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THE PROMISE OF MODERATION

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Introduction

ELEVEN-NINE WOULD GO DOWN IN HISTORY as Jordan's horrific but eye-opening 9/11. On that day, November 9, 2005, three Iraqi terrorists belonging to Abu Musab Zarqawi's Al-Qaeda in Iraq entered Jordan and carried out suicide bombing attacks against three Jordanian hotels in the capital, Amman, killing sixty people and injuring scores more. A fourth terrorist, an Iraqi woman and wife of one of the suicide bombers, failed to detonate and was captured a few days later.

The night the bombers struck, I was attending a working dinner at the home of a member of Jordan's parliament. I had been invited there to talk to about thirty Jordanian activists on the outcome of the National Agenda, a ten-year vision of political, economic, and social reform in the country. I was making the case that political reform was no longer a luxury. For Jordan, it was key to advancing our wider ambitions for social and economic development and our inclusion in the global economy. Our future national security also required a more competitive environment for ideas, so that the radical discourse on the rise in the region could be offset by voices of moderation in the public sphere.

I was explaining the details of the agenda's recommendations to the government when the host interrupted to say that Al-Jazeerah television had just reported that suicide bombers had hit three hotels in Amman, killing an unknown number of people.

By November 2005, Jordan—along with several other Arab states—had already spent several years on the hit list of some of the world's most notorious terrorists. Their enmity toward Jordan stems from their radical ideology, which runs counter to the moderate discourse that Jordan has followed since its creation. The nature of Jordan's leadership and the country's geographical position have made the country an obvious target for extremists. The Hashemites of Jordan, descendants of the Prophet Muhammad who have ruled the country since King Abdullah I established modern Jordan after arriving from the Hijaz (today western Saudi Arabia) in 1921, have led the country with pragmatism and moderation and have eschewed religious extremism. The leadership's disposition has been reflected in Jordan's constitution. Jordan is today one of the most open and tolerant societies in the Middle East. The state has privileged cooperation over conflict as an efficient problem-solving mechanism, a disposition that has led it to pursue friendly relations with the Western world and regional peace and culminated in a peace treaty with Israel in 1994. Its policies have placed it at the heart of the Arab Center. Jordan's geopolitical position as a regional buffer state has also made it an attractive target for extremists, for, as it is often said, as goes the stability of Jordan, so goes the stability of the region. The kingdom has used its stability to help neighbors realize their own security. Jordan has, for example, made a major contribution to the training of Iraqi police and military personnel and has helped train Palestinian police and civil service personnel.

It is no surprise therefore, that Abu Musab Zarqawi, the head of Al-Qaeda in Iraq, who quickly claimed responsibility for the devastating Amman attacks, had Jordan in his sights. Zarqawi had thrived with Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, and, although Jordanian, he harbored a special hatred for the Hashemites and the country. He, along with the rest of the Al-Qaeda leadership, regularly threatened Jordan, albeit from outside the region.

The fall of Baghdad in 2003 brought the group much closer geographically to its targets, since the chaos of Iraq provided an ideal arena for terrorist activity. From its haunts in Iraq, not only did Al-Qaeda in Iraq visit death and bloodshed on Iraqis, but the mother organization also exported terror to almost every country in the Middle East: Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, and Turkey. Jordan for a time had been spared, though not for a lack of trying on Al-Qaeda's part. Jordan's superior and highly professional security services, aided by an enlightened population, had in fact aborted many planned attacks.

Jordanians were acutely aware of these circumstances and events. For many Jordanians, a terrorist attack on the country had become a question of "when" rather than "if." Finally, in September 2005, Al-Qaeda managed a shot across the bow. From within a warehouse in the port city of Aqaba, the attackers fired three rockets at the *USS Ashland,* docked at port; all three missed the naval vessel, but one hit the dock, killing one Jordanian soldier and injuring another. Few in Jordan did not understand the significance of that event: the Iraq war had placed Al-Qaeda at Jordan's doorstep, and with the Aqaba attack, the group had announced its arrival.

In spite of the tremendous confidence Jordanians tend to have in the country's security services, from that day forward, few doubted that there would be more terrorism—more ambitious in terms of target, more spectacular in terms of execution, and certainly deadlier—in our country. But when the terrible day arrived, Jordanians were no less taken aback by the brutality unleashed on their country on 11/9 than Americans were on 9/11. That is the sinister "magic" of terror; it never fails to terrorize. Everyone in the room was shocked. People expected an attack, but not three simultaneous ones. As details were slowly being revealed on television, particularly regarding the suicide bombings at a wedding party, people in the room were sick to their stomach. Once the news started to sink in, everyone reached for their phones, frantically trying to call their loved ones. By now, the overloaded network was already down.

I had to leave immediately: as the official government spokesman and deputy prime minister, I would be responsible for keeping Jordanians informed about this horrific event and the investigation into it. I felt outraged, personally violated by a group who took it upon themselves to decide life and death for others. Amman, despite being a city of nearly two million people, is a relatively small place; any of my family or friends could have been at one of those hotels. I panicked about my wife and our children. As I sped, I frantically tried to reach my wife over my mobile phone, but the network was still down. I decided to take a short detour home before I headed to my office at the Prime Ministry.

As I drove home, flashbacks of September 11 kept coming to my head. I was then Jordan's ambassador to the United States and had left Dulles Airport at 8:40 a.m. on that fateful Tuesday, around the same time the terrorists did, for Houston, where I was to meet King Abdullah II, who was beginning an official visit to the United States. As we were about to land in Jacksonville, Mississippi, for a layover, the pilot announced that one of the World Trade Center towers in New York had been hit, as had the Pentagon, and that all US airspace had been closed. I felt the same outrage then that I felt now in Amman, with the same disbelief that any human being could do this to other human beings. I had also then tried to reach my wife to make sure she was okay, for a while without luck, since the mobile network was down.

After five long minutes, I reached home. Fortunately, both my wife and my two kids were there, safe. She was in shock, looking for answers to this madness, just as everyone was.

When I arrived at the Prime Ministry, the cabinet was preparing for an emergency meeting. The mood was somber. The cabinet discussed measures that needed to be taken both to calm citizens and to guard against future attacks. Suddenly, in the middle of the meeting, I felt that I needed to be on the scene. Jordanians expected and needed the government to talk to them directly. I promptly excused myself and went to the hotel where the largest blast had taken place, killing thirty-three people who had been attending a wedding there. The wedding hall, where one of the suicide bombers had blown himself up, was soaked in blood. I held an impromptu press conference there, facing the many reporters and cameras present, to give Jordanians the first official reaction to what had transpired.

From there, the prime minister, the minister of health, and I began visiting the wounded in the hospitals. At each, we were briefed on the emergency measures being taken. At one hospital, I found out that a close friend, Musab Khurma, a young and vibrant entrepreneur, was among those who had been killed. He was meeting his fiancé at one of the hotels when a suicide bomber detonated himself. His family was at the hospital, in total shock, wondering why his life had been cut short like this, without any reason. Another Arab-American, Mustafa Akkad, a Hollywood movie producer and his daughter, Reema, were fighting for their lives; both died a few hours later. Ironically, in the mid-1970s

Akkad had produced a Hollywood movie about Islam, *The Message,* starring Anthony Quinn and Irene Pappas, to portray Islam's true and tolerant message to the West. Now he had been killed by those claiming to speak and act in the name of Islam. At every hospital we visited, the same scene played out: family members wailing, overcome with grief at the loss of a loved one; others in tears, waiting to see if their loved ones would survive.

