

Vol. 6(1), March 2019

ISSN 2311-7796 Online

The Jordan's Controversial Participation in 1967 War

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Abstract

The main goal of this paper is to contend the Israeli point of view and other western thinkers about the motives of late King Hussein's decision to participate in the 1967 war, and labeling that decision as a serious blunder. This was ended by the occupation of the West Bank of Jordan (Palestine), and it was taken into consideration that Israelis had planned for the occupation of the West Bank of Jordan. To refute these assumptions, levels of analysis method and references were utilized from both sides to confirm the paper's assumption. The importance of this paper stems from using the theory of realism. This paper can prove that Israel waited for this war to occur and that Jordan participation was inevitable due to the international system condition at that moment of history.

Keywords: Jordan, controversial participation, 1967 war, West Bank.

Introduction

This paper tries to find an answer to the Jordan participation in the 1967 war, which affected the whole Middle East. The paper uses different resources from both sides to foster the hypothesis that the late king Hussein studied the available options, and the decision he made was not so bad. Without that decision, the loss could have been more disastrous. The political theory used the Jordanian foreign policy to explain the decision-making process as the theory of realism with its different strands of thought. Although according to some researchers, it can be explained through Omni balancing. However, this argument is not convincing, as the loss of the Palestine at that time could have cost the King his life, given the fact that Israeli Air force targeted the King's palace in Amman.

The methodology used is the levels of analysis where the first level is the leaders and statesmen, the second level is the state level, and the third level is the international level. In order to prove the hypothesis of the paper, it is better to show the Israeli interest of the war then move to the circumstances that forced Jordan to choose that decision. The Simulation way of thinking is used with the available courses of actions, and the best-chosen course of action is defined through war-gaming.



Vol. 6(1), March 2019

ISSN 2311-7796 Online

The first section is the introduction, which contains the methodology, the historical background, the preliminary events that led to instigating the war, and the literature review. The second section illustrates the three levels of analysis and their effect on the Jordanian decision. The last section is the conclusions drawn from the chapter discussed.

Aims and Scope

There were many explanations for the causes of the Jordanian participation in the six days war between the Arabs and Israel, which erupted in June 1967. This paper tried to contend the Israeli opinion and the Jewish writers especially Avi Shalem, in his book "Lion of Jordan" that it was the biggest mistake done by late King Hussein and many others like Jack O'connel in "King's Council".

Hypothesis

The Jordan participation in the war of 1967 was inevitable due to the regional and domestic factors.

Theoretical Perspective

The paper utilized the realism theory with its different strands of thought. The realism theory has its roots in the humankind history as it considers Machiavelli as one of the main realist thinkers due to his famous book *The Prince*. E.H Carr also contributed as an historian to the development of this theory as a response to the horrors of the First World War. Hans Morgentau in his book *Politics among Nations* (1948), declared his famous six principles.

In addition, the Neo Realism by Waltz contributed to the development of this theory by his structural realism, which interpreted the same foreign policy attitudes shown by USA and USSR during the cold war. Waltz's interpretation was based on the use of systemic force, which interposes itself between the state and the foreign policy. Realism assumes that the state is the unitary player and the international system has anarchical character, which is seen as "the absence of the overarching authority to regulate the relation between the states". Also, the international system is a self-help system, and the relations between the states depend upon the comparative power. Therefore, the state should focus on its national interest, which is the main driving force in international relations. At the same time, the focus on power leads to a security dilemma, which is the accretion of military power. Therefore, this will



Vol. 6(1), March 2019

ISSN 2311-7796 Online

consequently lead to an arms race to achieve the balance; the inability of achieving the military balance jeopardizes the state existence.

The realism theory came as a response to the naïve liberalism thought that peace can be achieved through collective security, free trade, and the spread of democracy. The liberalism dominated the international relations theory after the First World War, but the infliction of the Second World War proved its inability. Realism does not care about the moral principles between the states; instead the concept of interest as related to power is the focus. According to Manachem Begin, the Israeli prime minister once said "the world will not sympathize with those slaughtered as sheep".¹

Therefore, what is the relationship between the theoretical perspective and the case study, which is the Jordanian decision to participate in the war? After the 1948 war and before the 1967 war, Israel felt insecure due to the limited geography from the east where the Jordan Army was in close distance to the vital strategic positions in Israel at that time. And in the north, Syria was holding up the strategic positions in Golan Heights which easily can endanger the safety of the northern part of Israel.

