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# **Jordan: The Palestinian Stake in the East Bank**



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**A Research Paper**

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July 1987*

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# **Jordan: The Palestinian Stake in the East Bank**



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**A Research Paper**

This paper was prepared by   
Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis,  
with a contribution by  Office of  
Leadership Analysis. It was coordinated with the  
Directorate of Operations. 

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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:  
The Palestinian Stake  
in the East Bank** 

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**Summary**

*Information available  
as of 1 May 1987  
was used in this report.*

Jordan's Palestinians, who constitute a large and growing majority of its population, are unlikely to challenge the stability of the Hashemite regime in the near term. Palestinians have become well established economically, dominating trade and commerce, the professions, and the media. In short, the Palestinians' stake in Jordan is clear—they own much of it. Moreover, considerable intermarriage has blurred the distinction between Palestinians and native Jordanians, and mandatory military service and education have drawn the younger generations closer together.

During the 1990s, however, this situation may begin to unravel because opportunities for friction between the Palestinian and native Jordanian communities will grow. Despite King Hussein's efforts to co-opt Palestinians into the country's political and economic leadership, many Palestinians remain deeply suspicious of the King's intentions and continue to view Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) Chairman Arafat as their spokesman. Their general sense of detachment from Jordan's long-term destiny can be tied to the unresolved Palestinian issue and their belief that there is a deliberate policy that gives preference to native Jordanians for the highest positions in the government, the military, and education.

Jordan's economic slowdown—caused primarily by declining Arab aid and the recession in the Gulf states—has lowered worker remittances, dimmed overseas employment prospects, and increased job competition among recent Jordanian graduates. The slowdown may create a mass of unemployed or underemployed Palestinians and erode their stake in preserving the stability of the regime—a majority of the workers returning to Jordan from the Gulf are Palestinian. Such a development would widen the already major gap between native, middle-class Jordanians and over 200,000 Palestinians who remain in refugee camps near Amman and around the country.

Economic stagnation, moreover, would probably foster domestic political discontent, giving Islamic fundamentalist groups an opportunity to become a major political force, especially among young people, by exploiting Palestinian grievances. Since political parties were banned in 1957, opposition political opinion has been expressed mostly through Islamic fundamentalist or other clandestine groups. Although these groups do not pose a threat to the stability of the regime, as student riots at Yarmuk University last year illustrated, Islamic fundamentalists have proven able to

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exploit student frustrations and attract followers, particularly among Palestinian students, who may be hardest hit by a future contracting job market.

Growing frustration with the unsolved Palestinian problem on the West Bank could prompt Palestinians to view Jordan as their homeland and assert their "right" to govern it. King Hussein's willingness to participate in US-sponsored peace negotiations will be restrained by this internal Palestinian threat. The King must have the support of his Palestinian subjects to participate in an international conference or risk forcing them to choose between loyalty to the monarchy and Palestinian national aspirations.



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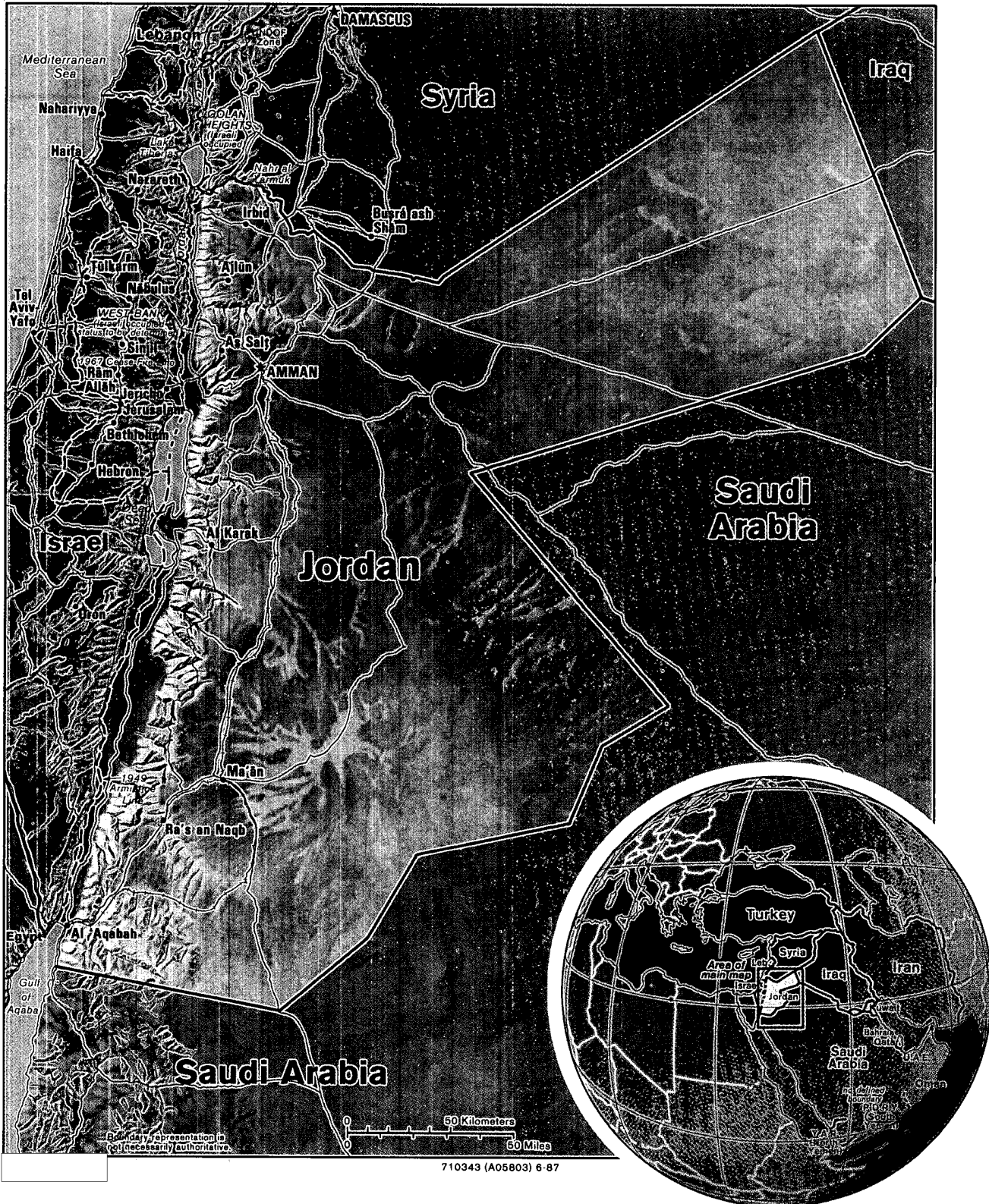
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Figure 1



