

The Modern Palestinian Village Defined

External Parameters and the Survival of Rural Communities in the West Bank

(A working thesis)

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Introduction: The definition of the West Bank village

For centuries, the Arab villages along the geographical corridor of the West Bank of the Jordan River were a small footnote, from the Western perspective at least, in the evolving history of the modern Middle East; though they were the narrowest sources of culture, society, and tradition, the individual villages of Palestine were often lost among prevailing themes of empires, wars, migrations, and imperialisms. This historical snub, plainly evident by the few first-hand sources of village history known today, is no doubt partly due to the ability of Palestinian villages to remain self-sustained entities of extended clans that acted as the providers of food, keepers of tradition, and guardians of local social integrity beneath the strata of contemporary external powers. While by no means existentially safer from these external powers in the past than today, the Palestinian village from Ottoman rule to the mid-twentieth century managed its own survival almost entirely by internal, communal means. Today, in the wake of a forced diaspora of some three quarters of a million Palestinian villagers in 1948 by the new state of Israel and the latter's subsequent military conquest of the remainder of Palestine in 1967, the remnants of the historical Palestinian villagers are defined by an entirely new reality.

The village in the West Bank no longer exists within the confines of a self-contained domain; indeed, the recent history of foreign influence has eroded nearly all capability for an individual Palestinian village to remain metaphorically introvert. It is therefore impractical to define the village in the sole terms of what it produces and has produced for itself but rather how it relates to the external elements that shape its present and future. As an area of sustained population evolves under a natural, unfettered order, it invariably comes into contact with neighboring populations and collectively builds a form of relationship that is based on each group's prevailing micro-cultures and is satisfactory to individual parties; be that relationship economic cooperation, political union, or hostility, to name a few possible theoretical outcomes. In practice however, the development of a concentrated population, such as those of the five hundred-odd village communities in the West Bank, is infallibly hindered by unexpected, immediate, and sometimes exacerbating external elements that tend to prevail over any perceived 'natural' progress. It is by these influential factors that the present state – the short-term existence – of a population group must be distinguished to adequately ascertain a future – or long-term – prospect for the social, political, and economic survival. Taking the West Bank village as an example

illustrates how a particular dependent element of the social structure is *defined* by its external circumstances.

There are three such external parameters that form the boundaries of definition for Palestinian villages in the modern West Bank. The first is the village's affiliation to broader governmental authorities, which might be classified, in the context of a social contract, as the relationship between the village as a constituent of a larger political environment (i.e. a governmental entity or entities) and the political entity as a provider for the village. Since it is established that the Palestinian village in the West Bank is not, by its development through erstwhile external circumstances, a self-sustaining unit, it is therefore conclusive that the village has a certain amount of its political, economic, and social needs provided by outside sources. The complex arrangements by these broader powers, Israel and the Palestinian Authority, to provide for the Palestinian village forms a significant role in defining the relationship between the constituent village and the political entity.

The second external factor intrusive upon the development of the Palestinian village is that of the ubiquitous military occupation of the native people and land of the West Bank by a foreign power: Israel. The evidence that this factor is a key contributor to the shape of the future Palestinian village lies in the applied devices of occupation as they affect and will affect Palestinian villagers with regard to the provision of the socio-economic requirements outlined in the first parameter as well as the long-term sustainability of individual villages and the village community as a whole.

The final parameter to be discussed is the relationship between the native Palestinian villagers in the West Bank and what might be denoted as a rival or competing population group: Israeli colonists. Far from a perennial clash of civilizations on a level field, the relationship between colonists and villagers is characterized by a systematic intrusion of one ethnocentrically favored population upon the development and livelihood of a second disfavored-status population. The disfavored group, the Palestinian villagers, faces an obstacle from a component particle of what is, according to the first two parameters, a system that both provides for it and militarily occupies it. Therefore, this relationship invariably defines the present and future reality for the Palestinian village.

A demographic overview

As an appendix to these three defining elements to be discussed following, it is necessary to clarify the classification of the Palestinian village within the context of its unique environment. Under the terms of the interim agreements between the state of Israel and the Palestinian Authority between 1994 and 2000, the 5661 square kilometers of the West Bank were gradually divided into three categories, so

called Areas A, B, and C (excluding the Israeli-defined area of East Jerusalem¹). Areas A have become synonymous with Palestinian metropolitan *cities* under the governmental control of the Palestinian Authority of which there were, by September 2000, eight distinct zones comprising 18% of West Bank land and one-third of the total Palestinian West Bank population of 2.1 million. Areas B, totaling a further 22% of the West Bank, contain the majority of remaining Palestinian built-up areas and 50% of Palestinians living in what are hereby classified as *villages*. The villages range in size from less than one hundred to greater than 10,000 and include not only built-up inhabited areas but also agricultural and industrial land. Areas C comprise the remaining 60% of West Bank land and include parts or all of 321 Palestinian villages and more than 250,000 Palestinian villagers, as well as 200,000 Israeli colonists living in at least 200 noncontiguous built-up areas. Areas C also contain military infrastructure, roads, Palestinian agricultural land, non-arable land, and so-called No-Man's Lands.²

The structure of Areas B and C will be further explained where necessary, but for the purpose of delineating the composition of the following study, the West Bank village pertains to all Palestinian built-up areas in the West Bank outside Areas A and includes all land and infrastructure relevant to each population area in question. The sum total includes more approximately 1.2 million Palestinians living in more than 500 built-up areas on 4642 square kilometers of land.³

Civil authorities and the provision of services for Palestinian villages

The first parametric factor that defines the modern West Bank village is the village's relationship with the civil establishments that ostensibly govern it: the Israeli government and the Palestinian Authority each to varying extents. Under the terms of the interim Oslo Accord agreements between 1994 and 2000, most Palestinian population areas outside the delineated Areas A fell under a loosely defined status of dual governance whereby government of Israel retained all security hegemony while passing on most of the day-to-day civil affairs to the fledgling Palestinian Authority institutions. These dual governance regions coincide with Areas B, while the remaining minority of Palestinian villages in Areas C are defined by the Oslo agreements as under complete Israeli security and civil control. What this system has created on the ground is an environment in which the roughly 1.2 million Palestinians in the West Bank living beyond the transparent borders of the Areas A remain penned in by Israeli military

¹ Israel has expanded what it considers the borders of East Jerusalem to include more than twenty Palestinian and Israeli settlement population areas excluded from classification of Areas A, B, and C. The 230,000 Palestinians in East Jerusalem are included in sum Palestinian population figures for the West Bank but excluded from village statistics. The 200,000 Israeli settlers in East Jerusalem are considered part of the settlement total and are included in the discussion of colonial activity vis-à-vis the Palestinian village insofar as they are created and expand, like all settlements, at the expense of West Bank land. Source: The Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs (PASSIA), 2001.