This precarious position of Israel, with limited geography and the lack of strategic depth, created the security dilemma for Israel. This eventually led to accretion of military power in the Israeli Army. This was more evident in the air force capabilities and the unmatched intelligence agencies to Arab armies. More than that, Israel developed its military doctrine to be aggressive in its allegedly defense doctrine, which is interested in preemptive and to some degree preventive strikes. Its main objective however lies in the transfer of war to the opponent's main land.

To sum up, Israel was in need of a war to improve its survival and to satisfy its Zionist ambitions of capturing the West Bank of Jordan. Jordan, on the other hand, suffered a lot from the Arabic rhetoric conspiring against it at that time.

The Jordan's interest was to improve its relationship with Nasser (President of Egypt) who was the key player in the Middle East, and who had a great influence upon most Palestinian movements and even many Jordanian officers and politicians in Nasercism.

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¹ Prime minister of Israel, Nobel Prize winner for Peace Treaty with Egypt.

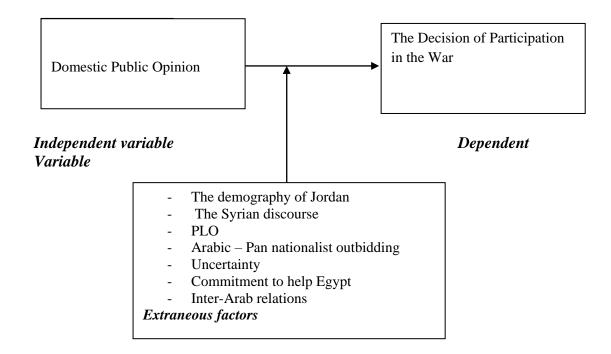


Vol. 6(1), March 2019

ISSN 2311-7796 Online

The international factor with its anarchical character and self-help attitude did not mind Israel. On the level of Leaders, King Hussein was skeptical about the intentions of the Israelis especially after the Samu raid which affected the popularity of the King inside the West Bank of Jordan. In the Discussion, we will try to correlate between the Realism theory and the Jordan's Decision.

The dependent variable is the decision to participate in the war, while the independent variable is the domestic public opinion. The extraneous factors are: 1) The Arabic public opinion, which is mainly formulated by the Arabic media; 2) The PLO; and 3) The Pan-Arab activities.





Vol. 6(1), March 2019

ISSN 2311-7796 Online

Background

After living in Jordan, Robert Edward² wrote his master's degree thesis for Brinston University; *the throne at all costs: power and survival in the Hashemite kingdom of Jordan*. In his paper, he tried to prove that King Hussein used short term politics to preserve the kingdom, but as he got experience he learned how to manage his delicate support base. These abilities helped to make him the most durable leader in the modern Middle East. In addition, it seems that Robert was focusing on king Abdullah the first and relating him with King Hussein. He did not compare fairly the international factor, which helped King Abed Allah more than King Hussein where King Hussein lacked the direct support from the superpowers after the cancellation of the defense treaty with UK.

Avi Shalem³, Professor in international relations, wrote about King Hussein and personally met him in Amman. In his book *Lion of Jordan*, he contends that King Hussein was driven by a single imperative: determination to preserve his own throne and the Hashemite dynasty. His success in achieving this, amidst relentless murder plots and upheavals and against every prediction of foreign intelligence services and diplomats, inspired admiration in the West as well as the Arab world.

Avi Shalem claims, "The biggest mistake of Hussein's reign was to join the Egyptians and Syrians in their 1967 war with Israel. The Israelis were willing to leave Jordan alone. However, Hussein had signed a pact with Nasser, and even accepted an Egyptian general to command his army. He calculated that the political price of no belligerence would be intolerable – an ostracism in the Arab world" (Shalem, 2009).

