

## *Israel's Jordan is Palestine Option*

By Sam Bahour

*Editor's Note: This commentary is part of an FPIF series of essays by non-U.S. analysts. See <http://www.fpif.org/outside/> for more perspectives from Outside the U.S.*

In today's complicated Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the political assumption that a Palestinian State is part and parcel of any future peace agreement is now a common realization that the U.S. and Israel have finally come to terms with. The U.S. administration, the Israeli press, and even the hawkish Israeli government, now openly make public statements to this regard. I do not question the fact that a Palestinian State is on the horizon, but I have serious doubts that the geographic location of this State is the same between the world's conviction and that of the Israeli government led by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

To understand my suspicion, I refer to the Sharon of the past and relate him to the, new and improved, or so we are to believe, Sharon of today.

In 1981, and on several previous occasions, today's Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, expressed his opinion about a Palestinian State as follows:

"I believe that the starting point for a solution is to establish a Palestinian state in that part of Palestine that was separated from what was to become Israel in 1922 and which is now Jordan. [...] The only strangers are the members of the Hashemite Kingdom ruled by King Hussein. [...] I don't mind who takes over Jordan." (*Time* magazine, October 5, 1981)

And as for illegal Israeli settlers settling on confiscated Palestinian lands, he continued in the same interview:

"I believe that 30 years from now, there should be about 1 million Jews living in a ten-mile

radius around Jerusalem. I believe that in the rest of Judea and Samaria [West Bank] there will be about 300,000 Jews. If there is a steady influx of 15,000 Jews into Israel and other factors remain the same, there will be about 4.7 million Jews in Israel by the year 2000. [...] If you are looking at the needs of this population for security, then the population should be spread out." (*Time* magazine, October 5, 1981)

In 1982, in an interview with Oriana Fallaci, Sharon, while answering a question regarding the denial of Palestinians of their rights, was quoted as saying:

"But they get a homeland. It is the Palestine that is called Jordan, yet Transjordan. Listen, this Palestinian thing has puzzled me for 12 years, and the more I think of it the more I decide that Jordan ... is the only solution. What counts for me is that a Palestine already exists, so there is no need to create another one. And I tell you: we shall never permit another Palestinian state. [...] It will never happen. Judea and Samaria shall not be touched. Nor Gaza. Forget it..." (*Washington Post*, August 29, 1982)

Disturbingly enough, most recently in April 2001, more than 20 years later, the "Millennium Model" Ariel Sharon was quoted in an exclusive interview to an Israeli newspaper as stating:

"I have not changed my world view. The one thing that has changed is my view of Jordan as Palestine—and that only because there is a reality [on the ground] here. I never believed there should be two Palestinian states. That is the sole



change that has taken place in my positions.” (*Ha’aretz*, 11/4/2001)

In 2001, in the midst of a Middle East powder keg, the Israeli “Jordan as Palestine” strategy was raised by Sharon without anyone asking him. This is clearly an Israeli option that not only remains in their political lexicon, but also most likely is in the Israeli government’s political bag of tricks.

Adding injury to insult, Sharon also this month answered a reporter when asked about the illegal, renegade Israeli settlers who rampaged through the heart of the Palestinian City of Al-Kahlil (Hebron), by stating:

“Those living in Hebron are not preserving the city of the patriarchs for themselves, but for all of us.” (*Jerusalem Post*, April 2001)

Why this glimpse into the past? Because General Sharon’s infamous 100-day aggression plan, which has culminated, thus far, in Israel militarily entering sovereign Palestinian areas and bulldozing over 25 homes and making over 500 persons home-

less, may not be as big of a secret as is being portrayed in the media. I believe that Sharon’s single goal is to remove this unfortunate “reality,” as he calls it, that is burning in his chest.

In other words, with the dismantling of the “reality” of today’s internationally recognized Palestinian National Authority, Sharon can return to his true conviction and begin to lobby the callow U.S. administration on a regional solution that would promise to bring the Jordanian economy back to life, while simultaneously ending the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. A seemingly civilized approach to a final status solution—that is, if you are naïve about history and the facts.

The Israeli government, Sharon in particular, and a great number of Israeli citizens are living in a dream world to believe that the indigenous Palestinian people would accept anything less than a fully independent Palestinian State on the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and Jerusalem. This State, which the Palestinians are calling for, would amount to a Palestinian con-

cession to Israel of 78% of historic Palestine.

Rather than continuing to dream of a Palestine with no Palestinians, General Sharon should be having nightmares, for himself and his people, thinking about the vengeance brewing in the hearts of those who have been made homeless or have lost their mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, husbands, and wives by Israel’s well-oiled U.S. war machinery.

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Note: The historical quotes were taken from the book, *Palestine Is, But Not in Jordan*, by Sheila Ryan and Muhammad Hallaj, (AAUG Press, 1983).

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