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Roundtable with a presentation by Dr. Asher Susser, Senior Fellow, The Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, Tel Aviv University

Topic: The Evolution of Jordanianism

Participants: PASSIA Staff; Dr. Sami Musallam, Director General, President's Office, Jericho; Mr. Walid Assali, Lawyer; Mr. Abed Abu Diab, Jerusalem Electricity Co.; Mr. Nabil Al-Jabari; Hashem Khatib, Banker; Dr. Michael Stahl, Swedish Consul General in Jerusalem; Christian Peter Hanelt, Director of Middle East Program, Bertelsmann Foundation, Gütersloh; Dr. Anis Al Qaq, Ministry of Planning; Manuel Cacho, Spanish Consul General in Jerusalem; HE Afif Safieh, Palestinian General Delegate in the UK and Palestinian Representative to the Vatican; Ahmad Kamal, Egyptian Consul, Tel Aviv; and Jorge Torres Pereira, Portuguese Consul, Tel Aviv.

SUMMARY

Dr. Asher Susser noted that the presentation is the product of a recent study - a discussion of Jordan-Palestinian relations - and part of a collection of essays produced by the Dayan Center on Arab minorities in the Middle East. The study was based on the following two approaches:

1. The case of the Palestinians in Jordan is special because they comprise more than 50% of the population i.e., the majority. No one can dispute that the addition of 350,000 Palestinian refugees from the Gulf made the Palestinians in Jordan the demographic majority, yet they are a political minority.
2. The cleavage between the Palestinian and Jordanian populations in Jordan is not primordial but a modern day creation i.e., a twentieth century phenomenon which has emerged because of modernization.

The paper addressed three different phases:

1. Abdallah and Arabism (not Jordanianism).
2. King Hussein's period from the first years of his reign to 1967 (*wihdat al-daffatain* and *Arab Hashimiyya*).
3. Post-1967 (the maturing of the Jordanian identity).

Phase 1: The Early Years

For Abdallah, Trans-Jordan was a stepping stone to Greater Syria. In 1921, he said that he had had enough of the wilderness: the largest town was Salt with 20,000 people, while Jordan did not have an urban center. He envied his brother Faisal in Iraq, who bore the title of king rather than prince. Abdallah's ambitions were not limited to Trans-Jordan as was implied in the name of his armed forces, the Arab Legion or *Al-Jaysh Al-Arabi*. This phase did not deliberately promote Jordanianism.

The Great Revolt was intended to allow for a Greater Syria, but Abdallah did not have support for this. Therefore, he turned to the point of weakest resistance i.e., Palestine, and was supported by the British and the

Jordanian people. Stabilizing Jordan became Abdallah's achievement, albeit not his aim. He annexed the West Bank.

Phase 2: Unity of Two Banks

Assimilation of Palestinians:

1. The ratio of Palestinian refugees to non-refugees in both banks combined was 2:1.
2. The name 'West Bank' was a Jordanian invention, which was intended to de-Palestinianize the area and to promote its acceptance as an extension of the East Bank.
3. The kingdom bore the identity of Hashemite Arabism which contradicted Abdallah's stepping-stone approach to Arabism.

For Hussein, Hashemite Arabism was not expansionist but aimed at maintaining the Hashemite goals. In this phase Jordan was Palestine and Palestine was Jordan. There was neither a place for Palestinian identity, nor an emphasis on Jordanian identity. The text books of the time illustrate an identity which is Arab and not particularly Jordanian. The state opposed the Palestinian identity, as in the reforms of 1950.

Phase 3: Watershed of 1967

(1) Consequences of 1967:

1. Re-emergence of Palestinians not under Jordan's wing.
2. A process of Jordanization of the West Bank was lost.
3. Eclipse of Pan-Arabism: Abdul Nasser's military defeat was also an ideological disaster which increased the legitimacy of separate state identity.

(2) After 1967 a new era in Jordan and the region began. A separate history began to emerge for the Jordanian and Palestinian identities, which culminated in a clash, i.e., the civil war in 1970. Jordanians began to fear the Palestinian national movement. The PLO had the idea of taking over Jordan. This corresponded to the Israeli right wing plan that Jordan could be an alternate homeland for the Palestinians. Consequently, the term *Al-Watan Al-Badil* (alternative homeland) emerged.