Jack O'connel, in his valuable book, spoke about his relationship with King Hussein and Jordan which was titled King's Council. He adopted the same position of Avi Shalem, that the King had more options than what he did. He admits first that "I am sure I would have been the target of the pro-Israelis in Washington and my job at CIA was to keep the King in power." However, he could not provide the King with the intercepted message between Nasser and the Syrian leadership in which Nasser calmed the Syrians by saying that he had something in his mind, which could be a trap like placing the Jordanian Armed Forces under the Egyptian military command (Haikel, 1990).

² Scholar who wrote a dissertation, and he served as a foreign area officer in the US Army.

³ Professor in Oxford has Israeli nationality and wrote about the Middle East conflict.



Vol. 6(1), March 2019

ISSN 2311-7796 Online

When writing about the era of the president of Egypt, Jamal Abed Al-Nasser, it is advisable to read the publications of the most prominent Egyptian Journalist at that time, Mohammad Hasanen Haikel⁴ publications. In his book *The Explosion*, he criticizes the steps of the Egyptian leadership at both the military and the political levels. Haikel also pinpointed the positive role by King Hussein in trying to convince Nasser not to instigate the war, but instead to wait anxiously for a move from Israel (Shalem, 1995).

Haikel, preoccupied by the conspiracy theory, blamed President Johnson, the president of USA, for unleashing Israel, and he did not highlight the misunderstood attitude of the USSR and its heinous role in that war.

When considering the Israeli point of view, Moshe Dayan on his memoir *The story of my life* in its Arabic version has a very interesting view. Dayan, who participated in all Israel wars in 1948, 1956, 1967, and 1973, upholds the Israel view that Israel did not have any choice but to conduct the preventative war. In addition, Dayan has the same typical Israeli view that Jordan was warned not to take part in the Israeli conflict (Dayan, 1976).

Dr. Sameer Mutawi⁵ wrote *Jordan in 1967* which was published in London both in Arabic and English language. His writings answered the question with multiple diplomatic answers. Although he had the chance to meet with the key players in Jordan Diplomacy at that time, but choose to be cautious in his interpretations (Mutawi, 1987).

The dream of the Israelis to occupy Jerusalem was clear and evident. For Israelis, it was like a promise on their marriage "if I forget you Jerusalem, I forget my right hand." The Jordan army succeeded to accomplish the hard and sacred mission to keep most of Jerusalem until June 1967.

In 1956, Israel, France, and Britain attacked Egypt ostensibly to reverse the Egyptian nationalization of the Suez Canal. However, under US pressure, they were obliged to evacuate their forces out of Egypt. This move reinforced the Jamal Abed Al-Nasser reputation in the Arab world. Egypt also agreed for the stationing of the UNEF (United Nation Emergency Force) to ensure the compliance of all parties to the 1949 armistice agreement.

⁴ Egyptian Journalist and historian wrote many publication about the conflict of the Middle East

⁵ Worked as Jordan Information minister. His book is essential to know about the war from the Jordanian View



Vol. 6(1), March 2019

ISSN 2311-7796 Online

Many sources stated that before the spring of 1967, the Soviet Union misinformed the Syrian government that Israeli forces were massing in northern Israel to attack Syria. There was no such Israeli mobilization. However, clashes between Israel and Syria had been escalating for about a year, and Israeli leaders had publicly declared that it might be necessary to bring down the Syrian regime if it failed to end Palestinian commando attacks against Israel from Syrian territory.

Before the war in 1967, as a result to an operation by the PLO, three Israelis were killed by attack and Israel avenged by attacking Al-Samu village. The Israeli attack was brutal and it was condemned internationally.

Nasser responded to the Syrian demands by expelling the UN mission from Sinai on May 19, deploying his troops in Sinai and finally embarking on an exercise in brinkmanship. This went over the brink by closing the straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping on May 22 (Shalem, 2009: 42).

At the same time, some of the Egyptian army was engaged in fighting in Yemen, and it seems that Nasser was just planning to use the dangerous policy, which was close to the brink of explosion.

