Chapter 3

Problems Of Withdrawal
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In the early years after the June 1967 War when Israel took over the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the Labour alignment was in power and it had no clear-cut policy towards the occupied territories\(^49\) (Efrat 1988). The new situation created by the events prior to the war heightened Israel’s security concerns. Hence, despite its initial preparedness to return substantial quantities of the occupied territories to the Arabs in return for peace, Israel established a limited Jewish settlement in the occupied territories. The government also began to integrate the economic infrastructure of these areas with Israel.

The residents of the West Bank were given access to Jordan through the “Open Bridge” policy to facilitate some resemblance of normalization and to facilitate minimal contacts with the erstwhile ruler.\(^50\) Limited assistance was given in restoration of economic activity and public functions at the municipal level. But region-wide political activities by the Palestinian residents were banned (Peretz 1986).

The Labour Party’s ambiguous policies in the West Bank, namely willingness to return large portions of the territories captured during the war even while building Jewish settlements, created more problems. Capitalising on this, militant groups such as *Gush Emunim* began establishing illegal settlements, especially in the West Bank, which the government found difficult to remove or control in the later stage.

A number of other important developments had occurred because of the June war. Firstly, the issue of land for peace became a viable political option, though its modalities remained an extremely contentious issue, especially as the Arab states showed no sign of political accommodation with Israel. Secondly, the PLO, which was established in 1964,......
emerged as a powerful force, using guerrilla tactics and various forms terrorism as a political weapon. Third, the issue of Eretz Israel became a bargaining chip for the Jewish hardliners and religious extremists.

There were however no national consensus in Israel regarding the occupied territories something the peacemakers had to confront following the signing of the DoP in September 1993. Successive Israeli governments viewed these settlements as a legitimate act aimed at enhancing national security and/or restoring Jewish presence in their ancestral homeland. In other words, there has been a gradual hardening of position aimed at preventing parts or all of these territories from returning to foreign hands (Smith Shah 1994:99-109; Smith-shah 1995:98-108).

The Palestinians, neighbouring Arab states as well as a majority of the international community viewed the Jewish settlements in the occupied territories a blatant violation of international law by an occupying power. The explosive nature of these two positions has been starkly demonstrated by numerous clashes between settlers and Palestinians over the years, most notably by the Hebron massacre of February 1994, which delayed the implementation of the DOP and raised fears over the continuation of the precarious peace process.

**Background**

Since the June war, Israel had perused an active settlement policy vis-à-vis the occupied territories. What began as a small move aimed at establishment security outposts along the borders with Jordan and Egypt gradually transformed into a fulfilled activity aimed at populating the Palestinian areas with Jewish Israeli citizens and thereby preventing the formation of an independent Palestinian entity between Israel and the Kingdom of Jordan. By creating 'facts on the ground' Israel sought to modify not only the demography of the occupied territories but also its geography and territorial component (Harris 1980).
The Allon Plan

It was within the context of the acquisition of the territory by war and its retention, on 26 July 1967 Minister of Labour, Yigal Allon, presented the cabinet with a plan for the country’s future borders and this was subsequently known as the Allon Plan (Allon 1976:38-53). It was a scheme for annexation of the maximum amount of territory with the minimum number of Palestinian inhabitants. Allon proposed the retention by Israel of the Jordan valley, from the river west to the crest of the high land ridge, a strip 12-15 km wide. At the southern end of the valley the strip widened to include Jerusalem, then proceeded south, skirting Hebron, to the bottom of the west Bank, a strip 18-25 km wide. He also proposed widening the Jerusalem corridor to include the Latrun salient to the north-west of the city, and the ‘Etzion Bloc’ area to the south (Allon 1976). Within the area to be retained, Allon further proposed the establishment of Jewish rural and urban settlements and military bases. For the interior of the West Bank Allon foresaw some sort of autonomy, with links either to Jordan and/or Israel. In addition to the part of West Bank, Allon proposed retention of the Gaza Strip and resettlement either in northern Sinai or the autonomous region of the West Bank of the 1948 refugee population of the Strip.

Although the Allon Plan did not fully satisfy either the minimalists or the maximalists inside Israel, it represented a compromise that neither found wholly unacceptable. Instead of retaining all or none of the territories, Allon suggested retention of the Gaza Strip and about 40 per cent of the West Bank under Israel’s sovereignty, with Israeli settlements along the Jordan valley serving as a security belt (Lehn 1988:167). Additionally the plan gave due consideration to security and demographic factors. Under it, Israel’s borders would be more readily defensible, in part, because the West Bank would be effectively partitioned, the relatively large Palestinian population of some 600,000 would not be added to the Jewish state, and additional good land and water, especially in the Jordan Valley, would be made available for Jewish settlement. In spite of such considerations in its favour, Allon’s plan was never adopted as an official doctrine by the government. But the plan exerted a considerable impact on Israel’s settlement map as long as Labour Party remained in power.
In the run-up to the 1973 Knesset elections, the security rationale of the plan was underscored by Allon's colleague, Yisrael Galilee, who drafted an ideological platform for the Labour party, supporting the concentration of “security settlements” along the borders and rejecting Israel's return to the pre-1967 borders and the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank. The Allon plan was a major innovation in the Israeli strategic thinking.

