

Fuzzy Nationalism: The Case of Jordan

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This article, on the basis of a case-study of Jordan, argues that engaging in the construction of collective identity is a much more complex task than dealing with the relationship between a territorial or pan-nationalism as either a binary apposite or as synthetic dualism. In Jordan, the construction of nationalism is deliberately fuzzy and eclectic due to security concerns. Jordan's eclectic collective identity, based on four often discordant elements – lineage and family, usually advanced by the monarchy; civic identity, promoted by both society and the monarch; the (pan)-Arab identity; and religion – deals with inner tensions facing the integrity of the Jordanian state and society.

State apparatuses, Roger Brubaker has asserted, 'nationalize' their citizens more so than national movements.¹ In his view, they have been the major actors in the crystallization, dissemination and reproduction of a standard often unidimensional collective identity within clearly defined state borders. The belief that the development of a nationalism is intimately intertwined with the evolution of the modern state is reflected often in the pairing together of two concepts – state-building and nation-building. Even an extreme constructivist as Renan, who felt that nationalism amounted to a day-by-day referendum over the meaning of the collective self, nevertheless felt that nationalism defined the borders of collective identity. And while primordialist and constructivist accounts of collective identity disagree over the developmental trajectory or staying power of collective identities, they agree over their innate coherence, or at the very least, over the attempt to create a coherent self-sustaining collective identity, mostly within the territorial state.²

Even in those states which cultivate a nationalism whose identity extends beyond state borders, as in the case of the Arab states and the promotion of pan-Arabism, particularly in the 1950s and 1960s, the imagined borders of the unrealized political entity seem to have been relatively fixed – extending in the case of pan-Arabism from Morocco in the West to Iraq in the east.³ Has the imagination of a uniform nationalism within more or less fixed borders, however, been the only act in town in the Middle East? Just as we recognize the distinction between a nationalism based on constitutional principles rather than one based on common culture

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or origins, should we not recognize yet other more eclectic variants in the development of collective identities? This article, on the basis of a case-study of Jordan, argues that engaging in the construction and deconstruction of collective identity is sometimes a much more complex task than dealing with the relationship between a territorial or pan-nationalism as either a binary apposite or as synthetic dualism. In Jordan, the construction of nationalism is deliberately fuzzy and eclectic due to security concerns.

The article is divided into four parts. In the first, I challenge the assumption, by constructivists as well, that constructions of collective identity must necessarily imagine fixed and highly-defined contours of collective and spatial identity. In the second section I show how this is reflected in official Jordanian rhetoric and in the popular imagination. In the third section, I show why fuzziness solves existential political and security dilemmas: for the monarchy, the fear of the potentially democratic implications of a patriotic nationalism, and for monarchy and society, the feeling of isolation and vulnerability of living in a small bi-national state.

The Fixity of Nationalism

Paradoxically, one of the best-known constructivist challenges to the idea that state borders and collective identity are in any way hard and fast, advanced by Ian Lustick, assumes an innate quest both by the state and society for both. On the one hand he writes:

In large measure only habit has led theorists such as Stephen Krasner and Theda Skocpol to take the territorial composition of a state as a given – as a structural feature of political life... the fact is that their approaches to the study of states as institutions emphasize the need to treat the norms and expectations from which states are constituted as ultimately subordinated to the outcome of political processes. There is good reason why geographical boundaries should not be treated in just this way – as a problematically institutionalized dimension of the state, affecting but also subject to continuous and discontinuous processes of political competition.⁴

On the other hand, the domestic crisis engendered by changing borders and, therefore, of collective identity, assume that states and societies have some innate desire for a fixed collective identity within definable collective borders even if those may be unsynchronized with contemporary political reality or at odds with internationally-sanctioned norms and sentiments. According to Lustick, state contraction frequently results in domestic crisis. The severity of that crisis, he argues, is a function of both the extent to which the state and its borders are considered fixed and immutable in the

minds of its citizens, and the differential costs of state contraction to the various groups in society. Generally, the more embedded and permeable the state is in cognitively defined borders, the greater the crisis over state contraction. But rather than portraying the relationship between state-building and the institutionalization of borders as a continuous function, he holds that there are three stages of expansion or contraction characterized by distinctive kinds of conflicts posing differently scaled threats of dislocation: (1) to governing elites; (2) to governing elites and the regime; and (3) to governing elites, the regime and the hegemonically established beliefs about identity and political purpose that form the ethos of a state as a system or community.

