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**Cooperation project on  
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migration, and the movement of persons**

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***Assessing the Impact of Migration on  
Palestinian Society in the West Bank and Gaza***

**EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE, FLORENCE**  
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*Assessing the Impact of Migration on Palestinian Society  
in the West Bank and Gaza*

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**CARIM**

**EURO-MEDITERRANEAN CONSORTIUM FOR APPLIED RESEARCH  
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The Valencia Ministerial Meeting in April 2002, went a step further by outlining a 'Regional cooperation programme in the field of justice, in combating drugs, organised crime and terrorism as well as cooperation in the treatment of issues relating to social integration of migrants, migration and movement of people' (referred to in the document as the JHA-Regional MEDA programme). This programme has been adopted by the European Commission on the 16/12/2002 (PE/2002/2521).

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- Mediterranean migration database
- Studies and research
- Training

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## 1 The political history of Palestinian migration

Migration has had, and still has, an immense impact on the life of Palestinians whose political, social and literary narrative is infused with the theme of migration, in its various forms, as experienced by generations of Palestinians. One of the most significant experiences for Palestinians was 1948 when their society was shattered, and large percentage of them became refugees (Kimmerling and Migdal, 1998).<sup>1</sup> Palestinians call this forced migration *al-Nekba* or catastrophe, meaning dispossession, dispersal, the shattering of their society, and continued statelessness. As things stand, more than half the Palestinian people live outside historic (or Mandate) Palestine. Hundreds of thousands live in refugee camps set up by the United Nations following *al-Nekba* in the areas where Palestinians sought refuge. Palestinian refugees are the largest and longest-standing refugee population in the world (Al-Ali, July 2004). The Arab states (mainly the oil-producing Gulf states) have also been home to large flows of skilled and professional Palestinian labour migration, while Israel attracted between a fifth and a quarter of the Palestinian labour force in the West Bank and Gaza until early 2000.

Palestinian emigration took place during the British Mandate and before that when Palestine was under Ottoman rule during the nineteenth century and up to the First World War. Even in its earlier stages migration left a mark on life in Palestinian towns as emigrants to the Americas made periodic visits to seek wives (or husbands), or oversee the progress of their investments, or to collect rents particularly in towns such as Ramallah and Bethlehem (Taraki and Giacaman, 2006). This, as well as internal migration from rural areas, and the rise of Palestinian coastal towns during the Mandate, helped transform the class structure of these towns. This process of class transformation, particularly the substantial enlargement of the middle class, accelerated after 1948, with some unexpected consequences. Indeed the creation of refugee camps composed mostly of dispossessed farmers and *déclassé* workers located on the outskirts of the towns of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip became one of the important features of Palestinian society in these areas.

However, towns and cities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and in the surrounding Arab countries hosted middle-class Palestinian refugees and emigrants who were able to integrate themselves into the socio-cultural and economic life of these towns and cities. In the West Bank a town like Ramallah where large numbers of its leading indigenous families emigrated during the 20th century to North and South America was helped by this fact to acquire embryonic features of a 'metropolis'; that is, an urban space that embraces all its residents (immigrants as well as traditionally established families), a feature not found in towns like Hebron and Nablus, for example. The extension of the influence of the Palestinian national movement during the 1970s through its political organizations, and the establishment of local universities, as well as mass and professional organizations, helped this process. The creation of the Palestinian Authority (hereafter PA) in 1994 accelerated this further since Israel accelerated steps to close East Jerusalem to Palestinians. As a result East Jerusalem witnessed a high rate of out-migration, as Israel embarked soon after its occupation of the city on a policy of Judaization of the city, a process accelerated since the Oslo Accords in 1993. The positioning of PA central institutions in Ramallah, and its housing the headquarters of political parties, NGOs, professional organizations, firms, banks, and cultural institutions, also gave the twin towns of Ramallah–Al-Beira some features of a metropolis. The optimism that followed the signing of the Oslo Accords encouraged some expatriate Palestinian businessmen to invest in the town and in new

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1 Of the estimated three-quarters of a million Palestinians who left their homes in 1948, 39% went to the West Bank, 26% to Gaza (to make up two-thirds of its population in the early 1950s), 14% to Lebanon, 10% to Syria and another 10% to the East Bank of Jordan, and about 1% to Egypt (Hilal, 1992: 40). As a result of in-migration, the West Bank population increased by 60% at a time when its economy, infrastructure, and outlets were severed from the rest of Palestine (as it became Israel). In Gaza the situation was even more dramatic since it was the least developed part of Palestine, yet its population tripled in 1948 as a result of influx of Palestinian refugees from the rest of the severed country (Hilal, 1992: 51; see also, Kossaifi, 1980).

enterprises. The fact that Ramallah had a sizeable Christian minority allowed it to acquire a degree of 'openness' needed to foster middle class activities, interests and tastes (Taraki and Giacaman, 2006).

### *Residents, refugees and emigrants*

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) estimates that there were 9.8 million Palestinians in the world at the end of 2004 (PCBS, 2005, 10). They were distributed as follows: 3.7 million (37.8%) in the West Bank and Gaza Strip; 1.1 million in Israel (11.2%); 2.8 million (29.5%) in Jordan; 427.5 thousand (4.4%) in Lebanon; 449.2 thousand (4.6% of total) in Syria; 63.8 thousand (0.7%) in Egypt; 318.9 thousand (3.2%) in Saudi Arabia; 168.5 thousand (1.7%) in Kuwait,<sup>2</sup> Qatar and Emirate; 119 thousand (1.2%) in Iraq and Libya; 6.7 thousand (or 0.1%) in other Arab countries; 241.1 thousand (2.5%) in the USA; 307,000 (3.1%) in other countries (of which 191,000 in Europe).<sup>3</sup>

At the beginning of 2000 there were over four million Palestinian refugees according to UNRWA figures,<sup>4</sup> while others put the figure at five million (Hanafi, 2001: 66). An international agency (UNRWA) was set up, in 1949, by the United Nations to administer the refugee camps that were set up in Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, West Bank and Gaza Strip. In all, some sixty refugee camps were set up including ten established in Jordan and Syria following the 1967 war to accommodate those displaced during and immediately after the war. In Lebanon three camps were completely wiped out (Tel al-Za'ter, Dhubai, and Gisir al-Basha in Lebanon) during the civil war of 1975-89, while others were scenes of massacres during the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 (Sabra and Shatila). The driving out of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) from Lebanon following the Israeli siege of Beirut left Palestinian camps vulnerable and impoverished, a condition that persuaded many Palestinians from these camps to seek political asylum in Europe and Canada. There are twenty-seven camps in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (nineteen in the West Bank and eight in the Gaza Strip). UNRWA provided essential services to camp refugees, particularly basic education, but could not provide the much needed employment opportunities. This left emigration as the only alternative for many camp dwellers. After the occupation of the rest of Palestine by Israel in 1967, unskilled or semi-skilled jobs became available for camp dwellers and other Palestinians in Israel.

As things stand there are no signs that the Palestinian refugee problem will be resolved in the foreseeable future. The Palestinian inhabitants of refugee camps view them as a temporary habitat where they live until they can return to their usurped homeland. Although most Palestinian refugees were born in camps or in the *diaspora* or *shatat* (dispersal) they still identify with the birthplace of their fathers or grandfathers in historic Palestine. This identity is reinforced by the special status of Palestinian refugees and immigrants in most of the Arab countries which bar them from acquiring the full the rights of citizenship and permanent residence (Zureik, 1996; Aruri, 2001; Shiblak, 2005).

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2 One study of the demographic composition of Kuwait in 1990 revealed that the total population of Kuwait totalled 1,791,500 was distributed as follows; Kuwaitis 27%; Palestinian 14%; Egyptian 8.7%, Indians 17%; Iranians 3.3%; Filipinos 1.8%, no nationality; 9%; other nationalities 16.7% (cited by Abu Bakr, 2000: 30–31). Most Palestinians in Kuwait were from the West Bank and Gaza.

3 The estimate that 191,000 Palestinians were living in Europe in 2004 is based on research published in 2005 (see Shiblak, 2005: 26). The study gives the following estimate of the distribution of Palestinians in Europe; 80,000 in Germany; 50,000 in the Scandinavian countries; 20,000 in the UK; 12,000 in Spain; 5,000 in France; 4,000 in Greece; and 20,000 in the remaining European countries.

4 UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian refugees in the Near East) defines, Palestinian refugees as persons whose normal place of residence was Palestine between June 1946 and May 1948 (the creation of the State of Israel) and who lost their homes and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 Arab-Israeli conflict. The number of registered Palestinian refugees has grown from 914,000 in 1950 to over 4 million in 2002 as a result on natural growth (see [www.unrwa.org](http://www.unrwa.org)). According to figures provided by the Agency the number of registered Palestinian refugees was over 4 million in December 2002, and those living in camps exceeded 282,000.

After 1948, the central-eastern hilly part of Palestine (the West Bank) was annexed by Jordan and its inhabitants granted Jordanian nationality which facilitated their settlement into the East Bank of Jordan where there were more work opportunities in the 1950s and 1960s, and then in the Gulf countries where professional and skilled labour was needed. The tiny strip of land at the southern tip of Palestine (the Gaza Strip) came under Egyptian administration. Although it was difficult for Palestinians in Gaza to travel outside Egypt, many managed to find work in the Gulf states.

### ***Displacement, occupation and migration following the 1967 war***

The 1967 Arab-Israeli war precipitated a new wave of out-migrants from the West Bank and Gaza Strip. They fled mostly to Jordan and Syria, and became 'displaced persons' as they were not allowed (by Israeli occupation authorities) to return to the West Bank and Gaza. Many of them were refugees for a second time. The estimated 300,000 Palestinians who fled to the East Bank of Jordan and Syria during and shortly after the 1967 war did so because they felt their situation would be precarious under the Israeli occupation or were fearful of being cut off from close relatives in Jordan and the Gulf states and possibly from remittances sent by relatives abroad (Hilal, 1992).

The Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza created a new political and economic order, and the two regions became totally economically dependent on the Israeli economy; not only did Palestinian markets become captive to Israeli goods and commodities as all tariff and customs barriers were removed, but a significant section of the Palestinian labour force became dependent for employment on the Israeli labour market. During the 1970s and 1980s over a third of the Palestinian labour force became dependent on for its employment on Israel labour markets. During the 1990s the percentage employed in Israel dropped, in response to Israeli measures, to a fourth and then a fifth of the total Palestinian labour force. This, together with the fact that Israel imposed a total security regime of control was bound to leave indelible marks on Palestinian society.

### ***The Gulf War and the expulsion of the Palestinians***

The aftermath of the 1991 Gulf War, and the establishment of a Palestinian Authority (PA) as a form of self-government with limited powers on parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip facilitated the return of a large number of expatriates. This phenomenon was however short-lived, and both Palestinian regions went back to exporting skilled labour soon after the onset of the second *intifada* at the end of September 2000 following the collapse of the final status negotiations in July 2000. By accusing the PA of supporting 'terrorism' Israel re-invaded the West Bank in spring 2002. This was accompanied by the intensification of a policy of closure, of imposing restrictions on movement between towns, villages and villages, the imprisonment of thousands of militants in the West Bank, and targeted assassination of militants in the Gaza Strip. It continued building an enlarging its settlements in the West Bank and embarked on building the Separation Wall which annexes all the large settlements, and all of East Jerusalem and its environs to Israel. In short, Palestinian society in the West Bank and Gaza reverted to its pre-1990 period as a major exporter of skilled labour, but this time with little export of labour to Jordan (which cut its administrative links with the West Bank in 1988), or to Israel with its new policy of separation from Gaza and the populated areas of the West Bank.

The war against Iraq launched in March 2003 put the Palestinian community in Iraq (estimated at 90,000 in 2004) in a precarious situation; most of them were evicted from their homes which were subsidized by the ousted Ba'thist regime (Al-Ali, 2004). Once again a Palestinian community in the diaspora found itself vulnerable and unwelcome by any of the neighbouring countries, and not in possession of the necessary Palestinian identity documents (which need Israeli approval) to find refuge



in territory controlled by the PA.<sup>5</sup> In the mid-1990s, similar conditions were created for the Palestinian community in Libya which was thrown on the Libyan-Egyptian border for months with no where to go, simply because the Libyan leadership wanted to show its opposition to the Oslo Accords.

This overview shows the multiple political, socio-economic and legal situations the West Bank and Gaza Strip undergone since 1948. After *al-Nekba* these two areas found themselves in conditions that made emigration a serious option for a high percentage of individuals and families. Putting aside life-threatening situations created by war and/or ethnic cleansing measures as in 1948 (Morris, 1987; Pappé, 1994; Masalha, 1992), Palestinian communities in these areas witnessed a such steady stream of out-migrants since the early 1950s to make it a structural feature of Palestinian society which was only abated, as has been mentioned, temporarily with the establishment of the PA in 1994.

This paper attempts to delineate the impact of migration on Palestinian society in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. It entertains the thesis that migration has been both a factor in maintaining Palestinian communities in these areas, as well as a dynamic that produced and maintained de-development,<sup>6</sup> dependency, and conservatism. To fully comprehend the full impact of Palestinian out-migration it needs to be placed in its concrete historical and socio-economic and political context starting with the explosion of Palestinian society in 1948, its subjugation to settler-colonial rule, and its deprivation of statehood and a metropolis. It is also necessary to situate the Palestinian emigrants within the political and socio-cultural and political milieu of their host societies. One cannot ignore the changes that the Middle East as a whole has witnessed since the early 1980s. Out-migration nevertheless has created assets that could be harnessed in the process of Palestinian nation-building should suitable political conditions materialize to create a centre of gravity for the Palestinian shatat or diaspora.

## 2 Palestinian migration: scale, destinations and features

There have been several estimates of the size of out-migration from the West Bank and Gaza Strip following *al-Nekba* and the 1967 war. All tend to stress the relative size of the phenomena, but very few have attempted to examine its repercussions of on Palestinian society and polity.

One major consequence of the severance of the West Bank from its Palestinian hinterland and its incorporation by Jordan was a steady stream of labour migration from the West Bank to the East Bank and to the Gulf states. The underlying causes of this out-migration were political and economic. Its annexation by the Kingdom of Jordan signified the defeat and the collapse of the pre-1948 Palestinian national movement. This created a feeling of political disaffection and estrangement among Palestinians who saw out-migration as a viable option for those able to take on such an enterprise. The 1950s and 1960s were marked by high rates of unemployment and underemployment, and a clear economic marginalization of the West Bank most evident in the concentration of public capital

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5 Since its occupation of the West Bank and Gaza in June 1967, Israel has unilaterally controlled the civil register of the Palestinian population, and has restricted movement in and out of the OPT for Palestinians and other non-Israelis. The PA cannot issue travel documents to resident and non-resident Palestinians without Israeli approval. Since the Palestinian Legislative Council elections in January 2006, many thousands of foreign passport holders of Palestinian and non-Palestinian origin living and/or working in the PTO were suddenly denied entry, deported or threatened with deportation. Israel has arrogated to itself the prerogative of allowing or refusing work permits to foreigners in these territories. The majority of foreign passport holders who are denied entry have relatives in the West Bank and Gaza and are entitled to family re-unionification by international conventions and recognized norms. The business community has also been affected by these measures which appear to be designed to undermine the Palestinian economy and to put pressure on Palestinians to leave. Several successful expatriate businessmen who have invested heavily in building their community for over a decade, are now being refused entry or deported with barely a month's warning.

