

JORDAN IN THE STRUGGLE
FOR ITS OWN SURVIVAL, 1967 – 1974*
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By 10 June 1967 Israel was in occupation of the Sinai Peninsula, the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and the West Bank of the River Jordan. The effect on all three countries was devastating, but especially for Jordan, which lost a third of its population and its prime agricultural land, and control of the Islamic and Christian sites in Jerusalem. The enormity of the defeat brought about a great change in the attitude of the Palestinians, a large number of whom now became convinced that the Arab regimes were either unable or unwilling to liberate Palestine. The Palestine Liberation Organization's new tactics began to pose a severe threat to the continuation of the Jordanian monarchy, so in 1970 its guerrillas were driven out of Jordan. Over the next few years the Jordanian government gradually reasserted its authority over the country. Jordan did not participate in the war of October 1973. However, King Husayn, along with his fellow Arab leaders, was obliged to recognize the PLO as the "sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people" at the Rabat Arab summit in October 1974, which inevitably diminished both his authority, and much of what was left of his appeal, on the West Bank.

Keywords: the 1967 Arab defeat, Jordan's losses, the road to Black September, a regime built on loyalty to the king, secret contacts with Israel, rejection of the Allon Plan

The crushing defeat of the Arabs in 1967 brought about a major shift in the attitude of the Palestinians, a large number of whom had by now become convinced that the Arab regimes were incapable of liberating Palestine. The Israeli Defence Minister, General Moshe Dayan, was not optimistic about relations with the Arabs when he declared: "we are doomed to live in a permanent state of war with the Arabs and there is no escape from casualties and bloodshed".¹ The Palestine Liberation Organization's new tactics, rejecting the

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status quo and determined to continue fighting Israel, began to pose a serious threat to the continued survival of the Jordanian monarchy. Palestinian guerrillas based in Jordan, launched attacks into Israel, provoking fierce retaliatory strikes by the Israeli army. In the Battle of Camp Karāma on 21 March 1968, Palestinian guerrillas, supported by the Jordanian army, repelled a strong Israeli force with a number of tanks.² As the PLO's confidence grew, its presence created increasing anarchy and its relations with the Jordanian authorities became increasingly strained. The authorities demanded calm and discipline, while Yāsir ʿArafāt, speaking on behalf of the Palestinians, declared "we are determined to prove that there is a people in our Arab nation who are ready to fight and die".³

During the spring months of 1969, the situation in the region began to deteriorate. The leaders of the four superpowers – the US, the USSR, Britain and France – met for the first time on 3 April and their negotiations continued intermittently until June. Meanwhile, the US had established special contact with Jordan, and King Ḥusayn met with Richard Nixon and William Rogers on 8 April, who understood the complexity of the king's position. Nixon called a meeting of the National Security Committee (NSC) for 25 April, at which there was a consensus that a settlement would have to be reached. The proposal was to be prepared by W. Rogers, who noted that the Israelis were increasingly clearly linking their security to territorial claims.⁴ By the end of the year, Secretary Rogers had finalized his multi-point settlement proposal for Jordan and Egypt and presented it publicly on 9 December.⁵ Israel immediately rejected the plan. The US position was subsequently revised: As early as January 1970, Nixon came up with a new proposal, departing from both Rogers and Resolution 242, and declaring that peace could only be achieved by direct agreement between the parties concerned, thus de facto adopting the Israeli position.⁶ A decisive role in modifying the American position was played by Henry Kissinger.⁷

Although the majority of the Jordanian population understood the attitudes of the Palestinians and sympathized with their desire to return to their homeland, the actions and demeanour of the Palestinian guerrilla fighters (*fidāʿīyūn*)⁸ aroused

¹ HIRST, D. *Puška a olivová ratolest* [The Gun and the Olive Branch], p. 324.

² LUNT, J. *Hussein of Jordan. A Political Biography*, p. 115.

³ HART, A. *Arafat. Terrorist or Peacemaker?*, p. 260.

⁴ QUANDT, W. B. *Decade of Decisions. American Policy Toward the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1967 – 1976*, p. 85.

⁵ The full text of the speech can be found in the *New York Times*, 11 December 1969.

⁶ RIYĀD, M. *Mudakkirāt Maḥmūd Riyād (1948 – 1978). Amrikā wa al-ʿArab* [The Memoirs of Maḥmūd Riyād. America and the Arabs], Vol III, p. 74.

⁷ KISSINGER, H. *Roky v Bilém domě* [White House Years], p. 349.