In addition, responding to a Syrian request for assistance, in May 1967, Egyptian troops entered the Sinai Peninsula bordering Israel. A few days later, Egyptian president Jamal Abdel-Nasser asked the UN observer forces stationed between Israel and Egypt to evacuate their positions. The Egyptians then occupied Sharm Al-Sheikh at the southern tip of the Sinai Peninsula and proclaimed a blockade of the Israeli port of Eilat on the Gulf of Aqaba, arguing that access to Eilat was through Egyptian territorial waters. These measures shocked and frightened the Israeli public, which presumably believed it was in danger of annihilation.

As the military and diplomatic crisis continued, on June 5, 1967, Israel attacked Egypt and Syria, destroying their air forces on the ground within a few hours. Jordan joined in the fighting belatedly, and consequently was attacked by Israel as well. The Egyptian, Syrian, and Jordanian armies were defeated, and Israel captured the West Bank from Jordan, the Gaza Strip, the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt, and the Golan Heights from Syria.

Vol. 6(1), March 2019

ISSN 2311-7796 Online

The Samu Operation

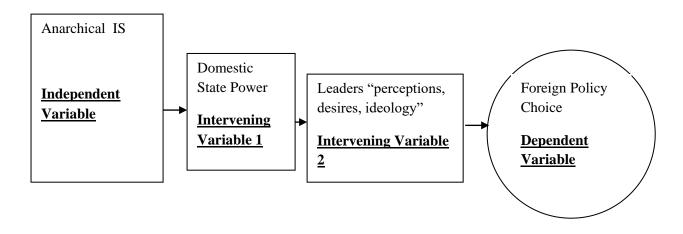
At 5:30 November 13, 1966, an Israeli force composed of Mechanized Infantry Brigade which was supported by tanks and aviation, attacked the Samu village with its 4,000 peasants. They were forced to leave their homes before starting to blow them up. During the operation, they fought against Jordanian force and killed 18 Jordanian soldiers, and this operation had deep impacts on Jordan relations with West Bankers as they felt defenseless. Thus, many of them demanded break away from Jordan. As a result, Wasfi Al-Tal recommended to the King to dissolve the Parliament and then announced the martial laws on 23 December 1966.

Why did Israel chose Jordan?

The answer for this question affected the Jordan decision to fight Israel in 1967, because it was evident that Israel designed the operation to provoke them to retaliate against Israel. Also the Jordanian interpreted the action that the Israelis made no distinction between one Arab state and another, which made the Jordanian demand that they should belong to an Arab defense system. It was also believed that the Israelis hoped that the Samu would have an inflammatory effect on Public Opinion, which would make it difficult for Jordan to stay out of any serious confrontation with Israel in the future. USA was aware of the Israeli intentions and President Johnson wanted to calm the King.

Discussion

This section focuses on the motives to enter the war by both sides, Jordan and Israel, using the level of analysis.





Vol. 6(1), March 2019

ISSN 2311-7796 Online

A. The First Level of Analysis "Leadership"

King Hussein: He became king when he was 17 years old. The king managed to survive many assassination attempts that were planned mainly by Arab countries. He kept good relations with the Western countries such as "USA" and "UK" and aligned Jordan against communism in the time of the Cold War. In 1956, he cancelled the joint military pact with UK upon domestic Arab pressure.

The King survived many plots against his life, and he had a burden to keep Jerusalem untouched from Israel. By his experience, he also felt the danger posed from Israel and he was aware of their dream about annexing Jerusalem.

Another important figure in Jordan was Wasfi Al Tal who had antagonistic opinions about Nasser and the Syrians. He was responsible for the media campaigns against Nasser from Jordan. In order to improve the relationship with Nasser, the king was obliged to remove him from his post on March 4, 1967 and appointed Saad Juma. Tal was accused by Nasser that he was a spy for the British and the Americans and was blamed for the failure on Samu Israeli raid. Juma shifted his position from been against Nasser to supporting him. This action was however described by Tal as riding the tide.

The elimination of Tal from the arena facilitated the Jordan's decision to participate in the war.

King Hussein perception about the intentions of the Israelis, his knowledge about the ideology of Israel, and their ambitions towards Jerusalem supported his analysis that the war with Israel was inevitable. He also had commitment to preserve Jerusalem; all these personal factors led the King to decide to engage in the fight rather than to wait and later on fight the Israelis alone without support from the Arabs (Hussein, 1986).