6 The term 'de-development' was used by Sara Roy (1995) to indicate policies and procedures calculated to create conditions of extreme dependency and pauperization as a result of dispossession of land and water resources, the 'pumping out' of Palestinian labour, and the destruction of Palestinian institutions.

investment in the East Bank, and in sponsoring Amman as the fast-growing capital of the Kingdom, at the expense of Jerusalem (Hilal, 1975: 136). This political and economic marginalization of the West Bank explains why, for example, its population increased only insignificantly between 1948 and 1967 (when occupied by Israel), and the shifting ratios of the population distribution between the West Bank and the East Bank of the Jordan. When the first Jordanian census was taken in 1952, only 44% of the population of Jordan lived in the East Bank while the rest lived in the West Bank. When the second census was taken in 1961 the percentage of population living in the East Bank rose to 53%, and was estimated at 62% in June 1967 (Hilal, 1992: 43). The percentage of Palestinians living in the East Bank rose from 31% in 1952, to 43% in 1961 (Kossaiifi, 1980: 20).

In 1961 the Jordanian population census revealed that 16% of the labour force in the West Bank was employed outside Jordan, not counting those working in the East Bank, or Palestinians who migrated to the East Bank and working abroad (Jordan, 1961 census, Table 6.1).

In September 1967, an Israeli census of the population of the West Bank and Gaza Strip revealed that a third (33.1%) of heads of household in these areas had sons and daughters abroad. It is very likely that these were underestimates as some households were likely to have refrained from divulging information on the whereabouts of their sons and daughters. This is in addition to the demographic fact that and some household heads would be too young to have sons and daughters but likely to have other close relatives abroad (brothers or sisters for example). The Israeli census showed almost equal out-migration rates among the various types of settlements; towns with a rate of 33.8%; villages with a rate of 33%: and camps with a rate of 31.7%. Some 11% of the emigrants were in Europe and the Americas, 41% were in Jordan, and the rest (48%) in other countries, mostly in the Gulf states (Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics, 1970, No. 5, Tables 18, 25).

A survey conducted by a Palestinian economist in the mid-1980s found that 40% of a sample of 1,186 households in the West Bank and Strip had household members living outside the West Bank and Gaza Strip (65% were sons or daughters and 17% were brothers and sisters of a head of household). The survey found that nearly two-thirds (65.5%) of emigrants were aged 21–35 (Abu Shukur, 1990: 53–57). It also found that households in towns had a much a lower ratio of emigrants than village households and households in refugee camps (38.6%, 44.5%, and 39.4% respectively).

In 1999, a survey designed by the Institute of the Women's Studies (IWS) at Birzeit University<sup>7</sup> and carried out by the PCBS recorded a high rate of emigration (nearly half the households had emigrant members living abroad),<sup>8</sup> but revealed a wide fluctuation within each of the settlement types, and indicated a pattern of utilization of family and local community networks.<sup>9</sup> A survey by the PCBS in 2006 suggested that 39.5% of persons were living outside the Palestinian territories with wide variations from district to district (ranging from 24% in North Gaza to 56% in Hebron)<sup>10</sup>. Indeed, it

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7 The author was a member of the team which designed the questionnaire, took part in training fieldworkers and in the analysis of some of the collected data. The survey included towns, villages and refugee camps with a total of 2,254 households and a population of 14,866. Some of the preliminary results of the survey were published in Giacaman and Johnson (2002), and in Taraki (2006). The survey covered nineteen communities, fourteen in the West Bank and five in Gaza, of which six were towns (including East Jerusalem, Hebron, Jenin, Nablus, Ramallah, Gaza City), five were refugee camps, and eight were villages.

8 The IWS survey recorded that half the households surveyed have very close relatives abroad; 46% of households in towns had emigrants abroad, compared to 56% in camps and 53% in villages.

9 The IWS survey recorded ratios of households with emigrants in towns ranging between 36% (Gaza City), 43% (Hebron), 54% (East Jerusalem), to 65% (Ramallah and Nablus). The ratios for the 8 villages ranged from 28% to 88%, and from 39% to 66% for the 5 refugee camps (Hilal in Taraki and Giacaman, 2006).

10 See; Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2006, Survey of the Impact of the Israeli Unilateral Measures on the Social, Economic, and Environmental Conditions of the Palestinian Households: Main Findings. Ramallah. Web-site: <http://www.pcbs.gov.ps>.

has been suggested that Palestinians and Iraqis have been increasingly mobilizing trans-national social networks to facilitate their migration to Western Europe (Al-Ali, 2004).<sup>11</sup>

### ***The routing of out-migration***

The IWS survey highlighted that nearly three-quarters (73%) of emigrants from refugee camps in the West Bank and Gaza Strip live in Jordan, 16% in the Gulf states, 3% in North America, 12 and 8,5% elsewhere. In contrast less than 37% of village emigrants live in Jordan, 18% live in the Gulf states, and 34% live in the USA and Canada and 11% reside in other countries (South America, Australia, Europe). Emigrants from the towns of the West Bank and Gaza were found living in the following destinations; 48% in Jordan, 35% in the Gulf states, 9% in the US and Canada, and 8% elsewhere. This shows that emigrants follow patterns established by their relatives and local community members who emigrated before them and established a foothold in the host country. This is important for understanding the relationship between out-migrants and their communities of origin. The study reveals that the relationship is not straightforward. It cannot be reduced simply to the formula stating that emigrants settle abroad in their new destinations and start to send money to their families back home, or invest in their community of origin. It is a relationship that does partially involve this type of relationship, but also involves marriage in the community of origin, paving the way for immigration of relatives and others from the community of origin, exchanging visits, and other forms of interaction (telephone, electronic mail, etc). For some it could also mean returning in old age to the original community in attempt to seek warm relationships (actual or imaginary) in the original community that they missed in the host country.

Migration patterns or channels are also structured and re-structured by the motives for out-migration. In the mid-1980s the Abu Shukr survey cited three main reasons for out-migration: availability of work (51%); marriage (25%); and study (17.5%). Political motives were given in 5% of cases. But it is not only the availability of work that provide the incentive to emigrate but it was found that emigrants sought better work conditions, such as higher salaries and wages. Nearly two-thirds (65%) of the emigrants in the Abu Shukr survey who worked in the West Bank and Gaza gave up their jobs to seek better paid employment abroad. Some 11% of the others who worked in the West Bank and Gaza left to go abroad for political reasons, and 7% were wives who left their jobs to follow their emigrant husbands (Abu Shukr, 1990: 65–6).<sup>13</sup>

The IWS survey recorded that the main reasons given for emigration from Palestinian villages (as reported by a close relative of the emigrant) were: work (40%), marriage (27%), expulsion by Israel (11%), study (10%),<sup>14</sup> being born in the host country (7%), and accompanying another emigrant (as a

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11 A survey by Fafo carried out in 2000 on emigration among Palestinians in Lebanon estimated that one in every ten Palestinian living in Lebanon has a relative living in Europe (Fafo, 2000).

12 Palestinians began migrating to the USA at the turn of the century, but their emigration rate accelerated after 1948, and accelerated further in mid-1960s as the USA changed its immigration laws, and Palestinian emigration witnessed an upsurge after the 1991 Gulf War. According to one study (Cainker et al., 2004) most Palestinians see their presence in the US as temporary, and as a strategy to cope with political and economic turbulence and resort to it in order maximize family security and income. The authors of the above study conclude that there is a phase in the life cycle (after the age of 60) when social relationships for immigrants are very important. At this stage in life a strategy to go back to home country becomes desirable. However, for Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza this option is still subject to Israeli approval.

13 The survey reveals differences between the West Bank and Gaza Strip in the weight that households in the two regions gave to seeking better work conditions (particularly higher wages) as the reason for migration. The percentage in the West Bank was 70.5% compared to 57% in Gaza. The percentage of those quitting jobs to join their husbands was 11% in the West Bank, and under 2.5% in Gaza. Those who left for political reasons (probably as a response Israeli repression) formed a much higher percentage in the Gaza Strip than in the West Bank (21% and 5% respectively). Only a small percentage (5%) from both areas went abroad to continue their education (Abu Shukr, 1990: 66).

14 With the establishment of universities and colleges in the West Bank and Gaza from the mid-1970s onwards, the numbers leaving for study fell markedly. By 2005 there were 10 Palestinian universities (7 in the West Bank, and 3 in Gaza), and 6

spouse or a dependent) (4/5%). The main reasons for out-migration from refugee camps were: marriage (29%), expulsion (29%), seeking work (19%), to accompany another emigrant (10%), study (7%), and being born in the host country (6%). Yet another pattern emerges for the town emigrants. Here the dominant reasons given for emigration were: marriage (30%), seeking work (28%), expulsion (14%), study (12%), accompanying another emigrant (8%), and being born in host country (7%).

What can be inferred from the above data is that there is no single dominant pattern of emigration for all the communities, but those out-migration patterns are formed by the history of the migration process in each community through, largely, the networks established over time by the emigrants of that community. It is for this reason that some social scientists have suggested viewing migration as a result of new forms of trans-national solidarity between different scattered communities.

The data also points to a clear gender dimension as to the reasons for emigration: work appears as the main motive for the emigration of men, and marriage as the main motive for the emigration of women.<sup>15</sup> This means that emigration involves often the formation of new families and households in the countries of destination. This is bound to affect the way the new household in the host country relates to the households in the community of origin (in terms of remittances, frequency of visiting, investment, property sharing, etc).

The formation of migration pattern becomes more obvious if the reasons for out-migration are viewed in the context of the host or receiving country. More than a quarter (26%) of emigrants from the West Bank and Gaza Strip in Jordan are there for reasons of expulsion (particularly since the 1967 war). Marriage as the reason of emigration accounted for a third (33%) of those who settled in Jordan. This is expected given the fact that Jordan has a high density of Palestinians mostly from the West Bank and that Jordan granted Jordanian citizenship (until the early 1990s) to Palestinians residing in the West Bank. About 21% emigrated to Jordan for reasons of work, 6% for study, 8% as companions to other emigrants, and 6% were born there.

The migration pattern is somewhat different for Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza going to the Gulf states. Here a third went there for work, and slightly over a quarter for marriage reasons (i.e. their spouses to individuals who work there), and 10% went as companions (dependents). In other words, the majority in the Gulf states were there because the household head works there. Only a minority (8%) went there for study (probably because a close relative works and lives there), or due to expulsion (11%), and 9% were born there (i.e. have parents working and living there).

Palestinian emigrants (from the West Bank and Gaza Strip) to North America<sup>16</sup> share some characteristics with their compatriots in the Gulf. In both cases the dominant motive for migration was work. Nearly half (46%) the emigrants were in North America primarily for reasons of work, marriage

(Contd.) \_\_\_\_\_

technical colleges. The number of university students increased from 29,380 in 1994/5 (when the PA was established) to 83,408 in 2001/2 (the first year after the intifada). The number of graduates tripled between 1994/5 and 2000/1 from 3,032 to 10,794 (Hilal 2006a: 84).

15 Work and marriage have been the main reasons for emigration. If those born in the host countries are excluded, the IWS survey gives the following data: 54% of Palestinian males emigrated for reasons of work, compared with 5% of females. Nearly two-thirds of women (65.7%) emigrated for marriage reasons ('tied emigration') compared to 2.5% of males. More males than females emigrated for reasons of study (20% and 1.5% respectively). Similarly, more males were subject to forced emigration than females (20% compared to 13%). Expulsion affected older migrants (over 50 years) more than the younger generations, and is mainly related to the 1948 and 1967 Arab-Israeli wars, including those who were outside the West Bank and Gaza Strip during the 1967 war and were unable to return, and those who were expelled by the Israeli authorities in the 1970s and 1980s (many have returned since 1994). A much higher percentage of females (14% compared to under 3% for males) were reported to have emigrated to accompany another person (presumably a husband or a male family member).

16 Palestinian emigration from the Palestinian occupied territories to the US increases after every national calamity, i.e. 1948, 1970 (the PLO-Jordan conflict), 1982 (following the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the exit of the PLO from the country), after the 1991 Gulf War and the expulsion of Palestinians from Kuwait, and more recently with the Israeli re-invasion of the West Bank and the siege of Gaza.

(to spouses working there, 28%), and 5% as companions. That is, 79% in all were in North America because of work. Those who were expelled or were born there formed about 5% of Palestinians in North America. The same pattern was found for Palestinian immigrants (from the West Bank and Gaza) to Latin America where work accounted for 75% of living Palestinian immigrants to that continent, and marriage accounted for 8% of all cases: that is, 83% of all immigrants are there for reasons related to work. Another 8% were there for study reasons, while 12% were born there or emigrated there because they were expelled from the occupied territories.

Europe had a different pattern. Here the dominant reason for Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza remaining was university study (53%) of Palestinians from the two regions, while marriage and accompaniment accounted for 16.5% of all cases, and slightly less than a quarter (23%) for work.

The IWS survey found that all the nineteen Palestinian communities covered by the survey experienced a substantial rate of emigration. All of them, regardless of whether they are towns, villages or refugee camps, and regardless of their district, had a substantial number of households that had one or more emigrants living abroad. The percentage of households with 'family members who reside outside the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and Gaza Strip and who are related to the household head in one of the following ways: father, mother, son, daughter, wife, husband' ranged from 28% to 65%, and averaged 49%.<sup>17</sup> These rates are, necessarily, under estimates of actual size of the out-migration flow that these communities have experienced between 1950 and 1999. The survey covered only resident households, and could not include households without any members left behind. A Fafu survey conducted in 1995 put the rate of Palestinian households, in the Palestinian occupied areas, with emigrants at 57% (Pedersen, Randall and Khawaja, 2001).

The IWS survey revealed that nearly 50% of the reported household emigrants live in Jordan, a quarter live in the Gulf and other Arab countries, 15% live in the USA and Canada, and the rest are found in Latin America, Europe, Australia, and elsewhere. The share of each of the host countries of migrants varied according to the period of emigration: thus Jordan's share of Palestinian emigrants (from the West Bank and Gaza as reported by their close kin in the surveyed households in the two regions) fell from 60% in the period 1948–1987, to 23% during the first *intifada* (1988–1993), and stood at 28% during the period 1994–1999. In comparison the ratio of Palestinian emigrants from the same areas to the Gulf states (and other oil-producing Arab states) increased from 19% in the period 1948–1966, to 28% in the period 1968–1968, then dropped to 23% during the first *intifada*, and stood at 21% between 1994 and 1999. The increase in the ratio of emigrants to North America was steadier and rose from 7% during the period 1948–1967, to 17% during the period 1968–1987, to 31% during the period 1988–1993 (first *intifada*), and stood at 27% between 1994 and 1999 (following the establishment of the Palestinian Authority). Emigration to other countries rose conspicuously after the Israeli occupation of the two regions in 1967: from 10% in the period 1968–1987 to 23% during the second *intifada* (2000–), to 24% in the period 1994–1999.

Figures are not available on the rate or destination of emigrants during the period of the second *intifada*, but there are indications that the flow of immigration rose during this period.<sup>18</sup> Indeed public opinion polls indicate that emigration is becoming a serious option to a worrying percentage of the

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17 The IWS survey defines an emigrant as anyone related directly to the head of household and who has spent at least 6 months outside the West Bank and Gaza Strip (including East Jerusalem) prior to the survey. That is, to qualify as an emigrant, one must have crossed an international border and stayed away for at least 6 months. For a discussion of definitions and measurements of migration see Boyle et al., 1998, Ch. 2.

