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Nationalism through Localism: Some Observations on the West Bank Political Elite*

Shaul Mishal

Since the first Arab-Israeli war of 1948 and more particularly since the 1967 war, the Palestinian community on the West Bank has undergone social and political changes: incorporation in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Israeli occupation, and increased PLO influence in internal politics. However, these changes were not paralleled by changes of similar intensity in the power structure or the political behavior of the West Bank elite. Under both Jordanian and Israeli rule, the West Bank elite continued to draw its power from its traditional local base and its behavior continued to be more moderate than its declared position. Radical leadership, in the sense of advancing political interests through violent means never became widespread.

Jordan and Israel are frequently assumed to be responsible for stemming the tide of radical activity and maintaining the power and position of the West Bank political elite. According to this view, the activity or passivity of the West Bank leadership is perceived as being mainly the outcome of Jordanian and Israeli policies.¹ In my opinion, this does not attribute sufficient importance to the political conditions which made these policies acceptable, or at least tolerable, from the viewpoint of the Palestinian West Bank elite. My purpose is to shed light on these conditions and to analyze their role in shaping the elite's ability to adopt non-radical patterns of activity.

This paper stems from a larger research project which focused on interviews with West Bank political figures. I approach the West Bank political elite as a *local power* element which was faced with the challenge of adapting both its political world view and its practical behavior to the demands of *non-local* Arab elements (later on also Israel, which had strong influence on West Bank politics). These other elements were the Palestinian organizations, Jordan, and the more radical Arab regimes such as the Egypt of Nasir, Iraq of Qasim and Syria under the Ba'ath. The political demands which these three political elements made of the West Bank elite on social and political issues were partially conflicting, although sometimes complementary. If the West Bank elite were to have coped with these multiple demands by adopting a one-sided position, it would have undermined its power position and risked its very existence. This position would be perceived as a clear-cut commitment towards one side or another. It would lead to sharp confrontations and conflicts within the elite, and

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between it and the non-local elements. My argument is that under both Jordanian and Israeli rule on the West Bank, social and political conditions enable the elite there to balance between the different demands by adopting non-radical modes of behavior, and at the same time being able to justify it in national terms. In both periods non-radical behavior has been presented as the optimal alternative to advancing pan-Arab or Palestinian national interests. The elite invariably bowed to national values but not always in a radical posture. Hence the idea of nationalism through localism.

I will show that during the period of Jordanian rule this was made possible through the West Bank elite's affiliation with at least three sources of political allegiance: Palestinian, Jordanian and pan-Arab. This multi-affiliation had two implications. First, it enabled the elite to justify its cooperation with the Jordanians, while simultaneously co-existing with the Palestinian organizations and with radical Arab regimes. Second, the multi-affiliation also enabled the elite to justify its focus on pragmatic activity, especially on the local level, leaving the controversial nationalist issues to the non-local Arab elements: the regime in Amman, the Palestinian organizations, or the radical Arab regimes.

During Israeli rule on the West Bank, the West Bank elite continued to adopt non-extreme modes of behavior. They succeeded in cooperating simultaneously with rival elements because they restricted themselves most of the time to pragmatic activity on the local level. As I will show after the 1967 war, these patterns of political behavior coincided with the short-term interests of each of the non-local Arab elements on the West Bank, and with those of the Israelis. The Jordanians, the Israelis and the PLO and its supporters among the Arab regimes all approached the political future of the West Bank as an issue which was to be decided principally by external elements, not by the West Bank leadership. The West Bank leaders, then, were discouraged by all parties from giving serious consideration to their own political future. The only political activity which was not regarded as controversial was day-to-day activity on the local level.

This coincided with what in fact the local level elite was capable of undertaking successfully. Moreover this elite succeeded in finding appropriate ways to express nationalist sentiments within local political context. Hence, the approach which was common to all the non-local elements (who were directly involved in West Bank politics after 1967) coincided with the West Bank elite's own delimitations of its role. This made possible the apparent paradox of the West Bank elite's cooperation with Israel and Jordan, while co-existing with the PLO.

THE WEST BANK ELITE UNDER JORDANIAN RULE

1. *Multi-affiliation and Cooperation*

The annexation to the Jordanian Kingdom in April 1950 engendered an ambivalence among West Bank inhabitants with regard to their political allegiance. They were Palestinians, and yet at the same time they were also... on pan-Arab symbols. As Palestinians, their

particular collective allegiance had its roots in local institutions like the family, the clan, the village, or the town.² During the thirty years of the British Mandate in Palestine (1917-48) these ties were strengthened and received political importance, largely in response to British policy and to Jewish activity. Many in Palestinian Arab political groups considered these two elements a threat not only to the existence of an Arab majority in Palestine, but also a threat to the survival of the Arab community there.³

At the end of the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, the political boundary between Israel and the Kingdom of Jordan cut right through the territory inhabited by the Palestinian Arabs. This discordance between social and political boundaries increased the desire of the Palestinian elite to regain Palestine within the Mandatory boundaries.⁴ The Palestinian collective allegiance revolved around an attachment to land which was now part of Israel as well as to the West Bank. While Amman regarded itself as the government of both banks of the Jordan river, the West Bank elite's political desires were based on abolishing the territorial status quo by military means.

