

75 08 21 11:40
WALL STREET JOURNAL, TUESDAY, AUGUST 21, 1990

JORDAN ANALYSTS PICK WINNERS AND LOSERS
IN MIDEAST CONFLICT

BY TONY HORWITZ, STAFF REPORTER
-FOREIGN INSIGHT-

AMMAN, JORDAN -- ALTHOUGH GUNS REMAIN HOLSTERED IN THE PERSIAN GULF, ANALYSTS IN JORDAN ARE WRITING OBITUARIES FOR CERTAIN PLAYERS. COUNTED AMONG THE DEAD ARE U.S. INFLUENCE IN THE REGION AND THE STABILITY OF THE JORDANIAN STATE.

"WHATEVER HAPPENS, AMERICA IS FINISHED IN THE MIDDLE EAST," SAYS TAHER MASRI, ONE OF THE MOST MODERATE AND ARTICULATE VOICES IN AMMAN, OUTLINES A LOSE-LOSE SCENARIO FOR THE U.S.

IF IRAQI PRESIDENT SADDAM HUSSEIN WEATHERS THE CRISIS, MR. MASRI SAYS, HIS PRESTIGE AND POWER WILL BE SO GREAT THAT SUCH CURRENT FOES AS EGYPT AND SAUDI ARABIA WILL FALL INTO LINE, THROUGH FEAR OF IRAQ OR OF THEIR OWN POPULATIONS. SADDAM HUSSEIN IS SEEN EXTENDING HIS HEGEMONY IN YEMEN AND JORDAN, GIVING HIM A CHOKE POINT ON THE RED SEA AND A LONG BORDER WITH ISRAEL. "HE WILL BE A GAMAL NASSER WITH TEETH," MR. MASRI SAYS.

IF SADDAM HUSSEIN IS DEFEATED OR DEPOSED, JORDANIANS SEE DIRE CONSEQUENCES FOR THE U.S. A MAN WIDELY PERCEIVED BY THE ARAB MASSES AS A "NATIONALIST HERO" WILL HAVE BEEN MARTYRED BY "WESTERN IMPERIALISM," MR. MASRI SAYS, AND "THE GAP BETWEEN ARAB LEADERS AND THEIR PEOPLE -- ALREADY WIDE -- WILL BECOME EVEN WIDER." WRATH NOW DIRECTED TO THE U.S. WILL BE DISCHARGED AT HOME, THREATENING MANY REGIMES.

MR. MASRI AND OTHER ANALYSTS HAVE NO DOUBT WHO WILL BENEFIT: FUNDAMENTALISTS, TERRORISTS AND RADICAL ARAB NATIONALISTS. "THE U.S. MAY CLOBBER SADDAM," SAYS ONE SOURCE CLOSE TO THE PALACE, "BUT IT WON'T BE LEFT WITH MANY REGIMES IN THE REGION TO DEFEND." ANALYSTS SAY THAT THE LARGE PALESTINIAN POPULATION IN GULF STATES, PARTICULARLY SAUDI ARABIA, COULD BECOME A VEHICLE FOR TERROR AND INSTABILITY.

ASAD ABDUL RAHMAN, A MEMBER OF BOTH THE ARAB ORGANIZATION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE PALESTINE NATIONAL COUNCIL, THINKS THE DAMAGE ALREADY HAS BEEN DONE TO THE U.S. AND ITS ALLIES. "A MODERATE LIKE MYSELF CAN NO LONGER EVEN TALK ABOUT ETHICS OR INTERNATIONAL LAW," HE SAYS. "ARAB DIGNITY IS ALL ANYONE CARES ABOUT."

HE BELIEVES MOST ARABS HAVE ACCEPTED THAT SADDAM HUSSEIN LIKELY WILL LOSE. BUT EVEN IF THE ODDS ARE THREE TO ONE AGAINST IRAQ, "ARABS WILL SAY, 'I'LL TAKE MY CHANCES,'" HE SAYS. "THE ATTITUDE IS, 'LET HIM DIE, LET US ALL DIE, BUT AT LEAST SOMEONE STOOD UP TO THE U.S.'"

