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# George Habash: A New Look at his Origins and Politics

by

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This paper argues that George Habash, founder of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), embodied and expressed a distinctly new style of politics with the Palestinian context. I argue that Habash, unlike both his political antecedents during Mandate Palestine and his contemporaries in the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) practiced a style of politics that was distinctly uncompromising towards ideological opponents, hostile to traditional structures of patrician leadership in Palestine, and aggressively confrontational in most situations. The time-span of this analysis begins in Chapter One in late Ottoman Palestine, where I appropriate and modify Albert Hourani's thesis of the "politics of the notables" as a way of framing the relationships between different hierarchically segmented actors in Palestinian society from the Ottoman era up until the end of the British Mandate and the formation of Israel in 1948. Chapter 2 analyzes Habash's entrance into the broader Arab political arena after the Palestinian exile, focusing on his involvement in and leadership of the Arab Nationalist Movement (ANM) and his patronage relationship with Gamal Abdel Nasir. Chapter Three transitions into the post-1967 war era, where I argue that Habash's political philosophy, influence and confrontational praxis reached its zenith with the formation of the PFLP. The Conclusion briefly addresses his posthumous influence in contemporary Palestinian politics and the ways that different observers eulogize or criticize his legacy.

## Table of Contents

Introduction - George Habash: A New Analysis of His Origins and Politics .....	1
Marxism, Leninism and Maoism: Their Relationship to the PFLP .....	8
Chapter One - Charting the “Politics of the Notables” under the Ottomans and British.....	14
From the Eve of World War I to the British Mandate .....	19
Conclusion.....	30
Chapter Two - A Return to Palestine or a New Middle Eastern Order? Ideological Conflict within the Arab Nationalist Movement and the Path to Class Struggle .....	34
Ideology and Praxis of the ANM and Kata’ib.....	36
Debates within the ANM.....	43
Habash and Egypt: A Reappraisal of an Alliance .....	47
Conclusion.....	53
Chapter Three - When Habash Became a Marxist: The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine .....	56
The Formation of the PLO: 1964-1967.....	57
Neo-Notabilism and the PLO: Habash versus Arafat, and Foreign Relations .....	60
Structure of the PFLP .....	66
The “People’s War, the “Popular Liberation War” and the Jordanian Example: Patronage Politics Versus Principle .....	69
Conclusion.....	74
Thesis Conclusion.....	76
Appendix.....	82
Bibliography .....	90

## Introduction - George Habash: A New Analysis of His Origins and Politics

The paper argues that unlike Yasir Arafat and his Fatah movement, George Habash and the group he led, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) attempted to reject the “politics of the notables”<sup>1</sup> as a legitimate form of practice. This was chiefly because of Habash’s fear that compromise ultimately equaled weakness and the dilution of revolutionary commitment. The general features of the “politics of the notables” will be explored in chapter one and Hourani’s concept will also be expanded to account for changes within this political schematic beyond his original context.

Yet Habash did not reject patronage as-such. Instead I argue that throughout his career Habash practiced his own “neo-notable” form of political patronage with external state actors such as Nasir’s Egypt, and later China and the Soviet Union. Moreover, compared with Fatah’s “broad tent” approach to political mobilization, Habash’s more stringent conditions on what actors (states, other militant movements, members of Palestinian society, etc.) constituted legitimate political patrons severely hampered his ability to forge broad-based political coalitions and to transcend his status as a perpetual outsider within Palestinian politics. Though Fatah’s transformation into the ultimate neo-notable patronage machine can be justifiably criticized for lacking principles and stunting Palestinian civil society, it must also be conceded that Arafat and his loyalists proved to be highly durable leaders who ultimately won the support of large segments of national and international opinion. Habash failed completely in these tasks, and

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<sup>1</sup> This phrase refers to Albert Hourani’s famous speech on the political structure of Ottoman societies during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. By “politics of the notables” he is describing a style of politics where local notables exercised largely unchallenged leadership over the pre-industrial population by relying on the weight of their traditional (i.e. historically consistent) status. In this the “politics of the notables” is fundamentally undemocratic, elite-based and reliant on extensive and unequal patronage exchanges between powerful social actors and weak ones. See Hourani, Albert Habib. “Ottoman Reform and the Politics of Notables,” in Hourani, Albert, P. Khoury and M. Wilson, eds. *The Modern Middle East: A Reader* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993).

remained committed to Soviet and Chinese revolutionary models that became outmoded almost from the moment of their articulation within Palestinian militant discourse. Habash's appeal and influence upon the evolution of Palestinian politics were limited but also highly significant. He represented a persistent counter-cultural current within Palestinian society that retains its appeal to this day through his direct ideological successors in the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, as well as amongst ideologically opposite groups such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

After the eviction and dispersal of the Palestinians from former British Mandate in 1948, George Habash played a pivotal role in the shaping and development of Palestinian national consciousness for nearly 50 years until his death in 2008. He was among the first generation of young and militantly activist Palestinians who experienced deep despair about and resentment towards the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, which permanently cut many members of this generation off from their ancestral homelands and properties. This episode led to profound feelings of trauma, resentment and despair but also to a desire for revenge and violent recompense. Habash's studied ideological militancy as well as his and his associates' terrorist actions throughout the 1960's and 1970's represented a distinct undercurrent within Palestinian political life, both in exile and with the Occupied Territories

Prior to 1948, the vast majority of Palestinians leaders and intellectuals remained practitioners of the "politics of the notables." Habash's intellectual development and his role as a nationalistic and militant activist grew out of the destruction of the economic and political bases of support of the Palestinian notables. The decline of the political influence of the notable class began during the British Mandate period, but truly reached its climax during and after the first stage of 1948 War between the Jewish Yishuv and the Palestinians Arabs. During this war, many of the principle leaders of various Palestinian cities, towns and community organizations

were among the first to flee to neighboring Arab countries. Within the power vacuum the Diaspora created, a modern style of Palestinian politics found expression, focusing on mass mobilization and party-building. Within a short time the notable class became the object of derision and scorn by most of these new political formations, being accused of collaboration with the Yishuv during the Mandate and utter cowardice once the 1948 Civil War began. George Habash's political consciousness emerged within this intellectual milieu and he soon became one of the most enigmatic, notorious and utterly committed members of this new Palestinian political class.

One of the key differences between Habash and his predecessors, and also between him and his sometimes-rival Yasir Arafat of Fatah was his reluctance, even his unwillingness, to engage in precisely the system of reciprocally beneficial patronage networks that permeated Palestinian Arab society during the Ottoman era and the British Mandate. He did not begin with such a disdain for patronage politics, and indeed his early life was one of relative privilege and difference; he was a Greek Orthodox Christian by upbringing from a middle class family and became a medical student in Lebanon before the Palestinian exile.<sup>2</sup> However, his politics and style of activism diverged markedly both from the local notables whose leadership role he (and many others) filled after 1948, and from the secular-nationalist Fatah group, founded by Arafat and other students in Cairo in October 1959.<sup>3</sup>

Chapter 2 will address Habash's tenure as leader of the Arab Nationalist Movement (AMN), in which he, like Arafat, sought to create a youth movement capable of channeling the

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<sup>2</sup> Reich, Bernard, ed. *Political Leaders of the Contemporary Middle East and North Africa: A Biographical Dictionary* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990): 213.

<sup>3</sup> Fatah's full name is harakat al-tahrir al-filastiniyya, or the Palestinian Liberation Movement. Along with Arafat, its founding members included Khalil al-Wazir, Salah Khalaf and Faruq al-Qaddumi. See Rubin, Barry, and Judith Colp Rubin. *Yasir Arafat: A Political Biography* (Oxford, UK; New York: Oxford University Press, 2003): 25.

grievances of dispossessed Palestinian youths within the Diaspora. Habash and his contemporaries such as Wadi Haddad, Naif Hawatima, Hani al-Hidi and others shared a disdain for the perceived corruption and helplessness of their local notable predecessors. However, after the AMN's transformation into the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), and Habash's own Marxist radicalization, he rebelled more forcefully against the compromises and quid-pro-quo dealings associated with the "politics of the notables." In particular he charged Fatah and other less-ideological factions within the PLO with adopting an unnecessary and harmfully compromising attitude towards the armed struggle against Israel, such as Fatah's accommodations with King Hussein of Jordan during the 1970 Black September crisis.

This divergence manifested itself, from the late 1960's onwards, in a frequently dogmatic and politically self-destructive strategy against compromise of any sort, with any party. This is largely because of the direction of Habash's political activism: his shift towards Marxist and Leninist revolutionary thought compelled him and his compatriots to try to force through radical social and economic change in moments of acute crisis<sup>4</sup> onto a wide variety of Arab societies, especially former Ottoman lands.

Habash lived during an era where the short-comings of Arab civilization appeared imminent to all, and they followed in the wake of an earlier body of self-reflective positivist criticism from 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century Arab thinkers such as Rifa'a al-Tahtawi,<sup>5</sup> Rashid Rida,

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<sup>4</sup> Both Habash and Lenin internalized Marx's embrace of the transformative power of crisis, or when "the numerous contradictions slowly accumulating in periods of so-called peaceful development find their solution." See Lenin, V. I. "Against the Boycott, July 9, 1907" in Possoni, Stefan T, ed. *The Lenin Reader: The Outstanding Works of V. I. Lenin* (Chicago, IL: Henry Regnery Company, in conjunction with The Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace, Stanford University, 1966): 16.

<sup>5</sup> Tahtawi (1801-1873) was from a religiously learned Egyptian family, and was appointed as the imam amongst a delegation of students sent by Muhammed Ali to France to study languages and sciences from 1826-1831. He learned exact French and studied subjects well outside the bounds of his intended religious purpose in Paris, such as social philosophy and European history, remaining there for more than five years. He returned to Egypt he became a renowned translator and he also published a collection observations of his time in Paris, *Takhlis al-ibriz ila takhlis*

Muhammed Abduh,<sup>6</sup> Boutros al-Bustani<sup>7</sup> and others. These men, coming from a variety of political perspectives (both ethnic and linguistic nationalist, as well as religiously-based), sought to address the social shortcomings they perceived in their own era and develop a synthesis between their respective traditions and the blatant material and military superiority of the Western world. George Habash's own evolution as an activist, and secondarily as a theoretician, must be placed squarely within the framework of these earlier secular-modernist and religious-modernist thinkers. The PFLP itself comes down on the side of secular-modernism, embracing a comprehensive vision of social change that borrows from Marx, Lenin, and Mao, as well as from the Palestinians' own traumatizing encounter with an organizationally and technologically superior collective: the Zionist Yishuv.<sup>8</sup> The PFLP is quite explicit about the type of change they desired in Palestinian and Arab society and the kind of citizen their revolution would create:

...the habits of underdevelopment represented by submission, dependence, individualism, tribalism, laziness, anarchy and impulsiveness will change through the

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Bariz, which gained fame for his astute but critical analysis of French society. Paraphrased from Hourani, Albert Habib. *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962): 69-72.

<sup>6</sup> Abduh (1849-1905), like Tahtawi, studied at al-Azhar, Sunni Islam's oldest and most renowned religious college and seminary in Cairo. Hourani states that one of Abduh's foundational contributions to 19<sup>th</sup> century Arab and Islamic thought was the need to "bridge the gulf within Islamic society" between traditionalist and obscurantist Islam and the excessively secular teachings emerging from European schools in the Arab-Muslim world. Referencing the administrative and economic changes occurring under Muhammed Ali's reign in Egypt, Abduh held that this bridging "could not be done by a return to the past" but by "showing that the changes which were taking place were not only permitted by Islam, but were indeed its necessary implications if it was rightly understood, and that Islam could serve both as a principle of change and a salutary control over it." See Hourani, *Arabic Thought*: 131 and 139.

<sup>7</sup> Bustani (1819-1883) in distinction from Abduh and Tahtawi was a Lebanese Maronite Christian, but he also received a religious upbringing in a Maronite seminary. He eventually converted to Protestantism after working with American missionaries in Beirut, and perhaps his greatest achievement was the construction of massive Arabic dictionaries and encyclopedias. He did this due to his love of the language and his desire to make Arabic "capable of expressing simply, precisely, and directly the concepts of modern thought." The students he taught and worked with went on to publish the first Arabic novels and dramas, as well as modern Arabic journalism. Boustani's Christianity made him especially sensitive to the need for creating unity amongst the Arab people's that transcended religious boundaries, and thus he advocated the "importance of national unity" mediated through a common language. In adapting modern concepts into Arabic, "his aim was to change the minds of those who read and spoke it, to make them citizens of the new world of science and invention." Of all the thinkers cited above, Habash had the most in common with Boustani, and similarly tried to forge unity amongst the Arab people's through the mediums of nationalism, anti-imperialism, and eventually socialism. See Hourani, *Arabic Thought*: 99-102.

<sup>8</sup> The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. *Jabhah al-Sha'bīyah li-Tahrīr Filasṭīn [A Strategy for the Liberation of Palestine]* (Amman, Jordan: Information Dept., 1969):17-18.

struggle into recognition of the value of time, order, accuracy, objective thought, collective action, planning, comprehensive mobilization, the pursuit of learning and the acquisition of all its weapons, the value of man, the emancipation of women...from the servitude of outworn customs and traditions, the fundamental importance of the national bond in facing danger and the supremacy of this bond over clan, tribal and regional bonds.<sup>9</sup>

However these laudable ambitions were the PFLP asserted that they had to be forced by revolutionary fiat onto all Arab societies, sweeping away long-established social establishments and modes of thinking as rapidly as the Russian Revolution appeared to. The PFLP believed that the road to national salvation:

Rejects whatever is existing and pushes forward on a new course—the course of transforming the resistance movement into an organized mass movement. It is armed with political, material, and radical national ideologies under the leadership of the vanguard fighting forces which are equipped with political consciousness and the ideology of the proletariat, hostile to Israel and imperialism and its allies throughout the Arab land.<sup>10</sup>

The lines from radical discourse to revolutionary action are clearly sketched here. The PFLP found the opportunity to make actionable this “hostility” within three years of its foundation, in September 1970, when the Palestinian guerrillas encamped within Jordan and soon sought to overthrow King Hussein. However, the PFLP at that point was neither a mass movement nor one led by the proletariat or peasantry.<sup>11</sup> Rather, in the view of one critic, they were simply a middle class refugee party “armed with Marxist-Leninist ideology”<sup>12</sup> who “know nothing of the economic exploitation to which a normal proletariat is subjected.”<sup>13</sup> Habash himself did live a disciplined and martial life, and could hardly have been accused of excessive comfort or an unwillingness to embrace the suffering of others. But what was missing collectively in the PFLP

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<sup>9</sup> PFLP, *A Strategy*: 81-82.

<sup>10</sup> The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. “Political Report of the Popular front for the Liberation of Palestine,” in Ismael, Tareq Y. *The Arab Left* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1976): 177.

<sup>11</sup> Franjieh, Samir. “How Revolutionary is the Palestinian Resistance? A Marxist Interpretation.” *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Winter 1972): 53. <http://www.jstor.org/> (accessed 03/03/2011).

<sup>12</sup> Franjieh, “How Revolutionary is the Palestinian Resistance?”: 63.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*: 53.

and in Habash's judgment at a critical moment was an appreciation, as opposed to a simple awareness, that this program of action would bring the PFLP into constant, violent conflict against enemies much greater than the "forces of Revolution." As will be shown in chapter 3, Habash's zeal for exporting the class revolution to Jordan and beyond did far more harm than good for the PFLP's broad strategic aims and exposed the group to internal collapse and external decline soon after its inception.

Unlike the classes of local urban notables and Muslim religious leaders who dominated everyday life in Palestine during the late Ottoman Empire and the British Mandate period, Habash espoused a radical populist ideology that scorned compromise with "illegitimate occupying authorities."<sup>14</sup> His intellectual preoccupations shifted throughout the course of his career as a militant and a party organizer. During his tenure in the Arab Nationalist Movement, (ANM) he first embraced anti-communist and anti-imperialist Arab nationalism but eventually adopted a hybrid of Marxist, Leninist and Maoist political and economic thought after the Arab defeat in the June 1967 war and the subsequent formation of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) in late 1967. The definition of these three ideologies (or differing perspectives within the same socio-political construct) can vary immensely depending on the

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<sup>14</sup> "Occupying authorities" in this context refers to the two above mentioned empires that ruled over Palestine prior to 1948. In both cases however the authorities in question would protest that their rule was anything but illegitimate: the Ottomans ruled over Palestine since the early 16<sup>th</sup> century and deeply shaped the political and cultural life of the region for centuries. Arab nationalism notwithstanding, the Ottomans' rule was not truly challenged in any sustained fashion by the inhabitants of Syria-Palestine until midway through World War I. See Kayali, Hasan. *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1918* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997).

Similarly, the British Mandate possessed the sanction of the newly formed League of Nations during the 1920 San Remo conference to justify its remit over Palestine, and therefore saw itself as fulfilling its international obligations, protests of the Arab inhabitants notwithstanding. What Habash and others did was force the discussion of legitimacy away from the politics of empires, great powers and power politics and into the desires of the majority of inhabitants with Palestine. As will be discussed, Habash was not a pure nationalist; he had other layers of commitment within his ideology, both Arabist and socialist, and these shifted throughout his life. These stages of commitment will be addressed later.

terminology used (ex. the differences between communism versus socialism) and their historical context.

## **Marxism, Leninism and Maoism: Their Relationship to the PFLP**

Habash and the PFLP absorbed significant portions of Marxism, Leninism and Maoism within both their actions and propaganda. In order to illustrate the pervasive influence of these worldviews, in this section relevant and well-known concepts from each are connected to the thought of Habash and the PFLP.

Karl Marx (1818-1883), a German philosopher, writer, journalist and economist, is justifiably considered the founder of historical materialism. Broadly speaking, historical materialism proposes that the dominant, determinative factor for human behavior and social organization within all human societies, regardless of era, is the “social means of production,” or economic basis of their society. Marx states that “individuals producing in society, thus the socially determined production of individuals, naturally constitutes the starting point”<sup>15</sup> of any investigation into outward manifestations of human activity, such as forms of government or the content of religion.<sup>16</sup> Generally speaking, this means that human beings actively and passively choose their own definition for what constitutes a “natural human being,” but that the process of choosing, the limits within which such a choice can possibly be made, is ultimately determined

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<sup>15</sup> Marx, Karl. *Grundrisse der Kritik der Politischen Okonomie (Outlines of the Critique of Political Economy)* in Elster, Jon. *Karl Marx: A Reader* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1986): 3.