Two major attempts to give real substance to an exclusively Palestinian option were initiated by Palestinian elements outside the West Bank: In September 1948, an All-Palestinian Government (Hukumat 'umum Filastin) was set up in the Gaza Strip before the signing of the armistice agreements between Egypt and Israel and between Jordan and Israel;⁵ since 1964, the PLO has tried to focus attention on the idea of a Palestinian homeland and self determination.⁶ The response of many groups within the West Bank elite show that they did not perceive these attempts as realistic options. Amman, with its monopoly over military and economic power, opposed them because of their potential political implication. In the 1960s, they were also put off by the split among the radical Arab regimes.⁷ These factors served to temper West Bank enthusiasm for substantiating their Palestinian allegiance.

As a result, most of the Palestinian political leaders on the West Bank tried to gloss over their differences with Amman by resorting to ambiguous formulas in defining their political goals. This kind of relationship was reflected in the growing readiness of the West Bank elite to affiliate itself with Jordan, although this affiliation was not sustained by the same political symbols and set of beliefs that engendered devotion to the idea of Palestinian allegiance. Their affiliation to Jordan materialized itself mostly in participation in the political life of the Kingdom and in West Bank dependence on resources allocated by the regime in Amman.⁸ Amman in this sense served as a source of civil authority rather than as a focus of normative identification.

The elite's seemingly contradictory identification with both Palestinian and Jordanian allegiance was made possible by its pan-Arab leanings. According to the pan-Arab view, West Bank secession from Jordan was undesirable since it would mean increased fragmentation in the Arab world. Even those among the elite who did not subscribe to pan-Arabism recognized that the political redemption of Palestine could be achieved only through Arab unity.⁹

Within the West Bank elite, different groups related in different ways to

each of the three sources of allegiance. Those who joined the Jordanian establishment as senior officials or ran for election to the House of Representatives tended to stress the ties with Jordan, or sometimes the pan-Arab allegiance. Opponents of the Jordanian monarchy, particularly those identified with opposition parties like *al-Ba'th*, *al-qawmiyyun al-arab* (the Arab Nationalists) and the communists emphasized Palestinian and pan-Arab allegiances.¹⁰ Individuals were not always consistent in their attitude towards the three sources of allegiance, veering in accordance with the Jordanian government's promises of personal benefits, or changes in Arab political attitudes towards Jordan and the West Bank issue.

The simultaneous affiliation of the West Bank elite to more than one source of allegiance enabled it to view the political arrangements between the two banks as *temporary*, pending the creation of political conditions that would lead to the realization of the ultimate goal. Thus, the local elite were able to agree with the definition of Palestinian political goals put forward by radical Arab or Palestinian bodies outside Jordan, but meanwhile they reconciled themselves to accepting the existing situation until they could acquire the means for realizing their objectives. By regarding their political existence under Jordanian rule as temporary, West Bank leaders were able to give legitimacy to their cooperation with Amman. This served as a mechanism to ease the pressure on the West Bank elite to adopt a radical stand.

2. Multi-affiliation, National and Local Functions

As a result of their affiliation with three sources of political allegiance, the West Bank elite were able to distinguish between the role that they should be playing, and that of the Palestinian organizations and the radical Arab regimes. Accordingly, they tended to concentrate on activities of an instrumental (pragmatic) nature on the local level, leaving the Palestinian organizations and radical Arab regimes to take on those activities 'expressive' of national solidarity and embodying Palestinian or pan-Arab values.

This distinction between activity of 'expressive' and instrumental meaning, to use Talcott Parsons' terms,¹¹ should be considered as one of degree rather than a categorical distinction. In other words, while the West Bank political elite indeed concentrated more on local activity of an instrumental nature, their activity acquired national-symbolic meaning as well, especially under Israeli rule. Similarly, while the Palestinian organizations were primarily conceived as radical groups whose main activity was engendering national feelings, they also engaged in instrumental activity as well. Nevertheless, I intend to emphasize the uniqueness of each in the belief that this distinction helps to explain the ability of the West Bank elite to adopt modes of non-radical behavior.

The West Bank elite derived their political power from their economic position or family status. Since this power base was for the most part local, West Bank leaders did not have a firm base of support if they sought to attain wider influence, either at the all-West Bank level or at the state level

(Jordan). The fact that a majority of the West Bank political leaders belonged to families with commercial and economic interests in Jordan further increased the dependence on Amman and made it difficult for them to take stands which might bring them into open conflict with the Jordanian authorities and damage their economic interests.¹²

The low level of political institutionalization in the West Bank can also explain the elite's tendency to focus on the local level of activity rather than on the national-symbolic one. Palestinian political activists, whether members of opposition parties or pro-Jordanian parties, lacked the means to mobilize support on a large scale. For those in opposition parties, it was the Jordanian regime's restrictions which prevented them from broad political activity at the all-West Bank or national levels. For those in pro-Jordanian parties, it seems to have been largely their own lack of motivation which reduced their possibilities deriving power through party office.¹³

Thus, despite the formal existence of political parties, and of elective institutions on both the parliamentary and the municipal level, power remained essentially a function of a family position, property, and influence based on personal contacts among the local elite. The elite was split on a family and regional basis. It lacked the authority to settle any all-West Bank conflicts, whether of social, economic or ideological origin.