But did Lustick in this deconstruction go far enough to contemplate societies where the most deeply cherished principles of belonging might have little to do with defined space, fixed borders or 'transparent, precise, planned symmetrical, organized, functional' states and other organizations bearing those attributes, but rather with very clear ideas and powerful affinities to a God inspired *umma* (people), to family and kin, to worship and virtue – those in fact who perceive of all political order in essentially minimal and limitless terms (at least spatially)? Ronen Shamir has argued that 'the law of the West, the search for certainty and stability and what Benhabib (1990) described as the Faustian-Cartesian dream of order' may not be universal.⁵ He quotes Dewey, who criticizes 'Western intellectualism as the sovereign method that privileges knowledge based on schematization, isolation and decontextualization over knowledge grounded in experience and context'.⁶ There is no better proof of this tendency than the vast literature both in comparative politics and international relations (especially the latter). The state in the international state system is imagined spatially in terms of Cartesian geometry. And not only are the borders of the territorial state conceived in this way but so is its collective identity. Yet one must ask whether one can apply Eurocentric models that assume a quest to institutionalize coherent fixed collective and spatial identities within to societies where borders relate to social institutions such as kinship and to religious precepts rather than to imagined nations and states. Do they apply with equal salience to societies in which the ruler – whether King, President, Shaykh or Sultan, and whether ruling an empire or a principality (any will do) – provides a modicum of security and possibly of justice and which the people make do with what they have?

Fuzzy Identity in Official and Popular Imagination

In Jordan the boundlessness of state identity and borders is to no small extent promoted by the monarchy, which rules the kingdom. The fusible

nature of Jordan is promoted by the government and the opposition and can be attributed both to structural and ideological reasons. Lisa Anderson has pointed out that monarchies endow personal rule with legitimacy that copes best with the demands placed on the ruler in the early stages of modern state formation.⁷ The Middle Eastern monarchies, most of which were created under European tutelage during the first half of this century, represent in this teleological scheme, a transitional form of regime 'well suited to the requirements of state formation, especially in its early stages'.⁸ She draws similarities between these states and political entities in Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

These personal regimes, like their European predecessors, are characterized by the lack of clear borders or functional specialization. As Robert Jackson and Carl Rosberg put it, 'the boundaries, structures, and institutions of these states were not yet settled in the minds of the people; as a result, absolutism became a widespread system of rule'.⁹ While their chief function may be 'to oversee vast changes in the name of preservation, inventing tradition as they go along',¹⁰ they are also well suited to accommodate the effects of changing borders even as they might (though hardly necessarily), try to institutionalize them. This fuzzy eclecticism characterizes both the Hashemite monarchy and Jordanian society.

The Monarchy

Hussein has been adept in maintaining the identity of Jordan ambiguous to be shaped and reshaped for instrumental purposes. Thus, during 'the Arab cold war' when Jamal Nasser was trying to establish Egypt's regional primacy under the guise of pan-Arabism, Jordan defended the primacy of the territorial state, going as far as allying with 'Karim Abd al-Qassim, the leader of the bloody coup that put an end to Hashemite rule in Iraq and in which King Ghazi, Hussein's beloved cousin along with his family, were brutally murdered. This did not prevent Hussein from continuing to advocate a pan-Arabism that competes with the development of a territorial state identity.¹¹ As Laurie Brand noted:

Basing their rule on a commitment to Arabism rather than a more local form of affiliation is crucial for the Hashemites because they themselves are latecomers to Jordan, having arrived from the Hijaz only in the immediate wake of World War I. The regime's repeated appeal to Arabism and characterization of Jordan as a home for all Arabs is also essential given the presence in the kingdom of large numbers of citizens who, like themselves, are not rooted in the East Bank.¹²

Some of the symbols of this Arabism transcend both the temporal and spatial borders of either the pre- or post-1967 Jordanian state. Brand writes

of the creation of a hybrid Jordanian identity that is neither east Jordanian nor obviously Palestinian (because of the political competition posed by the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization)). Shryock has pointed to a looming threat from the opposite camp composed of indigenous Jordanians whose attempts to generate lineage-based nationalism would leave the Hashemites, who are neither indigenous nor of the tribes, out of the equation.¹³ The regime's references to Arabism ensure that the Jordanian identity remains fuzzy.

An analysis of three of King Hussein's speeches – the first announcing the severance of ties to the West Bank from July 1988, the second given at the height of the Gulf crisis, and a third given soon after the Jordanian–Israeli peace treaty in October 1994 – demonstrates how intentional and consistent is this ambiguity. This ambiguity is reflected by his emphasis on Arabism alongside the promotion of a more specific Jordanian identity – but also the deliberate fuzzifying of the two by using the same terms of reference to describe both.

Let us look first at examples of the connection between Jordanianism and Arabism in his address 'to the Arab nation' on Jordan's separation from the West Bank and the relationship between the future Palestinian state and the kingdom:

The relationship of the West Bank with the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in light of the PLO's call for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, can be confined to two considerations. First, the principled consideration pertaining to the issue of Arab unity (al-wahda al-'Arabiyya) as a pan-Arab aim (hadaf qawmi), to which the hearts of the Arab peoples (al-shu'ub al-'Arabiyya) aspire and which they want to achieve. Second, the political consideration pertaining to the extent of the Palestinian struggle's gain from the continuation of the legal relationship of the Kingdom's two banks. Our answer to the question now stems from these two considerations and the background of the clear-cut and firm Jordanian position toward the Palestinian question, as we have shown.

Regarding the in-principle consideration, Arab unity (al-wahda al-'Arabiyya) between any two or more countries is an option of any Arab people. This is what we believe. Accordingly, we responded to the wish of the Palestinian people's representatives for unity with Jordan in 1950. From this premise, we respect the wish of the PLO, the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, to secede from us as an independent Palestinian state. We say that though we fully understand the situation, despite this, Jordan will continue to take pride in carrying the message of the Great Arab

Revolt, adhering to its principles, believing in the one Arab destiny, and abiding by the joint Arab action'¹⁴ (Hussein, 31 July 1988).

