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PLAYERS OR PLAYING CARDS?:
THE PALESTINIANS AND THE GULF CRISIS

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I

Of all the national communities who have struggled for national independence since the Second World War the Palestinians led by the Palestine Liberation Organization - PLO, attained an unprecedented resonance and powerful position in the international scene; more so than any stateless contender and to a greater degree than many independent states. The significant role played by the Palestinians in contemporary world politics was acutely emphasized during the crisis in the Persian Gulf, when they emerged as a central player capable of weakening the international coalition established by the American President George Bush against Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

The question to be posed here is how did an ethnic-national group like the Palestinians, having no country of its own and whose leadership is based in exile, succeed in attaining such a key political role in world politics; this despite the fact that the Palestinians have adopted a stand contrary to the broad international consensus in one of the most serious global crises - the Persian Gulf. The answer to this question can be found in the unique position of the Palestinians vis-a-vis the Arab world; their ability to effect or impede Arab unity and to represent two of the strongest symbolic forces in mobilizing Arab masses Pan-Ara-
bism and Islam. This position testifies not to the PLO's organizational strength or its military might but rather expresses the poverty of Arab regimes' legitimation formula. Indeed, the support of the Palestinian cause by Arab regimes is often more verbal than actual, though supporting the Palestinians is essential for the personal justification of these regimes. This commitment to the Palestinians may hinder the ability of Arab governments to act independently on the international scene should their interests collide with what is broadly perceived as the Palestinians interest.

In this short article we will discuss the unique position upheld by the Palestinians in the Muslim-Arab world as well as in World affairs as it came to light in the months following the Persian Gulf crisis. In reviewing Palestinian behavior, the reaction of Arab countries, and the international community it will become apparent how narrow is the commonly accepted thesis that the Palestinians are only pawns in advancing the interest of their Arab patrons. Dialectically speaking it can be stated that the Palestinians have turned from clients to patrons as a result of their unique position.

II

In the Spring of 1990 it seemed as if the Palestinian struggle for national independence in the Israeli occupied West Bank and Gaza was profiting on the international scene, especially in the United States. After a period of two and a half years of national uprising in the occupied territories, known as the intifada, the PLO leaders managed to create a wedge in the close ties between the U.S. and Israel. In May 1990 the tension between Washington and Jerusalem reached unprecedented heights when the U.S., Israel's most devoted ally, was preparing to support an Arab League initiative in the U.N. condemning Israel policies in the occupied territories "as a breach of International Law."

The international pressure on Israel to find a solution to the historical conflict with the Palestinians increased substantially after December 1988, when the U.S. decided to commence a "substantive dialogue" with the PLO; a decision which brought to an end the long standing American objection to such contacts. While high riding the waves of sympathy which the intifada evoked through the media, PLO leader Yasser Arafat announced in a dramatic move that he foreswore terrorism and accepted U.N. resolutions 242 and 338 that recognize Israel's right as a sovereign state. On November 1988, at the Nineteenth Palestinian National Council (PNC) meeting, in Algiers, the Palestinians officially
declared "Independence and Palestinian Statehood."

Toward the end of 1989 U.S. Secretary of State James Baker initiated a peace plan, widely known as the “Baker Plan”, calling for an Israeli-Arab confluence aimed at leading to free elections in the occupied territories to determine the Palestinian representatives for future talks with Israel. The internal debate in Israel regarding the adoption or rejection of the Baker Plan and the U.S. pressure on the Israeli government to move towards a meeting with the Palestinians eventually led in March 15, 1990 to the downfall of the Unity Coalition Government of Yitzak Shamir’s Likud and Shimon Peres’s Labor, and to one of the worst political crises experienced in Israel.

In May 1990 the projected image of the Palestinian struggle reached unprecedented heights. The dramatic changes taking place in Eastern Europe, the advancing towards unity in the West and the dissolving of regional conflicts in Afghanistan, Cambodia and South West Africa, pointed to the urgency in solving the Palestinian issue in obtaining world peace. The reluctance of Yitzak Shamir’s right wing government to accept the Baker Plan damaged Israel’s international position and it seemed as if the Palestinians were closer than ever before to the attainment of a substantial political achievement.

However, in August 1990, just a few months after this Palestinian climax the PLO found itself in one of its lowest ebbs. The dramatic regression in the effectiveness of the organization was a direct result of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on 2 August 1990 that shifted the international attention away from the Palestinian issue towards the Persian Gulf. The Palestinian position was further aggravated because of the support given by Arafat and the Palestinian masses to Saddam Hussein.