18 See the report by Jason Keyser (Associated Press, 1 March 2004, 'Moving abroad or to the next town, thousands of Palestinians flee hardships' where he states: 'About 10% of Qalqiliya's 40,000 people have left during the past three years of Israeli-Palestinian fighting, the mayor's office says, either to go abroad or move deeper into the West Bank. The flight from Qalqiliya mirrors migration patterns across the territory and to a lesser extent in the Gaza Strip. Thousands have moved to other towns to avoid the hardships of living too close to army checkpoints and battle zones. There are also signs that thousands more have gone abroad, mostly to Europe, Persian Gulf states and America'. A 2006 report by the ABC Demographic Project said that nearly 200,000 Palestinians emigrated since 1997 (Middle East Newline, 12 Jan. 2005).

young and educated. This has to be seen in the context of the sharp rise the rates of unemployment (including among university graduates) since 2001, and to the impasse in the political negotiations and the rapidly shrinking chances of the establishment of a viable and independent Palestinian state. In a survey conducted by the Development Study Programme (University of Birzeit) in September 2006,<sup>19</sup> some 32% (33% in the West Bank and 31% in the Gaza Strip) of a representative sample of the population (18 years and over) said that they ready to emigrate if the chance arises. If we break down this by type of settlement, age and education the results show the following:

- The rate of those wishing to emigrate is almost evenly distributed by type of settlement (35% for villages, 32% for camps and 31% for cities);
- Age and education were significant factors in the desire to emigrate; nearly 44% of the sample aged 18–29 years said they would emigrate if the chance arose, compared to 10.5% for those aged 50 and over. Similarly 35% of those with more than secondary education said they would emigrate if a chance arose, compared to 29% for those with less than secondary education
- Males (42%) were more inclined to emigrate than females (23%).

A similar result was reported, in November 2006, by the Centre for Opinion Polls and Survey Studies in An-Najah University: 31% of respondents said they consider emigrating, and 44% of respondents said that the main cause that compels them to consider emigrating is lack of security; 24% said that it is the poor economic situation (Poll No. 24, 16–18, Nov. 2006).<sup>20</sup> A survey conducted in December 2006 found that 19% of households said that at least one member of the household in the West Bank and Gaza Strip had migrated abroad during the past year<sup>21</sup>. This result has to be viewed against a background of increasing poverty, unemployment, absence of any real prospect of a solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the deteriorating internal Palestinian situation following Hamas's victory in the legislative elections in January 2006.

### ***Workers commuting daily to Israel***

The socio-economic and political situations that prevailed in the West Bank and Gaza following *al-Nekba*, together with the availability of employment opportunities in the oil-producing countries in the Gulf, and the absence of a Palestinian state explain the high rates of Palestinian migration during the period from 1948 to June 1967. Out-migration was facilitated by the high investment of Palestinians in education as a kind cultural capital that helps to compensate for their dispossession and as asset to improve their life chances in a precarious socio-political and economic situation.

With the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip two distinct types of migration emerge if we exclude the displacements caused by the war and occupation. The first is the emigration of skilled and white-collar labour to Jordan, the Gulf states, North America and Europe. The second began in the late 1960s, and accelerated during the 1970s and 1980s in the daily crossing Israeli border (the Green Line) of many tens of thousands of Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza working in Israel (or in its ever-expanding settlements). These workers came mainly from villages and camps,<sup>22</sup> and were mostly employed in unskilled and semi-skilled work in construction, agriculture and basic services. They were employed on a daily basis, usually were paid by the hour, and were excluded from

19 Public Opinion Poll, No 28, 20 Sept. 2006, Development Studies Programme, Birzeit University, <http://home.birzeit.edu/dsp>.

20 The State Information Service (an organ of the Palestinian Authority) reported in a public opinion poll conducted in mid-November 2006 that 33% (35% in Gaza and 31.5% in the West Bank) of its sample said they would emigrate if an opportunity became available (Poll No. 5/2006, <http://www.sis.gov.ps>).

21 See; Near East Consulting, Bulletin No. 12 (December 2006). Special Issue: NEC's Monthly Bulletin on Palestine. Pp; 30-32. <http://www.near-eastconsulting.com/>

22 Until the first intifada at the end of 1987/1988 entire villages and camp communities were dependent on work in Israel for their economic survival (Tamari in Heiberg and Øvnsen, 1993: 26).

insurance benefits, pensions or compensation for dismissal. Thus, their employment was intermittent, and lacking in job security of any kind. Not all Palestinian workers in Israel were officially registered or had permits, some (particularly in the West Bank because of the many entry points into Israel) worked, at all time, without such permits allowing Israeli employers (apart from paying them significantly lower wages than Israelis in similar jobs) to avoid paying labour benefits required by law, and to dismiss them at will. Palestinian workers were not allowed, by law to sleep in Israel, but required to return after to their homes in the West Bank and Gaza after work hours.

One of the main consequences of ‘integrating’ the captured Palestinian economy into the more developed and dominant Israeli economy was the maintenance of a two-track migration process: migration abroad for work or study (which often became for work after graduation) on a permanent or a long-term basis mostly of skilled and white-collar labour; and the daily commuting for work into Israel. Both had very significant and long-term impacts on Palestinian society (see *infra*.)

While half the households in the West Bank and Gaza Strip had at least one close member living abroad, the percentage of household with members working in Israel in the 1970s and 1980s was also high, particularly in villages and refugee camps. Official Israeli figures indicate that over a third of the Palestinian labour force was employed in Israel (or its settlements) ‘officially’ (i.e. only counting those who were registered or had work permits, and excluding those from East Jerusalem which Israel annexed in 1967).<sup>23</sup>

Restrictions on Palestinian entry to the Israeli labour markets began with the Gulf War of 1991 and continued after the Oslo Accords and the establishment of the Palestinian Authority in 1994. Restrictions on entry into Israel and movement generally were compounded following the eruption of the second *intifada*. However the percentage of those working in Israel continued to be relatively high and fluctuated between 16% of the total Palestinian labour force in 1995 to nearly 23% in 1999 (a year before the second *intifada*). It began to decline following the start of the second *intifada* and the building of the Separation Wall, dropping to under 10% in 2005. At the same time unemployment increased from 13% in 1999 to 23.5% in 2005, and to 29% in the second quarter of 2006.<sup>24</sup> In the second quarter of 2006 less than 5% commuted to work in Israel and the Israeli settlements and holding Palestinian identity documents, and of them from the West Bank. A similar percentage of persons who held Israeli identity documents and foreign passports but in the West Bank worked in Israel (PCBS, August 2006, Table 24). Once the wall is completed (expected in spring 2007) the percentage of Palestinians crossing to work in Israel will drop even further.

The fact that unemployment, in the last few years, did not reach higher levels is due, in no small part, to the intentional inflation of employment in the public sector (government sector). This sector employed, in mid-2006 nearly 24% of the total labour force: that is, 17% in the West Bank and 42% in Strip (PCBS, August 2006, Table 24). The inflation of the public sector, the suffocation of the economy, the weakening of Palestinian national institutions, and the severe restriction on employment in Israeli labour market, provide the necessary ‘push’ for out-migration, a policy that is openly advocated by some Israeli leaders under what is called ‘transfer’ of Palestinians.

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23 In 1986 (a year before the first *intifada*), Palestinians working in Israel ‘officially’ and excluding those from East Jerusalem (a majority of them worked in Israeli labour market), accounted for 36% of the total Palestinian labour force in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (Israel, Central Bureau of Statistics, Statistical Abstract of Israel, 1993, No. 44, Table 27.22). In the 1970s and 1980s the percentage of those working in Israel accounted for over half of those classifiable as working class (skilled, and unskilled manual workers). Shtayyeh (1998: 37) estimates that Palestinian workers in Israel earned 25–35% less than their Israeli counterparts and were barred from joining the general union of workers in Israel, Histadrut.

24 PCBS, August 2006, 31.

### ***Palestinian returnees to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip***

The Gulf War and the Oslo Accords together generated a wave of returnees to the West Bank and Gaza Strip. These returnees came from two main sources: Palestinians expelled from the Gulf states, particularly Kuwait,<sup>25</sup> as a measure to punish the PLO from its stand during the conflict, many of whom were born there or had worked there for two or more decades; and Palestinians who were allowed to enter and reside in the occupied areas as part of the terms of the Oslo Accord, most of whom worked with the various civilian and military institutions of the PLO.

What needs to be emphasized here is the total economic dependency of the 1967 Palestinian occupied areas on the Israeli economy. Not only did Israel make these areas a captive market for its commodities, and a reserve for cheap labour, but also it controlled their natural resources, particularly water, their land use, their public space, their urban growth, their agricultural and industrial development, their mass media, and their banking and financial institutions. In short the occupation created a regime of total control that covered all aspects of life in the occupied territories (excluding, possibly, family relations and underground political activities).

The establishment of the Palestinian Authority presented the opportunity to end Israeli colonial control and to create an independent Palestinian state, but this proved to be unrealistic, a realization that triggered the second *intifada* which was met with extremely harsh measures from Israel which include re-occupation of the West Bank in 2002, the imprisonment of the president of the Palestinian Authority in his headquarters in Ramallah, and the besiegement of the Gaza Strip. In other words conditions were recreated for the return of out-migration as a major feature of life in Palestinian communities.

### **3 Assessing the impact of migration on Palestinian society**

There is thus an abundance of data emphasising that emigration has been a persistent and prominent feature of Palestinian life in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.<sup>26</sup> Nonetheless, it is not easy to isolate the impact of migration on Palestinian society from the operation of other factors, for several reasons. First and foremost, there is still no Palestinian state that can build links with Palestinian communities abroad and encourage links between these with the home society to enhance the prospects of socio-economic development and cultural activities (Masood, 15 Nov. 2006). Second, the West Bank has been under a military colonial-settler occupation since June 1967, and before that was under Jordanian rule, both facts that had dramatic repercussions on its social structure. Something similar occurred in Gaza with the difference that it came under Egyptian rule which did not annex it, but nevertheless ruled it. Third, the two regions were separated in 1948, from being part of unified socio-economic or political formation and were not reconnected until both were occupied by Israel in 1967, only to be separated again following the eruption of the second *intifada*. Both regions were cut off from East Jerusalem which Palestinians seek to make the capital of their future Palestinian state. Both areas were

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25 Some estimates put the number of Palestinians expelled from Kuwait following the 1991 Gulf War at over 300,000, most of whom had Kuwaiti residence permits (Shtayyah, 1998: 26; Al-Ali, 2004). These permits were not a guarantee against collective punishment of immigrant communities, particularly Palestinian communities as they lack the protection that nation-states can provide for their citizens.

26 Official Jordanian figures reveal that the difference between the number who left and those who entered Jordan (both Banks) in the period 1962–1967 amounted to 292,000. It is estimated that 80% of these were Palestinians with Jordanian passports (Hilal, 1975: 105–6). According to Abu Shukur (1990: 5) in 1966 there were about 120,000 Palestinians from the West Bank and 45,000 from the Gaza Strip abroad. Between June 1967 and September 1967 some 200,000 left the West Bank and some 40,000 left Gaza to become ‘displaced persons’ (Shunar, 1994). Some estimate that a total of 320,000 emigrated from the West Bank and Gaza during the period starting June 1967 (the onset of the Israeli occupation) and 1992 (the eve of the Oslo Agreement; 171,000 from the West Bank, 35,000 from annexed Jerusalem, and 114,000 from Gaza (ibid., 145). Regardless of the exact number of emigrants there is no doubt that they constitute a significant and important social phenomenon.



recipients of large numbers of refugees, and have large refugee camps (MAS, Social Monitor, May 2005). These facts make it rather difficult to isolate the consequence of the ongoing processes of migration on Palestinian communities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. However, from the available quantitative and ethnographic data and from direct observation one can see that migration has had multifarious consequences (economic, political, social, and cultural level) on Palestinian society.

### *Class formation and gender relations*

As an enterprise, migration has been engaged in by a substantive percentage of Palestinian households in the hope of improving the life chances of individuals and household members, by opting out of political and economic situations that were particularly precarious and risky. The degree of success of the enterprise is difficult to quantify, but obviously it has been successful for many migrants judging by occupational mobility and wealth accumulation by emigrant Palestinians in many parts of the world. But there are also many stories of Palestinian families and communities (Lebanon, Kuwait, Libya, Iraq among other places) which tried unsuccessfully to escape situations of hardship, discrimination and inhuman conditions or did so only for a short time before losing jobs, savings, and a secure place to live. Many Palestinians feel that by migrating they have lost a great deal of their accumulated social capital in the form of extensive social networks built up in their home communities, and/or in their host communities which had to leave.

When examining the impact of migration it is important to widen the perspective to include the cultural field and the demands made on the immigrant in learning the culture of the host society and adjusting to its ways. This includes the trauma of estrangement and stress often caused by situations where there is little understanding of the complexity and multi-layer and dynamic nature of identity and by the ability (or lack of it) of migrants to move with ease from one socio-cultural context to another. Furthermore, we should also assess the impact of migration in terms of the possible loss of social capital built up by the immigrant when they leave behind a rich network of social relations developed in their home community that cannot be recompensed easily. Here immigrant women and even children are likely to pay a higher price.

Migration is to a large extent a family-based enterprise, which usually meant that the elderly stay behind, particularly in the villages.<sup>27</sup> Some emigrants choose, if they still have the option, to return to their communities in their old age (a fact born out by observation), while others are forced to do so as was the case for many emigrants to the Gulf region. Generally speaking, the more recent the date of out-migration, the greater the percentage of emigrants identified as a son/daughter, as would be expected for demographic reasons.<sup>28</sup>

One major impact of ongoing migration is the role it has played in the creation and maintenance of a large Palestinian middle class,<sup>29</sup> albeit abroad. The daily work of commuting in and out of Israel and its settlements by a large percentage of the Palestinian labour force created and maintained a sizeable working class, but without creating its own bourgeoisie or business class. Both processes took place independently of each other and operated outside the home society. Both processes provided income

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27 The IWS survey results show that just over three-quarters (76%) of emigrants were brothers or sisters of the head of the surveyed households, and a fifth (20%) were sons or daughters of the head of household. Parents and spouses of the household head comprised only a small percentage of emigrants (2% and 1% respectively). The highest percentage of emigrants who were brothers or sisters to the head of households (with emigrants) was found in towns (84%), followed by camps (79%) and then villages (61%). Villages had the highest percentages of son/daughter category (34%) compared to camps (18%) and towns (13.5%).

28 The percentage of sons/daughters of household heads (with emigrants) rose from 7% in the emigration period 1948–1966, to 9% in 1967, to 23% in 1968–1987, to 39% in 1988–99.

29 The term middle class is used here to refer to those employed in white-collar occupations, i.e. those with ‘cultural’, ‘professional’ or ‘literary’ capital, and who have different work conditions, terms of employment, and market situation than manual workers and those in the classical petit-bourgeoisie (small farmers, shopkeepers, craftsmen etc.).

to maintain a middle class level of consumption but without having a productive input in the Palestinian economy which remained, despite important changes that followed the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, heavily dependent on the Israeli economy and overwhelmingly dominated by very small family and informally organized enterprises (employing less than five people, using low-level technology and catering for the immediate local community).

