Palestinian uprisings. In effect, this action created a civil war within Jordan. The conflict was only worsened by use of Iraqi and Syrian aid to the Palestinians and on September 9th Syrian tanks attacked the Irbid region of Jordan. The sustained internal fighting required Hussein to seek outside assistance. Most of this assistance to Jordan came from the United States at the time. President, Nixon ordered aircraft carriers with a Marine contingent to remain in the

Mediterranean region on standby. This move was seen as implicit support for King Hussein and emboldened his confrontation with the Palestinian guerrilla forces. More controversial, Jordan received 200 tanks from Israel, that were sent to Irbid region in response to the Syrian tanks. These acts of Western assistance triggered a consequential Syrian.^{xxxii}

Apart from Saudi Arabia, most of the oil rich gulf countries had stopped the flow of aid to Jordan after their decision to crush the Palestinians in 1970. The US and Britain increased foreign aid after the civil war and in March of 1972 Jordan began to test uncharted Middle Eastern diplomatic waters. Jordan proposed a Jordanian/ Palestinian federation on both banks of the Jordan River. This plan backfired and was viewed as a way to deny the Palestinians real statehood. None of Jordan's allies agreed with this plan, yet rumors began to spread that Jordan was becoming an Israeli puppet. Jordan met with Israel three times to discuss possible plans regarding the fate of the West Bank. During one of the meetings Israel proposed the 'Allon plan,' which Jordan denied.^{xxxiii} They continued to meet discreetly about other issues such as security and the environment.

1973 Arab-Israeli War

The Year 1973 proved to be a pivotal year in terms of the King's decision-making process. With the oil crisis and the war with Israel, Jordan's actions were determined almost exclusively by wider external pressures. The Arab world's residual humiliation, from the alliances held in the Six Day War were undeniable.

The 1973 October War was launched against Israel on the Jewish holy day of Yom Kippur. This action allowed for early victories, taking the Israeli military by surprise. The tactics and viciousness of the Arab attack in 1973 boosted overall Arab morale throughout the region. Yet, during the initial attack, Jordan remained silent. The US approved of this behavior

ad encouraged King Hussein to stay out of the war. The US additionally used this conflict to convince other Arab countries that the presence of the Soviets in Egypt was an obstacle that they needed to overcome to defeat Israel and regain the Sinai. ^{xxxiv}

Pressures from all sides of the Arab world began to close in on Jordan. Sadat even stated that “the fate of the Arab world depended on his decision” to enter the War. As pressures continued to increase, so did the request for assistance. Syria joined in and requested a dispatch of a full armored division. It was not until the second week of fighting that Jordan entered the conflict.

On October 12th Jordan authorized night travel of Saudi forces through Jordan to Syria and Jordan’s 40th brigade was placed under Syrian command. Jordan informed the Israelis of the Egyptian and Syrian offensive, as well as his plan to put the 40th brigade in the hand of the Syrians. Yet fears of revolutions and attempted upheavals still haunted Jordan and they soon came to realize that to prevent further chaos they needed military balance that favored Israel. King Hussein wrote a letter to Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir, stating his reasons for moving his brigade begged Israel “to refrain from attacking this unit if possible.” He continued “this would not affect the outcome of the fighting there and would give Jordan the political cover it needed for remaining outside of the present conflict.” His main argument in the letter was that this action would keep Israel and Jordan out of a “senseless war” against each other. The Israelis were able to avoid clashes with the Jordanian unit. ^{xxxv}

Jordan has no oil resources of its own and is dependent on imports for its energy needs. According to the Central Bank of Jordan, 80% of money flowing through Jordan comes from exports to oil exporting neighbors. The kingdom received grants because of the number of Jordanians working in the Gulf. They became hooked after the civil war because of the boost of

economic activity after the war. A Jordanian times author stated, “when they hiccup in the gulf, it is an ulcer in Amman.” The relationship was not one sided. Countries like Saudi needed Jordan almost as much as Jordan needed them. The strategic location and well-educated workforce was too important to ignore. And an American banker stated once that “if Saudi could only grant money to five countries... Jordan would be on that list. And if Saudi could only give to two ... Jordan would still be on that list.”^{xxxvi}

During the war of 1973 the Major oil producing countries cut off oil to any countries that supported Israel. This act was able to strengthen their power during the war, without overexerting their military. Even though the Arab coalition achieved initial success in 1973 by the end of the conflict it was apparent that they were not going to achieve their goals militarily, so they waged war by other means. This event awakened the West to show just how dependent it was on Middle Eastern oil, and how fragile that lifeline really was. The United States was hit hard by the oil crisis and its leadership realized that they desperately needed connections in the Middle East. Therefore, Jordan’s strategic physical and political location made it an attractive target for US ambitions. America saw Jordan as a potential ally to balance out its support of Israel and be a conduit for improved relations in the Arab world.