(3) Palestinian plans of a national armed struggle on the one hand, and the Israeli right notions that Jordan was a Palestinian alternate homeland on the other, aroused Jordan's fears. Distinct group identities between Palestinians and Jordanians developed. This distinctive divide widened by 1970, after which Jordan took several measures:

1. Jordanian policies limited movement as migration between 1948 to 1967 flowed from the West Bank to the East Bank.
2. After the 1970 civil war Jordan did not adopt policies to Jordanize the Palestinians.
3. Palestinians were expelled from military posts.

4. Jordanizing (*ardannah*): a new slogan emerges, 'Jordan is Jordan and Palestine is Palestine.' This resulted in Jordan severing ties with the West Bank in 1988.
5. Jordan began to search for a usable past. It merged pre-Islamic with Islamic, Roman (Jerash) with the tombs of the *Sahaba*, all to formulate a particular Jordanian past. This is visibly apparent in the Jordanian postage stamps which illustrate themes of Jordanian identity and the shift from pan-Arabism to specific Jordanianism.

This creation of usable pasts is part of the invention of tradition and of a local memory of a nation state. Jordan projects itself as the spring of civilization rather than a recent creation. The Jordanian national charter of 1991 is relevant in that it downplays the Arab Revolt in a specific paragraph. The legacy of the Arab Revolt is overshadowed by a Jordan which disseminates democracy to the Arab world. Jordan is no longer a stepping-stone to other states but an example for other states to follow. This theme associates Jordan with self-determination rather than a manifestation of colonial border arrangements.

Where do Palestinians fit in the East Bank? Jordanianism was not intended to exclude Palestinians of the East Bank but to include them. The Jordan of today is the inheritor of the Jordan of the past's position, by which it sought to inherit Palestine; hence the slogan that Jordan is Palestine and Palestine is Jordan. After March 1972, King Hussein talked of a federation, which reflected the country's realization that it could not return to the *status quo anti* and consolidate the identity of the East Bank.

The dualist policies pursued after the 1970s aimed at reaffirming Jordanian identity in the East Bank, and at imposing restrictions on Palestinian travel to avert an influence on the East Bank.

Jordan affirms its patronage to the East Bank only and says that Palestinians in the East Bank are Jordanians. Consequently, it recognizes Palestinian identity in the West Bank but not in the East Bank. The Rabat resolution of severance in 1988 manifested a theoretical consequence; the Oslo agreements on the other hand had more practical consequences as they led to a Palestinian entity. So Hussein emphasized that there is one people on the soil of the East Bank using the term *al-ansar* (the Jordanians) *wa al-muhajirin* (the Palestinians). Consequently, all East Bankers are Jordanians and anyone who tampers with this is the enemy. The King allowed for vociferous troops and an ultra nationalist right wing to emerge.

Any Palestinian in Jordan who wanted to maintain his identity was obliged to return to Palestine. Hence Allaf's term *muta-ardinin* or those who pretend to be Jordanians. The subsequent tension has been greater than ever since 1970: this tension is the result of built-in functional cleavages between Jordanians and Palestinians which, although not religious or ethnic, have left the Palestinians in the private sectors. At this

point, Dr. Susser mentions the tribal aspect of the state of Jordan.

Abdallah achieved a tribal state by conscripting the tribes into the military, and they subsequently became the main fighting force for the regime. A quintessential monarchical lineage formed, which weakened the tribes as autonomous entities. Tribalism has become Jordanianism. The tribes in Jordan sense themselves as one Jordanian tribe against the Palestinian tribe. This perpetuated a "beduocracy": a bureaucracy which brings in its own kin and consequently forms an alliance between this machinery and the state. In contrast, the Palestinians have become integrated in the economy of the state but not in its echelons.

Factors which have made the Palestinians' and Jordanians' views of each other less illusionary:

1. *Peace Process*: In 1948 Jordan wanted to preserve its stake in the West Bank but the Palestinians wanted to be separate. Now Jordanians and Palestinians are committed to the peace process which has enhanced the disengagement. More Palestinians in Jordan have declared their loyalty to the King and to Jordan following the liberalization policies, yet many Jordanians are suspicious of the Palestinians' dual loyalty and their economic clout.
2. *Functional cleavage: The army*: Political liberalization gave the Palestinians general status in the state and improved their economic status and the gap between the military and the private sector seems to have grown. Peace with Israel meant the reduction of the army and an increase in trade, which will benefit the Palestinians.