² Applied Research Institute of Jerusalem (ARIJ) Geographic Information System (GIS) database 2002

³ PASSIA 2001

forces enforcing the security needs of Israel in the West Bank, while at the same time these rural Palestinians linger on the frontier of municipal services that has ultimately left them vulnerable to a wide range of problems.

The key services ultimately entrusted to the Palestinian Authority vis-à-vis the outlying West Bank villages include education, health care, and waste management as well as, to an incomplete extent, construction and repair, water, electricity, and telephone service. These latter services are all controlled by Israel to some degree, and the dual but not joint control of most services has left a de facto gray area in the quality and accountability of service to dependent villages.

Financing the village services

The foremost element of civil service from the government to the population is finance. Although Areas B in the West Bank fall under the Palestinian Authority's civil jurisdiction, Palestinian residents in the villages pay taxes to the state of Israel. Israel in turn (at least up until the outbreak of the Intifada in 2000) pays a portion of the funds collected to the Palestinian Authority to finance its institutions that will in turn provide services to the villages. It is important to note that Palestinian villagers do not have democratic representation in Israel though their taxes flow directly to the Israeli state and only indirectly, and not completely, to the Palestinian government; i.e. the government that ostensibly represents the Palestinian villager cannot be held directly accountable by the villager for the allocation of the tax funds. In practice, this is a source of discontent among villagers but hardly an issue for which they expect a shred of recourse. Furthermore, the government of Israel has, since September 2000, withheld more than NIS (New Israeli Shekel) 2.5 billion (US\$ 536 million⁴) in tax revenues owed to the Palestinian Authority.⁵ Consequently, PA spending in the public sector has decreased from US\$ 100 million monthly pre-Intifada to less than half that amount two years later.⁶ The fact that the Intifada and other external factors, to be discussed later, have produced more immediate concerns for villagers does not render moot the dissatisfied temperament of many rural Palestinians regarding the overall quality of service they receive from Palestinian and Israeli civil institutions.

The village may also finance its own institutions and services either to augment the service provided by external establishments of Israel and the Palestinian Authority or, as in most cases, to perform a service to the community that is not provided by either of the above governing authorities. Such an element of self-subsistence harkens back to an era prior to the twentieth century when villagers met most of their societal needs from resources collected within the community. Usually overseen by a

⁴ Conversion rate NIS-US\$ calculated at 1 October 2002 exchange rate of NIS 4.75 = US\$ 1

⁵ Ha'aretz Daily Newspaper, online edition, 24 November 2002.

⁶ Palestinian Institute of Health, Development, Information and Policy (HDIP) – database of fact sheets, September 2002.

local sheikh, a village council, or a religious magistrate, the communal resources provided the village with schools, health services, mosques or churches, roads, construction, and other needs of collective benefit, as well as their maintenance and staffing. In the modern Palestinian village the process may be the same for any of the community's essential needs, subject to limitations by external circumstances.

Education and health care

Most villages or village clusters in the West Bank had public primary schools and basic clinics before the arrival of the Palestinian Authority. Some villages have private schools, notably Catholic and Orthodox schools, as well as clinics run either privately or by a non-governmental organization (NGO) such as the Union of Palestinian Medical Relief Committees (UPMRC). The PA's ministries of health and education have, in their brief history, mostly concentrated on maintaining existing facilities in West Bank villages while focusing expansion of new facilities, including hospitals and institutes of higher education, within the cities. There are more than 500 primary schools and 300 clinics (mostly for secondary care) located in Palestinian villages, but only one in ten villages has a secondary school, few have modern hospital facilities, and there is just one university located within a village.⁷ Public school teachers, administrators, doctors, and nurses at schools and clinics run by the ministries are paid by the PA and in many cases do not reside in the village where they are employed. In the case of doctors, many are responsible for various rural areas and may visit a certain village only periodically. Additionally, more than half of the Palestinian population does not have medical insurance and with unemployment and poverty rates over 50% and rising monthly during the Intifada, disposable income for private schools and health care is a commodity of a privileged minority.⁸ Most Palestinian villagers rely on charity, barter, or debt to account for these services when they are not provided by an external source. The ability for the Palestinian villager to receive adequate education and health care will be discussed further later.

To further illustrate the complexities of the health care system, let's consider the following example. The village of Shweikeh near the Palestinian Area A of Tulkarem has two clinics to service its population: one operated by the Palestinian Ministry of Health (MOH) and one private. The private clinic is operated by a doctor who lives in Tulkarem and who visits the clinic daily when the situation allows. Otherwise it is staffed by a full-time nurse who accepts only health insurance or cash payment for services and medication provided via private purchase or organizational donation. The MOH clinic is staffed by a part-time nurse and traveling doctors and relies on regular shipments of medical supplies from Tulkarem. The MOH clinic is more vulnerable to disruption in supplies and the restriction of movement often imposed by Israel. Both clinics have been forced to accept no payment for many

⁷ ARIJ database, 2001

⁸ HDIP database of fact sheets, September 2002

medical services because of increasing poverty and medical emergencies due to the Intifada, a reality that has left the private clinic in severe debt.⁹

Water control, allocation, and infrastructure

Water management has consistently been a hypersensitive issue between Israeli and Palestinian negotiators, and the practical elements of the dispute are most evident in the analysis of allocation and control of water in the West Bank. The supply source of water in this region is primarily the disjointed aquifer that lies beneath much of the hilly region of the north and central West Bank and parts of Israel. A much smaller percentage of available water is drawn from the Jordan River and tributaries and wells in its valley. On the demand side of the equation, Palestinian agriculture, which comprises 33% of GDP, utilizes 57% of the water afforded to the Palestinian sector, while Israeli agriculture consumes 64% of the country's annual water allocation though it makes up only 3% of GDP.¹⁰ The remainder of demand is covered by consumption of water for industrial and personal uses (excluding store-bought bottled water). The government of Israel remains steadfastly in control of this precious resource.

The control of water consumption is best reflected in the statistics of water allocation. An estimated 80% of water drawn from the aquifer beneath the West Bank is reserved for Israeli uses; the figure is 95% for the Jordan River. The amount of water available to West Bank villagers for non-agricultural uses on a per capita daily basis is between 57 and 88 liters.¹¹ By comparison, the government of Israel allocates more than 350 liters per day per person for Israeli settlements in the West Bank.¹² The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) recommend a minimum daily water allocation of 100 liters for a population to be considered above the crisis level. While the Israeli government subsidizes water costs for settlements in the West Bank, Palestinian villagers, by comparison, pay an average of 12% of income on water, the price of which has risen from US\$ 2.50 per cubic meter in March 2001 to US\$ 7.50 in March 2002.¹³

There are four service sources of water – wells, cisterns, water tanks, and piped water – available to Palestinian villagers, although the average villager likely depends on one or two of these sources, rarely more. Many villages still partially rely on cisterns of collected rainwater for irrigation of crops and satiation of livestock. Wells are becoming less reliable as a source of water for villagers. Since the June