⁸ *Fidāʿī* – one who sacrifices himself (esp. for his country), partisan, freedom fighter.

resentment. The PLO obtained weapons and money from Saudi Arabia, and its fighters shelled Israeli targets across the River Jordan. This led to massive Israeli counterstrikes that resulted in many civilian casualties. King Ḥusayn came under public pressure to restore order, but he still hesitated to engage in open confrontation with the PLO. In July 1969 he made changes in the armed forces. ʿĀmīr Khammāsh became minister of defense, and *Sharīf* Nāṣir ibn Jamīl, the brother of the queen mother, took the former's place as commander-in-chief of the army. The king's cousin, *Sharīf* Zayd ibn Shākīr, became commander of the elite 1st Armoured Division. In this situation, the king was confident that he would be able to handle the situation.⁹

In February 1970, King Ḥusayn appointed General Muḥammad Rasūl al-Kaylānī as the new Minister of the Interior,¹⁰ who immediately issued a ban on the carrying of weapons in cities and a regulation concerning the registration of all motor vehicles. All this sparked a wave of protest not only in Jordan but also in Syria and Iraq. Even Egyptian President Jamāl ʿAbdannāṣir expressed support for the PLO during King Ḥusayn's visit to Cairo. In June 1970, US Secretary of State William Rogers came up with a new diplomatic initiative to secure peace between the Arabs and Israel. Egypt on 22 July accepted the Rogers Plan, which in turn gave Jordan the cover to add its approval on 26 July.¹¹ The PLO firmly rejected the plan, because of its recognition of the state of Israel and because it confirmed the loss of a significant part of Palestine. The response of the radical groups was a resumption of armed attacks on Jordanian military and civilian targets, so the king agreed to reinforce his troops in the capital.¹²

In the summer months, the king luckily escaped two assassination attempts. The king's relatives resigned their posts and the king personally took over as commander-in-chief of the army, and Major-General Mashhūr Ḥadīṭa became Chief of the general staff. There was also a change at the head of the government on 26 June, when the moderate ʿAbdalmunʿim ar-Rifāʿī replaced Bahjat at-Talhūnī. A joint commission with the PLO was formed to resolve the mounting problems. The 'civil disobedience' of the Palestinian resistance organizations continued and took on an international dimension when on 6 September fighters of the *Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine* (al-Jabha ash-Shaʿbīya li-taḥrīr Filastīn) hijacked four planes carrying 425 passengers, three of which landed in Jordan.¹³ The government could not intervene because the hijackers threatened to blow up the planes. It was a humiliating admission of weakness for

⁹ LUNT, J. *Hussein of Jordan*, p. 123.

¹⁰ SHLAIM, A. *Lion of Jordan. The Life of King Hussein in War and Peace*, p. 313.

¹¹ QUANDT, W. B. *Decade of Decisions*, p. 101.

¹² ROBINS, Ph. *A History of Jordan*, p. 130.

¹³ The fourth attempt in London airport was foiled.

the monarchy. It appeared that even Yāsir ʿArafāt was no longer in control of his fighters. Finally, on 15 September the king lost patience and acted. On 16 September he appointed a military government, under the little-known but capable Brigadier Muḥammad Dāwūd, who possessed the three qualities needed: he was loyal, he was himself a Palestinian, and he denounced the excesses of the Palestinians.¹⁴ The reactivated Marshal Ḥābis al-Majāli became Commander-in-chief of the army. The new prime minister tried to reach an agreement with Yāsir ʿArafāt, but to no avail.

At that moment, the army's loyalty was the most important factor, as some 5,000 Palestinian soldiers and officers either defected to the guerrillas or took off their uniforms and stayed at home.¹⁵ The PLO, however, was counting on a much larger number. The armed conflict broke out on 18 September and lasted for over a week, during which period some 3,000 Palestinians, both armed and civilian, were killed and several refugee camps were literally razed to the ground by Jordanian artillery. On 24 September, Sudanese President Jaʿafar an-Numayrī visited Amman and negotiated the terms of a ceasefire.¹⁶ On the morning of 25 September, Radio Damascus broadcast a message from Yāsir ʿArafāt to the guerrillas to abide by the terms of the agreed ceasefire. The first stage of the civil war in Jordan ended on 27 September 1970 when King Ḥusayn and Yāsir ʿArafāt met in Cairo at a meeting of Arab heads of state convened by President Jamāl ʿAbdānāšir, who arranged a ceasefire between Jordan and the PLO, at which King Ḥusayn and Yāsir ʿArafāt shook hands.¹⁷ Unfortunately, the following afternoon the Egyptian President, after he had seen off the last guest at the airport, returned home and, while lying exhausted in bed, succumbed to a heart attack. Yāsir ʿArafāt in Damascus received the sad news with the words “we have lost everything” and most Arabs felt that with his departure they had lost the hope of a just peace.¹⁸

After the events of ‘Black September’, King Ḥussein had no intention of tolerating the presence of thousands more Palestinian gunmen in his country. After the head of the military government, Muḥammad Dāwūd, resigned, the king in early October appointed the hard-line Jordanian patriot Waṣfī at-Tall as prime minister to enforce law and order in the country. What followed was the gradual expulsion of Palestinian guerrillas from Jordan, and the last clash took place in

¹⁴ DALLAS, R. *King Hussein. A Life on the Edge*, p. 134.