III

The Palestinian support of Iraq emerged sharply in the face of the international Anti-Iraqi coalition and especially in light of George Bush’s partial success in undermining the mythology of Arab Unity in the face of foreign “imperialistic” intervention. On 10 August 1990, the Arab League adopted a seven point resolution rejecting the annexation of Kuwait, endorsing the U.N. sanctions against Iraq and calling for Arab troops to defend Saudi Arabia alongside the Americans. The Palestinians and the Libyans remained the exceptions in their rejection.

The Palestinian support of Saddam expressed their aversion to U.S.-Arab ties indirectly advantageous to Israel. Support of Arab leaders of a Western embargo on Iraq was regarded by the
Palestinians as a form of disloyalty to their cause. In an interview to the New York Times a West Bank resident commented: “What these other Arab leaders are doing is selling cheap oil to America so the Americans can improve their economy and use it to support our enemy Israel.” In an editorial in the East Jerusalem newspaper al-Byadir al-SiYasi the writer said: “The jungle law allows U.S. to invade Grenada, to send forces to Panama and Liberia and to permit the invasion of Palestinian and Lebanese lands on the one hand, yet on the other declares a state of emergency and sends in forces against Iraq who entered Kuwait in order to recapture land that belonged to her historically.”

In addition to the outrage towards the Arab-U.S. coalition, the Palestinian adherence to Saddam expressed feelings of animosity sensed by many members of their community towards the rulers of Gulf countries whose eminent wealth was overtly pronounced in comparison to the poverty and distress of the Palestinian refugees in the occupied territories. Many Palestinians resented the boundless wealth of the Black Gold countries that have misused them as cheap manpower while denying them basic citizenship rights, refraining even from granting the Palestinians permanent residence status.

Prior to the Iraqi invasion, Kuwait, one of the wealthiest Gulf countries, housed about 400,000 Palestinians who served its bureaucratic system in all its aspects. The Palestinians sent large sums of money to their families in the occupied territories so that each year about 130 million dollars, diverted through banks in Amman, was invested in the West Bank in private consumption as well as in local institutions. In addition, a 5% tax fee was levied on salaries earned by the Palestinians in Kuwait and other countries in the Gulf. This amounted to about 125 million dollars that went through the PLO to the Palestine National Fund.

In July 1988 after King Hussein of Jordan severed ties with the West Bank, the Kuwaiti government used this opportunity to put an end to the direct flow of funds to the PLO. The Kuwaitis also failed to comply with the decision taken by the Arab Summit held in Algiers in July 1988, that called on all Arab countries to aid the PLO. This refusal was condemned by Arafat in May 1989 in Casablanca. From the Palestinian reaction in the occupied territories it can be assumed that, although they benefited from the financial aid they had received over a number of years, the Palestinians harbor deep animosity toward the Gulf countries, and toward Kuwait in particular. Hisham Hawartani, an economist from the West Bank University of Al-Najah, in Nablus, commented in an interview that, “in the last few years the Kuwaitis have become snobs, brags and slowly but surely severed
their ties with the Arab World. The influx of financial wealth into the West Bank and Gaza Strip was only of marginal importance and this is an impudence that they will not be forgiven for. The Kuwaitis have wealth beyond measure and they invested large sums everywhere else in the world except for here”.

Finally the Palestinians’ rallying behind Saddam was an indication of their latent desire for Arab unity. As a stateless people, the Palestinians have come to represent a radical approach to Arab politics that combines anti-establishment streams like Pan-Arabism, Third World and left ideologies and fundamental Islam, which all pose a direct challenge to the Arab state system. Hence they sought to exploit Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait as a springboard to undermine the existing order. Furthermore, the Palestinians who are known for their historical tendency for divisions and schism in their ranks saw in the figure of Saddam Hussein a knight in shining armor who would unite the Arab world around their cause. Saddam’s earlier threats against Israel and his conditioning an Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait upon an Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories, strengthened the Palestinians’ long standing support for the Iraqi leader who has earned the title of the “Second Saladin.”