<sup>16</sup> He reinforces this claim by making reference to Greek art as a cultural production that could never “originate in a society which excludes any mythological explanation of nature, any mythological attitude towards it, or which requires of the artist an imagination free from mythology.” Thus as Greek mythology was “the very ground from which” Greek art sprung, it follows that it could never occur again in a technologically advanced society where “man gains mastery over the forces of nature.” See Marx, Karl. *Grundrisse* in Elster, Jon. *Karl Marx: A Reader*: 19-20.

by the economic foundations of that same society.<sup>17</sup> In his foundational methodological and epistemological work, the *Grundrisse der Kritik der Politischen Okonomie (Outlines of the Critique of Political Economy)* Marx notes that Western philosophers and economists such as Adam Smith, David Ricardo and Jean Jacques Rousseau each variously embraced an individualistic concept of human nature, wherein each person possesses individuality and rational faculties distinct from the society in which they emerged. This cognitive autonomy enables them to enter into “social contracts” with other autonomous individuals and thereby consciously construct society on a thoughtful basis.<sup>18</sup> Marx utterly rejects these ontological presuppositions, consigning them instead to “the insipid illusions of the eighteenth century,”<sup>19</sup> and within this society “of free competition the individual appears free from the bonds of nature, etc., which in former epochs of history made him part of a definite, limited human conglomeration.”<sup>20</sup>

Historical materialism and the variety of critiques that it makes possible greatly contributed to Habash’s antagonistic attitude towards political “superstructure” of pre-1948 Palestinian politics and the dominant “feudal bourgeoisie” actors within it, details of which will be explored in the following chapter. Additionally historical materialism factors into the PFLP’s post-1967 critical assault on the flawed economic foundations the “petty bourgeoisie” regimes of Egypt and Syria with regards to their ability to persist in the fight against Israel will be addressed at the end of chapter 2.

In addition to historical materialism, Habash also absorbed Marx’s concept of the class struggle but only after rejecting this thesis for the first two decades of his militant career. Marx’s

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<sup>17</sup>Marx, *Grundrisse*: 27.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*: 3.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*: 3.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*: 3.

definitional statement on the basic causes of human conflict is as follows: “the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle.” However, Marx historicized this otherwise blunt statement by noting that the composition of a given class is dependent on the means of production within that society (ex. capital being the predominant social feature of capitalism versus land ownership being predominant within feudalism or physiocratic societies)<sup>21</sup> and therefore that the actual qualities and kinds of relationships and conflicts between the classes will differ from era to era. Marx stated that bourgeoisie society, by destroying the most of the economic and cultural foundations of the European Middle Ages,<sup>22</sup> has significantly “simplified the class antagonisms,”<sup>23</sup> splitting it into “two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other: Bourgeoisie and Proletariat.”<sup>24</sup> The PFLP embraced this theory of class struggle, but obviously had to incorporate the presence of significant amounts of the Palestinian population that were neither large bourgeoisie nor industrial proletariat: the “petit bourgeoisie”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid: 16-17.

<sup>22</sup> One of the problems that Habash and other Arab Marxists or Communists had to deal with in applying the concept of class struggle to Palestinian and Arab societies is that these societies did not follow the same historic and economic developments as medieval Europe, and as such, the necessary class conditions for bourgeoisie-proletariat conflict (speaking within Marxist thought) did not exist. A statement by Marx such as “from the serfs of the Middle Ages sprang the chartered burghers of the earliest towns. From these burgesses the first elements of the bourgeoisie were developed” makes plain the Eurocentric features of Marx’s worldview. Given that he never travelled to the Middle East, it is unlikely it could be otherwise given the more limited circulation of cross-cultural information available during his lifetime.

The PFLP do try to wrestle with the problem of how to foment class struggle within their non-European historical and cultural context where the “objective” historical conditions according to Marx have not been met: they try to elide the difference between Marx’s “proletariat” and the peasantry by stating that “underdeveloped communities are also class communities in which there are exploiting upper classes represented by colonialism, feudalism and the bourgeoisie” (PFLP, *A Strategy*: 21) and are therefore capable of waging class war and forming a classless society. However, within Marxist and especially Leninist analysis this approach is problematic when approaching Palestinian and Arab political economy (very generally speaking), as the continued existence of a “multitude of small establishments, the preservation of contacts with the land, the preservation of tradition in production and in the whole system of life” (Lenin, V. I. *Report on the Current Situation....May 7, 1917* in Possony, Stephan T., ed, *The Lenin Reader*: 26-27) retards the development of capitalism to its fullest extent, which Lenin saw as an absolute necessity for the transition to a communist state and society (though whether such “preservation of tradition” ever disappeared entirely within Western societies is another issue).

<sup>23</sup> Marx, Karl. *The Communist Manifesto* in Elster, Jon. *Karl Marx: A Reader*: 225.

<sup>24</sup> Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*: 225.

<sup>25</sup> Following Mao (Tse Tung, Mao. *Analysis of the Classes in Chinese Society* in Committee for the Publication of the Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung, Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, eds. *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung, Vol. I.* (Peking, PRC: Foreign Languages Press, 1975): 15-16), the PFLP defined this class very

and the peasantry. Further complicating matters, the PFLP had to fit their adherence to the Marxist definition of class warfare into both the exceptional circumstances of the stateless Palestinian Diaspora, as well as the fact that they framed their revolution as both a class struggle and a national liberation war. They partly acknowledged the former by claiming that “in the course of the last twenty years [since the Palestinian’s expulsion in 1948], certain well-defined class interests have arisen” amongst the Palestinian exiles, going on to delineate the presumed revolutionary or counter-revolutionary features of each class segment. For the latter they state that “national liberation battles are also class battles...between colonialism and the feudal and capitalist class”<sup>26</sup> and the majority of the rest of the population.

The chief contribution of Vladimir Lenin (1870-1924), philosopher, orator and revolutionary, to the PFLP’s theorization was the idea of the centrality of the proletariat, both in terms of its emergence as a necessity for class conflict and its privileged status as the only possible class capable of functioning as the socialist revolutionary vanguard. Lenin scorned the constitutionalism and legal engagement of the bourgeoisie with the Tsarist state before the October Revolution, believing this to be “only a screen for the bourgeois betrayal of the revolution” and signifying their counter-revolutionary class tendencies.<sup>27</sup> He arrives at the conclusion that only a “dictatorship of the proletariat”<sup>28</sup> was capable of defeating counter-revolutionary forces and creating a “revolutionary-democratic dictatorship.” For Lenin, this “democratic dictatorship” differed from an individual dictatorship in the sense that it uses

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broadly as “students, teachers, junior employees, small shopkeepers, lawyers, engineers, and medical men,” of which Habash was trained as the latter. Again reflecting Mao, they further subdivide this “class” into elements which, depending on the context, might “dilute revolutionary thought, strategy and programmes” through its “natural” vacillation and that which might raise “the banner of armed struggle” (PFLP, *A Strategy*: 32-33).

<sup>26</sup> PFLP, *A Strategy*: 22.

<sup>27</sup> Lenin, V. I. *The Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution, July 1905* in Possony, Stefan P. *The Lenin Reader*: 183.

<sup>28</sup> Lenin, *The Two Tactics*: 184.

political force, operating through individuals and Soviet organizations, to strike “at the exploiting minority in the interests of the exploited majority.”<sup>29</sup> Like Lenin, the PFLP believed the proletariat to be the only class capable of such coercion, but unlike the majority of the participants within the Russian revolution, they themselves were not proletariat or peasant and were unable, by virtue of the Israeli occupation of Gaza and the West Bank, to dispense their views freely to these non-exiled classes and recruit a genuinely revolutionary party according to Lenin’s standard. Rather, they candidly admitted that:

The Popular Front as a political organization does not at present conform totally with the toiling and proletarian class structure which constitutes the material and concrete guarantee for the revolutionary character of the organization, its steadfastness and its ability to go on with the revolution.<sup>30</sup>

This admission and the persistent failure of the PFLP to sufficiently recruit from the lower classes of Palestinian society in the territories drew harsh criticism from Communist parties in the region, as well as from the USSR; these criticisms will be addressed in chapter 3.

Lastly, Mao Tse Tung (1893-1976), founder of the Chinese Communist Party, copious political theorist and dictator provided the PFLP (and many other groups) with a class-based thesis that incorporated both the proletariat *and* the peasantry into near-equal partners within the socio-economic configurations of a revolution.<sup>31</sup> The PFLP perceived, much like Mao, that due to Palestinian (or Chinese) society’s underdevelopment, the proletariat remained small and therefore would have to share the burden of revolutionary struggle with the “semi-proletariat,”<sup>32</sup> the stratified but still oppressed peasantry, who “need a revolution to change the existing state of

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<sup>29</sup> Lenin, V. I. *The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government, April 1918* in Possony, Stefan P. *The Lenin Reader*: 185.

<sup>30</sup> PFLP, *A Strategy*: 100.

<sup>31</sup> Tse Tung, Mao. *Analysis of the Classes* in Chinese Communist Party. *Selected Works of Mao Tse Tung*: 19.

<sup>32</sup> Tse Tung, *Analysis of the Classes*: 16.

affairs”<sup>33</sup> that burden them with debt and feudal levies. As mentioned, the PFLP conceded that their own industrial proletariat was limited both by the Israeli occupation as well as underdevelopment, hence the appeal of Mao’s revolutionary thesis that still proposed the viability and desirability of a class-erasing revolution within a predominantly peasant or small-producer society. Lastly, the PFLP borrowed heavily from Mao’s delineation of revolutionary versus reactionary forces and classes, and essentially adapted Mao’s theoretical framework to the Palestinian context after the 1967 war. For instance, Mao identified the “big landlord and big comprador”<sup>34</sup> classes” within China as the chief counter-revolutionary elements facing the Communist forces. Given the Palestinian’s unique situation as a stateless people, the PFLP identified their foes on a larger international scale. These forces were Israel, the “World Zionist Movement,” “World Imperialism” and finally “Arab Reaction represented by Feudalism and Capitalism,”<sup>35</sup> or compradors. This last segment of enemies broadly constitutes both patrons within the “politics of the notables” as well as the patron-states within “neo-notabilism.”

The following chapter will bring the timeline back to before Habash’s birth and provide a broad explanation of the meaning and practice of notable politics, as well as a summary of why this political style failed the Palestinians during the 1948 wars.

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid: 18.

<sup>34</sup> The authors of *Selected Works* footnote that “a comprador...was the Chinese manager or the senior Chinese employee in a foreign commercial establishment. The compradors served foreign economic interests and had close connections with imperialism and foreign capital.” (19).

<sup>35</sup> PFLP, *A Strategy*: 8-18.

## Chapter One - Charting the “Politics of the Notables” under the Ottomans and British

Prior to 1948, the socio-economic status of Palestinian elites, such as Hajj Amin al-Husseini, Raghib al-Nashashibi and their elder relatives, was tethered to one of two world powers that controlled the territory of Palestine: the Ottoman Empire, which expired in 1918 but ruled the area for nearly 400 years, and the British Mandate, which formally abdicated its responsibility over Palestine in May 1948 after transferring the responsibility for solving the nationalist conflict between Jews and Arabs to the United Nations in 1947. Before explaining how “notable politics” functioned under the Ottomans and the British, and then how it transformed into the “neo-notable” style of politics within the Palestine Liberation Organization, we must first define who these notables were.

Hourani derived the concept of a “politics of the notables” from Max Weber’s “patriciate,” in which a given society is economically and politically ordered upon relations of personal dependence between differing classes.<sup>36</sup> Within the Levant of the late Ottoman Empire, a further proviso is due: this personal dependence, or interdependence, can only function when the given central authority<sup>37</sup> is too weak, indifferent or remote to be able to rule a province directly. All three of these conditions were present within the empire until at least the 1820’s,

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<sup>36</sup> Hourani, Albert Habib. “Ottoman Reform and the Politics of Notables”: 87.

<sup>37</sup> To avoid confusion about the meaning of “central authority” or any iteration of it, it will be defined as the imperial (Istanbul, London, etc.) center of power and the agents of said power who operate in its name. The scope of what constitutes “central” clearly changes depending on the territorial extent of imperial sovereignty; though much closer geographically to its peripheral villages and provincial capitals than Istanbul was to Damascus for instance, Cairo under Muhammed Ali acted as the “central authority” through which the rest of Egypt had to negotiate. Also, adjectival use of “decentralized” does not mean that there was no imperial center of power, only that its power over its provinces was more tenuous and required the consent of the notable class to sustain it. Much like European states in 19<sup>th</sup> century, the broad trajectory of Middle Eastern polities was towards an erosion of provincial power and a strengthening of the center.

when Mahmud II ended the Janissaries as a major political faction.<sup>38</sup> For instance, Ottoman sultans rotated provincial governors regularly, usually with terms of no more than a year<sup>39</sup> in order to prevent them from acquiring sufficient power to break away from the empire or extract unreasonable concessions from the sultan in exchange for compliance.

These governors were frequently not state bureaucrats but often prominent figures in Istanbul or notables themselves; they purchased their governorship in exchange for tax-farming privileges over the peasantry and artisans, which made them rather indifferent towards building a durable local political base. Once the governors extracted enough tax revenue to recoup their losses and make a profit, they left the city and the cycle began anew. Given the weakness of

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<sup>38</sup> For an extensive and focused description of life within a major Ottoman city (18<sup>th</sup> century) which describes the changing roles and fortunes of different social classes, including the Janissaries, see Marcus, Abraham. *The Middle East on the Eve of Modernity: Aleppo in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992). It also contains numerous anecdotes and stories that go well beyond the above description in describing the dynamics between provincial governor and local notables.

<sup>39</sup> There were a great many exceptions to this rule within the empire, such as the ascent of Muhammad Ali Pasha in Egypt at the start of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the near-independence he achieved after Napoleon's withdrawal. Muhammed Ali's tenure in Egypt likely falls outside the bounds of the "politics of the notables" given the strong centralizing and industrializing measure he instituted throughout his reign. The "politics of the notables" was replaced for a period by a different form of state-society relations: that of the politics of the court, where most social actors are directly dependent on the central government for prosperity and privilege. These centralizing measures were specifically aimed at breaking the backs of local notables, such as powerful village mukhtars (leaders), Bedouin sheikhs, or prominent *ulema* who served as intermediaries between the central government and the village (or city) residents. Centralizing reforms included the confiscation of *awqaf*, direct taxation of the peasantry, and mandatory conscription, amongst other measures that reduced the efficacy and necessity of relations of personal dependence. Within this context the power of the local notables becomes, if not obsolete, then peripheral, as their local peasant or artisan clients do not need the arbitration of their once-patricians for the resolution of disputes or problems: voluntary or forcibly, they had to take their complaints to central government authorities, such as a police chief, a tax collector, or an army sergeant. Nevertheless Muhammad Ali's reforms were not totalizing and the strength of local notables re-emerged in new ways in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, particularly in the post-Tanzimat rise of large private estates owned by well-connected businessmen and agriculturalists. For a detailed and critical analysis of Muhammed Ali's conscription policies and the resistance they engendered amongst the peasantry see Fahmy, Khaled. *All the Pasha's Men: Mehmed Ali, His Army and the Making of Modern Egypt* (UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

A similar process of what is usually described as "modernization" occurred throughout the Ottoman Tanzimat (reorganization) and Abdulhamid II's long reign, as the Ottomans authorities sought to reinforce central control over the Arab provinces by means of educational reform, law reform, and the Europeanization of the military. For an informative but sometimes redundant expose of Ottoman educational reforms and popular reaction to them see Fortna, Benjamin. *Imperial Classroom: Islam, the State and Education in the Late Ottoman Empire* (London: Oxford University Press, 2002).

these governors in terms of resources and knowledge, they often had no choice but to turn to prominent landlords, businessmen, *ulema*, and (to a lesser extent) rural sheikhs for assistance in governing their territories. Hourani reservedly includes rural powerbrokers into the dynamic of notable politics, but implies that their purely rural constituency is not sufficient for gaining privileged access to the representatives of central authority; only those close to the governor himself could truly claim that.<sup>40</sup>

These social classes (or sub-classes) constitute the core of the local notables, and beneath them in the social hierarchy lay the majority of the population who wielded little economic or political power except through their access to prominent notables.<sup>41</sup><sup>42</sup> This arrangement served the interests of the central authorities and the notables well<sup>43</sup> until at least the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as the political influence of the notables enabled the governor to rule and tax the population without provoking rebellion. In return, the notables could then present themselves as possessing privileged access to a much larger authority with a far greater claim to rule: the Ottoman Sultan.

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<sup>40</sup> Hourani, "Politics of the Notables": 91.

<sup>41</sup> Documents and statistics of the power and number of these social groups are both uncommon and certainly open to misinterpretation, but for the Tanzimat and Mandatory periods we have more reliable information. Given the limited scope of this paper, the late Tanzimat and Mandatory period will bound the discussion of the dimensions of the "politics of the notables" and also provide the main examples of prominent notable figures and families.

<sup>42</sup> Paraphrasing Hourani, the local artisan and the peasant producer each face near insurmountable barriers to breaking free of their dependence upon a notable, as neither are rich enough or productive enough to access markets beyond their own locality, which are controlled by a given notable or notables. Additionally these notables, usually urban landlords with land in the country or rich businessmen who have the market access that the lower social classes do not, are often the major consumers of local industry and agriculture. Offending their patron would very quickly put peasant or artisan out of business. Hourani, "Politics of the Notables": 87.

<sup>43</sup> By "well" it is meant that this political style endured for centuries as a reasonably effective way of balancing competing interests in different provinces and cities. Whether a more democratic or formalized power-sharing arrangement, such as the early implementation of constitutional rights and the enforced limitations of the power of kings could have produced "better" historical outcomes for the empire and its subjects is impossible to know and beyond the purview of this paper. What is relevant is that George Habash and his generation felt disillusioned and abandoned by the manifest failure of notable leaders of Palestinian society after Israel's creation, and therefore sought to mold a more democratic and egalitarian model of social relations for the Palestinian diaspora.

Regardless of the political power of a notable, they were still subjects to the Sublime Porte and could easily provoke an Ottoman military expedition if they sought to act too independently.<sup>44</sup>

In many areas of production in the Ottoman lands (modes of production being the key determinant of social consciousness for both Marx and Lenin, a thesis which Habash eventually embraced)<sup>45</sup> these regions were still largely agrarian economies,<sup>46</sup> with agricultural policy (registration, taxation, etc.) being determined by a “bargain between the central government, local councils and men of rural power which was clearly neither in interests of efficient administration nor the most profitable development of the region’s agricultural resources.”<sup>47</sup> Throughout the 1800’s, local staples such as pearls (the Gulf kingdoms), grapes and tobacco (Anatolia)<sup>48</sup> grain (Egypt and Syria),<sup>49</sup> cotton (Egypt)<sup>50</sup> and silk (Lebanon)<sup>51</sup> became major cash crops for European export. However, despite the fact that the level of capitalist development of agriculture increased considerably in the late Ottoman period,<sup>52</sup> the region as a whole still experienced relative deprivatation and underdevelopment compared with European competitors, with most of the surplus accruing “to the small number of families that managed to obtain control over a considerable portion of the cultivated land”<sup>53</sup> The indigenous industry within these societies, with notable exceptions such as how the entire Egyptian Delta “had been converted into an export sector devoted to the production, processing and export of two or three

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<sup>44</sup> Hourani, “Politics”: 88.

<sup>45</sup> See Lenin, V. I. *Karl Marx* in Possoni, Stefan T, ed. *The Lenin Reader*: 8-9.

<sup>46</sup> In addition to the commercial limitations of small-scale manufacture and peasant agriculture, the population levels were constrained, “as in any other pre-industrial society, by three inter-related influences: the high mortality rates and low life expectancy, debilitating disease, and sudden major fluctuations due to wars, famines and epidemics.” See Owen, Roger. *The Middle East in the World Economy, 1800-1914* (London; New York: I.B. Tauris & Co LTD, 1993): 25.