¹⁵ EI-EDROOS, S. A. *The Hashemite Arab Army, 1908 – 1979*, p. 459.

¹⁶ BULLOCH, J. *The Making of a War*, p. 66.

¹⁷ Ad-DĪB, Faṭḥī. *ʿAbdānāšir wa taḥrīr al-mashriq al-ʿarabī* [Jamāl/ ʿAbdānāšir and the Liberation of the Arab East], pp. 437–438.

¹⁸ HART, A. *Arafat. Terrorist or Peacemaker?*, p. 323.

July 1971 in the hills near the town of Jarash.¹⁹ After the defeat, some fled and those who surrendered were allowed to go to Syria. PLO leaders knew that if they lost their bases in Jordan, Syria would gratefully accept them, but not as an independent Palestinian liberation movement, so not wanting to play the role of vassals, they considered Syria out of the question. Moreover, in November 1970, after a bloodless coup, Ḥāfiẓ al-Asad, who did not consider Yāsir ʿArafāt his friend,²⁰ came to power in Syria. And so Yāsir ʿArafāt and with him the rest of the guerrillas had to leave Jordan in November 1971, thus ending the period when there was a state within a state.²¹ The Palestinian organizations settled in Lebanon, where they could reorganize their ranks and defend themselves.

The expulsion of the Palestinian resistance from the country significantly strengthened the position of the royal regime in Amman. The government was determined to prevent the guerrillas from returning to the country and could rely fully on the army in this matter. Once order was restored, the government was not going to take any risk of anarchy, and so the state of emergency imposed in connection with the 1967 war remained in force as a measure to prevent guerrillas from attempting to return to the country and smuggle weapons into the refugee camps. In order to reduce the possibility of terrorist attacks and acts of sabotage, additional measures were taken at all points of entry into the country, major thoroughfares and strategic crossroads. The first political casualty was Prime Minister Waṣṣī at-Tall, who on 28 November 1971 was shot dead in front of Cairo's Sheraton Hotel.²² The assassination bore the hallmark of the secret services, but his death was immediately branded an act of revenge by the Palestinian terrorist organization *Black September*.²³

Over the next few years, the Jordanian government gradually asserted its authority over the country, and a highly effective security service was established and a system of surveillance developed to stop and deter dissidents. The Palestinians were treated extremely harshly and ruthlessly by the authorities. However, the new Prime Minister, Aḥmad al-Lawzī, granted a general amnesty to all Palestinians who had been detained since September 1970, regardless of the nature of the charge.²⁴ After 1971, the internal policy of the Jordanian regime was mainly aimed at promoting national unity among the population. Palestinian

¹⁹ ROBINS, Ph. *A History of Jordan*, p. 132.

²⁰ HART, A. *Arafat. Terrorist or Peacemaker?*, p. 324.

²¹ SAYIGH, Y. *Armed Struggle and the Search for State: The Palestinian National Movement, 1949 – 1993*, p. 281.

²² SALIBI, K. *The Modern History of Jordan*, p. 244; DALLAS, R. *King Hussein. A Life on the Edge*, p. 141.

²³ HART, A. *Arafat. Terrorist or Peacemaker?*, p. 323.

²⁴ SALIBI, K. *The Modern History of Jordan*, p. 246.

particularists understood national unity as the recognition of the right to feel Palestinian, while Jordanian particularists considered only themselves to be the true inhabitants of the country. The state did not have an elected parliament and this state of affairs continued until 1984.

In many ways, the events of 1970 – 1971 changed the course of state-building in Jordan, renewing the debate over national identity and delaying the prospect of an early end to the authoritarian rule of the Hashemite dynasty. National identity took on new meaning in the monarchy as symbols, narratives, and assessments of internal conflict during the traumatic period following the 1967 war began to be reevaluated. While the king was consolidating his position in the hearts and minds of loyal East Bankers the presence of a large Palestinian minority that was in the process of becoming a majority required new thinking in Jordanian circles.²⁵ Mistrust and continued hostility towards the PLO were fundamental factors that influenced Ḥusayn's Palestinian policy during the 1970s.

