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Jordan's Soviet Option



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An Intelligence Assessment

PROJECT NUMBER NESA * 0002 * 89

(I) W M J K

PAGE NUMBERS 15

TOTAL NUMBER OF COPIES 610

DISSEM DATE 88/12/09

EXTRA COPIES 480-508

RECORD CENTER 509-558

JOB NUMBER 425-0162-89

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NESA 88-10071
November 1988

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Jordan's Soviet Option

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An Intelligence Assessment

This paper was prepared by [Redacted]
Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis,

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[Redacted] It
was coordinated with the Directorate of Operations.

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[Redacted]

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Comments and queries are welcome and may be
directed to the Chief, Arab-Israeli Division, NESAs,

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Jordan's Soviet Option [Redacted]

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Key Judgments

Information available as of 11 November 1988 was used in this report.

King Hussein is expanding relations with the Soviet Union to meet Jordan's arms requirements, gain leverage in regional diplomacy, and establish a more autonomous foreign policy as a result of deteriorating relations with the United States. During the last two years, Jordan also has expanded economic ties to China, increased acquisitions of a range of military hardware from Western Europe, and expanded its role as a mediator in inter-Arab politics. [Redacted]

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Jordan is dissatisfied with relations with the United States because of a decline in levels of US military aid, repeated US denials of advanced weaponry sales, and US reluctance to pressure Israel to begin negotiations on the ultimate status of the West Bank. Given the depth of Amman's frustrations, close cooperation with the United States is unlikely to resume for at least several years. [Redacted]

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To help offset the steady decline in the US-Jordanian security relationship since the early 1980s, Amman has increased its ties to Moscow. Since 1981, Jordan has ordered over \$1.3 billion worth of Soviet military equipment—almost all of which has been delivered. [Redacted]

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[Redacted]

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[Redacted] The two countries have expanded cultural exchanges and agreed in August 1988 to establish a joint committee for economic, scientific, and technical cooperation. King Hussein increasingly has praised Soviet policy in the region and sought Moscow's support for Jordanian efforts to convene an international peace conference. [Redacted]

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Improving ties to Moscow will not preclude Hussein from being responsive to US efforts to engage Jordan in renewed military, economic, and political cooperation during the next year. But the United States will face a more skeptical and nationalistic Jordan—able to acquire arms elsewhere and less susceptible to US diplomatic influence. [Redacted]

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Hussein probably will continue seeking advanced military equipment from both Moscow and Western Europe and will rely on aggressive diplomacy in the Arab world to win economic aid and diplomatic support for an international peace conference. Limited Jordanian ties to China also are likely to grow as Amman seeks additional Chinese trade and diplomatic support in the United Nations. [Redacted]


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King Hussein is most unlikely to realign Jordanian foreign policy in a fundamentally pro-Soviet direction in the next few years, despite his greater openness to Moscow. Hussein is probably not eager to begin another potentially disappointing dependency on a superpower. Jordan's Western-oriented military and intelligence officials whose support is vital to Hussein's survival are deeply opposed to such a realignment. Palestinians in Jordan would oppose any diplomatic initiatives to grant Palestinians less than an independent state, although Moscow is unlikely to launch such an initiative at the expense of the Palestine Liberation Organization. Palestinian nationalism is strong among more than 200,000 refugees in 10 camps in Jordan and obliges Hussein to support publicly Palestinian demands for an independent state while pursuing diplomacy aimed at granting only limited autonomy to Palestinians. 

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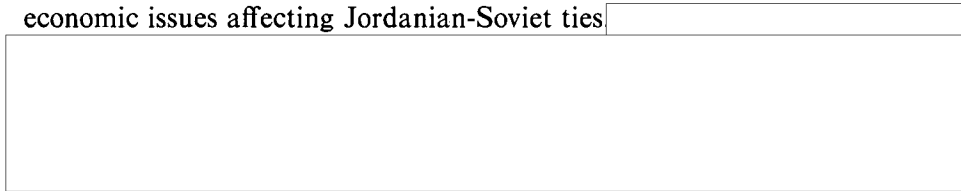
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Scope Note

This paper focuses on Jordan's attempt to use Soviet ties to pursue its regional and domestic goals. The analysis addresses key military and economic issues affecting Jordanian-Soviet ties