Engendering national solidarity function

Leadership of the Palestinian Arab at the national level was assumed by those with pan-Arab or Palestinian national orientation. At first this role was fulfilled primarily by President Jamal Abd al-Nasir of Egypt and Abd al-Karim Qasim of Iraq, and later on by the leaders of the Palestinian organizations. The Arab mass media made it possible to overcome the problem of distance and marshal the West Bank inhabitants to the call of Arab solidarity.¹⁴ Palestinian and pan-Arab leaders were active during periods of anti-Jordan political unrest on the West Bank especially among the political opposition group. Such unrest occurred in reaction to the Baghdad Pact in 1955, to the unification with the United Arab Republic in 1958, and the tripartite unification between Egypt, Syria and Iraq in 1963. These political activists from the opposition groups were ideologically articulate and inclined towards political and social radicalism. In the main, however, they remained intermediaries for pan-Arab or radical Palestinian organizations outside Jordan, and did not become leaders in their own right.

The weakness of these activities stemmed not only from the lack of an institutionalized power base (which made it difficult for them to find effective channels of activity) but also from their poor socio-economic position relative to that of the pro-Jordanian political leaders. They were faced with a choice: desisting from oppositional activity and attempting to integrate in the Jordanian establishment and obtain the consequent benefits, or continuing their activity in Palestinian or other radical Arab frameworks, either from within Jordan or from outside. The existence of this outlet, and the legitimacy of activity in political bodies outside the West Bank, mitigated the pressure on the West Bank political elite to take a clear-cut radical stand.

They were therefore able to continue with the pragmatic pattern of activity on the local level.

THE WEST BANK ELITE UNDER ISRAELI RULE

1. All-West Bank Activity

This non-radical pragmatic mode continued under Israeli rule. However, since the West Bank Arab population considered the Israeli rule a foreign administration, the Palestinian elite seems to have increased the national-solidarity content of their activities after June 1967.

The adaptation of the West Bank leadership to the situation created by the war of June 1967 had several stages. After the initial shock came the search for a way to function: collaboration with the Israeli authorities, continuing relations with the Jordanian government, or cooperating with the Palestinian organizations. This period, which continued until the end of 1970, was characterized by efforts to create an all-West Bank political framework around the idea of a Palestinian entity, and by acts of civil disobedience. The latter was principally the work of groups of young people and intellectual activists, particularly in Jerusalem and Nablus. (The Palestinian organizations also increased their activity both in the occupied territories and within the pre-1967 Israeli borders, primarily in Jerusalem.)

The activities of the adherents of the Palestinian entity idea took several forms. Lawyer Aziz Shihadah of Ramallah, Dr Hamdi al-Tagi al-Faruqi of al-Birah, and Muhammad Abu Shilbaya of Jerusalem worked mainly among intellectuals. They proposed negotiating with Israel to establish a Palestinian state on the West Bank that would precede a comprehensive settlement with the Arab states.¹⁵ This approach was quashed by the negative reactions of Israel, Jordan and the PLO, and by the PLO attempt to assassinate al-Faruqi in December 1967.¹⁶

Shaikh Muhammad Ali al-Ja'bari, the ex-mayor of Hebron, took a rather different approach. Several times in 1969 and 1970 he tried to lay the foundations for a direct settlement between Israel and the Palestinian Arabs of the West Bank. He suggested the formation of a political body based on the existing West Bank leadership, principally the mayors.¹⁷ This suggestion also met with opposition from other bodies.¹⁸

One of the protest actions of all-West Bank significance was the activity of the Supreme Moslem Council which was formed in July 1967 in East Jerusalem. Between August 1968 and January 1969, the council responded sharply to the Qadi of Jaffa's ruling that the *Shari'a* court of law in Jerusalem had no standing in Israeli law. The council considered this an attack on the position of the Moslem religious court of law. Moreover, Israeli government actions such as the excavations near the Western Wall, the expropriation of the Jewish Quarter in the old city of Jerusalem and Jewish prayers in the Tombs of the Patriarchs in Hebron were interpreted as indicative of Israeli desires to evict the West Bank Arabs from the holy places. The council expressed its protest in sharp petitions to the Israeli authorities and international bodies.¹⁹ The West Bank mayors also protested the Israeli demolition of houses sheltering activists in *fida'i* actions, or the houses of

their relatives, land expropriation, and the expulsion of West Bank political activists to Jordan.