Appearance of Gush Emunin

Settlements activity in the West Bank had been carried out by Israel's two largest parties, the Labour Party with its secular and socialist outlook and Likud with its religious and nationalist stance. The former took a pragmatic approach towards settlements, in line with Allon’s concept of defensible borders and avoided settlements in densely populated areas. Likud, on the other hand, was committed to the territorial ideology of “Greater Israel” and insisted on the right of Jews to settle everywhere in the territories, not least near major Arab population centres (Tachau 1994:198-258; Alpher 1996:229-41; Allon 1976:38-53). A new kind of pioneer Zionism thus emerged, one that exhorted Israelis to exercise their rights in their historic homeland and used nationalist and religious justifications to this end.

Domestic pressures to maintain Israel's hold on the occupied territories was renewed following the Arab failure to accept an offer for direct peace negotiations. A small but increasing number of religiously oriented Jews pressurised the government to adopt

51 The Labour party continues the political traditions of the social-democratic Mapai, which was the leading party in the Yishuv and the state of Israel from the time of its formation in 1930. It split and reunited many times and finally in 1968 emerged as the Labour party of Israel. It still follows a moderate line concerning major issues in Israel politics, in state, religious, social, defence, and economic policies, and it has supported the principle of territorial compromise concerning the future of occupied territories and the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. It has only opted for partition of the territories between Israel and a Jordanian-Palestinian state. It accepted, however, the autonomy plan signed by Israel, Egypt and the United States at Camp David (1978) as a necessary interim phase in the search for an overall solution. Labour supported the maintenance of Jewish settlements within a limited part of the territories and only for security purposes.

52 The Likud is the major party of the political right in Israel and Herut and Gahal were its predecessors and emerged as Likud in 1973. The Likud adheres to the idea of Greater Israel, though politically it has a more limited programme: to intensify Jewish settlements in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and to prevent the transfer of these territories to foreign sovereignty.
“Liberation of Judea and Samaria” as the official policy and to encourage Jewish settlements and ultimately to incorporate the entire West Bank into the Jewish State (Peretz 1986:46). In 1974, Gush Emunin appeared on the Israeli political scene (Karsh 1994:141; Barlizai and Peleg:59-74). 53 This group started the practice of creating illegal Jewish settlements near the Arab population centres. Before the emergence of this group, the ‘land-for-peace’ issue was already becoming a source of heated debate in Israel. Begin’s Herut party was opposed to returning any of ‘the land of historical Israel’ to the Arabs.

The Defence Minister Moshe Dayan determined Israel’s settlement policy from the end of the 1967 war until 1974. He did not allow the establishment of Jewish settlements in the bulk of the territories. The only exception he made was to allow a tiny group of Jewish settlers to live near Hebron. Dayan wanted to surround the densely inhabited parts of these areas, by creating a settlement zone in the almost uninhabited Jordan valley and northern Sinai (the Yamit settlement). In order to preserve the Israeli alliance with the feudal Palestinian notables who were in firm control of the villages (although not of the larger towns), Dayan promised not to confiscate village lands, which he mostly kept. Gush Emunin demonstrated its strength by organizing enormous demonstrations in 1974 and 1975 opposing the Dayan promise. These demonstrations were also directed against US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger for backing Dayan’s policy.

However, Shimon Peres, who became Defence Minister in 1974 under Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin (1974-77), initiated a new policy, which he called “functional compromise” for which he acquired the support of Gush Emunin. According to this policy, all the land inside the West Bank and Gaza Strip that

53 This politico-religious movement, for the settlement of the occupied territories that were seized by Israel in the June war was founded in 1974. This movement attached religious messianic significance to the consequences of that war; initiated Jewish settlement projects in the territories, especially in the West Bank; and protested official policies to curb Jewish settlement or any attempt to reach an agreement with the Palestinians and the Arab states involving the return of the territories. Gush Emunin did not develop into a political party, but its leaders were active in the national Religious Party and the parties of the political rights.
were not being used by the inhabitants could be confiscated for the exclusive use of the Jews who were Israeli citizens and whose presence in the occupied territories has been illegal and controversial. The government of the Israel promised to control only certain essential functions in Palestine areas. Palestinian political leaders were vehemently opposed to this new policy of consolidating and concretizing a permanent Israeli rule over the Palestinians in the occupied territories.