Later in the same speech he said:

If national unity (al-wahda al-wataniya) is dear and precious, it is for us in Jordan more than that. It is the basis of our stability and the cause of our development and prosperity as well as the foundation of our national security (amana al-wataniyya) and the source of our faith in the future. It is also a living embodiment of the principles of the Great Arab Revolt which we inherited and whose banner we are proudly carrying. It is also a living example of constructive plurality and a sound nucleus of any formula of a more comprehensive Arab unity. Based on this, safeguarding national unity (al-wahda al-wataniya) is a sacred matter that will not be compromised. Any attempt to tamper with it under any slogan will only help the enemy carry out its expansionist policy at the expense of Palestine and Jordan alike. Consequently, true nationalism and genuine pan-Arabism (al-wataniyya al-haqqa wa al-qawmiyya al-asila) lie in bolstering and strengthening national unity. Moreover, the responsibility to safeguard it falls on every one of you. There should be no room among us for a slanderer or a traitor. With God's help, we shall always be one cohesive family, whose members are joined by bonds of brotherhood, affection, awareness, and the common national and pan-Arab objectives (al-ahdaf al-wataniyya wa al-qawmiyya al-mushtaraka).'¹⁵

The King portrayed Jordan as a way station towards the achievement of Arab unity and by doing so criticized the Arab world for forcing him to make a decision to disengage from the West Bank which promotes fragmentation of the Arab world rather than promoting its unity.

In his address 'to the nation' at the onset of the Gulf War, the blurring of Jordan with pan-Arabism reached new heights though essentially it remained a matter of degree:

In the name of God, the merciful, the compassionate: Brother citizens, children of my one steadfast family. I send you my love and appreciation and stand beside you at this crucial time in the history of our country and homeland and in the march of our people and nation, as our minds and hearts are united in the great hope that our region and the world can withstand what is about to befall them, when the doors have been closed to reason and the windows shut to friendly dialogue and when the specter of war hangs over our Arab citizens and the whole human family.

Brother citizens, for many decades our Arab homeland has been denied what other countries have enjoyed in the way of security and peace. For many decades, our country has yearned for and worked to achieve the same free and dignified life and profound and comprehensive security and peace as others enjoy. Today our nation is on the brink of an abyss, after the Gulf crisis has turned into a looming catastrophe.

Despite the horrors of the situation and the pain that grips our hearts because of the point matters have reached, our conscience is clear because we exerted our utmost efforts to reach a political settlement to the Gulf crisis and because we acted, from the first moments of the crisis, in accordance with our convictions based on our deep affiliation and loyalty to the nation. In addition, we followed our course and never deviated from it in directing our efforts toward good and amity among our Arab peoples. We left no stone unturned and no road unexplored that would allow our single Arab family to address and solve the Gulf crisis within the Arab fold' (Hussein, 15 January 1991).¹⁶

Hussein employed the terms 'people', 'homeland', 'family' and 'nation' in their pan-Arab (Qawmi) sense, while in other places the exact same terms are used to describe the Jordanian people, homeland and nation.

Four years after Saddam Hussein roused the Jordanians' pan-Arab fervour it was still a theme Hussein saw fit to raise when addressing the cadets of the War College:

Brother youths: This past year has been an eventful one. It saw many achievements on the national (watani) scene, primarily when beloved Jordan made a national (watani) and Constitutional decision to strive to achieve peace. This had followed many epics of manliness and heroism and sacrifices throughout history. Jordan has kept the trust it inherited from the free men of the Arabs (ahrar al-'Arab) and their revolutionaries who fought under the banner of the father of revolution, Hussein Bin 'Ali, the descendent of Muhammad Bin 'Abdallah, may God's peace and blessing be upon him. Those revolutionaries followed the footsteps of Hussein Bin 'Ali to protect the nation (al-umma) and defend its beliefs. They also struggled for its freedom, unity, and progress. You, the sons of the Great Arab Revolt, have inherited this banner and raised it with strong hands, protecting it with your lives, not bowing except for God almighty. Jordan made this national decision after the Arabs had walked the path of peace. Our big sister, Egypt, was the first to follow the road to peace. Egypt, by virtue of its human and moral weight, led the nation in its successive wars.¹⁷