⁹ From first-hand testimony and research collected by the author, 10 May 2002

¹⁰ MIFTAH – The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy, 2000

¹¹ Allocation statistics vary yearly and seasonally and with the contemporary political situation. No source found offered any further demographic breakdown of consumption beyond the Palestinian West Bank in general (i.e. no source differentiated between consumption in cities and villages). Sources. PASSIA 2001; ARIJ 2001, HDIP database of fact sheets, September 2002

¹² PASSIA 2001

¹³ HDIP database of fact sheets, September 2002

1967 Israeli occupation of the West Bank, the Israeli authorities have not allowed any new wells to be dug in the Palestinian territories. Any new wells constructed, as well as those wells that cannot be proven by documentation to have been dug before 1967, are systematically plugged by Israel in an effort to control the fragile supply of water in the aquifer. Of the estimated 750 wells that existed in the West Bank prior to 1967, only 350 are still in use today, and in total wells and cisterns provide only 4% of water consumption for all Palestinians.¹⁴ Additionally, as each new generation of Israelis and Palestinians puts increasing strain on the aquifer's reserves, groundwater tables lower and existing wells are not deep enough to strike water.

Israeli policy regarding wells is exemplified by the case of the village of Al Khader (population 8,000), south of Bethlehem. In November 1999, Israeli authorities demolished at least thirty wells and irrigation pools they claimed were built without permits, although villagers insisted the wells were present for several years and previous Israeli inspections had found no objection to them. At the time the village was working on a land reclamation project to cultivate village land that happened to lie near Israeli colonies of the Gush Etzion bloc. Armed groups of settlers clashed with villagers, and the Israeli army quashed the affair by terminating the village's project and destroying the wells at a cost of more than NIS 600,000 (US\$ 127,000).¹⁵

The remaining two service sources of water reflect not only modern innovation but more importantly the disintegration of the village's self-reliance: water tanks and piped water. The former is the most common technique by which Palestinians meet the demand for water. Tanker trucks from Israel or Palestinian cities refill rooftop or underground water tanks weekly or biweekly. While it may be Palestinian laborers driving the trucks, Israel controls all aspects of the supply side of water allocation. Relying on tankers and Israeli control thereof, as will be discussed later, has been a major contributor to water crises in various rural population areas. More than 200,000 Palestinians in two hundred rural communities rely solely on tanker delivery to meet their water needs.¹⁶

Piped water to these tanks is more common in Palestinian cities but the network of water pipes has extended only to a minority of Palestinian villages – usually those that lie in a quasi-metropolitan region of a major town not impeded by a major Israeli settlement or military base. An Israeli company, Mekorot, which has a government-sanctioned monopoly, maintains the network of piped water. Almost all of the established Israeli colonies in the West Bank receive piped water, but their network does not include nearby Palestinian villages, presumably so that Israel can maintain separate allocations for the

¹⁴ PASSIA 2001

¹⁵ "Destroying the Livelihoods of Al Khader Villagers," by the Applied Research Institute of Jerusalem (ARIJ) and the Palestine Land Research Center (LRC), 28 November 1999

¹⁶ ARIJ Database 2001

two populations. Only 10% of Palestinian households are connected to the water pipe network, fewer in villages than in cities.¹⁷

The most expedient way to clarify the brittle connection between the Palestinian village and its water resources is to consider a couple of examples of crisis. Just north of the Area A limits of the Palestinian city of Ramallah lies a cluster of villages of which the largest is the small town of Bir Zeit, with a permanent population of roughly 2,500. In early June 2001, the Israeli army cut a section of the main road that links these villages to Ramallah. The bulldozing of Palestinian roads was a tactic of population control introduced with the ascension of Ariel Sharon as Prime Minister of Israel in February of that year, and the Ramallah-Bir Zeit route was first cut on the 8th of March and subsequently repaired. While digging this trench once again near the village of Surda, the Israeli army cut the water pipe that supplies many of these villages with their sole source of water. For nearly a week beginning the 3rd of June, the village of Bir Zeit and several of its neighboring villages went without water. The population relied on bottled water from markets or from personal hoards to meet the needs of consumption.¹⁸

The town of Beit Fourik, population 11,000, southeast of the city of Nablus relies on cisterns and water tankers to meet its ever-unsatisfied demand for water. The town is a major center of cement and cattle industries, both of which rely heavily on regular water supply. In the case of Beit Fourik, the destruction of external roads outside the village did not cut water pipes but prevented the tanker trucks from entering. The crisis peaked in the summer of 2002, when many cisterns began to run dry and the continued Israeli closure and curfew on the city of Nablus, in addition to the roadblocks around Beit Fourik, incapacitated the system of water tanker delivery to the town and surrounding villages.¹⁹

Land development and legal rights

The demand for construction in the domestic, agricultural, and industrial sectors correlates most closely to a rapidly growing population, with a current growth rates forecasting a West Bank population of nearly double its current level by 2015, and to the need to upgrade agricultural and industrial infrastructure to meet the demands of the population growth.²⁰ Due to a shortage of PA government investment in villages, a lack of financing mechanisms in many areas, and the near-freeze in economic activity since September 2000, the demand to meet the infrastructure needs of natural growth are far behind schedule. But villagers also have other factors to blame.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ “The Impact of Israeli Policies of Siege and Closure on the Living Environment of Birzeit Town,” by Maisoun Filfil and Rula Abu Safieh for the Institute of Community and Public Health, Bir Zeit University, 1 June 2002.

¹⁹ “A Few Drops Left: Water Crisis for 15,000 in Beit Fourik and Beit Dajan,” by Greg Wilkinson, 25 July 2002.

²⁰ In the West Bank, natural growth is estimated at 3.42% – PASSIA 2001

The Israeli occupation of the West Bank in 1967 brought with it a new permit system to which the Palestinians were subjected in order to build upon their own land. In addition to policing the water supply on private land, Israeli authorities require Palestinians to request permission to build additional structures or additions on their land. Therefore, a Palestinian farmer may not, in theory, build a pen for his goats or a new wing on his house with obtaining a special permit from Israeli authorities.

Palestinian villagers complain of the difficulties involved in retaining the land they have, let alone navigating the rigid Israeli bureaucracy for consent to build additions. Since 1967, more than 5% of Palestinian rural land in the West Bank has been confiscated by Israel for colonial or military infrastructure, not counting more than half of the remaining land that is under effective Israeli control designated as Area C.²¹ In any area of the West Bank, a Palestinian landowner who cannot produce the requisite deeds to his land can have that land confiscated, and as will be discussed later the proper documents may still not prevent his land from takeover by settlers and the military. Furthermore, a Palestinian villager who is caught building on his land without a permit is subject to having his structures demolished. The Israeli government's Absentee Property Law subjects any land in Areas B and C to government confiscation if it is deemed not in use for three consecutive years, directed at Palestinian émigrés who leave behind land for a future return. Between October 2000 and February 2002, Israel confiscated over 4400 acres of Palestinian agricultural land and uprooted more than 485,000 trees at a cost to Palestinian farmers of more than US\$ 138 million.²²

Israel may cite several reasons for preventing Palestinian development, most notable among them the issue of security and reducing any perceived tension between Palestinian villagers and Israeli colonists. If one ignores the systematic fashion by which Israel has appropriated Palestinian land for settlements since 1967, it is still difficult, especially for Palestinians, to escape the irony that the Israeli government authorities, the Ministries of Housing and Agriculture for example, to which Palestinians must apply for permits to build and develop their land are the same authorities that allot funds for settlement activity and infrastructure and partially subsidize the colonists' costs of living.