President of Egypt (Jamal Abed al-Nasser): He was a military officer before succeeding in the military coup d'état. His chief of staff, general Abed –Alhakim Amer, lacked the professionalism to lead the Egyptian army. Nasser was seen as a hero for his Pan-Arabism through the whole Arab world. However, his misperceptions of the international system and his personal desire for regional leadership led to foreign policy choices that were wrongly perceived by him. His removal of UN forces from the Sinai and the closing of the Straits of



Vol. 6(1), March 2019

ISSN 2311-7796 Online

Tiran introduced a US-brokered diplomatic agreement. This allowed him to escape with no military defeat and increased Pan-Arab prestige.

Nasser calculated that he could avoid the war with Israel by intimidation Policy and he could win politically. Nevertheless, on the military field, he made the required steps for the war.

Dayan, Begin, Rabin and Eshkol: Eshkol's creation of a new cabinet which included the ideologically-driven Moshe Dayan and Menachem Begin tipped the balance within the cabinet, so that any vote regarding the initiation of conflict with Egypt would be met with approval. Dayan, a passionate supporter of the Israeli military, saw the current crisis as a perfect opportunity for Israel to crush Nasser's Egypt and display Israel's military superiority. In comparison, Begin's ideological beliefs were deeper and more historically-driven than Dayan's affinity for military force. Begin viewed the crisis in May 1967 as an opportunity to realize Eretz Y israel, the land promised to the Jews in the Hebrew Bible.

These two members with the weak Prime Minister "Levy Eshkol", who did not have military background in a state as the military personnel, played the vital role. Therefore, he approved the war after having the green light from the President of USA "Johnson".

B. The Second Level "The Domestic Level"

The Israeli Domestic Level: It can be proven from multiple sources that Israel always dreamed about annexing the West Bank of Jordan. King Hussein was very aware of this fact and repeatedly declared this fact in his multiple speeches. For example, he said during his speech on January 25, 1967: "the enemy's present objective is the west bank; after that it will be the east bank."

In 1967, General Gulub Basha wrote "ever since the repulse by the Jordan Army in 1948, Israel had longed for an opportunity to overrun the remaining Arab Part of Palestine."

Israel had the chance to resolve the conflict peacefully but refrained to waste the opportunity to achieve its carefully planned operations. The following facts reinforce this assumption;

a. UN proposed to resolve the conflict and they got the approval of President Nasser for that initiative.



Vol. 6(1), March 2019

ISSN 2311-7796 Online

b. France, USA, and Australia had a plan to force Egypt to open the straits in June by sending their ships to accompany Israeli ships, but Israel fought the war before the planned date.

- c. The Joint Arabic military recommended not to give Israel a pretext to wage a war. This clearly means that the Arabs at that time knew that any war will be for the favor of Israel.
- d. The result of the war indicates that it cannot happen without very detailed planning by the Israelis.
- e. The UN asked Israel to station the UNEF on its territories but it rejected that offer.

Jordan Foreign Policy: King Hussein was the prime player of Jordan foreign policy at that time, where the ministry of foreign affairs does not function as an advisory institution but as an executive organ of the government and the king. Other players are the prime minister, the ministry of information, royal Hashemite Diwan, minister of royal court, and directorate of general intelligence.

The main principles for the Jordan foreign policy are the Hashemite heritage commitment to Arabism, the Arab solidarity and cooperation, the commitment to the cause of Palestine, good relations with the west, and antagonism with communism and survival. According to Adnan Abu Ouda, "the area of foreign policy is almost entirely dominated by the king." Also, Dr. Hazim Nussaiba confirms that.

Jordan relationship was at its lowest levels with the PLO after their trials to separate the West Bank from Jordan. They were supported by Syrians and to some extent by Nasser. King Hussein knew that their keys were in Damascus and Cairo, so it is not possible to neutralize their effect, without the approval of Nasser.

The Jordanian fear of Nasser was noticed by the joy of the Jordanian Prime Minister, Saad Juma, who replaced the popular Wasfi al-Tal. He told Jack after signing the treaty with Egypt that "this is the first night he can sleep peacefully."

