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APPROACHES TO  
JORDAN-ISRAEL DISENGAGEMENT

This memorandum analyzes alternative approaches to a disengagement agreement between Jordan and Israel which would involve some changes in the nature of the Israeli occupation of parts of the West Bank. The fundamental difficulty will be to develop a "disengagement" step on the Jordan-Israeli front that is sufficiently modest in scope for Israel to accept at this stage, while offering King Hussein enough to justify the risks involved. Basically, Jordan has no interest in a mediocre agreement for which it will receive no support from the Palestinians and other Arabs, and the Israeli leadership is not yet convinced of the need to make any move on the West Bank and Palestinian issues.

Option 1 below--Israeli pullback--is the approach which the Jordanians have proposed. This would require an Israeli decision on a straight withdrawal to a new line, relinquishing some control over the Jordan Valley. This would raise the issue of the status of eight Israeli settlements in the area.

Option 2--functional disengagement--would skirt the Israeli security positions in the Jordan Valley for the moment and concentrate on modifying some aspects of the Israeli occupation in ways that would enhance the ability of West Bank Palestinians to govern themselves and would give King Hussein some credit among the Palestinians for changing the Israeli presence. Hussein's problem with this is that it would create the appearance of collaboration with the Israeli occupation.

Option 3--disengagement zone and Jordanian administration--concentrates on functional disengagement, but also introduces an area of limited armament in the Valley to provide some symmetry with Egyptian and Syrian disengagement and to create the impression that Israeli withdrawal is beginning. That impression would help offset the problem of working within the framework of the occupation to achieve some functional disengagement. It could also involve the return of Jericho to Jordanian control. This seems to be the most fruitful concept for discussion now.

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DECLAS - Date Impossible to Determine.

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General Principles

Any disengagement arrangement should be responsive to the following objectives:

--It is important that Jordan play a role in the negotiations involving the political evolution of the West Bank. Our basic objective is to encourage the emergence of moderate leadership on the West Bank that will be capable of upholding any agreement reached with Israel. At the opening stages of negotiations, Jordan is more likely to win concessions from Israel than either the PLO or an independent delegation of West Bankers.

--Jordan should elaborate on its plans for allowing self-determination on the West Bank. This could help defer the issue of a PLO role at Geneva and should enhance the King's prestige on the West Bank. It might also encourage the PLO to let the King negotiate with Israel, reserving its own role to influencing the post-withdrawal political structure on the West Bank. For the present, informal consultations between Hussein and the PLO might begin the process of drawing moderate Palestinian support.

--Jordan, therefore, should have only a minimal supervisory presence on the West Bank in any areas that return to its control under disengagement. To the maximum degree possible, administration and security should be in the hands of West Bank inhabitants. The machinery for this is already largely in place in the form of local mayors and municipal councils; prominent West Bankers could relate directly to Amman. The issue of a broader, international trusteeship can be left open.

--The principle of open borders between the West Bank and both Israel and Jordan should be preserved. Arrangements for maintaining Israeli settlements in areas reverting to Jordanian control would have to be made, particularly in a disengagement agreement, in order to gain Israeli acceptance.

--Economic resources should be provided to a local West Bank authority to provide housing and to restore agricultural lands. A comprehensive development plan for the West Bank and Gaza should be articulated at an early date.



Alternatives

Option 1: Israeli Military Pullback. This is the Jordanian concept. It would involve a pullback of Israeli forces to a line averaging 8 kilometers from the Jordan River on the West Bank. The area from which Israel would withdraw would be mostly below the sea-level line. No regular Jordanian forces would occupy this area, but it would be under Jordanian civilian administration. Jordan could say it had regained virtually full control in a geographically identifiable area. A UN observer or police force would be stationed along the new line. The areas involved would affect about 10-15,000 people--the city of Jericho, sparsely populated agricultural land north of Jericho, and eight Israeli Nahals. The following specific issues have not been addressed in detail but would have to be discussed:

--Border checks. Israel has controlled the flow of people across the bridges into the West Bank and Israel. Under this plan, this function could be performed in any of the following ways: (a) joint inspection at the bridges with a UN officer; (b) Jordanian-UN inspection at the bridges and Israeli-UN inspection at the Israeli disengagement line; (c) no inspection at the bridges, Israeli inspection or Israeli-Jordanian inspection at the Israeli line, depending on which way the traveler was going.