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**Jordan:  
The Palestinian Stake  
in the East Bank**

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The Palestinians in Jordan have not challenged the regime in any major way since the 1970-71 civil war between the Jordanian Army and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) militias, and we do not believe they will threaten the Hashemite monarchy through the remainder of this decade. Many prominent Palestinians appear to have been co-opted by being named to high government positions, even though they are prevented from reaching the most sensitive, senior political and military levels.

The key to Palestinian integration into Jordanian society has been the comparatively unrestricted economic environment, particularly the decadelong period of economic growth beginning in the mid-1970s during which the Palestinian population prospered. Palestinians are well assimilated into Jordanian society and have developed strong family and economic ties to native Jordanians.

**The Palestinians of Jordan: Numbers and Loyalties**  
The Palestinian community is estimated to constitute between one-half to two-thirds of Jordan's population—there probably are between 1.4 million and 1.8 million Palestinians among Jordan's estimated population of 2.8 million.

Palestinians in Jordan are divided into four major groups, each with differing attitudes and degrees of loyalty to the Hashemite regime. The group with the oldest ties to Jordan consists of Palestinian families that arrived before 1948 and who identify themselves as Jordanians. For the most part, they have prospered commercially, professionally, and in government service.

A second group—by far the largest among the four—is made up of Palestinians who fled to Jordan during the 1948-49 Arab-Israeli war. Most academic specialists consider this group a silent majority in Jordan that has enjoyed considerable success commercially and has achieved positions of significant political

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***Problems in Estimating the Size  
of Jordan's Palestinian Community***

*The Jordanian Government defines as citizens those Palestinian Arabs who resided in the British-mandated territory of Palestine (1922-48) or their descendants. Since 1948-49, the massive influx of refugees from the West Bank and the movement in and out of the country by Palestinians who hold Jordanian passports but reside more or less permanently outside the country have made problematical various estimates of Jordan's Palestinian population.*

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*Jordan's Department of Statistics conducted the last official census in 1979, but no statistics were collected on the origin of Jordanian citizens or the Palestinian portion of the population. Even if Jordanian census takers were allowed to determine the Palestinian population, considerable intermarriage between Palestinians and native Jordanians has blurred national origin.*

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*72 percent of all Jordanians residing in the country are Palestinians or descendants of Palestinians, on the basis of the number of identity cards issued to Jordanian citizens. In contrast, the number of Palestinians living in Jordanian refugee camps is relatively easy to determine. Palestinian refugees in need of aid and assistance must register with the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). According to US Embassy figures, about 204,000 Palestinians still remain in refugee camps. This does not include a large but undetermined number of Palestinians from the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and Israel who have settled in Jordan since 1948 and who have not registered with UNRWA.*

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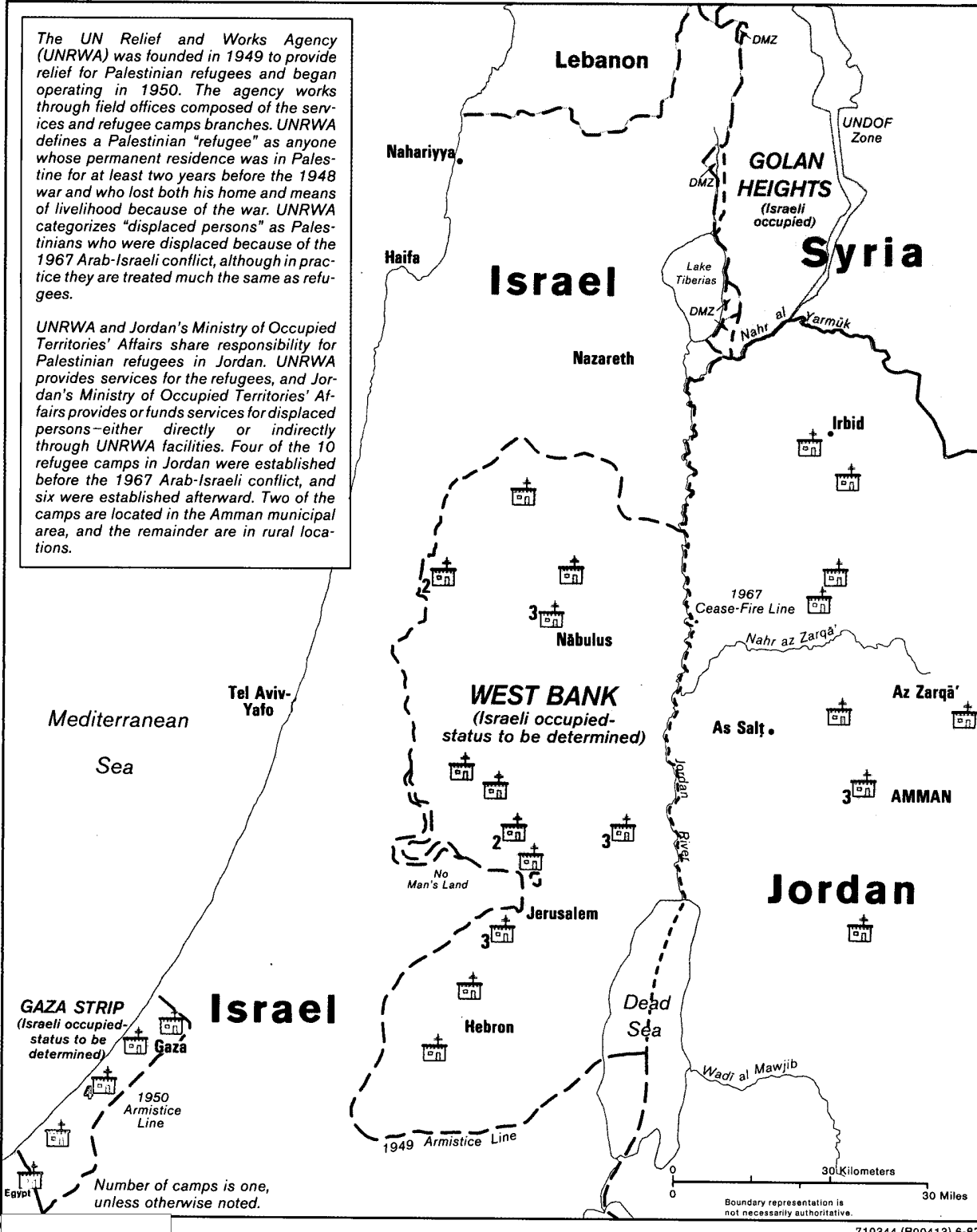
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Figure 2  
Selected Palestinian Refugee Camps



