

# JERUSALEM LETTER / VIEWPOINTS

Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs

No. 304 27 Heshvan 5755 / 1 November 1994

## THE OPPORTUNITIES OF THE ISRAEL-JORDAN PEACE

Daniel J. Elazar

**The Warm Atmosphere of Peace / Israel: Going the Extra Mile / Hashemite Jordan: Risks for Regime Survival / Palestinian Jordan: Mixed, with Reservations / Territorial Concessions and Opportunities / Jerusalem / A Place for the Palestinians / Cooperative Arrangements**

### The Warm Atmosphere of Peace

Almost without exception, Israelis were impressed with the warmth of the atmosphere on both sides at the time of the signing of the Israel-Jordan peace in the last weeks in October, culminating with the actual ceremony on October 26th. From the moment that the negotiations between the two states became public, the leaders of both sides have acted as if this peace was the most natural thing in the world between two close neighbors who sought to secure closer ties and mutual security. Not only that, but the feeling between them appeared to be genuine. The words that passed between them or that they said publicly went out of their way to reflect this warmth, even when enunciated by people not particularly known for expressing warmth under any situation. The very warmth of the atmosphere placed the peace on a special footing, much of which was reflected in the details of the agreement itself.

Moreover, in Israel, at least, the agreement was welcomed by virtually all segments of the population. The lopsided Knesset vote of approval for the

agreement, with only three Knesset members from the Israel far nationalist right voting against it, and six abstaining, reflected this. The Likud not only lined up behind the agreement, but its party leader, Binyamin Netanyahu, who had earlier visited with Jordan's Crown Prince Hassan, King Hussein's younger brother, was contacted by King Hussein so as to include him in some way in the process as leader of the opposition.

Even before the signing, the Likud Knesset members met together to agree to their common stance and at that time, with a great deal of nostalgia, agreed that their movement anthem written by their founder, the late Vladimir Zeev Jabotinsky, and entitled "Two Banks of the Jordan," was now a matter of nostalgia and that happily, while they were conceding their claims to the east bank, they were doing so in such a way that it would enhance the peace and security of Israel west of the Jordan. For those who had grown up singing "Shtay Gadot L'Yarden" from their earliest days, it must have been a powerful moment.

Daniel J. Elazar, Editor and Publisher; Zvi R. Marom, Associate Editor; Mark Ami-El, Managing Editor.  
13 Tel-Hai St., Jerusalem, 92107, Israel; Tel. 02-619281, Fax 972-2-619112. © Copyright. All rights reserved.  
ISSN: 0792-7304.

The opinions expressed by the authors of Viewpoints do not necessarily reflect those of the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs

### Israel: Going the Extra Mile

The agreement itself was an interesting amalgam. Perhaps 90 percent of it had been negotiated years ago under the Shamir government and then again under the leadership of Shimon Peres. It essentially remained in place. The remaining 10 percent was all that had to be negotiated and, while Israel's negotiators were prepared to press harder on the disputed points, Prime Minister Rabin decided that it was important to get the agreement signed as fast as possible and so conceded on most of them without contesting the matter further.

Thus Jordan was given 350 square kilometers of territory in Israel's possession, some of which, it is true, had involved Israeli army advances to better positions in the Arava, but at least some of which was on the cis-Jordanian side of the dividing line established by the British Mandatory regime or would have been so determined by international arbitration. For example, where the Jordan River had changed course and some lands that, prior to that, had been on the east bank and were now on the west, the agreement could easily have provided that those small parcels be placed under Israeli sovereignty, especially since the border established by the British was merely an administrative line between two parts of Mandatory Palestine and not ever a recognized international boundary. But Israel's prime minister, realizing that international arbitration could take years and seeing the advantage of a peace agreement with Jordan now, conceded all of those disputed points, only arranging that those parts of the territory under Israeli cultivation would be leased back to Israel for at least twenty-five years.

So, too, Israel essentially granted Jordan's claims to the water resources in the area, granting the Jordanians ultimately 100 million cubic meters of water, 50 million now and 50 million later after dams are built on the Yarmuk and the Jordan Rivers, but apparently Israel did so in such a way that it did not give Jordan a permanent claim to the Kinneret waters. Again, for Rabin it was a good trade-off and he led the way, having Israel go the extra mile for a warm peace that included the potentiality for many cooperative and joint arrangements between the two states. Significantly, the two states agreed to establish a Conference on Security and Cooperation in the Middle East (CSCME) modeled after the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) that has become so influential on that continent. This is made necessary by the fact that the whole territory, however divided, is really one land and the interdependence of its parts is a matter of necessity, if not inevitability.