Other activities of an all-West Bank significance included the attempts at student strikes and demonstrations especially in Nablus, Ramallah, Jenin, and Bethlehem and protest against the expulsion of eight West Bank teachers to Jordan. Further student strikes and demonstrations were held in the beginning of January 1969, and an appeal was made to the military authorities to restore the teachers to the West Bank. Another wave of strikes and demonstrations erupted at the end of January 1969, mainly in Nablus and the other towns of the northern region of the West Bank.²⁰

In November 1968, the establishment of a local Committee of National Unity (*lajnat at-tadamun al-qawmi*) in Nablus marked the first attempt at institutionalizing the protest actions. This led to attempts to institutionalize the framework at an all-West Bank level. Communists and *al-qawmiyyun al-Arab* members who stood behind this initiative proposed that the Committees of National Unity should first engage in political struggle against the Israeli authorities and proceed to a military struggle after consolidating their positions.²¹

During this period, similar attempts were made in Ramallah and al-Birah, following the example of the young intellectuals from Nablus like Dr Faisal Kan'an, Hatim 'Anabtawi, and Walid Stitiyah. They encouraged young intellectuals in other West Bank towns to follow their example in preparation for the day when all or most of the cities in the West Bank would be united in a single committee of national unity.

The initiators of the committee of national unity opposed the pragmatic attitude of the veteran leadership but were prepared to work with them in formulating methods of action against the Israeli authorities. However, the majority of the traditional veteran leaders saw the radical attempt to establish committees of national unity as a threat to their position. In Nablus, for example, the tension created between the veteran leadership and the intellectual groups who formed these committees caused the undertaking to fail. The traditional leadership opposed the activity of the committees of national unity and effectively neutralized them.

Under these circumstances, the veteran elite tended to concentrate on its collaboration with the Israeli authorities in instrumental matters. Their contribution to national solidarity expressed itself mainly in declarations of readiness to view the PLO as its legitimate representative and as the spokesman of its political aspirations.

In effect, the policies of Israel, Jordan and the PLO during the course of 1970 coincided with the policy of the West Bank elite. They complemented each other at least in one sense: they all impelled restraint in political initiatives at the all-West level in favor of instrumental activity on the local level. This helped West Bank leaders to justify non-extreme behavior even under Israeli rule, without being accused of taking an anti-national stand.

2. Israel Policy and the West Bank Elite

Israeli policy favored the preservation of calm on the West Bank, while

assuring the cooperation of the Palestinian leaders in instrumental matters on the local level. Normalization was accompanied by Israeli avoidance of political initiatives based on negotiations with the West Bank leadership regarding the future of the occupied territories. The Israeli authorities thus remained indifferent to local political initiatives such as the move to establish a Palestinian entity on the West Bank. At the same time, they tolerated the nationalist declarations of West Bank leaders on the condition that these declarations were not translated into subversive activity, for which the penalty was expulsion from the West Bank.²²

Israel's policy suited the majority of the West Bank leaders, especially the traditional ones. It relieved them of the need to make decisions on the West Bank's political future. This might have diminished the number of options available to them, and might have obliged them to risk the antagonism of both the Jordanian government and the Palestinian organizations. Political decisions by the West Bank political elite clearly digressing from local and practical matters would also have emphasized the internal conflicts with regard to a desirable political settlement. This might have undermined their political position, particularly that of the veteran leadership. From this point of view, the Israeli authorities' approach to initiatives on the all-West Bank level coincided with the interests of the traditional leaders within the West Bank elite.

3. *Jordan Policy and the West Bank Elite*

Jordanian policy was also directed at preventing independent political initiative on the all-West Bank level as long as it was under Israeli control. In the absence of an independent Palestinian settlement with Israel, the key to a political settlement entailing Israeli evacuation of the West Bank would thus remain in the hands of the Jordanian government. This situation strengthened Jordan's position in its relationships with the West Bank Arabs and with other Arab countries. The Jordanian government therefore opposed any attempt at political organization on the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

During the first months after June 1967, Jordan even opposed West Bank cooperation with the Israeli authorities on the local level for fear of the possible results. Jordanian influence, then as now, was directly ensured by the money the Jordanian authorities disbursed, and by the family and economic ties whose contribution was made possible by the Open Bridges policy.²³

The Jordanian government twice sought the resignation of Hamdi Kan'an, then mayor of Nablus, on grounds of collaboration. It also expressed dissatisfaction with the mayor of Hebron, Muhammad Ali al-Ja'bari, because of his close ties with the Israeli authorities.²⁴ Jordan's objection to West Bank collaboration with Israel gradually relented, and with it the significance of the affinity between Amman and the West Bank political elite declined. After the civil war in Jordan in September 1970, the Jordanian government reconciled itself to the local activities of the mayors and other West Bank dignitaries and confined itself to trying to prevent

political initiatives encompassing the whole of the West Bank that were liable to influence the political future in a direction undesirable to Jordan.