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responsibility and authority. With their education and sophistication, they became the core of Jordan's urban middle class. Although this group of Palestinians would like to regain lost Palestinian land, most have investments in homes and businesses in Jordan and are unlikely to risk losing them for an uncertain future in a fledgling West Bank state or entity. [ ]

A third major group consists of Palestinians who came after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. This group maintains a strong loyalty to the West Bank and is much more militant than the earlier arrivals in its support of PLO Chairman Arafat and his efforts to establish an independent Palestinian state. Many have not yet achieved the economic success of the 1948 refugees—a factor strongly underscoring their support for Arafat and the PLO. [ ]

The fourth Palestinian group includes refugees who have remained in camps after being displaced during the 1948 and 1967 wars. According to US Embassy statistics, about 204,000 Palestinians still live in these refugee camps. Except for some refugees who came from the Gaza Strip, all have been granted Jordanian citizenship and may live, work, and own property outside the camps. Both first- and second-generation Palestinians born and raised in the refugee camps are disgruntled, unsettled, despondent, and potentially militant, according to US Embassy reporting. [ ]

Although not resident in Jordan, another Palestinian group is inextricably linked to Jordan. These Palestinians, totaling 1.5 million according to UN estimates, live in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Most Palestinians in the West Bank and East Jerusalem—about 970,000 people—and to a lesser extent in the Gaza Strip—where about 560,000 reside—look to Amman for decisions affecting local government, education, health, housing, passports, religious affairs, and banking—giving Jordan considerable clout in day-to-day affairs. Many employees and officials have continued to receive salaries from the Jordanian Government since 1967, and thousands of retirees receive pensions from Amman. [ ]

#### **The Hashemites' Strategy of Political Assimilation: A Partial Success**

US Embassy reporting makes clear that King Hussein feels responsible for reconciling Hashemite and Palestinian interests, and to this end he has made Palestinian issues a central element in his domestic and foreign policies. A powerful force in the King's calculations is his belief that Jordanians and Palestinians are one "family" and that the East and West Banks should be united under enlightened Hashemite rule. The key to Hussein's strategy in handling the Palestinian challenge in Jordan is his determined effort to assert the primacy of Hashemite interests in the face of Palestinian nationalism. [ ] 25X1

Hussein has given Palestinians access to Jordan's political and social institutions to win their loyalty to the system, while simultaneously balancing national security considerations and the suspicions of the native Jordanian minority. Most Palestinians have become well established economically, dominating the professions, the media, and commerce. Considerable intermarriage has largely blurred national origin, and mandatory military service and education have drawn the younger generations closer together. [ ] 25X1

According to the US Embassy, the political moderation of Jordan's Palestinians can be attributed in large part to their desire to share in the general prosperity and stability that Jordan has enjoyed since the mid-1970s. Because of the King's efforts to integrate them into Jordanian society, Palestinians in Jordan enjoy rights that they have nowhere else in the Middle East. They do not need work or residence permits and may travel abroad on Jordanian passports. Palestinians living in Persian Gulf states, in contrast, must use laissez-passers and international travel documents. [ ] 25X1

The economic boom of the 1970s allowed Palestinians to assimilate to a greater degree in Jordan than anywhere else in the Arab world. Palestinians own a large proportion of Jordanian businesses, including [ ] 25X1

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Figure 3. King Hussein of  
Jordan

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firms in banking, insurance, manufacturing, construction, and shipping, according to US Embassy sources. Palestinians, moreover, play a prominent role in the state-owned enterprises in the mining, oil refining, transportation, communications, energy, and other sectors.

King Abdallah—Hussein's grandfather and ruler of Jordan from 1921 to 1951—made concerted efforts to integrate Palestinians into the political system from the beginning of mass Palestinian immigration following the 1948-49 Arab-Israeli war. Palestinian notables were appointed to the 10-member upper house of

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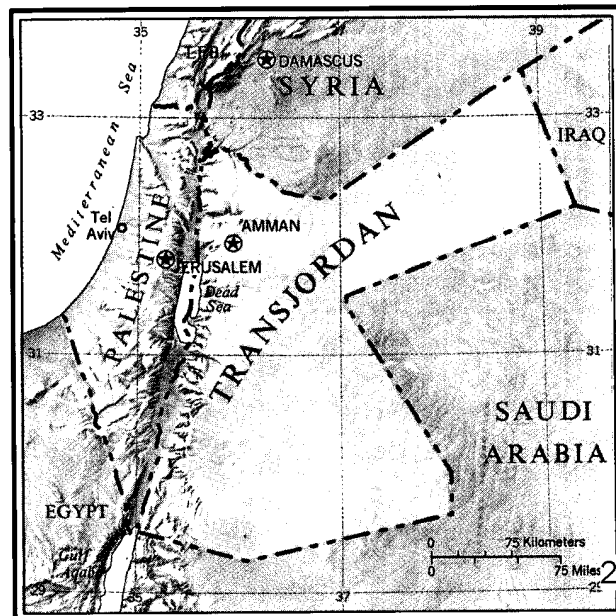
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### *History of the Hashemite Monarchy*