In the summer of 1971, after the definitive expulsion of Palestinian fighters from Jordan, King Ḥusayn consolidated his domestic position but severely damaged his relations with the rest of the Arab world. The country, although isolated, was not about to beg to return to the Arab fold or to return to it on unacceptable terms. Now that Jordan had emerged from the political turmoil that had lasted since the 1967 war, changes had to be made. The king's relationship with his younger brother Ḥasan, the crown prince, played an important role. The king was involved in high politics, especially foreign relations and the military, while his brother oversaw the economic development and internal stability of the state from the early 1970s onwards. Despite their different natures, an effective working partnership developed between the brothers.²⁶

The family's loyalty to the king formed one of the pillars of power, and the other pillar was the king's close circle of political advisers, which included his friend Zayd ar-Rifā^cī and his cousin Zayd ibn Shākir.²⁷ Both were the king's peers, but their rise to the top took different paths. Zayd ar-Rifā^cī was the son of a former prime minister, a stalwart of the regime. He had studied in Beirut and later at universities in the US. He subsequently held important posts in the royal court and in the diplomatic service. Zayd ibn Shāqir devoted his life to service in the army. He was commander of an armoured brigade and in the second half of the 1960s was commander of the 3rd Division of the Jordanian army. During the 1970 crisis, he became chief of the general staff and was a fierce opponent of the

²⁵ MILTON-EDWARDS, B., HINCHCLIFFE, P. *Jordan: a Hashemite Legacy*, p. 50.

²⁶ ASHTON, N. *King Hussein of Jordan. A Political Life*, p. 159.

²⁷ LUNT, J. *Hussein of Jordan*, p. 20.

Palestinian guerrillas.²⁸ The third and most important pillar of the king's power was the army, whose loyalty, discipline and morale had guaranteed his survival in September 1970.

In addition to the domestic pillars, Ḥusayn also had international support thanks to good relations with the US, although it was a very unequal relationship. The limit to this relationship, however, was the special relationship the US had with Israel. In 1969, Ḥussein hoped that the Nixon administration would take a more objective approach to the Arab-Israeli conflict than Johnson's, but as the 1972 presidential election approached, these hopes were dashed. In an attempt to break the deadlock and regain the firm political ground he had lost after the expulsion of Palestinian fighters, on 15 March 1972 Ḥussein unveiled his plan for the creation of a *United Arab Kingdom*.

The plan rested on a kind of federative annexation of the Israeli-occupied West Bank to the East Bank, so that the kingdom would consist of Palestine and Jordan.²⁹ Each part would have its own elected governor and parliament and each with extensive responsibility for the management of its own local affairs. The king would remain commander-in-chief of the armed forces. Amman would be the capital both of the kingdom and of the United Arab Kingdom as a whole, while Arab East Jerusalem would be the capital of the West Bank. Ḥussein also expressed the hope that other areas, such as the Gaza Strip, would later be incorporated into the Palestinian part.³⁰

But the king's plan had two practical problems: how to persuade the Israelis to relinquish control of the occupied territory, which was to be the Palestinian part of the United Arab Kingdom, and how to persuade the Palestinians that this part was to be their home. It is possible that the king had hatched the plan in advance as part of his secret dialogue with some senior Israeli officials, but Prime Minister Golda Meir was apparently not privy to the plan. In a speech to the Knesset on 16 March 1972, she described the plan as 'a surprising invention of its authors' and rejected it on the grounds that it dealt unilaterally with issues relating to Israel's borders and security without expressing any effort to establish peace. Particular criticism was levelled at the idea of making East Jerusalem the capital of the Palestinian region.

In the second half of 1972, all diplomatic activity to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict came to a halt. Israel had no real interest in negotiating with any of its Arab neighbours: the fundamental aim of its policy was to maintain its territorial

²⁸ From 1976 Zayd ibn Shākir held the post of Commander-in-Chief of the Jordanian army. In GLUBB, J. B. *Qīṣṣat al-jaysh al-ʿarabī* [The Story of the Arab Legion]. (Arab translation) Amman: Ad-dār al-ʿarabīya li an-nashr, p. 491.

²⁹ SALIBI, K. *The Modern History of Jordan*, pp. 251–252.