I could not help but feel proud, however, that all the medical teams we talked to were calm and efficient. Working under impossible conditions, they handled the situation with amazing professionalism. I saw many doctors, some of them friends, who just reported to the many hospitals we visited to offer their services. Jordan was united that night in a way I had not seen before.

As I drove home at 3:00 a.m., exhausted and still suffering from the shock of the past few hours, many questions came to my mind: Where was the Middle East headed? Why was it that the loudest voice in Islam today is that of Al-Qaeda rather than that of mainstream Islam, which advocates tolerance? Why was it that efforts to achieve progress on the central issues facing the Middle East—peace, reform, and the fight against terrorism—were all stalling? Was this predicament inevitable? Could the peace process have taken a different, more successful route? Has the slow pace of political reform in the region any connection with either worldwide terrorism or the peace process? Are the issues of terrorism and the peace process themselves linked in some manner? And why has the Arab region lagged behind in political reform when nearly all the other areas of the world have made significant progress toward democracy and good governance? Could the region, or indeed the world, afford a continuation of the status quo on all these issues?

Many of the problems of the Middle East are no longer localized. They are spilling over to the rest of the world. Terrorism, the emergence of Al-Qaeda and its transformation from a marginal movement into a key player in international affairs, the slow pace of political reform in the Arab world as well as the lack of progress on the Middle East peace process have undoubtedly affected the world at large.

Had there been voices in the Arab world that advocated alternative policies to those that had been practiced? Where did they succeed, and more importantly, why did they fail? Does the West really understand the Arab world? Or vice versa? How did this lack of understanding contribute to many of the policy failures in all these areas? What lessons can we draw from all this, if we are to chart a different course for the future?

Until late 2003, I was known in Jordan mainly as a "peace process" man. It started when I was appointed as the spokesman of the Jordanian delegation to the Middle East peace talks in Madrid in October 1991. After the talks concluded successfully in a peace treaty between Jordan and Israel in October 1994, King Hussein appointed me as the first Jordanian ambassador to Israel, where I served until early 1996. Later, as Jordan's ambassador to the United States from 1997 until early 2002, I followed the peace process closely as one of my principal activities in Washington.

In early 2002, I was recalled from Washington to become Jordan's foreign minister. In that year Arab states made a major effort to move forward a peace process that had been going in reverse at high speed for more than a year. I played a central role both in developing the Arab Peace Initiative—an Arab plan that offered Israel a collective peace treaty and security guarantees by all Arab states in return for an Israeli withdrawal from all occupied Arab territories and the establishment of a Palestinian state—and then in developing what came to be known as the Road Map—a plan of action to achieve the objective of a Palestinian state in three years.

For three years, 2002–2004, I worked closely with Arab colleagues and the international community to push forward both initiatives, until the process was stalled again in 2004 by the continuation of violence from both Palestinian and Israeli sides and by Israel's construction of a separation wall that severely damaged the prospects of a two-state solution and continues to stymie negotiations today.

Because of my deep involvement in the peace process, I was somewhat surprised when King Hussein's successor, King Abdullah II, asked me in October 2004 to leave the foreign ministry and become deputy prime minister in charge of reform. Although I was known as a liberal politician and a believer in political reform both in Jordan and in the Arab world, my previous experience on the issue had been limited to my role in convincing Arab foreign ministers to create a homegrown blueprint for political and economic reform in the Arab world, lest the United States try to impose its version of reform outlined in the "Greater

Middle East Initiative." The initiative was an American scheme that was hatched not long after the tragedy of September 11. It was hastily assembled with little sensitivity to the wishes of the region, and certainly without much consultation with it. Although I shared with King Abdullah II my reluctance to leave what was by now my area of expertise and to wade into domestic politics that promised to be extremely problematic, King Abdullah II told me he thought I was best suited to head the effort and wanted me to do it.

At this new post, I headed an inclusive national committee, formed and instructed by the king to devise a holistic vision for political, economic, and social reform for the next ten years. This vision was to be arrived at through a consensus among Jordan's diverse political, economic, and social forces, including political parties, civil society, media, and the private sector, as well as the legislature, the government, and the judiciary. Our initiative was to differ from previous reform initiatives in that it would incorporate not only general recommendations on the types of reform needed but also specific initiatives in the political, economic, and social spheres, an agreed-on timetable for implementation, and benchmarks for performance to ensure that implementation could be measured against set targets.

The national committee met under my chairmanship throughout 2005. Arriving at a consensus on issues like political reform or women's empowerment was not easy. But the committee, after much deliberation, produced the National Agenda—the document that embodied this vision. The effort came immediately under attack from several quarters, particularly the status-quo political elite, forces in the country that saw in change a threat to the privileges they enjoyed. Within weeks those associated with the agenda were castigated as "neoliberals" doing America's bidding in the region.

Despite this heavy attack, much of it directed against my person (in part because of my reputation as a liberal politician who believed that the status quo needed to evolve), the committee succeeded, after months of serious, heated debates, in producing a forward-looking, measurable vision that promised, for the first time in the Arab world, a plan that moved beyond rhetoric to specific action with performance indicators. The drafting of the National Agenda was concluded in October 2005, and a meeting was planned to present the effort to King Abdullah II and launch a process of institutional and long-term change in Jordan. I was explaining the outcome of our months of hard work to the activists gathered that night when the terrible news hit us.

This book is about the story of the alternative, proactive moderate camp in the Middle East. It attempts to explain, through firsthand knowledge, the successes, failures, and frustrations of efforts to push through policies of moderation in the Arab World on issues of peace, reform and the fight against terrorism.

There have been many attempts to trace the roots of these problems and thus explain them; yet, few of these analyses are generated by those within the region. There may be many reasons—or, in some cases, excuses—for why this has been so. One key reason is that some Arab politicians are simply intimidated by the repressive atmosphere that prevails in some areas, and their stories have been simply denied the telling under the pretext of guarding state secrets. Whatever the reason, they rarely record their experiences, and of those who do, few are inclined to do so in English, leaving it for others to document the region's history from the periphery.

The book not only addresses developments on these issues through the eyes of a practitioner but also discusses the linkages among them and suggests courses of action. It details efforts by Jordan and other Arab states to push the peace process forward and counter claims in the West that the Arabs never wanted peace with Israel. It also forecasts the possible consequences of failing to realize a two-state solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Last, I hope it will help Western readers better understand Arab politics, address public attitudes in the region toward terrorism, and contribute to addressing extremist ideologies in the region.

In the Arab region, many—in fact most—politicians live by the credo "kiss, but don't tell." This book is an attempt at an honest account of events I witnessed or took part in. It is therefore part historical record and part autobiography. It provides many inside and as-yet unexplored stories about several important developments in the Middle East, including my time as Jordan's first ambassador to Israel; the succession in Jordan, which I witnessed from a unique perspective as Jordan's ambassador to Washington during King Hussein's last six months in the United States; and the development of both the Arab Initiative and the

Middle East Road Map. Beyond that, it is intended to be a statement on the current affairs of the Arab world. Partly through revealing some of the dynamics of Arab politics, I attempt to address how the Arab world is dealing with the triangular set of issues it faces today: peace, reform, and the fight against terrorism. I also discuss the process of opening up the political systems in the Arab world and the struggle to push for policies of inclusion as an alternative to the current stalemate that has trapped Arab citizens between the status quo, dominated by the ruling elites who have often failed to deliver development, freedom, and good governance to their people, and the more radical forms of political Islam, which many believe threaten to curtail political, personal, and social freedoms.