*The modern history of Jordan is intimately connected with the Hashemite family—members of the House of Beni Hashem, descended in the male line from the prophet Muhammad's daughter Fatima. Abdallah, King of Hijaz, arrived in the area in 1920, expecting to help his brother Faysal recover the Syrian throne and expel the French from Syria. The British, to prevent difficulties with the French, persuaded Abdallah to remain as amir in the eastern portion of mandated Palestine known as Transjordan. Officially established as a semi-independent emirate in 1923, Transjordan remained under British tutelage until 1946, when it became the independent Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. In 1951, King Abdallah was assassinated by a Palestinian—in part because of his clandestine dealings with the Israelis—as he entered al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. After a short reign by Abdallah's popular but mentally ill son, Talal, Abdallah's grandson Hussein bin Talal became King in 1953.*

**Palestine and Transjordan  
Under the British Mandate**



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parliament, to Cabinet posts, and to governorships. Palestinians who gained influence and prestige from their civil service positions under the British mandate were integrated into the upper echelons of Jordan's bureaucracy. Leading Palestinian nationalists gradually were co-opted into the system, often as ambassadors to other Arab and occasionally to West European states.

Hussein has continued this policy. He has made sure that Palestinians are always represented in Cabinets. Nine of the 23 ministers Prime Minister Rifa'i selected in 1985 to form his new government were of Palestinian origin. After a recent minor Cabinet reshuffle, many Palestinians with ties to established West Bank families remained. Most notably, Minister of the Royal Court Adnan Abu Odeh, Foreign Minister Tahir al-Masri, Minister of Planning Tahir Kan'an, Minister for Occupied Territories' Affairs

Marwan Dudin, Minister of Finance Hanna Odeh, and Chief of the Royal Court Marwan al-Kasim—all of Palestinian descent—have continued to play prominent roles within Rifa'i's Cabinet.

By recalling the lower house of parliament in January 1984 after a 10-year hiatus, King Hussein sought to provide an opportunity for even greater Palestinian participation at the grassroots level. The lower house originally consisted of 60 members—30 each from the East and West Banks. The balance between West and East Bank members of parliament was maintained with the passage of a new electoral law in March 1986 expanding the size of the lower house to 142 seats.

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**Decisionmaking in Jordan:  
Influential Palestinians**

Although Hussein remains Jordan's key decision-maker and opinion shaper, he delegates considerable authority to a few key officials, according to the US Embassy. For example, most economic and government administrative issues are delegated to Prime Minister Zayd al-Rifa'i, with only infrequent intervention from the palace. Hussein is much more deeply involved with defense and security issues, consulting closely with the Commander in Chief Bin Shaker and other senior officials. On foreign policy issues, Hussein takes the lead, consulting with a small circle of advisers. [redacted]

Most Palestinians in government advise the King on foreign and domestic policies generally dealing with Palestinian and West Bank affairs. For example, much of the early conceptual work on the peace process was done by Minister of the Royal Court Adnan Abu Odeh, according to the Embassy. Hussein has used various Palestinian subordinates, including Abu Odeh and Chief of the Royal Court Marwan al-Kasim, to play roles with actors in the peace process such as West Bank notables, PLO Chairman Arafat, and Arafat's lieutenants. Abu Odeh and Kasim are considered by Jordanians as the two most influential Palestinians in the Cabinet—Kasim is often pointed to as a possible successor to the Prime Minister. Hussein alone decides Jordan's course in the peace process, however, and has frequently overruled the recommendations of his advisers. [redacted]

Foreign Minister Tahir al-Masri probably owes his current position and his rapid career advancement to King Hussein's efforts to retain influence with the Palestinians, particularly those in the occupied territories, and is an example of a Palestinian success story. Masri, an experienced diplomat and civil servant, was born in the West Bank town of Nablus and is a member of the wealthy and politically important Masri clan. Masri is the spokesman and administrator of the daily details of diplomacy but has seen his role as Foreign Minister eclipsed by the dynamic Prime Minister Rifa'i. The US Embassy says that Masri provides a needed balance to Rifa'i's risky diplomatic ventures and was chosen by the King to accompany the Prime Minister on a recent trip to the United States for that reason. Other members of Masri's family who have found wealth and influence because of their assimilation into Jordanian society include Wa'il al-Masri, onetime Ambassador to Moscow; Awni and Munib al-Masri, who have connections with Jordan's petroleum market; and Dr. Munthir Wasif al-Masri, who has been a contender for the position of Minister of Labor and Social Development. [redacted]

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A provision of the new law allows Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan to elect 11 delegates to parliament, with the number to count toward the West Bank's allocation of 71 seats. In the past, refugee camps were not represented in parliament. [redacted]

**Social Cleavages: Widespread Discrimination  
and Alienation**

Despite the efforts at political assimilation, the relationship between the Palestinians and Jordanians remains uneasy. According to US Embassy sources,

many Palestinians complain that the King's pronouncements and his decision to reconvene parliament have not been matched by concrete efforts to eradicate longstanding practices making Palestinians second-class citizens. Embassy sources say that Palestinians believe there is a deliberate policy to give preference to native Jordanians for the highest positions in the government, the military, and education. [redacted]

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**The 1970-71 Civil War**

*The process of integrating the Palestinians into the Jordanian kingdom was severely disrupted by the Arab-Israeli war in June 1967. Not only did the Arab defeat discredit the monarchy among many Palestinians, but it also exposed the West Bank population to occupation by a dynamic and determined people.*