The Palestinian middle class that was formed in the *diaspora* remained, in most cases, excluded and estranged from the political decision-making processes of the host country and dependent on the good will of the dominant élite in the host society. This is particularly true of the Palestinian middle class in the Gulf states where the Palestinian immigrant community (and other immigrant communities) were (and still are) barred from citizenship or the rights acquired by permanent residency. It also applies, albeit to a much lesser extent, in Jordan and probably in the USA and Canada and Europe although most have obtained citizenship and residency but remained excluded from the mainstream life of the host country. Attempts made by many Palestinian communities in the *diaspora* to organize themselves in support of Palestinian cause did not alter the fact of their marginality in their host countries.

### ***Palestinian communities and strategies of resistance, conformity and integration***

Palestinians communities have adopted strategies of cultural resistance, conformity, and integration. The latter can easily be found among descendents of emigrants in Latin America, North America and Europe. Thus, while the Palestinian community in Israel, which is an indigenous community (a minority in its own historic homeland) developed, on the whole, a strategy of an affirmation of its Arab identity as a form of resistance to Israeli Jewish hegemony, the Palestinian community in most of the Gulf states adopted, on the whole, strategies of conformity while guarding its Palestinian identity to a degree of forming a 'ghetto' in some of these states (Abu Bakr, 2000: 35). In Lebanon the Palestinian refugee community wavered between strategies of self-assertive resistance, to strategies of conformity depending on its perception of where it stood within the internal balance of forces in the country. In the 1967 Palestinians in the occupied territories the swung between a strategy emphasizing steadfastness, to one emphasizing civil resistance, to one emphasizing armed struggle. In Jordan the dominant tendency has been to opt for socio-economic integration while discreetly maintaining their Palestinian national identity.

Many Palestinians in the Gulf, the USA States and Europe accumulated sizeable financial capital which could be invested in the Palestinian economy should suitable conditions arise. The establishment of the Palestinian Authority did open up opportunities for this group of Palestinians to invest in the development of the Palestinian economy while making profits. This took place cautiously (some would say very cautiously) in the period 1995–2000 but came to a halt with the disappearance of genuine prospects for the establishment of independent Palestinian state.

Emigrant labour abroad involves, as a matter of course, some form of deconstruction of households (through the splitting up of extended families at home), and reconstructs other households or family units (through the creating of nuclear families abroad). This process is bound to an emphasis on the management of the conjugal family as it becomes dependent solely on wages and salaries gained through the labour market in the country of destination (and in the home country). This supplemented the process that employment of Palestinian wage labour in Israel which was accompanied by measures that marginalised agriculture and manufacturing.

### ***Assessing the implications of commuting Palestinian wage labour***

A majority of the Palestinian communities surveyed in 1999, had over 10% of their labour force employed on a daily basis in Israel, only a minority of these communities had less than 10% of its

labour force working in Israel or its settlements.<sup>30</sup> Variation in rates of employment in Israel is related to the type of community (village, town, or camp), location, and proximity to the Green Line (which separates Israel from the West Bank), and to towns. In the 1970s and 1980s, and to some extent in the 1990s, many households with migrant workers in Israel achieved a middle-class style of life (in terms of the ownership of household amenities and consumption patterns) due to the higher wages they received compared to those in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (Giacaman and Johnson, 2002, Ch. 4). Migrant daily labour to Israel reduced unemployment among Palestinians,<sup>31</sup> but at the price of cementing economic dependency on the colonizing country. Work in Israel brought relatively high income for working-class families to have a middle-class pattern of consumption (buying mainly Israeli commodities), but it did not create capital or generate economic development in the occupied territories; on the contrary it reproduced dependency.

Daily work commuters into Israel were predominantly from villagers and refugee camps: they were either unemployed or employed seasonally, or were small farmers and craftsmen who became attracted to wage labour in Israel with its higher wages. Work in Israel for commuting workers was restricted to certain jobs that Israelis were unwilling to undertake, and which Palestinians were prepared to do for lower wages than Israelis. But Palestinian wage labour inside Israel and its settlements went hand in hand with the marginalisation of Palestinian industry, agriculture and basic infrastructure. It in fact implied such marginalization.

One consequence of commuting labour into Israel is related to the heightening of dependence on wage labour. It has been argued (see, for example, Moors, 1995) that this process has sharpened the dependence of women on men's wage income. This dependence was aggravated by marginalization of agriculture and crafts that was initiated by the forced 'integration' of the under-developed Palestinian economy into the more developed economy of Israel, and the latter's annexation of East Jerusalem with all the logistical, cultural, religious, economic and historic significance it has for Palestinians. Other social scientists have argued that the Israeli occupation with its attendant closures, strikes and curfews (since 1991) has lent an uncommon importance to the home because such Israeli policies made individuals spend a great deal of time in their homes. In other words, the Israeli occupation forces intentionally restricted the public spaces where people could meet and gather available to Palestinians (Heiberg and Øvensen, 1993: 82–83) leading to people spending more time at home.

### ***Out-migration and occupation—the marginalisation of Palestinian agriculture***

Israel's policy of settlement-building and confiscation of land for 'security' reasons, and its construction of by-pass roads linking settlements to Israel (both to be used by Israelis only), reduced the amount land available for cultivation. Israel's complete control over water resources added to the marginalisation of agriculture and was exacerbated by flooding the markets of the occupied territories with its state-subsidised agricultural products.

The decline of Palestinian agriculture under Israeli occupation, as a source of employment for men and women (including unpaid family labour), can be gauged from the decline by half of the ratio of those employed in this sector between 1970 and 1993 (the time of the signing of the Oslo Agreement). In the West Bank it fell from 39% to 20%, and from 33% to 18% in Gaza (Statistical Abstract of Israel, Nos. 36, 44: Tables 27.23, 27.21). In 2005, the percentage of the labour force employed in

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30 Of the nineteen communities, five reported 10–20% of their labour force commuting to work to Israel and Israeli settlements, eight recorded over 20%, six recorded less than 5%. Only a very small percent of women commuted to work in Israel or its settlements but 45.5% of emigrants abroad were women, whereas the Abu Shukr survey found that 66.9% of emigrants from the West Bank, and 80% from Gaza Strip were men.

31 Both daily migrant labour in Israel and emigration abroad reduced unemployment (using a loose definition of employment) in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Israeli data give unemployment in these regions at 1–2% during 1974–1982 down from 10.8% in the West Bank and 16.9% in Gaza in 1968. It climbed to 5% in the West Bank in 1985, but remained at 1.5% in the Gaza Strip in 1986.

agriculture in these two region was below 15% (PCBS, August 2006: 31). The decline in the percentage of labour force employed in crafts and related occupations continued after the establishment of the PA as the Palestinian economy remained dominated by the Israeli economy. Thus, while employment in agriculture declined from 27.5% in 1995 to 17.5% in 2005 (PCBS, August 2006, 31), the population of Israeli settlers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip doubled between 1993 and 2003 to reach to nearly half a million in 2006.<sup>32</sup>

### *Migration and gender relations*

The employment of large numbers of Palestinian manual workers in villages and camps on work in Israel and their absence at work during the day implied leaving women—despite their increased dependence on their husbands' wages—with the sole responsibility of managing the household and daily affairs of the family. This suggests that women gained in the field of decision-making concerning household affairs. In the case of husbands who emigrated abroad without the accompaniment of their wives and children, which often was the case in the initial years of out-migration, the wives, in most cases tended to live or come under the supervision of the husbands' families. This tended to give the mother-in-law some authority in the decision-making concerning the daily affairs of the families of their sons. This would seem to suggest that the ramifications of migration on the status and status of women have been mixed, and that they are mediated through the market and extended family relations. Once the emigrant husband was joined by his wife and children, relations within the family became mediated by the market (where less than 12% of Palestinian women in Gulf states were able to engage in paid employment) and by the cultural patterns of gender relations dominant in the host country. A point to which I shall return.

Migration was not the only factor to have repercussions on gender relations in the West Bank and Gaza. These relations were affected also by changes in Palestinian political culture that became manifest in the late 1980s and more so in the 1990s and following the second intifada. The late-1980s saw the rise of challenges to the PLO as a carrier of a secular political culture following its weakening after its departure from Lebanon in 1982, and following the dramatic changes in the regional and international situation which deprived the PLO from powerful allies (e.g. the Soviet Union and the socialist camp in the late 1980s). Political Islam presented itself as an alternative to the PLO. The rise of political Islam culminated, in January of 2006, with the electoral victory of Hamas and its formation of a government in March 2006.

It would seem that since the overwhelming majority of those who worked in Israel or its colonies were men, and most emigrants abroad were initially men (Abu Shukur, 1990: 40) that migration should have strengthened the role and status of women, at least, as the interpreters of traditional norms and the guardians and reproducers of local customs. This has not happened. One reason was already mentioned relating to women increased dependency on the wages of their husbands. Another reason is related to the rise of political Islam which tended to view grass-root customs and local traditions as subversive, and is committed to the orthodox and uniform interpretation of religion and culture, including that of female dress,<sup>33</sup> and forms of discourse (with excessive reliance on Qur'anic verses, distrust of local cultures with their local saints and shrines and rituals). The upsurge of political Islam tended to undermine the role of women as guardians of local traditions and customs, and to redefine their role in the public space. There is quantitative evidence that male religious radicalism in the West

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32 PCBS, April 2004, and Palestine Monitor, [www.palestinemonitor.org](http://www.palestinemonitor.org); Applied Research Institute Jerusalem, [www.arj.org](http://www.arj.org).

33 For example, political Islam placed special significance on the uniform 'Islamic' dress (which covered parts of the body except for hands and face) which rapidly replaced the Palestinian embroidered dress ('thobe' which varied in terms of the embroidered designs and their colours from villages to village and from town to town all over Palestine), signifying an attempt to standardize behaviour and appearance.

Bank and Gaza tended to reinforce their social conservatism as indicated by the results of a large-scale survey conducted in the West Bank and Gaza in the early 1990s (Heiberg and Øvensen, 1993: 263).

One can say that this process was reinforced by the restriction of the entry of Palestinians in Israel's labour market. This restriction researched its zenith in 2006 with Israel closing completely its labour market to Palestinians, a policy that has been concretized with the completion of the Separation or Segregation Wall. The impact of this policy was immediately felt on a large percentage of households leading (given the high dependency on the Palestinian economy) to a sharp rise in unemployment and poverty rates (Hilal, 2006c), leading to a sharp increase in reliance of families on charities (including religious charities) since the PA did not have the means or resources to generate public-sector employment (as it is already saturated), and since the private sector was not willing to invest in an economy clouded by political insecurity and immersed in adverse conditions.

### ***Emigrants abroad and declining remittances***

The Abu Shukr's study indicated that remittances to the West Bank and Gaza Strip reached their peak in 1984 with 97.4 million Jordanian Dinars (JD)<sup>34</sup> for the West Bank and 57 million JD to the Gaza Strip. These remittances came to 9.7 million JD and to 2.9 million JD for the Gaza Strip in 1974. The above study attributed this increase to higher rates of emigration to the Gulf states and to the higher prices of oil that began in the 1974. However after 1984 remittances began to decrease as prices of oil dropped and the impact of the Iraqi-Gulf conflict on the Gulf states began to have its effect. Remittances to the West Bank did not exceed 50 million JD in 1986.<sup>35</sup> In 1997 the PCBS put the amount of financial remittances to family members in the West Bank and Gaza Strip at 96.4 million US\$ (cited in Hanafi, 2001: 200) which is much less than a decade earlier. The decline in these family remittances was compensated by new forms of public funding (to the Palestinian Authority and to NGOs) which appeared strongly in the 1990s (Shalabi *et al.*, May, 2001).

The decline in remittances continued following the second Gulf War with the expulsion of an estimated 300,000 Palestinians from Kuwait and other Gulf states, and with the end of funding of the PLO by these states in reaction to the position taken during the Gulf crisis. It should be noted that the PLO and its constituent political factions used to fund many activities in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, and this funding greatly decreased after the Gulf War with the cutting of aid from the Gulf states, and from the Palestinian community in Kuwait.<sup>36</sup> The role of the PLO in subsidizing services and infrastructure was resumed by the Palestinian Authority following its establishment in 1994. In the 1990s remittances from migrants to their relatives in the Palestinian areas declined substantially. The ratio of remittances (excluding remittances in kind) to wages earned in Israel increased as the remittance increased in value. In 1974 remittances amounted to 28% of the wages of workers in Israel and its settlements in the West Bank and Gaza. In 1980 the ratio was 72%, but rose to 113% in 1984 and fell to 100% in 1980 (Abu Shukr, 1990: 21). Remittances from emigrants abroad accounted for 8% of GDP in the West Bank, and 7.1% of GDP in Gaza in 1974. This share rose to 33.2%, and 56.4% in 1984 in the two regions respectively, and declined within two years (in 1986) to 20.9% and

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34 In 2006 the US dollar equalled approximately 0.70 Jordanian Dinar. It is worth remembering that the Jordanian Dinar was devalued significantly in the late 1980s.

35 An economic recession in the oil economies began in 1983 and peaked in 1986, the sharp decline in oil prices decreased the demand for skilled and unskilled foreign labour, including Palestinian labour. The labour importing countries in the region started with the decline in revenue from oil to shift their demand from Arab to Asian workers who accept lower wages and present lower political risk.

36 Some estimate that 85% of those with Jordanian nationality in Kuwait on the eve of the 1991 Gulf War were Palestinians, or Jordanians of Palestinian origin. In 1958/59 an agreement was concluded between Jordan and Kuwait which allowed any Jordanian to enter Kuwait as long he or she had a valid Jordanian passport. This enabled Palestinians from the West Bank to seek work in Kuwait (Brand, 2006: 182–83).

45.2% respectively, but remained much higher, at that time, than remittances to Egypt and to Jordan which did not exceed 9% (for Egypt), and 22% (from Jordan) of their GDP (Abu Shukr, 1990: 24).<sup>37</sup>

The 1990s saw a decline in remittances of emigrants to their kin in the Palestinian territories. Following the 1991 Gulf War, and the establishment of the Palestinian Authority in 1994 the situation changed as both remittances and wages from work in Israel fell, and the PA became a major employer of Palestinian labour. For the first times in decades in the first half of the 1990s the West Bank and the Gaza Strip became home to tens of thousands of returnees. This lasted until the end of 1990s when emigration from these areas began its earlier impetus following the eruption of the second intifada.

The IWS survey revealed a rather modest flow of emigrants' remittances to their relatives in the West Bank and Gaza. A total 15.5% of the households with emigrants abroad had a regular transfer of money with those emigrants. Only 8.5% of households with emigrants received regular financial support from their these emigrants, while 6.5% of households with emigrants sent regular financial transfers to their emigrants abroad, and roughly 1% reported sending and receiving money.

### ***Reciprocity between emigrants and their close relatives at home declines with years***

Disaggregating the data from the IWS survey by period of the emigrant's stay abroad reveals a decline in financial support from emigrant members to their resident households as the years of emigration increase. This is expected as emigrants establish their own conjugal families in the host countries which become to attract their attention and care. Only 4% of emigrants who left the West Bank and Gaza Strip during the period 1948–1966 sent money to close kin in these areas, the percentage rises to 10% among those who migrated during 1968–1987, and to 12.5% during the period 1988–1999. In other words only one in every eight households with emigrants abroad was, during the 1990s, receiving regular financial support.

