

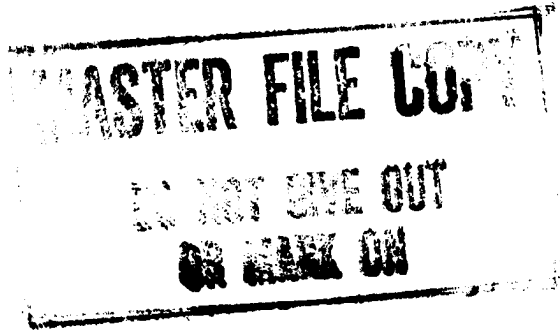


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# Jordan, the West Bank, and the Peace Process



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An Intelligence Assessment

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NESA 83-10082  
April 1983

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# Jordan, the West Bank, and the Peace Process

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**An Intelligence Assessment**

This paper was prepared by [Redacted]  
Office of Near East-South Asia Analysis. Comments  
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[Redacted]

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This paper was coordinated by the Directorate of  
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*April 1983*

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**Jordan, the West Bank,  
and the Peace Process**

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**Key Judgments***Information available  
as of 18 April 1983  
was used in this report.*

In our judgment, King Hussein will be unable to move ahead in the peace process without West Bank cooperation that will be gained only with the approval of the Palestine Liberation Organization. We believe Hussein intends to pursue his dialogue with the PLO despite the Jordanian cabinet statement in early April that Jordan was relinquishing all responsibility for the future of the West Bank and Gaza. We do not believe the King will try to enter negotiations alone because to do so will invite the anger of the Palestinians and other Arab states, and possibly retaliatory action.

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Hussein's lack of authority to represent the Palestinian cause on his own, given the Rabat Arab summit decision in 1974 naming the PLO the sole representative of the Palestinians, forces him to coordinate his actions with the PLO. Hussein, however, has continued to implement policies on the West Bank that have allowed Jordan to keep a foothold there without openly challenging the PLO's leadership claim. We believe these policies are designed to convince West Bankers that their only chance of ending the Israeli occupation is to allow the Hashemite Kingdom to play a key role.

Jordan's entry into peace negotiations with West Bank cooperation would bolster Hussein's prestige and authority at home, especially among the Palestinian community, and gain him recognition throughout the Arab world. Lack of success, however, would risk diplomatic isolation, akin to what Egyptian President Sadat experienced, and the loss of key financial aid that Jordan receives from the Gulf Arab states. It also would expose Jordan to the wrath of the Arab rejectionist states, particularly Syria.

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Hussein will seek additional commitments from the United States in return for his entry into the peace process. He will want firm evidence of US perseverance even in the face of Israeli opposition, particularly on the issue of Jewish settlements on the West Bank. He will also expect increased financial aid and assurances of US military aid if Jordan is threatened by one of its neighbors. Moreover, he will expect an end to congressional opposition to US arms sales to Jordan.

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In our view, if Hussein and the PLO fail to agree on a negotiating strategy, radical movements will gain new prominence in the Arab world and Hussein's concern for the internal security of the kingdom will grow. Fear of an increase in the Palestinian population will lead the King to adopt additional restrictive measures to check Palestinian immigration.

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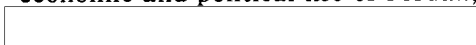
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The ultimate outcome of a political link between Jordan and the West Bank ironically might be the transformation of Jordan into the Palestinian state. Federation could push the Palestinian majority as high as 85 percent, creating a situation in which they may eventually come to dominate the economic and political life of Jordan, particularly after Hussein's demise.



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## Jordan, the West Bank, and the Peace Process

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King Hussein has always sought to maintain influence on the West Bank for political reasons and because of the strong economic and social ties between the two areas; he is particularly interested now that over half of Jordan's population is of Palestinian origin. He has had a difficult time preserving that influence, however, since Israel's occupation of the West Bank in 1967 and the Rabat Arab summit decision in 1974, reaffirmed by the Fez summit in 1982, that the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) is the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

them valuable technical and administrative skills. Many West Bankers attained prominent positions in the Jordanian Government and in business.

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Jordan's influence in the West Bank diminished significantly following Israel's seizure of the territory in 1967. Under international law, Jordanian law still applies to the region, but in 16 years of occupation the Israeli military government has issued over 1,000 administrative decrees that have significantly modified these laws.