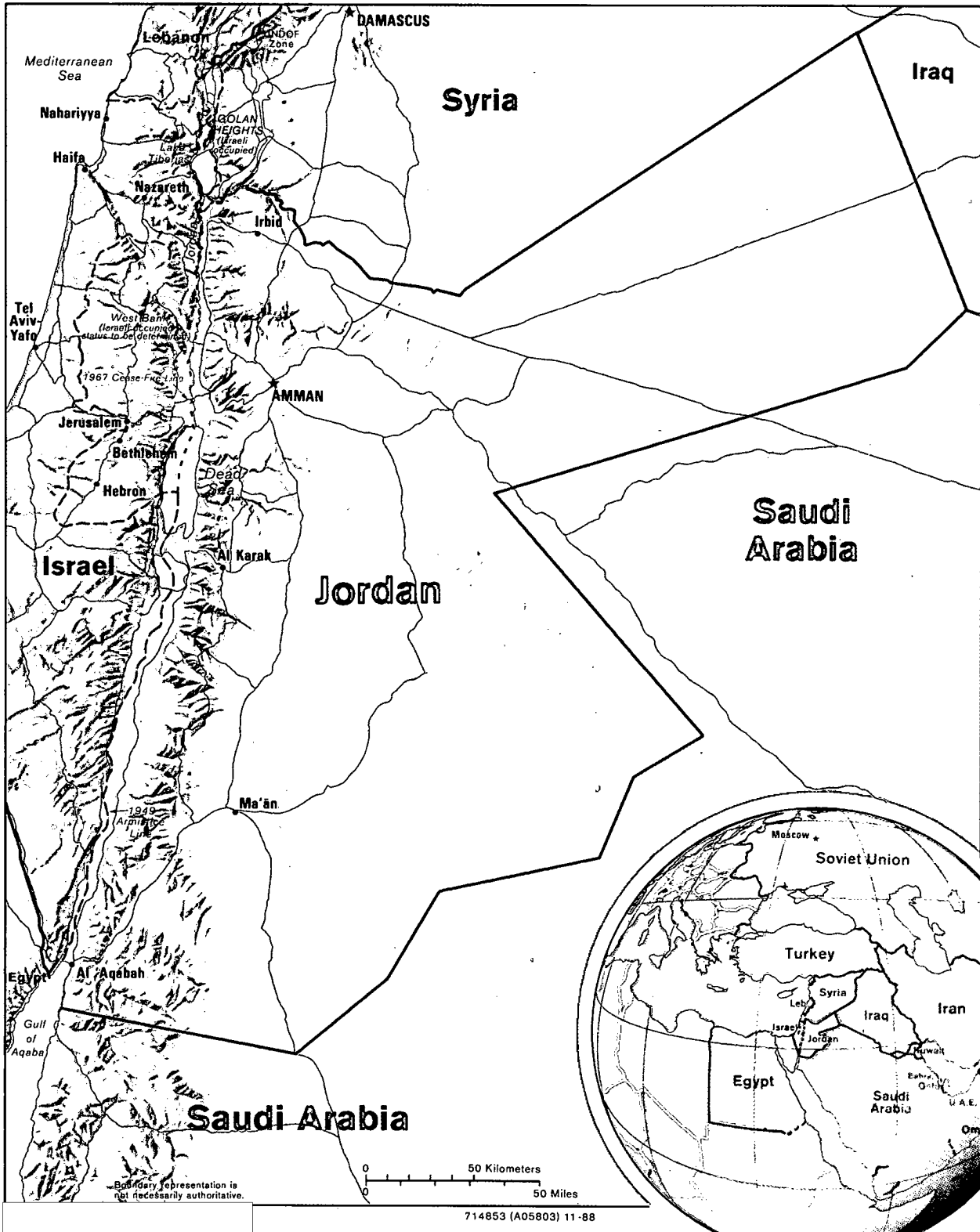
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Jordan's Soviet Option

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Disappointment With the United States

Jordan has been a major beneficiary of Western strategic interests since gaining its independence in 1946. British and US financial subsidies, military assistance, and diplomatic support enabled Jordan in the 1950s and 1960s to survive as a buffer between Israel and more radical Arab states. The conservative Hashemite monarchy, faced with the prospect of being dominated or even absorbed by Soviet-supported Arab nationalists based in Egypt and Syria, looked to a strategic partnership with the West as the best means of self-preservation. These strategic considerations and the monarchy's anti-Communist outlook precluded the development of significant relations with the Soviet Union.

In return for US arms, training, and direct military support, Jordan has supported US diplomatic efforts in the region. US aid to Jordan in 1958 against Arab nationalist threats and against the PLO in its bid to seize power in 1970 dramatically demonstrated the closeness of US-Jordanian bilateral ties. King Hussein has used the security relationship with the United States to modernize his small military in an attempt to provide a minimal deterrent to overwhelming Israeli and Syrian forces.

The US-Jordanian security relationship has diminished steadily since the early 1980s. According to the US Embassy in Amman, the first two serious blows came in 1983 with the collapse of a proposed Stinger missile sale and in 1985 with the collapse of a major sale of US air defense equipment. Hussein also has been severely disappointed with Washington's refusal to supply the F-16 fighter aircraft to help redress Jordan's vulnerability to Syrian and Israeli airpower. In May 1988, the United States delivered an artillery fire control radar system, completing the last remaining approved military sale to Jordan. US military assistance to Jordan is \$30 million annually, only about a quarter of the 1984 level, and probably

represents only a third of the amount needed to maintain adequately US equipment in the Jordanian inventory, according to the US Embassy.

Diplomatic and political cooperation has begun to suffer, we believe, largely because of Amman's perception of a US bias favoring Israel. Hussein has expressed repeated and strong disappointment with what he perceives to be US reluctance to apply effective leverage to bring Israel into negotiations on the status of the West Bank. According to the US Embassy, Hussein viewed Washington's memorandum of agreement with Tel Aviv on strategic cooperation in April 1988, after four months of harsh Israeli suppression of the Palestinian uprising, to be confirmation of ingrained favoritism toward Israel. Hussein warned US officials in early 1988 that he is considering changes in Jordan's foreign relations. His recent decision to sever administrative and legal ties to the West Bank and Gaza Strip suggests he will refrain from supporting US efforts to engage Jordan in a peace process he judges to be responsive mainly to Israeli security concerns.