Given such a broad undertaking, this book is bound to be opposed by some who might disagree with many of its findings. But few will be able to disagree with its account of events. In any event, I hope it will be a positive contribution to the growing debate about the state of affairs in the region and how to overcome the seemingly insurmountable obstacles blocking the development of a stable and prosperous Middle East.

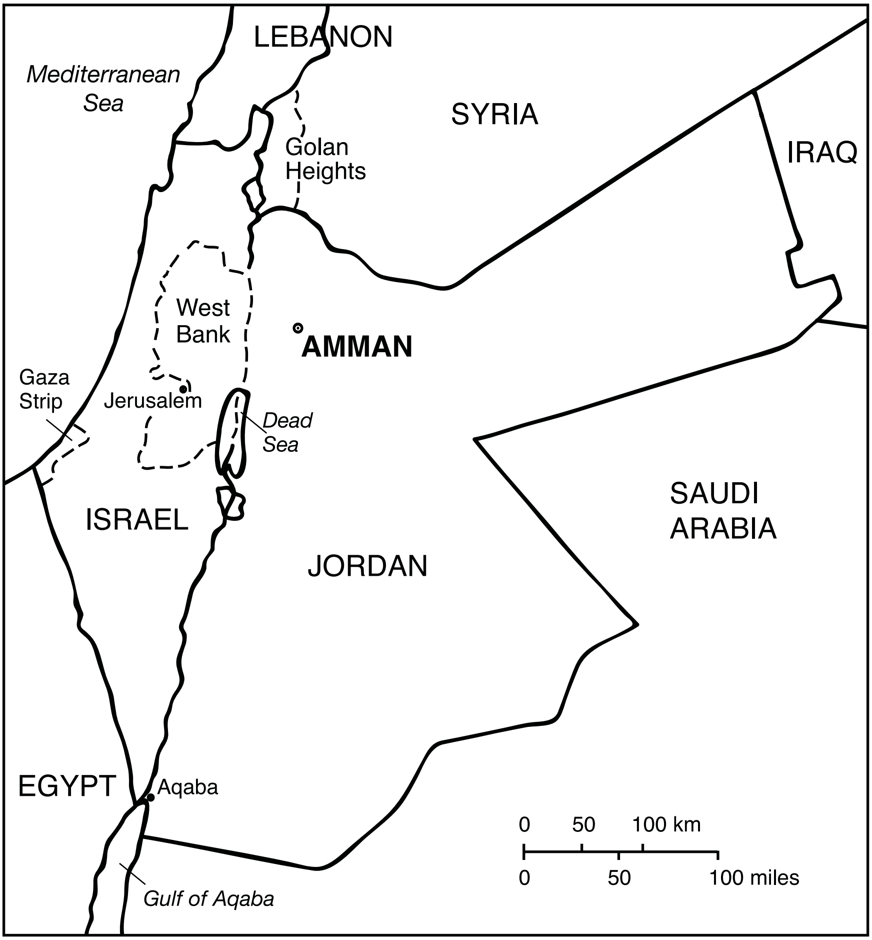
CHAPTER ONE

Jordan's Changing Role and the Evolution of the Two-State Solution Concept

During the negotiations that led to the signing of a free trade agreement between Jordan and the United States in 2000—America's first such accord with an Arab nation and only its fourth in the world—an Arab head of state was meeting with President Bill Clinton at the White House. His nation, too, had sought this coveted agreement with the United States but had not completed the changes in its trading practices to begin discussions. I was the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan's ambassador to Washington, and I had been involved in a two-year effort to achieve this agreement. Jordan had met the requirements in record time, and our delegation had lobbied Congress, the administration, labor and environmental groups, and others before the Clinton administration agreed to negotiate and sign the accord, the first since the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement with Mexico and Canada in 1993.

Administration officials who attended the meeting relate the story of the Arab head of state's repeated appeals to President Clinton for a similar deal. "Why are you giving it to Jordan, a small country in our region, as opposed to my country, which is bigger and more important?" he argued. When Clinton's attempts to explain that there were requirements met by Jordan but not by his country, the head of state protested, "If you are not willing to give it to my country, then you should not give it to Jordan." "Mr. President," Clinton said. "I honestly fail to see the logic."

THE U.S.-JORDAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT is symbolic of the success that Jordan has made in reforming its economy and of the international prestige the country enjoys—a reputation that is disproportionate to its size and relative regional and international power. How is it that one of


LEBANON
Mediterranean Sea
SYRIA
Golan Heights
IRAQ
West Bank
AMMAN
Gaza Strip
Jerusalem
Dead Sea
SAUDI ARABIA
ISRAEL
JORDAN
EGYPT
Aqaba
Gulf of Aqaba
0 50 100 km
0 50 100 miles

Jordan

the smallest countries in the Middle East—a nation of fewer than six million people that has no oil and limited natural resources—has come to enjoy such international stature? Jordan has managed to assert itself not only as a principal player in Arab-Israeli conflict resolution but as an originator of ideas and a bridge between the West and the Arab world—sometimes going against the grain of the Arab consensus (usually led by the country's larger and more powerful neighbors) but never far enough to violate that consensus.

Jordan, through enlightened leadership, has always pushed the envelope, adopting policies that advance Arab positions without abandoning

Arab principles and that accommodate international positions without compromising national interests. Since its founding in 1921, the kingdom has enjoyed a history of tolerance, and the Jordanian constitution explicitly forbids discrimination based on religion, ethnic origin, or language. Jordan's signing of a peace treaty with Israel in 1994 shifted its international standing in the West from being seen as a buffer state between Israel and the Gulf states and a bridge between East and West to offering a model of tolerance in the region that had long been lacking. The Jordan-Israel peace treaty presented a model of peace aimed at developing a new concept of cooperation and interdependence with all the states of the region, including Israel, as the only model that would ensure a sustainable development track for the region. Jordan was thus committed not only to the full implementation of the peace treaty but also to a proactive approach in seeking future areas of cooperation once the territorial conflict between Israel and Arabs was addressed.

The events of September 11 brought yet another qualitative shift in the international perception of Jordan. The Jordanian leadership, alarmed by the rise of Al-Qaeda and its distorted interpretation and practice of Islam, advocated a model of a tolerant Islam and sought to rally the silent moderate majority in the Muslim world into a clear stand against radical teachings and the murders that such teachings justify or even praise. The form of Islam advocated by Al-Qaeda is outside the teachings of any mainstream Muslim sect, for it sanctions the murder not only of non-Muslims but also of any Muslim who does not subscribe to its extreme ideology.

The brief history of Jordan that follows explains the evolution of conditions that have shaped Jordanian policy and its role in the Middle East today. It outlines the development of the Arab political center for which a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has emerged as the foundation of its policy for lasting regional peace. The Arab center is a moderate force struggling to recapture the lead in a race against radical ideologies. That peace between Arabs and Israelis has eluded the region is due neither to the absence of Arab moderation nor to a lack of trying on behalf of moderate forces. But perhaps we need to shed light on Middle Eastern history to understand how such a center evolved.