### Hashemite Jordan: Risks for Regime Survival

So the agreement was a good one for Hashemite Jordan and the Hashemite family, although not without its risks. King Hussein obviously had decided that the time had come to take those risks, to guarantee or to strengthen the chances for the survival of his regime even after he is no longer king, and also to give the Hashemite family, if not the Hashemite kingdom, a chance to reestablish itself, at least in small symbolic ways, west of the Jordan once again. The king may have been moved to do this for reasons of his health. While his cancer seems to be in remission, one never knows, and he had the opportunity now, while he still has the health to do so, to take these important steps for his regime's survival.

Jordan also paid a price in territory, but one that it had already paid, de facto, within the Arab world. If Israel gave up 350 square kilometers, Jordan renounced its claims to Judea and Samaria or, as it is known to the Arabs, the West Bank. Of course, those lands did not go to Israel. They are still in limbo with the assumption that much of them will come under Palestinian control in one way or another, with Israel's future borders and position in the rest of the territories still undetermined. For that matter, so is Jordan's, of which more below. On the other hand, with Israel's active agreement, the claims of Jordan and especially the Hashemite family to a religious presence in Jerusalem, essentially on the Temple Mount and in the Arab community, were strengthened by the treaty, to the intense dissatisfaction of the Palestinian Authority and the PLO.

In essence, King Hussein bought himself an ally, de jure as well as de facto, by making Israel openly interested in the survival of the Hashemite regime in Jordan so that the peace will survive. This was another shrewd step on the part of a monarch who, overall, has been very shrewd indeed during his long reign. To gain that support in a more formal manner, both Hussein and Hassan were willing to risk the anger of those Palestinians in Jordan who still have irredentist claims or those Islamic fundamentalists who oppose any peace with Israel.

That may be why for the Hashemite family the peace has to be a warm one but not too warm. They need Israel to be really concerned and involved in Jordan, but not with the kind of overeager embrace that Israelis, and Jews in general, frequently display when signs of friendship toward them become manifest. Millions of Israelis swarming into Jordan, an image that is clearly in the minds of the Jordanians, is not exactly

what the king would most prefer as the first manifestation of peace.

Connections, reasonably open borders, and cooperation in an institutionalized manner, he and his kingdom can handle and even may welcome to cement the ties that he rightly seems to feel that he needs for the survival of his regime. More than that could become threatening. Thus, what lies ahead is an effort to maintain a delicate balance between strengthening the ties that bind the two states but in such a way that neither are harmed by them.

#### **Palestinian Jordan: Mixed, with Reservations**

There seems to be little question that the third of Jordan that consists of the Hashemites and their indigenous supporters (bedouin, Jordanians of Palestinian ancestry from before 1948, and various others) share the aforementioned views of Hashemite Jordan. It is not so clear with regard to the 60 to 70 percent who comprise Palestinian Jordan; that is to say, those who were refugees from Palestine in 1948 and 1967 and their descendants. Some, indeed, do.

The more established elements of Palestinian Jordan have, by their very lives, aligned their fate with that of the Hashemite kingdom. For others it is not so clear. Their views are more mixed and more of them have reservations. For them the peace agreement means that any slim chances that they might have had to return to their previous homes in cis-Jordan are now all but gone. Moreover, formally they are more separated from their Palestinian brethren within, or soon to be within, the Palestinian Authority than ever before. Thus they will have to make choices that were more theoretical than real prior to October 26th.

For some among them, the most extreme, the opposition to the agreement is clear; among others there are rumblings. As those rumblings became apparent, a little of the luster of the agreement and the excitement of the Israeli partners began to diminish. We were forced to recognize that it was not just an easy path, the way the king and his family might have wished, but that we and the king had a way to go before persuading the Jordanian people to share the same warmth and enthusiasm.

#### **Territorial Concessions and Opportunities**

As indicated above, in a certain sense both sides made territorial concessions that were neither symmetrical in scope nor in direction. Not much is clear about the likely consequences of those concessions, but they seem to be predicated on a plan that is mutually en-

dorsed, that the Jordan Valley should become an area of joint cooperation and development, which may or may not include the Palestinians. Indeed, the whole Rift Valley from the Kinneret to the Gulf of Eilat seems to be earmarked for this kind of joint development.

This would assist both states greatly. It might indeed enable Israel to hold on to the Jordan Valley, with the exception of the Jericho pocket, which many believe is what Prime Minister Rabin would like. With more water, what is already the breadbasket of Jordan could become a major development area for both states and the ties that bind the two together would so interlink Israel and Jordan as to make breaking the peace that much more costly and difficult for either.

There is talk about joint agricultural, economic and touristic developments for both Jordan and Israel in Aqaba, Eilat, and the southern Arava, with or without a canal built from the Red Sea to the Dead Sea rather than from the Mediterranean as Israel has advocated in the past and the Palestinians want for their interests. The Dead Sea will be jointly developed, according to the talk, both for the extraction of its rich supply of minerals and for tourism, while the Jordan Valley will become an even richer agricultural region as it is better watered. In other words, if the talk is to be believed and if enough of it is translated into action, then the borderlands between the two states will become a joint garden, punctuated by jointly administered peace parks.