³⁰ ASHTON, N. *King Hussein of Jordan*, p. 161.

gains on all fronts and to make no concessions in the interests of peace.³¹ This attitude was based on the conviction that this state of affairs could be prolonged indefinitely, since Israel's military strength would deter the Arabs from further adventures in war. Nor has the Israeli leadership shown any diplomatic flexibility with regard to Jordan, let alone any desire for a peace agreement. There had been no practical cooperation in solving routine problems, and this state of affairs between Israel and Jordan had contributed to the diplomatic stalemate in the Middle East.³²

In the spring months of 1973, there were still disagreements between Egypt and Syria on the one hand and Jordan on the other, which prevented coordinated action in preparation for the liberation of the occupied territories. These disagreements were caused by King Ḥusayn's plan to create a united kingdom consisting of Jordan and the West Bank after its liberation. This plan, however, encountered stiff opposition not only from the Palestinians but also from most other Arab states. On 31 May 1973, Egyptian Foreign Minister Maḥmūd Riyād visited President Ḥāfīz al-Asad, who, like Anwar as-Sādāt, was determined to launch a war of liberation, and it was worthwhile to use the Jordanian army as well. However, the media campaign against the king had to end to create favourable conditions, and Ḥāfīz al-Asad welcomed the effort to restore normal relations.

The following day Maḥmūd Rijād visited King Ḥusayn in Amman. He conveyed to him the views of the presidents of Syria and Egypt regarding Jordan's role in the impending war. The king expressed his willingness to take part in the fighting in agreement with the two presidents. Regarding the possibility that Israeli forces might encircle the southern flank of the Syrian front by penetrating Jordanian territory, the King assured the Minister that to do this was his duty regardless of the previous agreement. On the other hand, Henry Kissinger reports that Ḥussein warned the Nixon administration in May 1973 that Egypt and Syria's military preparations were too real to be considered an exercise.³³ When the war broke out without any advance warning from Cairo, Ḥussein felt that Egypt had let him down again, as it had done in 1967.³⁴

Jordan continued to be a country whose position in the region could not be overlooked when important Arab decisions had to be taken. In the late summer of 1973, Egypt and Syria were preparing for a new armed encounter with Israel. Since the Arabs had suffered a crushing defeat in 1967, the Israeli leadership felt

³¹ SHLAIM, A. *Lion of Jordan*, p. 356.

³² LUKACS, Y. *Israel, Jordan, and the Peace Process*, p. 3.

³³ KISSINGER, H. *Years of Upheaval*, p. 461.

³⁴ DALLAS, R. *King Hussein*, p. 134.

no need to negotiate with them under the principle of ‘territory for peace’.³⁵ The political situation had reached an impasse from which it could only emerge by a new war. Before launching such an action, the presidents of Egypt and Syria, Anwar as-Sādāt and Ḥāfīz al-Asad, felt it necessary to reach a settlement with King Ḥusayn. The three met in Cairo on 11 September 1973, with the king not privy to the details, but shortly after the meeting diplomatic relations between the two states and Jordan were restored.³⁶

The main topics of the trilateral meeting in Cairo were the settlement of mutual differences, the coordination of military-political strategy, and the resumption of diplomatic relations.³⁷ The King admitted that if Israel refused to withdraw from the occupied territories, the Arabs would have no choice but to liberate them militarily. He added that the war would require careful preparations and the support of the oil states. Anwar as-Sādāt argued that it was up to the states on the armistice line to liberate their territories. He argued that the price for restoring diplomatic relations would be allowing the return of Palestinian guerrillas, but Ḥusayn firmly rejected this alternative. Anwar as-Sādāt relented and agreed to the immediate resumption of relations with Jordan, while Ḥāfīz al-Asad said he had to consult with his colleagues on the matter, but within days Jordanian-Syrian relations were also restored.³⁸ Ḥāfīz al-Asad asked Ḥusayn to open a third front and deploy his 70,000-strong army to fight for the liberation of the West Bank and Jerusalem. However, after the unfortunate experience of 1967, he did not want to risk further losses and preferred a defensive strategy.³⁹

After the outbreak of the war, the Soviet leadership urged Jordan to join the Egyptian and Syrian efforts, promising full support, but Ḥusayn refused. King Fayṣal demanded permission to move the Saudi brigade detached in Jordan to Syria, which the king also refused. He was, however, willing to send the 40th Tank Brigade to Syria, as far away from the front line as possible, when he was assured that Israel would not use this as a pretext to attack Jordan.⁴⁰ In fact, the Jordanian military presence was merely symbolic.⁴¹ A tank brigade entered Syria on 13 October to help the Syrians on the Golan front, but it took ten days to

³⁵ VYCHODIL, F. *Blížký východ: války či mír?* [The Middle East: Wars or Peace?], p. 262.