Palestinians in the West Bank have few and equivocal legal rights to protect their land. One problem is the lack of jurisdictional structure over disputes in the rural West Bank. For example, depending on the unique characteristics of a particular legal query, the Israeli military or civilian court may claim jurisdiction. The civil authority may be that of the district for the West Bank (or what Israel terms "Judea and Samaria") or a higher court in Israel proper. A particular case may have several claims of legal hegemony, with for example the military judiciary first claiming and then divulging jurisdiction.

²¹ The 5% includes land containing colonies, settler outposts, military bases, and bypass roads but excludes buffer zones and No Man's Lands - ARIJ Database 2001

²² "An Assessment of the Israeli Practices on the Palestinian Agricultural Center: September 29, 2000 – February 28, 2002," by ARIJ and LRC, March 2002.

This legal runaround is further exacerbated by the second problem faced by Palestinian villagers in legal disputes: time. The amount of time afforded a Palestinian villager to build a defense against a demolition or a confiscation may be as long as forty-eight hours or as short as no time at all. In the case of the latter, an appeal may still be filed but for practical purposes the damage has already been done. The threat of demolition and confiscation is especially significant in villages that do not have access to legal assistance; most Palestinians rely on non-governmental legal organizations, many of them Israeli, to act on their behalf in disputes with Israeli civil authorities, the military, or the settlement establishments. Since 1993, 41% of all homes and structures demolished in the West Bank lay in Areas C, i.e. isolated villages or those within settlement clusters, although only 17% of West Bank Palestinians live in these zones.²³

Other areas of public service infrastructure

Electricity and telecommunications are the most consistent services provided to Palestinian villagers. Israeli companies have built most of the infrastructure of the telephone system and licenses its equipment to the Palestinian telephone monopoly, PalTel, to service much of the Palestinian population areas of the West Bank. PalTel began, in the mid-1990's, to build its own infrastructure separate from that of Israel principally in areas that were gradually transferred to Palestinian Authority control (Areas A). Most households in West Bank villages are connected to telephone landlines. Service has frequently been interrupted in rural areas primarily due to Israeli military actions. The Palestinian mobile phone service company, Jawwal, based in Ramallah, competes with several Israeli and European companies but in general has a comprehensive coverage throughout the West Bank, where mobile phones are prevalent among all working age groups.

The Israeli Electrical Company provides electricity to the majority of Palestinian villagers, 98% of whose households have electricity.²⁴ Several West Bank cities, such as Jenin and Nablus, have small power plants to generate electricity, but their reach rarely extends beyond the heart of the cities into the rural areas.

The incapacitation of Palestinian institutions

Finally, the Palestinian villages' relationship to its governing authorities and various benefactors has been substantially altered since the Israeli invasions and curfews of Palestinian Areas A beginning in March/April 2002 and the subsequent incapacitation of Palestinian Authority and non-governmental institutions. In the crucial city of Ramallah, home to most PA ministries in the West Bank as well as

²³ ARIJ Database, 2001

²⁴ PASSIA, 2001

myriad Palestinian and foreign NGO's responsible for providing or augmenting education, health care, agricultural development, and humanitarian aid, the Israeli army incursions severely diminished the abilities of these institutions to provide services to outlying Palestinian population areas. The results were devastating: a breakdown of the health sector, a near-total stoppage of educational provision, an increase in malnutrition, water crises, increased unemployment and poverty, and a further isolation of villagers from critical resources that has led to a forced self-subsistence and gloomy short- and long-term ramifications for the Palestinian village under continued occupation.

The Palestinian village under Israeli military occupation

The second dominant parameter within which the Palestinian West Bank village is defined is the military occupation by the state of Israel. In the 1967 war with three neighboring Arab states, Israel took control of the West Bank and Gaza Strip and thereby became the new arbiter of Palestinian society. For most of the first twenty years, the occupation met only benign resistance by Palestinians, but the depth of frustration became apparent with the outbreak of an uprising in 1987. This first Intifada led to the Oslo peace process, which after a series of interim agreements but a failed final settlement led to more Palestinian frustration and the eruption of a second, more violent Intifada in September 2000. During this uprising of the past two years, Israel has tightened its grip on the West Bank leading to serious ramifications for the noncombatant Palestinian population. The most remarkable vices of the military control over the rural Palestinian population include checkpoints, roadblocks, land confiscations, building demolitions, curfews, closures, and the killing of innocents. The result of these policies, dramatically accelerated since March 2001, is an applied *cantonization* of Palestinian villages and village clusters in the West Bank with catastrophic consequences for rural inhabitants.

The devices of military occupation defined

Between March 2001 and March 2002, the number of checkpoints in the West Bank swelled from a few dozen to more than one hundred, and from locations principally at "border" crossings on or near the Green Line to locations between almost every Palestinian town and village cluster as well as areas adjacent to settlements and bypass roads. A checkpoint is a manned military station, either permanent with concrete blocks, ditches, and barbed wire or temporary with a unit of soldiers and military vehicles. Soldiers examine the Israeli-issued ID cards held by Palestinians; depending on the day and the orders they may inspect every passing Palestinian or a symbolic few. Frequently Palestinians are detained at checkpoints, often for hours.

Roadblocks are the unmanned counterparts of checkpoints. They are strategically placed ditches, earthen mounds, or concrete blocks that block passage on many Palestinian rural roads between villages

and towns, preventing population movement by any means other than pedestrian. In addition to the psychological effects on villagers, the roadblocks and checkpoints present very real dangers in other areas.

Freedom of movement is severely limited for Palestinian civilians between population areas. A checkpoint may delay travel for a few minutes or a few days. Roadblocks force civilians to make part or all of their journey on foot. Palestinians must utilize a back-to-back method when confronted by these obstacles, whereby they may take automobile transportation to one side of a checkpoint, walk across an area designated by the Israeli military as one where vehicles may not pass (anywhere from several meters to several kilometers), and obtain transportation on the other side to their destination or perhaps just to the next roadblock. This existence is the case not only for casual travelers but also for commercial goods, humanitarian delivery, and medical emergencies.