--Infiltration. The Israelis have constructed a security fence and zone along the entire length of the Jordanian River to detect and prevent infiltration. Some elements of the security system might remain on a transitional basis under UN control with Israeli and Jordanian liaison officers. A more expensive alternative would be to try to police the new line with a modified system.

--Eight Israeli settlements (Nahals) are in this proposed disengagement zone or are under construction. Arrangements would have to be made for their remaining in place, despite the restoration of Jordanian authority; for their being exempted from the area returned to Jordan; or for their eventual relinquishment. If they were left in place, this could be in the context of a broader principle allowing some settlements in the West Bank by Israeli citizens; eventually, there might be a parallel right for an agreed number of Palestinian Arabs to settle in pre-1967 Israel.

--Administration. The way in which Jordan re-establishes authority in evacuated areas will be very important in preserving the appearance of an opportunity for self-determination. The choices will run from working through the existing municipal councils, elected in 1972, to appointing representatives of the King on the West Bank. The Jordanians show little sign of having thought out carefully how to administer any areas of the West Bank that return to their control.

Option 2: Functional Disengagement. If Israel refuses to relinquish any control in the Valley now, Jordanian-Israeli negotiations could concentrate instead on steps that might be taken to modify the Israeli occupation throughout the West Bank and Gaza. This would be a minimalist approach. Its object would be to allow King Hussein to demonstrate his effectiveness in negotiating with the Israelis to produce changes that will benefit the Palestinian Arabs. This could enhance the King's prestige and credibility to some degree in the occupied areas, thereby improving his position vis-a-vis the PLO and easing whatever future relationship develops between the East and West Banks. But it would leave him in the difficult position of having to work within the framework of the Israeli occupation. In particular, the King could seek the following Israeli concessions:

--Return of displaced persons and refugees to the West Bank. As many as 200,000 Palestinians fled in 1967 and have been prevented from returning. Of these, some 75,000 have homes and property to which they could return. The Israelis have, on occasion, indicated a willingness to consider allowing some of these people to return.

--Opening of land now in security zones for agricultural development. The Jordan Valley has the greatest potential in this respect.

--Easing the procedures for controlling movement across the bridges.

--Freezing further land expropriation in the occupied areas. (About 400,000 acres have been taken to date).



--Setting up a Development Authority for the West Bank and Gaza, with projects to be formulated with the participation of local inhabitants and Jordanian planners. The most significant project would be work on the Mukhaiba Dam and the West Ghor Canal, which would require cooperative efforts by Jordan, Syria and Israel. Work could begin if Israel were willing to pull back in the Golan Heights from the dam site on the Yarmuk River.

Option 3: Disengagement Zone and Jordanian Administration. If the Israelis will not discuss returning the Jordan Valley portion of the West Bank to Jordan under the guise of disengagement and if the Jordanians need more than simple functional relaxation of some aspects of the occupation, then some combination of the approaches in Options 1 and 2 should be considered. It might be possible to begin instead by restoring Jordanian administration in a limited area like Jericho, combined with some administrative changes there, while at the same time creating a semblance of military "disengagement" in order to maintain symmetry with Egyptian and Syrian disengagement, to defer more difficult political issues and to give King Hussein the appearance of some Israeli withdrawal. This approach would combine the following elements:

--Military disengagement: A disengagement zone would be established in the Jordan Valley between the Jordan River and a line about 8 kilometers to the west. (Comparable limitations on the Jordanian side of the river could be considered, but only as a fallback.) Both sides would agree that only lightly-armed security forces would act in this zone. Possibilities for maintaining security would include some of the following:

--Israeli forces could continue to man the security fence and zone along the river, and Arab forces could be responsible in the Arab-populated areas, such as the town of Jericho.

--Jordan could assume control at the bridges. Or there could be joint inspection with Israel or with the UN.

--A small UN observer force could be stationed in the zone with the agreement of both sides.

--Jordanian Administration. Within the disengagement zone:

--An area to be called the "Jericho Administrative District" could be defined, corresponding approximately to the former "Jericho Sub-District." This would include not only the town of Jericho but as much of the agricultural land immediately to the north as naturally relates to Jericho.

--This area could be governed by the mayor and municipal council of Jericho. If these are to change, they will be elected by the voters of the District. It may be that this is a time for relaxation of highly restrictive Jordanian election laws.