Prime Minister Rabin at first opposed this policy. In 1975, Peres conspired with Gush Emunin and planned strategy to circumvent Rabin’s opposition. With the help of Defence Minister Peres in 1976, the Gush Emunin founded the settlement Ofra as temporary camp and the settlement Shilo as a temporary archaeological camp. It also pursued similar policies and initiated settlement activities in the Gaza Strip. These settlements agreed to by Peres in 1975 and 1976, still exist in the West Bank and are flourishing.

Following the 1977 election of Menachem Begin as prime minister, a “holy alliance” of the religious Gush Emunin and successive secular Israeli governments had occurred and has remained in place to date (Sprinzak 1991:86-91). Policies of the Gush Emunin and the tacit support it received from sections of the Labour Party in the early years made the future settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict even more difficult because these Jewish settlements not only mushroomed between 1974 and 1994, but any attempt to stop or disband them created yet another taboo which promised to create enormous acrimony and divisiveness inside Israel.

Likud’s fundamental objective from 1977 until 1984 was clear-cut, with emphasis on integrating the West Bank into Israel. The territorial unity of the historic Land of Israel or Eretz Yisrael was the basis of its political ideology and not amenable to compromise. All policies and decisions related to West Bank after 1977 were based on this goal. This policy was motivated as much by Herut ideology, emphasizing territorial unification of
the land of Israel as well as by strong security considerations. Shortly after the 1977 elections, but before assuming office as prime minister, Menachem Begin declared in an interview that “Israel will never return any part of Judea and Samaria (biblical name for the West Bank), for these areas are integral parts of the state of Israel.” He further added: “The Arab states must realize this, and eventually they will” (Lehn 1988:19). He then visited the settlement of Qedumim (West of Nablus), established in 1975, where he announced: “Since May of this year the name of these areas has been changed from occupied to liberated territories. This is liberated Israeli land, and we call on young volunteers in the country and in the Diaspora to come and settle here” (Lehn 1988:20); (Allon 1994:19).

However, between 1967 and 1977, the ruling party implemented the old ideology of the Labour movement, which, since the pre-state days had posited settlements on an agricultural basis. This ideology was also applied to West Bank, which in turn necessitated the identification of fertile and arable land. By way of a solution, the government either declared the land as a belonging to absentees and leased it to settlers, or seized it for security purposes. Likud’s rise to power heralded a fundamental change in the concept of settlement activities beyond the “Green-line” (that is, armistice lines as existed on the eve of the June 1967 war) to one favouring settlement in all parts of the West Bank.

To counter Jewish aspirations for control of the land in the West Bank, Palestinians resorted to a series of means. These included the unsupervised extension of village areas by scattered buildings; construction in isolated spots unconnected with villages; and resumption of cultivation of abandoned fields. They tried to cultivate lands that were seized by the occupying power in the hope of arresting the steady diminution of land through accelerated settlement activities.

When the Likud returned to power in the 1981 elections, the new government’s programme presented to the Knesset in August consisted of 35 objectives, including the following:
• The right of the Jewish people to the land of Israel is an eternal right that cannot be called into question, and which is intertwined with the right to security and peace.

• The autonomy agreed on at Camp David means neither sovereignty nor self-determination (for Palestinians). The autonomy agreements concluded at Camp David are guarantees that under no condition will a Palestinian state emerge in the territories of the western (part of the) land of Israel.

• At the end of the transition period set down in the Camp David agreements, Israel will raise its claim and act to realize its right of sovereignty over Judea, Samaria, and the Gaza region (Lehn 1988:184-85).

This plan for the settlement of the West Bank, largely modelled on Gush Emunin’s vision, was adopted in 1978 by the settlement department of the World Zionist Organization and Israel’s Ministry of Agriculture. Its aims were twofold: to settle 100,000 Jews in the territories between 1982 and 1987, and to increase their number to half-a-million by year 2010. The plan provided for the creation in urban settlements in the vicinity of the Green Line, that would not be based on a hard core of ideological settlers, as had been the case in the past; rather, they would actually serve as residential suburbs of the Tel-Aviv and Jerusalem, offering their Israeli residents a high standard of housing at a relatively low cost. To hasten unification of these areas with Israel proper, Jewish settlements were given great encouragement and assistance by the government, by Zionist institutions, and through the private sector. There were no restrictions on areas within the West Bank where Jews could settle since the whole region was considered an integral part of the Jewish state. Measures to integrate West Bank infrastructure such as water systems, electricity and road network within Israel were hastened. Priority in the use of land and water was given to Jewish settlements in all parts of West Bank.