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President Reagan's 1982 peace initiative, which rejects the idea of an independent Palestinian state and calls for a Palestinian entity on the West Bank in "association" with Jordan, has rekindled the King's interest in joining the two regions. He has initiated a dialogue with the PLO and has introduced a plan similar to his 1972 United Arab Kingdom Plan calling for a federation of the East and West Banks.

Moreover, the founding of the Palestine Liberation Organization in 1964 has undercut Jordan's position on the West Bank. West Bank loyalty has fluctuated between the two depending upon which side had more prestige and support in the Middle East at any particular time.

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Factors working against Amman include a perception among West Bankers of insufficient Jordanian defense of the area in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, the expulsion of Palestinian guerrillas from Jordan during the 1970-71 Jordanian civil war, and Jordan's inaction during the October War of 1973. In 1974 when Arab displeasure with Hussein was at a peak, the Arab summit conference in Rabat formally named the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, thus stripping Hussein of responsibility for the territory.

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### Ties Between Jordan and the West Bank

Ties between Jordan and the West Bank existed long before Jordan's annexation of the region in 1950. Under the Ottoman Empire, territories east and west of the Jordan River were considered part of Greater Syria. This created strong cultural and familial ties and facilitated the growth of commercial and economic relations between the two areas that still exist today. British control, which was foreseen in the Sykes-Picot agreement of 1916 and established after World War I, helped to perpetuate this association.

Despite the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Rabat decision, Jordan has tried to maintain its influence, hoping to convince West Bankers that their only chance of achieving Israeli withdrawal is through a political link with Jordan. Hussein sees the Reagan initiative as US endorsement of that position.

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With Jordan's annexation of the West Bank in 1950, the Palestinians on the West Bank as well as the refugees on the East Bank were given Jordanian citizenship. The addition of the West Bank more than doubled the country's population and greatly enhanced Jordan's economic potential. In addition to the tourist value of the area's numerous holy places, the generally better educated West Bankers brought with

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***King Hussein's United Arab Kingdom Proposal***

- *The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan shall become a United Arab Kingdom and shall be so named.*
  - *The United Arab Kingdom shall consist of two regions:*
    - *The Region of Palestine, consisting of the West Bank and any other Palestinian territories to be liberated and where the population decides to join it.*
    - *The Region of Jordan, consisting of the East Bank.*
  - *Amman shall be the capital of the kingdom and at the same time shall be the capital of the Region of Jordan.*
  - *Jerusalem shall become the capital of the Region of Palestine.*
  - *The King shall be the Head of State and shall assume the central executive authority assisted by a Central Council of Ministers. The central legislative authority shall be vested in the King and the National Assembly, whose members shall be elected by direct and secret ballot. It shall have an equal number of members from each of the two regions.*
  - *The central judicial authority shall be vested in a Supreme Central Court.*
  - *The kingdom shall have a single armed forces and its supreme commander shall be the King.*
  - *The responsibilities of the central executive power shall be confined to matters relating to the kingdom as a sovereign international entity ensuring the safety of the union, its stability, and development.*
  - *The executive power in each region shall be vested in a governor general from the region in a Regional Council of Ministers also from the region.*
  - *The legislative power in each region shall be vested in a People's Council, which shall be elected by direct, secret ballot. This council shall elect the governor general.*
  - *The judicial power in each region shall be vested in the courts of the region, and nobody shall have any authority over them.*
  - *The executive power in each region shall be responsible for all its matters with the exception of such matters as the constitution requires to be the responsibility of the central executive power.*
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**Motivations**

Hussein's concern for recovering the West Bank reflects both personal and national interests. Most important is Jordanian national security. Over 1 million Palestinians came to Jordan during and after the Arab-Israeli wars in 1948 and 1967, first to escape the newly founded Israeli state and then the Israeli occupation. Since 1968 the flow from the West to the East Bank has continued. Although accurate figures on the flow are unavailable, the US Consul in Jerusalem believes that it now probably constitutes several thousand each year. This continuing influx has created a Palestinian majority in Jordan that is potentially destabilizing. The King probably sees continued Israeli settlement activity on the West Bank as

forcing more Palestinians into Jordan, thereby increasing the chances that they might eventually challenge Hussein's rule. Increased numbers of Palestinians on the East Bank could also encourage international acceptance of the thesis advanced by Israeli hardliners such as former Defense Minister Ariel Sharon that there is no need for a West Bank Palestinian entity because one already exists in Jordan.

