

To annex or not to annex:
The question, for Israelis, is
complex and divisive

Israeli Politics and the West Bank

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Half a decade after the Six-Day War the Israeli government has made no decision about the future of the West Bank. The elections held in the West Bank's towns in early 1972, but under Jordanian law, were one example of the Jerusalem cabinet's inability to come to any decision and its determination to postpone decision for as long as possible. This determination reflects the complexity of the problem per se and the deep divisions within the Israeli polity on this subject. We will focus on the internal Israeli aspect.

The term West Bank was invented by the Jordanians to describe the area between the Jordan River and the 1948 Armistice Line that formed part of the British Mandate of Palestine, which was occupied by the Arab Legion in 1948 and was subsequently annexed by Jordan. From the historical point of view this area was also the heartland of the first and second Jewish states, as many Israelis remember today. But whatever the strength of Jewish or Arab historical claims to the area, its dominant feature, in contrast to virtually empty territories such as the Golan or Sinai, is its Arab population of about 660,000 (including East Jerusalem). Moreover, unlike the Arabs in the Gaza Strip, the other large center of Israeli-ruled Arab population, these Arabs are not mainly refugees surviving on U.N. doles but are self-supporting.

Strategically, the West Bank is important to Israel. Before 1967 the Jordanians, because of their control of the West Bank, were less than thirteen miles from the Mediterranean, facing the heavily populated Israeli area between Tel Aviv and Haifa (the Sharon Plain). This meant that they were within artillery range of Tel Aviv and Jerusalem and held the Latrun salient controlling the main Tel Aviv-Jerusalem road.

These strategic implications must weigh heavily

with any Israeli government considering the West Bank's future. Nor can Israeli political leaders, deriving their support from a population nourished on the beliefs of Jewish nationalism and, at least for a substantial minority, Jewish religion, ignore Jewish sentimental and historical ties to this area that Israelis refer to as Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria. On the other hand, the incorporation of over 600,000 Arabs into Israel would pose enormous problems, since it would alter the demographic and political character of the Jewish State. Annexationist fervor is also dampened by the prospect that Israel might be able to use its possession of the West Bank as a bargaining counter to be surrendered in return for a *de jure* Arab recognition which would bring the generation-long Arab-Israeli war to an end.

To the inherent problems of what to do with the West Bank must be added the difficulties of Israel's decision-making process. All Israeli governments since 1948 have been coalitions led by the Social-Democratic Mapai (renamed Ma'i after it merged with two smaller groups). This does not make for a decisive government except in the field of military strategy.

Initial Israeli policy (June-August, 1967) was simple enough. The West Bank was to be returned to Jordan in return for a peace treaty. East Jerusalem, the area of greatest historical, religious and sentimental value to Israelis, as well as some minor strategic points (Latrun, Kalkilya), was to become part of Israel. Thus Israel would absorb only about 60,000 Arabs, many of them emigration-prone Christians. Israeli insistence on formally annexing East Jerusalem and other measures taken in this period show an Israeli government determined to differentiate between the areas it meant to hold and those, the vast majority, it was willing to cede.

Perhaps the Israeli effort to provide for peace was doomed before it began. As a Ha'olam Hazeh leader said, no Arab government concerned for Tulkarm or

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Ramallah would surrender Arab claims to Jerusalem. But on the Israeli side there can be no question of Israeli determination to maintain Jerusalem as a Jewish-ruled united city. Even Maki, the (anti-Soviet) Israel Communist Party, which originally opposed Jerusalem's annexation, now states that any peace must include Israeli retention of the whole city. The only Israeli political forces to reject this position are Rakah, the (pro-Soviet) New Communist Party, whose support (see Table) comes from Israel's Arab minority, and a variety of small left and new left (e.g., Ha'olam Hazeh, Siah, Brit Ha'smol, Matzpen) grouplets.