--The Government of Jordan would appoint a prominent West Banker to serve as security officer to organize local security forces within the Jericho District.

--A Development Authority would be established for the Jericho District to rehabilitate land and build permanent housing. This authority could be chaired by a West Banker responsible to the municipal council; the Government of Jordan would be represented to coordinate with the Jordan Valley Authority. A representative of the World Bank or other appropriate representative of international donors could sit as an observer. Resources would be provided directly to the Jericho District Development Authority.

--Within the Jericho District, refugee camps would be replaced with permanent housing and towns. UNRWA would turn its functions over to local authority as quickly as possible while making an orderly transition.

--Israeli settlers would remain along with Israeli settlements existing or under construction, but new settlements would not be built.

--Next Steps. If an initial agreement can be reached on a limited Israeli withdrawal in the area of Jericho, along with other administrative changes in the occupied areas, then the same pattern could be applied to other populated areas of the West Bank as progress toward a full settlement continues.



A Strategy for Dealing with the West Bank

The guiding principle in dealing with the West Bank is to work for a political outcome which the Israelis can live with in terms of their security interests and which will be acceptable to a large enough body of Palestinian opinion to dampen irredentist sentiment. The West Bank and Gaza, whatever their eventual political status, will be essentially demilitarized and therefore vulnerable to superior Israeli force; will benefit from open borders with both Israel and Jordan; and will be inhabited by Palestinians who have national aspirations and a network of political structures in the towns and villages that any government will have to deal with. These fundamental realities will influence political developments in the West Bank whether Israel, King Hussein or the PLO have ultimate authority in the area. The following political forces will be important in resolving the status of the West Bank.

--West Bank and Gaza Opinion. Most Palestinians living under Israeli occupation want Israel to leave as soon as possible despite the material benefits to be derived from association with the Israeli economy. In addition, Palestinians have a strong desire to have a voice in how the West Bank and Gaza will be governed. For the moment, the PLO is seen as embodying most clearly this opposition to Israeli occupation and desire for self-determination. This does not mean that West Bankers would give their allegiance to any particular PLO representative, but they do cling to the PLO as a symbol of their national and political aspirations. This is probably most true in Gaza and in the Nablus region. Nevertheless, whoever is able to get the Israelis out will be welcomed, and, if this proves to be King Hussein, most West Bankers (although not Gazans) will probably be willing to accommodate to Hashemite rule. If the King were to offer a real measure of autonomy and some positions for the nationalists, he might find considerable support in the West Bank. If, instead, he rules the area with a heavy hand, as before 1967, Palestinian reaction will be very negative and the West Bank could become an area of instability and violence.

--The Palestine Liberation Organization. The PLO has succeeded in embodying a powerful idea--Palestinian nationalism--but as an organization it suffers from severe internal divisions and heavy dependence on Arab states. There is, however, no competing

organization that is able to represent Palestinian opinion more effectively than the PLO, although local leaders on the West Bank and King Hussein are both able to speak for some Palestinians. The PLO has been recognized by all Arab states except Jordan as the sole representative of the Palestinians, and even Jordan, under Egyptian pressure, has acknowledged that the PLO has a role to play in a peace settlement. The PLO is currently engaging in a serious internal debate over whether to participate in a settlement with Israel or to stand in the wings while King Hussein or non-PLO Palestinians negotiate for the return of the West Bank. The PLO has reportedly reached general agreement that a Palestinian "national authority" should be established on any Palestinian territory evacuated by Israel. This is a step in the direction of accepting the idea of a Palestinian state on the West Bank, but the modalities for bringing this about are still undecided. The PLO has not decided on whether to form a provisional government or whether to hold out for direct involvement in the negotiations. Increasingly it seems that the PLO will want to remain on the sidelines during negotiations, leaving the task to trusted "independents" from the West Bank. Fatah leader Arafat is anxious to receive some indication that the US is favorable to a role in negotiations for moderate Palestinians, but realizes that little can be done before Syrian-Israeli disengagement.