<sup>47</sup> Owen, Roger. *The Middle East in the World Economy*: 293.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*: 28.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*: 168.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*: 122.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*: 167.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*: 290.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*: 290.

crops,<sup>54</sup> tended to be small artisanal enterprises with insufficient economy of small to be able to compete extensively with industrialized Western manufacturers.<sup>55</sup> Due to the centralizing effects of the Tanzimat reforms on agriculture, which both tried to reconfirm the state's right of ownership and solidify limited private property ownership,<sup>56</sup> most of the cultivable land in the region came under the control of wealthy and well-connected local notables who benefited from peasants unwilling to register their land in their own name for fear of conscription or increased taxes.<sup>57</sup>

Within Palestine the wealthiest landowners lived in the coastal centers of Jaffa and Haifa, especially those with ties to international trade, as well as the hill country of Palestine, encompassing Nablus, Ramallah, Jenin, Hebron and Jerusalem. Muslih notes that the most powerful notables were the ones with the highest landownership, estimating that the 250 most powerful families owned literally all of the land in Palestine during the Tanzimat era.<sup>58</sup> Some families, such as the Khalidis derived their status not from great wealth but knowledge and family lineage; numerous members of the family founded libraries, served in the Ottoman parliament or became renowned religious scholars.<sup>59</sup> Therefore it cannot be said that all notables families were of equal stature, only that a small segment of Palestinian society wielded a vastly disproportionate amount of power compared to the humble laborer.

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid: 122.

<sup>55</sup> However, all major cash crops in the region by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century experienced considerable factory industrialization compared to their development a century prior. For instance, despite the fact that the Lebanese silk factories “were generally of a much smaller capacity with lower productivity than the European owned enterprises,” they nonetheless recorded sustained growth throughout the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (Ibid: 157).

<sup>56</sup> Ibid: 118.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid: 119.

<sup>58</sup> Muslih, Mohammed Y. *The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, Institute for Palestine Studies, 1988): 25.

<sup>59</sup> Muslih, Mohammed Y. *The Origins*: 26.

Usually these informal but durable arrangements between central government and local notables resulted in a decentralized local power structure, with no social grouping or individual exercising absolute power but all competing for it.<sup>60</sup> Again, this worked well for the Ottoman authorities for a long time as it prevented unified resistance forming and it also ensured, through handing out tax-farming rights to governors and lesser notables, a relatively steady stream of income for the court in Istanbul. It also served to segregate the majority of the population from participating in the political process directly, compelling them instead to dependency upon notable intermediaries. This political exclusion persisted due to a lack of mass education amongst the Ottoman population and a lack of ability for radical ideas to permeate due to the absence of dense transportation networks, such as railway and more importantly, the printing press. Habash's generation would be the first cohort of Palestinians to have access to mass media, advanced secular education and an effective railway and roadway network. His generation also formed the core of the most important mass-based political parties and militant groups in Palestine who espoused a populist and class-sensitive political philosophy.

## **From the Eve of World War I to the British Mandate**

The Palestinian notable class before 1948 largely accepted the necessity and legitimacy of both Ottoman and British rule during their vastly disparate lengths of tenure (albeit sympathizing with the Muslim Ottomans more strongly), and tailored their political strategies toward accommodating the differing needs of the respective occupying power.<sup>61</sup> This tendency

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<sup>60</sup> Hourani, "Politics of Notables": 88.

<sup>61</sup> This phenomenon was especially significant during the 1936-39 Arab revolt in Palestine, as local notables opposed (privately at least) civil disobedience or violence that threatened their livelihood, the citrus crop in

towards accommodation rather than reform or resistance made the notable class a conservative force in local and provincial politics, as it was against their interests to rebel against or replace the given imperial government which sustained their livelihoods and legitimized their political power. The notable classes' conservatism and collaborationism with occupying powers, especially the British would eventually be harshly criticized by the ANM and the PFLP, and they would join the ranks of "enemies" within the PFLP's list of social forces.

This fact taps into a later era of the "politics of the notables" which goes beyond Hourani's original thesis and into an era he did not cover in his presentation: the era of European colonialism and later the British Mandate.<sup>62</sup> The operation of the "politics of the notables" during the colonial era (before the end of the Ottomans) functioned differently due to the presence of new centers of power overlapping with, and sometimes replacing Ottoman authority outright, the "veiled protectorate" of Britain over Egypt being the most notorious example. However Palestine remained an integral part of the Ottoman domain until the end of World War I, and thus did not have to cope with the shock of European control until much later than Egypt. Britain sought to maintain the same economic and social relationships in Palestine as existed before their arrival and therefore extended the time period of local notable dominance over Palestinian society. This conservative ethos damaged the ability of Palestinians to compete with Zionist political and military organization, entrenched unimaginative or obstinate notable leaders in power and kept the Palestinians in a near perpetual state of internal strife. The intrusion of a

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particular. The Arab Higher Committee, established as a means of controlling the strikes and violence, eventually petitioned Arab heads of state to make pleas calling for the end of the strikes only a few months later, realizing that they were fatally compromising their influence with the British and creating such instability that popular nationalist forces were gaining power. For an analysis of the controversial role Arab heads of state played in Mandate Palestine from 1936 onwards, see Klieman, Aaron S. "The Arab States and Palestine," in Haim, Sylvia G and Elie Kedourie, eds. *Zionism and Arabism in Palestine and Israel* (Routledge Publishers, 1982).

<sup>62</sup> Other colonial enterprises can also be used as models for the upcoming section, such as the French in Syria or the British in India.

colonial power into Palestine stimulated the growth of nationalist opposition both to it and the Zionist endeavor that came along with the British armies, but nationalist aspirations were co-opted by a notable class that saw advantage in simultaneously opposing and collaborating with their new masters.

The Ottomans were late in providing major upgrades to agriculture, technology and industry in greater Palestine, and their war policies during World War I resulted in massive deforestation of the countryside.<sup>63</sup> The Committee for Union and Progress (CUP), a civilian political party which, along with military leaders, overthrew Sultan Abdulhamid II in 1909, faced the daunting and ultimately doomed task of revivifying the Ottoman economy. Robinson-Divine states that:

For many decades before the revolution, several Ottoman leaders had tried but failed to mobilize revenues sufficient to construct a modern system of transportation. Building a modern infrastructure in the empire was expensive and entailed heavy borrowing. In the short run, exacerbation of the Ottoman deficit problem weakened rather than strengthened the imperial economy. For that reason, Sultan 'Abd al-Hamid II initiated only modest programs for expanding and improving roads and ports.

The CUP on the other hand sought to utilize its connections with Germany to rapidly update its military prowess, even allowing scores of German officers to lead Ottoman armies in battle;<sup>64</sup> their foreign policy tended to embrace war and conflict as a necessary means for revitalizing Ottoman society, which they believed had grown timid and stagnant under Abdulhamid's more cautious diplomatic leadership.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Khalaf, Issa. *Politics in Palestine: Arab Factionalism and Social Disintegration, 1939-1948* (Albany, NY: University of Albany Press, 1991): 26.

<sup>64</sup> See Mango, Andrew, *Ataturk* (London: John Murray, 1999) for a detailed description of the roles German officers played in the Ottoman armies during the war, and the kind of resistance they met from Turkish generals, Ataturk included.

<sup>65</sup> Robinson-Divine, Donna. *Politics and Society in Ottoman Palestine: The Arab Struggle for Survival and Power* (Lynne Rienner Publishing, 1994): 144.

Despite the aggressive militarist policies of the CUP from 1909 onwards,<sup>66</sup> and harshness of wartime conscription policies in the Middle East,<sup>67</sup> most segments of Arab society still did not rebel against them, just as mass revolt against the British did not attain critical momentum until the mid 1930's.<sup>68</sup> Though Arab nationalist historiography has frequently painted the late Ottoman era and the "Young Turks"<sup>69</sup> as a period of unchecked decline, the population in Palestine actually grew and industry developed consistently. The economy burgeoned even during WWI,<sup>70</sup> leaving observers with the mixed impression of collapse and revival occurring simultaneously. Either way it was not in the best interests of the Palestinian notables to advocate separatism, as no one could predict the victors in the war and they were not yet willing to shed ties with the multi-ethnic empire that had governed the region since 1515. Therefore the notable classes throughout the Middle East, besides for prominent political figures executed for treason in Damascus in 1916, did not constitute an organized class capable or willing to challenge Ottoman imperial authority.<sup>71</sup> Later during the British Mandate that task fell primarily onto the backs of

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<sup>66</sup> Robinson-Divine, Donna. *Politics and Society*: 144.

<sup>67</sup> Khalaf, Issa. *Politics in Palestine*: 26. For an intimate account of the devastation left by World War I on agriculture and industry in the Levant, see Gilson, Michael. *Lords of the Lebanese Marches: Violence and Narrative in an Arab Society* (London: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 1996). Though he analyzes only northern Lebanon, utilization of both olive and citrus groves and natural growth forests in greater Palestine cause environmental havoc on the region, making the British occupation much more tenuous in the years of the Military Administration. For an in-depth analysis of British policy in the MA and its regrets over its promotion of the Balfour Declaration see Wasserstein, Bernard. *The British in Palestine* (Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1978).

<sup>68</sup> For a critique of Arab nationalist historiography (ex. Nasser, Gamal Abdel. *The Philosophy of the Revolution* (Buffalo, Smith Leynes and Marshall, 1959)) that stresses the "depravity" of Ottoman rule and the Arab peoples ostensible long-standing hostility towards it, see Kayali, Hasan. *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1918* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997).

<sup>69</sup> The term "Young Turks" refers to the civilian and military leaders who overthrew the sultan in 1909, but is often used to describe the Second Constitutional Era (1909-1918) more generally. It may also be used as an abbreviation for describing ambitious military officers who seek to reform a stagnating state and bolster its military capacity.

<sup>70</sup> Robinson-Divine: 145.

<sup>71</sup> Economics was not the only reason why most Arab leaders did not rebel. Many of them participated actively in constitutional politics before the war and became enmeshed in the government: "for Palestinian Arabs, the Young

the peasantry, who formed the core militants who rebelled against the British and Zionism throughout the Mandate.<sup>72</sup>

There were nonetheless differences in notable politics between the late Ottoman era and the Mandate. These differences modified the actors competing for power, the means they employed and their goals. For one, in the last few decades of Ottoman rule in greater Palestine (and Egypt), Ottoman authority overlapped with European colonial authority. The Capitulation agreements of the 16<sup>th</sup> century<sup>73</sup> became in the 19<sup>th</sup> century a Trojan horse by which European powers could intervene politically in Ottoman affairs. Notables increasingly had to align their interests with enjoys of foreign or diplomatic consuls who might wield more effective power than an Ottoman governor.

This fracturing of power centers created an opportunity for disadvantaged communities, such as religious and ethnic minorities, to secure privileges from their foreign patrons, contributing to their economic domination of import-export trade and other lucrative avenues. This development resulted in a strengthening of notable politics among Jews and Christians who

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Turk Revolution ushered in an era of many beginnings. Political ideas could be exchanged more freely than ever before. Parliamentary elections were held and contested. Although the electorate was small, limited to property owners, and under the aegis of local urban notables, parliamentary elections became occasions for rethinking and redefining shared interests. On the "hustings," candidates urged the adoption of policies to alleviate poverty and often singled out the needs of peasants as requiring special attention." From Robinson-Divine: 145.

<sup>72</sup> For instance Joseph Nevo states that during the 1936-39 Arab revolt "the participants by no means represented a national cross-section. They were mostly peasants. Even the townsfolk among the rank and file of the gangs were of the lowest socio-economic class. The urban elite hardly participated." From Nevo, Joseph. "Palestinian-Arab Violent Activity during the 1930s" in Cohen, Michael J. and Martin Kolinsky, eds. *Britain and the Middle East in the 1930s, Security Problems, 1935-1939* (London: Macmillan, in association with King's College, 1992): 183

<sup>73</sup> Generally speaking, these agreements gave European travelers and diplomats immunity from Ottoman law and significant trade advantages, such as freedom from taxation, which they eventually extended onto their local clients: religious minorities. European states' military supremacy over the empire rendered it powerless from halting this development, which essentially placed an economically significant portion of imperial subjects outside the Ottoman tax-base or judicial system. The Capitulations were only annulled only after the empire dissolved, by the new republican government of Turkey.

consolidated their power by depending on European centers of power rather than Ottoman, as well as among politically well-connected Muslims:

Rich and prominent individuals could be protected by attaching them in some way to the consulates and embassies...but beyond that, whole communities were taken under protection. A policy of protection, which had been pursued by the French since the seventeenth and the Russians since the late eighteenth century, was pursued by them and others more consciously and deliberately in the 1840's and 1850's.<sup>74</sup>

During the long Ottoman era, this notable conservatism, whether in obeisance to the Ottomans or a foreign patron, served as both as a stabilizing force in local politics and a source of contention amongst different religious groups, but with the advent of ethno-nationalism in the Middle East<sup>75</sup> it began to unravel. Bluntly stated, nationalism, which purports to speak in the name of every member of a given “imagined community”<sup>76</sup> or nation was the antithesis of the “politics of the notables” of the late Ottoman and Mandatory eras. Arab, Palestinian and Middle Eastern nationalisms can tentatively be described as emerging as popular ideas directly before World War I and growing rapidly afterwards.

Notable politics explicitly excludes the non-notable classes; in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century this increasingly included railway laborers, middle-class professionals, trade union members, and factory workers. Palestinian notables were also determined to keep control of burgeoning nationalist sentiment; prominent notables during the Mandate era<sup>77</sup> did form political parties and

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<sup>74</sup>Hourani, “Politics of Notables”: 105.

<sup>75</sup> Nationalism in this context refers to the widespread and growing idea amongst ethnically homogenous peoples that their quality of life and political aspirations could be better achieved by local self-rule, as distinct from imperial administration. This paper must by reasons of length and clarity avoid debates on the beginnings and definition of nationalism (Hobsbawm, Anderson, Smith et. al.), as well as the polemics of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict regarding which “nation” came first.

<sup>76</sup> See Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London; New York: Verso, 1983).

<sup>77</sup> Much as they did during the Second Ottoman Constitutional Era from 1909-1914, which saw a very large number of small, ethnically based parties emerge to secure more independence from Istanbul, such as the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party and the Liberal Union. Arabs largely eschewed the Committee for Union and Progress (CUP), which sought centralized reforms at the expense of Arab cultural and political autonomy.

groups, and did advocate for an independent Palestine or greater Syria. These formations included the Palestinian Arab Executive (PAE), led by Musa Kazim al-Husseini until his death; the Istiqlal party led by Rashid al-Haj Ibrahim,<sup>78</sup> and the Supreme Muslim Council (SMC) led by Hajj Amin al-Husseini.<sup>79</sup> Yet almost without exception these groups were held together by the personalities of prominent notables and familial solidarity rather than by common ideals or national policy.

This lack of solidarity amongst the various parties served to weaken the Palestinians ability to militarily withstand the far more disciplined Yishuv and also made their leaders them vulnerable to accusations of opportunism. These families tended to use the leadership their parties for factional rather than national purposes.<sup>80</sup> Even elections, such as for Jerusalem's major, were formalities; it was assumed that either a member of the Husseinis or Nashashibis would take power, given their long tenure in positions of authority. Other organizations such as the Muslim Christian Associations (MCA) emerged at the start of the Mandate as a means of counterbalancing the power of the Zionist Executive and Jewish Agency, but they too "were

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<sup>78</sup> Khalaf: 91.

<sup>79</sup> The SMC was not a political party but a new religious body created by the British at the start of the mandate through which the Hajj wielded considerable influence and resources, chiefly by control over the revenues of public *awqaf* revenues. It remained an important tool for the Hajj until 1936, when he was chased out of the country due to his support for the Arab revolt of 1936-39. See Khalidi, Rashid. "The Palestinians and 1948: The Underlying Causes of Failure," in Rogan, Eugene L. and Avi Shlaim. *The War for Palestine: Rewriting the History of 1948* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007): 22.

<sup>80</sup> Attempts were made by Palestinian political parties to form a unified position against the British and the Zionists, but they tended to be short lived. Porath states that prior to the 1936 revolt "the five Arab parties' leaders submitted their joint memorandum to the HC (High Commissioner)...in which they reiterated their national demands. These demands were three: a)I immediate stoppage to Jewish immigration; b) prohibition of the transfer of Arab land to the Jews; and c) the establishment of a democratic government in the country in accordance with the terms of the covenant of the League of Nations..." From Porath, Yehoshua. *The Emergence of the Palestinian-Arab National Movement, 1918-1929* (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 1974): 142-143.

mainly dominated by the leading notables and merchants in the major cities and towns of Palestine.<sup>81</sup>

Local notables, be they religious leaders, businessmen or landowners, had a vested interest in keeping wages low and peasants indebted to them, conditions which could be changed if said classes were able to build mass political parties and demonstrate for civil and political rights within an independent nation. The notables, regardless of how supportive or antagonistic they were towards the British could only enforce the marginalization of the working classes by relying on a central authority which would support them.<sup>82</sup> Fortunately for prominent families such as the Husseinis, Nashashibis and others, the British maintained a “status quo” form of administration over the Palestinian Mandate. The British adopted a similar style of hands-off management in their elder colony, India, in which some regions were ruled directly, while others remained under the nominal sovereignty of a princely ruler who could provide reserves for the army and regular taxation without direct British control.<sup>83</sup> They kept many Ottoman-era rules in

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<sup>81</sup> Al-Kayali, Abd-al-Wahhab. *Palestine: A Modern History* (Croom Helm Ltd, 1978): 48.

<sup>82</sup> Because of a mixture of population growth, Islamic inheritance laws, and war-time deprivations, Palestinian peasants after World War I became increasingly indebted to their landlords while trying to pay those debts on shrinking plots: “Because the size of peasant holdings became increasingly smaller, many peasants turned to tenancy arrangements with landlords to sustain themselves. They enabled some landlords to maintain their influence (patronage) and ties to the peasant, who was increasingly attracted to work outside agriculture, and to meet changing demands in the commodity market, by determining which crops were produced. Politically, the effect of these tenancy arrangements strengthened patronage relations.” Khalaf, *Politics in Palestine*: 27.

<sup>83</sup> This theme was made famous by Robinson and Gallagher, who described the British empire as a great iceberg, with the tip being regions under direct imperial administration and the body being the vast majority of regions that fell under British military and economic influence. Palestine, given the finite duration of the Mandate, might be considered part of the body, as the British invested considerable resources into devolving and limiting government of the region. Only in the aftermath of the British conquest or during major domestic disturbances (Wailing Wall Riots of 1929, 1936 Arab Revolt, etc.) did they bring to bear overwhelming military force. This may partly be due to the fact that they regretted becoming involved in Palestine to begin with. For thorough and original explications of British rationale in colonial management see Robinson, Ronald Edward and John Gallagher. *Africa and the Victorians* (Macmillan, 1981) and Robinson, Ronald Edward and John Gallagher. “The Imperialism of Free Trade.” *The Economic History Review*, Second series, Vol. 6, no. 1 (1953). See also Porter, Bernard, *The Lion's Share: A Short History of British Imperialism, 1850-2004* (Pearson/Longman, 2004) which discusses three “phases” of Britain’s imperial history. The third phase, within which the Palestine Mandate belonged, occurred between World War I and World War II when Britain’s territorial extent reached its

effect, such as land laws, and generally avoided creating new social programs or infrastructure beyond what was necessary to support the Mandatory administration and the military. Khalaf states that:

The central propelling motive of the British policy throughout the mandate was to maintain existing rural life and *stability* (italics in original). It was understood that changes would, and did, produce social and economic within villages that would increase migration occupational differentiation, rising expectations and as a result, conflict and instability.<sup>84</sup>

This fact dovetailed with the interests of powerful notables; local elites largely eschewed open confrontation with the occupying power and sought to contain the development of civil society groupings such as student associations, political parties and trade unions. Instead these notables, both rural and urban, entered into a reciprocal and mutually beneficial relationship whereby the local notables materially and symbolically supported the Ottomans and the British in exchange for confirmation of their own elite status within their localities.