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In our view, another important factor is Hussein's deep sense of personal responsibility for having failed to defend the area adequately during the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. He seems to be especially chagrined about the loss of East Jerusalem, which houses major Muslim shrines and is the final resting place for his great grandfather, Hussein, the Sherif of Mecca. [redacted]

**Jordan's Policies Toward the West Bank**

Jordan's principal means of maintaining influence in the West Bank is through financial support. It gives subsidies to the West Bank municipalities and pays the salaries of West Bank residents who were registered Jordanian Government employees prior to 1967. In an arrangement with Israel, it maintains an "open bridge" policy that helps the West Bankers to market their agricultural and industrial products. The Jordanians also financially support West Bankers working in Israel who go on strike, as they did last summer to protest Israel's invasion of Lebanon. [redacted]

At the Arab summit conference in Baghdad in November 1978, a Jordanian-PLO joint committee was formed, giving Jordan a formal role to play in West Bank affairs for the first time since the Rabat meeting in 1974. Through this committee, Jordan and the PLO are authorized to administer an Arab aid fund of \$150 million annually for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. During 1982, as part of the growing cooperation between Jordan and the PLO, the mission of the committee was expanded to include coordination of all policies and actions taken by the PLO and Jordan on the West Bank. [redacted]

In addition to maintaining its financial ties with the West Bank, Jordan has also adopted measures to emphasize its legal and constitutional status there. In 1976 Hussein dissolved the National Assembly, whose representation included West Bank Palestinians, because elections could not be held on the occupied West Bank. US Embassy reporting suggests that he did not want to hold elections only on the East Bank because the Israelis might interpret such a move as acceptance of their view that Jordan no longer had a role on the West Bank. [redacted]

West Bankers still hold Jordanian citizenship and carry Jordanian passports when they travel abroad. In 1980 Jordan reopened passport offices in the West Bank in an effort to help West Bankers keep their Jordanian passports current. West Bankers sometimes had difficulty traveling to Amman to renew these documents. [redacted]

The Jordanians have also taken restrictive measures toward West Bankers in an attempt to counter perceived Israeli efforts to co-opt local residents or to force Palestinian emigration to Jordan. In March 1982 the Jordanian Government passed a law banning membership in the Israeli-supported Village Leagues on the West Bank. The law required Palestinians to renounce their membership within one month or be charged with treason. Although the government made no real effort to implement the law, it blacklisted several mukhtars (village leaders) for collaborating with the Village Leagues. According to the Jordanian Minister of Occupied Territories, the law has had the desired effect of reducing membership in the leagues. Reporting from the US Consul in Jerusalem substantiates the claim that membership has been reduced. [redacted]

Another restrictive measure was enforced last fall when, [redacted] the government would not approve residence or labor permits for newly selected Palestinian professors to teach in Jordanian universities. They were instead urged to seek positions in West Bank universities, even though those jobs were less attractive because of the unrest on West Bank campuses. [redacted]

Similarly, the Jordanian Minister of Occupied Territories reports that West Bank students who apply to East Bank universities to get away from the demonstrations and frequent closures at West Bank universities are encouraged, principally through payment of their tuition, to continue their studies on the West

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Bank. Other youths who wish to work in Jordan are required to serve two years in the military immediately upon arrival. Such a requirement has deterred some youths from coming to Jordan. [redacted]

**West Bank Views of Jordan**

Despite their long existing ties with Jordan, we believe many Palestinians on the West Bank remain suspicious of Jordanian intentions. Since the days of King Abdallah, Hussein's grandfather, the Jordanians have adopted policies toward the area that West Bankers view as enhancing Jordan's dynastic interests and ignoring Palestinian concerns. To illustrate their point, many Palestinians point out that Jordan has periodically discussed the possibility of a peace treaty with Israel, while it has curtailed Palestinian guerrilla activity from Jordan. [redacted]

