

Observation no: 155 (Yom Kippur War)

Country-year: Jordan - 1972

1. Did the current regime come to power in a military coup?

No.

Jordan gained its formal independence from the mandate of Great Britain in 1946. Abdullah, brother of King Faysal in Iraq, had been in power as emir since the establishment of the Hashemite monarchy by the British in 1921 in the then called Principality of Transjordan and then as king of the Kingdom of Jordan after independence.¹ On July 1951, King Abdullah was assassinated in Jerusalem and his grandson Hussein became king on August 11, 1952 after his own father, Talal, had abdicated due to mental illness.

2. Has the country ever experienced a military coup?

No.

The Jordanian army, previously known as the Arab Legion, was financed and led by the British until 1956 under the Anglo-Jordanian Treaty that safeguarded Britain's influence in the country. Because of the initial mutual reliance of the army and the government, the Jordanian army became a strong support of the King's regime.² On March 1, 1956, the Arab Legion was renamed the Jordanian Armed Forces and King Hussein became its Commander-in-Chief.

However, after the 1967 military defeat and loss for Jordan of the West Bank and East Jerusalem that were previously administered by Amman, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) settled in Jordan to engage in a guerilla warfare with Israel. While the post-war boundaries resulted in a "Jordanian Hashemite nation-state" to emerge³, the PLO strongly rejected King Hussein's diplomatic efforts with Israel and attempted to assassinate him entering in a direct confrontation with the Jordanian state.⁴

3. Is the country's top leader a former military officer?

¹ Heller, Mark. Politics and the Military in Iraq and Jordan, 1920-1958: The British Influence. *Armed Forces & Society*, 1977, pp. 88-89.

² Heller, Mark, pp. 89-90 & 92.

³ Bligh, Alexander. *The Jordanian Army: Between Domestic and External Challenges*. In Rubin, Barry & Keaney, Thomas A. *Armed Forces in the Middle East: Politics and Strategy*. BESA Studies in International Security. London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2002, p. 149.

⁴ Barari, Hassan A. Four Decades After Black September: A Jordanian Perspective. *Civil Wars*, Vol.10, No.3, September 2008, p. 232-233.

No.

King Hussein was the descendent of King Abdullah, first king of the kingdom when the Hashemite monarchy was established in Jordan by Great Britain in 1921.

4. Are ethnic, sectarian, or racial criteria used to exclude segments of the population from the officer corps?

Yes.

Especially after the events of “Black September” in 1970, the traditional mistrust within the army for the Palestinian Jordanians (who form more than half of the population in Jordan) grew and Palestinians were removed from key military positions. There were also limited promotions of Palestinian officers in the army, especially within combat units. For instance, a Palestinian could not rise above the rank of major or lieutenant-colonel, except in supporting units where they could rise up until the rank of general.⁵ These moves corresponded to the “Jordanization” of the Jordanian state in the early 1970’s.

5. Are there strict ideological requirements for entry into the senior officer corps?

No.

I cannot find evidence of this in the major histories already cited.

6. Is party membership required for entry into the senior officer corps?

No.

I cannot find evidence of this in the major histories already cited.

7. Does military training involve extensive political education or ideological indoctrination?

No.

I cannot find evidence of this in the major histories already cited.

8. Has the military been used to repress internal dissent in the last five years?

Yes.

⁵ Bligh, Alexander, p. 150.

On September 1970, a military showdown opposed the Jordanian armed forces to the guerilla fighters of the Palestinian Liberation Organization. This episode named “Black September” was the result of the PLO’s interference into Jordanian politics and its launch of operations from Jordan against Israel, creating “a state within a state”. The PLO sought to solve the issue of the Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territories seized by Israel in 1967. On the other hand, the PLO denounced King Hussein’s claims in the West Bank and opposed the Jordanian efforts to reach a peace settlement with Israel for the recovery of the West Bank and East Jerusalem, preferring engaging in guerilla warfare for the liberation of all of Palestine.⁶

9. Has the military been used to govern the country in the last five years?

No.

See answers to questions 1 & 2.

10. Is there a paramilitary organization separate from the regular military, used to provide regime or leader security?

Yes.

The Royal Guard, stationed in Amman, ensured the regime and leader security.

11. Is there an internal intelligence apparatus dedicated to watching the regular military?

No.

I cannot find evidence of this in the major histories already cited.

12. Has a purge of the officer corps occurred in the last five years?

Yes.

Under the pressure of the Palestinian Resistance Movements that had settled in the Palestinian refugee camps of the East Bank after the loss of the West Bank to Israel in 1967, King Hussein removed Nasser Bin Jamil, the commander in chief of the Jordanian army, and Zayd Bin Shaker, the commander of the third division.⁷

⁶ Barari, Hassan A, p. 231-233.

⁷ Black September: The 1970–71 Events and their Impact on the Formation of Jordanian National Identity, *Civil Wars*, Vol.10, No.3, September 2008, p. 245.

Following the clashes of September 1970 - July 1971 between the Jordanian army and the PLO, the regime dismissed the Palestinian Jordanians from strategic military positions and in state institutions in general.⁸

13. Is there an institutionalized forum through which civilian leaders and military officers regularly exchange information?

No.

I cannot find evidence of this in the major histories already cited.

⁸ Baylouny, Anne-Marie. Militarizing Welfare: Neo-Liberalism and Jordanian Policy. *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 62, No. 2, Spring 2008, p. 289.