An example of such an exchange occurred when Husseini, suspected of fomenting the Riots of 1920 against Jewish settlement, suddenly dropped much of his agitation when the British forced through his appointment as “Grand Mufti” of Palestine, a historically anomalous position and one in which he was expected to dampen the fires of nationalist or religious agitation on the part of his religious and familial clients.<sup>85</sup> Additionally, Sir Samuel Herbert, after failing to establish a bi-national legislative between Arabs and Jews under the auspices of the Mandatory civilian government, instead opted to create parallel but separate “representative”

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climax, but began to run aground on the shoals of numerous emergent and irredentist nationalisms extending from Ireland to India.

<sup>84</sup> Khalaf: 31.

<sup>85</sup> Khalidi, Rashid. “The Palestinians and 1948: The Underlying Causes of Failure”: 23.

bodies for each community.<sup>86</sup> Husseini's new fiefdom became the Supreme Muslim Council, also, like the title of "Grand Mufti", an institution without any historical precedent.<sup>87</sup>

Such mutually advantageous exchange of benefits worked well for both parties (the Husseini family and the Mandatory authorities in this case) for a significant period of time, yet it will be shown that this highly patriarchal, religiously-focused and authoritarian mode of political control also served to smother alternative forums for Palestinian intellectual and activist expression. The two dominant "traditional" Palestinian families, the Husseinis and the Nashashibis, though fighting bitterly with each other throughout the Mandate, also had a vested interest in undermining or co-opting political competition from other sectors.

The decision by the British to prioritize Palestine's religious leadership and to invent new religio-political institutions for them directly aided the influential notabilities' ability to withstand burgeoning disgust and disappointment against them. Starting in the early 1930's, there emerged "an upsurge in Palestine of independent political organizing by the educated middle class,"<sup>88</sup> the earliest and important being the above-mentioned Istiqlal Party, founded in 1932. This group, unlike the patronage-based, Husseini-dominated PAE, was "organized not on the basis of family or clan loyalties but around a political program,"<sup>89</sup> which included the abolition of feudal titles, abusive treatment of the peasantry, rising prices and extortionate

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<sup>86</sup> See Wasserstein, Bernard. *The British in Palestine* (Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1978) for a detailed exposition of the various means employed by Samuel to bring together the Jewish and Arab communities during his tenure in office. The Zionists principally objected to any internationally recognized representative institution for the Arabs, believing such institutions to be against the spirit of the Balfour Declaration. Conversely, the Arab community refused to acquiesce forming representative institutions unless they *were* explicitly sanctioned by the League of Nations as well.

<sup>87</sup> Khalidi, "The Palestinians and 1948": 22.

<sup>88</sup> Swedenburg, Ted. "Palestinian Peasantry in the Great Revolt," in Pappé, Ilan. *The Israel/Palestine Question* (London; New York: Routledge Publishers, 1999): 147.

<sup>89</sup> Swedenburg, "Palestinian Peasantry": 147-148.

taxation.<sup>90</sup> The group itself did not survive for more than two years, but its former members somewhat paradoxical migration into Husseini's AHC<sup>91</sup> may have pushed the Mufti towards greater radicalism against his British patrons.<sup>92</sup> After the demise of the Istiqlal, the AHC faced open condemnation from only one Arab political party: the Arab League for National Liberation (ALNL), a communist-inspired party that had deep links with both the Palestinian Arab Worker's Society (PAWS) and the Federation of Arab Trade Unions (FATU).<sup>93</sup> PAWS tended to be more conservative, mainly focused on creating an Arab parallel to the Zionist *Histadrut*<sup>94</sup> while FATU, though smaller, was highly nationalistic, anti-Zionist and anti-notability.<sup>95</sup> ALNL's appeal, as well as its well-educated base, posed a threat both to British control and to notable dominance. However, notable politics was aided by Britain's conservative political impulses

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid: 148.

<sup>91</sup> Formed for the purpose of coordinating the initial strikes at the start of 1936 Arab Revolt, the AHC was reluctantly headed by the Mufti who had not yet reached the point of open rebellion against the British (al-Kayyali: 191). The AHC also played a lead role in inviting the Arab heads of state to (successfully) intervene in the course of the strikes. The kings of Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Transjordan each signed an open plea to the Palestinian strikers to cease violent activity and place their faith in the presumed good intentions of the British (Klieman: 119). The strikes were at that point causing significant economic harm to the Palestinian population (Klieman: 119), especially to the dock workers of Jaffa, many of whom lost their jobs and even the port-status of their city (Khalidi, "The Palestinians and 1948": 26-27). Additionally, many of the local notables, particularly the Nashashibi family, had deep interests in citrus export, which the strikes were badly damaging the production of (Swedenburg: 147). However the Arab rulers' intervention also had the detrimental effect of subordinating local Palestinian decision making and risk taking onto the aegis of external Arab governments, which were by all accounts pursuing their own regional ambitions at the expense of the fragmented Palestinian national forces (Klieman: 135). This dependence served the Palestinians poorly once the 1948 Civil War began.

<sup>92</sup> Swedenburg: 148

<sup>93</sup> There were two major Palestinian-Arab labor unions, the Palestinian Arab Worker's Society (PAWS) and the Federation of Arab Trade Unions (FATU). (Khalaf: 39) PAWS, founded in 1925, absorbed many Palestinians who briefly associated with a joint Arab-Jewish railway union known as the Union of Railway, Postal and Telegraph Workers (URPTW) and eventually became the largest Palestinian workers union in the region. See Lockman, Zackary. "Railway Workers and Relational History: Arabs and Jews in British-Ruled Palestine," in Pappé, Ilan. *The Israel Palestine Question* (London; New York: Routledge Publishers, 1999): 111-113. PAWS nearly doubled in size from 5000 members in 1942 (during a period of extensive growth due to war-driven demand and the stationing on British troops and support staff in the region) to nearly 15 thousand just three years later. PAWS's membership included elements of the petty bourgeois, such as teachers, government employees, doctors and industrial workers in the main port cities of Haifa and Acre. It also included a substantial number of small farmers from its rural branches. FATU, the more radical and communist-oriented union, focused more heavily on recruiting "skilled workers and was comprised of individual members and affiliated registered associations from Shell, IPC, Consolidated Refineries, Ltd., and Nazareth Arab Workers Society" (Khalaf: 41-42).

<sup>94</sup> Ibid: 40.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid: 41.

that favored maintaining “traditional” Palestinian social institutions and leadership strata, as well as their policy of “non-interventionism” in the local economy, which severely disadvantaged the labor organizations that formed the core of the anti-notable leadership:

The Labour Department encouraged peaceful conciliation and cooperation between Arab employees and employers. But it feared legislation dealing with social policy. The government did not help or encourage workers to fight for wages and refrained from framing laws governing trade unions and the conciliation of trade disputes.<sup>96</sup>

This active passivity on the part of the British, as well as their long-term sponsorship of the Mufti’s religio-political leadership and its surrounding institutional framework, created a situation where mass Palestinian politics almost inevitably gravitated towards conservative religious expression. Compared to other Arab countries under British “tutelage,” the Palestinian situation was highly anomalous: in no other Arab country was the leader of its national movement a person with religious authority and credentials.<sup>97</sup>

## Conclusion

The Husseinis and Nashashibis’ (among many other rural and urban notable families) acknowledgment of and acquiescence to the legitimacy of the Mandate served to entrench and stabilize British rule, and therefore the British and the notables had their own rationale for suppressing the emergence of less compromising, more nationalistic and (possibly) more representative Palestinian groups and leaders. For example, the President of the Arab Executive Committee, Musa Kazim al-Husseini, sought to portray the 1920 Third Congress in Haifa as simultaneously an elected body and an assembly of the powerful. Noting that the delegates were

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid: 42.

<sup>97</sup> Khalidi, “The Palestinians and 1948”: 23.

*selected* by prominent sheikhs, businessmen and landowners from each Palestinian community he nonetheless affirmed that:

On this basis it should be clear to His Excellency the High Commissioner that the Congress was elected by the people, that it represents an absolute majority of the Palestinian people, Muslims and Christians, and that it unites within it the notables and dignitaries of the country, who have always represented it.<sup>98</sup>

This patrician political philosophy explicitly estranged Palestinians of non-notable or aristocratic origin, laying bare the ideal and highly stratified social order of notable politics, whereby no other class besides for the traditional rulers could even be considered as appropriate representatives of Palestinian society.<sup>99</sup> Whether one agrees with Porath's assertion that the population accepted and unquestioningly embraced this social order or not,<sup>100</sup> Kazim Husseini's statement reinforces the contention that notables politics is the antithesis and opponent of any form of popular participation in the political process.

George Habash grew up surrounded by the milieu of the "politics of the notables" and like many others, resented its inability to secure Palestine for its native inhabitants. Notable figures tended to be among the first to flee Palestine when civil war between the Yishuv and the Palestinians began in early 1948, thereby depriving the population of most of its educated leadership class and source of financial support. Habash himself was a medical student in Beirut at the time but visiting his family in Lydda when the Haganah invaded. They were expelled, and Habash did not participate in the fighting. His own middle class origin and educational opportunities insulated him from the violence but also gave him a powerful stimulus to join the fight against Israel, and eventually against the social and political structures that so manifestly failed the people of Palestine. From 1952 onwards Habash challenged the network of privileges

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<sup>98</sup> Porath: 287.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid: 287.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid: 287.

enjoyed by the notable class, and the conciliatory, compromise-laden politics that came along with it.

The next section will explore Habash's association with the Arab Nationalist Movement (ANM) and by extension with Gamal Abd al-Nasir. This will summarize the content of Habash and the ANM's beliefs, and then analyze how they marked a major, but not terminal, break with notable politics. New forms of political organization arose, such as the clandestine cell or democratic centralist political party or militia, and new patrons for these groups arose along with them. Mass politics with nationalist and egalitarian aims was embraced by many young Palestinians and Arabs after the creation of Israel, as exemplified by the rising popularity of the Ba'ath Party in Iraq and Syria; Nasser's radical Arab nationalist populism and foreign policy "non-alignment"; and amongst the Palestinians, Fatah and the ANM.

Despite the revolution in Arab thought that occurred because of Israel's creation, this new zeitgeist could not quite divorce itself from centuries of (differentiated temporally and geographically) hierarchical and reciprocal patronage networks between elites and their supplicants, policies that the Ottomans fostered and the English and French colonials regimes maintained.<sup>101</sup> To put it more modestly, from the necessity of political expediency and long-term strategy, non-state actors in the Middle East through the 1950's and 1960's had to rely on powerful and potentially meddling external Arab "benefactors" who would aid them

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<sup>101</sup> Britain's maintenance of their perception of late Ottoman-era policies has been covered extensively, but the French in Syria and Lebanon also had a vested interest in stymieing populist nationalism. Referring to young middle-class Syrian professionals who agitated against the French Mandate (1920-1946), Watenpaugh notes that landowners and other segments of the traditional leadership sought to blunt the "bourgeoisie's" desire for social change and its anti-colonial discourse by co-option: the middle class "began to question the claims of the traditional notability to a position of hegemony," a current that posed an obvious threat to preserving aristocratic and status-based social relations in Syria. Through the landed elites' and hereditary notability's control over major centers of social and cultural influence they tried to redirect bourgeoisie populism into material individualism and desire for social advancement, currents which were decidedly non-threatening for the notable classes. See Watenpaugh, Keith D. "Middle-Class Modernity and the Persistence of the Politics of Notables in Inter-War Syria," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (May 2003): 259-260.

diplomatically and militarily. In exchange for this largely state-supplied patronage, groups such as the ANM would be compelled to adhere to their benefactor's policies and refrain from criticism, even if said policies went against the groups' ideological commitments or sense of wise policy choices. This "fealty" to a state-based patron proved disastrous for the ANM and provoked a major theoretical re-conceptualization in the group, which will be discussed in chapter 3. In terms of the "politics of the notables," the time period between 1948 and 1967 functioned as a transitional phase between Mandate-era notable politics and the "neo-notabilism" of the post-1967 period.

## **Chapter Two - A Return to Palestine or a New Middle Eastern Order? Ideological Conflict within the Arab Nationalist Movement and the Path to Class Struggle**

Before analyzing the most critical component of Habash's relationship to, and rejection of, notable patronage politics in Mandate Palestine and "neo-notable" politics within the PLO, we must first bridge the 19-year gap in Habash's political career. Between the expulsion of the Palestinians and the foundation of Israel in 1948, and the formation of the PFLP in December 1967, Habash became embroiled in Arab nationalist politics. His early political commitments, and the organizations that grew out of them, contained theoretical germs of his later evolution into a Marxist-Leninist revolutionary, but he also embraced political viewpoints that might be considered diametrically opposed to his later self. Therefore it is necessary to investigate the content of Habash's convictions during the two decades between the *nakba* and the *naksa* as a means of better comprehending the eventual crystallization of his beliefs after 1967. It is also within this time period that Habash first embraces state patronage from Egypt, then discards it after the fall of the patron, and finally redefines his relationship to it on an explicitly ideological basis.

Understanding Habash during this time period also sheds light on his early attitudes towards class conflict and the validity of class analysis of in the Palestinian context, two concepts that significantly affected his attitude towards notable and "neo-notable" politics.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> As explained in chapter one, notable politics exists within societies that lack a strong central authority and also possess a hierarchical and highly stratified social structure. One's role in the patron-client interchange is pendant upon one's class position: a small-scale urban artisan can obviously not be a patron for a wealthy landlord engaged in the international citrus trade. Notable politics tends to stress and reinforce existing inequalities between client and patron, and any attempt to change that order, by means of drastic socio-economic reform or even class-based revolution, by nature upsets this relationship. If the radical disparities of wealth and social stature between patron

This will become an important factor after 1967 because his views changed quite dramatically, as did his willingness to accept aid or succor from notable classes (in particular the “bourgeoisie” and “petty bourgeoisie”)<sup>103</sup> and their “reactionary” allies who he held responsible for the 1948 loss of Palestine. Lastly, Habash himself underwent a profound moral change from 1948 to 1967: from a self-acknowledged and privileged member of the notable classes of Palestine<sup>104</sup> into a militant revolutionary who rejected any compromising associations, military, financial and diplomatic, with any of the ideological forces he felt were arrayed against his goal of creating a socialist Palestinian state.<sup>105</sup>

Many news articles and obituaries emphasized the role that his family’s expulsion from Lydda in 1948 had on his attitude towards Israel, and the acceptability of using terrorist tactics to combat what he viewed as state terror. In one of the most widely read and quoted interviews with him in the English press, Habash notes that his transformation from a medical student and pediatrician into militant revolutionary<sup>106</sup> stemmed from emotional causes, rather than from

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and client are decreased or abolished entirely, then the patron has no way of ‘representing’ his client and protecting his or her livelihood, and likewise the client no longer has an economic motivation to subsume his or her political life to the demands of his patron-protector.

<sup>103</sup> The definitions of both according to the PFLP will be discussed in chapter three.

<sup>104</sup> Fallaci, Oriana. “A Leader of the Fedayeen: We Want a War Like the Vietnam War,” Life Magazine, June 1970: 34.

<sup>105</sup> Fallaci: 33.

<sup>106</sup> Obviously in this and the next section the question of whether to use the word “terrorist” to describe Habash and his organizations will come into question. To clarify matters and avoid over-generalizations of a complex man in the midst of an ugly insurgency against what he perceived as an occupying power, the term “terrorist” will be used to denote specific actions by Habash and the ANM/PFLP that deliberately targeted *civilians* in order to sow terror and attract world attention onto the question of Palestine. Since a great many acts of the PFLP and ANM did just that, the term itself is appropriate in most situations. However the term “militant” or “guerrilla” will be used as the primary descriptor of these groups, given that their acts of violence could be alternatively terroristic or not, depending on the situation and target. Additionally, whether a group is a “terrorist” group in the popular imagination changes depending on political climate and results; Nelson Mandela’s African National Congress (ANC), Algeria’s National Liberation Front (FLN) and the Zionist Irgun and Lehi were all regarded as terrorist groups by many Western states during their periods of pre-state violence, but eventually became legitimized due to their successes in winning political power. Labeling the PFLP and ANM “terrorist groups” may in fact be appropriate and valid, but it also ignores the fact that for the ANM, the PFLP and others, terror was a means to an end and not a self-contained objective committed for its own sake. Their ultimate goal was the formation of a new socialist nation state in the stead of Israel, at which time terrorist attacks would have seemingly no practical value. Habash’s theoretical socialist state could easily become a state sponsor of terrorism, but that is not the issue at stake

theoretical discussion.<sup>107</sup> He goes on to narrate his reaction to the procession of newly-created refugees out of Lydda as the destruction of his nation and as,

A picture that haunts me and I'll never forget. Thirty thousand human beings walking, weeping...screaming in terror...women with babies in their arms and children tugging at their skirts...and the Israeli soldiers pushing them on with their guns. Some people fell by the wayside; some never got up again. It was terrible. One thinks: this isn't life, this isn't human. Once you have seen this, your heart and your brain are transformed. What's the point of healing a sick body when such things can happen? One must change the world, do something, kill if necessary, kill even at the risk of becoming inhuman in our turn.<sup>108</sup>

His experiences of the expulsion, and the suffering he witnessed, evidently gave rise to a need for action, any action, against the injustices he witnessed. His comment of becoming “inhuman in our turn” is particularly revealing given his earliest political commitment, the Kata'ib al-Fida al-'Arabi (the Phalanges of the Arab Sacrifice), was quite explicitly anti-Semitic in its theory and practice.

## Ideology and Praxis of the ANM and Kata'ib

At this earliest point of his career as a militant, Habash and his comrades, whether due to their youth or anger over the expulsion, did not adequately differentiate between the Zionists he

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here. However, even this definition and the previous amendments are problematic. Could not al-Qaeda, also a group that has aims above and beyond terroristic violence, be exempt from the “terrorist” label if its ultimate goal was statehood? Perhaps, but al-Qaeda's is a transnational terrorist group that rejects the very notion of a bounded nation-state. Rather, they aspire to perpetual warfare against all states, groups and individuals who do not share their extreme variant of Islam: bin-Laden “invites” non-Muslims to Islam only to threaten them with violence if they do not accept. The only legitimate “nation” for bin-Laden and al-Qaeda is the Islamic *ummah*, which in their interpretation is universal and without geographic boundary. Therefore universal warfare is the only means of bringing this “nation” into being. This is a radical difference from Habash's limited, albeit aggressive, aims for a contiguous Arab nation state based on socialist economics and values. See Bin-Laden, Osama. “Letter to America,” *The Guardian* (November 2002). <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2002/nov/24/theobserver> (accessed October 16, 2011).