JORDAN’S STRATEGIES FOR SURVIVAL 1967-1973: EVALUATIONS AND OUTCOME OF FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC POLITICS

The 1967 Arab- Israeli War

The Jordanian people suffered tremendous losses because of the Arab defeat in the 1967 War. Their economy, military, political system, and sense of nationalism had been crushed by the overwhelming Israeli victory. Because of these loses the regime’s overall influence and standing was constantly being put into question. King Hussein, had to make decisions to

maintain his regime while appeasing the growing Palestinian factions within Jordan. After the 1967 war the numbers of Palestinian refugees in Jordan increased exponentially and became a threat to the regime itself.

The radical movements upset the balance of an already troubled nation. King Hussein was unfamiliar in dealing with domestic unrest and had to figure out a way to stay in power while listening to the demands of the masses. King Hussein's room for maneuver was limited by the rise on the Palestinian movement which increasingly threatened his regime. Decisions made by King Hussein were fraught with difficulty during this time because if he sided with the Palestinians, the West wouldn't see him as a legitimate partner and if he sided with the West he risked losing the support of his people. Faced with economic challenges and domestic threats King Hussein was forced to compromise and found himself relying on more foreign aid that would only be sustained by continuing cooperation with the West.

The overall defeat of the Arab countries during the 1967 War led to a general decline in Arab nationalism that still is evident. This decline of Pan Arabism or Arab nationalism lowered the standing of Egypt's General Abdel Nasser and his Arab nationalist followers. Nation state nationalism and *raison d'état* rather than Arab nationalism motivated politics of most Arab states and non-state actors. The decrease in Arab nationalism led to a surge in Palestinian nationalism which made it difficult for King Hussein to maintain legitimacy.

There was a challenge to his capacity to be the spokesperson for the issue, thus decreasing the kingdom's overall influence.^{xxxvii} However, in the Late 1960s Hussein promised that once the West Bank was restored the people would enjoy self-determination and decentralization. A revitalized Jordan could not be accomplished with the rise of radicalism movements within Jordan. However, Hussein realized that He needed to recognize the

Palestinian right to self-determination as “an entity of their own.”^{xxxviii} Greater Arab assertiveness made it difficult to control the Palestinians and the Fedayeen. When Hussein stated that, ‘We are all Fedayeen’, this gave him a lot of prestige and temporarily secured his regime.

The additional backing from the Khartoum conference also allowed for more maneuvering from King Hussein. He was able to make even more compromises allowing for his regime to be seen by all sides as a key negotiator. Both Egypt and Jordan went into the conference with an open mind. King Hussein stated that he was against the policies agreed upon at the conference and Nasser encouraged Jordan to negotiate with Israel to maintain western support.^{xxxix} This backing allowed the regime to distance themselves from other rulers in the region and gain more control of the growing Palestinian populations within Jordan.

The 1970 Black September Uprising

However, after 1967 the Jordanian authorities began to lose respect within Palestinian refugee camps^{xl}. The PLO began to operate as a de-facto police force outside of the King’s jurisdiction and increase their attacks on Israel. King Hussein told Yasar Arafat to take measures against the radicalizing groups, but this effort was proved to be unsuccessful. Arafat did not attempt to make the PLO more moderate because he knew that support would transfer to more militant groups such as the PFLP.

The Arab defeat in the Six-Day War additionally welcomed an increased Soviet presence in the region. Soviet support for the Marxist based PLO flooded to the area. The United States responded to the increased Soviet presence by substantially increasing its military assistance to Israel and Jordan. This assistance from the US gave Hussein enough political backing to feel confident enough in crushing the PLO. The Jordanian regime strategically used during the Cold War to propel the belief that the Black September crisis as another Soviet attempt to destabilize

Middle East governments placed distrust on Palestinian factions while earning support for Hussein's regime and its actions.

Hussein's actions along with the visible support of US military strengthened the resolve of the regime supporters in Jordan as well. This act demonstrated a growing connection between the former colonial powers and Jordan which allowed for Jordan to be a moderating force in the region and as a buffer against Soviet incursions among many Western capitals. His strategic decisions to confront the Palestinian threat within Jordan and further align himself with western interests, allowed for the survival of the regime. Otherwise, Jordan could have dissolved in a bloody coup like most of her post-colonial neighbors.