Feelings of neglect fuel the mistrust that Palestinians have for East Bank Jordanians. According to US Embassy reporting, many West Bankers complained that during the period of Jordanian rule King Hussein ignored the economic development of the West Bank while lavishing support on development projects in and around Amman. In our view, West Bankers particularly resent this because frequently it was their technical and administrative skills that helped plan such projects. Some Palestinians have told US Embassy officials that they still believe that such measures as import restrictions on West Bank-grown agricultural products, which would compete with East Bank-grown produce, reveal that the King's primary concern is to protect East Bank interests. [redacted]

Although this mistrust continues, we believe most West Bank Palestinians would nevertheless readily admit that the Jordanian connection is necessary for the West Bank's economic and political survival. Jordan is their link to the Arab world. More than one-third of the area's exports, particularly agricultural produce, go to and through Jordan. In addition, a large number of highly educated West Bankers have taken advantage of job opportunities in Jordan. Worker remittances—an estimated \$200-300 million per year—from these workers and others employed in the Gulf states flow into the West Bank through Jordan. A large portion of the funds available to West Bank municipalities comes from contributions made by Arab states that also flow through Jordan. [redacted]

West Bankers not only see Jordan as the conduit for Arab financial aid, but many now concede to US Embassy officials that only the Jordanian connection can deter Israel from annexing the area. [redacted]

[redacted] even though most West Bank Palestinians distrust Hussein because of his previous treatment of the Palestinians in Jordan, they understand that he is the only Arab leader who has the backing of the United States for seeking a Middle East peace settlement. [redacted]

For these reasons, the West Bank attitude toward Jordan's potential role in the peace process is generally positive. Many West Bankers still adhere to the position that the PLO is their sole representative and that negotiations cannot be held without PLO approval, but they seem to accept the need for Jordan to take the lead in those negotiations because Israel will not negotiate directly with the PLO. [redacted]

A recent poll taken by the moderate nationalist West Bank weekly, *Al-Bayader A-Siassi*, indicated an overwhelming majority of West Bank citizens still support the leadership of Yasir Arafat. They also favored, however, the continuation of the Jordanian-Palestinian dialogue and a Jordanian-Palestinian confederation. [redacted]

In discussions earlier this year with US officials, prominent West Bank Palestinians, including leading lawyers, university officials, and former Jordanian parliamentary and cabinet members also supported the concept of a coordinated Jordanian-Palestinian negotiating role. None advocated restoration of Jordanian sovereignty, however, and many still seem to cling to the hope of eventually establishing an independent Palestinian state, albeit after linking up with Jordan. [redacted]

**East Bank Attitudes**

The attitudes of Jordan's East Bank constituencies—those from the bedouin tribes and the Palestinians—also influence Hussein's policies toward the West Bank. Although both groups have vivid memories of

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the Jordanian civil war in 1970-71 and still continue to be wary of one another, they have found the prosperity and stability that they have enjoyed over the past decade to be attractive incentives to coexist.

The East Bank constituency generally supports Hussein's current efforts on behalf of the West Bank, but a "Jordan first" attitude is still evident, according to the US Embassy in Amman. Those who are "Jordan first" advocates would like to see the West Bank back in Arab hands, but they argue that the Arab states, under the Rabat and Fez decisions, relieved Jordan of its responsibility for the West Bank. The King should therefore accept that loss and concentrate on development of the East Bank. They also accuse Hussein of ignoring their concerns about the increased Palestinian presence in Jordan and risking their country for people who have no vested interest in Jordan's continued existence.

East Bank Jordanians realize that King Hussein must work out a solution to the Palestinian problem to achieve peace for Jordan. They oppose granting the Palestinians a form of sovereignty over the West Bank, however, because they view Palestinian sovereignty as a potential threat to the stability of the Hashemite monarchy.

East Bank Jordanians are concerned about the effect a Jordanian-Palestinian confederation would have on political and economic life in Jordan. East Bank Jordanians believe that Hussein will make concessions to the PLO, such as allowing more PLO members into Jordan, that will increase the Palestinian population and subsequently require an increase in the number of Palestinians serving in the government.

<sup>1</sup> After 1971 Palestinian representation in the Jordanian Government decreased considerably. Currently only five of the 24 cabinet ministers are Palestinians, and they make up less than one-third of the members of the National Consultative Council, the quasi-legislative body formed in 1978 to replace the dissolved lower house of parliament.