<sup>107</sup> Fallaci: 34.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid: 34.

despised on one hand, and the Jewish religious community on the other. Even Muhsin Ibrahim, one of the ANM's founding members, wrote a founding text of the ANM which explicitly cited the Jews as "historical enemies" of the Arab people and the expulsion of all of them from Arab countries.<sup>109</sup> Ibrahim and Habash later disavowed the open racism of the Kata'ib and early ANM's theories; both the PFLP<sup>110</sup> and Ibrahim's Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP)<sup>111</sup> clearly delineated that their goals were to destroy Israel as a state, not the whole of the Jewish people.<sup>112</sup>

In tandem with this totalizing and undifferentiated analysis of Israeli and Jewish society and its aims the Kata'ib mixed its anti-Semitism with a strongly fascistic worldview. The group, which Habash joined at an early stage,<sup>113</sup> carried out terrorist attacks against Jewish civilian targets, such as their 1949 assaults on a Damascus synagogue and the Alliance Israelite School in Beirut.<sup>114</sup> Sayigh states that some of the Kata'ib and Habash's early influences were:

...the revolutionary ideas of Giuseppe Garibaldi and his emphasis on 'political violence,' the obsessive secrecy of the Italian Carbonari and Young Italy Movement, the absolutist nationalism and iron discipline of Bismarck, and the confrontationist tactics of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and the Syrian National Party.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> AbuKhalil, As'ad. "George Habash and the Movement of Arab Nationalists: Neither Unity nor Liberation." *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (Summer 1999): 97. <http://www.jstor.org/> (accessed 03/03/2011).

<sup>110</sup> The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. *Jabha al-Sha'biyah li-Tahrir Filasṭīn [A Strategy for the Liberation of Palestine]* (Amman, Jordan: Information Dept., 1969): 79.

<sup>111</sup> AbuKhalil, "George Habash": 98.

<sup>112</sup> However the question of whether Israeli Jews could remain in Palestine after Israel's destruction was in the negative, except for the Jews who lived there before the 1917 Balfour Declaration, which would be problematic to determine to say the least. See "The Palestinian National Covenant, 1968," in Lukacs, Yehuda, ed. *The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: A Documentary Record* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992): 292.

<sup>113</sup> AbuKhalil: 93.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid: 93.

<sup>115</sup> Sayigh, Yezid. *Armed Struggle and the Search for State: The Palestinian National Movement, 1949-1993* (New York; Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, and the Institute for Palestine Studies, Washington, D.C., 1997): 72.

These ideological and organizational affinities, all of which embraced un-compromising and highly nationalistic attitudes (except for the Muslim Brotherhood) along with a sense of humiliation over the consequences of the Palestinian expulsion in 1948,<sup>116</sup> propelled the Kata'ib and then the ANM towards acts of sabotage in Arab countries against non-Jewish targets as well. The intentions of these campaigns was to force out governments that sought a negotiated solution with Israel, and after the ANM's embrace of Gamal abd al-Nasir in 1958,<sup>117</sup> the ANM also went to battle with regimes that opposed Nasir's ambitions.

For instance, the ANM mounted guerrilla campaigns against Jordan in 1957 after the dissolution of a nationalist government there, receiving help from Egyptian and Syrian security officers.<sup>118</sup> The ANM also tried to assist United Arab Republic (UAR) security officers during a nationalist rebellion in 1959 in Mosul, Iraq against Nasser's fierce rival, Abd al-Karim al-Qasim's but it too ultimately failed.<sup>119</sup> Regardless, these conspiratorial adventures against socially conservative, pro-Western or anti-Nasser regimes solidified the ANM's allegiance to Nasser's foreign policy which was bent on eradicating the effects of colonialism on the nation-states of the Middle East and reunifying the Arab world under a single authority.

The AMN leaned increasingly heavily upon external actors such as Nasser's Egypt<sup>120</sup> for ideological guidance and military training after the 1956 Suez War.<sup>121</sup> Despite his Pan-Arabist

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<sup>116</sup> Kazzuha, Walid W. *Revolutionary Transformation in the Arab World: Habash and his Comrades from Nationalism to Marxism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1975): 54.

<sup>117</sup> This "embrace" occurred largely because of Nasser's advocacy for Pan-Arab unity and his opposition to the existence of Israel. Prior to Nasser's ideological emergence after the 1955 Non-Aligned Conference in Bandung and his assertiveness against the British and the French, the ANM and many others derided his coup as a purely military affair with little popular back or legitimacy. They also scorned his efforts at negotiations with the British over the Suez Canal Zone. See Kazzuha, *Revolutionary Transformation*: 58-59.

<sup>118</sup> Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*: 75.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*: 76.

<sup>120</sup> However the ANM and Habash did not begin direct contact with Nasser until after the dissolution of the Egyptian-Syrian United Arab Republic (UAR) in 1961, when Pan-Arabism seemed to be at its lowest ebb. *Ibid.*: 76-77.

proclivities during the 1950's and 60's, Habash maintained a skepticism concerning Nasser's intentions, realizing that Nasser could just as easily co-opt the ANM and the Palestinian cause for purely local gains. Therefore Habash saw this reliance on outside states as a temporary necessity for the liberation of all Palestine rather than as a means unto itself; he therefore grudgingly accepted the necessity of state-patronage, even when the patron itself begins to lose its luster.<sup>122</sup> Bassam Abu-Sharif, an ANM member in the 1960's and later a spokesperson for the PFLP, quotes Habash doubting the will and military capacity of Nasser's Egypt,<sup>123</sup> and expressing sympathy with the more impetuous Fatah,<sup>124</sup> which from 1964 onwards openly advocated and practiced guerrilla action against Israel.<sup>125</sup>

Compared with Muhsin Ibrahim's fairly enthusiastic embrace of Nasser's socialist decrees of 1961,<sup>126</sup> Habash's vision of a new Palestinian state and society first and foremost depended upon the vanquishing of Israel and the triumphant return of the Palestinian refugees,<sup>127</sup> and, again, for that purpose reliance upon "progressive" Arab states with actual military capability remained a regrettable necessity rather than a cherished fact. In this he differed

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid: 75.

<sup>122</sup> According to AbuKhalil, Habash was among the few members of the ANM who "remained wary" of Nasser's influence over the group, as "he knew that Nasir did not trust independent political organizations and wanted MAN [ANM] as an appendage to his political/intelligence apparatus (Ibid: 95).

<sup>123</sup> Abu-Sharif, Bassam, and Uzi Mahnaimi. *Best of Enemies: The Memoirs of Bassam Abu-Sharif and Uzi Mahnaimi* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1995): 33.

<sup>124</sup> Abu-Sharif-Mahnaimi: 33.

<sup>125</sup> Cubert, Howard M. *The PFLP's Changing Role in the Middle East* (London; Portland, OR: Frank Cass Publishers, 1997): 46. Fatah is usually credited in most sources as being the first indigenous Palestinian group to launch a guerrilla into Israeli territory in December 1964. However Sayigh notes that the ANM in fact launched the first raid into Israel two months before Fatah, but did not publish its activity "out of an idealistic sense of propriety or concern that it would embarrass Nasir." (Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*: 110) This disavowal of its own activity ultimately wounded the ANM's reputation, as for years activist and Palestinian particularist currents within it had been clamoring to launch the armed struggle against Israel, independent of the approval or backing of an Arab state.

<sup>126</sup> Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*: 79: referring to co-founder of the ANM Ibrahim's role as editor of al-Hurriya, the new ideological mouthpiece of the AMN and eventually a source of strife amongst its various members. Ibrahim's role as an associate and rival of Habash grew in furor over time, and he represented the emergent "leftist" faction amongst the ANM and would eventually be the chief advocate of utilizing Marxist class analysis in the context of the Palestinian struggle.

<sup>127</sup> AbuKhalil: 96.

considerably with Ibrahim who wanted “a two-front battle against internal and external enemies”<sup>128</sup> to be waged simultaneously, rather than focusing on political freedom from colonialism and eradicating Israel first and social revolution after the fact. Additionally, during his formative years (defined as up until his Marxist “turn” in 1967-68) as a militant and nationalist activist, Habash lacked any kind of binding theoretical framework for what kind of Palestinian state might emerge after the defeat of Israel: would it be democratic or authoritarian, exclusively Arab or multi-ethnic? The AMN’s theory and praxis embraced a Pan-Arab outlook, something which they shared with both Nasser and the emergent Ba’ath Party of Michel Aflaq and Salah Bitar,<sup>129</sup> but the vagueness and impetuosity of the AMN’s “intellectual” platform of “Unity, Liberation and Vengeance”<sup>130</sup> offered little substance as to their ultimate intentions after the Palestinian’s return to their homeland.

Kazziha notes that the group’s internal structure was highly secretive and centralized, but also “brotherly and cooperative”<sup>131</sup> while AbuKhalil emphasizes the ANM’s adherence to an elite-model of internal organization and rigid ideological discipline which in turn led it to becoming totalitarian in nature.<sup>132</sup> Finally, Sayigh points out that its structure was very similar to “the classic pyramid of communist parties”<sup>133</sup>: this entailed a powerful central committee ruling over various subsidiary commands, based on a form of democratic centralism and periodic authoritarianism.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> AbuKhalil: 96.

<sup>129</sup> Habash even tried to merge the ANM with the Ba’ath after asking Michel ‘Aflaq, one of the party’s cofounders, to make the ANM the military “teeth” of the party. His request was rejected by ‘Aflaq, causing Habash to ultimately scorn the Ba’ath in the future (Ibid: 93).

<sup>130</sup> Kazziha: 50.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid: 23.

<sup>132</sup> AbuKhalil: 95.

<sup>133</sup> Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*: 73.

<sup>134</sup> It can be said that organizationally, the ANM differed very little from its successor the PFLP in terms of its internal organization and procedures (PFLP, *A Strategy*: 117-124). Dissent was encouraged, but only within lines

In terms of the conflict with Israel, the ANM resolutely rejected any attempt at compromise over the rights of Palestinians to return to their homes,<sup>135</sup> and viewed Israel not just as an imperialist project, which would vanish once the European colonialists left the Middle East,<sup>136</sup> but as an expansionist movement that “aimed at the usurpation of the Arab land, and the expulsion of the Arab people”<sup>137</sup> throughout the presumed historic boundaries and claims of the ancient Kingdom of Israel.<sup>138</sup> In line with the Katai’ib and the ANM’s early anti-Semitism, their nationalist platform consisted mainly of a quasi-fascistic outlook that stressed an ethnic and romantic nationalist focus on the essential historical, cultural and linguistic connections between all Arabs, with Palestinians being part of an organic Arab whole and Israel serving as a parasitic implantation.<sup>139</sup>

The movement’s early program was “characterized by a vague, romantic advocacy of Arab unity that was envisaged to follow the German pattern of national unity.”<sup>140</sup> However, the primary goal of such a call to unity among Arabs mainly consisted of exhorting Arab states to invade Israel and facilitate the return of the Palestinian refugees. After the rise and consolidation of power by Gamal Abdel Nasser in 1952 the ANM embraced the burgeoning tide of Pan-Arabism that he propounded:

The slogan of Arab unity occupied a central position in the Movement’s political outlook. It derived from two important factors. One was political and pertained to the Movement’s conviction that Arab unity, once attained, would inevitably lead to the liberation of Palestine. The other was theoretical and directly related to the concept of

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already demarcated by majority rule. When in 1963 Muhsin Ibrahim stepped outside of the majority consensus concerning the invalidity of class analysis, he received threats on his office and life from Wadi Haddad, Habash’s longtime comrade. See AbuKhalil: 97.

<sup>135</sup> Kazziha: 53.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid: 50-51.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid: 51.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid: 50.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid: 48.

<sup>140</sup> Ismael, Tareq Y. *The Arab Left* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1976): 63.

Arab nationalism. The unification of the Arab countries was viewed as the necessary outcome of the existence of one Arab nation.<sup>141</sup>

In other words, the existence of multiple feuding and ideologically differentiated Arab countries was incompatible with notion of there being a single Arab nation with a common history, language, culture and political will.<sup>142</sup>

The ANM saw the British and French partition of the Middle East after World War I as a great injustice whose after-effects badly damaged the ability of the Arab countries to recover from the war and fight the Balfour Declaration and Zionist immigration.<sup>143</sup> This followed from the ANM's agenda of "Arab liberation, which aimed at the elimination of Western influence from the Arab world."<sup>144</sup> This liberation was conceived as both a termination of the geographic consequences of colonialism, as well as a release from "any kind of foreign exploitation."<sup>145</sup> It is in this aspect of the ANM's philosophy that we see the emergence of Marxist-Leninist philosophy,<sup>146</sup> as destroying "foreign exploitation" meant eliminating unequal socio-economic relations between the Arab countries and the Western world, and the reform of Arab society from within.<sup>147</sup> However this focus on issues of socio-economic structure were still eclipsed by the focus on the political struggle against Israel, world Zionism and Western imperialism, and would therefore have to wait until the Arab world achieved "a certain measure of political integration and freedom"<sup>148</sup> from them. Bassam Abu-Sharif described one of his experiences in the ANM during the early 1960's:

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<sup>141</sup> Kazzuha: 55.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid: 56.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid: 60.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid: 60.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid: 61.

<sup>146</sup> Formulated in the Introduction.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid: 61-62. This "reform" did not yet imply a classless society on the lines of the USSR or one led by the working classes, which the PFLP advocated after 1967.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid: 62.

As a member of this elite order, you were banned even from drinking Coke. One day, I was strolling along with a friend when a huge arm snaked round my neck from behind. Before I knew it, I was in a strangehold, while the man who had hold of me stamped my can of Coca-Cola flat into the ground. ‘That is a product of the imperialist USA – it is filth!’<sup>149</sup>

This vignette tellingly shows the hostility of the groups rank-and-file towards anything affiliated with the United States at that time, given the US’s crucial support for the establishment of Israel and its continuing diplomatic links with it and with Arab states hostile to the ANM and Nasser.

## Debates within the ANM

The stress on Arab nationalism and unity masked considerable theoretical and strategic differences within the ANM that changed over the 1950’s and 1960’s. These differences manifested themselves strongly with regards to the validity of class critiques in the Palestinian context, the acceptability of Palestinian particularist nationalism, and the appropriate time for the final confrontation with Israel.

During the majority of the group’s existence, roughly from its foundation in 1954 to 1967, Habash and the “rightist” faction with the AMN, though employing some facets of Marxist rhetoric such as a stress upon the role of peasants and workers,<sup>150</sup> were at that time resolutely anti-communist. Accordingly, “the movement took an anti-Communist stance that rejected any attempt at alliance with the ‘secessionist communists,’”<sup>151</sup> many of which were assumed to be at the beck-and-call of the USSR, which itself voted in favor of the partition of Mandate Palestine into two states in the 1947 UN Resolution 181. Habash and others downplayed the significance

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<sup>149</sup> Abu-Sharif and Mahnaimi: 30.

<sup>150</sup> Kazzuha: 49.

<sup>151</sup> Ismael, *The Arab Left*: 63.

of class divisions among the Palestinians in exile and in Gaza and the West Bank,<sup>152</sup> fearing that such an emphasis might cause the movement to splinter.<sup>153</sup> Thusly the ANM appealed “mainly to elements of the prosperous bourgeoisie and to those from more or less aristocratic origin,”<sup>154</sup> of which Habash might be said to belong to.<sup>155</sup>

In terms of the problematic of Palestinian particularist nationalism during this phase, the ANM remained tethered to Nasser’s goal of liberating Palestine by means of Arab arms at the right moment: Nasser declared that “Egypt would not embark on a confrontation with Israel until it had completed building its military force to ensure ‘decisive superiority.’ Egypt would select the time and place for war once it was fully prepared,”<sup>156</sup> something that the ANM acquiesced to for most of its existence. One of the reasons for this hesitancy to engage in independent Palestinian guerrilla activity<sup>157</sup> against Israeli targets was the fear amongst the ANM’s leadership that once the Palestinians took the mantle of armed struggle onto their own shoulders, it would provide the other Arab states an easy excuse to back down from their promises of Palestinian liberation.<sup>158</sup> After 1962, the example of Algeria was widely touted as a model for this liberation and partial proof that an Arab people could overthrow a colonial presence by sheer tenacity.<sup>159</sup> However, the fact remained that the economic, diplomatic, demographic and topographical

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<sup>152</sup> This stance would prove ironic as Fatah eventually adopted this position as a means of blunting the radical Marxist critiques of the PFLP and Habash in the late 1960’s. See Muslih, Muhammad Y. “Moderates and Rejectionists within the Palestine Liberation Organization.” *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (Spring 1976): 130. <http://www.jstor.org/> (accessed 03/03/2011).

<sup>153</sup> AbuKhalil: 96.

<sup>154</sup> Ismael: 64.

<sup>155</sup> Recall that Habash himself was a child in a middle class Christian family and was studying medicine at the prestigious American University of Beirut during the 1948 wars.

<sup>156</sup> Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*: 78.

<sup>157</sup> And by extension an assertion of a “Palestinianness” on the part of the guerrillas.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid*: 79.

<sup>159</sup> However tenacity could not alone have defeated the French: the FLN possessed allies in Egypt, armed forces in neighboring Tunisia and Morocco, and the USSR. Additionally international condemnation of French colonialism helped to pressure DeGaulle’s government into evacuation. See Ben-Rafael, Eliezer. *A Guerrilla Conflict in International Politics* (New York; Westport, CT; London: Greenwood Press, 1987): 15.

features that propelled the Algerians to success against the French remained elusive for the Palestinians both before and after 1967.

For one, the Palestinians were a widely dispersed and atomistic community that was still trying to rebuild its sense of national purpose after the 1948 *nakba*, unlike the Algerians who, despite the social disintegration stemming from French colonialism, remained in the same geographic area.<sup>160</sup> Two, unlike the indigenous Algerian numerical advantage over the French colonists, the number Palestinians remaining within Israel's 1948 borders and the 1967 occupied territories were fewer than or at least equivalent to the number of Zionist "colonial settlers"<sup>161</sup> the ANM sought to overthrow.<sup>162</sup> The remainder of the Palestinians on the East Bank, annexed by Jordan in 1950 and the occupied by Israel after 1967, were either cooperating with the Jordanian and Israeli authorities or trying to fend off national assimilation into the Kingdom or submission to the occupation. Lastly the Algerian comparison was invalid simply because Algeria's vast territory provided ample space for guerrilla operations,<sup>163</sup> it had hugely porous borders with friendly Arab states on both sides and military within them, and its populous Arab-majority cities gave the Algerian rebels a sympathetic home base within which to consolidate and organize their forces, something that the Palestinian militant groups lacked throughout. The idealistic notion that the Algerians overthrew the French by themselves was false; for the ANM,

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<sup>160</sup> Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*: 10.