SADDAM HUSSEIN'S DEFEAT WOULD ONLY DEEPEN THIS NIHILISM AND ANGER, MR. RAHMAN BELIEVES. "ALL AMERICA WOULD WIN IS THE ENMITY OF MILLIONS OF ARABS. IT MIGHT TAKE A FEW YEARS, BUT THE FALLOUT WILL BE TURMOIL AND TERROR."

K.....

NEAR THE BREAKING POINT IN AMMAN. WHEN A TO JUSTIFY SAUDI ARABIA'S STANCE IN A MOVED OUT OF THE PULPIT -- A SHOW OF JORDANIANS SAY IS ALMOST UNHEARD OF IN ALLIES CONTINUE DAILY, AND TRUCKS OF RIOT D BY THE U.S. EMBASSY AND AT MAJOR TWO CONSCRIPTS IN THE JORDANIAN ARMY AIR OWN INITIATIVE. ONE WAS KILLED AND

WORKING FOR A GOVERNMENT AGENCY RETURNED FIND HIS CO-WORKERS DOING NOTHING BUT "TWENTY PERCENT WANT TO FLEE JORDAN," HE ER 80% WANT TO GO TO HOLY WAR."

WH PRO-IRAQ SENTIMENT CRETES WHAT ONE N CALLS "THE KING'S CONUNDRUM." IF KING TO WESTERN PRESSURE AND IMPOSES TRADE, "THE ANGER AT HOME WOULD BE OFF THE AT SAYS. BUT IF THE KING DEFIES THE U.S. DAD, HE WILL INCUR ISOLATION ABROAD AND OME, POSSIBLY WITHIN SEVERAL MONTHS. "THE BASSADOR, "IS REALLY FACING THE CRUNCH."

IS IS A TRIPLE HIT TO JORDAN'S STUMBLING IES FROM THE 300,000 OR MORE JORDANIANS HAVE BEEN MADE ALMOST WORTHLESS, AND THE ANS WORKING IN OTHER GULF STATES IS IN AID FROM KUWAIT IS GONE, AND OTHER GULF TO REPAY AMMAN FOR ITS SUPPORT OF BAGHDAD ID AS WELL. AND TRAFFIC AT THE PORT OF GOODS ARE TRUCKED TO IRAQ, IS DWINDLING STOP LOADING GOODS BOUND FOR IRAQ.

S OFF THE REST OF ITS TRADE WITH IRAQ, EFFECTIVELY COME TO A STANDSTILL," SAYS, CROWN PRINCE HASSAN. JORDAN SENDS 25% IRAQ AND RECEIVES 90% OF ITS OIL FROM E AS REPAYMENT FOR CREDITS THAT AMMAN HE IRAN-IRAQ WAR. IF THIS TRADE WERE AY JORDAN WOULD BE UNABLE TO SERVICE ITS BILLION, AND UNEMPLOYMENT COULD SOAR.

DE WITH IRAQ IS EVEN LESS PALATABLE HE KING WOULD BE PERCEIVED AS STABBING AB CAUSE IN THE BACK," SAYS ONE WESTERN N OF SENSITIVITY ABOUT THE KING'S IMAGE IS ORSHIP AFTER MONTHS OF EMERGING DEMOCRACY PRESS IN JORDAN. ISSUES OF TIME MAGAZINE N NEWSTANDS THIS WEEKEND WITH SEVERAL THE CENSORED MATERIAL INCLUDED A PHRASE HUSSEIN IS "KNOWN LOCALLY FOR HAVING A MILLION TIMES."

ON QUALITY HAS HELPED THE KING SURVIVE DURING HIS 37-YEAR REIGN. AND IN RECENT EN AT IT AGAIN, STANDING BY IRAQ IN ONE