The plans for political absorption were dealt with more severely than under Labour and attempts were made to sever all ties between West Bank inhabitants and the Palestinian nationalist movement, especially the PLO. An attempt was made to replace Arab attraction to the PLO with establishment of rural-based “Village Leagues” opposed to the PLO-oriented urban leadership. Prime Minister Begin developed an autonomy plan for
the Arab inhabitants of the West Bank under the Camp David peace agreements, in which limited self-government would be extended to individuals, but would not be applicable to the territory, which would become part of Israel. Successive governments maintained the status quo on the settlement policy until Oslo agreement.

**Shift in policy**

Driven security consideration in the early years the Labour encourage limited number Jewish settlement in the West Bank. At the time of the Knesset elections in December 1973, Labour government had modified the Galili documents. The new programme stated that until peace treaties or interim arrangements could be included “Israel will continue to maintain the situation as determined at the time, with priority for security consideration. Although the new programme called for territorial compromise, it warned that “Israel will not return to the lines of June 4, 1967, which were a temptation for aggressions (Peretz 1986:47-49). When Labour left office in 1977, the role of the West Bank as a bargaining chip for peace negotiations had diminished.

Prior to the Oslo accord, some sections strongly advocated that Israel should adopt certain posture of “territorial compromise” vis-à-vis the occupied territories (Kumaraswamy 1994:223). Some were advocating a unilateral Israeli annexation of certain part of the West Bank. Another strong group in Israel had already made it clear that an eventual evacuation of settlements was something the army must oppose (Kumaraswamy 1994:223-24). This group reminded Rabin of his promise before the 1992 elections that no settlements would be evacuated. Former Prime Minister Shamir has equated the evacuation of settlements with killing one’s parent (Allon 1994:18; Hessian 1994:40-42).

Rabin acknowledged the important role played by settlements in search of peace and declared that his government would halt its settlements plans. But soon became apparent that Rabin’s “freeze” was far from a prohibition on Israeli construction in the occupied territories. At the end of September, a broad Israeli consensus emerged the “five noses” formula. But only those noses
are relevant here are “no to abandoning any settlement” and “no to the imposition of any restraints upon the Israeli army anywhere in the territories. The rationale for Rabin’s support for settlements of strategic value, meant encouraging the Gush Emunin (meaning “Bloc of faithful”) who were ready to settle in places like Netzarim, where their less zealous brethrens are unwilling to go (Israel 1994:16; Efraim 1994:141). They have also aspired to settle the mountain crest and areas densely populated by the Palestinians. This meant the creation of territorial continuity between the West Bank and the state of Israel.

However, Israel for more than thirty years has been building roads, settlements and military bases that became highly problematic for withdrawal. The major political parties in Israel right and left had envisaged a “solution” in which Israel retains between fifty percent and seventy percent of the West Bank, returning only the left over to a possible Palestinian state (Guyat 1998: IX). On the other hand, having lost bulk of the territory in 1948 the Palestinians were not prepared to accept further loss of territories and demanded a complete Israeli withdrawal to the June 1967 borders as a minimum requirement for a stable and independent state.

Firstly, Rabin Excluded Arab East-Jerusalem from the settlements restrictions, arguing that, even this territory had been occupied in 1967 and held by military forces. Having annexed the eastern party or “unified” according to Israeli parlance, Israel has exempted it from any settlements-related limitations. Second, Rabin had imposed no restrictions on the continued confiscation of Palestinian lands in the West Bank and Gaza. In fact, the Rabin-Peres government seized as much territory as any of its Likud predecessors. Three, Rabin not only pursued major housing programme and projects in the occupied territories but strengthen a network of bypass roads intended for Jewish settlers. Aimed at avoiding Palestinian towns they linked various settlements with each other and with Israel (Guyat 1998: 30-32). The by-pass road project has long been appealed to the Israeli leaders to shift the West Bank travel from
North-South to east-west. The roads have been criticized by human rights and environmental groups as well as organization supporting a land-for-peace solution because the new highway cut across Palestinian lands and agriculture and was meant to carry only settler traffic and thereby reinforcing the permanent Israeli presence in the occupied territories. Despite the publicity over settlement freeze, Rabin-Peres government contributed enormously to the consolidation of Israeli settlement in the occupied territories.

In terms of settlements, Rabin’s policies between 1992 and 1995 were disastrous for the Palestinians. His genius was in appearing to be compromising but securing all of Israel’s objectives. The Oslo II agreement served Israel by preserving every settlement. In fact, as long as Israel occupied the whole of the Gaza and the West Bank, the ideological supporters of settlements could imagine that the Palestinian would soon be expelled from these lands entirely and Jewish settlers could “return” in huge numbers to Nablus, Bethlehem and Hebron. By agreeing to allow the Palestinian to administer their own cities, Rabin broke their confidence and was consequently murdered by Yigal Amir, a yeshiva (religious seminary) student with links to the ideological settlements movement. Amir claimed that, by making even the smallest territorial concession to the Palestinians, the Israeli leader had failed and betrayed the Jewish people and earned his demise.