<sup>161</sup> The Palestinians within Israel and within the newly-occupied territories of Gaza and the West Bank accounted for roughly 1 million people, as compared with 2.5 million Jews in 1967. See Morris, Benny. *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict* (New York: Vintage Books/Random House, 2001): 336 and the Israeli Central Bureau for Statistics, [http://www1.cbs.gov.il/reader/shnaton/templ\\_shnaton\\_e.html?num\\_tab=st02\\_01&CYear=2010](http://www1.cbs.gov.il/reader/shnaton/templ_shnaton_e.html?num_tab=st02_01&CYear=2010).

<sup>162</sup> Fatah in particular embraced the Algerian nationalist model, which focused more on purely anti-colonial nationalism rather than a concerted conflict led by a disciplined party apparatus aimed at both independence and radical social change, like in Vietnam or China. In chapter three the notion of a "people's war" according to the PFLP will be elucidated further. See Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*: 196.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid: 198. Sayigh is referring to Naif Hawatima's contention that guerrilla activity in the West Bank and Gaza had "no scientific basis" for comparison with the Algerian revolution.

the Algerian example was concrete proof that the Palestinians, due to their massive disadvantages vis-à-vis the Israelis, needed even more help from the Arab world and beyond than the Algerians if their revolution was to succeed.

Nonetheless the lure and prestige of independent guerrilla attacks on Israel prior to the 1967<sup>164</sup> and the growing assertiveness of the ANM's largely Palestinian rank-and-file forced a partial reassessment of the validity of subsuming all of the Movement's members into a generic "Arab" identity. The problematic of whether to embrace a Palestinian particularist nationalism or remain steadfast to Nasser's Pan-Arab outlook eventually reached a climax in 1964, when the ANM Congress formed a "'Palestine Region of the ANM'"<sup>165</sup> in an attempt to assuage the many Palestinian members of the group who were becoming impatient with the group's passivity regarding armed struggle.<sup>166</sup> After 1967, the PFLP would turn towards the communist "people's wars" in China and Vietnam as their main inspiration for resuming, maintaining and organizing the armed struggle,<sup>167</sup> as well as embracing the concept of an independent Palestinian state over all of the old British Mandate.<sup>168</sup> But in order to reach that point in Habash's political career when he transformed from the leader of a "vassalized" clandestine political group into a stubbornly independent guerrilla, terrorist and Marxist theoretician, we must analyze the mechanics of his disenchantment towards Nasser's Egypt which was almost exclusively brought about by Egypt's catastrophic failure during the June 1967 war.

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<sup>164</sup> Kazzuha: 83.

<sup>165</sup> Cubert, *The PFLP's Changing Role*: 45.

<sup>166</sup> Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*: 80. Habash was in hiding for much of the run-up to the formation of the ANM's "Palestine" branch, but eventually agreed with Wadi Haddad and Hani al-Hindi that its establishment was necessary to stanch growing discontent.

<sup>167</sup> PFLP, *A Strategy*: 39.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid*: 80.

## Habash and Egypt: A Reappraisal of an Alliance

As mentioned earlier, Habash's political thought during his years in the ANM was in no sense Marxist, besides for a vague concern with economic justice and redistribution;<sup>169</sup> he rejected both Marx and Lenin's analysis of the roots of class conflict and of the very phenomenon of antagonism between the classes. Though he was also hostile towards the compromises and conciliation of the pre-1948 notable class with what was perceived as illegitimate authority (The British Mandate), he nevertheless did not discern all of the potential ramifications such a critique might contain. In essence, he found complaint with the actors of Palestinian society and Mandate notable politics, but he did not extend that critique into how class structure might continually reinforce those same failed actors and undermine the very causes that he advanced: Pan-Arab unity followed by the destruction of Israel and its transformation into a state within a larger Arab federation.

The Arab defeat of 1967 deeply disillusioned Habash and caused him to reevaluate the political and economic nature of the republican dictatorships, Nasser in particular, he previously had supported. Rather than the slightly socialist revolutionary Pan-Arab beacon of the 1950's and the Suez War, Habash and the PFLP came to see Nasser's regime as being dominated by "petty bourgeois" whose worldview was tainted by their Islamist pasts and their corrupt present. The last section of this chapter will address the details of how and why Habash's views shifted away from a Pan-Arabism that was disinterested in questions of class and religion into a

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<sup>169</sup> Gresh, Alain, and A. M. Berrett, translator. *The PLO, the Struggle Within: Towards an Independent Palestinian State* (Paris; London: Zed Books Ltd., 1985): 24.

paradoxically Pan-Arab and Palestinian particularist Marxism that placed class and the privilege of elites, both foreign and domestic, at the center of his agenda.

Habash's final embrace of Marxism directly after the 1967 war seems to both be in response to the failures of "notable democracy" in the Arab world after the establishment of Israel, as well as his disillusionment with Nasser's "Arab socialism," which posited a unitary Arab state but did not advocate the abolition of class or, more modestly, the redistribution of resources to exploited segments of society beyond what was necessary to boost Nasser's popularity in the short term. Habash did not leave (in English) a detailed exposition of his economic viewpoints, thus we must find answers within larger secondary sources about the PLO, as well as manifestos published by the PFLP.

As mentioned, the ANM's theories of Pan-Arabism as well as their military efforts essentially followed the lead of Nasser's Egypt up until 1967 and therefore did not tackle the complex issue of what a post-Israel Palestinian state might look like. Was it to be truly independent or ensconced within a larger Arab federation? Was it to be a pluralistic democracy or a quasi-fascist ethnocracy, reserved for the Arab peoples alone? Habash seems to answer this question in the latter by stating that, "Palestine liberated from Zionism and imperialism will become, through a natural process, a part of a unified revolutionary entity."<sup>170</sup> If the ANM's secretive and hierarchical group organization served as a model to their aspirations, then the answer is likely the latter. At the very least, the ANM and Habash saw an Arab dictatorship as a necessary evil in order to achieve the discipline required to destroy Israel;<sup>171</sup> their patience with Nasser's "Arab socialism" and ruthless security state tactics must have seemed sensible in light

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<sup>170</sup> Gresh, *Struggle Within*: 36.

<sup>171</sup> Kazzuha: 60.

of this belief, especially given the PFLP's later embrace of "democratic centralism," which it can be argued legitimates dictatorial rule in the guise of pluralist democratic processes. After all, democratic elections and parliamentary democracy in general could just as easily bring corrupt and compromising notables into power as it could serve as a means for the masses to advance their interests. Democratic institutions were already widely distrusted throughout the Middle East, Egypt under the British protectorate being a non-Palestinian example of notables hijacking democratic institutions and using it for parochial and elitist ends.<sup>172</sup>

Generally speaking, the ANM favored Arab unity as a precondition to the liberation of Palestine and so did its successor the PFLP.<sup>173</sup> The difference between this fairly similar stance is that the ANM espoused a future Palestine as part and parcel of the wider Arab nation, an appendage of a greater whole, but did not advocate class revolution as a means to bring about a unified Arab state (i.e. all of Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, etc.). As mentioned earlier, it took part in multiple attempts to overthrow conservative regimes and replace them with autocratic republics during the 1950's and supported Nasser's antagonistic relationship with the Arab monarchies, as well as his "wait and see" policy vis-à-vis Israel. This hesitancy changed dramatically in the wake of the 1967 War, pitting Israel against Jordan, Syria and Nasser's Egypt and ending with the absolute destruction of the air forces of all three Arab states and the seizure of Sinai, Gaza, the West Bank and Jerusalem by the Israelis within six days. Quite quickly, Habash re-evaluated his intellectual positions, and having witnessed the futility of his loyalty to

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<sup>172</sup> In *Philosophy of the Revolution* Nasser makes this point abundantly clear, pointing to the squabbling and corruption of the old landowning classes as a primary reason for abolishing parliamentary elections and creating the Liberation Rally (LR) in its stead. The LR and its final iteration, the Arab Socialist Union (ASU) were not parties but political vehicles through which the government and Nasser could suppress and refocus divergent political beliefs into a single harmonious strand which would support his policies unconditionally. For detailed information on the rise and failure of single-party mass politics in Egypt under Nasser and Sadat, see Waterbury, John (1983). *The Egypt of Nasser and Sadat: The Political Economy of Two Regimes* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983).

<sup>173</sup> Ben-Rafael, *Israel-Palestine*: 36.

Nasser and the ANM's client-patron relationship with Egypt, he turned against his former ideological mentor and sought to find new sources of arms and aid from countries outside of the Middle East.

One of the PFLP's opening statements revealed that Habash and his associates' conception of the "progressive" nature of Nasser's Egypt changed dramatically. Referring to the post-1948 political composition of the newly independent Arab states and the "Palestinian Arab national liberation movement," the PFLP asserted that this grouping was "responsible for the June War and it is that movement which must be responsible for the reversal of the June defeat."<sup>174</sup> By "responsibility" Habash and the PFLP did not mean that the Arab states which lost in the 1967 war (or abstained from fighting) should maintain their control over the means and aims of the struggle; quite to the contrary, for both the PFLP and Fatah, their "responsibility" meant supporting the independent activities of the radical guerrilla groups.

Going further still, the PFLP took aim at not only the Arab "reactionary" regimes such as Jordan and Saudi Arabia, but at the socio-economic basis of Egypt and Syria as well. The latter two states were, at varying times, once considered by Habash to be the most dynamic forces within Arab nationalism and the only entities militarily and politically capable of destroying Israel and establishing Palestinian national rights.<sup>175</sup> Following the defeat however, Syria and Egypt became "petit bourgeois"<sup>176</sup> regimes, which failed to lead the Arabs effectively against Israel in 1967 and therefore relinquished their privileged positions as leaders of the Arab nationalist movement. The PFLP claimed that the petit bourgeois regimes, "by reason of the class structure resulting from their experience, are longer capable of continuing their progress on

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<sup>174</sup> PFLP. "The Political Report of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine," in Ismael, Tariq Y., *The Arab Left*: 163.

<sup>175</sup> PFLP. *A Strategy*: 54.

<sup>176</sup> PFLP. "The Political Report": 164.

the revolutionary road and of raising it to the level which would enable them to face the state of alarm that has arisen in the of imperialism, Israel and Arab reaction.”<sup>177</sup>

This perception of the “petit bourgeoisies”<sup>178</sup> derives directly from Lenin: speaking after the formation of the Soviet Union, Lenin states that this “class” (which may, depending on the definition, encompass small proprietors, students, intellectuals, small artisans, lawyers, etc.), “inevitably vacillate between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, between bourgeois democracy and the Soviet system, between reformism and revolutionariness, between love for the workers and fear of the proletarian dictatorship.”<sup>179</sup> The most scorn, born from disillusionment, was reserved by the PFLP for Egypt. They sharply criticized the interconnectedness of its economy with that of the industrialized West and international capitalism:

The economy that was set up by the petit bourgeois could not resist the Zionist-imperialist attacks because it was a consumer economy based on light industrialization and agrarian reforms (the redistribution of land to raise self-sufficient production). Such an economy-following the closure of the Suez Canal-was forced to retreat and ask for assistance from the reactionary oil-producing countries, to be able to sustain itself.<sup>180</sup>

This economically dependent relationship, which relegated Egypt to begging for sustenance from its old royal adversaries, severely hampered its capacity to ever build a “national war economy”<sup>181</sup> capable of maintaining constant conflict with Israel until its defeat. The PFLP therefore deduced that until the Arab world could build economies capable of breaking “all its connections with neo-colonialism and world imperialism, and American

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<sup>177</sup> PFLP. *A Strategy*: 59.

<sup>178</sup> Whether the Nasir regime was truly run by “petty bourgeoisie” is a different question, as the term itself is not well conceptualized; Lenin tends to use it as a form of insult towards individuals or groupings in Russia that were, like Nasir, insufficiently revolutionary.

<sup>179</sup> Lenin, V. I. *On the Significance of Militant Materialism, March 12, 1922* in Possony, Stefan T. *The Lenin Reader*: 435.

<sup>180</sup> PFLP. “The Political Report”: 163.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid*: 164.

imperialism in particular”<sup>182</sup> the Palestinians would forever remain a stateless people, at the mercies of both their enemies and supposed allies.

The PFLP’s solution to this dilemma, as mentioned earlier, was to take recourse to the new and success models of reference which emerged within Palestinian national liberationist discourse during the late 1960’s, even before the 1967 war. Once again, the Maoist and Marxist examples of Vietnam and Cuba came to the forefront, containing within them radical notions of a “people’s liberation war” and a powerful critique of the socio-economic basis of the Arab states, the “progressive” regimes in particular.<sup>183</sup> Within these states the petit bourgeois class, in this sense referring to middle-class men with military backgrounds, became an entrenched and conservative group of officers and merchants at the top of a social hierarchy, interested mainly in their own political survival rather than with “the necessity of protecting the country and preparing it (economically, politically and militarily) for the liberation of Palestine.”<sup>184</sup>

For example, in Egypt the Nasser regime effectively established new patronage networks upon the ruins of the notable politics of King Farouk’s Egypt prior to the Free Officers Coup. These new patronage networks and the actors within them, despite the pro-Palestinian revolutionary slogans of Nasser’s “Arab socialism,” were not interested in fully committing Egypt’s resources to fighting Israel, as the price of constant conflict would prove too high for its economy to sustain. Nasser himself admitted on numerous occasions that neither “he nor any other Arab leader had a plan to liberate Palestine,”<sup>185</sup> and knew quite well Egypt’s military

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<sup>182</sup> Ibid: 164.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid: 162.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid: 164.

<sup>185</sup> Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*: 68: Nasser’s surprising frankness served his regional enemies well, as al-Qasim of Iraq subsequently challenged Nasser’s commitment to the liberation of Palestine soon after his rise, during what Malcolm Kerr coined the “Arab Cold War.” Al-Qasim was not the only Arab leader to use the Palestine issue as a bludgeon against Nasser. After the collapse of the Egyptian-Syrian merger under the United Arab Republic, the

inferiority versus Israel. He only reversed his more cautious pronouncements in the late 1960's once King Hussein and Iraqi President Abd al-Karim al-Qasim taunted his resolve to actually do anything about the Palestinian cause which he claimed to hold so dear.<sup>186</sup> Rather, Egypt's "petit bourgeois" regime preferred to accept a ceasefire as soon as the Arab regular armies encountered consistent loss of territory, with the PFLP stating that "all their evolutionary slogans-'fighting inch-by-inch,' 'the popular liberation war,' and 'the policy of the scorched earth'-evaporated."<sup>187</sup>

## Conclusion

Habash's anti-communist and Pan-Arabist ideology in the ANM set the stage for his radical philosophical reassessment after the June 1967 war. Though Habash had his suspicions of Nasser and his pledge to liberate Palestine using Arab armies as the vanguard, he nevertheless remained loyal to this thesis until the 1967 defeat revealed the empty content of his promise.<sup>188</sup> During the ANM years Habash embraced Nasser's revolutionary aims, but only in regards to overthrowing regimes that were either hostile to Egypt or beholden in some fashion to American influence. For example, the ultimate goal of the short-lived UAR, which the ANM embraced,<sup>189</sup> was "to achieve its major objectives of freedom and security in liberating all the parts of the Arab homeland and in establishing a society of sufficiency and justice, a society of socialism."<sup>190</sup>

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Syrian Ba'ath Party became implacable foes of Nasser, with one leading official commenting that "we shall rub Nasir's nose in the mud of Palestine that is where his end shall be." (104)

<sup>186</sup> Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*: 68.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid*: 164.

<sup>188</sup> However Habash rejected attempts by the "left-wing" of the ANM to merge completely with the UAR and restrict its relative independence. See Kazzuha: 83 and AbuKhalil: 96.

<sup>189</sup> Kazzuha: 60.

<sup>190</sup> "United Arab Republic: Manifesto (April 1963)," in Laqueur, Walter, and Barry Rubin, eds. *The Israel-Arab Reader: A Documentary History of the Middle East Conflict* (New York: Penguin Books, 2008): 90.

However for the “rightist” circles in the ANM this socialism meant nothing more than creating an economic system “aimed at achieving justice and equality among the Arabs,”<sup>191</sup> which stood in stark contrast to Ibrahim and Hawatima’s Marxist contentions that the “socio-economic structure was the determining factor in the progress of all other aspects of Arab society.”<sup>192</sup> For the ANM and the UAR, Palestine itself remained secondary to the primary goal of Arab unity, a unity that would make “the power of each region a power for the Federal State of the Arab Nation, and make the Federal State a power for each of its regions as well as for the whole Arab Nation.”<sup>193</sup>

Rashid Khalidi notes that when the “validity” of Palestinian nationalism is under question (i.e. whether it is a “real” versus an “invented” nationalism) it was often because Pan-Arab nationalism “in some measure obscured the identities of the separate Arab nation-states it subsumed.”<sup>194</sup> This sidelined the issue of purely Palestinian nationalism until the rise and prominence of Fatah and the aftermath of the 1967 war. In the case of renewed Palestinian nationalism and activism it can be said that Yasir Arafat and Fatah’s contention that Palestinian guerrilla action was needed to push<sup>195</sup> the Arab states into war with Israel was far more revolutionary and subversive than Habash’s dwindling faith in the redemptory power of the Arab armies. Fatah’s innovative assertions were reinforced by the fact that “in setting out a programme to achieve its goals Fatah insisted above all on two cardinal principles: the absolute independence of Palestinian organization and decision-making from the Arab governments, and

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<sup>191</sup> Kazzuha: 67.

<sup>192</sup> Kazzuha: 67.

<sup>193</sup> “United Arab Republic: Manifesto (April 1963)”:<sup>93</sup>.

<sup>194</sup> Khalidi, Rashid. *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997): 181.

<sup>195</sup> Rubin, Barry. *Revolution Until Victory? The History and Politics of the PLO* (Cambridge, MASS; London: Cambridge University Press, 1994): 15-16.

the primacy of armed struggle as the sole means of liberating Palestine.”<sup>196</sup> This independence of action and organization for the Palestinian militant groups dovetailed with the reconnection of Gaza and the West Bank after the 1967 war, and greatly stimulated the reemergence of Palestinian national consciousness<sup>197</sup> as well as offering a potentially fertile territory for the militant groups to recruit from.<sup>198</sup>

The goal of independent strategic and tactical thinking, along with a burgeoning desire to use the occupied territories as platforms for guerrilla warfare, would eventually be adopted by the PFLP, which absorbed the ANM in 1969.<sup>199</sup> Thus before the 1967 war, besides for the influence of Muhsin Ibrahim, the ANM and Habash remained essentially conservative in outlook towards both socio-economic revolution in the Arab world and the proper pace for the ultimate battle against Israel. This is shown by the contentions of the “later splinters that the movement was nothing but the backward right wing of the then national movement.”<sup>200</sup> At least by comparison to the ideologically focused Marxist-Leninist organization it would evolve into, the ANM was deeply enmeshed in state patronage with Nasser’s Egypt and consequently lost its own freedom of action and also its political initiative to Fatah. Habash finally realized the inadequacies of the Nasserist project too late in the game, and belatedly caught up with the brewing Marxist-Leninist currents in the Arab world with the foundation of the PFLP in 1968. In the last chapter the concept of “neonotable” politics will be introduced in order to differentiate the PLO’s political arena from the narrow state-patronage politics of the 1950’s and 1960’s as well as from the Ottoman and Mandate eras.

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<sup>196</sup> Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*: 89.