The conception that Arab unity will lead to the “liberation of Palestine” has been a central aspect in the ideological struggle of the Palestinians, though in reality all attempts to realize the dream of Pan-Arabism have resulted in disappointment. Since the declaration of Israeli independence in 1948 (known by the Palestinians as the “1948 disaster”) and up to the defeat of Arab countries in the 1967 Six Day War, Palestinian nationality and Pan-Arabism were tightly linked. The main source of energy that inspired the creation of the Palestinian national movement was found in the charismatic personality of Gamal Abdul-Nasir who subscribed to the idea of a unitary Arab state, including liberated Palestine. Egypt, under the leadership of Nasir, became the leading patron of Palestinian nationalism. Nasirism struck roots in Palestinian mythology and served as a catalyst for the establishment of the PLO in 1964. The integral attachment to Nasir’s Pan-Arabism was manifested in the PLO’s early Charter where no mention is made of the Palestinians’ desire for an independent state or government. But the defeat suffered by the Arabs in 1967 gradually led to Palestinian disillusionment with Pan-Arabism. As Fouad Ajami pointed out, “If the Arab States could not protect themselves against Israel, let alone do something for the Palestinians then the latter were to construct their own independent politics.”

Moreover, the 1970’s were marked by a sharp decline in
the pursuit of Arab unity among the Arab states’ leaders, including the more revolutionary Baathist regimes in Syria and Iraq, who have invested their efforts on widening their power base at home and consolidating their rule. Saddam Hussein, for example, has used much of Iraq’s oil revenues to bridge the gap between rich and poor Iraqis and to accommodate Shiite demands. Since 1967, therefore, the Palestinians gradually set aside their adherence to Pan-Arabism and adopted an independent national stance. Their experience under Israeli occupation has helped to recreate them as a separate nation.

The Palestinian armed struggle intensified during the 1970’s and was marked by numerous terrorist acts inside Israel and abroad and by continuous attempts to establish a Palestinian military force along the Israeli borders, first in Jordan and later in Lebanon. The armed struggle strategy yielded diplomatic results and in 1974, in Rabat, the Arab States recognized the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinians. This recognition was followed by major diplomatic coups for the PLO in many countries, especially in the Third World, and the PLO was elevated to a unique position in the United Nations. Anwar el-Sadat’s historic visit to Jerusalem in 1977 and the Egyptian-Israeli peace talks culminating in the Camp David Accords in 1979, further deepened the Palestinian mistrust of a Pan-Arabic salvation. However, throughout all these years Palestinian diplomacy never gave up on the rhetoric of Arab unity.

IV

The constant pursuit of the Palestinian problem was, and continues to be an important part of the legitimation formula of Arab governments. Both radical and conservative states invested economic resources and provided diplomatic support to the Palestinian struggle and to the PLO for reasons far beyond their aversion to Israel or their authentic solidarity with the misfortune and distressful situation of their Arab brothers. This support of the Palestinians is intrinsically connected to the internal legitimation crisis of Arab regimes and it serves as an alibi for their failures to solve their internal problems. Paradoxically, however, the Arab’s states failure to transform the Palestinian predicament has remained one of the most important delegitimizing factors of their regimes.

The central problem for progressive revolutionary states is one of identity—the lack of national-ethnic religious unity within the state and the existence of primordial loyalties that undermine the governmental legitimacy. Moreover in the absence
of democratic procedures force and suppression become central means of enlisting loyalty. As Lisa Anderson has pointed out: "the extent to which governments of the region rest their rule on naked power or clothe it in respect for regular procedures varies along a continuum from those whose fidelity to the rule of law is relatively constant to those whose behavior is widely condemned as essentially criminal."13

The lack of democratic mechanisms in neutralizing opposition led many Arab states to search for ideological justification beyond their frontiers. Pan-Arabism, leftist ideologies of the Third World, as well as Islamic symbols serve as justifications for the progressive revolutionary states. Pro-Palestinian gestures became an important aspect of this multifaceted legitimation formula. The Syrian Baathist leadership in the hands of the Alawi minority, for example, continuously proclaim their support of the Palestinians as one of their government’s raison d’etre. In an oral address President Hafiz al-Assad expressed Syria’s enduring support for the Palestinians:

“How much have we sacrificed for the Resistance in the past few years? Fifty percent of the Syrian military aircraft destroyed in the clashes with the enemy [Israel] before the 1973 war were in the defence of positions of the Palestinian Resistance. Thirteen planes were lost in Urqub in defence of the Resistance. These aircrafts were manned by the elite of our pilots ... We lost 500 soldiers in one day. We lost them in a fight with the enemy because the enemy had hit a Fidai (guerilla) base somewhere in Syria. The battles we fought against the enemy for the sake of the Palestinian Resistance are numerous ... Who has done for the Resistance what Syria has done? Who has sacrificed for the Resistance what Syria has sacrificed?”14