To the officers of the Jordanian Armed Forces Arabism is not only imagined but is manly, virile and personal. In the same breath, the King

emphasizes the Jordanian soldiers' Arab character, implies his own connection to the Great Arab Revolt of 1916 in which his great grandfather and namesake rebelled against the Ottomans. He portrays the soldiers as continuing that legacy, and reminds everyone of his connection to Muhammad, facets of an identity that have little to do with the institutionalized territorial state. The term 'Arab' does not denote the imagined impersonal collective identity identified by Benedict Anderson but rather the genealogical cultural sense of what it means in Beduin culture – *nashb* and *fada'il*: lineage and virile virtues. Shryock in his interesting book on the construction of incipient and potentially revolutionary Jordanian tribal nationalism takes issue with Benedict Anderson for imagining that all constructions of nationalism are replications of the Western experience and are therefore all based on an imagined synthetic belonging to a people or nation.¹⁸ This commitment to the writing of oral traditions, a form of nationalism is rooted he feels, in real blood ties. The nationalist lore surrounding Hussein's family is also different from Anderson's version. It is imagined but within the framework of the family, a social unit with real blood ties. The point for our purposes is that Jordanian identity conceived either by indigenous Jordanians as retaining their Beduin nationalism or Hussein's eclecticism runs counter to Western concepts of functional and institutional order. It hits at the legal-rational-spatial foundations of the modern state – an identity that aids in the non-institutionalization of the decision-making process and blurs the sense of space it ought to occupy.

This eclecticism continued under Abdullah II, albeit in decreasing proportions. On the first anniversary of his rule in 2000 he described his people once again in a variety of terms that imagine a heterogeneity of borders and identities:

Through my work in the Armed Forces I have had the opportunity to learn about our Jordanian family and about the people's conditions and aspirations. Throughout the past year, I have sought to discover more about Jordan's citizens and their daily suffering. I have found that such suffering stems largely from our economic conditions.

For this reason economic development has topped our national priorities. A comprehensive revision is required to revive the economy and provide the Jordanian people with a proper living standard.

With God's will Jordan will remain an Arab country and part of the Arab Nation. We are determined to continue our support for the Palestinian brothers in their struggle to regain their rights and establish their independent state on their national soil, with Jerusalem as its capital. We will continue to support Syria and Lebanon to regain

their rights and their lost territory and so help lay the foundation of a comprehensive peace based on justice and equality.¹⁹

In a speech to security personnel on 24 December 2000 soon after a Jordanian citizen of Palestinian descent was killed in a demonstration supporting the Palestinians in their war against Israel, he warned, 'My message to those whether they are inside or outside the country is this: We are the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. The future belongs to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and we will not permit anyone whoever to stand in our way or place obstacles in front of Jordan. If there are people who want something other than 'the kingdom', I have the Arab army of which we are proud and I am longing to wear the 'army uniform' and the 'atmosphere of the battlefield'.²⁰

The Citizenry

'In Jordan, as in other countries, national as well as sub-national identities are in a state of continuous adjustment, if not reconstruction.'²¹ This is also true of what the state's borders should be. To prove this assertion, I marshal the evidence provided by a unique survey conducted by the Center for Strategic Studies at the University of Jordan regarding the identity of East Jordanians and Palestinians in Jordan.²² The subject has long been politically taboo, so much so that the conducting of the survey itself, no less the findings, aroused heated and relatively open debate in the Jordanian press and amongst Jordanian and Palestinian elites.²³

The survey consisted of three samples, the 'national' sample composed of 1176 respondents, a sample consisting of 500 'opinion-makers', and a sample of 279 Palestinian refugees representing Jordan's 13 refugee camps with a total population of 270,000 inhabitants.²⁴ The refugee population living in the camps comprise approximately six per cent of the population of Jordan. The first two samples consisted of two origin groups, those of east Jordanian extraction, and those of Palestinian origin. For the sake of brevity, they will be referred to here as Jordanians and Palestinians respectively, even though most Palestinians are Jordanian citizens, and many if not most were born in Jordan. The third sample consisted exclusively of Palestinians who live in camps populated by refugees who fled or were evicted in 1948 and 1967. While many have were in Jordan, many do not possess Jordanian citizenship. It should be noted that the census does not differentiate between the two groups of origin. All three polls were taken at various times during the latter half of 1994, that is to say, after the establishment of the Palestinian Authority in May 1994. Thus, the national and refugee surveys were undertaken between 30 August and 6 September 1994, and the opinion-makers poll was conducted between 19 October and 22 November 1994. The

timing is important in understanding the findings. Between the first two samples and the third, Jordan signed a peace treaty with Israel in a widely televised ceremony attended by President Clinton and his wife on 26 October 1994. Politically Jordan, by concluding a peace treaty based on negotiations conducted in secrecy with Israel, became 'even' with the PLO which had taken the same secret negotiation track in Oslo with the Israelis that had led to the Declaration of Principles on the White House lawn. Both sides had therefore reneged on their promises to work jointly towards a comprehensive settlement with Israel.

The survey clearly demonstrated the absence of consensus regarding what Jordan is or ought to be. Responding to the question regarding the support for some kind of unifying framework that included the choice of: complete unity; federation; a model in which the two areas may have autonomy according to a separation of powers between the federal government and constituent states; confederation, where the two sovereign states agree usually to joint armed forces and one foreign ministry; some other form of unity (understood most probably by the respondents as being some kind of pan-Arab option of fusing Jordan along with other Arab countries together to form one larger Arab state); postponement of the issue; and lack of support for unity altogether – the vast majority of all sub-groups supported some kind of unity, albeit, with considerable variation (see Table 1). A much lower percentage of Jordanians in the national sample (70.8%) sought some kind of unity than did Palestinians (85.0%), and a much lower percentage of both origin groups in the elite sample (64.5% of the Jordanians compared to 73.1.5% of the Palestinians) supported some kind of relationship of unity rather than separation. Support for some kind of unity was also high amongst the refugees (81.3%).