<sup>197</sup> Morris, *Righteous Victims*: 336.

<sup>198</sup> Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*: 155.

<sup>199</sup> PFLP. *A Strategy*: 135. From the PFLP’s foundation until 1969 the ANM survived as a part of the PFLP amongst a “group of organizations, each of which would maintain its independent existence.” (131).

<sup>200</sup> Ismael: 64.

## **Chapter Three - When Habash Became a Marxist: The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine**

Belatedly following Muhsin Ibrahim's lead, after 1967 Habash and the newly founded Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) became explicitly concerned with questions of class, the economic composition of states, and the capability of non-Communist states to maintain the fight for the return of the Palestinian Arabs and the elimination of Israel. It is here that we see the culmination of George Habash's rejection of both the "politics of the notables" within local Palestinian life in the occupied territories, as well as a rejection of the party and state-based "neo-notabilism" of "progressive" Arab regimes and the Palestinian Liberation Organization. In particular, Habash began to distinguish himself from Fateh's non-sectarian, class-inclusive and strictly Palestinian nationalist ideology, as well as from Nasser's state and military based socialism. Even if the PFLP, by virtue of its own paltry resources and vulnerable nature as an underground militant group, could not avoid accepting aid from more powerful parties and possibly compromising their freedom of action, they still insisted on formulating ideological standards for assessing the credibility and desirability of a potential patron.

Before venturing into Habash's conversion to Marxism and his embrace of wide ranging guerrilla and terrorist warfare against agents of 'imperialism' or "Zionism," the concept of what this paper has termed "neo-notabilism" must first be addressed, along with summarizing the rationale for the Palestine Liberation Organization's creation and its institutional structure. This is necessary in order to discern why Habash and the PFLP rebelled against this new model of politics, encapsulated within the PLO, as well as the older "politics of the notables" detailed in chapter one.

First, neo-notabilism was the domination of Palestinian politics by new formations, both internal (within the PLO and particularly among the Palestinian diaspora) and external (other Arab states, but also the USSR and China) to Palestine. Generally speaking, the supplicants within this new arena were the various groups and their leaders that constituted the PLO while the patrons were outside states. However a key difference between old notable politics and neo-notabilism is that the Palestinians themselves were no longer purely proxies to other states but instead represented themselves as “authentic Palestinian nationalist groups whose revolutionary agenda contradicted the state of oblivion of the Arab-Palestinian cause since 1948.”<sup>201</sup> The PLO became a vehicle through which Palestinian political actors, militant groups and unaffiliated Palestinians alike, tried to assert their ambitions and ideology and establish their relative independence from the stronger Arab states. They were able to accomplish this because of the greater awareness towards and sympathy for the Palestinian cause by the emerging Arab middle class and the vulnerabilities of the Arab regimes to charges of weakness against Zionism, especially after the 1967 defeat. Through these new formations the reconstitution of patronage politics emerged within the Palestinian arena.

### **The Formation of the PLO: 1964-1967**

The new Palestinian “neo-notable” elite, comprised mainly of exiled leaders such as Arafat, Khalil al-Wazir (Abu Jihad) and Salah Khalaf (Abu Iyad)<sup>202</sup> asserted their authority over

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<sup>201</sup> Sela, Avraham, and Moshe Ma'oz, eds. *The PLO and Israel: From Armed Conflict to Political Solution, 1964-1994* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997): vii.

<sup>202</sup> And arguably George Habash as well, though his Marxist affiliation and rejection of compromise with Israel concerning recognition, secure borders, a Palestinian “mini-state,” and cooperation with conservative monarchies

the previously toothless PLO which was originally founded by Arab states in 1964 and led by Ahmed Shuqairy. Shuqairy, a prominent lawyer and one of the “old notables” of Palestine, was given the task by the Arab League<sup>203</sup> of finding Palestinian delegates for the Palestinian National Council (PNC). He veered towards middle class notables and other urban professionals, such as doctors, lawyers, pharmacists and engineers.<sup>204</sup> The list he compiled was deemed “insufficiently revolutionary or activist”<sup>205</sup> by some, but he did manage to compile a large cross-section of the Palestinian population. However his choice of relatively non-political individuals who were not affiliated with major militant movements created tension with the various militant groups already in existence, such as Fatah, the Arab Front for the Liberation of Palestine and others, as “their major fear was that the PLO would be used by Arab governments to contain the upsurge of Palestinian national feeling by institutionalizing it within the existing framework of Arab states, where the PLO would be subject to heavy pressure not to disrupt the existing Arab-Israeli status quo.”<sup>206</sup>

Institutionally speaking, the early PLO (pre-1967) possessed a “parliament” (the PNC) and control over its own treasury and army,<sup>207</sup> as well as a “parliament” in the form of the PNC, and an Executive Council comprised of the leaders of the largest parties within the PLO, with a chairman at its head. Habash in particular, during his ANM years, criticized the early PLO for not giving the Palestinians enough latitude for creating effective military command structures

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puts him somewhat outside the parameters of a “neo-notable.” However, he still acquiesced to receiving state-patronage from ideologically compatible states, both during his ANM years (see chapter 2) and in the PFLP.

<sup>203</sup> As well as by Gamal Abdel Nasser, “who wanted to manipulate the Palestinian cause for his own interests.” From Rubin, *Revolution Until Victory?*: 2.

<sup>204</sup> Hamid, Rashid. “What is the PLO?” *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (Summer 1975): 94. <http://www.jstor.org/> (accessed 9/26/2011).

<sup>205</sup> Hamid, “What is the PLO?: 94.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid: 95.

<sup>207</sup> Rubin, *Revolution Until Victory?*: 2

(i.e. ones not simply submerged into an Arab army as auxiliaries).<sup>208</sup> And unlike the 1968 Palestinian National Charter, which explicitly spelled out the goals, methods and representative nature of the PLO,<sup>209</sup> the Shuqairy-era PLO did not explicate these important components due to Jordanian and Egyptian pressure, despite the opposition of the ANM, Fatah and Syria.<sup>210</sup>

One of the largest reasons for this ambiguity was the suspicion of King Hussein of Jordan, a long-time nemesis of George Habash, who opposed any Palestinian formation that might challenge his annexation of the West Bank or his claims to represent the whole Palestinian community.<sup>211</sup> Additionally, since Jordan had a strong voice in Shuqairy's choice of PNC representatives,<sup>212</sup> Hussein managed to influence the political direction (or lack thereof) of the PLO from its inception until its takeover by the militant nationalist organizations. In short, the early PLO lacked strong autonomous foundations via support from the militant organizations and democratic political participation; Shuqairy's bombastic claims of ultimate Arab victory prior to the 1967 defeat<sup>213</sup> further tarnished his image, leaving him politically vulnerable. He would eventually resign as the PLO's chairman in late 1967, after a concerted propaganda campaign against him by Fatah, the PFLP and other groups.<sup>214</sup> Shuqairy was among the last of the older generation of Palestinian notables to hold effective power within the resistance, and his departure opened the door for the emergence of Yasir Arafat, George Habash, and the politics of neo-

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<sup>208</sup> Hamid: 94

<sup>209</sup> PLO. "The Palestinian National Covenant," in Lukacs, Yehuda. *The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: A Documentary Record, 1967-1990*: 94.

<sup>210</sup> Shemesh, Moshe. *The Palestinian Entity: Arab Politics and the PLO* (London; Totowa, NJ: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd, 1988): 46, 47-49. Both Jordan and Egypt maintained a vested interest in controlling the representative nature of the PLO due to the fact that both of them occupied portions of mandatory Palestine; Egypt held but did not annex the Gaza Strip, while Jordan formally annexed the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

<sup>211</sup> Rubin, *Revolution Until Victory?: 2*.

<sup>212</sup> Shemesh, *The Palestinian Entity*: 42.

<sup>213</sup> Sachar, Howard M. *A History of Israel: From the Rise of Zionism to Our Time* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1976): 633-634.

<sup>214</sup> Shemesh: 92.

notabilism that went in tandem with the PLO's decentralized and consensus-based institutional structure.

## **Neo-Notabilism and the PLO: Habash versus Arafat, and Foreign Relations**

Given the sheer diversity of factions within the PLO, it will be necessary to focus primarily on Fatah's embrace of neo-notabilism, given its historic significance and leadership of the Executive Council of the PLO, as well as summarize the institutional structure of the PFLP in order to provide a contrast between the two groups' means of sustaining themselves. An additional problematic emerges when considering Habash's relationship to the "politics of the notables," that of his views of democracy and democratic institutions such as parliaments, separation of powers, an independent judiciary and other establishments. Though Habash and the PFLP were self-professed populists and class warriors, they nevertheless distrusted the concept of democracy, given how easily it became for conservative notables to dominate the parliaments that were established in the Arab world before 1948 and forestall radical political change. As mentioned earlier, Habash and the ANM were broadly supportive of Nasser's monopolization of power and his destruction of Egypt's parliament and political parties, so long as he was able to fulfill his promises of a unified Arab world and the termination of Israel. When his failure became manifest, Habash did not suddenly embrace pluralistic democracy instead of Nasser's state socialism: the PFLP's internal structure functioned in a similar manner to the ANM's, which was itself hierarchical, secretive and centralized, and which relied on both persuasion and coercion to enforce group unity.

More than any other group, Fatah transformed the PLO from a pawn of the Arab League and Nasser into both a vehicle for the nationalist aspirations of the Palestinians and a patronage machine, whereby the strongest group within it was able to extract “rent” from outside states and marginalize their competition within the PLO by means of legal maneuvering.<sup>215</sup> For Yasir Arafat, who was fairly disinterested in ideology<sup>216</sup> and far more sensitive to the attitudes of other Arab states than Habash, this diversity enabled him to “divide and rule” the PLO. Gresh states that:

This acceptance of diversity among Palestinian organizations had significant consequences. Unity and consensus became a central goal: first, because the complex situation of the resistance—whether in the face of reactionary “plots” or attempts at peaceful settlement—required the union of all Palestinian forces; and secondly, because it was the best way of securing the widest support among Arab countries and preventing them from being able to manipulate inter-Palestinian contradictions.<sup>217</sup>

However, “consensus” politics within the PLO could also provoke the exact opposite reaction; each individual guerrilla group could try to “seek external support and threaten the PLO’s claim to be the sole legitimate representative of all Palestinians”<sup>218</sup> if their particular grievance was ignored. Furthermore, consensus politics gave disproportionate influence to these small guerrilla

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<sup>215</sup> In an August 1974 interview with Habash, he expressed displeasure at the “unilateral decision making of the PLO” concerning a recent PLO delegation being sent to Moscow for talks with the Soviets. He expressed appreciation for the Soviets, but disagreed with their insistence on “homogeneity” on the PLO’s political position, which in his mind meant a stance “leading towards political settlement.” Rather he asserted that any PLO delegation has to be “comprised of all the member organizations of the Executive Council so that the delegation fairly represents the coexisting and contradictory political lines within the Liberation Organization.” See “Interview with General Secretary of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Dr. George Habash, in *al-Hadaf, Beirut, August 3, 1974*” in “Documents and Source Material: Arab Documents on Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict.” *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Autumn 1974): 200. <http://www.jstor.org/> (accessed 03/03/2011).

<sup>216</sup> Rubin, Barry, and Judith Colp Rubin. *Yasir Arafat: A Political Biography* (Oxford, UK; New York: Oxford University Press, 2003): 19.

<sup>217</sup> Gresh: 13.

<sup>218</sup> Sayigh, Yezid. “Armed Struggle and State Formation.” *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 4 (Summer 1997): 23. <http://www.jstor.org/> (accessed 9/26/2011).

groups with few seats on the Executive Council, creating a situation whereby an Arab state could use these mini-groups as a means to obstruct PLO decision making.<sup>219</sup>

Regimes such as Saudi Arabia and other conservative Gulf monarchies bankrolled Fatah,<sup>220</sup> many of whose leaders were once affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and with Islamist political currents in general<sup>221</sup> before the advent of the PLO. These governments saw Fatah as a relatively non-threatening alignment within the PLO, given its generally conservative worldview, avoidance of class-based ideology, and willingness to seek support from any and all quarters within the Arab world.<sup>222</sup> Contrary to Fatah, the PFLP believed that the conservative Arab monarchies were natural allies of imperialism, given Saudi Arabia, Jordan and the Gulf States' close economic relationship with America.<sup>223</sup> As such their support for the Palestinian resistance could never be more than tactical:

These Arab reactionary forces – particularly the intelligent ones – may outwardly support superficial national movements with the object of using them to settle, to their own advantage, some of their side conflicts with Israel or with world imperialism, but in

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<sup>219</sup> Sayigh, “Armed Struggle and State Formation”: 23. Ironically enough, the same can be said about proportional representation in Israeli democracy. Small or medium-sized parties within a coalition government can force their agenda onto the majority by threatening to withdraw if its particular demands are not met (such as Shas’s drive for state funding for religious schools). Alternatively, they can make their acquiescence to major matters of national security (such as the details of the peace process) pendant upon the fulfillment of their particular demands. See Swisher, Clayton. *The Truth about Camp David: The Untold Story about the Collapse of the Middle East Peace Process* (New York: Nation Books, 2004).

<sup>220</sup> Jabber, Fuad. “The Arab Regimes and the Palestinian Revolution, 1967-71.” *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (Winter 1973): 80. <http://www.jstor.org/> (accessed 01/19/2011).

<sup>221</sup> Rubin and Rubin. *Yasir Arafat*: 18.

<sup>222</sup> This policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of the Arab states stems from the PLO’s National Charter, where it is stated that “the Palestine Liberation Organization will cooperate with all Arab States...and will maintain neutrality in their mutual relations in the light of and on the basis of, the requirements of the battle of liberation and will not interfere in the internal affairs of any Arab State.” See PLO. “The Palestinian National Covenant, 1968”: 293. However this policy was broken many times by various factions in the PLO, especially by the PFLP and other far-left groupings, who envisaged a wider socio-economic revolution in the Arab World, aimed especially against Jordan.

<sup>223</sup> PFLP. *A Strategy*: 14.

the end they are inevitably against any national liberation movement which aims at uprooting colonialism from our soil.<sup>224</sup>

In addition to the monarchies, radical Arab nationalist states manufactured their own “Palestinian” groups and installed them within the PLO, such as the Syrian Sai’qa and the Iraqi Arab Liberation Front (ALF).<sup>225</sup> In exchange the various Palestinian groups were pressured to support their patron publically, and defend their interests in the PLO from potentially hostile groups, as well as cooperate with the authorities within a given Arab country. Habash however recoiled from the idea of being subsidized by ideologically incompatible states (Saudi Arabia, Jordan, etc)<sup>226</sup> or becoming a vassal of one of the larger Arab republics.<sup>227</sup> He even once remarked that if Fatah and Arafat were ever able to create a Palestinian state “it would end up looking like Saudi Arabia.”<sup>228</sup>

Fatah’s moderation with regards to class and its indifference as to the political affiliation of the countries which it accepts rents from made it perfectly acceptable for the more conservative Arab states. It was precisely this leniency of the part of Fatah, both with regards to accepting patronage from conservative states and its indifference towards the class struggle that made it a suspect group in the eyes of Habash and the PFLP and not quite committed enough to

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<sup>224</sup> PFLP: 14-15.

<sup>225</sup> However the Arif regime in Iraq extended aid to Fatah and the PFLP, in the form of political support during the late 1960’s and military support beyond then. Yet the Iraqi Ba’ath party also sought to neuter the independence of the groups it financed and demanded to be consulted by the groups when they sought to plan attacks on Israel; they also tried to install minders within the various radical groups that had bases on their territory, as well as limiting the number of training camps they could establish. Therefore it can be seen that the Iraqi government, under the Arif brothers and the Ba’ath, tried to manipulate the Palestinian issue to their own gain rather than unconditionally support militant factions that may have worked against Iraqi state interests. Shemesh: 125-127.

<sup>226</sup> Fallaci: 34.

<sup>227</sup> In this Fatah and the PFLP held similar viewpoints; neither group wanted to be the puppet of a particular Arab regime. For instance, during the Palestinian militant groups’ ascent in Jordan, they desired almost total freedom of action and jurisdiction over the Palestinian-populated regions of Jordan, as well as “secure bases” near the frontier of Israel from which to launch guerrilla raids, despite the major breaches of sovereignty this implied for King Hussein. See Jabber, “The Arab Regimes”: 82, 87.

<sup>228</sup> Rubin and Rubin: 19.

see through the armed struggle to its conclusion.<sup>229</sup> In this regard, Habash may be correct, given Fatah's eventual acceptance of Resolutions 242 and 338 and the Oslo Accords, but during late 1960's and early 1970's Habash's posture made his group singularly unattractive to most external regimes and potential patrons and therefore cost him support abroad. Habash played the game of patronage politics, but he differed from Arafat in that the only acceptable patrons were those who he believed were strategically and ideologically compatible with the PFLP's Marxist leanings, such the USSR and China.

Habash was pragmatic enough to recognize that the PFLP, given its Marxist theorization, socially revolutionary instincts, and rejection of religion (Islam in particular) as a valid unifying theme for the Palestinian nationalist movement, could not survive without the support of outside state actors. However this narrow reliance on the world socialist bloc prevented Habash from accruing as much military and financial support as Fatah. The USSR prioritized relations with sovereign Arab states, fearing that "not only does the lack of unity within the organization make it difficult for the Soviets to control its movements or even influence its policies, the internal struggles tend to sway the organization towards rejectionist positions."<sup>230</sup> The PFLP in particular was considered far too radical and unpredictable for the USSR in particular, and therefore they:

...sought to envelope the Palestinians within the overall Arab national liberation movement, for...the most realistic approach was toward a political rather than a military solution, via the Arab states, whereby Israel would be forced out of the territories

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<sup>229</sup>The PFLP rejected Fatah's notion that "since we are in the stage of national liberation, we cannot envisage a class struggle which is only justified in the state of socialist revolution," claiming that this "rightist leadership" cannot bring the armed struggle "to the end of its destined course and is incapable of planning the radical revolutionary programmes which alone can help win the battle." PFLP. *A Strategy*: 21.

<sup>230</sup> Golan, Galia. *The Soviet Union and the Palestine Liberation Organization: An Uneasy Alliance* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1980): 250.

occupied in the 1967 war-thereby paving the way for solution of the Palestinian problem as well.<sup>231</sup>

These Soviet preferences militated against Habash's goals, especially their advocacy of an unmodified UN Resolution 242.<sup>232</sup> This resolution made no mention of Palestinian national rights after the June 1967 war, something that Habash rejected completely, threatening that "no peace will materialize as long as the Zionist state exists."<sup>233</sup> Habash's intransigence concerning a peaceful resolution to the conflict led him to open verbal conflict with Soviet leadership;<sup>234</sup> therefore "because of its size, dominance, and position within the Arab world, Arafat's non-Marxist nationalist Fatah organization was the logical focal point of Soviet support in an era when *real-politik* outweighed purely ideological considerations."<sup>235</sup> Habash's opposition to neo-notabilism manifested itself clearly in this instance: he would not moderate or change his political positions even if it meant alienating a powerful patron, and even if his stance meant strengthening his inter-PLO rival.