A combination of factors—the disposition of its leadership, its geopolitical position, and its demographic composition—has kept Jordan at the heart of the peace process. Jordan's unique situation has been a source of opportunity as well as challenge, giving it a role in regional and international affairs that it might not otherwise have enjoyed. Jordan's activism has at times won the country a prime seat in the international community and at others brought it to the verge of war. Its moderation vis-à-vis the Arab-Israeli conflict and the burden resulting from the influx of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians as a result of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War brought it significant political and economic assistance from the West, particularly the United States, and the Arab world. This political and economic support has been crucial for Jordan's security, helping it to withstand the many conflicting pressures it has faced both from Israel and from other Arab regimes.

A BUFFER STATE

The contemporary Middle East was born of the 1916 Sykes-Picot Agreement, a convention secretly negotiated by Britain and France that defined their international spheres of influence in the post–World War I era. The agreement left Britain in control of the territories that today comprise Jordan, Iraq, and a small area around Haifa in what is now Israel. France secured control over what today are southeastern Turkey, northern Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon. The colonial powers were left free to decide on state boundaries within these areas. The area that came to be called Palestine was to be governed under an international administration pending consultations with Russia and other powers but was administered by the British in the interim.

Sykes-Picot contravened European promises to support Arab independence in exchange for Arab cooperation in felling the Ottoman Empire in World War I. Colonialism in the Middle East did not curtail Arabs' desire for independence, but the long history of colonial dependency meant that newly independent states were fragile, inducing a moment of intense regional competitiveness to ensure the nascent states' survival in the postcolonial era. These struggles for survival were intensified by the Balfour Declaration of 1917, which promised European Jews a national homeland in Palestine, introducing to the region a new competitor for power and influence.

Throughout the mandate period, the ascendance of Zionism among European Jews encouraged Jewish immigration to Palestine to establish a Jewish homeland there. Immigration to Palestine was also undoubtedly encouraged by the rise of Nazism and persecution of Jews throughout much of Europe. The Jewish longing for a homeland in Palestine was directly at odds with Arab aspirations for Arab independence in the same territory, which Arabs—of every religion—felt was theirs, if not by right as the inhabitants of the land, then at least by the promises made to them by the colonial powers. Jewish immigration proceeded apace with the help of the British, provoking the mobilization of a Palestinian resistance movement, which culminated in the 1936–1939 Arab revolt. The rebellion found ready support from the population of Transjordan, which supplied volunteers and arms to the Palestinian nationalist movement. It must be mentioned here that racial anti-Semitism was a European phenomenon that had no roots in Middle Eastern culture at the time. The conflict was strictly one over land, not religion or ethnic background.

That support was a natural outcome of a unique relation that had been established over centuries among the peoples of the territories straddling the Jordan River. Under Ottoman rule these were a complex articulation of economic, social, and cultural relations, along with political and administrative rules, that prevented the inhabitants from considering themselves as part of two fully separate entities. When Jordan became a state in 1921, the Jordan River became the western border of what was then known as Transjordan, but the mere drawing of a border did not sever the peoples of the two territories.[1] On the contrary, after the emergence of two entities, relations between Transjordan and Palestine remained intimate socially, economically, and even politically. Administered by the same colonial power, the two mandate administrations cooperated extensively, with many Palestinian mandate government officials taking up official posts in Transjordan.

The outcome of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, which started after Israel declared statehood in May 1948 and several Arab armies came to the aid of the Palestinian population, transformed both Jordan's strategic milieu and its internal structure. After hostilities ceased, Jordan remained in a state of war with the newly declared state of Israel with all of the grave consequences of that status and in 1950 entered into a union with the West Bank. Jordan's role in the West Bank has been a matter of controversy for historians. One theory posits that King Abdullah I's decision was taken to prevent Israel's further encroachment on what remained of Palestine and its expansion beyond into Jordan itself. Some believe that

King Abdullah I, motivated by his own Arabist thinking, annexed the West Bank as part of broader territorial ambitions. Others contend that Jordan's inherent weaknesses in terms of material and human resources made territorial expansion imperative for its survival as a state. Still others believe it was a combination of all these factors.

The combination of the kingdom's state of war with Israel and its unity with the West Bank transformed Jordan's demographic composition. The country's population rose from an estimated 375,000 before the 1948 War to more than 1,270,000 after it, including almost half a million refugees.[2]

Refugees who had entered Jordan proper as well as those living in the West Bank became Jordanian citizens through a law passed in 1954. This new reality and Jordan's geographic proximity with Israel posed a fundamental challenge. Jordan now found that it had simultaneously to placate domestic public opinion—particularly, although not exclusively, among the aggrieved Palestinian population—which was very anti-Israeli, and to keep Israel at bay, particularly since neither Arabs nor Israelis were ready to accept the new borders and since Israel had its eye on the historic walled city of Jerusalem.

Even with the enlargement of its territory, Jordan remained a small country surrounded by three larger, stronger, and richer Arab states that often competed for regional hegemony and preeminence: Syria to the north, Iraq to the east, and Saudi Arabia to the east and south. And to its west was an enemy state, Israel. Jordan's geographical position made it a buffer among these states while also exposing it to conflicting pressures from all directions. Jordan was subject to pressure from revolutionaries who sought to overturn the status quo and reclaim lost Arab territory through military means and from conservatives who sought to preserve it, believing that Arab states could not match Israeli military capability and stood to compromise Arab interests and territory further if they tried to do so. Although one famous Egyptian commentator went so far as to call for wiping Israel (as a state, not as Israelis) off the map, the Palestinians at the time advocated establishing one democratic state in Palestine, with equal rights for Muslims, Christians, and Jews. Israel sought an exclusive Jewish state and considered this an unacceptable solution that would be the demographic equivalent of total military defeat.

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the revolutionary trend was ascendant, embodied in various Arab nationalist ideologies, especially Nasserism, an inspiration of Egyptian president Gamal Abdul Nasser. Nasserism was a revolutionary, Arab nationalist ideology that adopted some aspects of secular socialism and was vehemently opposed to colonialism. It was robustly opposed to Zionism and viewed Israel as a new Western colonizer that had come to replace the old. These ideas appealed to large segments of Jordan's population. They were most frequently promoted by Jordan's revolutionary and far more powerful neighbors, Egypt and Syria, each of which looked to boost its regional power and influence at Jordan's expense. The Jordanian state was in many ways hostage to these radical forms of Arab nationalism. In 1955, for example, domestic and regional pressure, particularly from the forces of Nasserism and pan-Arabism, prevented Jordan from joining the Baghdad Pact, even though the state agreed with its general principles. The pact, an initiative of Britain, Turkey, and Iraq (which the Hashemites also then ruled), was designed to confront Soviet expansion southward and would have bolstered Jordan's resources against the more immediate threats posed by Egypt and Syria.

Western fears of Soviet expansion were heightened after the Suez War in 1956 and Britain's withdrawal from Egypt. This episode signaled the end of colonial power in the region and opened the playing field to competition between the United States and the Soviet Union. American fears that the Soviets would rush to fill the vacuum were shared by Jordan: the atheism inherent in communism was incompatible with the ideals of the Jordanian leadership. In 1957, the United States announced the Eisenhower Doctrine, and President Dwight D. Eisenhower appealed to Congress to authorize increased economic and military aid and even direct U.S. protection of any Middle Eastern nation willing to acknowledge the threat posed by communism. The Jordanian state's ideological opposition to communism, together with a leadership that was considered open and pro-Western, caused it to be viewed as a buffer state in the region that could stand up to communist infiltration, as well as keep the Arab-Israeli conflict from widening. Jordan officially declined American offers of aid extended in accordance with the Eisenhower Doctrine, but the kingdom's general policies were sufficiently pro-Western to convince the Eisenhower administration that Jordan was worthy of American investment.