4. *Cooperation Between Jordan and Israel and the Impact on the West Bank Elite*

In some cases, Jordanian objections to changes that took place on the local level during the Israeli administration required special political arrangements to accommodate the differences between the Jordanian and Israeli interpretations of the new situation. Thus, when Nadim Zaru, the ex-mayor of Ramallah was banished to Jordan, the Jordanian government continued to consider Khalil Musa Khalil as deputy mayor, whereas Israel considered him mayor. Musa Khalil therefore presented himself as mayor when dealing with the Israeli authorities and as deputy mayor when dealing with the authorities in Amman.

The Council of Chambers of Commerce established on the West Bank at the end of 1968 with the participation of representatives from East Jerusalem provides another example. No such body had existed on the West Bank under Jordanian rule, except for two brief periods in 1949 and 1951; otherwise, the chamber of commerce in Amman had served as the headquarters of all the chambers of commerce in the Jordanian Kingdom. The council established in 1968 comprised representatives of the chambers of commerce of East Jerusalem, Nablus, Ramallah, al-Birah, Hebron, and Bethlehem, later joined by the representatives of Jenin and Tulkarm. East Jerusalem was fixed as its permanent seat; Fa'iq Barakat, the director of the East Jerusalem Chamber of Commerce, was elected secretary.²⁵ The establishment of the Council of Chambers of Commerce on the West Bank did not coincide with the Jordanian government's interests as the disassociation from the central chambers in Amman that might have resulted from this move would have weakened the ties between the two banks. The Council also presented the Israeli authorities with certain problems, mainly because Fa'iq Barakat was from East Jerusalem, which they considered part of Israel and not part of the West Bank. In both instances, the problem was solved by distinguishing the formal aspects from the practical aspects. The West Bank Chambers agreed to maintain their ties with the chamber of commerce in Amman and accept its mediation, thus recognizing Jordanian authority. As to their relations with Israel, the Council decided that Fa'iq Barakat, although a member of the council, would not be the official representative of a West Bank body.

It was also decided that the Council would concentrate on economic and commercial problems and not engage in politics. Although several members of the Nablus and Tulkarm chambers exhibited an inclination for political activity and organizing business strikes, this was done on a personal basis. Only twice did they deviate from this policy. The first was when the Nablus Chamber of Commerce supported a local commercial strike in February 1969; the second was when the Ramallah chamber did likewise in 1977, as part of its struggle against Israeli imposition of a value added tax.

Such arrangements attested to the existence of common interests between

Israel and Jordan in day-to-day activities. These common interests led to a tacit agreement between the two countries. Israel's activities were directed toward the normalization of daily life, while the Jordanian government was mainly concerned with precluding new political realities in the area.

The municipal elections held on the West Bank in 1972, the first under Israeli rule, serve as a striking example of this tacit agreement. The idea of holding municipal elections on the West Bank was first raised in 1968 by Hamdi Kan'an, formerly head of the Nablus municipal council.²⁶ Groups of young intellectuals in Nablus supported his political goals, as did groups of youngsters in other West Bank cities, but other elements expressed disapproval. The Israeli military authorities had no official opinion, but the Jordanian government were adamant that elections would constitute recognition of Israeli authority on the West Bank. Jordanian opposition increased once the Israeli government went ahead with plans to hold the elections, and the military authorities had translated this decision into practical terms by force of an order dated 26 November 1971 issued by the commander of the West Bank region.

As the appointed date drew near, the Jordanians abandoned their opposition. They understood that if the elections took place successfully despite their opposition, the differences of opinion between the two banks would be emphasized, whereas Jordanian interests lay in emphasizing their intrinsic unity. On the other hand, if the attempt to hold the elections were to fail, the Israeli authorities might make drastic changes in administration and supervision. The West Bank inhabitants would then blame Amman as it was the Jordanian authorities who had advised them not to cooperate with Israel in the elections.

The tacit division of functions between Jordan and Israel is further illustrated by the arrangements with regard to educational programs and examinations, especially in the high schools. They were the cumulative result of various actions leading in the same direction: a demarcation between the pragmatic domain for which Israel considers itself responsible; and the domain of national solidarity relating to the political fate of the West Bank, for which Jordan exhibits a special sensitivity.²⁷

Cooperation between Israel and Jordan in instrumental matters strengthened the West Bank elite's pragmatic patterns of action, especially among the veteran circles. The veterans continued to benefit from power positions without the need to try to protect them by means of radical activity on the all-West Bank level which would have meant risking sharp confrontation with both the Israeli and Jordanian authorities.

In this context, it is worth noting that mayors who did not adjust to this system found difficulty in functioning as mayors and had to resign their positions. This was the case with Hamdi Kan'an of Nablus, who sought to convert his role as mayor into a power base for acquiring power at the regional level or even at the all-West Bank level. As early as 1969, Hamdi Kan'an sought to introduce prominent figures such as Hikmat al-Masri, Qadri Tuqan, and Rashid al-Nimr to the Nablus Municipal Council. This move antagonized not only Jordan and Israel, but also a considerable portion of the city leaders. Forced to resign, he became an agitator for

political initiatives on the part of the West Bank inhabitants under Israeli rule. Initially, this expressed itself in working for new mayoral elections. In this sense, Hamdi Kan'an attempted to assign a national political significance to the role that the city council was to fill which digressed from the local framework.