*For several years after the 1967 war, Palestinian guerrillas in Jordan exercised considerable political and military influence. Their popularity in the refugee camps was substantial, and even young children were recruited into paramilitary youth groups. During the period 1966-70, Palestinian groups launched guerrilla attacks against Israel from Jordanian territory that were met with brutal retaliation by Israeli forces. The Palestinian movement in Jordan—led at the time by George Habbash's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine—reached its peak in 1970 and severely threatened the Hashemite monarchy.*

*In September 1970, also known as Black September, the Jordanian Army fought a 10-day civil war with Palestinian guerrillas led by Habbash, who succeeded in persuading Fatah leader Yasir Arafat to involve his forces in the heavy fighting. This ended with an agreement, signed in Cairo, under which the guerrillas recognized Jordanian sovereignty and the King's authority and agreed to withdraw their forces from towns and villages. Some fighting continued, however, until 19 July 1971 when the Jordanian Army won a major victory over Habbash's men in the 'Ajlun area. Most of the several thousand Palestinian commandos thereafter relocated to Lebanon.*

Palestinians complain of discrimination in education and career opportunities. They theoretically compete with other Jordanians for acceptance at universities, vocational schools, or teacher training institutes without formal quota restrictions as in other Arab countries. the Ministry of Higher Education intervenes to ensure

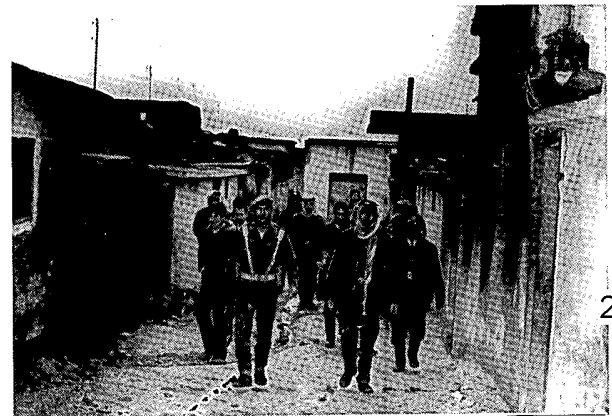


Figure 4. Security forces search Palestinian village, 1971

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Figure 5. Security forces attacking Palestinians, 1971

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that native Jordanian students receive about 60 percent of all first-year university openings and scholarships. The government also limits the number of Palestinians by distributing university openings on a geographic basis. For example, most Palestinians live in urban centers such as Amman and are thereby excluded from openings given to students from rural areas. Palestinian students and professors resent the fact that less qualified Jordanian students are given admissions preference and scholarships, particularly since Palestinians on average have scored higher on the national university entrance examination.

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Despite their predominance in the private sector, Palestinians are considerably underrepresented in the public sector as a consequence of Jordanian worries stemming from the civil war in 1970-71. Palestinians complain of discrimination in government hiring and promotion, according to US Embassy officials. Palestinians also note that Jordan's security services have a suspicious, if not hostile, attitude toward their community, which adds another source of antagonism toward the Jordanian establishment. [redacted]

[redacted] Palestinians in the armed forces are better educated than other groups but are openly distrusted. Palestinians are rarely found in combat units, and there are few high-ranking officers—for example, there are no Palestinian brigade commanders. The low number of high-ranking Palestinian officers—in sharp contrast with the Palestinians' heavy representation in the conscript ranks—is largely because Jordanian military leaders have not forgotten the 1970-71 civil war and, as a result, are extremely reluctant to allow Palestinians to move into the higher military ranks. Palestinian officers generally are placed in support units such as the maintenance corps, signal corps, and finance department, although there are occasional exceptions to this practice. Not surprisingly, [redacted] morale is low among Palestinians in the military because they resent their exclusion from more senior positions. In contrast, the Air Force was not heavily involved in the civil war and, consequently, has fewer bitter memories. A system of merit awards favoring promotions based on demonstrated ability has given Palestinians in the Air Force good opportunities to advance in the officer corps. [redacted]

Resentment between Jordanians and Palestinians is largely based on issues of power and wealth. Both Palestinians and native Jordanians have prospered during the economic boom, but US Embassy officials report that conspicuous consumption by wealthy Palestinians fuels the resentment of poor Jordanians who believe that Palestinians have taken over Jordan. Conversely, many poor refugees point to the wealth of some Jordanians as proof that Palestinians are discriminated against in education and employment. The greatest discontent is among the Palestinians still living in Jordan's refugee camps, whose standard of living remains low. [redacted]



Figure 6. Refugee camp near Amman [redacted]

#### Political Cleavages: Palestinian Nationalism Versus Hashemite Legitimacy

The US Embassy in Amman estimates that most Palestinians in Jordan are political moderates who have learned since the 1970-71 civil war to tolerate Hussein's authority. But they have never considered him their spokesman—a role they continue to accord to Arafat and the PLO, while generally rejecting the violent tactics of radical PLO factions. Radical Palestinian influence in Jordan has been limited since Hussein expelled the guerrillas from the country in 1970-71 and adopted strict security measures to prevent their reinfiltration. [redacted]

Jordan's Palestinians still identify to varying degrees with the Palestinian national movement, depending on their stake in Jordan. Their general sense of detachment from Jordan's long-term destiny can be tied to the unresolved Palestinian issue. In the past, the Palestinians' rejection of the Hashemite regime was

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*East Bank Versus Palestinian Identity*

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*The Kingdom of Jordan lies east of the Jordan River, the Dead Sea, and the series of wadis from the Dead Sea south to the Gulf of Aqaba. Native Jordanians are a diverse group, numbering probably more than 1 million, or more than one-third of Jordan's population of 2.8 million. These native people are the descendants of the approximately 300,000 inhabitants of the area when it became the Amirate of Transjordan in 1921. Nearly half of these 300,000 were bedouins, and the rest were townspeople, villagers, and seminomads. Amir and later King Abdallah based his authority primarily on support from the bedouins of the south, who shared his Hijazi origins. Abdallah also brought a small number of followers with him from Mecca and Syria following the French occupation of Damascus.* [ ]