³⁶ HAYKAL, M. Ḥ. *Uktūbar 73. As-silāḥ wa as-siyāsa* [October 73. Weapons and Politics], pp. 308–309; DALLAS, R. *King Hussein*, p. 148.

³⁷ RIYĀD, M. *Mudakkirāt Maḥmūd Riyād (1948 – 1978)* [The Memoirs of Maḥmūd Riyād. America and the Arabs], Vol. I, p. 440.

³⁸ SHLAIM, A. *Lion of Jordan*, p. 359.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 365.

⁴⁰ KISSINGER, H. *Years of Upheaval*, p. 506.

⁴¹ ROBINS, Ph. *A History of Jordan*, p. 141.

engage the Israelis and then withdrew.⁴² The war between Egypt and Israel did not even touch Jordan. In meetings with Arab political and military leaders, King Ḥusayn was able to make a convincing case for a policy of non-intervention, in particular by pointing to the overwhelming superiority of the Israeli air force.

On 22 October 1973, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 338, calling on the opposing parties to cease hostilities and enter into direct negotiations to settle the conflict on the basis of Resolution 242. Israel, Egypt and Jordan immediately accepted the resolution, Syria with some delay. King Ḥussein was interested in direct negotiations with Israel to restore Jordan's sovereignty over the West Bank, but he was let down by Israeli and the US.⁴³ After the adoption of the resolution, Henry Kissinger embarked on his first tour of the Middle East to prepare the ground for an international conference. Amman, where he arrived on 8 November 1973, was the last stop on his tour of the region's capitals. Jordan was the country most affected by the conflict, both in terms of territory and population, so it wanted the return of the West Bank with few reciprocal adjustments. However, Jordan was not central to the resolution of the conflict.⁴⁴

For years, King Ḥusayn had been under American and Israeli pressure to 'solve' the Palestinian problem through direct negotiations with Israel. However, without an Arab mandate, the king did not dare to agree to divide the West Bank with Israel, thus becoming an indirect vassal of Israel. It was not easy to choose between what little Israel was willing to offer and what the Arabs would accept. King Ḥusayn would have preferred a Jordanian-Palestinian federation, which he felt could have been an adequate fulfilment of Palestinian aspirations, a protection for his throne, and for Israel to obtain the required security guarantees.⁴⁵ However, the 'territory for peace' offer, which the Israeli government attempted to introduce into political terminology, approached the problem of a settlement that was not in accordance with the principles of international law or the security interests of the region. At its core was a continuing rejection of the return of the territory occupied by Israel in 1967.⁴⁶

At the Geneva Conference in December 1973, the King of Jordan put forward a proposal for the disengagement of Jordanian and Israeli forces, whereby both states would withdraw their troops to a distance of 8 km from the banks of the Jordan River. Ḥusayn believed that this would bring more calm to the area and

⁴² HERZOG, Ch. *The War of Atonement*, p. 140.

⁴³ SHLAIM, A. *Lion of Jordan*, p. 371.

⁴⁴ KISSINGER, H. *Years of Upheaval*, p. 506.

⁴⁵ SEALE, P. *Asad of Syria. The Struggle for the Middle East*, p. 463.

⁴⁶ VYCHODIL, F. *Blízký východ: války či mír?* [The Middle East: Wars or Peace?], p. 262.

show Israeli sincerity, but Golda Meir rejected the proposal.⁴⁷ Kissinger put to the fore agreements between Israel on the one hand and Egypt and Syria on the other, knowing that an agreement with Egypt would weaken Soviet influence in Cairo. He overlooked the Jordanian proposals because he was aware that Jerusalem and the West Bank were part of the ancient Jewish state, so the Jews would hold fast to them.⁴⁸

Before the start of Kissinger's postwar mission, Israel's attitude toward territorial problems on the Jordanian front did not differ much from Allon's original plan. It envisaged the return to Jordan of the Palestinian-populated West Bank territory, with the proviso that an Israeli military presence would be maintained there in the form of military camps along the River Jordan valley.⁴⁹ Claims that Israel was willing to agree to a deal with King Ḥusayn were merely tactical manoeuvres to maintain disagreements between the King and the Palestinian resistance.