Jordan was forced to defend themselves and their foreign policy reflected that in this time thus explaining why the behavior in the 1970's was slightly uncharacteristic. This event is key in determining Jordan's unique development in the history of Middle Eastern politics.

Many leaders criticized Hussein for not crushing the Palestinian factions immediately and letting the tensions grow for too long. However, his hesitation to do so was strategic in nature. He knew that if he waited long enough his neighbors would soon grow to dislike the radical groups as well. Seeing them as nothing but a militant group that threatened not only Jordan's stability but the stability of other surrounding nations. Hussein was worried that if he did not receive a green light from any of his Arab neighbors it would be the end of the Hashemite monarchy in Jordan.

As a result, he looked to Nasser for advice because of Nasser's status in the Arab world. If Nasser agreed with King Hussein's plan of action against the PLO factions, then he would suffer less of a blow domestically as well as from his Arab counterparts. Nasser had become

increasingly frustrated with the Palestinians which King Hussein realized could give him the political cover to crush the threat.

King Hussein saw this when Nasser accepted the US proposed Second Roger's Plan which proposed a cease fire and envisioned eventual peace talks between Israel, Jordan and Egypt.^{xli} Nasser was in no mood to support the Palestinians in their fight against the Jordanian monarchy. Therefore, his attitude reassured King Hussein and his desire to crush the Palestinian factions within Jordan.

1973 Arab-Israeli War

Strategically, Jordan's role in the 1973 war signifies their continual balancing of regional and western influence. King Hussein's behaviors fell within the realm of external limitations on decision making placed upon them by their regional allies. Pan Arabism was on a quick decline since 1967 and it no longer seemed like the way of the future and king Hussein was able to use this momentum to justify his lack of participation in the war. Both the internal population and the regional allies would no longer view the throne as legitimate if they decided to ignore the conflict and this frightened the regime. Their overall quiet participation was a balancing act and they had to walk a tight-rope between their Middle Eastern neighbors and the West. The pressures of not falling to one side were high. If they fell to the regional side the aid from the west may have stopped, and If they fell to the West, they would become yet another leader who became subject to western influence, thus being viewed as nothing more than a puppet.

Hussein additionally acted as an informant to showcase his reasonable nature. Jordan's participation was merely symbolic for the sake of preserving some sense of Arab unity. It is noted that this was just a tacit understanding and they would try to stay out of the conflict as

much as possible. The participation of Jordan in the 1973 war was an overall an act of desperation fueled by the existing pressures of their neighbors.

WHAT LESSONS CAN BE LEARNED FROM JORDAN'S EXPERIENCE?

It is not easy to be a pro-Western country, especially in the Middle East. The structure of Western societies and the access to Free press, free elections, open institutions, transparency, are difficult to maintain because domestic political pressure in the Western countries demand attention to shared values, human rights, transparent government among their allies. Openly aligning oneself with the West oftentimes comes with increased scrutiny and pressures to conform to Western and democratic ideals. Rulers who faced strong, revolutionary movements at home, like King Hussein, must learn to walk that tightrope between regime preservation and alliance with the demands of Western democracies.

Jordan's choices at this time were highly influenced by the end of Pan-Arabism after the 1967 War, the real threat and rise of a Marxist Palestinian overthrow of the Hashemite dynasty, the economic realities that Jordan does not sit on vast natural resources and could not continue to engage in an increasing arms race with Israel. All these influences forced Jordan to align with the West while at the same time making the Hashemite Kingdom a good buffer against the growing Soviet influence in the region.

Consequently, Jordan became a reliable, Arab partner to the West while benefiting from increased diplomatic engagement, economic cooperation and military assistance to bolster its standing among their neighbors. Additionally, Jordan's alliance allowed for a Jordan to become a buffer between Israel and the Arab world. Israel's policies with regard to its neighbors has been somewhat restrained and not shown any signs of negotiation, thus allowing Jordan to assume a leadership position in the Arab world with regards to the ongoing conflict.

Iran's growing ambitions in the Middle East echo many of the same challenges the region faced during the Cold War. Iran was not created and then colonized in modern times out of the ruins of the Ottoman Empire, as Jordan was. However, the Proxy wars, alignment systems, nuclear threats and revolutionary movements once again dominate the headlines of the Middle East, as we saw in 19767-1973. While the dynamics are different, the stakes are just as high for the region and the world. The similar struggles with legitimacy and alignment in the past potentially mirror what is to come. Thus, the pattern continues. Making Jordan, once again, one of the lone survivors within an everchanging Middle East.

Notes

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