A study by Mustafa Hamarneh's institute [Center for Strategic Studies at the University of Jordan, Amman] showed that the riots of 1989 and August 1996 occurred in the bedrock of the Hashemite sector and not the Palestinians'. They were an expression of discontent in the Southern East Bank.

Conclusions:

The majority of Palestinians in the East Bank want a federation, while there is a majority support in both banks for a confederation. Jordan faces problems of how to reconcile its government's cleavage with its desire for unity between the East and West banks. The government's cleavage is the result of a relative historical shallowness produced by the modernization of the twentieth century and is not primordial like the separations between the Alawis and Sunnis or between the Druze and Maronites.

Historical ties between Jordanians and Palestinians in the East and West Banks are divided into three phases. The relations are east-west oriented,

e.g., Nablus and Karak ties, rather than north-south oriented.

Both Palestinians and Jordanians want to preserve their ethnic identities, but they also want a recognition of sorts.

Discussion:

Dr. Abdul Hadi: Thank you for the discussion on the phenomenon of nationalism in Jordan. Would you kindly elaborate on the following points:

- King Abdallah's talks with the Zionist movement and his position on the Arab revolt.
- King Abdallah's plan of 1938 and King Hussein's plan of 1972 (federation thesis), and the monarch's attitudes vis-à-vis the Arab Higher Committee in the 1930s and the PLO in the 1960s.
- How did the King view Oslo and why did the Palestinians play it alone?
- What is the impact of Palestinian-Syrian relations on Jordan?

Dr. Susser: Abdallah, after 1924, never felt threatened on the East Bank. He sought some measure of expansion into Palestine when it was not possible to expand into other states. He established common interests with the Zionists, but did not collude with them. One common interest was to defeat the Mufti Haj Amin who was every-thing that Abdallah was not, i.e., anti-British and widely supported.

Hussein feared the notion of *watan al-badil*. However, the Israeli right never considered how Jordan regarded this as a threat to its sovereignty, and Arik Sharon never thought what such plans would mean in terms of restructuring the Middle East.

Palestinians in 1969 did not think of taking over Jordan to establish an alternate homeland but as a means to liberate Palestine. Jordan has felt more secure since signing its treaty with Israel in 1994 because the treaty implies that Israel does not believe that Jordan is Palestine. Jordan put too much emphasis on the Zionist threat.

As for federation, Jordan realized that it would be very difficult to restructure the West Bank to the pre-1967 order in the light of the Zionist threat. Jordan had to come up with another formula following Black September in 1970. The federation concept was regarded by the Jordanians as a downgrading from inheritor status to senior partner. This meant *qutrayn* and not *dawlatayn* as previously stated in 1965. Jordan could maintain the federation notion and recognize the Palestinians.

This posed a dilemma as the King emphasized *tansiq* (coordination). Oslo was a shock and caused Jordan to be anxious for two reasons:

1. The Jordanians felt that there was the possibility that Israel had dramatically changed its attitude of 1948-50, which recognized that Israel and Jordan had a common interest. It was important for Jordan to ensure that it was not threatened by Israel.
2. The Jordanians feared that Israel and the Palestinians would make agreements without taking Jordan into account. The Paris agreement, for example, deliberately kept Jordan out. Consequently, Palestinian relations with the King deteriorated.

As for the eclipse of pan-Arabism, Jawad Anani expressed an unapologetic response which emphasized *al-khusousiya al-qutriyya* (state particularism). A historical contrast was evolving.

Abdallah did not like the Mufti any more than the Hashemites liked him. Jordan feared that Palestinian nationalism would lead the East Bank into deterioration. Shuqayri used to say that Jordan was not a legitimate state and that Palestine spread from the Mediterranean to the Syrian-Iraqi desert. The relation between King Hussein and Arafat is now much more a question of tactics, not that Palestinians have excluded Jordan *per se*, and the tension has reduced.