By August, 1967, the Israeli government realized that a swift peace with Jordan was not in the cards. To be sure, East Jerusalem's differentiation has remained. The normal processes of civil Israeli government operate in East Jerusalem, while the West Bank is still under military rule. The Israelis have recently reemphasized the distinction by offering East Jerusalemites, but not West Bankers, compensation for property abandoned by them in Israel in 1948. Even the 1972 West Bank elections, held under Jordanian law, contrast with the situation in East Jerusalem, whose inhabitants, as residents (but not citizens) of Israel, vote in municipal (but not national) elections held under Israeli law providing for universal franchise.

But the West Bank's status has also changed. The distinction between Jerusalem and the West Bank, between what is to be held and what can be surrendered, is not as plain now as it was in 1967. Many Jewish Israelis desire the West Bank's annexation. The basic annexationist argument is that, on the one hand, the West Bank is historically and religiously part of Israel. To question Israel's right to Hebron or Nablus, they maintain, is equivalent to questioning Israel's right to Tel Aviv. They admit that there is now an Arab majority in the West Bank which does not desire annexation, but remark that the same could have been said twenty, thirty or fifty years ago about areas that are today unquestionably part of Israel. On the other hand, they state that from the strategic point of view possession of the West Bank is vital to Israel's defense. Even if a peace treaty were signed, the Arabs might not respect it, in which case Israel would once again be in a strategically untenable situation.

As for the problems posed by an Arab majority on the West Bank, the annexationists offer several different solutions. They are united in rejecting any attempt to expel the Arabs from the area by force or governmental fiat, although many of them hope for a voluntary Arab hegira once the Arabs realize that the area is to form part of a Jewish state. First they point to the prospects for large-scale immigration from the U.S. and USSR. Second, a number of special devices for reducing the Arab impact on Israeli politics are also mentioned. But some an-

nexationists, especially those belonging to the younger generation, assert that it is not a problem. On all important issues (security, immigration) the Jewish majority in the Knesset would stick together; many Arabs will vote for Jewish parties anyway; and finally, on other issues, Arab representatives may well have constructive ideas to offer.

Historically the right-wing Herut (Freedom) Party has favored Israeli expansion beyond the 1948 Armistice lines. However, the feeling that the West Bank should be part of the Israeli State is by no means confined to that party or its offspring, the Mercaz Hofshi. Herut's partner in Gahal, the Israel Liberal Party, has called for Israeli retention of "Judaea and Samaria," as has Mafdal, the National Religious Party. When we add the sympathizers with this position in the smaller Reshimat Mamlachti and Poale Agudat Israel, the annexationists would appear to be a formidable lobby indeed, commanding over one-third of the Knesset. But one-third is not a majority. Besides, a number of observers of Israeli politics think that many in Mafdal and the Liberal Party would be prepared to support a compromise treaty in return for Ma'i concessions on some other issues.

But annexationists are not unknown within Ma'i itself. When the Movement for the Whole Land of Israel was founded in 1967, it included many members of the constituent parties of Ma'i, especially from the then Rafi and Achdut Avoda parties. The core of Achdut Avoda, the Kibbutz Meuchad, has been committed historically to the position that Judaea and Samaria should form part of the Jewish State. Other Ma'i leaders, such as S. Peres, now Minister of Communications but formerly Secretary General of Rafi, also favor the political integration of the West Bank.

These elements are far from a majority in Ma'i, and there is little chance of a party split on this issue. Other issues take priority, especially the dispute between Defense Minister Dayan (ex-Rafi) and Education Minister Allon (ex-Achdut Avoda) for succession to the post of Prime Minister. Besides, all ex-Rafi-ites and ex-Achdut Avoda-niks are aware that their parties joined with Mapai in the first instance because they realized that they would have more of a programmatic and patronage advantage as part of Ma'i than as independent parties. Those Rafi-ites who disagreed are now in the Reshimat Mamlachti. Still, the very presence of the annexationists within Ma'i, added to the weight of annexationist opinion outside the Party, constitutes a formidable barrier to any Israel cabinet inclinations to surrender all or part of the West Bank.

At present the annexationists' importance does not lie in their role as a brake. There is, after all, no place for the Israeli government to go, since no Arab government is willing to negotiate directly with the Israelis or, in indirect negotiations, to come anywhere near the Israelis' minimum demands.