*education level of Jordanians now equals that of Palestinians, but conservatism and provincialism remain Jordanian characteristics. They do not perceive regaining the West Bank or destroying Israel as being realistic or relevant.* [ ]

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*Before the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, Jordan's population was largely native born. One of the major consequences of this war was Jordan's seizure of the West Bank and the granting of citizenship to all residents of the West Bank as well as to the Palestinian refugees who found themselves in Jordan and the West Bank after the war.* [ ]

*Although possessing a similar ethnic and cultural heritage, Palestinians and Jordanians have different historical and national outlooks. Palestinian immigrants from the 1948 Arab-Israeli war and particularly the 1967 war have remained emotionally attached to the struggle for their lost homeland and have not focused on integrating with the tribal and kinship-oriented Jordanians. Those Palestinians in refugee camps have been heavily influenced since 1967 by the rise of a militant guerrilla movement and are undoubtedly the least supportive of the Hashemite monarchy.* [ ]

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*The native Jordanians—especially the bedouins—regard the settled townsmen as less manly and less Arab than themselves and generally oppose intermarriage. In contrast with the largely urban, educated Palestinians, the Jordanians before 1948 were provincial, conservative, and poorly educated. The*

*Despite these contrasts, many ties and relationships exist between Palestinians and Jordanians. Increased urbanization has led to greater intermingling between the two communities, particularly in Amman. One example is the enduring complex of traditional family links between the West Bank towns of Nabulus and Hebron and the Jordanian cities of As Salt and Al Karak, respectively. Even in the midst of Israel's occupation, families in Nabulus and As Salt and in Hebron and Al Karak have continued to arrange marriages and conduct a flourishing commerce.*

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*determined by the perception that their nationalist goals might be achieved by the monarchy's overthrow. The monarchy was threatened several times through the 1960s and up to 1971 when nationalist fervor was at its highest—stimulated by the union of Egypt, Syria, and Iraq by Egyptian President Nasir in 1963, the beginning of terrorist operations by Arafat's Fatah in 1966, and the PLO's maintenance of a major military presence in Jordan from 1968 to 1970.* [ ]

*Although Jordan's economic boom probably has strengthened the Palestinians' interest in the status quo, the potential exists for a revival of radical Palestinian influence. The US Embassy in Amman says Jordan's refugee camps are breeding grounds for Palestinian nationalism that can be exploited by radical Palestinian groups.* [ ]

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***Peace Process: Fueling Mutual Suspicions.*** King Hussein's relationship with the Palestinian community has become increasingly complicated by his efforts at political cooperation with the PLO. Despite the failure of Hussein's yearlong effort to reach an agreement with Arafat in February 1986, Jordanian officials continue to state publicly that Jordan will not enter peace negotiations with Israel without the PLO. Most Palestinians believe Hussein hopes to sway Palestinian opinion in his favor to undermine PLO influence and woo the support of an independent West Bank leadership that will join him in the PLO's place in the peace talks.

Most Palestinians suspect that the King is only interested in dominating the Palestinian movement and regaining control of the West Bank. Moreover, the US Embassy says that the Palestinians' longstanding suspicions about Hussein's intentions are standing in the way of their support of his ambitious West Bank development plan, which anticipates—unrealistically, we believe—spending \$1.3 billion by 1990 on development projects.

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*Figure 7. PLO Chairman Arafat and King Hussein at the 17th session of the Palestine National Council in Amman, 1985.* [redacted]



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Hussein's involvement in the peace process has increased the suspicions of native Jordanians—especially bedouins and their descendants—of the country's Palestinian community. According to the US Embassy, despite their staunch loyalty, native Jordanians are wary of the King's peace efforts, fearing that Hussein might undermine their interests for the sake of the Palestinians. After the 1974 Rabat Arab summit meeting decision naming the PLO as the "sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people," some East Bankers believed their sacrifices on behalf of the Palestinians were ignored and rejected by the Arab world and the Palestinians themselves. This sense of rejection and the realization of their own separate interests led to the growth of the "East Bank first" school of thought that calls on King Hussein to put national interests ahead of his sense of mission and responsibility for the West Bank and Jerusalem. They argue that Hussein should not negotiate with Israel on behalf of the Palestinians and demand that he have broad, public Arab support even for limited moves in the peace process. [redacted]

***Refugee Camps: Cauldrons of Discontent.*** We believe the refugees—not the established Palestinian business class—would have the greatest potential to cause

trouble if they were convinced that the King was trying to stifle Palestinian nationalism by entering negotiations with Israel without the PLO. US Embassy sources say that dedication to the Palestinian cause is more central than loyalty to the Hashemite kingdom for many Palestinians in the camps. [redacted]

***Growing Radicalism Among Palestinian Youth.*** Despite being more integrated into Jordanian society than their elders, Palestinian youth are the hardest hit by Jordan's social inequities and growing economic troubles. Violent campus unrest in May 1986 at Yarmuk University, north of Amman—Jordan's second largest university—resulted in the deaths of at least three students during confrontations with Jordanian security forces. Jordanian officials attributed the demonstrations to discontent with academic policies, but, in our judgment, the outbreaks also stemmed from growing student frustration with King Hussein's centralized governing style, poor employment opportunities, and subversive efforts by a small group of radical activists. Most Yarmuk students come from low-income, predominantly Palestinian families who could not afford newly imposed tuition hikes. [redacted]

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Figure 8. Jordanian bedouin chiefs—loyal to the King but wary of his peace efforts. [redacted]



Figure 9. Palestinian refugee family [redacted]