Israel did keep its end of the bargain with the Palestinians and allowed Arafat to return to the Palestinian territories, enabled the establishment of a Palestinian government and partially withdrew from lands so that the Palestinians could govern. Although Israel did not violate the letter, it certainly broke the spirit in the particularly sensitive issue of settlements in the West Bank and Gaza (Makovsky 2000:7-8); Aly 1996:4-6). During the Original Oslo II talks in 1993, the Palestinians had wanted an explicit Israeli commitment to a settlement freeze. But confronted by settlers and their powerful supporters inside

Israel Rabin refused to yield. Indeed, both Labour and Likud governments had consistently supported settlement expansion in the occupied territories.

**Territorial Jurisdiction of withdrawal**

The DoP signed in September 1993 formally brought the PLO to the West Bank and Gaza and the formation of an interim Palestinian National Authority (PA), with the goal of finding a solution to all of the remaining issues. The agreement was structured as a five year, three stage processes, a complex and gradual approach required by the high degree of mutual mistrust and large number of difficult issues to be resolved during this transition period. While Israel relinquished full control over some territories and releases hundreds of Palestinian prisoners, it also retained control over international affairs, borders, overall security, East Jerusalem and Jewish settlements. In exchange, the Palestinian authority (PNA) agreed to put an end to Palestinian terrorism against Israel, change of its charter calling for Israel’s destruction and cease hostile propaganda.

The two sides agreed that discussion of the issue of territorial jurisdiction (Article IV of DOP) as it relates to the interim period was based on the premise that issues relating to the exercise of sovereignty were outside the scope of the interim status negotiations. The two sides agreed to view West Bank and the Gaza strip as a single territorial unit whose integrity would be preserved during the interim period. Another key goal of the interim period was the transfer of authority to Palestinians. In order to govern themselves according to democratic principles, direct, free and general political elections (Article III) would be held for the council, under agreed provision and under international observation, with the Palestinian police ensuring public order. These elections would constitute a significant interim preparatory step toward the realization of the Palestinian people and their just requirement.

Shortly after the signing of the DoP, negotiations commenced between Israeli and Palestinian delegations on the interim agreement which led to the Gaza-
Jericho agreement signed in Cairo, 4 May 1994. On 1 July 1994, Arafat finally set foot for the first time in twenty-seven years on the territory he had claimed. Four days later, he was sworn in as the head of the PNA and his first cabinet began to function. One week after that Arafat moved into his new home in Gaza.\textsuperscript{55} The Palestinian held joyous celebration as PNA forces entered each new places. These agreements was reinforced by January 1996 election renewing Arafat's mandate as the head of the PNA and the election of 88-member Palestinian legislative council.\textsuperscript{56}

The establishment of PNA derived its legitimacy from the Oslo agreements and its outcome. Israel also agreed for partial withdrawal from the occupied territories, holding of the first national elections in 1996, and the establishment of the first Palestinian government which had produced an appearance of harmony (Khalil 2002:23). The authority of the PNA covers all matters that fell within its territorial, functional and personal jurisdiction, as follows.

- The territorial jurisdiction covers Gaza strip and the Jericho area territory, as defined in article 1, except for settlements and the military installation area. The territorial jurisdiction shall include land, subsoil, and territorial water, in accordance with the provision of this agreement.
- The functional jurisdiction encompasses all powers and responsibilities, as specified in this agreement. This jurisdiction does not include foreign relations, internal security and public orders of settlements and the military installation area and Israeli and external security.
- This personal jurisdiction extends to all persons within the territorial jurisdiction referred to the above, except for Israeli, unless otherwise provided in this agreement.

\textsuperscript{55} Between 1967 and 1994 the Palestinian National Leadership lived in a Diaspora, with the PLO headquarter moving from Jordan to Lebanon to Tunisia. Local leadership in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, kept on asserting from time to time. But Israel never recognized and discouraged the movement and its leadership. In 1994 the PLO leadership returned home to establish the PNA. See the text of "Israel-PLO agreement on the Gaza strip-Jericho era, 4 May 1994", (Washington D.C.), in Journal of Palestine Studies, Vol. XXIII, No. 4, pp. 120.

On the other hand, Israel retained complete authority over the settlements, military installations, Israelis living in the occupied territories, external security, internal security and public orders of settlements, and other powers and responsibilities specified and agreed by both parties. Another interim agreement on West Bank and Gaza strip was signed in Washington on 28 September 1995. This covered subjects such as security arrangements, elections, civil affairs, legal matters, economic relations, Israeli-Palestinian Cooperation and the release of Palestinian prisoners. Between September 1995 and January 1996, Israel withdrew from West Bank Palestinian towns and villages and partially from Hebron in January 1997.