Looking at the kind of unity they would like to see, nearly one third of the three samples over all would support complete unity with surprisingly small differences between the groups of origin in the national and opinion makers sample. Another approximately one-sixth supported a federal relationship, and a similar percentage supported a confederate solution. The refugees by contrast were the group most supportive of complete unity but overall are less supportive of some form of unity than respondents in the national sample (71.2%). This support for complete unity is not surprising given their close ties to relatives in the territories which were until recently under Israeli rule. However, it is not entirely clear from the survey who is to unify the state – the Hahsemites or the PLO – or what identity it would adopt. Only a small percentage in all samples of both origin groups did not support some constitutional connection between the two entities, albeit the Palestinians less so than the Jordanians. The Jordanians, by contrast, are least supportive of unity at all. 17.7% of the Jordanians in the national

TABLE 1
 EXPECTATIONS OF FUTURE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JORDAN AND PALESTINE,
 BY PLACE OF ORIGIN

	National Sample			Decision Maker Sample			Refugee Camp Sample
	Place of Origin			Place of Origin			Total
	Jordan	Palestine	Total	Jordan	Palestine	Total	
Complete Unity	30.4	37.8	34.2	26.5	32.8	29.6	44.4
Fed	17.0	20.0	18.8	15.0	21.1	18.0	15.4
Confederation	18.4	20.7	19.6	19.0	21.1	20.0	11.8
Leave to Future	6.6	6.0	6.3	14.6	15.8	15.2	5.4
Other	5.0	6.5	5.8	4.0	3.2	2.6	9.7
Do Not Support	17.7	6.7	12.1	18.2	4.0	11.2	9.7
Do Not Know	4.9	1.8	3.3	2.8	2.0	2.4	3.6
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

sample did not want any kind of unity compared to 6.7% for the Palestinians. Amongst the elite the difference was even more striking: 18.2% of the Jordanians compared to 4.0% of the Palestinians opposed any form of unity. Once again, this is consistent with other responses in which Jordanians evinced greater defensiveness, fear and suspicion of the other side than the Palestinians towards the Jordanians. Overall, these responses tend to mirror, in state-institutional terms, responses to questions relating to integration within Jordan.

A qualitative analysis of what is written and expressed about the Jordanian state leads to similar conclusions. The conception of the borders of the state is still subsumed in many cases to a non-state centred ideology rather than to a territorial focused patriotism (Assad 'Abd al-Rahman, Ahmad 'Abidat,²⁵ Fahad Fanik, 1995). The Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood, for example, opposed partition in part because of its Pan-Arab/Islamic ideology, that opposes the balkanization of the Arab nation and regards the division into territorial states a means of maintaining Western control over the Arab nation.²⁶ The remarks of Hamza Mansur, a member of the Jordanian parliament and spokesperson for the Islamic Action Movement, Jordan's largest political party, is revealing about the lack of meaning of the Jordanian state though acknowledging its instrumental importance:

I would be pleased if there came a time when my birth certificate, and my feeling of lineage (nasab) would be to my Arabness and to by Islamism, not to my passport and to my birth certificate. From our Islamic perspective we will be more Palestinian than the cream of the

Palestinians and more Jordanian than the cream of the Jordanians because our Islam obligates us to safeguard the interests of our people east and west of the Jordan.²⁷

For Hamza, representing the largest political party – perhaps the only effective political party in the state – Jordan was clearly a temporary entity with temporary borders.

This is not to deny that there are many Jordanians, especially the indigenous Jordanian elite who are trying to institutionalize Jordan as a Westphalian nation-state. For 'Abd al-Hadi al-Majali, Secretary-General of the al-Ahd party. Palestinians in Jordan must engage in politics only as Jordanians; they can support Palestinian causes but as a lobby:

We consider the Palestinian presence in Jordan an intrinsic part of the Jordanian people's composition. Therefore all those who reside on Jordanian soil are Jordanians provided they accept the political and constitutional essence of the Jordanian state and strive [on behalf of it] by showing loyalty to its institutions and abiding by its firm goals. When the independent state does emerge, the choice will be open to the brethren of Palestinian origin to exercise their free choice to remain within Jordan or to join the Palestinian political institution.²⁸

But the very advocacy of constitutional patriotism by a small political party reflects the absence of hegemonic thinking regarding the state itself. This has to be forged rather than assumed. For al-Majali, the borders of citizenship have to be solidified within Jordan's existing borders.

Fuzzy Nationalism: The Decision to Sever from the West Bank

How Hussein decided to sever ties between the East and West Banks in July 1988, and the lack of domestic crisis it engendered, offers one of the most striking proofs of the Jordan's fuzzy nationalism. In any advanced democracy, such a decision would be the culmination of a long formal process of intensive internal debate within the formal representative institutions and ultimately the taking of a decision whose authorization at least would involve the representative assembly. So momentous a decision as renunciation of formally annexed land enshrined in the constitution would be placed within its precise constitutional framework. The process and the wording of the decision would aim at reducing, if not eliminating, any ambiguity.