When conducting military operations or searching for suspects, the Israeli army will frequently place a population zone under curfew, which may last a matter of hours or, in the case of the town of Nablus in the summer of 2002, several months. During a curfew, no Palestinian is allowed outside his or her home except during allowed intervals for individuals to obtain food and supplies, and often these intervals come days or weeks apart. Since March of 2001 and most notably during the Israeli invasions of Palestinian Areas A in March/April 2002, more than 150 Palestinian communities in the West Bank were placed under some form of curfew and collective house arrest.²⁵

The closure of a village or population zone is defined by the ability of the population to move freely within the closed area but the inability to travel in and out of the zone. The expansive network of checkpoints and roadblocks allows the Israeli army to open and close certain areas at its discretion and with relative ease. The consequences for villagers are frequent shortages of food, water, and supplies and the disruption of education, health, and other services.

The crisis in health care

The direst consequences of the tightened Israeli occupation of Palestinian villages are in the field of health and medical services. The restricted movement imposed on the population has prevented health staff and supplies from reaching outlying areas. Doctors cannot reach clinics, vaccinations cannot reach village children, and medicines such as insulin and heart disease pills cannot reach patients who rely on regular doses. Medical sources note that upper respiratory infections doubled amongst children during 2001 because of the inability to move basic cold medicines.²⁶ More than one half million Palestinian

²⁵ HDIP database of fact sheets, September 2002

²⁶ Ibid

children in the West Bank have missed scheduled vaccinations for Measles and Polio, diseases which were eradicated the region only in the last five years.²⁷

In reverse, the strengthened occupation has prevented medical emergencies from reaching hospitals in cities. The Union of Palestinian Medical Relief Committees (UPMRC), the Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS), and numerous relief and human rights organizations report that expectant mothers, victims of heart attacks and strokes, patients needing kidney dialysis, and feverish children have on numerous occasions been denied passage at checkpoints or roadblocks whether in ambulances, private vehicles, or on foot. No fewer than thirty-six pregnant women in or near labor have been denied at checkpoints while attempting to reach a hospital and instead delivered their babies in cars, in fields, or even at the checkpoint. In at least eight documented cases, the baby did not survive.²⁸ Many villages are desperately trying to upgrade local clinics to provide maternity care, but progress is slow with the constrained movement of supplies and personnel.

A study completed by USAID in September 2002 on malnutrition among Palestinian civilians confirmed what local humanitarian organizations had feared for more than a year. One in five Palestinian children in West Bank villages under the age of five suffers from either acute or chronic anemia, a condition of deficient iron and protein in the body caused by poor diet and resulting reduced immunity to disease and stunted physical tissue growth. 10% of women of regular childbearing age also have anemia.²⁹ Because the normal Palestinian diet, including beans, chicken, and many green vegetables, is high in protein and iron, the problem is not one of the quality of food but simply the inability, due to checkpoints and closures, of food to be freely transferred from harvest to market or from urban warehouse to rural grocery store.

The village of Deir Ibsi'a, west of the city of Ramallah, is a strong example of a village facing a health crisis due to occupation. A forty-day military-imposed curfew on the village starting in February 2002 marked the beginning of a multi-faceted crisis that affected its 1600 residents and those of more than a dozen other villages in its vicinity. During the curfew, residents of the village were only allowed out of their homes for a few hours a week to purchase food and supplies. The army frequently entered the village to search homes and enforce the curfew. The soldiers slashed the tires of any car caught driving. Children did not go to school and residents did not go to work. No Palestinians could enter or leave the village. For the first fourteen days of the curfew, the village went without phone service and electricity when the army accidentally cut the power lines. When the curfew was lifted in late March, the closure remained tight and roadblocks were constructed along roads into the village, and even pedestrians could

²⁷ March-April 2002 – Defense for Children International, Palestine Section (DCI/PS), November 2002

²⁸ HDIP database of fact sheets, September 2002

²⁹ “Nutritional Assessment and Sentinel Surveillance System for the West Bank and Gaza,” USAID report 5 August 2002; Interview with USAID Director Larry Garber by Palestine Report, 7 August 2002

not pass the checkpoints but instead had to walk through the nearby hills to neighboring villages for transport to Ramallah. With the ensuing Israeli invasion of Ramallah, the residents of Deir Ibsi'a and its neighbors were cut off from all services and supplies based in that city.

As a result of these measures by Israel, numerous health problems arose. Childhood psychological disorders, including bedwetting and trauma, increased substantially. Insulin and medicines to treat asthma and hypertension were smuggled in from neighboring villages or brought sporadically by humanitarian organizations such as the UPMRC, but many residents suffered without medication. One woman died from not being able to get to a Ramallah hospital for a scheduled kidney dialysis. One expectant mother from the nearby village of Qibya was denied at the Deir Ibsi'a checkpoint needing to pass in order to give birth in a hospital and gave birth at the checkpoint instead.³⁰

The disruption of education

The aspects of Israeli military occupation are also detrimental to the Palestinian educational system on all levels. Students and teachers face difficulties and delays reaching schools that lie beyond a checkpoint, and in areas of curfew and closure there is an indefinite hiatus in education. The results are lost class days that, en masse, lead to lost semesters and even entire school years and a precipitous decline in the quality of education and students from a level was once considered among the strongest in the Middle East. At the university level, the targeting by Israeli military personnel of young Palestinian men for detention at checkpoints has led to many male students simply avoiding checkpoints altogether and missing classes.

The aforementioned village of Bir Zeit is home to five public and private schools that provide education to residents of nearly a dozen surrounding villages; in between many villages and Bir Zeit schools lies at least one checkpoint. On an average school day since March 2001, one-third of faculty, staff, and students cannot reach school on time or at all. At Bir Zeit University, the only major Palestinian institution of higher education outside Area A, the school year 2001-02 was tarnished by 180 lost class days because most students and staff reside outside the village.³¹

The decline of the village economy

With the development of Palestinian society from disjointed village and agrarian communities to a centralized urban-based social structure, the average village is less able to sustain its own economy and has become increasingly reliant on neighboring towns and on the burgeoning 'state' system to quench its

³⁰ "Report on the Solidarity Action in Deir Ibsi'a," by International Checkpoint Watch (ICW), June 2, 2002; from research and testimony collected by the author, March-June 2002.

³¹ "The Impact of Israeli Policies of Siege and Closure on the Living Environment of Birzeit Town," by Maisoun Filfil and Rula Abu Safieh for the Institute of Community and Public Health, Bir Zeit University, 1 June 2002.

need for employment and markets for goods, as well as for necessary imports. Therefore the limitation on the movement of people and products stands as a stark impediment to the livelihood of a West Bank villager.