Although Jordan did not participate in the 1973 war, its share or 'reward' for this moderation or caution was less than King Ḥusayn ibn Ṭalāl ibn ʿAbdallāh had expected, and he believed he deserved more. King Ḥusayn, along with other Arab leaders, was forced to recognize the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people at the Arab summit in Rabat in October 1974,⁵⁰ which not only diminished his authority in the West Bank but also much of his appeal. Even Saudi Arabia, which had provided financial support to Jordan after the 1970 civil war, concluded that the Palestinian people should be represented by the PLO, whether at the UN or at a Middle East peace conference.⁵¹ Jordan was as isolated in the Arab world as it had been in the past. On his return from Rabat, the king reduced the number of Palestinians in the government led by Zayd ar-Rifāʿī. He also suspended the parliament and ruled by decree, which led some experts to conclude that Arab monarchs not only reign but also govern.⁵²

The results of the October war caused considerable disillusionment in Israel. The Labour Party emerged from the December 1973 elections considerably weakened. Following the publication of the Agranat Commission report, Golda Meir resigned on 10 April 1974. She was replaced as the head of government by

⁴⁷ LUNT, J. *Hussein of Jordan. A Political Biography*, p. 173.

⁴⁸ DALLAS, R. *King Hussein. A Life on the Edge*, p. 155.

⁴⁹ SHLAIM, A. *Lion of Jordan*, pp. 374–375.

⁵⁰ HART, A. *Arafat. Terrorist or Peacemaker?*, p. 397.

⁵¹ RIYĀD, M. *Mudakkirāt Maḥmūd Riyād (1948 – 1978)* [The Memoirs of Maḥmūd Riyād. America and the Arabs], Vol. I, p. 511.

⁵² "In all the Arab monarchies, the King, Amir, Shaykh or Sultan does not merely reign but rules". In HUDSON, M. *Arab Politics: The Search for Legitimacy*, p. 19.

Yitzhak Rabin, who chose Yigael Allon as foreign minister and Shimon Peres as defence minister. It was widely known that Allon was a strong supporter of the policy of settling the occupied territories. In March 1975, Henry Kissinger launched a new round of his 'shuttle diplomacy', but the Israeli government was reluctant to make concessions, so the negotiations reached an impasse. When President Gerald Ford threatened that the US would reconsider its Middle East policy and suspend arms shipments to Israel, the Israeli government backed down. Kissinger assured the Israeli leadership that the US would not force Israel to make a deal with Jordan or make territorial concessions during the upcoming negotiations with Syria.⁵³

Nevertheless, King Ḥusayn made a bold decision and held secret negotiations with the new Israeli officials: accompanied by Zayd ar-Rifāʿī, the prime minister, and his confidant, he flew by helicopter to a remote location in the border valley of ʿAraba, where he met with them, but nothing was agreed upon.⁵⁴ At the Arab summit in Rabat at the end of October 1974, Ḥusayn's Arab opponents were given the opportunity to block his ambitions to represent the Palestinians: a resolution was adopted there that designated the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.⁵⁵ It was the king's biggest political setback since the 1967 war.

The King was surprised by the summit's unanimous decision, because he had hoped that at least Anwar as-Sādāt and the King of Morocco would support him. Yāsir ʿArafāt emerged 'victorious', already speaking at the UN General Assembly on 13 November, which granted observer status to the Palestinian delegation and affirmed the right of the Palestinians to self-determination and independence.⁵⁶ This meant a further weakening of the king's position in the Middle East. The decision of the Arab rulers to recognise the PLO as the sole legitimate representative was not reasonable under the circumstances. All those who supported the resolution knew that it would be many years before Israel and the USA, the states negotiating with Jordan, would agree to negotiate with the PLO, which they considered to be a terrorist organisation.⁵⁷ By adopting an ineffective decision, the Arabs had shattered the interests of the Palestinians: they had given Israel a great argument not to negotiate a 'territory for peace' agreement for the West Bank and Jerusalem, and had given them more time to

⁵³ BICKERTON, I. J., KLAUSNER, C. L. *A History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, p. 181.

⁵⁴ SHLAIM, A. *Lion of Jordan*, p. 378.

⁵⁵ AJAMI, F. *The Arab Predicament. Arab Political Thought and Practice Since 1967*, pp. 150–151.

⁵⁶ ḤUSAYN, al-malik (the king). *Mihnatī ka-malik* [My Profession as King], pp. 240–242.

⁵⁷ DALLAS, R. *King Hussein. A Life on the Edge*, p. 157.

expand their settlements in the occupied territories. It should be remembered that even Jordan, which defeated the Palestinian fighters in 1970 and expelled the survivors from its territory, could not claim the right to represent them.

The Israeli Government had already expressed its position in July 1974, long before the Rabat Summit. It wanted to reach a peace agreement with Jordan based on the existence of two independent states, Israel with a united Jerusalem as its capital and a Jordanian-Palestinian Arab state to the east of Israel, the borders of which would emerge from Jordanian-Israeli negotiations. Many victorious Israelis realised that they could not gain anything through a ‘territory for peace’ agreement with Jordan that they did not already have: they continued their colonial-style occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip and expanded illegal settlements.