According to US Embassy officials, the Palestinian majority in Jordan generally supports the King's efforts on behalf of the West Bank. They have expressed concern, however, over the implications of a confederation for the Palestinian cause. We believe some Palestinians question exactly what the King envisions in the union. One Palestinian member of the National Consultative Council explained this concern to US Embassy officials by stating that the issue of confederation becomes a choice between entity and identity. To him, a confederation would give the West Bankers a Palestinian entity, but perhaps over time it would erode the sense of Palestinian national identity.

a number of Palestinian residents in refugee camps in Jordan do not favor the idea of confederation even though they have lived in Jordan for years. These camp Palestinians, who make up less than one-fourth of Jordan's overall Palestinian community, complain that Hashemite rule has not improved their social and economic standing. they fear that if the Palestinians do not set up an independent state, Jordan will regain sovereignty over the West Bank and Gaza and prevent them from improving their standard of living.

**PLO Influence on West Bank Attitudes**

We believe West Bank Palestinians will take their cue on negotiations from the PLO. Some West Bank leaders, such as Bethlehem mayor Elias Freij, who is known for his pro-Jordanian views, have campaigned in favor of cooperation with Jordan in the hope of influencing the PLO's position. Freij circulated a petition late last year that expressed support for a confederation with Jordan and a Jordanian role in the peace process, but he reportedly obtained only a few hundred signatures. The US Embassy in Amman interprets the failure of the Freij petition as evidence of the inability of the West Bank leadership to support a position that might be contrary to PLO wishes.

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King Hussein with Arafat [redacted]



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PLO approval is, therefore, the crucial factor for Jordan in its calculations on the peace process. Without that approval, Hussein's options concerning Washington's initiative are severely limited, and the possibility of Hussein working with West Bankers alone, as some Embassy reports suggest he might do, becomes highly unlikely. [redacted]

Hussein seems to accept, at least for now, the idea that only by working with the PLO can he possibly gain the support he needs to allow him to negotiate with Israel on the future of the West Bank. Since President Reagan's peace initiative, Hussein has concentrated on improving Jordanian-PLO relations in the hope of gaining PLO approval for a Jordanian role. Despite his efforts to maintain a foothold on the West Bank, he acknowledges the PLO's position as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. [redacted]

Hussein and Arafat have met several times since the President's speech to discuss two main issues: the establishment of a political link between the West Bank and Jordan and the creation of a joint Jordanian/non-PLO Palestinian negotiating team. [redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

In early April, however, Arafat failed to obtain support from his own Fatah organization for an agreement with Hussein. Although this resulted in a Jordanian cabinet statement relinquishing to the PLO all responsibility for the future of the West Bank and Gaza and a suspension of direct Hussein-Arafat talks, continuing Jordanian-PLO contacts indicate King Hussein intends to pursue his dialogue with the PLO. [redacted]

**Implications for the US and Middle East Peace Process**

In our judgment, the King will be unable to move ahead in the peace process without West Bank cooperation and that will be gained only with PLO approval. We do not believe the King will try to enter negotiations alone because to do so would invite the anger of the Palestinians and other Arab states and possibly retaliatory action. Jordan's political, economic, and military vulnerability in the Arab world makes it highly unlikely that Hussein would take such a risk. [redacted]

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Jordan's entry into peace negotiations would serve to bolster Hussein's prestige and authority at home, especially within the Palestinian community and, if successful, it would gain him recognition throughout the Arab world. His efforts to work out a settlement of the West Bank issue would demonstrate to both the Palestinian community and to other Arab states, which have criticized Hussein in the past for his treatment of Palestinians, that he is concerned about Palestinian rights and welfare. Some Jordanian Government officials believe Hussein's internal position would be enhanced regardless of the outcome because Hussein would be able to say he had tried to achieve an honorable peace. [redacted]

Nevertheless, Hussein's participation in the peace process would carry considerable risks. Without a clear mandate from the PLO and the support of Arab moderates, Jordan, like Egypt in 1979, would face diplomatic isolation and the loss of vital financial aid that it receives from the Gulf Arab states. In 1982 Jordan received about \$900 million in aid from Arab donors and needs to ensure continued financial aid to keep the economy afloat. [redacted]