Moreover, the frequency of financial support provided by resident families to members abroad increases as the years of emigration become longer. Thus, while 4% of households in West Bank and Gaza Strip sent regular financial support to near kin abroad who emigrated during the period 1948–1967, the percentage rises to 5% in 1968–1987, and to 13% during the period 1988–1999 (it is very likely that the assistance is sent mostly to students abroad). What these figures indicate is a reciprocal relationship between resident households and their emigrant members that wanes with time in changes in the household composition of two households.

Scrutinizing regular remittances by the age group of emigrants through data presented by the IWS survey reveals that the younger the emigrant the more likely they are (in most cases it is a male) to transfer money regularly to their resident close kin in the Palestinian communities. However the both the host country of the emigrant, and presumably their level of income, are relevant. Among emigrants aged under 30 years, 15% send money regularly to their families in the West Bank and Gaza. This percentage falls to 9% with emigrants aged 30–49 years, and to 6% with those aged 50–59 years, and to less than 3% with emigrants aged 60 or over. By the same token the younger the age of the emigrant the more likely to be receiving money transfers from his/her home family as they are likely to be students or young and recent emigrants still looking for work and need their family's support. Of those aged less than 30 years 19% received money regularly from their families back home, but this percentage decreases to less than 4% for those aged 30 and over.

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37 One study estimates that remittances from Palestinian workers in Israel constituted 30% of GDP in the West Bank and Gaza Strip before the outbreak of the second intifada and following the sharp decline of remittances from the Gulf States where some 600,000 Palestinians lived (Shtayyeh, 1998: 34).

### ***Households without a regular remittance relationship with emigrants***

It is worth noting that most West Bank households (84%) in the 1999 IWS survey reported that they did not receive remittances from relatives abroad, or sent them money transfers. The percentage of those who neither receive or send money regularly to close relatives increases with the age of the emigrant, starting with 65% in the under-30 age group, to 93% with those aged 30 and over. This is a sobering fact to those who see emigration simply as a form of future financial investment or a source of economic security.<sup>38</sup> The above data only covers regular transfers (that one a month or once every two months) and do not cover remittances that possibly take place in emergencies (such as in cases of illness, unemployment or death of main provider). But more data is needed before one can make definite and detailed statements on the range and value of such transfers and remittances.

The destination of emigrants is also relevant for the existence of supportive links between them and their close relatives at home. The IWS survey revealed that emigrants to Jordan have the lowest supportive interaction with their close relatives in the West Bank and Gaza. Less than 3% of the migrants in Jordan send remittances regularly to their close kin in the Palestinian areas, while the reverse is double this rate. That means that more households in the Palestinian areas send money to close relatives in Jordan than the other way around. This is due to the fact that in the 1980s and early 1990s many families from these areas sent their children to study in Jordanian universities because of low cost and geographic proximity, and existence of relatives there. The same applied to medical treatment because its cost in Jordan is considerably less than in Israel, considering that Palestinian health system was grossly underdeveloped to cater for serious health problems. It also worth remembering that intermarriage between Palestinian families across the Jordan River is very common, and this could involve remittances during the stage of setting up a home and initiating a new family.

Another striking result of the IWS survey was the very limited scale of the supportive interactions between Palestinian migrants in the Arab states (including the oil-producing Gulf states) and their close relatives in the West Bank and Gaza. Only 6% of the households which had emigrants in these countries did receive regular remittances, while another 6% of households in the Palestinian areas sent regular remittances to close relatives in these countries (probably to sons studying in Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, and North African universities). In other words, migration to oil-producing countries seems to affect a very small circle of households in the occupied Palestinian areas. This could mean that while most Palestinian immigrants in these countries enjoy a middle class style of life in terms of consumption, very few have a large enough income to subsidize household members at home. Only a small percentage seemed able to do this, the rest concentrate on providing for their nuclear families.

### ***Concentration of remittances in villages with very high emigration to the Americas and the Gulf***

It was village households which reported receiving the highest rate of remittances from their emigrants. One in five village households received remittances from an emigrant member (or members) compared to less than one household in every twenty-five households in urban areas, and less than one in every thirty three households in refugee camps. However further disaggregating revealed that regular remittances from out-migrants are concentrated, more or less, in three villages. Two of these three villages are in the central region of the West Bank, and both reported high percentages of households with emigrants abroad (88% and 70%). Both villages reported that 35% of all households with emigrants abroad received regular remittances from the close abroad. Both had a

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38 Most of communities in the IWS sample reported receiving no or very small amounts of regular remittances from their emigrants abroad. None of the households with emigrants in two of the nineteen communities surveyed reported receiving any regular money transfers from their relatives abroad, twelve reported less than 6% of their households (with out-migrants) receiving regular remittances from their close relatives abroad. The remaining five communities had 9% or more of their households (with out-migrants abroad) receiving regular remittances from close relatives abroad.

high rate of emigrant in North America followed by South America.<sup>39</sup> Both the villages had a high rate of emigrants working in trade (31% and 55%) which indicates that they probably have higher income than salaried professionals or wage workers.

The third village which received relatively high regular financial remittances from relatives abroad is a small community in the southern part of Gaza Strip. The village reported that one in four of its households received regular remittances from emigrants. But unlike the other two villages it did not report a particularly high rate of emigration (only 40%), and none of its emigrants were in the Americas but mostly in the Gulf states. Like the other two villages it reported a relatively high percentage of its emigrants (28%) working in trade. The two West Bank villages reported that a high percentage of their emigrants left for reasons of work (75%) or marriage (82%), while the Gaza village reported that 49% of its emigrant left for reasons of work or marriage, and 21% were born abroad.

### ***The making of a new Palestinian middle class: education and migration***

The establishment of the Palestinian Authority created high hopes that an independent and sovereign state was on the way. One of the unintended consequences of the establishment of the PA has already been mentioned when discussing the rapid urbanization of Ramallah. However there have been other changes of significance of which perhaps the most important was the expansion in the relative size of the middle class in the West Bank and Gaza. This was congruent on the creation of the quasi-state structures of the PA, the impetus gained by the private sector, and the increase in the number of NGOs. All these institutions required white-collar and specialist cadres to man and operate. Nearly 30% of the active labour force in the two regions were classifiable, in 2004, as white-collar occupations (Hilal, 2006a: 88).

Many factors played a part in the making of the Palestinian middle class. The demise of agriculture, and with it the decline of agricultural land as a source of wealth: the collapse of the old Palestinian national movement in 1948 which was dominated by landowning and merchant families, the spread of secular education, and the high rates of emigration are all important factors. The Palestinian Authority in 1994 that was crucial in enlarging the middle class in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, whereas before the Palestinian middle class was concentrated in the immigrant communities abroad.

The presence of the Palestinian middle class was felt in 1960s which witnessed the emergence of a new Palestinian national movement led by a political élite of mainly university and college educated individuals, mostly from working class and farmer backgrounds (Hilal, 2002: 39-58). The availability of free or low-cost education (UNRWA in the camps, government schools in Jordan, Syria and places where there are Palestinian communities), the availability of university education for Palestinian students in Arab government-sponsored universities (Cairo, and other Egyptian universities, Damascus and other Syrian universities, Beirut, and Baghdad), and the availability of scholarships for Palestinians to study in the former Soviet Union and the socialist countries in the 1970s and 1980s, all provided Palestinians with assets to seek professional and managerial jobs abroad, including in the Gulf states, while a minority studied in Europe and the USA. Since the mid-1970s opportunities to study at Palestinian universities became available to students from the West Bank and Gaza.

The nature of the Israeli occupation (as a settler colonialism) and the high value put on education by Palestinian families as a valuable 'cultural capital', made higher education and emigration the two main vehicles for the formation of the Palestinian middle class. Emigration was reported to have played a similar role in the making of the middle class in Lebanon (Khater, 2001). With the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, and the increase in the number of Palestinian universities and of graduate students in the Palestinian areas the mechanisms for the creating the middle class were

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39 On features of Palestinian out-migration to North and South Americas since the end of the 19th century see Hanafi, 1997: 23–39. On the features of Palestinian emigration to Europe, see Shiblak, 2005.



widened significantly, but this time repatriation (an inverse of out-migration) became a significant factor in the enlargement of a resident middle class.

### *The making of a Palestinian middle class in the diaspora*

A sizeable section of the Palestinian middle class became as such in the Gulf states and Jordan, and a small section in North America and Europe. In the mid-1980s a survey by Abu Shukr reported that 51% of emigrants from the surveyed households in the West Bank and Gaza were in the oil-producing Gulf states, 22.5% in Jordan, 8.5% in North America, 8% in Europe, 6% in non-oil producing Arab states, and the rest was elsewhere (Abu Shukr, 1990: 63). The survey found that 56% of the emigrants were employed in white-collar occupations as 'specialists, technocrats, supervisors, managers, and administrators', and 21% were classified as secretarial occupations at jobs which make up the lower middle class (Abu Shukr, 1990: 62), so that three-quarters of emigrants (76%) were in middle-class occupations.

The IWS survey revealed that the percentage of out-migrants in white-collar jobs varied by host country. Three-quarters (73%) of Palestinian emigrants from the West Bank and Gaza Strip in the Gulf states were employed in white-collar jobs, with 8% in trade and 12% in skilled manual jobs, and less than 4% in unskilled occupations. Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza in the USA and Canada had the lowest share (44%) of Palestinian emigrants in white-collar occupations and the highest percent in trade (38%), with 15% in unskilled manual jobs, and 3% in skilled manual jobs. Half (51%) the Palestinians from the occupied areas in Jordan were in white-collar occupations, with 10% employed in trade, and 25% in skilled manual jobs, and 11% in unskilled manual jobs.

The survey also revealed that regions with highest levels of poverty (e.g. Gaza and the southern region of the West Bank) recorded the lowest rate of emigration of household members, while the middle of the West Bank, which has the lowest rate of poverty, recorded the highest level of emigration. The same pattern appears once households are stratified by social class variables. It is beyond the scope of this paper to investigate this relation, but it could be that the poorer areas of the West Bank and Gaza that depended more heavily on work inside Israel which in the 1970s and 1980s provide high rates of employment in these areas, and relatively high wages (in comparison to wages in the Palestinian local market). The 1990s saw a sharp decline in employment in Israel and in employment opportunities outside, particularly in the Gulf. Israeli closures were a key factor in causing income poverty among Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (Hilal, 2006c).

The rate of employment in white-collar jobs among remaining members of households with emigrants was less than half the rate found among the emigrants themselves. This clearly shows that migration is a mechanism for upward social mobility. The rate employed in white-collar jobs, according to the IWS survey (carried out in 1999, two years after the general census of population) is in line with the 1997 Census of the Palestinian population in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, equalled a fifth of the total active labour force, while 39% were employed in manual occupations (mostly unskilled), and the rest were employed in trade services and crafts (Hilal, 2006a: 308). Only a very small percentage was employed in agriculture and fishing, a fact that emphasizes the degree of the marginalisation of agriculture and the dominance of semi-skilled and unskilled wage labour in most Palestinian communities. The proximity of most villages to towns (almost all within a commuting distance) ensures their access to labour markets in these towns. This, and the limitations on work opportunities in towns, explains also why internal migration, as the 1997 population census of the West Bank and Gaza Strip revealed, has been limited in scope, and was as a process motivated mainly by marriage considerations (Maliki and Shalabi, 2000: 25–7, 49).

Up to the time of the IWS survey the Israeli labour market was still employing a sizeable percentage of the labour force in the West Bank and Gaza. But unlike labour markets abroad, which tended to attract highly skilled and professional labour, the Israeli labour market continued to utilize only unskilled or semi-skilled Palestinian labour. The IWS household survey showed that about 15%

of the work force was employed at the time of the survey (in 1999) in Israel or in Israeli settlements. Over 80% of Palestinian workers were employed construction or unskilled jobs. Only 4% were employed in professional or semi-professional jobs (mostly from Jerusalem). The PCBS data indicated that 22.7% of Palestinian labour force was employed, on average, in Israel and its settlements in 1999. This percentage declined to less than 9% in 2004, while unemployment climbed to 27% in the same year reflecting the severity of Israeli measures (PCBS, August, 2006: 31).

One of the ways in which the presence of the Palestinian Authority was felt was its creation and maintenance of an inflated public (government) sector. This was accompanied by the expansion of the number and activities of many international and local NGOs in the Palestinian areas (Shalabi *et al.*, 2001). It was also followed by steps taken by the private sector to assert its interests and canvas for legislation to promote its activities there. This and the expansion of the public sphere to accommodate the open activities of political groups and parties, and the emergence of new newspapers and journals, private television and radio stations, and the rapid growth in enrolment in local universities, all altered the occupational structure, previously dominated by unskilled and semi-skilled labour occupations. A new middle class was now established in the West Bank and Gaza Strip accounting for 20% of the labour force at the end of 1997 (at the time of the general census of population), and reaching 28% in 2004, when in the 1980s and early 1990s, it did not exceed 12% of the total active labour force (Hilal, 2006c: 58). In Jordan (both Banks), the size of the middle class did not exceed 9% in 1961 while among the immigrants from Jordan (mostly Palestinians) it was 22.4% (Hilal, 1975: 101–2).<sup>40</sup>

### ***Returnees in 1990s: reversing, temporarily, a time-honoured trend***

The 1990s saw a decline in the volume of emigration of white-collar skills to the Gulf states, as the entry to these countries, as well as to Jordan, was narrowed significantly. But the Oslo Agreement and the creation of the Palestinian Authority and the impact of the Gulf War in 1991 brought a wave of repatriation to the Palestinian territories. At the end of 1997 returning expatriates totalled no less than 267,355 individuals or about 10.5% of the total population of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.<sup>41</sup> Of the returnees 36.5%<sup>42</sup> came from Jordan, 31.1 % from the Gulf states, 21.5% from other Arab countries, 4.9% from the USA, and 6% from elsewhere (Maliki and Shalabi, 2000: Tables 18–20).

In the first half of the 1990s about a quarter (24%) of returnees to the West Bank and Gaza arrived as a result of the Gulf War (1991), and about half (48.5%) as a consequence of the Oslo Accords. The return of expatriates had a significant impact on changing the occupational structure of Palestinian society in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, particularly in expanding the ranks of the middle class. Among returnees to the West Bank 37.5% had middle class occupations in the host country,<sup>43</sup> and in Gaza the percentage of returnees employed in white-collar occupations in the host country reached 68%. Those employed in unskilled manual jobs in the host country were 18% of returnees to the West

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40 One study estimated the size of the middle class (as expressed by the occupation of head of household) in the West Bank (without the East Bank) in 1961 to have been only 6% (Abu Kamish, 1991: 91).

41 65.3% of the returnees went to the West Bank, and 34.7% to the Gaza Strip. 53% of returnees were, at the end of 1997, living in urban areas, 33.2% in villages, and 13.8% in camps (Maliki and Shalabi, 2000: 54). At the end of 1997 Palestinians in the West Bank and Strip were distributed by type of settlement as follows; 53.1% in urban areas; 15.9% in refugee camps; and 31% in village communities MAS, May 2005: xii). This means that returnees were evenly distributed by type of settlement.

42 Returnees as defined by PCBS in its census of population in 1997 are those who returned to Palestinian areas after having been normally resident outside these areas (i.e. West Bank and Gaza Strip).

43 The following are what the writer defined as middle class occupations; legislatures, managers, administrators, specialists, technicians, professionals, teachers, academics, secretarial workers.