The Syrian rhetoric of fidelity to the Palestinian cause did not, however, deter Syrian soldiers from siding with the Christian Militia in Lebanon in 1976 against the Palestinians. Likewise, the Iraqi financial and diplomatic support of the Palestinians has always been tempered by Iraqi political needs.15

As to the traditional Islamic regimes, their legitimation problem is rooted in their failure to comply with modern mythology of popular sovereignty. This fact was exploited by revolutionary Arab regimes, in the past headed by Nasir and during the Gulf crisis by Saddam Hussein, who have challenged their mere existence. The fact that many of the Arab monarchies represent
merely family wealth derived from the oil fields with little other bases of legitimacy stands in sharp contrast to the Palestinians who have a nation and a people, widely recognized by the international community, yet remain stateless. This contradiction between a stateless people and a nationless monarchy has proved continuously destabilizing. Hence, Arab monarchies have tried to diffuse revolutionary pressures to transform their systems by paying homage to Pan-Arabism, primarily to its most common denominator - the Palestinians - who have come to represent a binding force in an increasingly vague notion of Arab unity. It is for this reason Arab monarchies provided strong diplomatic support and lavish financial aid to the PLO and were reluctant to support Egypt’s conciliatory moves towards Israel in Camp David.

But beyond their rhetorical adherence to Pan-Arabism, Arab regimes and leaders must constantly demonstrate their devotion to Islam. As the historian Bernard Lewis commented: “Islam provides the most effective system of political mobilization, whether to arouse the people in defence of a regime that is perceived as possessing the necessary legitimacy or against a regime which is perceived as lacking that legitimacy, in other words, not being Islamic or, perhaps, as having forfeited that legitimacy by no longer being Islamic.” Arab leaders therefore, including those at the head of modern secular states such as Syria and Iraq, must incorporate Islamic rhetoric and symbols as part of their ruling mechanism in their campaign to destroy religious opponents who challenge their claims to power. Saddam Hussein’s court biographers even found it appropriate to mythologize their leader by tracing his origins back to the prophet Mohammed.

Adherence to Islam as a basis for internal legitimation intensified with the decline of Nasirism following the 1967 defeat, and as a result of the erosion in the concept of Arab unity with the consolidation of Arab revolutionary regimes. Ironically, it was Saddam Hussein who announced in 1982, that “the question of linking [Arab] unity to the removal of boundaries is no longer acceptable to present Arab mentality.” He declared Nasir’s vision of an Arab nation as one state as “sheer dreams” and called for all Arab states’ to exercise mutual respect to the demarcation of boundaries between them.

The need to pay homage to Islam increased significantly after the Iranian Revolution in 1979 which provoked fundamental currents in the entire Arab-Moslem world. Dependency on Islam enhances the stature of the Palestinians in the Arab world as they have come to represent, (and indeed promote their image as) the sacrificial lamb in the struggle to recapture the Holy City in East
Jerusalem, which was annexed by Israel after the 1967 War. Since 1967, therefore, the fight for Jerusalem became a major force in the hands of the Palestinians in rallying Arab and Islamic support.

The Temple Mount in East Jerusalem has been a source of tension and national religious struggle between Arabs and Jews for many generations. The Temple Mount, known as al-Haram al Sharif, is second only to Mecca and Medina in Saudi Arabia as a holy shrine for the Muslims. Also found on the Temple Mount are the only ruins of the Second Temple sanctified by the Jews as their holiest site. In 1929, a bloody riot broke out between Arabs and Jews in Palestine following a dispute over Jewish prayer at the Wailing Wall. The Jews tried to implement freedom of worship while the Muslims believed them to have ulterior motives aimed at conquering the Temple Mount and rebuilding the Jewish Temple. From 1948 to 1967 the Temple Mount and East Jerusalem were under Jordanian occupation. Despite earlier Jordanian proclamations to allow freedom of worship, the Jews were denied access to the Wailing Wall. In the aftermath of the Six Day War, Israel and Jordan, with tacit approval of local Palestinians, informally agreed to the control of the Temple Mount by the Islamic Endowments (Awkaf) which was part of the Jordanian official bureaucracy. Since July 1988, when Jordan severed its ties with the West Bank, more and more Islamic radicals have penetrated the Awkaf.