Hussein's decision exhibits none of these features. First, it was taken without either prior consultation or knowledge of the Jordanian Assembly of Deputies or the appointed Senate. In fact, a day beforehand, a royal

decreed dissolved the Chamber of Deputies. Judging by the policy positions they expressed before the King's speech, the King's decision may even have caught off-guard many who took part in the informal discussions of the King's inner court (diwan). Thus, in late May, Minister of Court 'Adnan Abu 'Awda stated that Jordan was not even thinking of dissolving the parliament that equally represented the East and West Banks. In early June Minister of Information Hani al-Khasawna claimed that Jordan had no intention to 'wash its hands of the West Bank'.²⁹ Crown Prince Hassan declared that Jordan was interested in 'safeguarding the geopolitical stability of the area called the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan'.³⁰ In early June, Minister of the Occupied Territory Affairs, Marwan Dudin, announced that Jordan intended to carry out its development plan for the West Bank and Gaza. In mid-July, the director-general of Jordan's Foreign Ministry still rejected any talk of disengagement. Minister of Interior Raja'i al-Dajani stated that Jordan had no intention of changing the status of the West Bank Jordanian citizens.

Though the decision was sudden, it was hardly unpredictable. As far back as October 1974, the resolutions of the Rabat summit declared that the PLO was the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, and that Jordan had no right to re-establish its sovereignty over the West Bank. Although Jordan, having little choice, formally accepted these resolutions, Hussein made his best efforts to undermine them as much as possible. As always, he continued to promote Jordan's central role in any negotiations concerning the West Bank.

In February 1985, Hussein and 'Arafat reached an agreement according to which Hussein recognized the Palestinians' right to a state, while 'Arafat agreed to a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation to an international peace conference, thus recognizing Jordan's centrality in the peace process.³¹ The Intifadah was a main catalyst which promoted PLO leadership on the West Bank, while undermining Jordanian leadership. The King had no choice but to eventually recognize the fact that the intifada indeed was a Palestinian national phenomenon which manifested not only a deep identification of the West Bank Palestinians with the PLO, but also the rejection of Jordan as a desirable partner with the PLO in representing the Palestinians. The Algiers summit on 17 June 1988 can be seen as the 'last straw' leading to the King's decision. Prior to the summit rumours had it that the King was about to announce Jordan's disengagement from the West Bank, and in his speech at the summit Hussein indeed spoke of pressure from within the Jordanian establishment to carry out such a step. During the summit, Jordan and the PLO had serious disagreements on the issues of Palestinian representation and the channelling of aid to the occupied territories, and Jordan was accused of imposing itself on the Palestinian people.³²

In addition to being sudden, the decision was also ambiguous both as reflected in the steps taken after the speech and by what the speech itself concealed. On the one hand, the Jordanian government decided to retire almost all Jordanian civil servants employed on the West Bank. The decision, reached on 4 August and carried out on 16 August affected 18,000 teachers, health workers, municipal workers and others. On the other hand, it did not apply to the over 3,000 employees of the Ministry of Religious Endowments (Awqaf) and Religious Affairs, including the Islamic religious court system. On 6 August, both the Supreme Committee for West Bank Affairs and the Ministry for Occupied Territory Affairs were abolished following a royal decree. The duties of the latter were transferred to the newly formed Department of Palestinian Affairs in the Foreign Ministry. Jordan radio and television also dropped special programming aimed at the West Bank. On 20 August new instructions were issued by the prime minister to the Civil Registration Department and the Department of Passports. These stated that all Jordanian citizens residing on the West Bank prior to 31 July 1988 would from now on be considered as Palestinians rather than Jordanian nationals.³³ At the same time, however, the school system remained under Jordanian supervision and the bridges connecting the West Bank and Jordan remained open. Jordanian television continued to show on the evening news a map of Jordan that included the West Bank, and Minister of Information Hani al-Khasawna denied reports that Jordanian maps were to be modified to exclude the West Bank. On 2 October the King issued a royal decree postponing parliamentary elections indefinitely. This was yet another tactical move on the part of the King, for amending the 1986 Election Law and holding elections for a parliament that would represent only the East Bank would be admitting the finality of his decision.³⁴ By 1989, most of the decisions which continued to reflect ties with the West Bank were revoked. Thus, the new election law of 1989 applied to Jordan's East Bank only.

Yet up to the present no constitutional changes have been made. The resolution of April 1950 on the reunification of the two Banks, as well as Article 1 of the Jordanian constitution, which stated that the Jordanian territory is indivisible, both remained unchanged.³⁵ In fact, Hussein had dissolved the Chamber of Deputies on 30 July 1988, effectively avoiding any debate over possible constitutional changes. When asked by a reporter eight days after his decision whether Jordan, in essence, 'formally renounces irrevocably sovereignty over the West Bank', the King answered: 'Did I say that?'³⁶ Similarly, when Minister of Information Hani al-Khasawna was asked on 3 August 1988 if the 1950 reunification measures had been abolished, he answered that he was surprised that measures adopted at the request of the PLO were seen as a violation of the 1950 unionist document (Sawt al-Sha'b, 1988).³⁷

No better proof of the ambiguity the decision generated is the fact that nearly one decade after the decision was made intellectuals and politicians heatedly debate whether in fact Hussein severed ties between Jordan and the West Bank after all. Many Palestinians are convinced that the fact that no constitutional-legal act accompanied the decision reflected its tactical nature. Hussein in the view of many Palestinians surprised the PLO in order to embarrass it and bide his time until an occasion presents itself that will facilitate bringing back the West Bank under the Hashemite fold.³⁸

Why Fuzzy Nationalism in Jordan?