#### **Jerusalem**

If the agreement offers great possibilities for cooperation between Israel and Jordan in the Rift Valley, in Jerusalem it offers equally great opportunities for conflict between Jordan and the Palestinians. Indeed, by bringing Jordan formally into the picture, an alternative to Palestinian religious control of the Muslim holy places, and maybe of the holy places in general, has been initiated. The Palestinians are well aware of the implications of this and are quite angry about it.

Moreover, the fact that Rabin pointedly informed Arafat that he was not invited to the signing ceremony further strengthened the appearance that Israel was about to play off Jordan against the Palestinians, at least in some ways, with Jerusalem as the main sticking point. At present, both King Hussein and Arafat have appointed their own men as successors to the previous Mufti of Jerusalem. Both are veteran officials on the Temple Mount and each sits in his office presenting himself as the Mufti.

At this writing, the PLO candidate has the advantage because he has Palestinian support which is more

open. He has moved into the old Mufti's office to assert his authority. But the Jordanian Mufti cannot be counted out, especially in light of the agreement. Indeed, the reason that President Clinton cancelled his visit to the Old City was not because of possibilities of terrorism or Israel-Arab tension, but because he could not come into the Old City without visiting the Temple Mount and then he would have had to choose between the two muftis as to who would escort him. To avoid the latter situation, he cancelled his trip and sent Hillary to visit just the Kotel instead. In any case, the agreement has enabled Israel to transform the conflict over Jerusalem from an Israel-Arab or Jewish-Muslim confrontation, or even an Israel-Palestinian confrontation, into a three-way confrontation in which Arab and Muslim forces could be divided, very likely an advantage for Israel.

While this might seem to disadvantage Jordan, it does not because King Hussein feels that the Hashemite family, as descendants from the Prophet Mohammed, have a special relationship to the Islamic holy places. Since they cannot exercise that relationship in Saudi Arabia and have not been able to since the late King Ibn Saud, founder of that state, drove Hussein's great grandfather, the Sharif of Mecca, out of the country, all they had left was Jerusalem. Having lost that in 1967, getting back at least a religious toehold is a kind of vindication. We can expect the Hashemites to make every effort to exercise their rights and to be opposed at every step by the Palestinian Authority under Arafat.

### A Place for the Palestinians

All in all, the agreement revives in a modest and different way Jordan's presence on the West Bank. That is not altogether unpopular in the eyes of the Palestinian residents of Judea and Samaria. In a recent poll conducted by the leading Palestinian polling institute, based in Shechem, and released only three weeks ago, some 60 percent of the Palestinian residents preferred returning to Jordanian rule over rule by the Palestinian Authority under Arafat.

Arafat was reported to be very upset and even incensed at the poll and has tried to discredit it among the Palestinians, but there it is, a sign of what has been apparent to all observers of the scene in the last few months. As the Palestinian Authority has appeared to be failing to get its act together, the sentiment has increased for bringing Jordan back. For Israel, which would like a solution that would provide for at least a federation between Jordan and the Palestinians, this has to be considered good news, if far too soon to be

anything but preliminary thoughts.

In general, the PLO has been semi-responsible in fulfilling the Oslo agreement. That is to say, except for very visible eruptions on the surface, it looks as if it is fulfilling the agreement. Still, the PLO has failed to live up to its commitments in some critical matters, not the least of which is the repeal of those sections of the Palestinian Covenant committing the PLO to the destruction of Israel. For internal reasons, the Palestinian Authority has not been willing to pursue Hamas, even its military or terrorist wing.

Nor has it been willing to introduce a system of fiscal responsibility into its institutions that will enable it to receive funds from the Western powers. The latter are holding fast to the principle that any funds they grant must be subject to proper control and full accountability. Arafat, who has always kept PLO funds under his direct and secret control, refuses because, at the very least, he does not want to lose that control.

As a result, monies that are being funneled into Gaza are being funneled through the United Nations instrumentalities in Gaza. Whatever their problems of efficient and honest administration may be, these instrumentalities are still capable of providing basic services and may be providing as much as 75 percent of the functioning services in the territory under Palestinian Authority rule, with the PA providing the remaining quarter. This enables the PA to continue to govern without governing and to concentrate their attention on building up paramilitary forces, as they are doing, but it is hardly a long-term solution.

Not only that, but the inability or unwillingness of the PA to control terrorism has meant that the number of Israeli civilian casualties in terror attacks has doubled since the Oslo agreement, even though the territories themselves are relatively quiet. This had led many Israelis, previously quite sympathetic to advancing Palestinian control over the territories to be given to them, to reconsider matters. It is rumored that Prime Minister Rabin is among them, that he would like to go slower to give the Palestinians a chance to demonstrate that they are the partners that they must be if Israel is to work with them.