Another example is provided by Nadim Zaru, the radically nationalistic mayor of Ramallah identified with the Ba'th party. Zaru found it difficult to provide for the daily practical needs of the people of Ramallah because his radical attitudes affected the municipality's relations with the Israeli military authorities. Zaru refused Israeli loans for developing the city, and encouraged activities to prevent workers from Ramallah and the neighboring area going to work in Israel. This approach was an obstacle to the normalization of daily life in Ramallah, and Zaru was eventually expelled to Jordan.

Despite the differences between them, the two cases shared a common denominator: both men tried to bestow radical political content on their activities while taking independent initiatives on the all-West Bank level. Paradoxically, although this approach diverged from the tacit agreement between Israel and Jordan, it was not a reflection of PLO political interests on the West Bank.

5. *The PLO and the West Bank Elite*

Because of the Israeli presence and the Jordanian influence in the West Bank, the PLO did not become the sole regulator of West Bank political activity, although it did maintain some degree of influence over the local political elite. The PLO opposed independent local initiative at organizing the West Bank Palestinian Arabs when it came to sending delegations to the Arab countries to discuss current political problems. The PLO (and particularly *al-Fatah*, the leading faction within the PLO) contended that they and not the leaders living under Israeli rule, were the political address for the West Bank Palestinian Arabs. They did not preclude the exertion of pressures and sanctions against those deviating from this line, as with the attempted assassination of Dr al-Faruqi of al-Birah in 1967.

Most West Bank leaders assumed that there was no way of solving the West Bank problem without PLO consent. They therefore held consultations on various issues with the PLO representatives in Beirut, Damascus and (until 1970) Amman. PLO influence encouraged local leaders to abstain from independent political initiatives with regard to the future of the West Bank. This created an anomaly whereby until March 1972, the effect of PLO influence paralleled that of Israel and Jordan; it opposed independent political initiatives on the all-West Bank level and encouraged the local leadership to concentrate on day-to-day activities at the local level.

As there was ideological justification for the elite's abstention from all-West Bank initiatives after 1970 and for its concentration on what would seem to be practical, non-radical activity, this approach attained national significance. The ideological justification found its expression in the policy of *sumud* (steadfastness), meaning 'passive resistance against any form of

cooperation with the Israeli authorities, and the avoidance of any manifestation of acquiescence of agreement to their presence'.²⁸ David Farhi argues that by 1970, West Bank Palestinian Arabs had created a rigid code with explicit definitions of the behavior prohibited from a nationalist point of view. Prohibitions included changes in local institutions; updating the communal representation on various levels at elections held under the jurisdiction of the occupation authority; and formal contact between public bodies and the Israeli authorities, save what was required by their day-to-day needs. Communal activity was only legitimate if approved by the Jordanian government, by the other Arab governments and the Arab league, and by the PLO.²⁹ In 1970, when the cooperation with the Israeli authorities on the local level increased, *sumud* acquired a more positive connotation. One West Bank leader said:

In 1967, we adopted *sumud* as a negative political motto, and on that basis we automatically rejected every Israeli proposal. Today our motto is positive *sumud*: we are prepared to consider every proposal for reform or development coming from the Israeli regime as long as it does not contradict our national interests as we understand them. Moreover, we are more inclined than in the past to rely on our own judgement in all that relates to our current communal interests, and not to accept dictates from without.³⁰

Participation in the elections for the chambers of commerce, the support for the Open Bridges policy, and the willingness to permit the West Bank population to work in Israel are all expressions of this approach.

Positive *sumud* seems to represent an attempt on the part of the West Bank political elite to interpret the goals and national aspirations defined by other political forces, mainly the PLO, in a spirit coinciding with West Bank political interests and needs. Thus one can argue that the West Bank leaders were not just passive followers of political values formulated by others; they themselves try to have some impact on these values which guided their actions. Their success in doing so derived in part from the fact that until the publication of King Husayn's Federation Plan in March 1972 as a solution for the relations between the two Banks, the PLO was relatively less concerned about political entrenchment on the West Bank. Mainly concerned with the armed struggle. Its political interest in the West Bank until that time was limited to encouraging and supporting passive resistance to Israeli authority.³¹ Under these circumstances it was easier for the West Bank elite to preserve its position by proposing a formula that would translate the principle of passive resistance into practical terms suiting its own needs.

Since mid-1972 and especially after the Arab Summit in Rabat (October 1974), which proclaimed that the PLO was the 'sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people', the increase in PLO political involvement on the West Bank impaired the success of the West Bank elite in this field. The PLO's increasing strength reduced the influence of the veteran West Bank leadership to the point of threatening its very existence. Moreover, the success of PLO supporters in the 1976 municipal

elections—both in gaining new positions of power, as in Nablus and Hebron, and in strengthening their position, as in Tulkarm and Ramallah—tempted analysts and policy makers to view this success as representing a sharp reversal in the policies of the newly-elected as compared to their predecessors.³² The prevalent opinion among both circles was that the new West Bank leadership would be more readily disposed to accept PLO dictates on every aspect of political action.