A BRIDGE BETWEEN THE ARABS AND THE WEST

International efforts to solve the Arab-Israeli conflict peacefully had not yielded positive results by the mid-1960s. The refugee problem and the issue of borders remained sticking points that precluded real negotiations, let alone a successful conclusion to the conflict. Arab states would not recognize the existence of Israel without negotiating first over borders, while Israel would not negotiate without first being accepted as a state. Nor would Israel acknowledge its responsibility for the refugee problem, and it repeatedly refused to abide by United Nations General Assembly Resolution 194, which required the repatriation of those refugees who wished to go back to Israel. To the Israelis, the return of refugees would constitute the liquidation of the state of Israel, at least in demographic terms, and would constitute a blow to the raison d'être of Zionism: a Jewish state.

Such was Jordan's state of affairs when the 1967 Arab-Israeli War erupted. The war was catastrophic for Jordan, which entered the conflict because of domestic and Arab pressure even as King Hussein realized that the Arabs could not win. Israel captured the West Bank from Jordan and, with it, East Jerusalem. Many Palestinians who lived in the West Bank now streamed into the East Bank. The massive influx of people severely strained Jordan's meager resources and again profoundly altered the demographic composition of the East Bank. The war was also disastrous for other Arab states: Israel seized the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt and the Golan Heights from Syria and destroyed Arab military capacities.

Nonetheless, the 1967 War also transformed Arab-Israeli relations by putting Israel in control of Arab lands that could, in theory, be traded for peace in the future. Now President Nasser's Egypt, hitherto hostile to Jordan, came to appreciate the role that Jordan could play in returning Arab territories through diplomatic means, using the good offices that King Hussein held with the West. Nasser explicitly asked the king to do so, and thus Jordan played a key role in formulating and passing UN Security Council Resolution 242 of November 1967, which called on Israel to withdraw from the territories it had occupied in the war as a quid pro quo for peace. Ever since, land for peace has been the cornerstone of Jordan's regional peace policy.

To Jordan, the combination of UN Resolution 242 and Egypt's tacit approval of it presented an opportunity to recover the West Bank and

Jerusalem. Two months before the passage of Resolution 242, the Arab Summit in Khartoum had adopted what became known as the "three no's": no to peace, no to negotiations, and no to recognition of Israel. This posed a particular dilemma to King Hussein, who felt a heavy personal responsibility over the loss of the West Bank and Jerusalem. Thus, despite the resolutions of the Khartoum Summit, Jordan reached an understanding with Egypt to use Resolution 242 to recover the occupied territories and reach a comprehensive peace in the Middle East as the optimal guarantee of Jordan's survival and prosperity. The old notion of wiping Israel off the map was deemed unrealistic not only by Jordan but also now by Egypt. But in any event, Israel was not yet ready to negotiate: in the West Bank it vigorously pursued a repressive security policy to stymie resistance and employed economic incentives to encourage pacification of the population.

Jordan's role began to evolve as a bridge between the West and the Arab world. Jordan had to walk a tight rope in this regional political minefield. As a result, Jordan's foreign policy on the Arab-Israeli conflict became one that adopted a strategy for peace that was based on Resolutions 242 and, later, 338, in order to secure an Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories, including East Jerusalem, in exchange for a permanent, just, and comprehensive peace. At that time, the land for peace formula had not evolved into a resolution of the conflict based on a two-state solution involving an independent Palestinian state. Indeed, Resolution 242 does not mention a Palestinian state, and no consensus on the establishment of a Palestinian state existed among Arab states, in Israel, or in the international community.

Other international and regional factors undermined progress toward a peace settlement. The superpowers' global rivalry had engulfed the Middle East, which became an arena of competition and proxy war, particularly when U.S. administrations saw the Middle East through the prism of the Cold War.[3] The ascendance of the "Israel first" school of thought in American foreign policy vis-à-vis the region had also contributed to immobility in the peace process that began after the October War in 1973.

In the meantime, Palestinians in Gaza, the West Bank, and the diaspora, including Jordan, had not been standing still. An organized Palestinian nationalist movement had been cohering since the mid-1960s.

The Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) had been a marginal player on the regional scene until the 1967 War, but its credibility as a representative of Palestinian interests grew in tandem with the collective failure of the Arab states, Israel, and the international community to restore Palestinians' internationally recognized rights and alleviate their suffering. The PLO's call for armed resistance against Israel and its claim to represent Palestinians everywhere resonated among the refugees and dispossessed from the Arab-Israeli wars, as well as among Arabs everywhere who sympathized with the Palestinians' predicament. After 1967, the Jordanian government allowed the PLO to establish an official presence in Jordan. But several Palestinian factions started operating like a state within a state, openly carrying arms and often clashing with the Jordanian army. They also carried out attacks on Israel from Jordanian territory, inviting punitive Israeli retaliatory attacks. Matters came to a head when a radical faction of the PLO hijacked three Western planes and, after releasing the hostages, blew up the planes in a desert field in Jordan. The PLO and the Jordanian army began a military confrontation that lasted for two weeks in September 1970. Even though the Arab League brokered a cease-fire, it did not hold, and the PLO was driven out completely from Jordan in 1971. The trust between the two sides, particularly between King Hussein and PLO leader Yasser Arafat, was never really restored after that. Their mutual suspicion frequently derailed their work toward common objectives, in particular the goal of ending the Israeli occupation of the West Bank. The PLO's claim to represent all Palestinians was also in conflict with that of Jordan, which not only hosted but had given citizenship to millions of Palestinians. When Arab states recognized the PLO at the 1974 Rabat Summit as the "sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinians," Jordan had little choice but to accept this consensus, even though King Hussein felt he was better suited to broker a peace deal than the Palestinians were. The Rabat decision resulted in considerable constraints on Jordan's maneuverability in attempts to seek a diplomatic solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. The ascension of the PLO ultimately transformed Jordan's view on the optimal solution to the conflict.

Starting in the mid-1970s the oil boom furthered Jordan's reliance on Arab funding and restrained Jordan's efforts to bring about a recovery of land occupied in 1967, given the division among the Arabs regarding the best way of solving the Arab-Israeli conflict. The split between those who advocated that all Arabs should move forward together and others who thought each state should pursue its own interests was highlighted by Egypt's defection from the Arab fold to sign a peace treaty with Israel in 1979, restoring the Sinai Peninsula to Egyptian control.

A second but perennial obstacle to Jordan's ability to push forward a settlement was Israel's position. In the first decade of occupation, the Labor-led government in Israel was sharply divided on the disposition of the occupied territories. The doves advocated territorial compromise with Jordan in return for a peace treaty between the two states. But hardliners in the Labor Party, led by Moshe Dayan and Shimon Peres, threatened to bolt the government should the prime minister pursue a territorial concession. Israel rejected Jordan's suggestion of a disengagement agreement similar to the ones signed with Egypt and Syria. Instead the Labor Party adopted what came to be known as the Jordanian Option, based on the Allon Plan. The Allon Plan envisioned an Israeli withdrawal from the populated areas of the West Bank and the annexation of the most strategic areas and Jerusalem within the framework of a peace treaty with Jordan. Allon also suggested that Israel build settlements in strategic areas.[4] In an article published in *Foreign Affairs,* Yigal Allon, the plan's architect, delineated his concept of what he termed Israel's "defensible borders."[5] Although the government never adopted the Allon Plan, it constituted the basis for the first wave of settlements built in the occupied territories as a way to create irreversible facts on the ground once a peaceful settlement would require Israel to give up territory it held because of the war.