Participation also would expose Jordan to the wrath of the hardline Arab states, particularly Syria, with whom relations have been strained for several years. The Syrians could try to destabilize Jordan in order to disrupt peace efforts by encouraging Palestinians in Syria to infiltrate into Jordan in order to stage attacks against Israel. This would invite Israeli retaliation against Jordan. Similarly, Syrian President Assad could use his influence with pro-Syrian PLO factions to undermine Arafat's efforts to maintain a PLO consensus while trying to establish a coordinated position with Hussein. [redacted]

A federation or confederation between Jordan and the West Bank is the answer to the US initiative and Hussein's own preferred solution to the Palestinian issue, but such an arrangement ironically could bring about the realization of the Sharon thesis that Jordan is the Palestinian state. A federation could push the Palestinian share of Jordan's population to as high as 85 percent. Initially, this linkage may not prove to be a challenge to the sovereignty and territorial integrity

of the Hashemite Kingdom, but the Palestinian majority may eventually dominate the economic and political life of Jordan, particularly after Hussein's demise. [redacted]

Hussein will seek additional commitments from the United States for his entry into the peace process. He will want firm evidence of US perseverance even in the face of Israeli opposition. To gain the support of both the PLO and other Arab states, Hussein has told US officials that he needs evidence of US willingness to take a firm stand with Israel on the issues of withdrawal of Israeli troops from Lebanon and a freeze on Jewish settlements on the West Bank. Signs of Israeli flexibility in these areas would give Hussein the ammunition he believes is required to convince Arafat and the other Arabs that now is the time to negotiate. [redacted]

In light of the Sharon thesis, Hussein will look for personal guarantees of support for the Hashemite monarchy and assurances of US military aid if Israel turns its attention to its eastern border--a contingency the King and many other Jordanians fear--once it has withdrawn from Lebanon. [redacted]

Hussein also will expect increased financial aid from the United States, particularly now that he claims Jordan is experiencing serious budgetary problems. Although he may be exaggerating the severity of Jordan's financial problems, Hussein is well aware of the money the United States has provided Egypt since Camp David and will expect similar treatment. [redacted]

Hussein will also look for an end to Congressional opposition to US arms sales to Jordan if he enters negotiations. He has sought US approval to purchase F-16s and mobile I-HAWK air defense missiles for some time, but Congress has strongly opposed the sale because Jordan is still considered a confrontation state. Hussein insists that such equipment is needed to defend Jordan from Syria, not Israel, and he will press even harder now that the USSR has installed SA-5 missiles in Syria. [redacted]

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*Effects of Confederation*

*A formal link between Jordan and the West Bank, whether in the form of a federation or confederation, would have a significant effect on the political, economic, and social life of Jordan:*

- The majority of the East Bank population is already Palestinian. Federation would increase that figure, possibly as high as 85 percent, forcing King Hussein to be more attentive to Palestinian interests.*
- Pressure will increase on the Hashemite monarchy to expand Palestinian representation in the cabinet and other government offices as well as in the command structure of the military.*

- The Palestinians, who have traditionally been politically active, will also seek a return to popular participation in the decisionmaking process and will press for new elections to be held for representatives to the National Assembly, the lower house of parliament.*
- West Bankers will expect to be included in the economic development activities planned for the next five years, but East Bankers will be reluctant to share the funds designated for development now that the Arab countries are reducing their contributions to Jordan.* [redacted]

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In our view, if Hussein and the PLO fail to agree on a negotiating strategy, radical movements will gain new prominence in the Arab world, and Hussein's concern for the internal security of the East Bank will grow. Fear of an increase in the Palestinian population of Jordan should West Bankers flee Israeli occupation or annexation may lead the King to adopt additional restrictions against Palestinian immigration [redacted]



[redacted] Although we believe Hussein would tighten security to prevent radical Palestinian groups from

resuming military action against Israel from Jordanian soil, we doubt that he would consider taking so drastic a measure as closing the bridges. Given the extensive family and business connections on both sides, Amman would certainly face serious unrest within its large Palestinian community if they believed the Jordanians were abandoning the Palestinians on the West Bank. Closure would also negate all of Hussein's efforts over the years to maintain influence there and provide Israel with an excuse to tighten its hold on the territories. [redacted]

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