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*The belief is taking hold in Amman that Jordan's effort to steer a course between Egyptian President Sadat and his Arab opponents cannot be maintained much longer, but King Hussein does not appear to have any new strategies in mind.*

## Jordan and the Peace Negotiations

Jordan's King Hussein emerged from talks with Egyptian, Syrian, and Saudi officials in late July apprehensive about the consequence of a stalemate in the Middle East peace negotiating process. Hussein welcomes the new talks between Egyptian President Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Begin to be held in the US next month, but he is not sanguine that they will lead to any breakthroughs. He has long been convinced that he must keep his distance from Sadat's peace initiatives and he is unlikely to make an effort to join the talks.

Hussein sees lack of movement on negotiations as posing a serious threat to the moderate Arab regimes. He believes a stalemate will discredit Sadat and possibly lead to the Egyptian leader's overthrow, an event that would place severe pressure on the moderate governments. Hussein shows little inclination, however, to move the negotiations along by offering to mediate on the West Bank and Palestinian issues that are the stumbling blocks.

### Aware of the Risks

The King is aware that the risks to Amman of joining in Sadat's initiative are as substantial as those posed by a stalemate. Syrian disapproval, unease among his East Bank constituency, and increased tension with the Palestinians are only a few of the problems such a move could cause. Hussein, moreover, remains deeply suspicious of Sadat's intentions; he fears that the Egyptian President really wants Jordanian participation in talks

with Israel only as a cover for arranging a deal with Israel on the Sinai.

Over the past few months, Hussein has tried to avoid these risks by promoting a variety of alternative strategies. He has attempted to enlist Saudi support for a reconciliation effort, pushed for an Arab summit, and tried his hand at personal diplomacy, all in an effort to promote a unified Arab position that would keep the negotiating process moving.

Hussein now appears frustrated and bereft of new ideas. He continues to call for the US to press Israel to be more flexible on territorial questions but sees little likelihood this will happen soon. Some Jordanian newspapers and a handful of government officials have suggested that the Sadat initiative could somehow be combined with a reconvened Geneva conference that would allow Sadat to end direct talks with the Israelis without admitting failure. This idea, however, appears to have aroused only limited interest, and the King has not commented on it.

### Negotiations and Settlement

Hussein's thinking about the procedural aspects of the negotiating process and the outlines of a final settlement have not changed much since Sadat visited Jerusalem last November. The Jordanian leader has, however, made a number of suggestions on a transitional period for the West Bank.

The King insists that negotiations—whatever the venue—must be preceded by Israeli agreement on two points: with-

drawal to the June 1967 borders "with mutual, minor modifications," and self-determination for the Palestinians. The first requirement could probably be met by an Israeli agreement to implement UN Security Council Resolution 242—which Hussein regards as a "declaration of principles" sufficient for the continuation of negotiations. Hussein probably requires an explicit Israeli declaration on self-determination.

Hussein's insistence on such a declaration is in part a matter of self-interest—he has to be in line with other Arab states on this issue—but it is also designed to meet as many Palestinian demands as possible to avoid any residue of irredentism.

The Jordanians interpret self-determination to mean a plebiscite, probably coming at the end of a transitional period during which the West Bank and Gaza Strip would be administered by some sort of international authority. In the plebiscite, the Palestinians would vote on a series of options regarding the political future of the area.

Royal Court Chief Sharaf, an influential adviser to the King, has called for the participation of all Palestinians—not just West Bankers and Gazans—in such a plebiscite, but Hussein has been noncommittal and would probably prefer to see the vote restricted to current residents of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

A key Jordanian assumption is that the choices in a plebiscite would not include an independent Palestinian state, which Hussein believes would eventually threaten his regime. Hussein hopes that big-power

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pressure, coupled with Israeli demands, will restrict choices and that the most attractive will be some sort of a Palestinian federation with Jordan.

Jordan is not trying to undercut the Palestinians in the negotiating process; Hussein maintains, and is committed to having "representatives of the Palestinian Arab people" involved. The continued use of such language, deliberately omitting any reference to the Palestine Liberation Organization, points to Jordan's preference for non-PLO Palestinians as members of the negotiating team.

Providing that Israel agrees to withdraw in advance, Jordan is willing to accept an

extended transitional period—preferably under UN auspices—on the West Bank and in Gaza. Hussein does not want the Jordanian Army involved in a peacekeeping role on the West Bank during this period and would like to see an international force in place. Hussein maintains that Israel would have to dismantle its settlements during the transition period, although he is willing to permit freedom of movement for Israelis on the West Bank during and after the transition.

Jordan has long been willing to meet Israeli demands for normalization of relations as part of a final peace agreement, and Amman would have little

difficulty living with Israeli demands on this subject. Jordan is far less flexible on the difficult issue of East Jerusalem. Hussein insisted that Israel return East Jerusalem to Arab sovereignty and also give back all land that it has incorporated into Jerusalem's municipal boundaries since the Israelis occupied the city in 1967.

Hussein has obviously given a great deal of thought to the negotiating process and the outlines of a final settlement. In making final decisions, however, he will have to subordinate his personal preferences to the desires of Jordan's neighbors—chiefly Saudi Arabia and Syria.