Prior to the current Intifada, more than 50,000 Palestinians in West Bank villages worked across the Green Line in Israel. A further 100,000 or more worked in other Palestinian towns or in jobs that required them to travel beyond the borders of their own villages.³² Today, more than fifty percent of the rural West Bank is unemployed, and the village economies are collapsing around them. In the village of Deir Ibsi'a, a system of bartering and buying on credit or goodwill has prevailed where modern fiscal transactions have become largely obsolete. A local storekeeper's ledger in the village showed a credit backlog in his shop of over NIS 200,000 (US\$ 42,000).³³ Homegrown fruits and vegetables are traded for batteries and propane fuel for stoves. Storeowners, in turn, are in debt to distributors and many people rely, when available, on handouts from aid organizations. More than half the rural population relies on handouts to meet at least some of its provisional needs.³⁴

The impoverished village populations cannot satisfy the market for rurally grown commercial crops and thus goods must reach the economically centralized markets in major Palestinian towns. Checkpoints and roadblocks inhibit the transfer of goods between markets, as trucks are subject to long delays and inspections and in some cases goods must be transferred utilizing the time-consuming back-to-back method. As a result, village crops such as fruits, vegetables, meats, grain, and olives either reach an urban market tainted by the arduous journey or simply do not leave the villages altogether. Economically, the effects of military blockades have driven up the prices for many goods in the cities while significantly deflating prices in villages.

Returning to the village cluster west of Ramallah, including Deir Ibsi'a, Kafr Ni'ma, Ras Karkar, and Al Janiya, the average return for farmers for a kilogram of figs plummeted from NIS 10 (US\$ 2.10) for the harvest in 2001 to NIS 1.5 (US\$ 0.32) in 2002. For zucchini, the price for a ten-kilogram box in Ramallah in May 2002 was NIS 40 (US\$ 8.42) while simultaneously in the western villages the price was only NIS 7 (US\$ 1.56) due to a low demand ratio.³⁵ The total cost to West Bank farmers from products not able to be sold at market is estimated to be US\$ 62 million.³⁶

In February 2002, these villages had a combined poultry population greater than 40,000 that mostly fed the consumption needs of the local residents but which required a regular supply of chicken feed from factories and distributors in Ramallah and Jerusalem. By June, due to the long curfew, closed

³² ARIJ Database 2001

³³ "Report on the Visit to the Village of Deir Ibsi'a," ICW, March 22, 2002.

³⁴ ARIJ database, 2001

³⁵ "Report on the Solidarity Action in Deir Ibsi'a," by ICW, June 2, 2002.

³⁶ "An Assessment of the Israeli Practices on the Palestinian Agricultural Center: September 29, 2000 – February 28, 2002," a joint study by ARIJ and LRC, March 2002.

checkpoints, and the Israeli invasion and closure of Ramallah in March and April, nearly every chicken in these villages had to be slaughtered and put into freezers for lack of supplies to keep them alive and producing eggs. The cost to chicken farmers was estimated at NIS 250,000 (US\$ 53,000).³⁷

The interruption of other services and consequences of occupation

The presence of military checkpoints and roadblocks also affects the management of waste and wastewater in villages. Most West Bank villages rely on septic tanks for the disposal of wastewater; the tanks are usually emptied biweekly or monthly by tanker trucks operated by the Palestinian Authority in Areas A. When these tankers cannot pass checkpoints or roadblocks on schedule, septic tanks may overflow and deposit harmful materials into the ground, affecting crops and water wells. Some villages with means to transport the wastewater may deposit it outside the village in valleys, still highly pollutant but away from population areas. Solid waste is normally collected from tens of dumpsters located in each village and directed to various landfill sites in the West Bank. With the rise in frequency and severity of checkpoints and closures, so came a rise in solid waste building up in fields and vacant lots within and adjacent villages. Such a health hazard brings the risk of polluted cropland and groundwater as well as health risks to children scavenging in or burning the trash.³⁸

As the government and army of Israel moved, in the summer of 2002, to reduce the number of manned checkpoints and fortify a core smaller group, the roadblocks and barriers around villages remained and the threat to villagers is still very real and critical. When the month of May in 2002 finally brought a temporary reprieve to the beleaguered village of Deir Ibsi'a, many residents decided to move to Ramallah with friends or family, an inclination that is being mimicked throughout many of the villages in the West Bank. Poverty and malnutrition are on the rise while short-term social services and long-term sustainability are bleak as the Israeli military apparatus of population control confines the West Bank village.

The Palestinian village and Israeli colonization

The third and final parameter that shapes the daily existence and longer term survival of West Bank villages is the presence and continuing development of Israeli settlement activity in the Palestinian territories. The colonizing activity began shortly after the June 1967 War when an entourage of ideological Jews from Gush Emunim – the Bloc of the Faithful – took over a Palestinian building in the southern West Bank city of Hebron. Contemporarily, the government of Israel began establishing Jewish neighborhoods in and around the newly captured East Jerusalem and several kibbutz collective farms

³⁷ “Report on the Solidarity Action in Deir Ibsi'a,” by ICW, June 2, 2002.

³⁸ “Impact of the Israeli Closure on Solid Waste Disposal,” by ARIJ and LRC, June 2001

were set up in the Jordan Valley. These settlements highlight the three broad categories of Israeli colonies that exist in the Palestinian territories today that, despite their common link of being illegal under international law,³⁹ are distinct in their design, constituency, and how they affect their Palestinian neighbors in West Bank villages.

The demography of the three types of colonies

At least 125 colonies in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, representing the bulk of established settlements, are designated by the Israeli government as ‘Priority A,’ meaning that they qualify for government subsidies, financial incentives, and other considerations designed to lower the cost of living thereby attracting new colonists and rewarding existing ones. Discounted mortgages, free public transportation, and an income tax break of 7% are some of the enticements offered to Priority A colonists but not to residents of Israel or neighboring Palestinian residents in the West Bank.⁴⁰ Strategically, 115 settlements are located atop aquifer zones denoted as ‘highly sensitive’ and a further 25 above ‘sensitive’ water areas.⁴¹

Agricultural settlements are akin to the cooperative farms – the kibbutzim – that characterized the early history of Zionism and the first waves of Jewish immigration to regional Palestine that preceded the state of Israel. While still great in numbers across much of northern Israel and south in the Negev desert, the kibbutz movement does not have the same value to the state as it once did, and most farms even outside the West Bank are heavily subsidized by a government sympathetic to its historical roots. Kibbutz colonies in the West Bank are generally more isolated from Palestinian communities in the sparsely populated semi-arid Jordan Valley between the river and the Judean mountains. There are a total of about 23 Israeli settlements along the Jordan Valley and adjacent to the Dead Sea with a total population of around 5,900.⁴² With the exception of the oasis city of Jericho and several small villages in the north, very few permanent Palestinian enclaves exist in this narrow region. However, those that do exist are primarily animal herding communities accustomed to a wide range of movement to find food for their flocks. The presence of various Israeli colonies and the recent military restrictions on movement have penned in these Palestinians villagers, already among the poorest in the West Bank, to what appear to be no more than shantytowns. Where possible, many villagers have turned to farming the land on the few naturally fertile patches of earth, but this is mainly to meet the local village needs while the produce of Jericho is exported all over the West Bank and that of the kibbutz colonies is exported all over the world.

