

The Jordanian Perspective on Regional Developments

Jun 26, 1997



Brief Analysis

Israel-Palestinian Track: "The standoff is dangerous and threatening. If it persists, it may lead to the collapse of all our endeavors and achievements thus far... The [U.S.] mediator's role is going to be limited if the principals continue to shun each other because of political pressure to which they claim they are being subjected... The mediator has to restore a measure of trust between the parties and create a great deal of goodwill to make meaningful talks possible again. [The process has degenerated] into mutual recrimination, accusations and counter accusations, and both sides appear to think that time is on our side; I don't think time is on the side of peace... The concept of American facilitation should evolve into a concept of American engagement with the parties, to bridge the gap between security anxieties on the one side and legitimate political aspirations on the other."

Refugees: "It is extremely important ...that when the refugee issue is discussed in final status terms, that it is regarded as an overarching issue that concerns Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, as well as the territories... I want to go back to basic security, to anthropolitics, to politics where people matter, to remind you of the fact that, whereas we have done well in economic adjustment in macro terms, with the fundamentals looking good; yet, nobody can eat fundamentals... The question of the future of security is tied very closely to human well-being, to the human environment."

Jerusalem: "As far as the establishment of the American embassy, it is coincidental that \$100 million is almost equivalent to the sum total of the aid package promised to Jordan, which of course goes down swell at home, as you can imagine...I do want to say that the establishment of an American embassy that gives credence at this stage of discussions to Jerusalem, the capital of Israel, is...a measure which is not entirely in tune with the difficulties of peacemaking at this stage and on the ground."

Jordan-Israel Relations: "A few weeks ago, we were able to initiate and then to conclude successfully the question of water rights, in the context of the three batches of 50 million cubic meters of water... I'm glad to say that we have been able to make some positive headway in this area...But there is a great deal of distance between discussing the question of vital interests and discussing the question of political interests, and ultimately discussing the question of interstate relations, in a broader security context."

"...I would like to go back to His Majesty's visit to the families of the bereaved, of the seven killed by a Jordanian soldier, the seven girls killed by a Jordanian soldier only a few months back, and...say that there was a tremendous outpouring of goodwill. And I think it was not directed solely at King Hussein, but at what he represents in statesmanlike terms: a hope for peace, a hope for decency, and a hope for a better life. This is what I hope we can collectively continue to build on."

"... If you are asking me what is the latest on our feelings towards the Israeli cabinet and the Israeli prime minister ... I would like to just characterize our understanding of the present situation as being that of greater emphasis on tactics than it is on regional issues and on statesmanship. Now, that is not a characterization of the prime minister of Israel, but it's a characterization of the moment in which we live..."

The Challenge of Normalization: "Those who find it easier to be crisp and direct in opposing peace, in asking what the rewards of peace have been, will be well-received, particularly where there is poverty, where there is ...both the politics of despair...and indeed the economics of despair."

"The territories are 69 percent dependent on the Israeli economy. Of course, when we meet in the context of the Arab League, countries who have not signed the peace treaty with Israel... called for the boycott of Israel. And I sometimes wonder why the call is not for the liberalization of the Palestinian economy [and] why the call is not for greater openness in trade on the part of the Israeli economy... Unless and until we have a size of market to invest in—unless and until the quality-of-life yardstick applies to all peoples in the region [given the fact that] poverty is color-blind—it is impossible to talk effectively of reconstructing that relationship... As I said many times, peacemaking is not between elites. Peacemaking has to be between peoples."

Turkey: "The time has come to effectively to make it very clear that Turkey is a country with a role to play in the [Middle East] region. I think that Turkey needs a voice in the region... We note with interest...that Turkey has bilateral relations with all countries in the region. Some might say [that Turkey represents] certain contradictions, if you talk about bilateral relations with Israel and increasing trade relations with Iran. But...I think that one is...finding that each and every country in the region is trying to push the envelope of how far it can go in bilateral relations at this particular moment...I just hope ...that the gamut of inter-Arab politics will focus on the broader regional concern of developing shared identity, rather than focusing on pushing the envelope of opportunity in terms of our trade relations and the expedient relations at the moment... Having visited Turkey recently, I was deeply impressed by Turkey's commitment, reiterated on more than one occasion, to the sovereignty of Iraq, the reunification of Iraq, and the territorial integrity of Iraq. That is at a time, of course, where Turkish troops are present in northern Iraq. But at the same time, I do want to make it very clear that Iraq's borders are not only permeable, but have been violated, not only in the context of the Turkish incursion, where, there is no authority at the presence in northern Iraq, but also by the presence of an influence and an outreach, which I believe to be representative of more than one neighboring country."

Iraq: "Jordan is a country which receives endless delegations traveling through to Baghdad... We receive Iraqi delegations traveling through from Amman, and yet I have to come here and say, in all sincerity... that there is absolutely no change in the basic Jordanian policy of invoking United Nations resolutions, in invoking their absolute implementation, whether it is 986, whether it is the future of sanctions... Iraq should satisfy UNSCOM as soon as possible...As far as containment and dual containment is concerned, to quote Madame Albright, "engagement does not mean endorsement." Now, I'm not misquoting her, because the Secretary was referring in fact to Hong Kong and China. But I rather appreciated the formulation... I know that there is a great deal of back-channel interest in engagement, at least with the new establishment as it appears to us in Iran. I wonder, effectively, whether engagement over the absolute issue of the future of the balance of relations, the very delicate balance of relations between Iraq, Iran, and the rest of the region, can be addressed more comprehensively."

Islamism, Democracy, and Elections: "What we have tried to do is transparent; what we did was to hold national elections and to invite the conservatives if you will, the Muslim Brothers, to participate in these national elections. When this process started in—or revived itself in 1989, with the participation of the different parties—we were successful in inviting a dialogue in a Jordanian, and if you will, even a Hashemite, context. By that, I mean a conversation which is centrist. And I think effectively that, in terms of recipes, we are not offering recipes to anyone. But I am interested to note that, in the wake of the Algerian elections, that there has been a lot of talk of middle path and centrism....Of course, the great challenge for us in the future is to address the subject of civil society, to invite the debate not only between government and parliament, but to invite the debate between all Jordanians in the broadest possible sense, in the debate related to the political discourse, the economic, and indeed the cultural discourse. And

I say "the cultural"—I think it's relevant, because the issue of normalization, of universalization is an issue that is pan-Arab today. So I would like to say that the formula is, I think, one that His Majesty has proven, of having the self-confidence to invite that particular debate and not to see it as the opening of a Pandora's box that is at the expense of the authority of the royal house, but rather a transition which enhances and vindicates the presence of the royal house into decades to come."

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