The arrangement at the Temple Mount did not prevent the conversion of the place to a fertile ground for inciting religious and political riots. In August 1969, a 21 year old Christian, Michael Rowen, set alight the al-Aksa Mosque. Subsequently it was discovered that Rowen was psychologically unstable; yet the reaction of the Arab countries was extreme and in the U.N. they proposed to send an investigation committee to look into the matter. At the outbreak of the intifada the Palestinian leadership declared the day of Rowen’s failed attempt a memorial day to be honored by demonstrations and strikes. On 11 April 1982, Alan Goodman, a Jewish-American who lived in Jerusalem and served in the Israeli army, burst into the al-Aksa Mosque opening fire and killing two Arabs. It was assessed that he too was deranged. For whatever reason the event was subsequently erased from Palestinian memory as indicated by the failure of the intifada leaders to sanctify it as a memorial day.

Over the years a number of attempts by Jewish extremists and various criminal groups to break into and rampage mosques on the Temple Mount were uncovered. The most militant and vocal Jewish extremist is a minority group called the “Temple Mount Faithfuls” who have advocated to “cleanse” the holy site
of all Muslim mosques in order to rebuild what they called the "Third Jewish Temple." Defying a religious prohibition declared by the Chief Rabbinical court forbidding observant Jews from entering the Temple Mount area, the Temple Mount Faithfuls have constantly attempted to hold prayers and symbolic demonstrations on the Mount. Their activities have constantly led to outbursts of violence and the provocation of the Muslim-Arabs populace. Muslim leaders have declared every such event to be an Israeli government’s plot to takeover the holy mosques.

On the Palestinian side, during the 1980’s, and in particularly during the intifada there has been a rapid growth of radical Moslem groups exploiting the Temple Mount mosques as a stage for Islamic propaganda, anti-Jewish incitements, and as a safe haven during clashes with Israeli police. Since the mid 1980’s Islamic activism has been intensified among the Palestinians who have gradually lost confidence in the PLO’s diplomatic strategy. For Palestinians who are experiencing political, social and economic deprivation under Israeli occupation, Islam fills an ideological and political vacuum; its eschatological promises provide symbolic gratification and compensate for their daily sacrifices. The central Islamic movement in the occupied territories is Hamas, an umbrella organization consisting of members of the Muslim Brothers Movement in the Gaza Strip and the al-Muhammad ‘al-Islami. In addition to Hamas, which is a mass movement whose ideology bridges Islam and Palestinian nationalism, the other significant organization with strong followers is the Islamic Jihad. The latter which is more militant in its objectives, sees the Islamic Republic of Iran as its model and conducts a selective recruiting policy.

Prior to the violent incident on the Temple Mount on 8 October 1990, rumors had been spreading amongst the Palestinians that the Temple Mount Faithfuls were planning to lay a cornerstone for the intended construction of the Third Temple. The Israeli Supreme Court, aware of the tension, had granted a restraining order explicitly forbidding the Temple Mount Faithfuls from making their yearly pilgrimage to the holy site. The Israeli police conveyed this information to Muslim community leaders. Unsatisfactory precautionary measures taken to reduce the tension, resulted in the unprecedented bloodshed on the Temple Mount and caused international outrage towards Israel, including unanimous condemnation in the U.N. Security Council and a motion to send a three member investigatory mission to probe the events in Jerusalem. The Israeli government’s stance was further aggravated when it rejected the decision as an infringement on Israel’s sovereignty.
For many the Palestinian support of Saddam appeared as a fatal mistake which would eventually take its toll. Many experts suggested that “the spectacle of Arafat’s embrace of Saddam Hussein will undoubtedly give pause to the PLO’s most hardened enthusiasts in Europe and the United States,” and that the only beneficiary of the Palestinian stand will be Israel, whose refusal to enter into negotiations with the PLO, will be readily accepted and sympathized with by the international community. Joel Brinkley wrote in the New York Times that by supporting Saddam “the momentum that the Palestinians built up through nearly three years of uprising in the Israel-controlled West Bank and Gaza Strip appears to have been lost.” Lilly Weissbrod, a political sociologist specializing in Middle East ideologies argued that, the Palestinian “support of Saddam will avail them nothing even in the unlikely event that he emerges victorious from the conflict with the U.S.” But the chain of events in the occupied territories during summer of 1990 which culminated in the outburst of violence in Old Jerusalem on 8 October leaving about eighteen Arabs dead, refuted the prediction that the Palestinians had been losing footing on the international scene. Following the fatal clashes on the Temple Mount the Palestinian issue rebounded to the forefront of world affairs encompassing enough power to pose a threat even to the international unity against Iraq.