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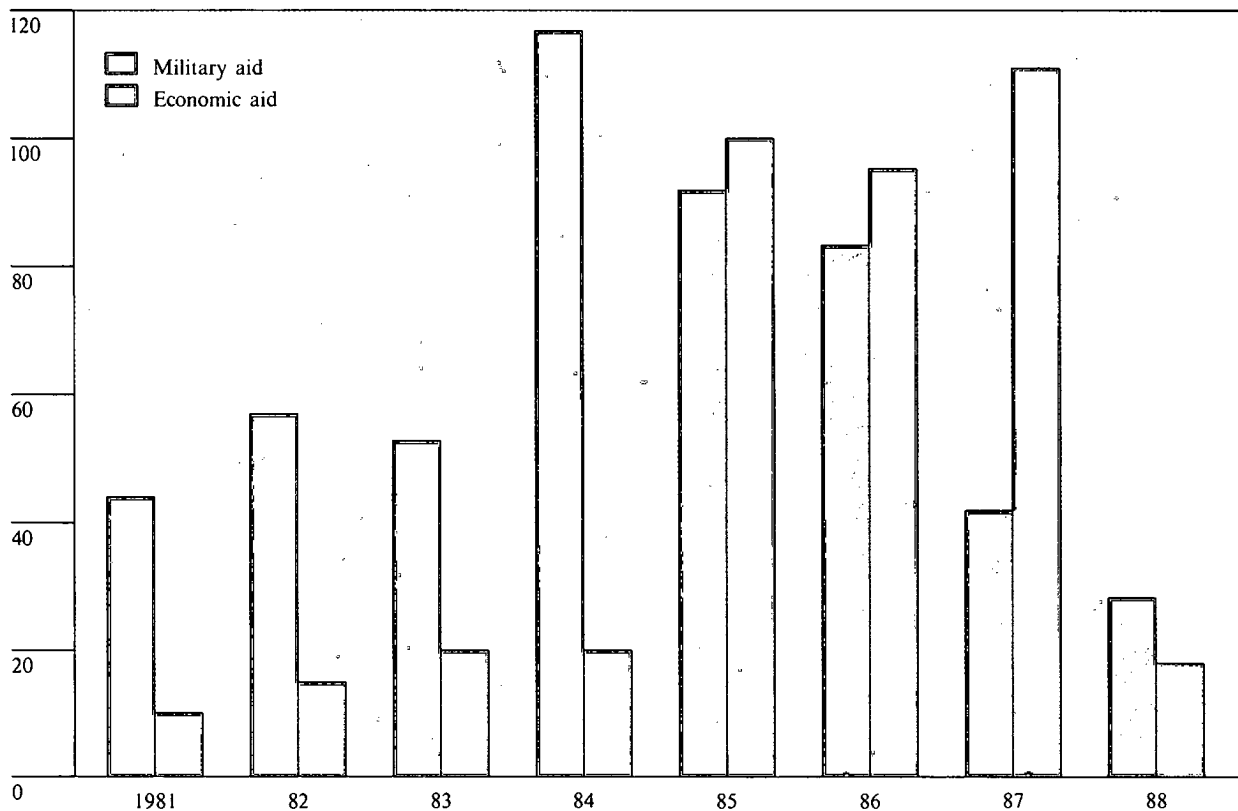
Hussein has taken only limited direct action to cut back on Jordanian ties to the United States. After two decades of annual visits to the United States, Hussein has not visited for more than three years and in 1988 canceled an official visit of his brother and heir apparent, Prince Hassan. Hussein intentionally delayed for several months appointing a new Jordanian Ambassador to Washington in 1988 and has publicly blamed Washington for the lack of movement in regional peace talks.

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Relations With the Soviet Union

Despite his pragmatic approach to decisionmaking, we believe Hussein's Western orientation exerts a restraining influence on developing ties to Moscow.

Figure 1**Jordan: Allocations of US Military and Economic Aid, 1981-88***Million US \$*

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Hussein is personally committed to remaining tied to the Western alliance and remains deeply suspicious of Soviet aims and Communist doctrine, in our view.

Hussein's confrontation in the 1950s and 1960s with socialist, Arab nationalist, and Communist parties in Jordan made him deeply wary of external meddling. Hussein's military training in the United Kingdom, his dynasty's debt to British support after World War I, and Hussein's own Islamic conservatism reflect intellectual and cultural opposition to Communism.

The decline of Pan-Arab nationalism and the emergence of US-Soviet detente in the 1970s, in our view, began to alter Amman's hard line toward the Soviet Union. The surge in oil wealth of Iraq and Saudi Arabia, Jordan's closest Arab allies and subsequent financial backers, also freed Amman from total dependence on US financing of arms supplies and set the stage for Arab-financed Soviet arms purchases.