Party Strengths and Positions in Israel

Party	1969 Jewish Vote %	1969 Arab Vote %	1969 Total Vote %	1969 Knesset Seats	Position in West Bank issues
Ma'i ^a	} 48.8	13.3	47.4	56	Ambiguous. Majority supports Allon Plan but annexationist and anti-annexationist vocal minorities exist
Mapam ^a					
Gahal	23.3	01.1	21.7	26 ^c	Favors annexation of all West Bank
Mafdal	09.9	07.4	09.7	12 ^b	Favors annexation of all West Bank
Agudat Israel	03.6	00.2	03.2	4	No clear position except for retention of Jerusalem
Independent Liberals	03.4	01.0	03.2	4 ^b	Originally similar to Mapam, now generally favors Allon Plan
Reshimat Mamlachti	03.3	01.0	03.1	4	Divided on issue, no stand except for retention of Jerusalem
Arab lists	00.4	41.8	03.5	4 ^b	Two Arab lists sponsored by Ma'i, follow Ma'i position
Rakah	00.7	28.3	02.8	3	Supports Soviet stand of immediate Israeli pullback to Armistice lines
Poale Agudat Israel	02.0	00.2	01.8	2 ^d	Favors annexation of all West Bank
Mercuz Hofshi	01.2	01.0	01.2	2	Favors annexation of all West Bank
Ha'olam Hazeh	01.2	01.1	01.2	2	Favors federation of Israel and Arab Palestine, opposes annexations
Maki	01.2	00.7	01.1	1	Favors retention of Jerusalem, rest to Arab Palestinian State as part of peace

Notes

Jewish vote and Arab vote refers to the vote in Jewish-majority and Arab-majority cities and villages. Virtually no Jews live in Arab-majority settlements, and almost no Arabs live in Jewish rural settlements. There are Arabs in Jewish-majority cities such as Tel Aviv-Jaffa, Haifa and Acco (Acre). Their votes are included in the Jewish vote.

^a In 1969 Ma'i, formed by a merger of Mapai, Achdut Avoda and part of Rafi (the rest forming the Reshimat Mamlachti) was aligned with Mapam for electoral purposes

^b in government 1967 to present

^c in government 1967 to 1970. Half the Knesset members represent Herut, half the Liberals.

^d in government 1967-1969

Instead of a brake, the annexationists should be viewed as an accelerator pushing for more integration between Israel and the West Bank. The most serious annexationist activity is encouraging Jewish settlement on the West Bank. An area in which Jews live is one it is politically impossible for any Israeli government to surrender. Hence, the Israeli government interdicted Jewish settlement on the West Bank (excluding Jerusalem) after the Six-Day War.

In November of 1967 the Movement for the Whole

Land of Israel challenged this policy. It offered financial and moral support to youths drawn from the Mercuz Ha'rov Yeshiva and the B'nai Akiva (Mafdal youth movement), some the children of the original settlers of Kfar Etzion, who proposed—government permission or no—to reestablish that settlement on its Judean site halfway between Jerusalem and Hebron. Faced with this pressure the government gave in. Not only has Kfar Etzion been restored, but so has its companion settlement, Rosh Tsurim. The Kfar Etzion area is also being developed as an

urban and educational center. It already contains a major Yeshiva (rabbinical seminary). Since May, 1968, the Israeli Coalition has been committed to its retention.

An even more audacious move took place in Hebron. In April, 1968, a small group of religious Jews, financed by the Movement for the Whole Land of Israel and related sources, moved into the Arab city of Hebron and announced, without any government backing, their intention of staying there. The move infuriated Defense Minister Dayan, since it threatened the pleasant relations he had established with Sheik Ja'abari, the Arab mayor of Hebron, as well as other West Bank leaders.