As Chairman of the PNA Arafat took upon himself the tremendous burden for maintaining stability, promoting economic development, creating social institutions and reaching a peace agreement with Israel. But to succeed in negotiations, the PNA had to prove its ability to fulfil its commitments to Israel. But the preamble to the agreement made no mention of the division of the West Bank into three areas, the largest portion of which was to remain under full Israeli control. The Oslo II set in a process a complex hierarchy of functions and responsibilities whose implementation proved to be difficult due to complicated jurisdictional questions involved. In particular, a Gaza-Jericho type withdrawal was not possible at an early date as dispute arise over areas from which Israel withdraw first. The PLO preferred Israeli withdrawal mostly from zone C, as it was the largest chunk of territory under Israeli occupation. However, it generated a controversy due to intra-party differences in the PLO and Israel.

57 The text of "Israel-PLO Agreement on the Gaza Strip – Jericho Area Cairo, 4 May, 1994", see in Journal of Palestine Studies (Washington D.C.) Summer, 1994, Vol.23, No. 4, pp. 120.
Geographical Continuity of West Bank and Gaza Strips

The West Bank and Gaza Strip have a combined land area of about 23,000 squares miles. According to published estimates, about 65 per cent of the Palestinian living in the Israel occupied West Bank and Gaza strip. The Palestinian society has a mainly rural character, and even urban centres more like small towns than large cities. In the West Bank 65 percent of Palestinians live in about 400 villages, while only 35 percent live in small towns. Even in Gaza, where close to 85 percent of the inhabitants reside in Gaza city, the society is predominantly rural (Musli 1994:72).

The East Jerusalem is of particular significance for the people of the West Bank and the Palestinians in general. The West Bank’s tourism potential is linked to a physical connection with the religious sites of East Jerusalem. There is one formal centre of power, including the city houses, financial, trade, and cultural infrastructure of the West Bank and Gaza, including the power systems serving the areas from Ramallah in the north to Bethlehem in the south. The Israeli military and civil administration is also continued headed by two area commanders, one for each of the territories. When the Israeli-PLO agreement took effect and Israel partially withdraws from the Gaza Strip and Jericho area, authority in the spheres of education and culture, health, social welfare, direct taxation and tourism were to be transferred from the Israeli military government and civil administration to an elected Palestinian council.

It is essential to identify their similarities and differences, Gaza and Jericho represents two contrasting world. Their similarities and differences have parallels in other Palestinian towns and villages. It is important to make some distinction between the two. Because there will be a direct bearing only on the PNA’s ability to govern but also more generally, on the prospects for developing a viable political society. Gaza is about 141 square miles while the town of Jericho (The Israeli definition of it) is only 20 miles squares Musli
1994:75). For the time being Gaza–Jericho are united by agreement. It deferred the goal of full-fledged independence.

But what unites them can also separate them, especially when there are other factors at work. Gaza is rightly described as Israel’s dangerous place, with its refugee camps. Here there were all the signs of injustice and chaos. Israel imposed segregation between the Arabs and the Jewish settlers in economics, politics, education and laws, slums and densely populated camps, uprising and army crackdown and a vibrant militant Islamic movement, Hamas. Jericho too has felt the impact of the Israeli occupation, but opposition there has not been intense. The resurgence of political Islam in the form of Hamas or Islamic Jihad were minimal in the Jericho area.

**Agreement and Implementation**

The “Gaza-Jericho-first” agreement of the Declaration of Principles provided for the withdrawal of the Israeli Defence Forces from virtually the entire Gaza Strip and the West Bank Palestinian Arab town of Jericho, and for the transfer of two dozen spheres of administration in those regions to a Palestinian Authority (PA). By including Jericho, the negotiators signalled that Palestinian self-governance would not be limited to the impoverished Gaza Strip but would eventually extend to areas of the West Bank (Khalidi and Agha 1995:102; Duncan 1995:59-72).

But why Gaza first? Rabin taken this step on Gaza to break the deadlock in the peace talks but was also hoping to side step key issues and experiment with self-rule first in Gaza. The plan meant the acceptance of an interim agreement without a prior commitment with regard to the final withdrawal or settlement. He also felt that there “will be a world war in Gaza between Hamas and the PLO as soon as we leave” (Pasha 2000:451-52). The Israeli and PLO officials signed the agreement on the implementation of autonomy for Gaza and Jericho on 4 May 1994, in Cairo. In the same month, the Israeli defence force (IDF)
evacuated from the Gaza city and were re-located in and around settlement blocs. In the Jericho area the withdrawal was complete and in both these areas the Palestinian forces replaced the IDF.

According to Palestinians, it was better to start with Gaza and Jericho than to have nothing at all. Moreover, Israel's recognition of the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people were seen as a belated recognition of the legitimacy of the Palestinian nationalism. The most critical challenge Palestinians faced was to ensure that Gaza and Jericho were merely the first step towards an independent homeland.