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Increased Soviet diplomatic activity in the region and Soviet participation in UN peace efforts almost certainly provided an additional incentive for Hussein to expand contacts with Moscow. We believe Hussein calculated that these strategic developments made exclusive political and military cooperation with the West no longer necessary and that broader Soviet ties could improve his standing in the Arab world and his leverage with the West. [redacted]

Jordan has moved cautiously in developing relations with the Soviet Union. King Hussein waited until 1963 before agreeing to establish diplomatic relations and did not visit the Soviet Union until shortly after Jordan's defeat in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. Preliminary discussions on purchases of Soviet arms were inconclusive, but both sides did agree to an economic and technical cooperation agreement in 1971. Despite Hussein's visits to Moscow in 1976 and 1981, bilateral ties were constrained by strong Jordanian relations with the United States and Jordanian wariness of Soviet relations with Syria and revolutionary Iran, in our view. [redacted]

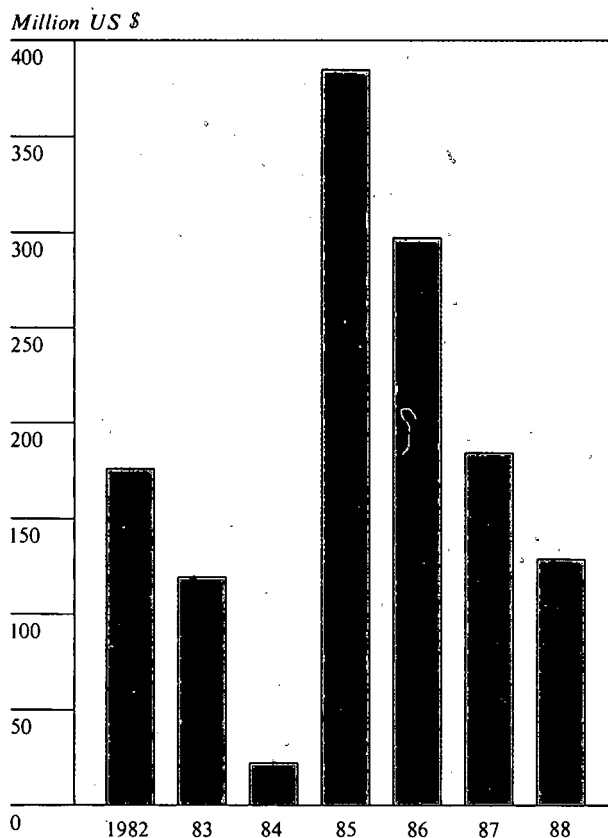
We judge that Jordanian purchases of Soviet arms have been the mainstay of growing bilateral ties. Jordan's dissatisfaction with US-imposed limitations on the purchase of Hawk missile batteries probably encouraged Amman to purchase Soviet air defense equipment in 1981. Jordan has purchased just over \$1.3 billion of military equipment—including air defense equipment and armored personnel and command vehicles—from the Soviet Union, nearly all of which has already been delivered. [redacted]

[redacted] Finally, both countries agreed in August 1988 to establish a joint committee for economic, scientific, and technical cooperation similar to the existing US-Jordanian joint committee. [redacted]

Hussein's Soviet Game Plan

Goals. Hussein's primary objective in expanding ties to the Soviet Union is to enhance Jordan's security and the prospects for long-term Hashemite rule. We believe he views a working relationship with the Soviet Union as assisting his efforts to secure arms, contain Palestinian nationalism, and pressure Israel to

Figure 2
Jordan: Total Soviet Arms Deliveries, 1982-88^a



^a Total equals \$1.3 billion.

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negotiate over the status of the West Bank. Hussein almost certainly views improved Jordanian-Soviet ties as a way of ensuring Jordan's place in mainstream Arab politics and gaining influence with more radical Arab rivals—especially Syria. [redacted]

Diplomatic Strategy. Jordan's inability to act unilaterally in regional politics has forced Hussein to rely on foreign support to achieve Jordanian goals. Hussein

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Jordan's Palestinian Refugees

Jordan's demographic mix obliges Hussein to seek a settlement with Israel responsive to Palestinian nationalism. Amman publicly claims that about 30 percent of Jordan's 2.8 million people are Palestinian, but on the basis of academic sources that count all Palestinians regardless of their date of arrival in Jordan we estimate that Palestinians number over 50 percent of the total population. The US Embassy in Amman reported in late 1987 that 850,965 Palestinians were then registered as refugees with the United Nations and that 206,595 of the refugees lived in 10 camps in Jordan. [redacted]

We believe the potential for a destabilizing eruption of Palestinian nationalism among refugees in the camps is high. [redacted]

[redacted] Palestinian youth in the camps face diminishing employment prospects, resent Jordanian discrimination, and have little respect for King Hussein.