Indeed, the whole episode exposed Dayan's political plight. In his capacity as Minister of Defense, responsible for the administration of the territories, Dayan must work closely with the landlord/mukhtar class in the West Bank, the people who have successively served Turkish pashas, British colonial officers and Transjordanian Beduins, and who, naturally, wish for the status quo to be preserved. On the other hand, Dayan's chances of becoming Prime Minister depend on his attraction to the Israeli public (since most of the established leaders in Ma'i dislike him) and hence upon a dynamic and basically annexationist image. In 1968, with Ma'i newly established, Dayan's dilemma was even more acute. By the same token, it is not surprising that Yigal Allon, Dayan's rival in Ma'i, joined with Mafdal and Gahal annexationist cabinet members in preventing Dayan from expelling the settlers from Hebron.

The status of the Hebron settlers continued to be a serious issue for the rest of 1968 and all of 1969. While Dayan managed to move them to the Israeli military center in Hebron, they, over his objections, increased their number, transformed part of the Maarat Machpelah (the burial place of the Jewish Patriarchs, used as a mosque since the thirteenth century) into a synagogue and began to engage in business operations in Hebron.

By March, 1970, however, the cabinet had changed, and Prime Minister Golda Meir and Defense Minister Dayan now decided that the Hebron settlement was there to stay. Over the objections of the anti-annexationist elements in Ma'i (Finance Minister Sapir, Foreign Minister Eban) and the ministers of the anti-annexationist Mapam, the construction of a Jewish suburb of Hebron, as well as an industrial complex, was begun. In September, 1971, the first settlers moved into "Kiryat Arba."

The official government view, which Ma'i, the Independent Liberal Party (ILP) and Mapam now agree to, is that building a Jewish settlement in Hebron does not fix Hebron's political future. Even if the cabinet genuinely believes this, the more Jews there are in Hebron and the longer their stay, the more difficult it will be for any Israeli government to surrender it. Thus, Allon has already proposed that

Kiryat Arba remain an Israeli enclave following a peace settlement. But while Etzion could be imagined in Israel with the rest of Judea back in Arab hands, Hebron is the center of the Arabs of Judea. If it is under Israeli rule, all of Judea will be Israeli. Nor is civic partition very practical as a focus of Jewish interest; the Maarat Machpelah, in which there have been a series of Jewish-Muslim incidents as Jewish rights there are gradually extended, is in the midst of the Arab city.

Thus, thanks to the initiative of the Movement for the Whole Land of Israel and the Hebron settlers, a careful differentiation must increasingly be made between Samaria, the area of the West Bank north of Jerusalem, in which there is no Jewish settlement (excluding the Samaritans of Nablus) and which is therefore returnable, and Judea, whose status is today much more questionable. One reason for this is that annexation of Judea would not threaten the demographic balance of the State. Of the 600,000 Arabs in the West Bank, 450,000 are in Samaria and only 150,000 in Judea.

But if the status of Judea is ambiguous, that of the Jordan Valley itself is clear enough. During the Six-Day War the vast majority of the Arab population of the western side of the Jordan Valley crossed into Jordan. Thus an empty area now existed between the concentrations of Arabs in the highlands of the West Bank and the cease-fire line. At first the Israelis did nothing about it. At the same time that Kfar Etzion was resettled, however, it was decided to rebuild Beit HaArava, the Kibbutz Meuchad settlement located before 1948 at the Jordan River's junction with the Dead Sea. By May, 1968, the government decided that Jewish settlements were to be established throughout the Jordan Valley.

Officially, both the late Prime Minister Eshkol and present Prime Minister Meir have stated that Israeli government policy is that the Jordan River must remain Israel's security border, beyond which no Arab army may pass. In practice, the post-1968 construction of fourteen settlements linking the Beit Shean Valley in the north in prewar Israel with the Dead Sea at Ein Gedi suggested that Israel had adopted the Allon Plan, which called for an eventual peace settlement in which most of the West Bank would be an Arab-controlled demilitarized zone. But, besides Jerusalem, Latrun, (subsequently) Etzion and (more subsequently) Kiryat Arba, Israel would retain control of the strategically vital western side of the Jordan, holding the strip of land between the river and the mountains by plotting Jewish settlements there.