Throughout the DoP, both parties agreed that the interim arrangements would be applicable to "Gaza-Jericho area." In the case of Gaza Strip, the PNA had the functional jurisdiction over the entire Strip even though a large portion of it were occupied by settlements and the supporting Israeli military infrastructure. The geographical limits of Jericho, however, have been left to be negotiated by both the parties. The question was much larger than actual area that would come under the domain of the Palestinian autonomy. It was a core issue because it granted early empowerment, administrative and financial (but not political) autonomy to the Gaza Strip which the agreement considered to be an integral part of the West Bank. While the PLO is insisting on an area corresponding to the pre-1967 Jericho district under Jordan the initial Israeli offer was much smaller. The dispute assume vital, because if one looks of two other geographical points near Jericho, namely the Allenby bridge across the Jordan river, the access points for any movements between the occupied territories and the outside world and the Jewish settlement around the Jericho (Kumaraswamy 1994:224). But Israel under the Gaza-Jericho transfer of 4 May 1994 had retained control of external security and ultimately of internal security under early empowerment, it retains control over all types of security and keeps all responsibility for public order under the new agreement. The Palestinian National Authority (PNA) does not have any police function or
powers relating to criminal matters (such as investigation) in any of the spheres affected by the government.

In the meantime, Israeli signed a peace treaty with Jordan and the Palestinians feared that having achieved peace with Jordan the Israeli government would not pursue the negotiations with the Palestinian National Authority on implementing the DoP. Though an early empowerment agreement was reached at the end of August for the transfer of control in the fields of education, taxation, tourism, health and social welfare from Israeli civil administration to the Palestinian authority, it did not resolve the serious differences. On the other hand, a series of violent incidents intensified. When in Israel the settlement council of Efrat decided to expand its settlements on the land near the Palestinian village of Al-Khadar, the Palestinian leaders protested that the expansion violated the DoP, the Israeli cabinet devised a compromise solution that froze building on the initial site. But allowed for the construction of new housing on lands next to Efrat. While the PA couldn’t take any action. The US stand coincided with Israel’s and it refused to intervene in the matter (Cossali 1998:78; Levi-Fauri 1997:33).

The interim stage of Oslo II (28th September 1995), which set the terms for the second stage of the peace process. It sought to broaden Palestinian self-government in the West Bank through Palestinian elections and withdrawal from 456 Palestinian towns and villages. It called for the creation of areas “A”, “B”, and “C”, to be under Palestinian, Israeli, or joint jurisdiction. For its part the PNA pledged to act vigorously against anti-Israel violence emanating from within its area. In fact the agreement carried three areas in the area A, six West Bank towns would be placed immediately under the civilian and military control of the PNA. Hebron, which has a small Israeli settlement near the town centre, would be under partial PA control with Israeli forces protecting the settlers. In area B, which included the majority of the 460 Palestinian villages in West Bank and contained 68 percent of the Palestinian population, civilian
control would immediately transfer to the PA, while Israeli would maintain control over security. Area C, which is mostly made up of rural populated area, would be evacuated by Israel by mid-1996. And Israel would retain full control of the Israeli settlements in the West Bank, military installations, and Jerusalem until the implementation of final status agreement by end of May 1999 (Eisenberg and Caplan 1998:79-111).

**Territorial Component**

Although the parties still agreed in the preamble of Oslo II, upon a commitment to resolution 242, the interim agreement offered ample evidence that Israel intend only for a partial and not full withdrawal from the West Bank. Since 1967 various Israeli leaders had reiterated their vehement opposition to Israel withdrawing to the green line. One could go the extent of arguing that a widespread consensus exists in the country against Israel withdrawing to the June 1967 borders. As mentioned earlier the land was officially divided into three zones. Area A consisting of Palestinians towns and urban area and comprising about 3 percent of the West Bank, including the densely populated urban areas of Ramallah, Jenin, Nablus, Qalqilya, Tulkarem, and Bethlehem. Hebron was being deferred to a later date. Area A would be under the complete jurisdiction of the PNA. Area B, which included a network of some 400 Palestinian villages and adjoining rural lands comprised around 27 per cent of the West Bank and would be controlled jointly by Israel and the PNA. Area C, encompassing 70 per cent of West Bank, included Jewish settlements and their bypass roads, military encampments, Israeli designated state land, and almost all the agricultural land of the Palestinians and would be under exclusive Israeli control. Israel was to redeploy from area A locations; however, Palestinians could not move from one part of area A to another without passing through area B, which meant a series of checkpoints, roadblocks, and the necessary permits to get through. Entrances and exits to Gaza were also under Israeli control.
All three areas would be essential to Palestinian autonomy and Oslo II contained provisions for Israeli withdrawal from A, B, and C. Moreover, 1995 and 1996 saw Israel kept its promise to withdraw entirely from area A (except for Hebron) and to give a measure of control to the new Palestinian authority over Palestinian living in area B. Israel also agreed to withdraw from Area C overtime, but not from the parts which related to "issues that will be negotiated in the permanent negotiations. (Guyat 1998:32) The permanent status talks were envisaged as the final stage in the Oslo process, with negotiations lasting no more than two years and commencing no later than 4 May 1996. The issues of permanent status are Jerusalem, refugees, settlements, security arrangement, borders, relations and cooperation with other neighbours and issues of common interest. Amongst this list, settlement and security arrangements were of particular relevance to the occupied territories with hundreds of settlements and military outposts in area C. Israel had negotiated the right to remain in a large portion of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip even after the interim period. Since the declaration of a military area or settlement brought it wholly under Israeli legal and military control, this modest clause changed the fundamental nature of the agreement. Because of the security reason and in contrast to the stated aim of the Oslo process to return the territories under 242, the document signed in September 1995 gave the Israeli the right to hold on to certain portions of the occupied territories at least until final status arrangements. 59