At present one should not discount the damage in the international sphere caused by Arafat’s embrace of Saddam, nor should one underestimate the decline of PLO’s stature in Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf countries that have come to view the organization as a “fifth column.” Yet, despite the present aversion to the PLO, in the long run Arab states can not abandon the Palestinians or its leadership. The Palestinian have come to penetrate Arab consciousness and any attempt to ignore their plight may haunt Arab regimes.

Indeed, the Gulf crisis exposed the political bankruptcy of Pan-Arabism, as Arab soldiers took opposing sides in the midst of an international crisis. It proved that Arab states were striving primarily to enhance their own political objectives divorced from their Arab connection. Saudi Arabia rushed to invite American forces to protect its sovereignty despite its vulnerability to charges of hosting “sacrilegious infidels” at the holy sites. Egypt’s reward for its allegiance to President Bush was a quick waiver of its national debts of about seven billion dollars. Hafiz-al-Assad of Syria saw in the Gulf crisis a unique opportunity to avenge his historic Baathist enemies in Baghdad. In allying himself with Washington, Assad was also able to put an end to his growing isolation resulting from the Soviets’ new
disengagement policy from regional conflicts. Finally, the aligning of Syrian forces alongside the Americans gave Assad a free hand in eliminating his rivals in Lebanon.

The Palestinians, however, who have no state power at their disposal, remained isolated in their attempts to manipulate Pan-Arab feelings against U.S. and foreign intervention. They have sought to use the Iraqi invasion to their advantage by advocating Arab unity under the banner of “Arab solution to an Arab problem,” thereby linking any diplomatic resolution in Kuwait with a resolution in Palestine. But Arafat’s call for Arab unity remained unheeded in Cairo, Damascus and Riyadh.

In the face of the impotence of Pan-Arabism, Islam remains a powerful resonant alternative through which Palestinians can appeal to the Arab world. Through their presence in Jerusalem and the Temple Mount Palestinians have drawn Arab states back into their fold, forcing them to remain active in their struggle. To the Arab states’ consternation, the Palestinians have demonstrated that any attempt to attain state goals or to solve inter-state relations in the region cannot bypass the Palestinian cause. The Temple Mount incident reemphasized the strong hold Palestinian exert over Islam and served as a reminder that no Arab leader can dispense with Palestinians in pursuing domestic or international objectives.

At the time of writing (November 1990) a resolution to the Gulf crisis is not yet in sight. However, it is already clear that the Palestinians have succeeded in injecting themselves into the international scene as central players in a variety of manners: 1) in the international scene, the recognition of Palestinian rights for self-determination has long been an integral part of the U.N. agenda, and there is a growing inclination among Western world leaders to link a solution in the Gulf with the issue of Palestine — whether through a diplomatic initiative or following an Iraqi defeat in a military operation; 2) in the overall Muslim world Palestinians are a major force in generating anti-West solidarity; 3) within the Arab states Palestinians are capable of undermining regimes’ attempts to relax strong Islamic opposition and serve as key players in the Arab states’ ability to sustain national cohesiveness — as most acutely demonstrated in Jordan where 60 percent of the population, who are of Palestinian origin, have sided with Arafat in supporting Saddam and thus forced King Hussein to walk a tight rope by adopting a “Palestinian” foreign policy.

Thus, unlike many other ethnic groups, and especially exile organizations searching for state power, the Palestinian have emerged as a dynamic force in world affairs and not merely as playing cards in the hands of others.
2 On 6 December 1989, the U.S. State Department announced the Baker Plan for Israeli-Palestinian talks to be held in Cairo. The talks should have led both parties to agree on elections in the occupied territories. Under the plan, the Egyptian were to consult with the Palestinians, but no mention was made of the PLO.
5 al-Byadir al-Siyasi (Arabic), 18 August, 1990
7 Yediot Haharonot (Hebrew), 8 August 1990.
10 As a rule, the U.N. provides access to the General Assembly or the Security Council and grants diplomatic and material assistance to selective liberation movements in recognition of their struggle for self-determination and independence. The PLO is recognized by the U.N. as the sole and authentic representative of the Palestinian people, and as such have earned the right to participate in the sessions and work of the General Assembly and other U.N. organs as observer.
15 See Christine Moss Helms, Iraq: Eastern Flank of the Arab World (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institu-
tion, 1984), 113.


18Ibid., 114-15.


21*The New Republic*, 3 September, 1990
