

and councils in the West Bank were gradually seen as the primary, rather than as the ultimate, power base for Israeli rule in the territories. Israeli legislation was extended to cover jurisdiction over the settlements' zones, and they were integrated into the army's "regional defense system" (Litani, 1981:14).

The "Green Line" separating Israel in its pre-1967 boundaries from the occupied territories is thus being blurred structurally (through economic integration), demographically (through a policy of population dispersal and settlement) and jurisdictionally (through extending Israeli sovereignty to settlers' councils). The weakening of any meaningful prospects for a political solution of the Palestine question brings into sharper focus the territorial-demographic dilemma of the Israeli state. The Arabs under Israeli rule constitute today 34 - 40 percent of the total resident population of the country, depending on the population estimate one chooses to believe (for a discussion cf. Rubinsten, 1981). In any case, the claim for Jewish sovereignty over the land can only be sustained by the continued disenfranchisement of the Palestinian inhabitants and the physical expropriation of the land they inhabit. It is perhaps a historic irony that precisely at the moment that the Palestinian leadership had made a radical move towards a political accommodation with the Jewish state, Israel began implementing a policy leading to its own dissolution as a Jewish state.