³⁹ Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, Articles 46 and 55 of the Hague Convention, UNSC Resolution 465

⁴⁰ PASSIA 2001

⁴¹ HDIP database of fact sheets, September 2002

⁴² PASSIA database 2001; Peace Now Database of Settlements, 2001

The second major category of settlements is the so-called *suburb* settlement. These colonies generally have the highest populations, and their constituency is largely comprised of working and middle class Israelis who commute to work inside Israel. The suburb settlements are planned communities by the state of Israel for reasons political, economic, and demographic. These colonies include Ariel in the north central West Bank (population 16,100), Modi'in Ilit (19,200) which straddles the Green Line northwest of Ramallah, Betar Ilit (17,300) in the Gush Etzion settlement bloc south of Bethlehem, and Ma'ale Adumim (25,000) between Jerusalem and Jericho.⁴³ Most of the 200,000 settlers, or half of the settlement population, which live in colonies in and around East Jerusalem fall into this category as well. In general, these communities rarely interact with their Palestinian neighbors, but due to their size and certain political motives they are rapidly growing and expanding at the expense of Palestinian urban and rural development. Modi'in Ilit, for example, has seen its population grow by 47% since 1999, while Betar Ilit has expanded from twenty acres of land in 1995 to more than eighty today to accommodate a population surge of 215% from 5,500 residents seven years ago.⁴⁴ The latter colony has swelled at the expense of three neighboring Palestinian villages Al Khader, Wadi Foukin, and Nahalin, which will be further discussed later.

The third type of Israeli settlements can most broadly be described as *ideological* colonies. Established via a combination of forces including religious, Zionist, nationalist, and political, these settlements are by far the most common in number but generally have smaller populations ranging from a few thousand to just a few people. While the area of definition between this type of colony and the previous two may be ambiguous since to a certain extent all colonists may hold to some ideology regarding 'settling' in the West Bank and Gaza regardless of religious or national zeal, the key standard of classification lies in the common desire of this subculture to occupy as much land as possible with as few people as necessary thereby both retaining a unifying element to colonization while allowing for much ideological homogeneity within individual colonies. While the average population of the eight largest settlements that might be categorized as suburb colonies, excluding those in East Jerusalem, is more than 12,000, the average of these 140 or so ideological colonies is 714.⁴⁵ They are usually purposefully placed in areas of religious or nationalist significance or directly adjacent to Palestinian built-up areas to hinder their growth, and many are established not by the Israeli government but by a subset of organizers within the settlement communities. It is also members of these colonies, by various actions and aggressions, which pose the most immediate threat to Palestinian villages in the rural West Bank.

⁴³ Jerusalem Central Bureau of Statistics, 2001; Peace Now Database of Settlements, 2001

⁴⁴ ARIJ Database 2001; Peace Now Database of Settlements, 2001; Statistical Abstracts of Israel, 2001

⁴⁵ Foundation for Middle East Peace Special Report: "Israeli Settlements in the Occupied Territories," March 2002

The infrastructure of the settlement establishment

While the Israeli government strategically directed the settlement movement in the suburb settlements from 1967 onward, the ideological settlement boom did not occur until the late seventies and early eighties. By this time Israel accelerated the expropriation of Palestinian land for colonies, military installations, and the roads necessary to connect them to Israel. Between 1967 and the present, Israeli colonists have, for their communities alone, commandeered approximately 150 square kilometers (2.6% of the West Bank) of Palestinian land, the majority of which is agricultural private or communal land belonging to villagers.⁴⁶ Approximately 267,700 rural Palestinians (17% of the West Bank population) live within Israeli military security or 'buffer' zones that comprise 2565 square kilometers (45%) of West Bank land and include 158 colonies.⁴⁷ The total length of the so-called bypass roads – by definition roads that allow settler traffic to circumvent Palestinian population areas between colonies and Israel – is 350km built on 52 square kilometers of Palestinian land or what amounts to 1% of the land mass of the entire West Bank.⁴⁸

The settlement movement endured a much larger boom in the 1990's that saw the population swell to nearly three times its 1991 size by 2000.⁴⁹ With the rise in colonial activity directed by the Israeli government came a simultaneous upsurge in new colonies founded by grassroots settler initiatives and the unilateral expansion of existing settlements into various blocs. The Israeli government has attempted to distinguish *permissible* settlements from what it terms illegal 'outposts,' defined as settlement growth that is non-contiguous with existing colonies and is established by extra-judicial means. The colonial outposts are frequently set up for the purpose of forming a new settlement bloc in a process whereby a small group of settlers sets up a ramshackle homestead with caravans and military protection. The Israeli government made little effort to stem outpost growth before September 2002, by which time the number of outposts had grown in number to between sixty and one hundred.⁵⁰

To illustrate the infringement of outposts upon Palestinian villages, consider the village of Yanoun, southeast of Nablus in the central West Bank with a population of 115. The village lies in Area C and contains more than 4,000 acres of cropland primarily providing olives and wheat. Already severed from external roads by checkpoints and roadblocks, the villagers witnessed colonists from nearby Itimar, a cluster of five colonies and outposts, seize about 800 acres of village land in March 2001 in an attempt to expand a military buffer zone around one of its outposts. The land belonged to a family living in the

⁴⁶ Miftah report: "Israeli Settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip", 10 September 2002

⁴⁷ ARIJ Database 2002

⁴⁸ "An Inventory of Israel's Aggression on Palestinian Land during the first year of the Intifada," by ARIJ and LRC, November 2001

⁴⁹ Peace Now Database of Settlements, 2001

⁵⁰ Competing statistics by ARIJ, Gush Shalom, Peace Now, HDIP, Ha'aretz Daily, and Israeli government spokespeople leave a wide range of figures that changes rapidly with the local environment in the West Bank.

United States, but it had under village agreement been transferred to the community of Yanoun for cultivation for the benefit of all villagers and was not lying in disuse. The new outpost, with military protection, has remained at the expense of crop harvests and badly needed income for the village.⁵¹

Confrontation between colonists and villagers

During the thirty-five years of Israeli colonization in the West Bank, but mostly during the settlement boom since the early nineties, there have been thousands of reports and documented cases of confrontation between Israeli settlers and Palestinian villagers. During the current Intifada, there have also been numerous cases of Palestinian attacks on settlements or individual settlers in the West Bank, but it is extremely difficult to classify these attacks in the context of the village versus the settlement; rather they are rogue elements of the collective Palestinian resistance. It might be argued that those settlers who engage Palestinian villagers beyond simply seizing land represent a rogue contingent of the overall colonial population. While there may be some truth to this, the paramilitary nature of even a small minority of settlers is in itself a significant threat to rural Palestinians. Furthermore, the threat to colonists from Palestinian-instigated confrontation cannot be seen in as an existential one because of the broad financial and other support given to the settlements by the Israeli government and external organizations, while for Palestinian villagers confrontation often means economic and social crisis for which there are bleak prospects for resolution.

