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NOW MORE THAN EVER IS THE TIME FOR A FEDERAL SOLUTION

Daniel J. Elazar

Heady Times for the Palestinian Arabs / Don't Count Jordan Out / Continued Links with Israel Are Inevitable / The Appropriate Federal Solution / The Nature of an Israeli-Jordanian/Palestinian Confederation / How to Achieve It

Heady Times for the Palestinian Arabs

These must be heady times for the Palestinian Arabs in the West Bank and Gaza. Over twenty years of Israeli administration have brought general prosperity and improvement of living conditions in virtually every respect, but did not bring political satisfaction to the indigenous population. The year-long disturbances in the territories have shocked everyone by their extent and intensity and by the fact that they extended also to East Jerusalem and to a few Arab villages in pre-1967 Israel. Outbreaks of adolescent anger a year ago were transformed into organized aggression that knocked the Israelis off balance, seriously changing the images of both Israel and the Palestinians and leading to great uncertainty with regard to the future at home.

King Hussein's formal withdrawal from the territories west of the Jordan

and the recent declaration of a Palestinian state by the Palestinian National Council meeting in Algiers have only added to that heady feeling. But heady feelings are not enough to change the situation on the ground. In the short run the Palestinians cannot dislodge the Israelis from what they refer to as "the occupied territories," while in the long run, whatever they may achieve, they cannot expect to be rid of either a Jordanian or an Israeli presence.

Don't Count Jordan Out

Despite King Hussein's dramatic announcement and subsequent actions designed to speak even louder than his words, less than three months after the presumed severance of the Jordanian involvement he and Yassir Arafat had resumed discussions of a Jordanian-Palestinian confederation, first under the auspices of Egyptian President

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Husni Mubarak and subsequently on a bilateral basis in Amman. Even the PLO leaders understand that, with a few exceptions, even that segment of the Israeli population willing to withdraw from territories occupied by Israel in 1967 is not prepared for a separate Palestinian state that is not linked with Jordan in some serious way.

Nor is it necessarily in the Palestinian interest not to be linked with their brethren east of the river located in territory which, according to the PLO platform, should be part of the Palestinian state. Whatever concessions the PNC made toward recognizing Israel's right to exist in its Algiers declaration, they made no concessions whatsoever with regard to Jordan's right to exist. Their original doctrine continues to apply undiluted to the East Bank.

Continued Links with Israel Are Inevitable

The Palestinians have also hinted that they understand the need for a continued connection with Israel as well, even if they get their state, at the minimum out of economic necessity. Most Israelis understand this as well. Certainly it is accepted doctrine among Israeli policy-makers, even those who are prepared to make the maximum territorial and political concessions to the Palestinians. The idea

that of maximum separation of Jews and Arabs when it comes to matters of self-government and preservation of their respective cultures. While there are many kinds of federal solutions, one seems to be particularly appropriate at this juncture: a Palestinian-Jordanian federation in new boundaries recognizing Israel's security needs overlayed by a confederation with Israel. A Palestinian-Jordanian federation would mean one over-arching general government for the territories within it, both east and west of the Jordan River, divided into two or more constituent states, at least one of which would be controlled by the Palestinian Arabs west of the river. It is not for us to dictate the form of government that such a federation would take. Israel's role in that federation will be primarily as a guarantor to both sides that the other lives up to its federal obligations as determined in the peace settlement and the constitutional bargaining between King Hussein and the Palestinians. Israel's principal concern will be that a real federation between the two parties is involved so that for purposes of international relations there will be only one Arab state in the historic Land of Israel/Palestine, albeit with at least two component federated states with substantial powers that will together share in the

the case in the confederations that have emerged since World War II, the first and foremost of which is the European Community.

Such a confederal arrangement will provide for Israel and Israelis to continue to have rights and access to the territories they relinquish and a share in determining critical decisions regarding those "goods" and resources such as water which are common to the entire country and do not respect state boundaries. It could involve extraterritorial status for both Jewish and Arab settlements on one or another side of the new border and obviate the necessity to either dismantle Jewish settlements or to establish entirely contiguous links between them and pre-1967 Israel. Among the tasks that could be entrusted to the confederation would be security in the West Bank and Gaza other than local police, control and distribution of common water resources, economic and fiscal coordination including the maintenance of an open labor market, and the promotion of economic development.

How would such a confederation be governed? One way would be through a council whose members would be appointed by the parties involved either through the two states or, perhaps more effectively, by Israel and each of the federated states of Palestine/Jordan. If the former, voting could be on the basis of

be based on an allocation of jurisdiction rather than decisions on ultimate sovereignty, either indefinitely or for an interim period.

In sum, such a federation-confederation combination could give all the parties involved not only the peace they seek but their other demands as well. The Palestinians would get their state, albeit as a federal state rather than a separately independent one, and also a guaranteed share in the common governance of the Arab state. Jordan would continue to have a standing west of the river. Israel would get secure borders, recognition by its Arab neighbors, and a continuing relationship with those parts of the historic Land of Israel not within its full political jurisdiction. Most of all there would be peace, which by now the vast majority of the people involved seriously want.

How to Achieve It

How do we get there from here? This program can be implemented either through the initiative of any one of the three principles involved — Israel, Hashemite Jordan, or the Palestinians — or through the good offices of the United States or, for that matter, Egypt. What is needed is to come to the bargaining table under the leadership of a skilled negotiator who could gain consent to the

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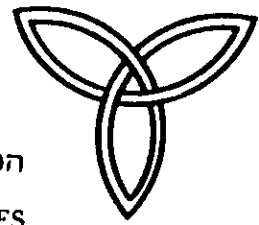
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