--Jordan. Jordanian opinion is not unanimously in favor of becoming involved again in the Palestine problem by regaining control of the West Bank. There are no economic gains to be had, and the Palestinians have always been a problem for the Hashemites. Nonetheless, King Hussein recognizes that a Palestinian state could be dangerous to his own regime and that his interests are best served by controlling, in some capacity, the West Bank. The King is also intent upon having a role in Jerusalem, but does not show much concern for Gaza. The Jordanians have not been very effective in developing contacts on the West Bank. The Jordanian approach to the area has been to deal with a few trusted traditional leaders who receive subsidies from Amman. The King, in recent visits to Cairo, Damascus and Riyadh, has tried to win Arab backing for Jordan's role in negotiating



for Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank. Sadat, Asad and Faisal all seem to agree that Jordan should be present at Geneva, but they also are holding out for a Palestinian delegation in the negotiations. The King has said he is not opposed to this, but he has stopped short of reorganizing the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinians. Thus far the Israelis have been quite negative toward Hussein's disengagement proposal, and this has led him on occasion to consider opting out of negotiations and turning over responsibility to the PLO. His other choice is to pursue rapprochement with the PLO, with help from Sadat and Asad, with the objective of getting Palestinians to endorse any agreements he is able to reach with Israel.

--Egypt and Syria. Presidents Sadat and Asad both have considerable influence over the Palestinians, the former through his relationship with PLO Chairman Arafat and the latter through the Syrian-controlled Saiqa fedayeen group. Egypt has reportedly urged the PLO to seek a rapprochement with Jordan, but continues to support the idea of Palestinian representation in the peace talks and perhaps the creation of a provisional Palestinian government as well. Asad has been preoccupied with his own problems and has not actively pressed the PLO to take any specific position now, but this could change if Syria goes to Geneva. A combination of Egyptian and Syrian pressure on the PLO would be hard to resist. The Palestinians cannot lose the support of these two key Arab countries and expect to remain a viable political movement.

--Israel. As long as the Israeli political situation remains unsettled, it will be difficult to direct Israeli attention to the Jordanian-Palestinian front. The NRP, a possible coalition partner, has extracted a commitment from the Labor Party that any agreement on the West Bank would require new elections. There is a segment of Israeli opinion that recognizes that the key to Arab-Israeli peace is a settlement with the Palestinians and, if any representative body of Palestinians were prepared to negotiate on the basis of acceptance of Israel's existence, support might be found for such negotiations inside Israel. For the moment, however, the Israeli leadership refuses to consider serious negotiations with either the Palestinians or King Hussein. Rabin may, however, prove to be more flexible than Mrs. Meir.

A US Strategy

In the initial stages of Jordanian-Israeli disengagement talks, the United States should seek to encourage a process that will allow King Hussein to take credit for bringing about changes in the Israeli occupation of the West Bank that will be favorably viewed by the local inhabitants. By restoring Jordanian authority to a limited area of the West Bank such as Jericho, an agreement could have a profound influence on expectations of subsequent developments. The King should be urged to use this first step of disengagement to demonstrate to the Palestinians that he is prepared to respect local sensitivities and to allow autonomy after Israeli withdrawal. The purpose should be to give moderate Palestinians a program to support, thereby isolating the most radical elements in the PLO. Rather than precluding Palestinian participation in the peace settlement effort, the King should invite Palestinian participation in the peace settlement effort along with Jordan, especially in dealing with issues involving refugees and, eventually, Jerusalem.

A necessary complement to this strategy will be to convince Egypt and Syria not to press for immediate Palestinian participation in negotiations, while leaving open the possibility of Palestinian representation in conjunction with Jordan. We might even go further and encourage Egypt, and possibly Syria, to press the PLO to discuss strategy with Hussein. If appropriate, we might convey directly to the PLO that we consider that Jordan can most effectively negotiate for Israeli withdrawal at this stage, but that we do not preclude a role for the Palestinians at a later stage provided they are prepared to accept Israel's existence, as specified in Security Council Resolution 242.

The key role for the United States is to convince Israel that, after Israeli-Syrian disengagement, the time is ripe for a substantial step on the Jordan-Israel front. If possible, this should include some territorial withdrawal. We will have to press Israel hard on this to get results, and it is not certain that we can succeed. A fallback position would be to try for at least an informal agreement on modifying some aspects of the Israeli occupation in ways that will encourage moderate Palestinian leadership and will enhance King Hussein's role as a negotiator. If Jordan is not interested in such an approach, then the US will have to decide whether to try to draw the Palestinians into negotiations directly or to move on to other issues of a settlement.

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