The extremist elements of Israeli colonists engage Palestinian villagers with methods including but not limited to damaging and destroying land and agricultural infrastructure such as irrigation and greenhouses, harassing and limiting the movement of farmers and shepherds, paralyzing harvests of olives, raiding and looting crop stores, establishing separate checkpoints and roadblocks between villages, rampaging in areas under military curfew, shooting attacks, and on rare occasions engaging in terrorist activities such as the bombing of schools and public places.

The olive harvest, each year in October, is a crucial and time-sensitive elemental staple for Palestinian villagers both for commercial and personal use. It is during this time of year that many Palestinian venture the furthest from their villages into the fields to pick olives, and usually coincides with a rise in settler attacks on Palestinians. The village of Umm Safa, 15 kilometers northwest of Ramallah, experienced difficulty with its harvest in the fall of 2000 due to settlement encroachment and settler harassment. Penned into their village between the Israeli colonies of Atarot and Hallamish and the latter's adjacent outpost of Zofit, the villagers were subjected to a 47-day curfew in October and November 2000 because of Israeli military measures at the start of the current Intifada. When finally allowed to go to the fields to harvest their olives, the main source of income for the villagers, they found

⁵¹ "Israeli Colonial Activity in Yanoun Al Foqa Village," by ARIJ and LRC, April 2001

themselves the targets of shooting attacks by settlers; two villagers were injured by settler gunfire in separate incidents in November. The continued blockade of their village by the army required the residents of Umm Safa to carry their harvests overland to neighboring villages where they could then find transportation to olive presses in Ramallah.⁵²

Similarly, the residents of the aforementioned village of Beit Fourik have encountered problems during recent olive harvests. Armed colonists from nearby Jid Oneim killed a villager picking olives on October 26, 1998 and another on October 17, 2000. Even large groups of villagers found themselves under attack during the harvest of 2000. When the Israeli army forced the villagers to return to their homes, the settlers set fire to more than 250 acres of cropland that the villagers were powerless to protect.⁵³

Colony expansion and the threat of annexation

Finally, at the expense of the growing network of colonies Palestinian villagers unwillingly forgo the right to determine their own political future. The village is forevermore dependent on a larger governmental apparatus, such as a state in the possible future absence of the current occupation, to provide modern services to dependent village populations. Because of the extensive placement of settlements in the West Bank, many villages face the threat of annexation to Israel with neighboring colonies.

As the aforementioned colony of Betar Ilit rapidly expands, it further incorporates land belonging to several villages, including Hussan, Nahalin, and Wadi Foukin. The latter village, with a population of 881, lies with its diminishing cropland in a valley comprising the bare two kilometers between Betar Ilit and the Green Line.⁵⁴ If Israel were to formally annex Betar Ilit as seems inevitable, the residents of Wadi Foukin would be swept into Israel as well. If Israel were to further annex the entire Gush Etzion bloc with a fifteen-kilometer wedge into the southern West Bank, parts or all of more than two dozen villages would be affected.⁵⁵

Conclusion: The three parameters and the survival of West Bank villages

An analysis of the complex and ill-defined system of external governance of and provision for the West Bank village offers several conclusions. Firstly, the dual governance of Israel and the Palestinian Authority, which is characterized not by cooperation but by the latter acting more like a middleman for the former to an ambiguous extent, leaves the system of provision *incomplete* as long as the political

⁵² "Difficulties for Umm Safa Village during the Intifada," by ARIJ and LRC, March 2001

⁵³ "Jid Oneim Settlers Attack Beit Fourik Villagers," by ARIJ and LRC, October 2000

⁵⁴ Population according to 1997 census, ARIJ database 2001

⁵⁵ "Betar Ilit Colony Expansion and the Fate of Wadi Foukin Village," by ARIJ and LRC, February 2001

future of the West Bank is bereft of a final agreement between the two sides. Secondly, the system is *undemocratic* because it highlights the disfavored and disenfranchised status of the Palestinian population relative to that of the ultimate power broker, Israel, and further highlights the disproportionate allocation of resources, infrastructure, and legal rights despite Israel's spin-off of several responsibilities to the PA. Thirdly, the system of service provision is *deficient* because of its inability to adequately provide for the constituent village and prevent or even maintain crises in the service sector. An incomplete, undemocratic, and deficient system of provision of services to the dependent Palestinian villages represents a constraint of viability for these rural communities. As a result, the Palestinian village lies in limbo between progression, which is stifled with little prospect for a political breakthrough needed to jumpstart development, and regression, which may yield a destructive future for rural Palestinian society.

The consequences of military occupation came into sharp focus when Palestinian irritation with what was perceived as two-faced diplomacy between Israel and the PA yielded a violent uprising in September 2000, though as noted the origins of Palestinian opposition to occupation are to be found long before even the first Intifada. Among the measures Israel took to combat Palestinian resistance was to tighten its control over the Palestinian population. Isolated, paralyzed, and existing in turpitude, Palestinian villagers have witnessed the stronger occupation not only *dismantling* the system of public services of health care, education, and others, but also *weakening* the ability of the village to provide for itself in a crisis by incapacitating local economies and restricting movement. This has in turn led to a deeper resentment of Israel destined to perpetuate the opposition to occupation. More ominously, the occupation has forced many villagers to fear for the continuing survival of village life.

The long-term threats of Israeli settlement are not to be discounted. Palestinian villagers perceive the presence of settlements as abjectly contradictory to the future existence of village life in the West Bank; indeed, no single group has had a better vantage point to witness the growth of settlements and the extent of colonial hegemony than the rural Palestinian. The massive and disproportionate expansion of Israeli populations in the West Bank relative to the gradual evolution of native Palestinian villages is an *incompatible* correlation because of conflicting ideologies about possession of the land, the explosion in each group's population (be it natural or artificial growth), the small amount of land involved, and the consistent preferential legal treatment and subsidization of one group relative to the other. West Bank villagers today possess a very real existential threat to their livelihoods that may ultimately see some villages annexed with settlements to Israel or eventually emptied of residents due to the competition faced from expanding colonies.

These three parameters, which shape the present reality and forecast the future way of life for West Bank villagers, are not mutually exclusive but undeniably intertwined within the identity struggle of the Palestinian people as a whole and the West Bank villager individually. When considered together, the

external factors manipulating the development of the village community represent the constraining limits on the growth of the social, economic, and political structure of Palestinian society. A collapse of the Palestinian village, with its connotations of food-staple provision, cultural tradition, and social constitution, would be a direct threat to a viable and sustainable Palestinian political unit with its own internal identity. It is therefore conclusive that the Palestinian village must overcome or be loosed from these external constraints of its environment, thereby redefining itself in a new milieu of development, or else face its own demise as an element of the present social order in the West Bank.