Jordan's eclectic collective identity, as we have seen, is based on four often discordant elements: lineage and family (the Jordanian family or tribe) usually advanced by the monarchy; civic identity (the Jordanian people, the citizens), promoted by both; the (pan)-Arab identity; and religion (the Muslim army – al-jaish al-mustafawi).

Each of these discordant elements deals with an inner tension facing the political actor who employs it. The monarchy promotes lineage, family and tribe to offset and neutralize the potentially revolutionary implications of civic discourse concerning peoplehood and citizenry. It imagines an organic paternal relationship to offset a conception based on individual rights which might lead to questioning the geneological basis of monarchic rule as well as the absolutist regime (albeit mild by Arab standards) it imposes on the people.

Yet nevertheless the monarchy feels compelled in its capacity as a modernizer to employ the rhetoric of modern (liberal) patriotism. Jordan's reliance on foreign aid might be a further enducement in imagining Jordan as an institutionalized state composed of patriotic citizens, which at the very least aims at expanding political and liberal rights. This discourse is echoed in Jordan's press, political parties and institutions of higher learning. The liberal discourse also helps attenuate tensions between Jordanians of East and West Bank (Palestinian) origins. The rhetoric of Arabism possesses the additional virtue of attenuating the tension of being a minor state and societal player in the larger Arab region. It is no coincidence that Hussein speeches accentuated Jordan's pan-Arab identity during the 1990 Gulf War both out of domestic and external security concerns. In realist theory, Hussein was ideologically bandwagoning with the actor that threatened him most – Saddam Hussein's Iraq. Finally, religious rhetoric is important in legitimizing monarchic rule in a traditional society as well as coping with a strong Muslim Brotherhood.

Security fears then are at the root of this fuzziness about nationalism, and collective identity and physical borders. The absence of crisis over the

decision to disengage from the West Bank stemmed from security concerns related to the Palestinian intifada and the perceived inability of the Jordanian monarchy to reintegrate the area even if Israel withdrew.

Similarly the decision to refrain from formalizing the severance from the West Bank also stemmed from security considerations. Formal and complete severance of ties with the West Bank could impinge on Jordan in at least two important ways: (1) State contraction could be a prelude to the formation of a Palestinian state that would compete with Jordan for precious resources offered by the international community; it would impose added costs induced by containing threats from such a state; (2) The Palestinian majority could provide an incentive for the Palestinian state to adopt an irredentist strategy of activating the Palestinian majority to overthrow the regime in Jordan and then merge Jordan in the Palestinian state and thus create a greater Palestine.³⁹ Based on recent history this is an unlikely scenario – since the Second World War irredentism has been rare and ineffective, both because the international state system has effectively opposed it, and because the targeted group has preferred to remain separatist rather than join the irredentist state. But the fear remains, especially if the norms of the international community change. It would be wrong to assume that these dangers compel the Jordanian state to adamantly fight against the severance of ties. To the contrary it is the very dilemma Jordan faces between on the one hand governing a state composed overwhelmingly of Palestinians, and on the other contracting and thus empowering a potential enemy state, that calls for a policy of maintaining a fuzzy collective and spatial identity. Arabism will continue to persist as long as Jordan remains both a bi-national state internally and a vulnerable one externally.

Conclusion

Middle Eastern monarchs and possibly Saddam Hussein who after advocating a radical Ba'ath secularism quickly added 'God is Great' to the Iraqi flag in time of need, can teach a lesson to even the most radical constructivist about the fuzziness and eclecticism of nationalism. Even constructivists assume that there is a quest to construct a nationalism with more or less fixed and coherent contours extending over relatively defined spatial borders. Jordan's experience with constructing collective identity shows that even this belief is questionable if not erroneous.

The fuzziness of nationalist rhetoric in the Jordanian case is highly linked to domestic and external security concerns. The Jordanian case suggests that the more heterogeneous the domestic population, and the more vulnerable the state in the regional system, the more fuzzy and eclectic will be the rhetoric, especially the official though not exclusively so.

As Lisa Anderson and Jackson and Rosberg conjecture, the fuzziness, flux and eclecticism of nationalist discourse in Jordan may be a function of a universal historical trajectory of state-building. Jordan's nationalism may be no different than European predecessors in the Age of Absolutism, the investigation of which requires at least an article in its own right. To the potential writer of that article, this piece suggests that behind this fuzziness lie weighty domestic and security concerns. These may be the same considerations which in the era of European nation-states in the nineteenth century might have led states to engage in a standardizing nationalism that helped transform their mass conscription armies into effective war machines. Whatever may be the history, the Jordanian case demonstrates that the construction of nationalism need not imply even a quest for a standardized internally coherent collective identity, let alone its actual construction.