The Allon Plan was ingenious for several reasons. First of all, in terms of Israeli politics, it made sense, since Allon, who was originally identified with the Achdut Avoda Party, which tended to be annexation-

ist, was now a candidate for the succession to the post of Prime Minister on the part of ex-Achdut Avoda elements within Ma'i and the ex-Mapai "Old Guard." For they mistrusted Dayan, wanted another candidate with a military record and were anti-annexationist for demographic reasons. The congruence between this coalition and the Allon Plan is obvious.

The plan made sense on economic grounds, since the Jordan River Valley, because of its climate, is a potential exporter of winter vegetables to Europe. It would also seem sensible from the demographic and security points of view. Annexationist critics such as S. Peres point out, however, that the Allon Plan would give the cities and villages of Israel's coastal belt from Tel Aviv to Haifa no protection against terrorists who might begin operating from the evacuated West Bank. But the great advantage of the Allon Plan was that, while any evacuation of land was postponed to the nebulous future, after an Israel-Jordan peace agreement, action for integrating the Jordan Valley into Israel and the planting of settlements there could be undertaken immediately. Indeed, despite bitter criticism of the Allon Plan by the annexationists, the majority of settlements in Latrun and the Jordan Valley are affiliated with annexationist groups or parties (Herut-Betar, Kibbutz Meuchad, Mafdal, Poale Agudat Israel), although the nonannexationist Ihud HaKibbutzim Ve-HaKevutzot and Tnuat HaMoshavim (both Ma'i) also have their share in the settlements.

Indeed, the Allon Plan has become the ground upon which nonannexationist opinion stands. While some Ma'i anti-annexationists (Finance Minister Sapir, Foreign Minister Eban, Jerusalem Mayor Kollek) originally looked upon the plan as an Israeli statement of its maximum position, it now seems agreed that, on the contrary, the Allon Plan represents a statement of the minimum Israeli position. In 1969 the plan was in effect adopted as part of Ma'i's "Oral Law" on the problem of territories. Since then Ma'i has frequently reiterated its stand. From time to time Dayan, in order to counter Allon, has suggested that he has a plan of his own representing an intermediate position between the Allon Plan and the annexationist stand. However no concrete details of this have ever been revealed.

Dayan's emphasis has been quite different. As administrator of the West Bank he initiated (or at least approved) a policy of allowing free contact and trade

between the West Bank and the Arab world. Thus, in the summer of 1972, 150,000 tourists from Arab countries visited Israel and the West Bank. Though this policy has come under some fire from the more extreme annexationists (Herut, Mercaz Hofshi, Movement for the Whole Land of Israel), it has had general popular support. At the same time, Dayan has strongly supported the integration of the West Bank's economy with that of Israel. Today virtually all travel barriers between Israel and the West Bank have been abolished. Knowledge of Hebrew is growing on the West Bank. Tens of thousands of West Bank Arabs are working in Israel, mainly in unskilled positions, a development which has raised West Bank wages almost to Israeli levels.

This economic integration has led to dissatisfaction. Anti-annexationists fear that Israel's economy will come to depend on cheap Arab unskilled labor as Jews cease to fill unskilled positions. Economic benefits, they argue, will not reconcile Arabs to Jewish rule of, in another generation, a half-Arab country. Finance Minister Sapir, the leader of the ex-Mapai elements in Ma'i, is one leading anti-annexationist. In addition to other ex-Mapai ministers (e.g., Foreign Minister Eban), he has now been joined in his concern by Allon, Trade Union Secretary General Ben Aharon (ex-Achdut Avoda) and Labor Minister Y. Almogi (ex-Rafi). The Mapam and ILP are also concerned.

But what is the alternative to annexation? With the exception of younger ex-Mapai leaders (Eliav, Ofer), Ma'i anti-annexationists have been relatively quiet. Part of this relates to the Mapai establishment's distaste, after fifty years of dominating the Israeli Jewish community, for any sort of "ideological" position or struggle. Especially after Ma'i was formed, there was a distaste for any controversy that might split the Party and allow Dayan, whom they dislike, to appeal to the public.