[redacted] as many as half of the camp population is under 20 years old, and Embassy reports indicate Palestinian nationalist sentiment is strongest among refugee school children. Jordanian security forces have so far easily squelched small demonstrations that support the Palestinian uprising in the West Bank, but [redacted]

[redacted] government mass arrests and interrogations of Palestinian youth in the camps have fueled anti-Jordanian sentiment. [redacted]

[redacted] secret committees have sprung up inside Jordan's refugee camps to discuss ways to support the Palestinian uprising in the West Bank. [redacted]

has tried to use multilateral diplomacy to establish a forum for negotiations on the West Bank and provide Jordan a security guarantee for making concessions to Israel. The multilateral option, in our view, helps Amman compensate for its military weakness and is designed to legitimize Jordanian attempts to defuse Palestinian nationalism. The threat of the Palestinian uprising in the West Bank spilling over into Jordan's refugee camps has given Amman an additional incentive to revive multilateral peace efforts. [redacted]

The Soviet Union's drive for increased influence in the region has coincided with Amman's calls for a major Soviet role in an international peace conference. Diplomatic and press reporting indicate senior Jordanian officials believe cooperation between Washington and Moscow offers the best chance for ultimately achieving a negotiated settlement of the status of the West Bank. Jordanian Prime Minister Rifa'i has repeatedly called for a greater Soviet role in regional diplomacy, suggesting Amman believes the United States is unable to broker a negotiated settlement on its own, given its perceived alignment with Israel. Amman's public support for the Soviet Union suggests it believes Moscow is committed to establishing a less confrontational presence in the region and that it can harness Soviet ambition in the region to help launch successful negotiations on the West Bank.

Political cooperation with Moscow, in Jordan's view, is paying off. Hussein publicly declared in December 1987 that Jordan's relations with Moscow had improved and were excellent. [redacted]

[redacted] Amman also believes Moscow will support its position on convening an international conference and will support a joint Jordanian-PLO delegation. According to the US Embassy in Amman, PLO officials in Jordan suspect Moscow began playing down its ties to PLO Chairman Arafat during Arafat's April visit to Moscow. [redacted]

Economic Incentive. Jordan's deteriorating foreign payments situation has given Hussein another incentive to turn to Moscow and its relatively low-priced arms. According to the US Embassy in Amman, declining worker remittances, heavy debt servicing requirements, and major shortfalls in Arab aid since 1981 have severely drained Jordanian foreign exchange reserves, which plummeted from \$413 million at the end of 1987 to a record low of about \$19 million in June 1988. Three years of spending to hold unemployment in check have fueled growing budget deficits and put additional pressure on a foreign payments deficit that shot up from about \$46 million in 1986 to \$349 million in 1987. [redacted]

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Soviet financing proposals for major Jordanian weapons purchases, far more attractive than rival offers of West European suppliers, have not been enough to capture the Jordanian market. Defense attache reporting indicates the Soviet Union has offered Jordan easy financing terms on several arms packages, including an offer of 20 MiG-29 fighter aircraft in 1987.

[Redacted]

Despite Jordan's cash shortage, Hussein has not accepted Soviet offers on the basis of financing alone. His attitude suggests he is wary of poor Soviet servicing of the equipment and is reluctant to increase significantly the Soviet presence in Jordan. We estimate 50 to 60 Soviet military personnel are living in Jordan.

Constraints on Jordanian-Soviet Ties

Domestic Challenges. Hussein's monopoly on foreign policy decision making has not protected him from important domestic opposition to expanded relations with Moscow. Western-oriented military and intelligence officials, native Jordanians, and Palestinians all have reservations about rapid improvements in Jordanian-Soviet relations. Hussein, in our view, faces the dilemma of needing Soviet diplomatic help to contain Palestinian nationalism, while risking new domestic tensions that would result from a Soviet-supported diplomatic initiative to settle the status of the West Bank.

We believe Hussein's most important domestic opposition comes from his security forces.

[Redacted]

Hussein's decision to reject the MiG-29 offer also suggests he is reluctant to oppose his military's preference for more sophisticated Western systems.

Expanding ties to Moscow threatens to disturb Hussein's fragile relations with Palestinians in Jordan.

[Redacted] Palestinians in Jordan believe Hussein remains committed to negotiations on the West Bank and view his disengagement in July 1988 as a means designed to lead the PLO to cooperate with Jordan in an international peace conference. [Redacted] Palestinians also believe Hussein intends to restrict further PLO activities in Jordan. Intimate diplomatic interaction between Amman and Moscow, in our view, would fan Palestinian fears—especially among refugees who have little loyalty to the King—that Hussein wants to dominate the PLO and reach a settlement on the West Bank giving only limited autonomy to Palestinians.

Developing closer ties to Moscow risks alienating Hussein's native Bedouin constituency. Embassy reporting suggests native Jordanians are wary of Hussein's efforts to convene an international peace conference because they believe Jordan would be exposed to Palestinian and Syrian hardline opposition to any concessions to Israel. These Jordanians believe Syria should assume the risks of dealing with Israel and that Jordan lacks sufficient clout to soften US support of Israel and should maintain a lower diplomatic profile. The King's Bedouin constituency has welcomed the disengagement from the West Bank as a sign of a permanent renunciation of ties to the West Bank and would probably oppose diplomatic cooperation with Moscow leading to a reassertion of Jordan's West Bank influence. Hussein's small political opposition, centered around native Jordanian members of Parliament, has criticized him for addressing foreign more than domestic affairs and might seize upon expanded ties to Moscow as a pretext to broaden its base of support among predominantly isolationist native Jordanians.