NOTES

1. Roger Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationalism and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p.25.
2. Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), p.25.
3. Sylvia G.Haim, 'Introduction', in Sylvia G. Haim (ed.), *Arab Nationalism in the Middle East* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962), pp.71–2.
4. Ian Lustick, *Unsettled States, Disputed Lands: Britain and Ireland, France and Algeria, Israel and the West Bank-Gaza* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993), p.40.
5. Ronen Shamir, 'Suspended in Space: Bedouins under the Law of Israel', *The Law and Society Review*, Vol.30, No.2 (1995), p.233.
6. *Ibid.*, pp.21–2.
7. Lisa Anderson, 'Absolutism and the Resilience of Monarchy in the Middle East', *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol.106, No.1 (1991), p.4.
8. *Ibid.*
9. Robert H. Jackson and Carl G. Rosberg, 'Why Africa's Weak States Persist: The Empirical and the Juridical in Statehood', *World Politics*, Vol.35, No.1 (1982), p.5.
10. Anderson, p.13.
11. Naseer Aruri H., *Jordan: A Study in Political Development 1921–1965* (The Hague: Marinus Nijhoff, 1972), p.22; Uriel Dann, *King Hussein and the Challenge of Arab Radicalism, 1955–1967* (London: Oxford University Press, 1989), p.25.
12. Laurie Brand, 'Palestinians and Jordanians: A Crisis of Identity', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol.24 (1995), p.51.
13. Andrew Shryock, *Nationalism and the Geneological Imagination: Oral History and Textual Authority in Tribal Jordan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), p.8.
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15. *Ibid.*
16. King Hussain, 'King Hussein's Addresses Nation on Crisis, 15 January 1991' in *Amman Domestic Service in Arabic*, 16 January 1991.
17. King Hussein, 'King Hussein's Addresses War College on Peace', Amman Jordan Television Network in Arabic, 30 January 1995, 31 January 1995.
18. Shryock, pp.317–18.
19. *Jordan Star*, 9 March 2000.
20. 'Jordan: King Views Attempts to Destabilize Country, Economy,' *Al-Ra'i*, 25 December 2000.

21. Brand, p.47.
22. Markaz al-Dirasat al-Istratijiyya, Istitla' lil-Ra'i Hawla al-'Alaqa al-Urdunniyya-al-Filastiniyya [Survey of Opinion Regarding the Jordanian-Palestinian Relationship], Amman, February 1995.
23. Khalid Al-Ksasba, 'Filstiniyyu Al-Urdunn,' *Al-Bilad*, 25 October 1995.
24. Ben Wendeman, 'Jordan's Siamese Twins Agonize Over Identity: Prospects for a Palestinian entity Renews Old Debate', *Middle East Insight*, Vol.10, No.3 (1994), p.36.
25. Ahmad 'Abidat was twice Prime-minister of Jordan in the 1980s.
26. Ahmad 'Abidat, Comments in 'Al-Malaf: Al-'Alaqa al-'Urdunniyya-al-Filastiniyya: Madiyan wa-Hadiran wa-Mustaqbalan', *Majallat al-Dirasat al-Filastiniyya*, No.24 (Spring 1995), p.93.
27. *Ibid.*, pp.119-20.
28. *Ibid.*, p.130.
29. Asher Susser, 'Jordan', *Middle East Contemporary Survey*, Vol.12 (1988), p.590.
30. *Ibid.*
31. *Ibid.*
32. *Ibid.*, pp.589-90.
33. *Ibid.*, p.592.
34. Asher Susser, 'In Through the Out Door: Jordan's Disengagement and the Middle East Peace Process', *Policy Paper/The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, (1990), p.84.
35. Anis Fawzi Qasim, 'Al-'Alaqa al-Urdunniyya-al-Filastiniyya B'ada Rahil al-Malik Husayn', *Majallat al-Dirasat al-Filastiniyya*, No.28 (spring 1999), p.23.
36. Jordan TV, 7 August 1988 in FBIS-NES, 8 August 1988.
37. *Sawt al-Sha'b*, 1988.
38. 'Abd al-Rahman As'ad and Hani al-Hurani, 'Tatawwur Mafhum al-'Alaqa al-Urdunniyya-al-Filastiniyya', *Al-Siyasa al-Filastiniyya*, No.11 (fall 1996), p.75.
39. Asher Susser, 'Jordan', pp.468-9. Ali Jarbawi, a political scientist from Birzeit University recounts similar Jordanian fears in even more dramatic fashion. He wrote: 'The fear was the main source of anxiety in Jordan regarding the Israeli-Palestinian Declaration of Principles. The newly born Palestinian entity... could gradually grow, blessed by Israel and most Arab nations, to transcend the limitations of self-rule... Were this to happen, and were this new Palestinian entity to find itself unable to grow westward because of Israel, would not its expansion then be eastward!' See his 'The Triangle of Conflict,' *Foreign Policy*, Vol.100 (1995), p.102.