The new leaders were certainly more inclined toward political activity in the PLO spirit than were their predecessors, but this did not mean the absolute subordination of local interests to those of the PLO. The considerations favoring a pragmatic policy which would reflect local needs and interests continued to constitute an important element in the reasoning of the new West Bank local leaders, and in fashioning their relationship with Israel, Jordan, and especially with the PLO. From this point of view, the new leaders display an inclination to continue to make allowances for local interests and old loyalties, despite what might be called their radical world view.

NOTES

1. On the impact of the Israeli politics on the West Bank political behavior see for instance, Shlomo Gazit, 'Israel's Occupation Policies', *New Outlook*, vol. 11, no. 6 (July-August 1968), pp. 47-55; also Nimrod Raphaeli, 'Military Government in the Occupied Territories: an Israeli View', *Middle East Journal*, vol. 32, no. 3 (Spring 1969), pp. 177-90. On the Jordanian influence see, for instance, Asher Susser, 'Jordanian influence in the West Bank', *The Jerusalem Quarterly* no. 8 (Summer 1978), pp. 53-65.
2. On the structure of these institutions during the British Mandate period, see for instance, Yehoshua Porath, *The Emergence of the Palestinian Arab National Movement 1918-1929* (London: Frank Cass, 1974), pp. 287-88. Y. Shimoni, 'Arviyey Eretz-Yisra'el (The Arabs of Palestine)', (Tel Aviv: Am-Oved, 1947), pp. 157-82, 206-11.
3. See, for instance, a statement issued by Palestinian Arabs in Ramlah and Lydda in which they argue: 'Either us or the Zionists! There is no room for both elements struggling together in the same area. The laws of nature require that one side be defeated. We want life and they are striving for it, but life is indivisible. There is no escaping the fact that one of us must win.' As cited in Porath, *ibid.*, p. 50.
4. One can point to Palestinian leaders in the West Bank like Shaikh Muhammad Ali al-Ja'bari of Hebron and Wadi Da'mas of Bait Jala who supported King Abdallah's political goal of incorporating Palestinian territories into his kingdom. Nevertheless, many of them tended to make their support conditional on his willingness to eventually include all of Palestine in his kingdom, and on the termination of the political independence of the Jewish community. This attitude was most strikingly articulated by the Jerusalem and Ramallah delegates to the Palestinian Congress, also known as the Jericho Conference, which was arranged by King Abdallah and his Palestinian supporters on 1 December 1948 in order to receive legitimization of his annexation of Palestinian territories to Jordan. For more details see Arif al-Arif, *Al-nakbat bait al-maqdis wal-firdaus al-mafquda: 1947: 1955* (The disaster: the calamity of the Holy Land and the loss of paradise: 1947-1955), (Beirut: al-Maktaba al-'asriyya lit-tiba'a wal-nashr, undated), pp. 877-78.
5. On the formation of All-Palestine Government see, *ibid.*, pp. 89, 703-5; Aqil Abidi, *Jordan: A Political Study, 1948-1957* (New York: Asia Publishing House, 1965), pp. 49-52.
6. See the 'Final Communiqué of the First (Arab) Summit Conference', January 1964, in *Tokhnit hape'ula ha'aravit neged Yisrael, 1949-1967* (The Arab plan of action against Israel, 1949-1967) ed. Yehoshafat Harkabi (Jerusalem: Academ, 1972), part 2, p. 11.