Mapam, the largest anti-annexationist party, suggested a peace plan in August, 1967, which called for the return of the West Bank to Jordan except for Jerusalem and "border adjustments" (e.g., Latrun) with an Israel-Jordan customs union. In the meantime, Mapam urged Israel to show good will toward the Arabs by refraining from settling the West Bank. Mapam itself refrained from rebuilding its pre-1948 settlement of Revadim in the Etzion area or joining in building settlements along the Jordan. Indeed,

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in 1969 Mapam's price for electoral union with Ma'i was that Ma'i not officially endorse the Allon Plan.

But Mapam's own problems, its declining electoral appeal, growing disagreement between party factions as to the future of the Party and its fierce opposition to Dayan's becoming Prime Minister dictated an alliance with Allon. Moreover, while Mapam feels itself closest to ex-Mapai elements on security questions (with ex-Achdut Avoda a distant second), on socio-economic issues Mapam feels closest to ex-Achdut Avoda.

Hence the "right" and "center" of Mapam, the elements headed by the leadership of the Kibbutz Artzi that wish for closer ties with Ma'i, have refrained from criticizing the Allon Plan. They have endorsed the retention of the Etzion area and have been careful to praise the courage and idealism of the Hebron settlers. Anti-annexationism was the property of the Party's left, some of which dropped out in 1969 to protest the alignment with Ma'i, and the rest of which has chosen to emphasize other issues.

The situation in the other two "anti-annexationist" parties is not dissimilar. While a minority in the ILP (including former Justice Minister Rosen and Tourism Minister Kol) favor the retrocession of all the West Bank except East Jerusalem (and Rosen would not even exclude that), the Party's majority, led by G. Hausner, has been favorable to the Allon Plan. This allows it to appear "patriotic" while differentiating its stand from the other "middle-class" party, the annexationist Gahal. The Maki majority also, even after the death of its leader M. Sneh, seems, although guardedly, to favor the Allon Plan. Here also the Party's minority, led by E. Wilenska, favors return to the 1967 borders while being vague about East Jerusalem.

But all plans for the West Bank ended at a similar sticking point. However much or little was to be returned to Jordan, there were large populated areas which must remain under Israeli military control until the distant day that Jordan will sign a peace treaty. The annexationists realized that until the perhaps equally distant day when the USSR decides to permit one million or so Soviet Jews to migrate to Israel, an area containing 600,000 Arabs must be included within the Jewish State without altering its character.

Perhaps the principal development to emerge over the past two years has been the tentative start of a common answer to both problems, the Palestinian solution. In 1967 this solution was the idea of a few on the far left, especially in Maki and Ha'olam Hazeh. It seemed to contradict both the annexationists and those who hoped to surrender the West Bank in return for peace. For the Palestinian Arabs, themselves not a state, could not give Israel the recognition its leaders desire. Finally, a Palestinian State without Jerusalem or, in the light

of the Allon Plan, a Palestinian State on the West Bank, demilitarized and completely surrounded by Israel, would be something of a joke.

But the "Palestinian" idea was not without its ambiguities. For some it meant negotiation with the Arab leaders of the West Bank with a view toward creating an Arab State in the West Bank (and perhaps Gaza) which might have various economic or other links with Israel. For others it meant negotiation with the leaders of the Palestinian commando groups based in Lebanon, Syria and Jordan, either with a view toward creating such a state or, on the contrary, creating a Palestinian State composed of Transjordan, which had a Palestinian majority and in which most Palestinians lived, with which the West Bank and Gaza might be united.

Above all, the Palestinian idea had the advantage that it enabled anti-annexationists to suggest a plan of action other than waiting for King Hussein to change his mind. After 1967 the seeming evolution of a distinctive Palestinian nationalism fueled this concept. After the Jordanian army's destruction of the Palestinian commando groups in 1970-71—leading some terrorists to give themselves up to the Israelis rather than surrender to Hussein—it is doubtful that the West Bankers had any desire to return to Hussein's rule.