Bank, compared to 19% in skilled manual jobs. In the Gaza Strip 16% of returnees had been employed in unskilled manual jobs and 18% in skilled manual jobs (Maliki and Shalabi, 2000, Table 26).<sup>44</sup>

If we look at the educational level then 14% of all returnees (20.3% of the male returnees, and 6.6% of the female returnees) aged 10 years old had university education compared to 4.5% (6.3% the males, and 2.5% of the females) among the resident population. A smaller percent of returnees worked, upon their return, in Israel (in 1997) than the rest of the population. A smaller percentage of returnees were under 15 years of age (28%) compared to the rest of the population (47.1%).

The highest percentage of returnees (55%) returned to the Palestinian territories as companions (dependents or wives), and only 11% said they returned for work, 7% because they were forced to leave their host country, 2% to finish their studies, and 20% for other reasons probably related to the establishment of the Palestinian Authority and the fact they are assured of jobs in its emerging institutions. If the category of 'accompaniment' is excluded from the reasons of returning to the Palestinian territories then political and economic considerations emerge as the dominant factors (Maliki and Shalabi, 2000: 66–68). This is expected as the establishment of the PA induced among Palestinians expectations of statehood and economic prosperity. Many of those who returned worked in culture and journalism, a fact that was reflected in the enhanced activities in these fields, as witnessed in the large number of newspapers, journals, research centres, television and radio stations that were established in the 1990s in the Palestinian territories. The withdrawal of direct Israeli military occupation from parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip is also an important factor. What the data point to is the relatively high percentage of the middle class among the returnees in comparison to the resident Palestinian population.

The Palestinian Authority's policy of enlarging the public sector helped absorb the influx of returnees (a large percentage of whom worked for the PLO and its main political groups), offset the decline the employment for Palestinians in Israel, and helped maintain a constituency for the ruling party (Fatah). The percentage of the labour force employed by the government sector rose from 17.6% in 1996 to 23% in 2005 (MAS, May 2005: xiii, and MAS, May 2006: 20). The PA faced an economy that had been de-developed under a regime of settler-colonialism, and incapable of absorbing the influx of repatriated labour and labour made redundant by the Israeli policy of closure. Many of the returnees to the West Bank and Gaza had become used to an urban style of living (having lived and studied for years in Beirut, Damascus, Tunis, and European cities) a fact that created tension between the returnees and the resident populations, or sectors of the resident population in the 1990s.

#### **4 The Palestinian Authority, migration and expatriate capital investment**

The first important change that followed the setting up of the Palestinian Authority was the initiation of a process designed to create the rudiments of a national economy, with unifying laws and regulations, coupled with efforts to modernize the infrastructure (roads, electricity, water networks, systems of communication, etc). The second part of the 1990s saw the creation, simultaneously with a Palestinian stock exchange, and in the relatively short period, of over thirty holding companies that provided alternative forms of economic and financial activities to those that dominated the Palestinian economy since the early 1950s; that is, an economy of small family owned and informally run enterprises catering for local markets. After 1967 these enterprises operated within the restrictions imposed by the Israeli colonial occupation which controlled imports and exports, and all banking and

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44 There are other distinguishing features of returnees, compared to residents, in addition to occupational composition, educational attainments and age structure. But these follow mostly from the above features e.g. having a higher percentage married (61.5% compared to 54.6% in the overall population), having a smaller rate of refugees (38.6% compared to 41.6%), and having a higher percentage that is economically active (42.4%, compared to 35.7% aged 10 years and over) (Maliki and Shalabi, 2000: 60).

credit and insurance activities, coupled with the imposition of heavy taxation, neglect of infrastructure and restrictions on permits for industrial enterprises (World Bank, 1993: Vol. 3).

The Authority soon realized the importance of the three sources of financial capital: financial assistance provided by donor countries, capital investment from wealthy expatriates, and foreign direct investment. To this end it took some steps, some say insufficient, to improve the investment environment, including the rehabilitation of the infrastructure, institution-building and legal reforms. It also granted monopoly concessions on the basis of personal contacts, favouritism, and kickbacks, some to expatriate investors. Despite the atmosphere of instability and insecurity the business community, invigorated by large expatriate capital and the prospect of statehood, began to articulate business interests. Thus, we saw the formation, shortly after the establishment of the PA, of the Palestinian Trade Centre (Paltrade) by large business composed mostly of expatriate capital. It was able to make itself heard by the PA, and to illicit the support of international organizations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (Nasr, 2004: 174).

All three sources of financial assistance and investment operated in a milieu of political insecurity that dominated the Palestinian territories as the Oslo Accords faltered, and Israeli-Palestinian negotiations faced an impasse. The donor countries found they had to provide assistance to the PA not to promote development projects, but to subsidize public consumption designed to control the damage caused by closures. The high political uncertainty as to the future of the Palestinian territories kept away foreign investment in Palestinian economy with its fragmented and small market, and expatriate investment remained, at best, partial, watchful and hesitant.

### ***Expatriate investment: hesitant steps towards fashioning a national economy***

President Arafat repeated calls on the Palestinian business community in *shatat* to invest in the Palestinian economy, did have some effect. In 1993 a holding company, the Palestinian Development and Investment Company (PADICO) was established by a number of wealthy Palestinians with a declared capital of one billion US\$ designed to attract ‘investment that will help rebuild the economic infrastructure of the Palestinian economy and create jobs’.<sup>45</sup> The company established subsidiaries in telecommunications (PATEL), real estate, industry (PIIC), electricity (PEC), tourism, electronics, and other sectors. Another group of wealthy Palestinian expatriates established the Arab Palestinian Investment Company (APIC) which set up many subsidiaries, including in consumer goods, medical services, aluminium, shopping centres and food. It also invested in other companies such as PALTEL, and the Arab Islamic International Bank (Nasr, 2004: 175).

The establishment of the Palestinian Authority was followed by the opening of many commercial banks in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. All operating banks were closed by the Israeli occupation authorities in 1967, and only Israeli banks were allowed. Two non-Israeli banks were allowed to reopen in 1981 in Gaza and another (in 1986) in the West Bank. Prior to the outbreak of the second *intifada* (late September 2000), there were twenty-two banks with over a hundred branches, and nine of which were locally chartered, the rest were considered foreign bank, but most of these (including the Arab Bank) were owned wholly or partially by Palestinian expatriates. The establishment of the Palestinian Authority (PA) saw also the establishment of a number of insurance companies. But the Law of Encouragement of Investment (providing tax incentives to investors) which was passed in 1995, and amended in 1998, but did not attract much foreign investment, not because it was biased towards large firms (which some say it was), but because of the high political and economic uncertainty surrounding the future of the Palestinian territories. To induce investment in a high risk situation the Authority granted monopolistic concessions to large firms (with large expatriate capital investments) particularly in infrastructure (electricity, and telecommunication), in other cases it went

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45 Arafat described the founders of the company as ‘the tigers of the Palestinian economy who were expected to play a major role in rebuilding the Palestinian state’ (Nasr, 2004: 175).

into partnership with private capital (including expatriate capital), and thirdly it monopolized the import and distribution of certain strategic products, such as cement, and petroleum (Nasr, 2000: 176).

In short, expatriate capital played a tangible role in reshaping the Palestinian economy in the second half of the 1990s. Its role was both economic and organizational, in that it infused expertise in the running of large holding companies, and in creating economic activities not permitted by the Israeli occupation (in banking, insurance, catering, running of financial markets, etc). Expatriate Palestinian businessmen, who made their capital in the Gulf and elsewhere were motivated, as a reaction to their politically marginality in the host countries, to play an active role in influencing political and economic policies of the PA in the hope of its imminent transformation into a full-fledged independent Palestinian state. The business community, led by expatriate businessmen with large capital, began to organize itself and to articulate a unified voice and to make demands to the PA (Hilal, 2002: 86–93; Nasr, 2004). This should not deflect from the fact that their interest in investing in Palestine included also the making of profit, as their efforts to secure monopolies or share them with the Palestinian testify. The Palestinian bourgeoisie also sought a political role, and to institute a present in the national political field, a role that remained marginal during the heyday of the PLO.

The re-occupation of the West Bank in March 2002, the besieging of Gaza, the weakening of the PA, and the maximizing of restrictions on the movement of labour, capital and goods,<sup>46</sup> together with the fragmentation of Palestinian territories, and the imposition of sanctions on the PA following Hamas's electoral victory in January 2006, all increased the uncertainty and vulnerability of the situation in the Palestinian territories, and are likely to lead to the suspension of expatriate investment in the economy.

### ***The economic input of Palestinian communities in shatat—selective and limited***

In two studies carried out before the outbreak of the second *intifada*, on the relationship between Palestinian businessmen in the *diaspora* (living in Arab and non-Arab countries) and the emerging Palestinian Authority,<sup>47</sup> and its follow-up study (Hanafi, 1997 and 2001) on the relationship between the Palestinians in the *diaspora* and the centre, the author argues that there was a utilization (albeit limited) of the international economic networks that Palestinian businessmen and communities possess in aid of the Palestinian state-building project. The research did not anticipate that the West Bank and Gaza Strip would witness a return in large number of Palestinian businessmen and professionals in the near future. It acknowledged that investment by Palestinian businessmen in the Palestinian territories in the 1990s was limited and selective (Hanafi, 2001: 115–15), and argued that the relevant factors in determining the return of businessmen and investment are: the political and economic situation in the West Bank and Gaza; the kind of relationship that exists between the Palestinian Authority and the country hosting the Palestinian community; and the socio-economic structure of the Palestinian communities in the *diaspora* (Hanafi, 2001).

It is clear that the involvement of the Palestinian communities outside Palestine in the Palestinian economy and communal support remained ostensibly below the resources they possess (in terms of financial capital, and in terms of the expertise and experience in many fields). Hanafi (only covering the period preceding the eruption of the second *intifada*) argues that the Palestinian *diaspora* contribution was limited but significant. He calculates that the value of 'large scale' direct investments (mostly by expatriate Palestinians) totalled US\$ 134 million in 1996, and US\$ 114 million in 1997, or

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46 On new restrictions on the entry of Palestinian expatriate investors to the Palestinian territories by Israel, see article by Amira Hass: 'The silent expulsion: Palestinian businessmen wonder why Israel wants them out of the territories' (Haaretz, 5 Sept. 2006).

47 The research was based on interviews held during the period 1994–1996 with Palestinian businessmen in the USA (33 persons), Canada (25 persons), in Egypt (62 persons), in Syria (25 persons), United Arab Emirates (45 persons), Lebanon (15 persons), Britain (24 persons), and France (7).

about 5.5% of GDP. These figures (relative to GDP) are smaller than external direct investments in Arab countries (which are not less than 15% of GDP). If small investment in constructions (houses or villas for expatriates families for vacations or blocs of flats as investments), are added to the large scale investments the percentage of total value of investments in the Palestinian economy does not exceed 11%. The demographic and historic connection, and the factor of contiguity between the West Bank and Jordan, and between Gaza and Egypt is reflected in the fact that investments by Palestinians in Jordan and Egypt were much higher than investments of Palestinians in the Gulf states and much higher than investments from Palestinians in both North and South America (Hanafi, 2001: 203).

In addition to direct or indirect investment by Palestinians in the *diaspora*, some US\$ 96 million in 1996 and US\$ 91 million were estimated by PCBS to be the value of remittances (in kind and in cash) to resident relative from emigrants abroad (Hanafi. 2001: 200). In addition some US\$ 8 million were spent in humanitarian aid in these areas (half of which was provided by Welfare Association) by Palestinians and associations abroad. The total direct and indirect investments, of remittances and transfers, including humanitarian aid by Palestinians from the *diaspora* to their compatriots in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, totalled US\$ 408 million in 1996, and US\$ 410 million in 1997 (compared to US\$ 549 million in 1996, and US\$ 432 million in 1997 given by the donor countries). These figures do not posit a high rate of regular remittances and investment if compared to Jordan for example where the rate is about three times greater. Nor do the figures provide the needed assistance to the very poor in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In 2004 no less than 27% of families in the West Bank and Gaza Strip were living below the poverty line using a consumption criterion, and 54% were under the poverty line (2.10 dollars per capita per day) using income criterion (PCBS, May 2005).

PCBS figures (PCBS 2006b) for 2006 confirm that only a very small percentage of households depend on remittances from abroad (presumably emigrants). In June 2006 the percentage of households that indicated that remittances from abroad constituted main source of income represented no more than 1.7% of all households in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. This amounts to no more than a third of the households that indicated their source of income to be remittances from inside the Palestinian territories (4.1%) and from social assistance (9.5%). This finding is in line with the findings of the IWS survey.

The IWS survey revealed that only a small percentage of resident families received regular remittances from emigrant relatives. A survey carried out in 1996 showed that only a quarter of families which described their socio-economic situation as difficult or very difficult received regular assistance (in kind or in cash) from resident and non-resident relatives or neighbours, or friends (Hilal and Maliki, 1997: 25). This does not exclude the possibility that are all sorts of remittances which are not regular, and that these do not go necessarily to needy families either because they do not have well-to do emigrants or they do not have emigrants abroad.

What the available data makes clear is that very few families depend on remittances from relatives living abroad, and that remittances are not unidirectional (i.e. from emigrants to their families at home) as pointed out earlier. Remittances are sent from families in the West Bank and Gaza Strip to relatives abroad, and these have, more or less, the same frequency and regularity as in-coming remittances. Unfortunately, we do not know the exact amounts of remittances that are sent out to relatives abroad, to be able to compare between the out-remittances and the in-remittances.

The limited investment by emigrant Palestinian businessmen is explainable in terms of the uncertain political situation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The linkages of Palestinian communities in the *diaspora* with each other and with the Palestinian territories were not able to create a firm and strong Palestinian centre of gravity for Palestinian dispersed communities in the *shatat* as most of these communities did not have access to the areas controlled by the Palestinian Authority, as the latter lacked the necessary features of a sovereign Palestinian state. The existence of internet services, connecting centres in refugee camps and Palestinian communities served more the middle class who have the facility and know English (Hanafi, 2001: 222) than the wider community.

A majority of Palestinian businessmen in the *diaspora* said that they have relatives in most Arab states, and many in North America. Sectors of the Palestinian community in Canada said that they have strong economic and social relations with the West Bank and Gaza (remittances, marriage connections, visits, investing in property, sending children to study Arabic), and also took steps to strengthen their ties with the host country, e.g. establishing businesses, buying houses in the host country, educating their children in the host country. The Palestinian community in the USA tended to feel discriminated against in the host society, and alienated from government institutions because of its foreign policy, and this kept its interests and pre-occupations focused on Palestine (Hanafi, 1997: 32–6; 2001: 83–94). In Latin American countries, particularly in Chile where there is a large and multi-generational Palestinian community, Palestinians are well integrated in the host societies.

Palestinian businessmen position regarding the Oslo Accords was affected by their country of residence: most Palestinian businessmen in Syria were against the Oslo Accords, while a majority of Palestinian businessmen in Egypt supported these accords as it allowed them access to Gaza, and most of them are originally from Gaza (Hanafi, 1997: 46, 60). Palestinian businessmen in Jordan and Egypt found it easier than others to invest in the Palestinian areas or think of doing so because the two countries had peace agreements, and diplomatic relations with Israel, and both countries have borders with Palestine. Syria and Lebanon stood against Oslo Accords, and did not allow travel to or investment in Palestinian areas as the borders of these areas remained under Israeli control. For Palestinian businessmen in Europe, North America, Jordan and Egypt the question to invest or not to invest was determined mainly by economic considerations (Hanafi, 1997: 73).