[redacted] Palestinian radicals were instrumental in exploiting political frustrations at the university. Many in the Yarmuk demonstrations denounced the government and the King's February 1986 speech that ended his dialogue with PLO Chairman Arafat. [redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted] Islamic fundamentalism in Jordan is providing another channel for expression of political opposition by disaffected Palestinian youth. [redacted]

[redacted] the Islamic fundamentalist movement and the Palestinian nationalist movement in Jordan are inextricably linked because many Palestinians look to the establishment of Ayatollah Khomeini's Islamic republic as an example of a successful popular uprising. [redacted] many young Palestinian women are wearing traditional Islamic garb more as a protest against the government than as a religious statement. [redacted]

The US Embassy in Amman has noted a discernible rise in Islamic activity on campuses in recent years largely because of the absence of competing student

organizations. In 1978 student unions were abolished after students at the University of Jordan in Amman challenged the university administration and called a major strike. The unions were replaced by elected "student committees" organized for each faculty. The resulting leadership vacuum on campus has been filled over the past five years by fundamentalist students, who now control virtually every student committee at the Universities of Jordan and Yarmuk. At least one small clandestine fundamentalist group, the "Supporters of God's Victory," promotes exclusively Palestinian causes. [redacted]

Although we believe Jordan's fundamentalists have had an impact on all levels of Jordanian society, they have not yet created a unified or coordinated national movement. Nonetheless, extremists have proved able to generate explosive confrontations at Yarmuk University and have the potential to do so again in the future, particularly as Jordan's economic conditions worsen. The US Embassy says the student body at Yarmuk University is 80 percent Palestinian. Many recognize that they will be unable to find jobs when they graduate because of Jordan's stagnating economy and few job opportunities in the Gulf and believe they have nothing to lose by protesting. [redacted]

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**Irbid: Potential for Unrest**

*The violent campus unrest at Yarmuk University focused attention on the northern city of Irbid, which is one of Jordan's major urban centers and the site of the country's fifth-largest Palestinian refugee camp. Irbid's economy, which is based predominantly on agriculture, provides only limited job opportunities for university graduates.* [redacted]

*During the 1970-71 civil war the city's large number of Palestinian refugees and its proximity to the Syrian border and Syrian troops made Irbid an ideal PLO base. [redacted] the PLO continues on a small scale to exploit antimonarchy sentiments among students frustrated over poor post-graduation employment prospects.* [redacted]

*Fundamentalist sentiment also appears strong among Irbid's Palestinians, as witnessed in a fierce byelection battle to fill a vacant seat in parliament early last year. A Muslim Brotherhood candidate lost narrowly to a Christian candidate in a close campaign.* [redacted]

*We believe the potential for further unrest is high if job prospects remain bleak for Irbid's sizable student population and if the government continues to be seen as being heavyhanded in dealing with Palestinian political and religious activity.* [redacted]

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**Prospects**

For the short term—at least through the remainder of this decade—we believe the animosities between the Palestinian and native Jordanian communities are manageable. Jordan's healthy economy over the last 10 years has materially improved the lives of both groups, with some Palestinians actually becoming the wealthiest among Jordan's business community. This

wealth and the intermarriage between the two groups give the Palestinians a strong social and financial stake in good relations with their Jordanian neighbors. [redacted]

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During the 1990s, however, we believe changing political, economic, and social conditions will magnify the Palestinians' discontent with continuing limitations on their status, particularly if the population balance shifts more in their favor—which almost certainly will happen, given the Palestinians' high birthrate. [redacted]

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According to Jordanian Government estimates, the country's work force will increase by 25 percent, from 535,000 in 1986 to 670,000 in 1990, largely because of the increasing numbers of Jordanian youth and greater female participation. The return of workers who are losing their jobs in the Persian Gulf states will add to the economy's burden of absorbing so many new workers. Recession in the Gulf, where 40 percent of Jordanian workers are employed, forced about 20,000 Jordanians—many of them Palestinians—to return home during 1986. This has prevented many of Jordan's recent high school, vocational school, and university graduates from obtaining jobs. With its domestic labor force growing at 5 percent annually, unemployment could reach 20 percent by 1990, according to US Embassy sources. [redacted]

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As economic difficulties grow, the Palestinian stake preserving domestic stability to protect their interests under Hashemite rule may be eroded. We believe a mass of unemployed or underemployed Palestinians would pose a growing and potentially ominous security risk. Dissatisfaction with their standard of living and increased discrimination in university and career opportunities may cause more Palestinian youth to seek solace in fundamentalist Islamic practices. [redacted]

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We believe that, for King Hussein, meeting the minimum aspirations of the Palestinians in any future peace talks will be an overriding national objective. According to the US Embassy, the King's sensitivities to Palestinian concerns, however, will not earn him the unquestioned support of Jordan's Palestinians

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*Jordan's Growing Economic Woes*

*Reduced Arab aid and declining worker remittances are taking their toll on Jordan's hard-pressed economy. Assistance from the Persian Gulf states to Jordan dropped from \$1.2 billion in 1981 to about \$580 million in 1986. If Riyadh does not forgive Jordan's oil debt, Gulf aid this year will be significantly below 1985 levels.* [redacted]

*slack—an unlikely development—the levels and pattern of growth projected in the plan will not be realized.* [redacted]

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*Jordan's third five-year development plan (1986-90) focuses on assistance to its troubled sectors, including the ever-growing need for water, further development of the service and agriculture sectors, housing and construction, and relief of unemployment. By stimulating investment to spur job creation, the government hopes to create approximately 100,000 jobs over the next five years. If realized, the new jobs would help to offset reduced remittances from Jordanians working abroad—particularly in the Persian Gulf—and help to hold Jordan's unemployment rate to no more than 10 percent by 1990. We believe Jordan will not garner the financial resources needed to implement the investment called for in the five-year plan. Unless the private sector can pick up the*