In 1967, as stated, the "Palestinian concept" was the property of Maki and Ha'olam Hazeh. By 1969, Siah (New Israeli Left), which split from Mapam to protest the alignment with Ma'i, also stressed Palestinian claims. The Young Mapam, representing those elements in Mapam that resented the alignment but did not split with the Party, took a like stand. Indeed, by 1970, as Palestinian attacks on Israelis and Israeli property continued, Ma'i's Mishmeret Tseira also attacked the government's policy and called for negotiations with the Palestinians over the West Bank. A. Eliav, Secretary General of Ma'i in 1970 and close to Sapir's ex-Mapai machine, has made the same suggestion, somewhat more guardedly.

The events of summer, 1970, were a turning point. For instance, the ILP now came out in favor of autonomy for the West Bank, at least as an interim measure. The Movement for Peace and Security, founded in 1967 by anti-annexationist academics, now came out for the "self-definition" of the Palestinians. Since it had the backing of Mapam, this can be taken to mean that Mapam also was no longer keen on returning the West Bank to Jordan, although it did not formally alter its program.

Nor was the Palestinian concept confined to the "left." S. Peres called for Israeli annexation of the West Bank and Gaza, the resultant "Greater Israel" to be directed by a parliament of which 71 per cent would be elected by the Israeli Knesset, 19 per cent by the West Bank (not including East Jerusalem) and 10 per cent by Gaza. Such a concept was not,

except for its rhetoric, basically different from the ideas for Israel-Palestine federation that Ha'olam Hazeh or Maki had put forth in 1967. For that matter, Moshe Dayan occasionally suggested that the inhabitants of the West Bank constituted a distinct ethnic group which must be politically represented in some way.

Another factor seems to have exerted a decided influence, yet it cannot be measured. As late as 1970 many Israelis still thought of the conflict as an Israel-Arab one, in which Israel's aim must be to split the unified Arab front. But after the controversy over the August, 1970, cease-fire, it became obvious to all that the dispute had now become one between Israel and Egypt. Its focus was now Sinai rather than the West Bank. Accordingly, a treaty between Israel and King Hussein, or between Israel and Palestinian leaders, even if possible, is now irrelevant. One proof that this is now the Israelis' view of the conflict is that the controversy between annexationist and anti-annexationist centers on Sharmel-Sheik rather than the West Bank. And since 1970's cease-fire Israelis do not expect any real settlement with Egypt. Declining interest in, and financial support for, the movement for a Whole Land of Israel is one result of this belief.

Government policy has not altered. Political leaders continue to stress that there is room for only two states between the Iraqi Desert and the Mediterranean Sea. There is, moreover, an obvious contradiction between any fixed political status for the West Bank and the recent declarations by Dayan and Minister Galili (ex-Achdut Avoda, now Meir's close advisor) that Jewish settlement must be permitted throughout the West Bank.

Yet there are signs of Israeli moves to change the West Bank's status. The August, 1971, decision to permit a conference of West Bank officials in Beit Jala was one example. The spring, 1972, elections on the West Bank were another. The Israelis have not by any means decided on the West Bank's future. But there seems to be a consensus that military administration cannot last forever and that Nablus or Jenin cannot be treated as suburbs of Tel Aviv.

Still, the seeming Israeli consensus, including Herut and Mafdal annexationists as well as ILP and Mapam anti-annexationists, should not be overemphasized. While all now appear united in thinking it desirable to grant autonomy to the Arabs of the West Bank, the extent of this autonomy remains undefined. Is there, for example, to be a wide West Bank parliament? What will be the relations of Arabs in East Jerusalem or Gaza to it? Would it, to ask the most controversial question, have the right to restrict or limit Jewish settlement in the West Bank? What are the means, if they exist, for the West Bank Arabs to be represented in those matters which the Israeli government will inevitably continue to handle? All of these questions are unresolved, all can be expected to cause serious splits among the Israelis in the future.

Of course, any status for the West Bank, even a purportedly provisional one, must take Arab opinion on the West Bank into account. Given these conditions, it is by no means surprising that the Israeli government has refrained from defining its policy too closely. But, by the same token, the decisive steps toward creating some sort of political entity on the West Bank seem to have been accepted by all segments of Israeli opinion.