External Risks. Hussein faces external constraints on developing closer relations with Moscow. We believe Hussein calculates that closer ties to Moscow would extinguish already dim prospects for major new US

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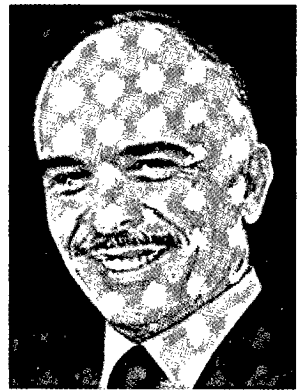
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Foreign Policy Decision Making in Jordan



King Hussein



Bin Shaker

King Hussein is the paramount decisionmaker in Jordan and his authority is especially pervasive in foreign affairs. According to the US Embassy in Amman, Hussein draws on a small group of advisers including key members of the military, General Intelligence Directorate, and the Cabinet for advice on foreign affairs. Hussein has relied on Foreign Minister Masri only for routine diplomatic missions in Arab capitals and multilateral forums and does not include him regularly in the elite foreign policy coterie of the Palace.

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Tahir Nash'at al-Masri



Tariq 'Ala al-Din

Since his appointment in 1985, Prime Minister Zayd al-Rifa'i has used his personal status as a boyhood friend of Hussein to limit the access of other senior officials to the King and has assumed foreign policy duties greater than his domestically oriented predecessors, according to the Embassy.

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[redacted] Rifa'i's pragmatic approach to relations with Syria and the PLO suggests he supports a limited expansion of Soviet-Jordanian ties to meet short-term military needs and improve Jordan's diplomatic standing at any international peace conference but would be wary of inviting a greatly expanded Soviet presence in Jordan.

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Zayd al-Rifa'i

[redacted] have equally good access to Hussein and are probably even more wary than Rifa'i of expanding Soviet-Jordanian ties. Field Marshall Bin Shaker, Hussein's commander in chief and cousin, accompanies Hussein on virtually all trips abroad and enjoys strong personal relations, according to diplomatic reporting. The Embassy reports Maj. Gen. Tariq 'Ala al-Din, director of the General Intelligence Directorate, also enjoys good access to the Palace, despite attempts by Rifa'i to impose limits. We believe Hussein will continue to give strong consideration to the preferences of his security services in dealing with Moscow but will try to win their support for a modest expansion of ties in the coming months.

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arms sales by helping US critics portray him as undeserving and unquestionably hostile to Israel. Hussein probably also sees too rapid a move toward Moscow as a potential strain on relations with Saudi Arabia, Jordan's most important Arab financial backer and likely critic of a major expansion of Jordanian-Soviet ties. [redacted]

and Iraq. Amman also has taken a lead role in rallying Arab support for Iraq in its negotiations with Iran and has sought to use its improved standing to build a consensus within the Arab League for convening of an international peace conference. Moreover, Hussein's decision to defer to the PLO by disengaging from the West Bank for the present was almost certainly intended to improve Jordan's standing among Arab state supporters of the PLO. [redacted]

Creating Other Foreign Policy and Security Options

We believe that expanded ties to Moscow are part of Jordan's broader efforts to pursue an increasingly independent foreign policy and gain wider international support for its regional goals. We believe Hussein's disappointment with Washington has made him reluctant to depend exclusively on either superpower for military, economic, and political support. Aggressive diplomacy in Europe and the Arab world and expanding ties to China, in our view, are designed to maximize Hussein's political leverage in regional diplomacy and establish alternative sources of military supply and economic aid. [redacted]

Growing relations with China have enabled Hussein to reap modest military and economic benefits. [redacted] Amman decided in late 1986 to permit China to open a new economic and commercial office to manage expanding economic ties and to supervise more than 2,000 Chinese workers in Jordan. [redacted] in March 1987 Amman decided to give China the main contract for the construction of a \$27 million sports facility, permitting several hundred more Chinese workers to enter the country. Amman also has continued to use China to satisfy ad hoc military requirements, purchasing a small amount of defensive chemical warfare equipment in July 1988 [redacted]

West European military technology and political influence with Washington and Moscow have made Hussein eager to strengthen ties to Western Europe. Jordan's decision to purchase eight British Tornado advanced fighter aircraft at a cost of nearly \$900 million in September 1988 demonstrated Hussein's desire to acquire advanced weaponry without having to accept US restrictions or impose additional unfamiliar Soviet equipment on his Western-oriented military. Hussein has traveled regularly to London to consult on Middle East peace efforts, has visited Paris to discuss French offers of military equipment, and has sought political support from the European Parliament for an international peace conference. [redacted]

Hussein's willingness to expand ties to China, in our view, is also aimed at winning Chinese support for key UN votes affecting Amman's regional diplomacy. China's permanent seat on the UN Security Council gives Beijing veto power over resolutions on the Arab-Israeli conflict and a major voice in establishing the structure and content of UN-sponsored peace negotiations. Hussein's frustration with US support for Israel in the United Nations and other multilateral forums probably has fueled his desire to develop China as an advocate of Jordanian interests in the United Nations and among Asian states. [redacted]

Hussein's skilled diplomacy in the Arab world has improved Jordan's regional standing and established Amman as a credible mediator among Arab states, in our view. [redacted] Hussein successfully brokered the establishment of diplomatic relations between Oman and Syria in 1987, and diplomatic reporting indicates Hussein has made repeated attempts to mediate between Syria