Dr. Abdul Hadi: In 1982, according to Uri Avneri, in his book *My Friend the Enemy*, Sharon promised Arafat via Sartawi that '[Israel] would help you get Jordan.'

Dr. Susser: I have reservations about taking Avneri's quotes seriously. In 1970 Israel did help Jordan indirectly by holding off Syrian mobilization. Sharon said: "Let the Palestinians take Jordan." But Sharon and his plans were not popular following the war in Lebanon and the assassination of Bashir Jemayyil.

We are now beyond semantics and Likud plans. Oslo cannot be ignored, not even by Netanyahu. Syria would not object to Israeli-Palestinian relations but Israel is not able to shape this relationship. Israel would like to see stability in Jordan. Israel would not support a Palestinian entity to replace Jordan nor would Israel see itself in the peace process without Jordan's partnership. But the bilateral agreements of Oslo caused panic in Jordan. Jordan is not Palestine for domestic reasons, and because the Palestinians would not accept it. Netanyahu recognized that the plan of transforming Jordan into a Palestine is not potentially feasible because of the facts culminating from Oslo.

Mr. Torres Pereira: I would like to add the Islamic factor to the equation, particularly since Islamists are on the rise in the South of Jordan.

Dr. Susser: The Islamists factor is important but I do not think that they would be able to change the Palestinian and Jordanian association unless they were to take over Jordan and the PNA. It is impossible politically for the Islamists to do this. In Jordan there is a mixed relationship between Jordan and the Islamists. The *modus vivendi* that exists between

the two depends on the balance of power, which is in the regime's favor. Neither side wants a clash.

Mr. Christian Peter Hanelt: I have several questions:

1. Would relations between the PNA and Jordan be better if personal relationships were put aside?
2. If the King should die, is loyalty in Jordan to the King or the Hashemites?
3. Could the riots, which indicate economic discontent, be a sign that the economic situation of Palestinians is better? Is there a fear that Palestinians are becoming politically stronger?
4. As for the religious system: are Jordan's attempts to gain more control over Jerusalem political or tactical? Would Hussein have full power in East Jerusalem?

Dr. Susser: In response to your first question: I would say that the mistrust of Arafat and Hussein is a fact of life. The two personalities have had difficulties and differences which I believe could be better addressed by people within the PNA structure rather than by Arafat himself.

As for the second question: loyalty is to the King. The Palestinians in Jordan are relatively well equipped to affect the structure, more so than other parties in the East Bank. However, Palestinian loyalty in the East Bank relies on the stability of the state. If this is changed then the power structure will also change, but I do not think this is likely to happen.

The Israelis think that Jordan is a personification of the King, but Jordan is not a one-man show. The King is just a manifestation of the evolution of Jordan's elite and military establishments. They are happy to preserve themselves and to protect themselves from domestic contention.

Dr. Abdul Hadi: As opposed to the Saudi case for example?

Dr. Susser: Well, the Saudis could not have manipulated the Iraqis. The major factor is the self-interest of the Jordanian political elite, who wish to maintain the structures of the military, the *mukhabarat*, and the bureaucracy. The succession would go from King Hussein to Hassan without the collapse of the 70-year old structure. Jordan is not Saudi Arabia.

Regarding the third question, namely Jordan's fear of the Palestinian economic stature; Jordan has severe domestic problems which manifested in the riots of August 1996. The regime has to find a way to restructure economically and to compensate East Bankers. The fear of Palestinian economic power increased as a result of the peace process. The riots do not mean that the state is cracking, but rather that it has to assume the role of a redistributor of wealth. This has developed a new kind of Jordan-Palestinian problem. Palestinians in Jordan will not rock the boat. The King does not like Likud. If the King feels that the

Palestinians are rocking the boat, they will lose their economic advantage in Jordan. I am sure they would not want to see this happen.

As to the last question, the holy sites: the Jordanians do not want to rule East Jerusalem. They see Arab East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine, but would like to have control over the holy sites. This, however, carries a built-in disadvantage because the King and/or his *mukhabarat* are not in Jerusalem to implement the Israeli-Jordanian decision on this matter. Can such a decision be implemented by proxy? Is Israel going to establish Jordanian Hashemite sovereignty in Jerusalem by force? Everything Israel and Jordan agreed upon on the matter of controlling the sites remains unimplemented. Israel does not run the Muslim holy places; Jordan's argument that Israel is a threat to the Muslim holy places is an excuse which it uses before the Arab world.