*Jordan's unemployment forecasts are badly flawed, in our judgment. More realistic US Embassy projections place the unemployment rate in 1990 at about 20 percent, which would leave over 100,000 Jordanians out of work. Employment prospects for university graduates—whose unemployment rate already runs significantly higher than the national average—are further clouded by the graduates' refusal to accept jobs in the construction, agricultural, and service sectors. US Embassy sources estimate that 30 percent of Jordan's engineers and physicians—many of whom are Palestinian—are unemployed.* [redacted]

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*Such high unemployment would place the Jordanian Government under tremendous pressure to become the employer of last resort, a role it is not inclined to take. With limited growth prospects, however, the government ultimately may have to create a large number of make-work jobs.* [redacted]

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because of their vivid memories of past Jordanian crackdowns, particularly the suppression of Palestinian guerrillas during the 1970-71 civil war. These reservations about Hashemite intentions will increase if it appears that Jordanian-Israeli negotiations over the future of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip will take place. Hussein will have to bring in the PLO directly or else secure its blessing for non-PLO Palestinian representatives to avoid forcing his Palestinian subjects to choose between the monarchy and their nationalist aspirations. If the Palestinian issue remains unresolved, Jordan's Palestinians are likely to begin to agitate for political change in Jordan, arguing for greater democratization of the country's political institutions. The King's decision to reconvene the lower house of parliament, partly to broaden Palestinian participation in government, has stimulated increased parliamentary criticism of Hussein's policies, particularly by Islamic fundamentalist members.

King Hussein's continued commitment to the Palestinian issue also is likely to increase tensions between native Jordanians and Palestinians, particularly if Jordan's economic problems grow—as seems likely. Jordanians will come to resent the financial and political capital spent to resolve the issue, particularly Hussein's plan for West Bank development.

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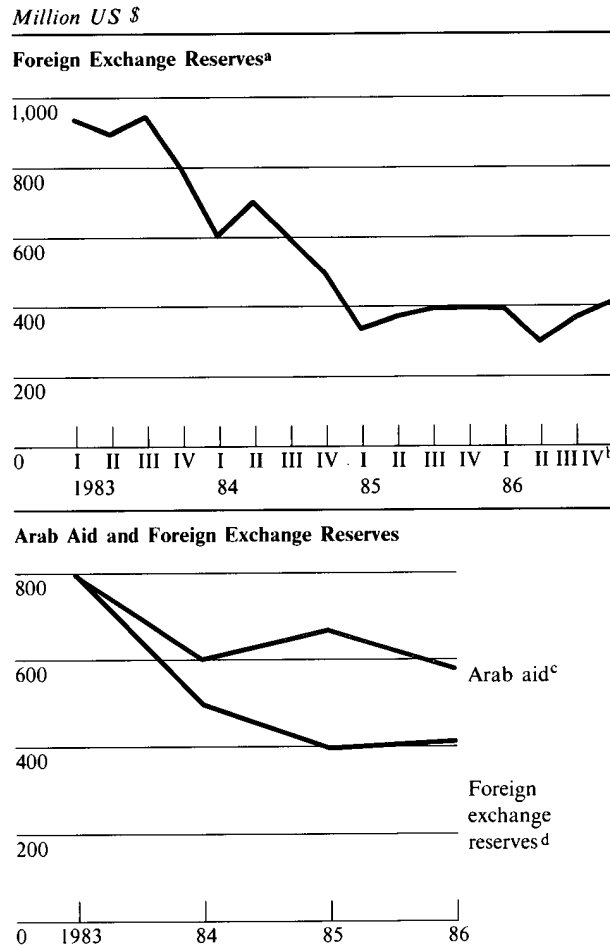
An Israeli decision to annex the West Bank and the Gaza Strip would create serious and possibly destabilizing tensions in Hussein's relations with his Palestinian subjects. Such an Israeli move could quickly generate Palestinian underground activity against the regime of a sort not seen since the 1970-71 civil war. An Israeli decision to force significant numbers of Palestinians under occupation to emigrate to Jordan would create an overwhelming Palestinian majority

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[redacted]

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**Figure 10**  
**Jordan: Declining Arab Aid and Foreign**  
**Exchange Reserves, 1983-86**



<sup>a</sup> By quarter, end of period figure.  
<sup>b</sup> Estimated.  
<sup>c</sup> Baghdad Agreement payments.  
<sup>d</sup> End of period; 1986 year-end figure estimated.

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within the country and imperil the Hashemite crown. This majority, frustrated with the Jordanian-dominated status quo, could use its numerical superiority over time to foster development of a Palestinian state in Jordan.

Palestinian acceptance of the monarchy is essential to a smooth succession on King Hussein's death—a contingency few in Jordan wish to face, given Crown Prince Hassan's widely doubted leadership abilities and past poor performance. We believe Hassan's views toward the Palestinians closely resemble King Hussein's, and he would almost certainly continue the King's moderate policies. Although Hassan has concentrated his efforts on economic, social, and cultural affairs, he has assumed a more active role in foreign affairs as well.

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The Crown Prince is an ardent supporter of the Palestinian cause and strongly denounces Israel's West Bank settlement policy and the effects of its occupation of Jerusalem. He has written several books on the subject and has made himself an expert on demographic changes in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The US Embassy reports that he pays frequent visits to Jordan's refugee camps, particularly when the King has made foreign policy decisions unpopular among Palestinians, such as the ending of a peace dialogue with PLO Chairman Arafat in February 1986. He has been active recently in drumming up international financial support for Jordan's West Bank development plan. The US Embassy reports he has worked closely with Minister of Planning Tahir Kan'an, a Palestinian, to redirect the bureaucracy into thinking about the coherence of Jordan's programs on the West Bank and to bring them into conformity with Jordan's overall development efforts.

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Despite Hassan's vocal support for the Palestinian cause in recent years, US Embassy sources report that many Palestinians do not entirely trust him and continue to believe it was the Crown Prince who pushed King Hussein into confrontation with the Palestinians during the 1970-71 civil war. We believe, however, that many Palestinians would accept Hassan's rule because they would not want to risk losing the stability and prosperity they have enjoyed over the last 10 years.

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