They were more concerned with their Arab credentials and gaining Nasser's favor than they were with the consequences of war and defeat (O'connel, 2011: 46).



Vol. 6(1), March 2019

ISSN 2311-7796 Online

Jordan looked carefully at the available options and calculated the gains and the losses. Below is a list of the available options:

C. The Course of Actions (COA) for Jordan Foreign Policy Decision

The foreign policy in Jordan prior to the War has limited choices. This part of the paper includes all the COAs, and the expected results when considering the political atmosphere during the current time.

1. Jordan Participates in the War with the Victory for the Arabs

This is the best COA for Jordan that will strengthen the relationships with Egypt and the sovereignty of Jordan over the west bank. It is also seen as a fruit of victory so that Jordan might regain the whole of Jerusalem.

2. Jordan Participates in the War with the Loss of War for the Arabs

This is what occurred but nobody in the world at that time could imagine the size of the catastrophe. It is beyond imagination that one army can defeat three (3) armies within six days and capture that size of territory, taking in account that UNSC will act in the first days and stop the war. Also the loss of territory could mean a permanent peace between Israel and the Arabs. Therefore, a result of negotiations could be conducted after the end of the war.

3. Jordan does not Participate in the War with the Loss of War for the Arabs

This COA will jeopardize the survival of Jordan as the neighboring Arab Nations will consider Jordan a traitor against the Arabic Cause. This will contribute to the dramatic loss of war to Jordan.

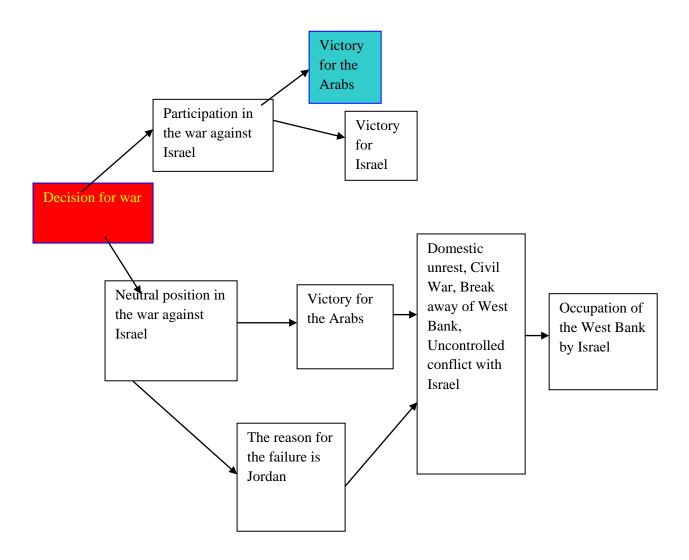
4. Jordan does not Participate in the War with the Victory for the Arabs

This COA will not be suitable for Jordan foreign policy as it will lose solidarity with the victorious Arab world as well as the King's credibility and his role in foreign policy.

Vol. 6(1), March 2019

ISSN 2311-7796 Online

Jordan's Decision



D. The Third Level "The International System"

The Neo-Realists consider the effect of the International System as the most important factor in shaping the foreign policy of the states. The anarchical character of the international system has its effects on this war, as the superpowers are more inclined for war. The international system conditions war, but the system does not control the war.

The Effect on Israel

USA started to feel the danger from Nasser in the region and the extension of his role. President Johnson at the end accepted the idea from his advisors to unleash Israel. The Soviet Union encouraged the Egyptians to open a new front in the west to alleviate the pressure on the Syrian Front. Kenneth Waltz described the international system as being a self-help



Vol. 6(1), March 2019

ISSN 2311-7796 Online

system. Therefore, the Jews in Israel who are refusing to forget the impact of the holocaust in the WW2 reinforced with what they claim as centuries of oppression in the ancient times in Babylon, Old Jerusalem, Egypt, and the medieval ages by the Christians in Europe and Spain. This reinforced their claim that they should not rely heavily on others and should suspect the intentions of others "goyeem". As a result of the self-help international system, they were to attack the Egyptian mainly because it was the main threat to the security of Israel.