### ***Absence of a galvanizing Palestinian national centre***

Soon after the signing of the Oslo Accords Palestinian capitalists did establish holding companies which insert new features into the Palestinian economy, and would have, by all accounts, played a significant role in economic change in Palestine had the Oslo Accords not collapsed and with it the prospect of the establishment of an independent and viable Palestinian state in the foreseeable future. However the role of Palestinian businessmen can not be reduced to that of financing investments. In 1983 a group of ten prominent Palestinian businessmen and a number of Palestinian intellectuals met in Geneva and established the Welfare Association with the aim of funding projects for Palestinian education, health, human resources and social development. It seems that it tried to emulate the Jewish National Fund, but without employing the resources and energies of that Fund. The Welfare Association spent, during the 1990s, in the West Bank and Gaza Strip less the five million US dollars a year. The Association remains active in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and among other Palestinian communities (Hanafi, 1997: 78–80), but its contribution to Palestinian welfare remain minute.

Individuals from the business community in the USA had a hand in arranging dialogue between the American Administration and the PLO in the late 1980s, but this was conditional, and did contribute much to changing the outlook of USA towards the Palestinian question. It was also reported that Palestinian businessmen working in Arab States had, on occasions, played a part in preventing the relations between these states and the PLO from exploding. Some contend that in fact that Palestinian businessman in the *diaspora* tended to pressurize the PA to modify its political stance by threatening to abstain from investing in Palestine, and some were concerned to maintain good relations between the PA and Jordan since they had investments in both territories. Others called on the PA to implement democratic reforms (considered necessary to create an attractive environment for capital investment), while other preferred co-ordination with NGOs and not with the PA (Hanafi, 1997: 88–93). However, one should be cautious in reporting as true what the business community says about its political role; the fact remains that it played a marginal role in the contemporary Palestinian national movement up to the Oslo Accords when it began to show interest in the process of state-formation and in demanding an influential role for itself in that process.

The PA could not become the focal centre of gravity for the Palestinian communities abroad, as it never freed itself from the tentacles of the Israeli occupation and never was allowed to gain control of its borders. This fact, together with the difficulties encountered by Palestinians in travelling from and to Arab countries limited the role that Palestinian communities abroad could play in the state-building, and left them feeling marginal and disempowered particularly as the establishment of the Palestinian Authority was followed by the freezing of the PLO institutions, together its mass and professional associations and trade unions. Jordan could not act as the centre of gravity for Palestinians in the *diaspora* since it cannot undertake the role of a sovereign Palestinian state (in terms of providing free access, issuing passports, reciprocal arrangement with other states, etc) as the case with China and the Chinese communities in diasporas, or as the case with Israel or India (Hanafi, 2001: 80–3).

### ***Out-migration and the creation of a Palestinian bourgeoisie in the diaspora***

Migration has been the route for the emergence of an important sector of the Palestinian bourgeoisie different from the old sector of the Palestinian propertied and trading classes. In this sense migration inhibited the re-production of the old Palestinian class structure. Many of the new business and professional classes come from small towns and villages and have nothing to do with the old landed-trader semi-feudal aristocracy, and many were attracted to modern professions and economic concerns. Here secular education has played a vital role (Hanafi, 2001: 109–20). Emigration to North America (especially Canada), Australia and Europe and the acquiring of the nationality and passports of the host countries helped Palestinian businessmen to gain a freedom of movement and to rid themselves of uncertainty that they experienced in Arab states, dramatically exemplified in Kuwait in 1991, Iraq in 2006, in Libya in 1995 and in Lebanon after 1982, or in the West Bank and Gaza Strip under Israel occupation.

## **5 The impoverishment of ‘cultural’ capital and the conservative ethos**

In a recent publication (Hilal, 2006) I argued that migration as a whole has had a conservative impact on Palestinian society in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.<sup>48</sup> This is the product of the almost continuous impoverishment of the ‘cultural capital’ of Palestinian society in the West Bank and Gaza in the form of continuous emigration of the highly educated and of professionals as a consequence of the colonial situation that these areas have been subjected to. But is also the product of the milieu that Palestinian emigrants (especially those who are destined to return or are in frequent contact with their home communities) face in their host societies. In other words the evaluation of the overall impact of migration has to place the phenomenon in the context not only of the political economy of the Israeli occupation, but also in the context of the changing regional and international situation. The colonial-settler situation that the West Bank and Gaza Strip were subjected to, structured their export of cheap unskilled or semi-skilled labour to the colonizing state’s (i.e. Israel’s) labour market, and their export of skilled and professional labour to the oil economies in the Gulf, and to other places once Jordan’s employment capacities were exhausted in the early 1950s.<sup>49</sup> The fact that the educational system in the West Bank and Gaza remained geared to white-collar employment (Tamari, 1993: 26), was bound to channel graduates to out-migration, as the local market could not absorb so many applicants for white-collar jobs, and no attempt was made to institute technical education and training to widen the capacities of the Palestinian labour market. A discussion on the appropriate educational policy more

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48 Other researchers have noted the existence among Palestinians in the West Bank, in the early 1990s, of a disparity between ‘political radicalism’ and ‘conservative social conduct and outlook’ and linked this, partly at least, to the impact of migration to the Gulf States (Rosenfeld, 2004: 198).

49 The IWS survey revealed that nearly 50% of emigrants resided in Jordan, 26% in other Arab states (mostly the Gulf States), 9% in North America (USA and Canada), and 8% in other countries (mainly Latin America, Europe and Australia). But periodization of data shows a decreasing ratio of emigrants going to Jordan and an increasing ration going to North America, and a decrease in the percent going to the Gulf and other Arab states after 1987.



geared to the needs of the local economy (with a limited productive capacity and small population) was raised only after the establishment of the PA.

What some social scientists fail to see is the long-term ramifications of the colonial situation that was, and still is, maintained by Israeli occupation since 1967. While it employment opportunities in the Israeli labour market reduced ‘Palestinian migratory propensity’ and improved ‘consumption and housing investment’ as some have argued (Gabriel and Sabatello, 1986), it nevertheless kept the Palestinian economy under-developed and tied to the needs of the Israeli economy. This was clearly demonstrated during the 1991 Gulf War when Israel instituted a closure policy, and during second *intifada* when Israel drastically restricted not only employments in its labour markets, together with limiting the movement of labour and commodities between Palestinian towns and villages through an extensive network of military checkpoints.

Paradigms that ignore the fact that Israeli occupation impoverished the cultural and social capital of Palestinians, through inducing out-migration of skilled and professional labour and through the de-developing the Palestinian economy cannot adequately understand the changes that have been taking place in Palestinian society.<sup>50</sup> The high dependency of Palestinian Authority on conditional foreign aid meant making it an easy target for political pressure. The systematic weakening of the Palestinian Authority during the second *intifada* ended up in producing a situation of dual authority with two competing political parties competing for power, and in the fragmenting of society through the revival (or re-invention) of local and kinship ties (Maliki, Shalabi and Ladadwa, 2004).

The fact that a large section of the Palestinian working class was employed by the colonizing society (including in building Israeli settlements on confiscated Palestinian land), and in a context of a regime of total control on the economy, social movements, political parties and urbanization, left its strong mark on the accessibility of that class unionization, and becoming an effective force for equality, freedom and social justice.

Similarly, the fact that a large sector of the Palestinian middle class was working and living in monarchic regimes with patriarchal ruling families has coloured, in varying degrees and forms, the attitudes and behaviour of members of this class in these countries. As immigrants with insecure status that Palestinians there had, in order to protect their jobs and investments and avoid being thrown out into more insecure and risky situations, to adopt a strategy of conformity to the norms and prescriptions dominant in the host societies. Most, if not all, of the Gulf states were ruled by authoritarian and conservative family regimes that presented themselves as guardians of orthodox religion and righteous morality and looked at any change with suspicion, if not hostility.<sup>51</sup> These attitudes and modes of behaviour became normalized by force of being in that conservative habitat, and were disseminated back home by returning or visiting immigrants. This included the veiling of women and imposing strict gender segregation, adopting a style of conspicuous consumption, and an attitude that fears art, culture and freedom of thought. This was aided and abated by the huge sums of money that the oil-producing countries (especially Saudi Arabia with its *Wahabi* fundamentalist religious persuasions) spent on propagating religious fundamentalism and orthodoxy in the region as part of its crusade against secularism, the left and pan-Arabism.

It is worth recalling that Palestinians in the Gulf states could not qualify for citizenship or permanent residency regardless of how many years they worked or lived there and regardless of being born there. The absence of a Palestinian state to which Palestinians can refer for help and advice, or to which they can return, made Palestinian emigrants from the West Bank and Gaza (also Palestinian in Lebanon) particularly vulnerable and tending to avoid any behaviour that might be construed as

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50 On the relationship between Palestinian emigration and skilled labour see Elnajjar, 1993.

51 ‘Mitrah ma birizaq ilzeq’ is a Palestinian saying which reflects the experience of Palestinians who sought a living abroad, at times in adverse conditions, and translates as ‘be sure to stay in the place where you find your livelihood’.

subversive.<sup>52</sup> One Palestinian journalist who lived and worked in Kuwait for many years wrote that Palestinians there (most of whom were from the West Bank and Gaza) formed ‘a community that is almost self-enclosed within which they develop their patriotic feeling, generosity, special culture ... and within which they also form a “ghetto”... the incidence of marriage outside the closed and guarded walls of their community is almost non-existent’ (Abu Bakr, 2000: 35). This description is applicable to all the immigrant Palestinian communities in the Gulf, and perhaps also to other places, including the USA. In fact since the mid-1980s the mosque increasingly became the focal point of mobilization for Palestinians (among other Moslem immigrant communities) in the Gulf, Europe and USA, where worshippers are urged to send money to Palestine through Islamic associations or Zaka committees (Islamic charitable institutions). After the 9/11 attacks in 2001, these associations and committees became subject to strict surveillance and came under strong suspicion particularly in the USA.

In the Gulf states, and also in Jordan although in a different way because of the demographic composition of Jordan where those of Palestinian origin constitute a majority, the Palestinian middle class tended to conform, to the ethos propagated by the hegemonic institutions of the social and cultural fields. Jordan itself was a country exporting skilled labour (mainly of Palestinian origin) to the Gulf and oil-producing countries, and thus has been under the impact of the conservative ethos. Since the mid-1970s remittances to Jordan from expatriate labour formed between 15–25% of GNP, reaching over 1 billion JD in the mid-1990s (Brand, 2006: Table 6.1: 180). Such remittances are many times more than the remittances received by Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza during the 1990s, indicating the scope of impact of migration there.

Palestinian emigrants to Europe and to the two Americas took multiple routes in the formation of their ‘class’ positions and ethnic identities. Decisive among these were educational attainment, and occupation. Successful integration (which entailed gaining citizenship) of educated Palestinians in the new countries reduced their interaction with their home communities and thus diminished their role as agents of socio-cultural change.<sup>53</sup> Some successful Palestinian emigrants from the West Bank or Gaza might possibly return to build a house or send some money to remaining members of family to build a house for visiting or returning members of family (Lutfiyya, 1962: 13–14). But their impact does not usually go beyond signalling that he or she had made it in the *mahjer* (host country) through investing in building of a spacious house. This is not to deny that wealthy Palestinian immigrants (in North America and the Gulf) did, and still do, send money to their needy villages or families when the latter face a serious problem. We do find villages round Ramallah, as an example, where migrants abroad did set up funds for education and health, but this is not the norm.

### ***Disjointed classes, migration, identity and negotiating conditions of insecurity and statelessness***

Palestinian society has been characterized, up to the late 1990s of having a major part of its working class and a major part of its the middle class formed independently of each other; that is, they did not develop within the same socio-economic formation, nor within a clearly defined independent and state. This applies also to Palestinians business class (bourgeoisie) who made their capital in their host countries (the Gulf states, Europe, the US and other countries); that is, they become capitalists mostly in countries where they remained on the margins of political society, even when they obtained citizenship and permanent residence. What united the fragmented Palestinian classes was their national identity (interpreted and given meaning according to generation, status of Palestinians by host

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52 Many Palestinians families in Kuwait sent their children to study in Europe, and more in the USA partly because it was not possible for non-Kuwaitis to enrol in Kuwaiti universities. This applied also to enrolment in government schools there (Abu Bakr, 2000: 17).

53 Researchers note the existence of strong traditional attitudes and values among Palestinian communities in the USA (Detroit and Chicago), and the continuation of a strong attachment to Palestine. One study estimates that Palestinians made up 12.5% of the Arabs in Detroit, and 57% in Chicago (Hayati, 2003).

country and by occupation and education of the individual); an identity which gave central significance to the narrative of *al-Nekba* (dispossession and dispersal), and the realities of discrimination, military occupation and resistance. Palestinian identity was re-articulated and given an organizational expression by the PLO (with its secular political culture) which succeeded up the Oslo Accords, when it was marginalized by the Palestinian Authority, in mobilizing large sectors of Palestinian communities outside and inside Palestine. The mobilization was both political and organizational as many national institutions, trade unions, professional associations were formed and functioned as part of the national liberation movement. Communities in the *diaspora* were involved in the national movement through the organizations and associations of the PLO up to early 1990s when all energies and efforts went to the building of the Palestinian Authority as the nucleus of an imminent Palestinian state (Hanafi, 2001: 66–69, Nabulsi, 2006, and 2007). Up to that date the dispersed Palestinian communities (through expulsion, and/or migration) acted in co-ordination in the struggle for statehood and political rights. The disappearing prospects of a viable Palestinian state could possibly create pressures to reactivate the PLO (reformed in structure and composition) in a way to re-empower the Palestinian communities outside Palestine.

The socio-political milieu within which large sectors of the Palestinian middle class were formed was dominated, as mentioned earlier, by conservative attitudes and demands. Such attitudes and demands are congruent with the concentration of the Palestinian middle class in the service sector of the oil-producing economies, with its marginal position in the political systems of these societies, and with its habitat in a cultural space in which the state presented itself as the guardian of religion, morality, and of polity. Citizens, and more so immigrants, are expected to respect the dictates of the state, and this was enforced by its behaviour a ‘rentier’ state that did not depend on taxation of citizens but on oil revenues which enabled it to provide ‘free’ services their citizens, with no or minimum taxation.

The proximity of the Gulf states to the West Bank and Gaza enabled emigrants to return periodically to their home communities and to carry with them attitudes and norms acquired in the host countries. This has also been the case with the intensive interactions between families from the West Bank and their relatives in Jordan, given the proximity and the existence of a large number of Palestinians in Jordan a majority of whom came from the West Bank. It has been estimated that the number of Palestinians in the East Bank increased from 70,000 in 1949 to about 1.2 million in 1987, and from several hundred in the Gulf states to about half a million for the same period (Gilbar, 1997: 24).

Social scientists have noted that the continual loss, through emigration, of skilled and highly educated individuals from Palestinian communities in West Bank and Gaza Strip meant their deprivation from the more innovative and dynamic members (Ammons, 1979: 224; Tamari, 1993: 26), and enhanced, therefore, resistance to social change. However, this is only one dimension of the situation, perhaps the most important dimension is what happens to these individuals in their host societies and what kind of relationship, if any, they maintain with their original communities. In any case the issue cannot be adequately dwelt with without situating it within the colonial situation that engulfs the Palestinian communities in the West Bank and Gaza.