- For background material on the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), see William B. Quandt, Fuad Jabber, and Ann Mosely Lesch, *The Politics of Palestinian Nationalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), pp. 67-74. Also see Rashid Hamid, 'What is the PLO?', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 4, no. 4 (Summer 1975).
7. For more details on this split, see Malcolm H. Kerr, *The Arab Cold War*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 77-95.
 8. See Shaul Mishal, *West Bank/East Bank: the Palestinians in Jordan, 1949-1967* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), p. 17.
 9. For more details, see Eliezer Be'eri, *The Palestinians Under Jordanian Rule: Three Issues* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1978), pp. 33-4.
 10. On these differences, see Shaul Mishal, *West Bank/East Bank*, ch. 4.
 11. On this distinction, see Talcott Parsons, *The Social System* (Illinois: Free Press, 1951), p. 49.
 12. For further details, see Uriel Dann 'Regime and Opposition in Jordan Since 1949', in *Society and Political Structure in the Arab World*, ed. Menahem Milson (New York: Humanities Press, 1973), pp. 145-51.
 13. On the structure and activities of the political parties in the West Bank under the Jordanian rule, see Amnon Cohen, 'Political Parties in the West Bank under the Hashemite Regime', in *Palestinian Arab Politics*, ed. Moshe Ma'oz (Jerusalem: Jerusalem Academic Press, 1975), pp. 27-48.
 14. For an example of Egyptian and Syrian use of propaganda broadcasts to mobilize the West Bank population for political activity against Jordanian regime, see Daniel Dishon, ed., *Middle East Record 1960* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, n.d.), pp. 149-50.
 15. Aziz Shihadah stated the situation in these words: 'The time has come for us to take the initiative in handling our own fate, even though we would have preferred that this initiative not be independent of the rest of the Arab world.' See Aziz Shihadah, 'The Voice of the forgotten Palestinian', *New Middle East* (December 1968), pp. 14-15. See also the *Jerusalem Post*, 7 September 1967; *Ha'aretz* (Tel Aviv), 27 November 1967 and 15 December 1967; *al-Quds* (Jerusalem), 9 November 1969.
 16. On this attempt of the *Fatah* organization to threaten supporters of the Palestinian entity idea, see Daniel Dishon, ed., *Middle East Record 1967* (Jerusalem: Israel Universities Press, 1971), p. 283.
 17. For more details, see Elie Rekhess and Asher Susser, 'Political Factors and Trends in the West Bank' (Tel Aviv: The Shiloah Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, Tel Aviv University, 1974), pp. 7-8, 11-13. See also David Farhi, *Chevra vepolitika bi Yehudah ve Shomron* (Society and politics in Judea and Samaria), *Ma'arakhot* 215b (June 1971), p. 16.
 18. On this opposition, see for instance *Jerusalem Post*, 17 April 1970; *Ha'aretz* (Tel Aviv), 26 April 1970.
 19. On the formation and the activity of the Supreme Muslim Council, see Dishon, ed., *Middle East Record 1967*, pp. 282, 293-94; *Ma'ariv*, (Tel Aviv) 22 September 1968; Rekhess and Susser, 'Political Factors', p. 5.
 20. For more details on these strikes and demonstrations, see Daniel Dishon, ed., *Middle East Record 1968* (Jerusalem: Israel Universities Press, 1973), pp. 450-51.
 21. Rekhess and Susser, 'Political Factors', pp. 5-6.
 22. For a general survey of Israeli policy in the West Bank, see Mordechai Nisan, *Israel and the Territories* (Ramat Gan: Turtledove Publishing, 1978), pp. 83-140; Shlomo Gazit, 'Hashtahim hamuhzaqim—Mediniyut vem'as' (The administered territories—policy and practice), *Ma'arakhot*, no. 204 (January 1970), pp. 25-39; Shlomo Gazit 'Israel's Occupation Politics', *New Outlook*, vol. 11, no. 6 (July-August 1968), pp. 47-55; also Nimrod Raphaeli, 'Military Government in the Occupied Territories: an Israeli View', *Middle East Journal*, vol. 32 (Spring 1969), pp. 177-90.
 23. On Jordanian Influence in the West Bank through the Open Bridges policy, see Asher Susser, 'Jordanian Influence in the West Bank', pp. 57-61; on the flow of money from Jordan and the West Bank, see Raphaeli, 'Military Government', p. 186; also *Jerusalem Post*, 13 February 1975.
 24. See *al-Difa'* (Amman), 26 December 1968 and 4 January 1969.
 25. On the structure and the activity of the chambers of commerce under Jordanian and Israeli

- rule in the West Bank, see Michael Yizhar and Moshe Drori, 'Democracy and Election in the Western Bank of the Jordan', *Social Research Review*, no. 3 (March 1973), pp. 31-37.
26. See Hamdi Kan'an, 'How Can we Get rid of this Stagnation', *al-Quds* (Jerusalem), 1 August 1971.
 27. For more details see Shaul Mishal, 'Anatomia shel behirot munitzipaliyot biYehudah veShomron' (Anatomy of municipal election in Judea and Samaria), *HaMizrach HeHadash*, vol. 24, no. 1-2 (1974), pp. 63-67.
 28. Abraham Sela, 'The PLO, the West Bank and Gaza Strip', *The Jerusalem Quarterly*, 8 (Summer 1978), p. 68.
 29. See David Farhi, 'Amadot politiyot biYehudah veShomron 1972-1973' (Political attitudes in Judea and Samaria 1972-1973), *Ma'arakhot*, 231 (July 1973), p. 10.
 30. *ibid.*, p. 9.
 31. On the changes in PLO attitudes to political activity on the part of West Bank Palestinian Arabs, see Sela, 'The PLO, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip', pp. 69-73.
 32. On the results of the 1976 municipal elections, see Elie Rekhess, 'Arviyey Yisrael veHagada haMa'aravit' (The Israeli Arabs and the West Bank), in *Bein milhamah vehesderim* (Between war and settlement), ed. Alouph Hareven and Yehi'am Paden (Tel Aviv: Zmora, Bitan, Modan, 1977), pp. 120-26; also Michael Walzer, 'Israeli Policy and the West Bank', *Dissent*, vol. 24, no. 3 (Summer 1976), pp. 234-36; and *Ma'ariv* (Tel Aviv), 5 May 1976.