The wide scope of Jordan's foreign policy suggests Hussein seeks to maximize his options—emphasizing pragmatism over ideology—and to attempt to build enough diplomatic support to offset his military weakness and advance his regional interests. Good relations with Europe, the Arab states, and China are likely to

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lead to many of the same political, military, and economic gains Hussein seeks from the Soviet Union. Nonetheless, Moscow's desire to expand its influence in the region, its greater political leverage, and its willingness to supply and generously finance major weapon systems suggest Hussein believes he can make greater gains by giving priority to developing ties to Moscow. [redacted]

Outlook

Hussein will continue to pursue a gradual improvement of relations with Moscow, in our judgment. The challenge of equipping the Jordanian military adequately during a period of deterioration in Jordan's external payments makes inexpensive Soviet arms attractive to Hussein. Fears of a long-term rightward shift in Israeli politics, renewed border tensions, and a spillover of Palestinian unrest from the West Bank into Jordan are also likely to encourage Hussein to develop the Soviet Union as a reliable arms supplier. Diplomatic reporting indicates Jordan is seeking additional purchases of Soviet air defense and armored vehicles. [redacted]

We believe Jordan will lobby Moscow more than Washington for support of an international peace conference. Hussein has publicly admitted his inability to pressure Israel and Washington to begin negotiations and has conceded his lack of influence among West Bank Palestinians by dramatically cutting back Jordan's presence there. We believe the Soviet Union represents for Hussein an avenue to pressure Washington and Tel Aviv. Hussein is unlikely to replace the PLO as the most popular representative of Palestinians in the West Bank, but he probably calculates that better relations with Moscow and PLO disunity will permit him to reemerge as the dominant partner in a joint PLO-Jordanian delegation to an international conference. [redacted]

Hussein is likely to maintain correct—even if cool—relations with Washington. Despite Soviet efforts to expand influence with all actors in the Arab-Israeli conflict, Hussein does not harbor illusions about Moscow's still limited sway with Israel. A successful international conference, in Hussein's view, will require consensus and pressure from Washington and

Moscow, giving Hussein a strong incentive to balance his overtures to Moscow with preservation of ties to Washington. His public statements suggest Hussein sees himself as a moderate intermediary, encouraging US-Soviet consensus on regional issues and avoiding steps likely to reduce Jordan to client status with either great power. [redacted]

We believe expanding relations with China and Europe will attract valuable political and economic support for Hussein. Closer economic ties will help the King prepare the way for greater political cooperation in future UN-sponsored regional diplomacy. Hussein probably calculates his good relations with Europe will enable him to enlist European states—especially the United Kingdom—to forge consensus and cooperation between Washington and Moscow. [redacted]

Implications for the United States

Close strategic cooperation between the United States and Jordan—fueled in part by Amman's heavy reliance on past US military and economic assistance—is unlikely to resume for at least several years. We believe Hussein's success in building new political and security relationships with the Soviet Union, Europe, and China has made him less dependent on refurbishing US ties. Hussein's perception of Soviet moderation, US reluctance to pressure an increasingly hard-line Israeli leadership, and the King's own pressing need to develop new ways to contain Palestinian nationalism are unlikely to fade quickly. We believe Hussein has accepted the necessity of developing an alternative to dependency on Washington to pursue Jordan's regional goals and improve the prospects for long-term Hashemite rule. [redacted]

As a result, the United States will face a more skeptical and nationalistic Jordan—able to draw on alternative arms suppliers, including Moscow, and less susceptible to US diplomatic pressure. Hussein will have little choice but to accept the United States as his principal conduit to negotiations with Israel but almost certainly will try to demonstrate greater independence both to his own Bedouin constituency and to fellow Arab states. The United States is likely to find that a rapprochement with Jordan will depend less on