Ultimately, the Palestinians will have to have an appropriate place with Israel and Jordan in governing the common land. I assume that both of the latter want that place to be very closely linked with Jordan, while the Palestinian leadership do not want that. Thus, things will have to be left to stew for a while until the mixture is ready to be served.

### Cooperative Arrangements

In the meantime, the Israel-Jordan agreement provides for various kinds of cooperative arrangements between the two states, from those related simply to sharing a common boundary of the kind normally found in international relations, to arrangements for joint rule in one way or another over segments of that territory, to co-production in the borderlands and perhaps beyond. The intention is to normalize relations in culture and science, the fight against crime and drugs, roads and transportation, telecommunications and postal services, tourism, environmental protection, energy, health, agriculture and regional development. For example, the electricity grids of the two countries are being linked as rapidly as possible. Direct telephonic communications have already been established. Joint tourism plans have apparently attracted foreign financing already in the area of the southern Arava and Eilat and Aqaba. More border crossings are being erected to facilitate cross-border activities.

Much of the success of the peace between the two states will probably rest upon those cooperative arrangements. The talk of separation of a kind that we hear periodically from government sources at the highest levels and from their supporters is sometimes attractive to reassure the general public after terrorist attacks, but

is really thinking about a world that has long since passed away. As this writer has noted for the past twenty-five years, Israel, Jordan, and the Palestinians, willy-nilly, are interconnected because of the states and peoples occupying this land. We can be interconnected in war and terrorism as we have been, or we can take the opportunities now emerging to be interconnected in peace.

The Israel-Jordan agreement, as much as and perhaps more than the Oslo Declaration of Principles, provides for the needed interconnections appropriate to the situation. Whether they will come about depends upon how that agreement is implemented. At least in Israel, but probably in Jordan as well, we have begun with high hopes. We may, and probably will, have disappointments as we attempt to translate those hopes into realities, but it is possible for us to reach the kind of living together that will give all of the partners involved both prosperity and peace.

\* \* \*

Daniel J. Elazar is President of the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs. His latest book is *Israel at the Polls, 1992*, co-edited with Shmuel Sandler (JCPA and University Press of America, 1994).

★ ★ ★ NEW BOOKS FROM THE JERUSALEM CENTER ★ ★ ★

**Political and Structural Arrangements in the New Era  
of Israeli-Palestinian Relations**

*Conference Proceedings, December 1993*

After the Oslo Agreement between Israel and the PLO, the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation sponsored a conference on Political and Structural Arrangements in the New Era of Israeli-Palestinian Relations, which was held in Jerusalem on December 6-8, 1993. Some 21 speakers explored possible structures and relationships between Israel and the autonomy, the political implications of the new arrangements, related experiences of other countries, the politics and election of the Palestinian council, avenues for functional cooperation, and legal and constitutional issues including settlements and jurisdiction. Included among the speakers were four representatives of the Palestinian community — a leading Gaza notable, a professor of political science from Bethlehem, a well-known Jerusalem writer, and a member of the PLO delegation to the peace talks.

Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs and Konrad Adenauer Foundation, 1994, 218pp.  
Softcover \$15.00

\* \* \*

**Understanding the Jewish Agency: A Handbook, Third Edition**

*Daniel J. Elazar and Andrea S. Arbel*

The most important institutional task facing the Jewish people today is creating a proper structure and process of governance for the emergent world Jewish polity. As the major institutional link between the State of Israel and the diaspora communities, the reconstituted Jewish Agency stands at the nexus of this effort. Originally published as the first book-length guide to the Jewish Agency in 1984, the fully-updated Third Edition of *Understanding the Jewish Agency* gives a comprehensive overview of this important political instrumentality's history, evolution, present-day structure, activities, and relationship with world Jewry, complete with detailed charts and tables.

Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, December 1993, 187pp.  
Softcover \$21.00

\* \* \*

**The Political Economy of Israel: From Ideology to Stagnation**

*Yakir Plessner*

The failure of the Israeli economy can be explained by its departure from the institutions and rules which govern predominantly market economies. Israel's economy has been operating on principles too far from European Liberalism (or American neo-Conservatism) and too close to Socialism. While national imperatives may have been a reason for ignoring economic considerations, ultimately this strategy led to domination of the economy by the government and the systematic exclusion and distrust of private enterprise. As long as the economy is not reformed to create a hospitable climate for private investment, Israel will not be able to extricate itself from economic stagnation. A major critique of Israel's socialist economy, this work is part of the JCPA's study of the political economy of Israel.

State University of New York Press, 1994, 330pp.  
Softcover \$21.95; Hardcover \$65.50.