From Jordan's perspective, the Allon Plan was a nonstarter. As far as King Hussein was concerned, the only Jordanian Option was one that returned the West Bank, including Jerusalem, with minor border modifications on a reciprocal basis. This remained Jordan's position in all the clandestine meetings held with Israelis from the early 1960s.[6] But given Israel's complicated domestic political dynamics, no Israeli prime minister was either willing or able to agree with Jordan's peace proposal. The Jordanian Option became little more than a Labor Party slogan raised whenever the government needed to appear to have a peace policy less extreme than that of the Likud, which favored the wholesale annexation of the West Bank.

Internal developments led to a political hurricane within Israel in 1977. The Labor Party lost its twenty-nine years of dominance in Israeli politics, and Menachim Begin led Likud to a decisive electoral victory in the general elections and formed the first right-wing government in the history of the Jewish state. Soon after assuming power, Begin announced plans to intensify settlement activities in the occupied territories. To Likud, there was a need to fill the West Bank with settlements everywhere possible to lay the groundwork for annexation. This was a considerable departure from Labor's settlement policy, which was confined to areas deemed necessary for Israel's security. Jordan, which closely observed Israeli politics, did not view this development with comfort.

The settlement policy was much in keeping with Likud ideology, which viewed the West Bank and East Jerusalem as the heart of the biblical land of Israel. Settlements were thus a conscious policy not only to lay claim to those territories, but to preempt Labor's already limited ability to trade land for peace in the future. More worrisome for Jordan was the emergence of a new, alarming discourse from influential voices within Likud, including those of Ariel Sharon and Yitzhak Shamir. In an article published in *Foreign Affairs* in 1982, Shamir wrote that Jordan was Palestinian in everything but name. He proposed that the Arab-Israeli conflict therefore be solved by allowing a Palestinian takeover of Jordan. "The state known today as the Kingdom of Jordan," he wrote, "is an integral part of what once was known as Palestine (77 percent of the territory); its inhabitants therefore are Palestinians—not different in their language, culture, or religious and demographic composition from other Palestinians. . . . It is merely an accident of history that this state is called the Kingdom of Jordan and not the Kingdom of Palestine."[7] Likud's "Jordan is Palestine" mantra became known in Jordan and beyond as the "alternative homeland" conspiracy—a conspiracy to establish a Palestinian state outside the Palestinians' historical homeland in the West Bank and Gaza—against Palestinians' wishes and at Jordan's expense.

Under the pretext of the attempted assassination of the Israeli ambassador in London, Israel invaded Lebanon in June 1982 to dislodge the PLO, where the PLO had established its base of operations following its expulsion from Jordan. The invasion resulted in the PLO's expulsion to Tunisia and other Arab states and had a cumulative effect on the Palestinian approach to peacemaking, moderating its position and bringing it closer to the Jordanian approach. Two rounds of talks between Jordan and the PLO, designed to advance a peaceful solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, were held in Amman. These efforts paid off in February 1986, when Jordan and the PLO signed what was known as the Amman Accord. The PLO had moderated its policy, indicated by its willingness to accept UN Resolution 242 as a basis to end the conflict, to make it eligible as a partner in any prospective peace negotiations. But due to internal PLO politics, Arafat backtracked from his earlier agreement with the king, and the accord collapsed.

At the heart of Jordan's foreign policy since 1967 had been the idea of mediation between the Arab side on one hand and the West on the other. Consistent with this mode of thinking, Jordan's foreign policy since 1967 had been to create an Arab consensus and an environment conducive to peacemaking based on Resolution 242 and to enlist international support for implementing the relevant UN resolutions. Hence, Jordan's foreign policy in the 1980s advocated convening an international peace conference attended by all parties to the conflict and the five permanent members of the Security Council. Jordan dedicated a great deal of effort regionally to help the Arabs agree to such an idea. The talks with the PLO should be seen within this perspective. After considerable persuasion from King Hussein, the Arabs agreed to the idea of an international conference. Yet this enterprise was thwarted by both the Americans and the Israelis. The Americans feared that an international conference might give the Soviet Union a channel through which to exercise influence in the Middle East.[8] Further, the Americans formed one voice with Israel in objecting to the PLO's participation in a peace conference before the organization would meet three conditions: recognize Israel, accept Resolution 242, and renounce violence and terrorism.

In any event, Israel was also unwavering in its opposition to an international conference out of fear that the international community could impose a solution that demanded territorial withdrawal, insisting instead on direct, bilateral negotiations.[9] The idea of an international conference became anathema to every right-wing government in Israel.

In 1987, King Hussein reached a deal in London with then foreign minister Shimon Peres in Israel's national unity government that would lead to an international conference where the Palestinians would participate under a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation. But Peres could not convince Prime Minister Shamir to accept the accord, and the deal fell through.

The Arab-Israeli conflict was entering its fortieth year in 1987. The community of Palestinian refugees and displaced persons now numbered in the millions, and Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip had lived under Israeli occupation for two decades. Palestinians in the occupied territories had grown increasingly fed up with life under occupation and Israel's relentless confiscations of what was left of Palestinian land for settlement building. Seeing no other obvious solution on the horizon, Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip took matters into their own hands in December 1987: a civil revolt erupted against Israeli occupation. The Palestinian Intifada, or uprising, raged for five years.

Jordan's objective of convening an international conference was laid to rest in 1988 after the Americans abandoned the idea and Israel's hardline prime minister Yitzhak Shamir formed a new government. Protesting Palestinians had also expressed a clear desire to pursue their future independently not only of Israel but of Jordan, too. Fears were genuine that the Intifada would spill over to Jordan. King Hussein concluded that for all these reasons, the Palestinians themselves should assume responsibility for the future of the occupied territories, and he thus announced that Jordan would sever its legal and administrative ties with the West Bank.

This was a turning point in the history of the conflict and represented a fresh approach to try to break the stalemate. Jordan's decision that it would not speak for the Palestinians was a clear message to the Israelis that the Jordanian Option was off the table. It was also a message to the PLO's leaders that if they wanted to lead Palestinians in the West Bank, they would have to make serious decisions about peacemaking and could no longer pass the buck to Jordan when and if things went wrong. Indeed, the PLO's decision few months later to accept UN Resolution 242 and renounce violence positively contributed to the new policy of direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians that Jordan was now advocating.

Given the abovementioned inter-Arab and Israeli politics, Jordan's strong efforts did not yield the desired outcome: a comprehensive and lasting peace. Nevertheless, the end of the Cold War in 1989 and the subsequent military campaign to drive Iraq out of Kuwait brought about a revitalized American willingness to work actively toward a resolution of the conflict, leading to the Madrid Peace Conference of 1991.

Jordan immediately capitalized on this opportunity. For one thing, Jordan had long championed the idea of an international conference. For another, settling the Arab-Israeli conflict peacefully had been a cherished Jordanian objective at least since 1967. Jordan also hoped that participation in peacemaking would help end the regional and international isolation imposed on it because of its position in the Gulf crisis of 1990–1991. (Jordan had opposed Iraq's occupation of Kuwait but had also opposed the presence of the coalition forces in the region and had attempted to work out a diplomatic solution.)