Kissinger made the US position clear in a memorandum of understanding attached to the second disengagement agreement between Egypt and Israel, dated 1 September 1975.⁵⁸ The US would not talk to PLO officials unless that organization recognized UNSC Resolution 242. This condition was unacceptable to the Palestinians because that resolution did not refer to the rights of Palestinian refugees. While this memorandum prevented US contacts with the PLO for many years, Israel systematically created a ‘new reality’ in the occupied territories.⁵⁹ Hussein came to terms with the situation and announced that, in the light of the resolution adopted, Jordan was no longer directly involved in the Palestinian issue. Later that year, he dissolved the Jordanian parliament on the grounds that West Bank MPs no longer had a seat in it.

In the early 1970s, the Jordanian economy was diverse and modest, consisting of a small number of public sector enterprises and small family businesses. Some development occurred after the war, as the country began to emerge from the political turmoil of the previous period. A three-year development plan was launched for 1973 – 1975, with the aim of reviving the economy and introducing a coordinated approach to economic development. However, despite Waṣṣī at-Tall’s desire to strengthen Jordan’s sovereignty by achieving self-sufficiency, Jordan remained structurally a rentier state. Throughout its existence, it has depended on foreign financial assistance to build many state institutions and to maintain the state’s overall level of economic activity. Jordan was able to obtain foreign financial injections first from the British, then from the Americans, and also from its Arab neighbours, emphasizing the strategic benefits of doing so to its donors. For the US, Jordan was a bulwark in the fight against Communism; for the principal Arab states, Jordan was important, both as a barrage against Israel and to avoid the kingdom becoming a client of any one of their number.

⁵⁸ KISSINGER, H. *Roky obnovy* [Years of Renewal], pp. 370–374.

⁵⁹ DALLAS, R. *King Hussein. A Life on the Edge*, p. 158.

That changed after the 1973 war, with the drastic rise in oil prices and the fabulous revenues of the oil-producing states that came with it. Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Kuwait, for example, had sufficient resources to provide, and so could count on a return in the form of political support from Jordan.⁶⁰

The expansion of the oil industry in the region also offered indirect benefits for the strengthening of the Jordanian economy, thanks to the substantial inflow of convertible currency directly into private hands. In the less developed oil-producing states of the Gulf, there was strong demand for skilled labour. Palestinians with Jordanian passports did very well here, given their relatively good level of education. They preferred to live outside their homeland, rather than live under Israeli occupation or in hardship in the East Bank.⁶¹

In 1975 and 1976, King Ḥusayn held secret negotiations with the leaders of successive Israeli governments led by the Labour Party, presumably in an attempt to restore his position as the representative of the Palestinians.⁶² However, he could not accept the Israeli proposal in the form of the Allon Plan,⁶³ which offered the return of the territory, because this would have left Israel with about a third of the West Bank.⁶⁴ The Israelis saw no reason to negotiate with Jordan; on the contrary, they expected the king to speak on behalf of the Palestinians as well and to take responsibility for them in the occupied territories.⁶⁵ The Allon Plan was clear evidence that the Israelis did not take into account the domestic and regional constraints that the king had to reckon with. For them, the ‘Jordanian option’ meant that the king should take the offered territory and be grateful for it.⁶⁶ King Ḥusayn, however, did not resign and made no secret of his view that the PLO would not be able to regain even a sliver of the occupied territory without Jordanian help. The Jordanian government continued to pay salaries to civil servants in the West Bank and provided funds for educational and religious institutions. West Bank mayors, even those who publicly supported the PLO, were regularly invited to Amman.⁶⁷

⁶⁰ BRAND, L. *Jordan's Inter-Arab Relations: The Political Economy of Alliance Making*, p. 121.

⁶¹ ROBINS, Ph. *A History of Jordan*, pp. 142–143.

⁶² HIRST, D. *Puška a olivová ratolest* [The Gun and the Olive Branch], p. 342.

⁶³ In July 1967 the Israeli labour minister Yigal Allon drafted a plan that would provide for an Israeli security belt along the River Jordan valley, strategically situated to block any Arab invasion route. In SMITH, Ch. D. *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, p. 303.

⁶⁴ ISAAC, R. J. *Israel Divided: Ideological Politics and the Jewish State*, pp. 115–126.

⁶⁵ SMITH, Ch. D. *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, p. 314.

⁶⁶ ROBINS, Ph. *A History of Jordan*, p. 136.

⁶⁷ MANSFIELD, P. *The Arabs*, p. 422.

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