Dr. Sami Musallam: Thank you for your presentation. To comment on what you said at the end, is not the Jordanian position merely the Hashemite position on custodianship, sought by the country following the assassination of Abdallah in July 1951 and requested from MacMahon? The documents are there for everyone to read. Peres and Majali talked about this in their discussions with Clinton. The King went to Clinton to emphasize his desire to have a special relationship with Jerusalem by stressing his personal attachment, and the fact that his grandfather was assassinated there. This argument is put forward by the King while the regime is inclined to follow the agreement with the PLO. I think that Jordan's government and regime know that their claim on Jerusalem is weak. It is the personal feelings of the King that uphold this attachment.

If a change of rule occurs and Crown Prince Hassan - who is stern on Palestinians - takes over, will there be a change in Palestinian affairs because of Hassan?

The study lacks the relevance of the PNA and its influence on events. One cannot exclude Palestinian, PLO and PNA factors as well as the popular factor which also has independent influences on Palestinian-Jordanian relations.

Dr. Susser: On Jerusalem, I do not disagree with what you said. On the matter of Hassan and the Palestinians, this is a convoluted matter. He has an image of being hostile towards the Palestinians since he was part of Wasfi Tal's group in his early twenties. If Hassan were to succeed King Hussein, he would have no choice but to follow the former's footsteps, but perhaps in a different manner. However, the cleavages in Jordan would not differ.

The PNA is very cautious not to meddle in Jordanian affairs, not because the PNA's priority is to establish a Palestinian state but because it does not wish to exacerbate the dual loyalties of the Palestinians in Jordan. One cannot preserve one's Palestinian identity and have influence in

Jordan, otherwise arguments would be made to disenfranchise the Palestinians in Jordan. The PLO and the PNA have very little to gain from meddling in Jordan's internal affairs. The Jordanian-Palestinian relations are complicated enough.

Dr. Abdul Hadi: What if the Chairman dies?

Dr. Susser: People say that politics evolve around Arafat. The question arises whether his absence would exacerbate Jordanian-Palestinian relations. Irrespective of Palestine's status as an autocracy or an elected entity, a built-in animosity does not exist and so I do not see Arafat's disappearance as a problem. I have a built-in bias about history. The question is whether history shapes a personality or whether a personality shapes history. I think history shapes a personality.

Mr. Afif Safieh: You need to optimize and extend your observations. You imply that Jordan is the target of destabilization, and you allude to a return to 1950s relations with Iraq: this issue alone would require another discussion session.

Dr. Susser: With reference to Iraq, it was never detached from the Palestinian context. The problem lies in how to preserve Jordan's identity because there is no way to completely break away from the Palestinian identity. The King has an interest in separating Jordan from the Palestinian fate. The Jordanization idea has emerged but without calling for the exclusion of the Palestinians. Abbadi's extreme school of thought attempts to simplify issues as black and white.

A lot has changed since the time when Jordan needed Iraq in a strategic alliance *vis a vis* Israel. Strategically, Jordan now needs Iraq less, if at all. Hussein has less interest in Saddam's regime, which has become more a liability than an asset. The King cannot develop the relations of the 1950s.

Mr. Afif Safieh: Israeli scholars and apparently Israel analyze the Palestinian issue in terms of Jordan and Israel. Palestinians are prone to a dual-lung analysis: the West Bank with Jordan, and Gaza with Egypt within a complex regional arena, with each column covering three political centers: Lebanon, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Lebanon, for example, gives a real idea of Palestinian complexities. This factor is relevant in analyzing the Palestinian dimension. Israel is very reductionist when it analyses Palestinians.

Dr. Susser: I do not think that Israeli academics have the power to shape the Israeli government's policies. With regard to the presentation, what we see as descriptive you see as prescriptive. The figures and slogans were not created by us, e.g., terms such as *al-ansar wa al-muhajirin*. I am trying to analyze what Palestinians and Jordanians are saying. If Jordanian-Egyptian relations are studied, Mubarak does not talk

of *alaqat mumayyaza*.