Recognizing Jordan's role in any peace settlement and in regional stability, the administration of George H. W. Bush reversed its attitude toward the kingdom, and Secretary of State James Baker conducted talks with King Hussein to attend the international peace conference.

Jordan's role was crucial in making possible Palestinian participation in the peace negotiations at Madrid. Jordan offered the Palestinians an umbrella under which to participate, agreeing to form a joint delegation with the Palestinians to help them talk directly to their Israeli counterparts and granting a Jordanian passport to a prominent Palestinian Jerusalemite, Dr. Walid Khalidi, to ensure the presence of a delegate representing Jerusalem. This was the only way to press Shamir to agree to talk to the Palestinians. I was appointed Jordan's spokesman to the peace talks and was a member of the negotiating team that went to Madrid in October 1991. The year before I had served as the director of the Jordan Information Bureau, the public affairs arm of the Jordanian embassy in Washington.

Madrid was a watershed in the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The conference was the sum of decades of efforts by the moderate Arab countries and the international community to negotiate a peaceful settlement to the conflict. It also vindicated the moderate position against the more radical positions on both sides: a radical Arab position that called for the return of all of historic Palestine to Arab hands and a radical Israeli position that sought to keep control over every inch of "Eretz Israel."[10]

The conference was somewhat daunting from a personal standpoint. I was dispatched there a week before the rest of the delegation to prepare for the meeting. Although I had acquired significant experience in dealing with the Western press through my work in Washington, particularly in the wake of the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait and the Gulf crisis, Madrid offered a challenge of a totally different scale. Almost six thousand reporters were covering the event, and I had to establish the Jordanian press center with no technical help. One morning, I received a call in my hotel room at 6:30. King Hussein was on the other line. Word had reached him that I was working alone, and with his customary graciousness, he assured me that help was on its way. The next day, four members of his press staff arrived, and they did a wonderful job in helping me handle the slew of reporters wanting information or interviews.

Madrid was also a turning point for the Palestinians in that the world saw them for the first time not as a group of terrorists but as a people yearning to live free of occupation. Hanan Ashrawi, the able Palestinian spokeswoman, illuminated the human dimension of the Palestinian story, hitherto unseen to the world, with her eloquence, poise, and integrity. The head of the delegation, Dr. Haidar Abdel Shafi, a soft-spoken, dignified, seventy-year-old physician, also gained the Palestinians much-deserved respect throughout the world. Perhaps most important, the imposing presence of the Palestinian delegation buried an old Israeli adage first uttered by Prime Minister Golda Meir: that the Palestinians did not exist, and hence there was no Palestinian problem to solve.[11]

Despite the momentum that had been building, Israel was still governed by the most inflexible government in its history, and Israeli participation in the Madrid peace conference was not genuine. Shamir was buying time to build more settlements in the occupied territories, as he himself made clear in an interview he later gave to the press.[12] The Bush administration took a strong stand against such settlement building, withholding loan guarantees to Israel equivalent to amounts spent on settlement building, thus contributing to the downfall of the Shamir government. For the peace process to yield positive results, Israel's domestic politics needed to change.

The electoral defeat of Shamir and the victory of Yitzhak Rabin in 1992 was thus a very positive development for the peace process. Unlike

Shamir, with his "not one inch" policy, Rabin was willing to seek a solution based on land for peace. There was finally a meeting of minds between Jordan and Israel. The peace process was revived and led in September 1993 to Israel and the PLO signing the Oslo Accords. The accords marked the mutual recognition of the PLO and Israel, with Israel willing to offer a territorial compromise directly to the Palestinians.

THE EMERGENCE OF THE TWO-STATE SOLUTION

Through the decades two schools of thought had formed within the Jordanian political establishment concerning the state's policy toward the conflict and toward Jordan's relationship to the West Bank. One school advocated a key role for Jordan in the West Bank and Gaza to prevent the emergence of an independent Palestinian state in the territories occupied by Israel since 1967. This school justified its policy on a straightforward security rationale: its advocates believed that a Palestinian state would be radical and irredentist and would thus constitute a threat to Jordan. This mode of thinking reflected the history of mutual mistrust and competition between Jordan and the PLO, and opposition to a Palestinian state was most pronounced within the country's security establishment.

The second school of thought believed that the emergence of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza would be a positive development not only for the Palestinians but for Jordan. A Palestinian state distinct from Jordan would bury, once and for all, the Israeli Likud traditional argument that "Jordan is Palestine," which could be used to justify the expulsion of West Bank Palestinians to Jordan and the creation of a Palestinian state on Jordanian national territory. Preventing Israeli implementation of the "alternative homeland" was thus of paramount importance to advocates of this school of thought. This school further stressed that a Palestinian state would help develop a healthy Jordanian national identity by defining once and for all who is a Palestinian (resident of the new Palestinian state) and thus who is a Jordanian. Within this second school, there were two subschools in terms of how they viewed the Jordanian national identity. The first was represented by many East Bank Jordanians, for whom a Palestinian state represented not only the death of the "alternative homeland" option but a chance to reinforce the country's Jordanian identity, which, they believed, had been diluted and obscured by the presence of Jordanian citizens of Palestinian origin. They hoped to weaken the "Palestinian component" in the evolving Jordanian national identity by having Palestinians move back across the river whenever possible. The other subschool sought two states but strove to realize a Jordan that was inclusive of all citizens regardless of their origin. The Palestinians in Jordan had been awarded Jordanian citizenship more than four decades earlier, and since then relations between East Jordanians and Jordanians of Palestinian origin had grown more complex at every level—social, economic, and familial.

Although the two lines of thinking were well known, the status of Palestinians in Jordan had never been publicly debated, nor was public consensus ever reached—mostly because the absence of progress toward conflict resolution had made the debate unnecessary as well as, for a number of reasons, politically unacceptable among large sectors of Jordanian society. King Hussein's announcement that Jordan would sever legal and administrative ties with the West Bank, however, changed all that.

The disengagement was controversial and has been intensely debated ever since. But King Hussein was clear on one point: the decision would not affect the rights of Jordanians of Palestinian origin. In announcing the disengagement on July 31, 1988, he explicitly stated that the measures "do not relate in any way to the Jordanian citizens of Palestinian origin in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. They have the full rights of citizenship and all its obligations, the same as any other citizen, irrespective of his origin. They are an integral part of the Jordanian state."[13]

King Hussein's convictions on this issue were not enough to quell the groundswell of debate about who belonged to Jordan: the disengagement threw the doors wide open to discussion, and in the absence of progress in the peace process, the public in Jordan has yet to arrive at a consensus. Whether by default or by design, the disengagement also ultimately transformed Jordan's approach to the land for peace policy and its regional role.

The Madrid peace conference and process prompted Jordan to take a closer look at its interests and to decide what was best for the country. Israel had not recognized the PLO until then as the representative of the Palestinians, and it insisted that the Palestinians attend the Madrid conference under the umbrella of Jordan, in a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation formula, despite the disengagement decision. Realizing that this was the only way to get Israel to go to Madrid, Jordan was willing to provide such an umbrella while insisting that the Palestinians should represent themselves, and Jordan was keen not to act or appear to act as the Palestinians' custodian. In fact, following Madrid, Jordan and the Palestinians insisted on conducting negotiations in two separate tracks: Jordanian-Israeli and Palestinian-Israeli.