In the history of Arab-Israeli conflict, including the wars and military operations, Israel consulted with the USA before conducting these military operations. Although the International factor does not play a vital role in Israeli Foreign Policy and this is mainly dictated by the domestic factor.

For some American experts, the war could lead to peace in the Middle East. Many sources confirm that the Russians provided the Syrians with misleading information about a build-up of Israeli troops on the Syrian border. However, the Syrians and the Russians had interest in the war to weaken Nasser and force him to depend more on the Russians, and the Johnson's administration allowed Israel to unleash its forces (Haikel, 1990).

The Effect on Jordan

In addition, the International System played an important role to shape the Jordan decision as Jordan found itself isolated from the Arab world and ultimately Israel will find the proper pretext to occupy the West Bank. For Jordan diplomacy, the atmosphere was hostile by both Israel and Arabic countries. This International System encouraged Jordan to adopt the policy of survival and minimize the damage. The International character was evident in Jordan as it will be set alone against Israel after any expected engagement between the Arabs and Israel. Jordan's decision to cancel the defense treaty with UK under the public opinion pressure deprived Jordan from International assistance.

However, Jordan realized that they could not defend West Bank on their own. For this reason, it was essential for Jordan to belong to a regional defense system in order to share the burden with other nations. The following table shows the three levels of analysis and their impact on the Jordanian decision.



Vol. 6(1), March 2019

ISSN 2311-7796 Online

Level	Israel	Jordan
Leadership	Cabinet Reshuffle with which military assumed control of the state. Begin has an ideological attitude towards Jerusalem and Dayan looking for military glory	King Hussein has the experience and suspects the Israeli intention to annex the West Bank
Domestic	The pubic opinion is in favor	The public opinion is against Israel and, in
Issues	of preemptive strike against the Arabic armies	favor to fight Israel, there is an underestimate to the military capabilities of Israel due to the Arabic media
International	USA gave Israel the green	Mistrust between the Arabic countries and
level	light to fight as a response to Nasser actions.	USSR encouraged Egypt to fight Israel

Conclusion

In 1997, King Hussein spoke: "on that day I had to choose and show Jordan's commitment to defend the nation in the face of the danger…had we decided to avoid entering the battle, the country would have faced an explosion at the internal level at the hands of the old school outbidding" (Dallas, 1999: 122).

It is obvious that Israel planned very carefully for this war. The CIA reported that the Israelis collected enormous information about the Arabs.

The mixture of Israel's insecurity and military superiority to its Arab rivals, combined with great power interests, created an environment where Israeli elites perceived war as simultaneously bringing security and relative power gains. These structural realities were intensified by the domestic situations in both the Arab states and Israel. The international system put the option of war on the table.

For Jordan, the domestic issues played a vital role that led to the decision to play an active role in the war, rather than to wait for the result. The king was aware of Israel's intention when he warned Nasser to avoid the provocations made by Syria (Haikal, 1990). Nasser's



Vol. 6(1), March 2019

ISSN 2311-7796 Online

negative response motivated Jordan to sign the Mutual Defense Treaty with Egypt to prevent the isolation of Jordan. The Realism paradigm explains the war as it focuses on the leadership where we say King Hussein's insight was the main reason for the decision. The second level of the analysis shaped the Jordan decision whereby the demography of Jordan changed after the inclusion of the Palestinian refugees. In addition, the role of PLO as contender to the King in Jordan fostered the danger of imminent civil war for Jordan.

Finally, the anarchical international system punished Nasser by not giving him an honorable exit of the inevitable war, which he was not prepared to conduct. Jordan's domestic demographic factor, with the growing PLO military role inside the West Bank arena, had an impact on the decision. In addition, the belligerent Arabic attitude towards Jordan encouraged the King to adopt the Principle of Survival in an anarchical arena with its self-help main character.

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Vol. 6(1), March 2019

ISSN 2311-7796 Online

Shalem, A. (2009). Lion of Jordan. London: Allen Lane.

HOW TO CITE THIS PAPER

Warikat, F. (2019). The Jordan's Controversial Participation in 1967 War. International Humanities Studies, 6(1), 10-26.

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