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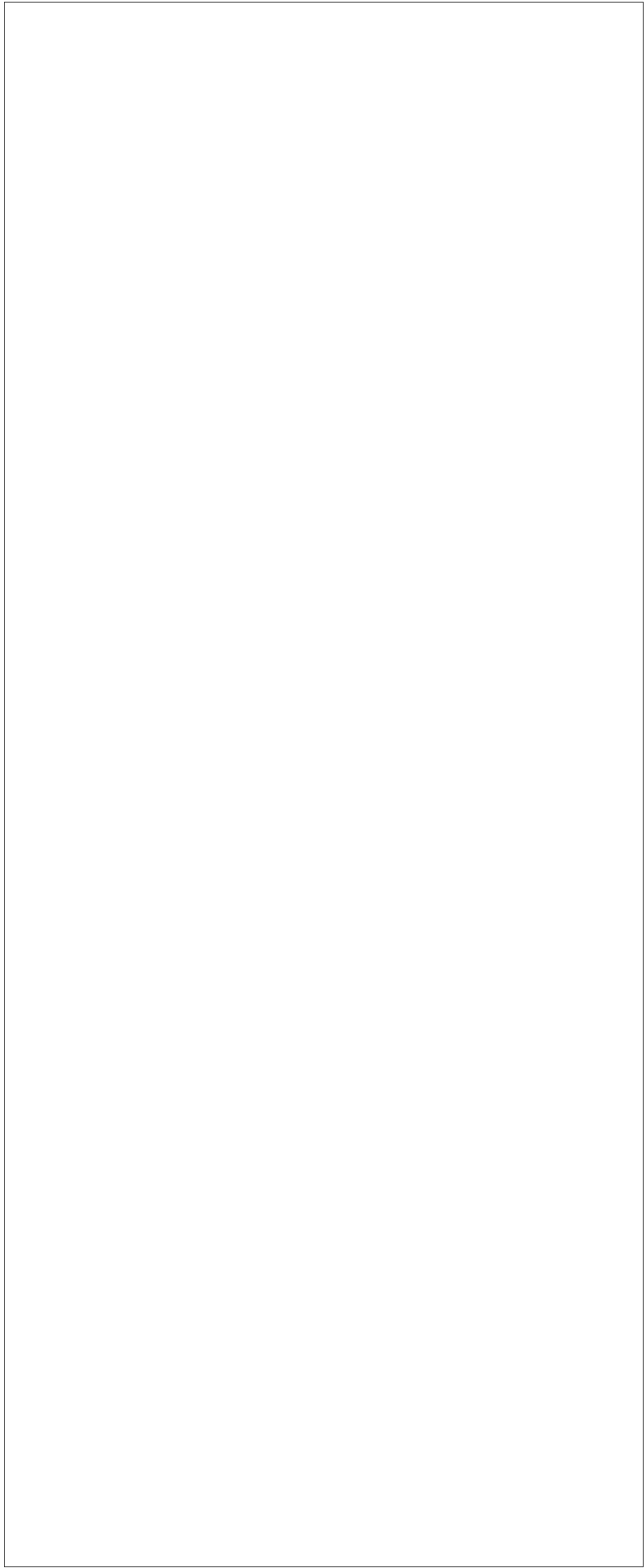
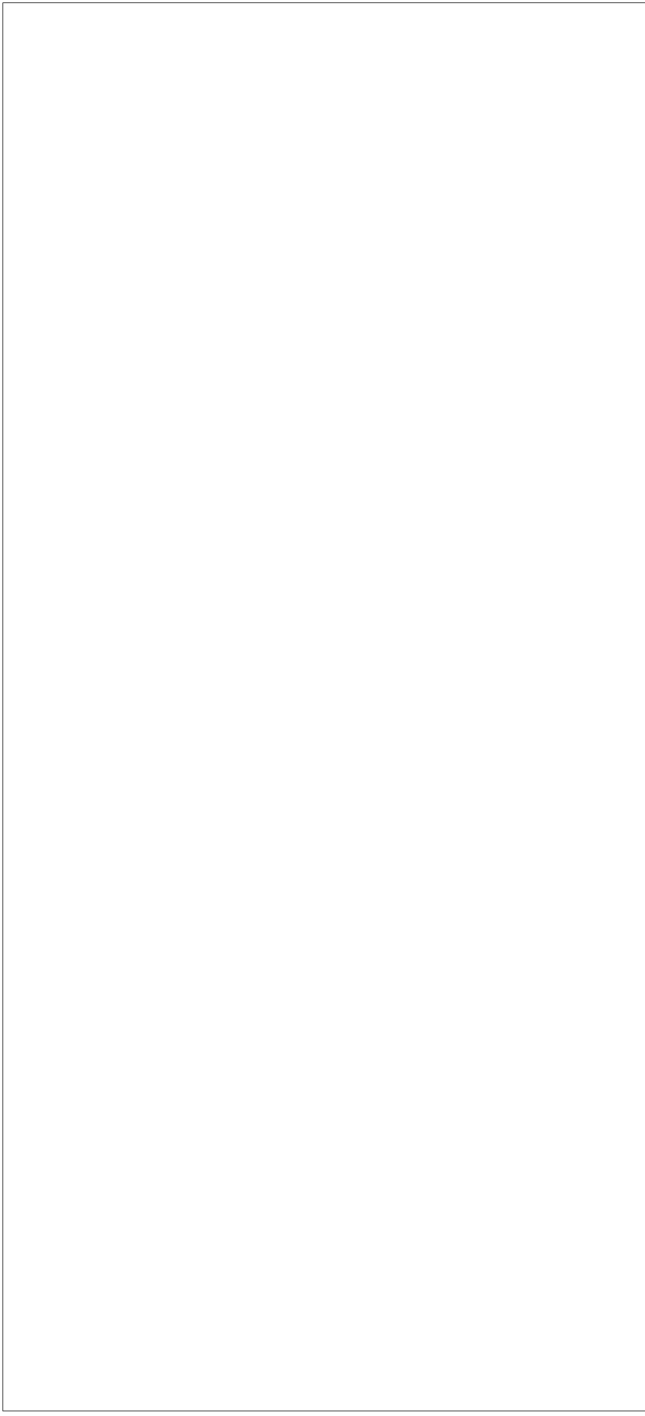
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military supply and more on bringing Israel to the negotiating table, especially if the Palestinian uprising in the occupied territories continues to threaten unrest in Jordan.



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