The signing of the Oslo Accords on September 13, 1993, was a turning point for Jordan. The initial Jordanian reaction to the announcement of the PLO-Israel accord was apprehension, due in part to the element of surprise and in part to Amman's perception that the Palestinians and the Israelis might be cooking up something against Jordan's interests or that they had defined a role for Jordan without its consultation. The Jordanian delegation to the peace talks, of which I was a member, was then in Washington, and we were taken completely aback. We met with the Palestinian delegation, headed by Dr. Haidar Abdel Shafi, only to find out that he himself was both surprised and angry at not being informed of the secret channel in Oslo. Abdel Shafi was apologetic and seriously considering resigning from the delegation.

We did not know how to react. On one hand, the delegation felt that after Jordan had given the Palestinians an umbrella under which negotiations with Israel could take place, the least it could expect was to be kept informed that another channel had been established where "real" negotiations were taking place. We also were not sure what impact this would have on negotiations between Israel and Jordan or indeed how Jordan would fare after these sudden developments. Once emotions settled, however, and following a long debate, we reached a consensus that acknowledged the importance of the Oslo Accords not only in providing direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian leadership—an objective Jordan worked for since the disengagement decision of 1988—but also in creating new opportunities for Jordan's negotiations with Israel. The Oslo Accords essentially transferred responsibility for negotiating the thorniest issues of peacemaking from Jordan to the PLO, making Jordan's negotiations with Israel far less problematic than they might otherwise have been. The emerging view among the delegation also was that Israel's recognition of the Palestinians would be in Jordan's interest and would help put to rest, once and for all, the Israeli right's notion that "Jordan is Palestine."

King Hussein listened to both arguments but kept his options open. The king was not sure of Israel's intentions and whether Rabin wanted to bypass Jordanian interests in any future deal with the Palestinians. He was also skeptical of the PLO's intentions, fearing that the PLO might be conspiring with Israel against Jordan. He worried that on such issues as East Jerusalem, the loss of which for him was a matter of personal responsibility, or Palestinian refugees, more than 40 percent of whom were Jordanian citizens, Israel and the Palestinians might arrive at a solution that would be unfair to Jordan. Another fear almost certainly must have been that the Palestinians, being the weaker party, would cut a poor deal that could only lead to a small and weak state that, to save itself, would look eastward. It thus became clear that the implementation of the accord and the emergence of a viable and independent Palestinian state were in Jordan's national interest. But King Hussein also began to realize that the accords had placed the territorial issue where it belonged: on Palestinian soil. Further, the identity crisis that many Jordanians of Palestinian origin experienced could not be resolved except by the creation of a Palestinian state.

The king had to make sure of Rabin's intentions. The immediate period after the signing of the Oslo Accords and the agreement on an agenda for the talks between Jordan and Israel on the following day—a period extending from September 1993 to May 1994—brought no significant progress in Jordan's negotiations with Israel. The king felt that the Israelis were giving priority to negotiations with the Palestinians over those with Jordan. Finally, he decided to meet with Rabin to ensure that Jordanian interests were protected. The two met secretly in London in May 1994, and the king was assured that Jordanian interests, particularly concerning Jerusalem and refugees, would be taken into consideration. This meeting led to the first public meeting between Rabin and the king in Washington on July 25, 1994. The Washington meeting culminated in the Washington Declaration, in which Israel recognized Jordan's special role in safeguarding the holy places in Jerusalem and stated that final status negotiations on refugees would not take place without Jordan's involvement. This set the stage toward resolving other pending issues between Jordan and Israel—borders and water being the most prominent—and the signing of a peace treaty in Wadi Araba between the two countries on October 26, 1994.

As soon as King Hussein was confident that Jordan's interests would be protected, the argument that a Palestinian state would be in the national interests won the day. Even though many within Likud and the Israeli security establishment claimed otherwise—some even to this day—Jordan's position was cemented.[14] The king from that point on became more vocal in his support of a Palestinian state, repeatedly emphasizing the need to consider Jordanian interests in any agreement to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

The king first articulated these interests in a letter to Prime Minister Abdel Salam Majali in December 1997. King Hussein wrote that the time had come "to recall and identify clearly the bare facts of the well-known Jordanian position vis-à-vis the ongoing peace negotiations between the Palestinians and the Israelis." He described Israeli claims that a Palestinian state threatened Jordanian and Israeli security as "baseless" and said that he "categorically and unequivocally" disagreed with them. The letter explained that Jordanian interests in any settlement centered around seven issues: Jerusalem, refugees, borders, settlements, water, security, and sovereignty. Jordan's position toward the West Bank had made a dramatic turnabout: from outright opposition to an independent Palestinian state to full support for such a state as a Jordanian strategic interest. Jordan's quest for a two-state solution had begun in earnest.[15]

THE EMERGENCE OF AN EFFECTIVE ARAB CENTER FOR PEACE

Although Jordan held one of the most moderate positions on the peace process in the Arab world, its ability to push forward that position was limited by its relatively junior status in that world. Throughout much of the Arab-Israeli conflict, Arab consensus, although at times influenced by Jordan, was forged through an informal alliance of three states: Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Syria. These three countries regularly coordinated their positions and made sure that they were generally in tandem. But the different nature of the three states prevented forward movement on the peace process. Syria maintained a hard-line position regarding the issue. Egypt's Nasser took an equally hard line, and Egypt moved toward a proactively moderate position only after the 1973 War under Anwar

Sadat's leadership. Saudi Arabia, which was not a confrontational state, advocated a cautious policy and was unwilling to risk taking the lead on peace initiatives.

When Egypt signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1979, the Arab world viewed this development not as a move toward comprehensive peace in the region but rather as a treacherous act that weakened the Arab bargaining position in any solution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Almost all other Arab countries now hardened their positions on the question of peace with Israel (and ostracized Egypt from the Arab fold). The Arab public, which views Palestine not just as a Palestinian issue but as an Arab interest, would not tolerate further abandonment of the Palestinians. This situation persisted until Madrid. By that time, the Egyptian-Israeli peace process had gone little further than ending the state of war between the two countries. In that, the treaty did not differ much from the objectives of UN Resolutions 242 and 338, which did not mention peaceful relations among countries of the region.

Madrid provided a new framework whereby the declared position of Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, and the Palestinians paralleled that of Egypt in pursuing peace with Israel through a negotiations process based on UN Resolutions 242 and 338 and the principle of land for peace. The Oslo Accords and the Jordan-Israel Peace Treaty gave further legitimacy to negotiations.

These events put Jordan at the forefront of regional peacemaking. Once King Hussein decided that a two-state solution was the only result that would serve its strategic interests and secure regional peace, Jordan used its international prestige to champion independent Palestinian statehood. Nevertheless, many other non-frontline Arab countries continued either to oppose the Madrid process or to support it from a safe distance. They preferred to await the outcome before taking a stance or engaging in the process, but for Jordan there was no turning back.

September 11 changed all that. The emergent threat of extremism illuminated a new, shared Arab interest and a challenge that could be met only by ending regional tension, beginning with the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which lies at its heart. Saudi Arabia's decision to take a more active role in the process effectively created a critical mass of Arab nations with enough weight in the Arab and Muslim worlds as well as in the West. A new Arab core emerged. This new core was both moderate and proactive and enjoyed good relations not just with the international community in general but with the West and the United States in particular. The new troika of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan, which replaced the old troika of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Syria, immediately started coordination to advance a two-state solution to the conflict through such efforts as the Arab Peace Initiative and the Middle East Road Map.