It is within the colonial context that the ‘impoverishment’ of the labour of Palestinian society took place, and encompassed—as a consequence of increasing dependency on wage labour—the breakdown of the long-standing tradition of the transfer of skills among craftsmen and artisans from one generation to the next. It is also within this same colonial context that we need to notice that the Israeli policy refused entry to or exiled thousands of highly qualified individuals because of their political affiliations or patriotic persuasions. Some Israeli sociologists have argued that Israel had a clear policy designed to obstruct the emergence, in the occupied territories, of an effective Palestinian leadership opposed to the occupation (Migdal, 1980: 67).

## 6 Conclusion: the political and cultural economy of Palestinian migration

It is futile to discuss the impact of migration on Palestinian society in the West Bank and Gaza without situating the society in its historical, regional and international setting. Palestinian society in the West Bank and Gaza has been subject to dramatic changes and shattering events beginning with *al-Nekba* in 1948, to its two regions coming, respectively, under Jordanian and Egyptian rule, to their falling under a military and settler-colonial occupation in 1967. The occupation of the two regions coincided with the emergence of the PLO as a secular umbrella organization of political organizations dedicated to the resistance of the occupation and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. This had ongoing consequences for the society in its two regions. The PLO played a decisive role in organizing Palestinian communities in both the *diaspora* and in the regions under occupation, and a decisive role in directing and organizing support and assistance for the occupied territories.

Families in the occupied areas have to negotiate modes of resistance while managing their livelihood in a dependent market economy where a significant sector of its labour force is employed by the colonizing state, and another significant sector has to emigrate for white-collar employment abroad. The establishment of the Palestinian Authority in 1994 meant the re-articulation of a new relationship between Palestinians outside and Palestinian communities within Palestine, with the latter occupying the centre of the political stage, whereas it was Palestinians in the *diaspora* who occupied that position. It also meant, albeit temporarily, a change in the direction of migration so that the Palestinian areas became, for the first time since the 1950s, recipients of expatriates or returnees.

It is also necessary to view Palestinian migration within the framework of other ongoing processes that gave it impetus, and affected its volume and destination. The most important processes have been the spread of secular or state education (both at the basic and high levels) that was made available to Palestinians, the dominance of wage labour as the main means of earning a livelihood for the great majority of people, the marginalisation of agriculture and the de-development of the Palestinian economy, together with the absence of tangible urbanization in the Palestinian territories. These processes were taking place in absence of a national state for Palestinians, and under the impact of a colonial-settler occupation (since 1967) and the struggle for national liberation.

### *The colonial situation and the impoverishment of cultural and social capital*

The repercussions of the processes just outlined have been far-reaching on the economy, social structure, and culture of the Palestinian areas. The de-development of the Palestinian economy and its transformation into a captive market for Israeli commodities and as a reservoir of cheap unskilled and semi-skilled labour for Israeli industry, was the driving force (the 'push') behind high rates of emigration of skilled and professional labour, a process that impoverished the labour force of the Palestinian society and deprived it of dynamic elements for change and innovation. The arresting of urbanization fed the same result. The absence of a Palestinian metropolis, or a unifying centre for cultural, artistic, journalistic, economic, intellectual and political interaction, has stunted the growth of Palestinian culture and arts and kept them in a state of weightlessness and dispersion and subject to the diverse influences of external cultural and political fields, determined by the political fields where Palestinian communities happen to be situated (i.e. Jordan, Israel, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Gulf states, Europe, USA, etc). The fragmentation of Palestinian society in 1948 had an impact not only on the development of Palestinian art and culture but also on Palestinian crafts, which lost a great deal of their vitality and creativity through work in Israel, and through out-migration (Mohamed, 2002).

### *Uncertainty, statelessness, low remittances and modest investments*

The economic benefits from Palestinian out-migration have been, judged by the resources available, of uncertain benefit to Palestinian society for two reasons. First, remittances remained modest as shown in some detail earlier. This also applies to the volume of investments by expatriates following the

establishment of the Palestinian Authority. Second, the very rich experience gained by the Palestinian emigrants (many hundreds of thousands of whom have helped in building other states, such as in Jordan and the Gulf states) could not be utilized sufficiently by Palestinian society because it remained entangled in the web of a settler-colonial situation. The optimism experienced soon after the Oslo Accords that the Palestinian Authority would be able to transform itself into an independent and sovereign state was soon replaced by disappointment and frustration. In fact the democratization of the Palestinian political system which the USA, Israel and Europe demanded for the Palestinian political system brought Palestinian society more hardships as was the case following the election of a Hamas government in March 2006. The political and economic siege imposed on the PA exacerbated the already high levels of poverty and unemployment, while Israel continued its settlement building, the construction of the Separation Wall, with its closure policy, and the withholding, in violation of the Paris Protocol, of \$54 million in monthly tax revenue owed to the Palestinian treasury. The prospects of a negotiated settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that could lead to the creation of an independent, viable and sovereign Palestinian state became an empty political slogan and make is extremely unlikely while the right and extreme right occupy the political centre stage in Israel.

### ***The pitfalls of functionalist paradigms***

Functionalist paradigms are of limited value in explaining reasons behind migration, and its ramifications and consequences (Hovedenak, 1997; Al-Ali, 2004; Cainker *et al.*, 2004). It is more rewarding analytically to view migration and its various dimensions (other than forced migration or expulsion) using paradigms that examine the phenomenon as a process that takes place over a period of time, through which individuals or families seek to intervene to change their circumstances. This process of intervention may involve trying to minimize risks or to improve life chances in situations of wars, military occupation, repression, poverty, exploitation, and discrimination. Such interventions may expose them to new conditions of vulnerability (risks of marginality, of cultural alienation, loss of social capital, ethnic or religious discrimination, etc), or to new situations of conflict (cultural, ethnic, political, etc) in the host country. Indeed, most Palestinian communities in Israel, in the 1967 occupied areas, in the Arab states, or in Europe or the USA have experienced various forms of tension, or discrimination in the host state or society.

As mentioned earlier, immigrant communities tend to develop strategies of resistance, conformity or integration mediated through the politics of identity (religious, sectarian, nationalist, ethnic, etc), the politics of citizenship (demand for equality), specific interests (bettering of wages, work conditions, housing, health facilities), or a combination of these. Thus, while the Palestinian community in Israel developed, in general, a strategy affirming its Arab identity and culture in confronting Jewish Zionism, Palestinian communities in most Gulf states emphasised their Palestinian identity as a struggle for statehood, the right of return and independence; that is, of non-interference in the affairs of the host country to the point of forming a kind of 'ghetto' in some of these countries in response to their exclusion from the politics of the host society (Abu Bakr, 2000). Palestinians in Lebanese refugee camps moved from a strategy of self-assertive resistance to one of conformity depending on the changing internal balance of forces in Lebanese society. Thus, many Palestinians sought to join resistance organizations or to emigrate even if this meant facing the hazards of the asylum process.

In the West Bank and Gaza Strip, more than one strategy was adopted simultaneously or successively. These ranged from emphasis on steadfastness, to emphasis on civil resistance, to the adoption of armed resistance, to seeking emigration abroad, and to the seeking work with the Israeli employers. In Jordan the dominant tendency among Palestinians has been to adopt socio-economic integration, while maintaining, often inconspicuously a Palestinian political identity.

It is more realistic to view the act of migration as one of intervention (usually extending over a period of time) to change one's or family's situation, but often doing so while not in full control of the factors that determine or influence that process. This sort of outlook allow one to avoid looking at

migration in terms of costs and benefits, and to focus more on what happens to the migrants in his relationships with their host society as well as with their community of origin. As a process, emigration involves negotiations and decisions at various stages (in the home family, in the host society with the authorities, with employers, with neighbours, with one's emigrant community, with the home community, with political affiliation, etc.). The emergence of the Palestinian national movement in the late 1960s and its enhanced mobilization capacity in the 1970s and 1980s, gave it a significant role in relation to the Palestinian communities in the *diaspora*. In many cases it meant the immigrant seeking help, advice and support from the political organization that they supported at home. This normally meant joining a political organization in the host country, and participating in its activities and national occasions and solidarity campaigns with the resistance of Palestinians under occupation.

What this means is that the act of migration cannot simply be reduced to 'individual and household adaptation to a complex social world' (Pedersen, 1997: 7). As a process, as we have seen with out-migration and in-migration in Palestine, it always takes place in socio-economic and political context, where dimensions of class, gender, religion or ethnicity are evident, and in a context of what some social scientists called '*diaspora space*' (Brah, 1996: 208–10).

### ***Crossing the 'Green Line' for work***

Commuting Palestinians, who crossed to Israel and its settlements for work, and those who used to cross the Jordan River to the East Bank, particularly before 1967, adopted such courses of action as strategies to provide for a livelihood for their families. Palestinian refugees in Lebanon did not have such options; instead they sought employment in agriculture and industries that needed cheap and unprotected labour. This remained the case until late 1960s when the arrival of the Palestinian resistance organizations and the institutions of the PLO provided them with the alternative of joining the various factions of the PLO and working in PLO institutions in the camps there (Sayigh, 1979). After 1982 when the PLO was no longer operating in Lebanon emigration became a serious option for anyone unable or unwilling to join resistance groups active in the refugee camps, or would otherwise have to seek manual work in the Lebanese economy.

### ***Migration, social class, and re-inventing uses for tradition and kinship***

Both extended family considerations and social class dynamics are pertinent in explaining the direction of migration and its consequences for local communities. It is also true that migration affects the process of social class formation and alters the significance of extended family relations, emphasising their value as social capital. Thus, the relevance of migration for social class and kinship (as interpreted and reinterpreted in a situation of statelessness and insecurity) is not uni-directional. Migration as a process is geared, in specific ways, by social class and is facilitated by extended family relations, but once migration takes place it engenders changes at both levels.

The IWS survey results show that the percentage of households with out-migrants is highest among wealthiest households followed by the poorest households. In other words, the very wealthy and the very poor are the most likely to have members migrating abroad.<sup>54</sup> Similarly households headed by persons who are employers or self-employed are more likely to have emigrants than private-sector employees, and households headed by public-sector employees (employed by the government) tend to have a higher ratio of emigrants abroad than private-sector employees.

The relationship between class position and out-migration is also expressed in other ways. In the IWS survey we found that households with emigrants have a higher percentage of individuals with a

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54 The percentage of households with emigrants abroad according to wealth index was as follows (based on the survey by IWS carried out in 1999): very poor households 51%; poor households 42.9%; medium households 47.9%; upper-medium households 51.5%; upper-upper households (very wealthy) 53.1%.

high level of education than households with no emigrants. But again we found that households with the highest rates of illiteracy have a higher ratio of emigrants than households with elementary, preparatory and secondary education.<sup>55</sup> The survey results also show that households with emigrants (i.e. brother, son, sister, daughter, father, mother) living abroad tended to have a higher rate of living in separate dwellings than households without emigrants.<sup>56</sup> The IWS survey showed that the smaller the household, the higher the likelihood of having a close relative abroad.<sup>57</sup> This correlation corresponds to the inverse correlation between household size and poverty rates in the West Bank and Gaza (PCBS, May 2005), again indicating a social class connection. Data from the IWS survey and well as from general observation indicate that both the well-off and the very poor are most likely to seek emigration. Of the total 194 households in the IWS survey that had no one member of the household employed, 131, or two-thirds had an emigrant abroad.

These findings point to the complex relation existing between social class, extended family relations and migration, and hence the impact they likely to generate on each other. Migration, and much as kinship solidarity is a household strategy used by the poor to escape or alleviate poverty and insecurity (albeit, not always successfully). Migration is also a strategy used by the well-off to reproduce their social class and improve their wealth and/or social status.

Extended family relations retain their vitality in Palestinian society as a support system that can be activated in situations of acute insecurity, risk (economic, political, social), and political uncertainty. Most Palestinian households are nuclear, and common ownership (land or estate) between married brothers is not a common phenomenon. Family networks are relevant in shaping spatial patterns of migration as earlier emigrants try to assist relatives to be ‘pulled away’ (this is the literal translation of the Arabic word *‘seheba’* used in this context by participants) from uncertainty, poverty and insecurity (as exits in West Bank and Gaza Strip) to seek a livelihood in another country. This has instituted what some social scientists refer to as ‘chain migration’ (Boyle, *et al.*, 1998: 36).

It is worth noting that large numbers of emigrants from the West Bank and Gaza came from small or smallish communities with strong traditions and with strong kinship loyalties and gender identities. They come from communities, including towns and refugee camps that have not experienced any significant degree of urbanisation since 1948. The pervasiveness of small community and provincial styles of life is reflected, and reinforced, in the high rates of kinship marriages that are maintained in these communities, as well as, it seems, among emigrants from these communities.

There relevance of kinship is most clear in the maintenance of a high incidence of marriage among relatives. National surveys (in 2000) show that marriage to close (first-degree) relatives formed 28% of all marriages in the West Bank and Gaza; 26% in the West Bank, and 31% in the Gaza Strip (PCBS, 2000). A Fafu survey conducted in 1995 found that nearly 27% of all marriages of women in the West Bank and Gaza Strip born between 1940 and 1949 were marriages to first cousins, and the percentages for women born between 1949 and 1969 was just over 28% (Pedersen, *et al.*, 2001: 82). The IWS survey found that 27% of women in the nineteen communities surveyed were married to their male cousins, and nearly 18% were married to other relatives; in all, nearly 45% of marriages were to relatives of various degrees.

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55 While illiterate households (for those aged 10 years of age or more) were equally divided between those with emigrants and those without, households with persons with more than secondary education were distributed as follows; 58.5% and 41.5% respectively. Households with persons with secondary education had a ratio of 46.4% with emigrants to 53.6% without emigrants. Households with elementary and preparatory education had a similar ratio of emigrants to non-emigrants; 45.4% with emigrants to 54.6% without emigrants, and 45.6% emigrants to 54.6% non-emigrants respectively (Hilal, 2006).

56 A third (33%) of all households with close relatives abroad reported living in separate residences, compared to 28% among those who do not have relatives living abroad (Hilal, 2006).

57 Over half (53%) of households with 1–4 persons reported having close relatives abroad, compared to 51% of households with 5–7 persons, and to 43% with 8–10 persons, and 42% with 11 or more persons (*ibid.*).

The relevance of kin marriage for migration is not very clear, but one can suggest two things: first, that marriage to close kin tends to reproduce the 'chain' in the emigration process, as it is bonded by kinship marriage. Secondly, that migration, despite theories about globalization and modernization, does not lead to the break-up of traditional norms and practices, but that in fact it seems to act as a mechanism for their reproduction. This is how a social anthropologist in her study of a Palestinian refugee camp (in the first half of the 1990s) in the West Bank phrased it:

Notwithstanding the fact that in most cases labour migration of Palestinian professionals to the Gulf enhanced their economic position, at least temporarily, the denial of rights and freedoms in the countries of migration prevented the translation of this gain into social independence and mobility. The contradiction between the economic potentials of migration and the absence of a concomitant social transformation fostered a two-fold dependency: on the one hands that of families on the economic support of their sons and daughters; on the other, that of migrants on the familial social ties and connections in the homeland. One of the results is the prolonged preservation of traditional patriarchal relations within the family despite the physical separation of young family members and despite the latter's economic advances. (Rosenfeld, 2004: 163)

In reality, given the context in which migration has been taking place, the process did more than simply facilitate the maintenance of traditional patriarchal relations; it has been on the whole a mechanism generating conservatism among a middle class that it helped to create and maintain.



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