Staged Withdrawal

Although Oslo’s principal aim was to negotiate an Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories various stages of the process consistently failed to address the biggest obstacle, namely Israeli withdrawal. Oslo’s intention according to

its framers was to encourage the two sides to agree on smaller issues in the first instance and thereby enable Israel and Palestinians to learn to trust each other. The most difficult negotiations were come later, benefiting from an improved working relationship.

During the first stage in 1994, following the Israel withdrew the newly formed Palestinian authority took control over ninety per cent of the Gaza Strip and also the town of Jericho in the West Bank. Details for implementing this step were set down in May 1994 agreement signed in Cairo. In the second stage, the PNA expanded its rule to all most all Palestinian populated areas of the West Bank (September-November 1995) held election (January 1996) and gained control over most of Hebron. (January 1997). The basis of these steps was the September 1995 interim autonomy agreement which was delayed by a series of terrorist attacks and took nine months to negotiate. Three further Israeli deployments were supposed to take place at six months interval.

However, the joys at the withdrawal of IDF troops from one Palestinian town after another was tempered by restrictions on the movement of Palestinians among and between these islands of PNA authority. Furthermore Israel continued with its policy of land confiscations in the Jerusalem environs, perpetuation of special privileges for Jewish settlers in the West Bank, retaliatory closures of the "green line" borders after Palestinian bombings inside Israel and the replacement of Palestinian labourers with workers from Europe and Asia. While such measures reassured many Israelis who worried about suicide bombers coming from the occupied territories or from PNA-controlled areas, this angered Palestinians who saw this as unfair collective punishment and a serious blow to their fledging economy.

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Contrary to the expectations expressed by both sides in Oslo, Israeli withdrawals from Gaza and most of the Palestinian population centres in the West Bank did not weaken the strength of the Islamists who were opposed to the entire peace process. Categorically opposed to the existence of the Jewish state and any compromise with it, Hamas and Islamic Jihad responded to each new phase of the Oslo agreements with an upsurge in murderous attacks directed at civilians within Israel proper, as well as at Jewish settlers and soldiers in the occupied territories. By the second anniversary of the DoP, 149 Israelis were killed in terrorist attacks, compared to 86 in the preceding two years, leading many to question a peace that was proving more lethal than the former state of war. Hamas suicide strikes hardened mainstream Israeli public opinion against further concessions, and reinforced Israeli fears that the interim stage of Palestinian self-governance might be only the first step in a long-suspected Palestinian plan for the elimination of Israel by “stages.” The PNA’s reluctance or inability to crush Hamas and its refusal to extradite Palestinian fugitives to Israel reinforced the reservations of many about Arafat being partner in peace. After a series of spectacular suicide bus bombings perpetrated by Hamas within Israel in mid-1995, Peres spoke candidly “about the political hazards of peacemaking, [admitting] ‘We are winning historically, but loosing politically (Eisenberg and Caplan 1998:119). After a similar round of terrorist attacks in the spring of 1996, his pro-Oslo camp lost the election.

Therefore, from a geographical point of view, so far as the West Bank is concerned, total withdrawal looks not possible because too much has been invested by Israel. But there was scope for compromise. The danger lays in Israel not withdrawing sufficiently and thereby fail to satisfy even minimum Palestinian aspirations. At one level, Israel did not want to assist the extremists gaining political power and intensifying the terrorist struggle but on the one hand substantial army withdrawal would be unacceptable to Jewish extremists. Unfortunately, most Jewish settlers live in those areas most likely to be abandoned eventually by the Israeli security forces. Hence, Israel opted to
withdrawing in stages and hoped that other confidence building measures would not only mitigate Palestinian opposition but also minimise domestic opposition to land-for-peace formula.