George Habash did enthusiastically embrace Communist China under Mao, stating that "Our best friend, in fact, is China. China wants Israel erased from the map because as long as Israel there will remain an aggressive imperialistic outpost on Arab soil."<sup>236</sup> This was largely because "since 1965 the People's Republic of China has been the most consistent big power supporter of the Palestinian guerrilla organizations, arming them, criticizing them, seeking to unify them and, despite fluctuations in the relationship, providing moral and material support."<sup>237</sup>

Part of these "fluctuations" stemmed from the PFLP's acts of international terrorism, which both

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<sup>231</sup> Golan, *The Soviet Union*: 27.

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid*: 160.

<sup>233</sup> "Interview with George Habash": 200.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid*: 161.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid*: 151.

<sup>236</sup> Fallaci: 35.

<sup>237</sup> Craig Harris, Lillian. "China's Relations with the PLO." *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (Autumn 1977): 124. <http://www.jstor.org/> (accessed 03/03/2011).

China<sup>238</sup> and the USSR condemned. Additionally, like the Soviets, the Chinese were worried about the PFLP's unpredictability and mercurial nature, as well as the fact that none of the small Marxist groups were remotely strong enough to lead the Palestinians within the PLO or the occupied territories.<sup>239</sup> Despite the fact that the PFLP shared very similar ideological bases with the Chinese,<sup>240</sup> received military training from them,<sup>241</sup> and believed in ending the conflict through armed struggle exclusively,<sup>242</sup> the Chinese were still reluctant to endorse them wholeheartedly. This was largely because of the PFLP's relatively small size, the group and Habash's unwillingness to abandon provocative international terrorism, the PFLP's depletion after the Jordanian civil war, and lastly because most Palestinians were not Marxists and found the PFLP's radical secularism too disquieting. This was evinced by Fatah's larger membership pool and its reflection with the Palestinian National Council and Executive Committee of the PLO during the early 1970's.<sup>243</sup> The next section will address the internal organization of the PFLP itself, which differed considerably from the politics of consensus within the broader PLO.

## Structure of the PFLP

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<sup>238</sup> Craig Harris, "China's Relations with the PLO": 124.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid: 129.

<sup>240</sup> PFLP. *A Strategy*: As detailed in the introduction, the PFLP straightforwardly borrowed many Maoist concepts, such as the delineation of "friends and enemies," (chapter II), the necessity of a disciplined ruling party who could lead the masses (chapter XV), and the importance of revolutionary education of the masses (chapter XII). For Maoist influence of Fatah's rhetoric, see also Craig Harris: 128.

<sup>241</sup> Fallaci: 34.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid: 34.

<sup>243</sup> Hamid: 103-104.

Habash emerged as one of the most ideologically vociferous members of the PLO, lambasting Arafat for cooperating with American-aligned conservative monarchies<sup>244</sup> as well as monopolizing authority within the PLO and making unilateral decisions for the whole movement. In terms of democratic institutions, Habash himself was skeptical of democracy in its liberal parliamentary variety, which he and the PFLP associated with the Arab “feudal regimes” and Palestinian factions that withered in the face of the Yishuv before and after the 1948 war.<sup>245</sup> According to the PFLP, these “feudalists, aristocrats and members of the bourgeoisie”<sup>246</sup> sought only formal release from colonial control that would place these classes “at the top of the power pyramid”<sup>247</sup> in Palestine with a continuation of the status quo class stratification as had existed throughout most of the Ottoman era, albeit with new democratic trappings.<sup>248</sup> Instead within the PFLP, Habash advocated a “democratic centralism”<sup>249</sup> as the best means for assuring organizational discipline while also allowing “every member to know everything within the limits of the party’s security, his right to discuss party strategy and positions without any restriction and his right to criticize and stand in the face of error.”<sup>250</sup>

Roughly speaking democratic centralism meant that free debate amongst individuals was allowed within certain boundaries that were established previously by majority rule.<sup>251</sup> Within the PFLP individuals could theoretically engage in criticism of the decisions and priorities of the

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<sup>244</sup> During the struggle against the Hashemite Kingdom in 1970, it became well known that Arafat personally desired a rapprochement with King Hussein as a means of continuing guerrilla attacks into Israel, whereas Habash actively sought the overthrow of his old nemesis in order to create a revolutionary Palestinian state on the East Bank. See Schmidt, Dana Adams. "An Arab Guerrilla Chief Emerges." *New York Times* (March 1969): 166. ProQuest. Web. (accessed 11/ 29/2010).

<sup>245</sup> PFLP. *A Strategy*: 16

<sup>246</sup> Ibid: 52.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid: 52.

<sup>248</sup> See chapter one for Musa Kazim al-Hussein’s viewpoint on the inherent privileges of the notable classes to rule in a “democratic” system.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid: 118.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid: 122.

central command but could not question the basic rationale of the group, which held that all struggle must be based on armed struggle and that Israel could never be legitimized.<sup>252</sup>

Institutionally speaking, the central party apparatus ultimately held veto power over sub-commands and when operational decisions were agreed upon by a majority, all debate ceased and absolute obeisance was required of the lower members in the organizational hierarchy.<sup>253</sup>

This necessity of hierarchy was justified in the name of organizational cohesion and technically ameliorated by the proviso that it was an obligation of the collective leadership of the central command to “prevent their responsibility from being converted into any material or moral privilege.”<sup>254</sup> By and large, Habash and the PFLP stayed true to the notion of refusing patronage from ideologically incompatible states, and generally sufficed on poverty rations.<sup>255</sup> Habash himself forcefully noted that to accept money from such states would “trample on our moral beliefs, to lose our honor,”<sup>256</sup> and he maintained that the PFLP received most of its money from its own members, and would forcibly procure donations from members who had a surfeit of resources.<sup>257</sup>

One can already see the parallels between the ANM’s hierarchical centralism and Lenin’s theory of the “dictatorship of the proletariat” being a precondition for a mass people’s state. The PFLP however would absorb Lenin’s theory, Mao’s concept of a “people’s liberation war” and his division of different classes into “friends or enemies,” the successes of the Algerian revolution and the example of Vietnamese resistance to the United States and try to apply those

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<sup>252</sup> Referred to in the text as “deviation.” Ibid: 120.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid: 123-124.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid: 121.

<sup>255</sup> “Marxist Leader of Commandos George Habash.” New York Times (June 13, 1970): 12. ProQuest Historical Newspapers (accessed 11/29/2010). This brief article summarizes the PFLP and other militant factions’ living conditions in Jordan.

<sup>256</sup> Fallaci: 34.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid: 34.

concepts in a radically different arena: Israel, the Occupied Territories, and finally, the wider world. Both the ideology and strategy of the PFLP's leadership militated against any form of compromise or truce against potential aggressors, real or imaginary, be they local Arab capitalists, American-allied Arab regimes, or the Zionist movement at large.

### **The “People’s War, the “Popular Liberation War” and the Jordanian Example: Patronage Politics Versus Principle**

Despite his criticisms of Arafat's hegemony over the PLO Executive Council, Habash himself could be accused of authoritarian and intimidation tactics over the whole of the PLO as well if it suited his aims, such as during the PLO's predominance in Jordan before Black September. For instance, in the name of defending themselves against King Hussein, Habash tried to drag the other Palestinian militant groups<sup>258</sup> into an unwinnable and counterproductive military and ideological conflict with the Hashemite Kingdom between 1968 and September 1970, during which time the guerrilla groups established secure bases on Jordanian territory and in Palestinian areas of Jordanian cities and towns. Arafat personally favored a rapprochement with King Hussein, fearing that the PFLP's attacks against the Jordan government would provoke massive retaliation and direly weaken the Palestinian resistance's capacity to strike against Israel.<sup>259</sup> He also worried about the diplomatic ramifications of some of the PFLP's more notorious terrorist actions, such as taking Western hostages during the PFLP's siege of two

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<sup>258</sup> “Palestinian Warns of Jordan Civil War.” *New York Times* (Jun 11, 1970): 10. ProQuest Historical Newspapers (accessed 11/29/2010). Short caption mentioning Habash's threats to Hussein and his promise to ignite further fighting if Hussein steps up suppression of the Palestinian resistance in Jordan.

<sup>259</sup> “Hussein Yields Under Guerrilla Pressure.” *New York Times* (Jun 14, 1970): 166. ProQuest Historical Newspapers (accessed 11/29/2010). Details Hussein's capitulation and withdrawal from a military crackdown on the Palestinian resistance after the PFLP's hostage taking in several Western hotels in Amman.

Amman hotels in July 1970,<sup>260</sup> and the even more infamous PFLP hijackings of four airplanes at once (El-Al, Pan-Am, Trans World and Swiss Air) and their landing (except for the El-Al flight, thwarted in mid-air) and detonation in Jordan.<sup>261</sup> These terrorist actions, initiated mainly by the PFLP, the DFLP and the PDFLP began over six months after the June defeat. However, spectacular actions of international terrorism were not the Palestinians' first choice of armed struggle methods, and were conceived of as a necessary alternative after the failure of the "people's war" in the West Bank and Gaza.<sup>262</sup>

Throughout late 1967 Fatah, the ANM, the PFLP and other groups all tried their hand at guerrilla infiltration methods into Israel and the occupied territories along the lines of the Vietcong's insurgency against American troops. These forays into enemy territory were not conceived of as an objective in themselves. Rather they were supposed to badly damage Israeli morale through constant harassment and infiltration, while also establishing friendly contacts and revolutionary training with the populations of the occupied territories, resulting in the establishment of a "national authority"<sup>263</sup> in the "liberated territories" which would then join the Arab armies for a final confrontation with the state of Israel. As mentioned in chapter 2 however, Fatah had a more limited notion of: what kind of struggle to wage, valid targets of the struggle, and who should lead the struggle.<sup>264</sup> They preferred the Algerian model of a "people's liberation war" directed against colonialism alone and conceived of the struggle as primarily a nationalist

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<sup>260</sup> "Hussein Yields Under Guerrilla Pressure": 166.

<sup>261</sup> "4 Jets Hijacked; One, a 747, Is Blown Up" *New York Times* (Sep 7, 1970): 1. ProQuest Historical Newspapers (accessed 11/29/2010).

<sup>262</sup> Abu Sharif quotes Wadi Haddad, Habash's second-in-command in the PFLP, as stating that since infiltrations were strategically useless, they had to resort to more high-profile acts of violence to force the issue of Palestine onto the world stage. See Abu-Sharif and Mahnaimi: 59.

<sup>263</sup> Sayigh, Yezid, "The Armed Struggle and Palestinian Nationalism," in Sela, Avraham and Moshe Ma'oz, eds., *The PLO and Israel: From Armed Conflict to Political Solution, 1964-1994*: 29.

<sup>264</sup> Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*: 196.

one “whose primary goal was the liberation of the Palestinian homeland.”<sup>265</sup> Fatah considered the class struggle, or the articulation and execution of any socio-economic critique within Palestinian society as meaningless at the current stage, concluding “that there was no scope for a social programme, since the Palestinians lacked a unified territorial, social and political base,”<sup>266</sup> the defining elements of a state. The PFLP disagreed, instead framing the armed struggle as a “class struggle between the national liberation bloc on the Palestinian and Arab land and the enemies of the liberation movement, such as imperialism, Arab reactionary regimes in alliance with imperialism, and world Zionism.”<sup>267</sup>

In terms of similarities though, both the PFLP and Fatah agreed on the necessity of establishing a secure sanctuary within a neighboring Arab country and receiving, voluntarily or coercively, the acquiescence of the political leadership in those states. Israel was surrounded by Egypt, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan, but Egypt no longer was able to operate supply lines for the guerrillas or provide training<sup>268</sup> due to the Israeli occupation of the Suez region. Given the comparative strength of the Syrian government, its enforced ban of combat operations from its own territory, its desire to create its own proxy guerrilla groups in the PLO,<sup>269</sup> as well as its sporadic support for Fatah and the PFLP<sup>270</sup> removed it as an option for establishing the secure bases. Jordan, and later Lebanon, would instead become all of the Palestinian militant groups’ unwilling hosts.

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<sup>265</sup> Jabber: 88.

<sup>266</sup> Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*: 199.

<sup>267</sup> PFLP. “Political Report”: 157.

<sup>268</sup> Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*: 116. Nasser militarily sponsored the formation of the Palestine Liberation Army (PLA) within the PLO, but viewed it as an “irregular force rather than a regular one with conventional heavy weaponry.”

<sup>269</sup> Shemesh: 114.

<sup>270</sup> Sayigh, Yezid. “Turning Defeat Into Opportunity: The Palestinian Guerrillas After the June 1967 War.” *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 46, No. 2 (Spring 1992): 259. <http://www.jstor.org/> (accessed 09/26/2911).

The construction of the secure base in Jordan, which shared the largest border with Israel, was intimately linked with the guerrilla's need to "anchor themselves within the population"<sup>271</sup> of the West Bank. Since Israel possessed a "determined, innovative army backed up by a highly effective intelligence network"<sup>272</sup> within the West Bank and Gaza, the guerrilla groups' efforts at infiltrating the regions proved difficult is not impossible: the risks of crossing back into Israel "were considerable, and they were the same whether the infiltrator was an armed guerrilla or a woman rejoining her family-just as they had been the same, after 1948, for anyone who crossed the armistice line."<sup>273</sup> Bassam Abu Sharif noted that the:

PFLP and all the other newly-motivated Palestinian groups joined the attack, playing cat-and-mouse with the IDF patrols. Every night, they tried to infiltrate through the labyrinth of tiny interconnecting ravines that lie between Jordan and the West Bank; almost every night, the Israelis detected them.<sup>274</sup>

The guerrillas confronted an Israeli military government with a "repressive infrastructure of occupation and control"<sup>275</sup> that actively sought to create, at least in the first ten years of occupation, "an Israeli-dominated autonomous entity in the West Bank,"<sup>276</sup> led by local notables willing to tacitly cooperate with the military government. From an early stage the PLO as a whole explicitly rejected the idea of a Palestinian autonomous "entity"<sup>277</sup> which would "owe its existence to the legitimization and perpetuation of the State of Israel, which is absolutely incompatible with the Palestinian Arab people's right to the whole of Palestine."<sup>278</sup>

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<sup>271</sup> Ben Rafael: 115.

<sup>272</sup> Rubin, *Revolution Until Victory?*: 26.

<sup>273</sup> Hirst, David. *The Gun and the Olive Branch: The Roots of Violence in the Middle East* (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press/Nation Books, 2003): 355-356.

<sup>274</sup> Abu-Sharif and Mahnaimi: 57-58.

<sup>275</sup> Morris: 336.

<sup>276</sup> Ibid: 340.

<sup>277</sup> PLO. "Palestine National Assembly Political Resolutions, 17 July, 1968," in Lukacs, Yehuda, ed., *The Israeli Palestinian Conflict: A Documentary Record, 1967-1990*: 298.

<sup>278</sup> PLO. "Palestine National Assembly Political Resolutions, 17 July, 1968": 298.

The PFLP, while rejecting an autonomous entity established with the permission of Israel, nonetheless “was prepared to agree to a Palestinian state ‘in liberated parts of the West Bank or elsewhere which will be imposed by force of the armed struggle.’”<sup>279</sup> The principle behind this stance was clearly a hostility towards a pseudo-state, led by local notables from the Jordanian era such as “mayors and members of municipal councils, members of House of Deputies and the Senate, the heads and members of the Chambers of Commerce, district governors and former cabinet ministers,”<sup>280</sup> which would compromise and cooperate with the PFLP’s worst enemy, as well as a fear that any state created in that manner would empower these local notables at the expense of the PLO as a whole.<sup>281</sup> However, Israeli efforts to co-opt the local notability and force them into a patron-client relationship along the lines of Hourani’s classical “notable politics” backfired, as most Palestinians resisted the occupation, (including some notables, religious and political)<sup>282</sup> or at least refused to cooperate with it, evinced by early protests throughout the territories and calls for a general strike during September 1967.<sup>283</sup>

As the futility of the “people’s war” strategy within the occupied territories manifested itself throughout 1967, the PLO continued to build its safe haven within neighboring Jordan. For the PFLP, the Jordanian sanctuary also provided them with a secure base from which to plan and execute terrorist operations abroad. However, the guerrilla’s creeping infringement of Jordanian sovereignty,<sup>284</sup> sparked a prolonged standoff with the Jordanian authorities, and the military in particular. The Palestinian militant’s inflamed the feelings of King Hussein, by their “claim to

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<sup>279</sup> Shemesh: 178.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid: 167.

<sup>281</sup> Ibid: 172.

<sup>282</sup> Such as the Muslim Council, which was a self-appointed local leadership comprised of members of the Ba’ath and even the ANM. However it possessed a “narrow geographical composition” which prevented from serving as a genuinely representative leadership. Ibid: 168.

<sup>283</sup> Morris: 340.

<sup>284</sup> Jabber: 88.

be the only genuine representative of the Palestinian people and protector of its rights,<sup>285</sup> which “posed a direct challenge to the legitimacy of King Hussein’s own jealously protected claim to guardianship over the Palestinians.”<sup>286</sup> As mentioned earlier in chapters 2 and 3, Habash held Hussein in particular contempt, due to his close connections with Western powers, as well as the widely shared perception amongst Palestinians that Hussein’s father, Abdullah, had sold them out during the 1948 war.<sup>287</sup> Throughout the Palestinian guerrillas’ armed presence in Jordan, but especially in 1970, Habash regularly advocated the overthrow of Hussein, stating that Jordan’s government was a “reactionary regime that has tried to destroy us many times”<sup>288</sup> and that “we must defend ourselves to survive.” These sentiments sharply contrasted with official Fatah statements, which made it abundantly clear that they did not consider Hussein their enemy<sup>289</sup> and that waging war against him was a distraction from their main battle against Israel.<sup>290</sup>

## Conclusion

Arafat’s and Fatah’s concerns, both about antagonizing more powerful neighbors and incurring Western hostility, would prove valid. Habash’s intransigent stance against King Hussein fueled a counter-reaction within the Jordanian military that would ultimately lead to a civil war between Palestinians militant groups and the Jordanian government, better known as

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<sup>285</sup> Ibid: 88.

<sup>286</sup> Ibid: 88.

<sup>287</sup> Rogan, Eugene L., “Jordan and 1948: The Persistence of an Official History,” in Rogan, Eugene L. and Avi Shlaim, eds., *The War for Palestine: Rewriting the History of 1948*: 104.

<sup>288</sup> “Palestinian Warns of Jordan Civil War”: 10.

<sup>289</sup> Pace, Eric. “Hussein’s Overthrow Again Called for by Leftist Guerrilla Leader.” *New York Times* (Jan 18, 1971): 3. ProQuest Historical Newspapers (accessed 11/29/2010). Similar to previous excerpts where Habash advocates Hussein’s downfall.

<sup>290</sup> “Palestinian Warns of Jordan Civil War”: 10.

Black September, which resulted in the termination of the guerrilla presence on Jordanian soil by July 1970. Habash's aggressive policy towards the Hashemite regime destroyed the Palestinian resistance in Jordan and forced the militant groups into a new safe-haven: Lebanon. In this instance, Arafat was dragged along into a conflict of principle<sup>291</sup> between the Marxist guerrilla groups and King Hussein, one which he sought to avoid, despite the fact that cooperation with Hussein meant a limitation of militant groups' freedom of action within Jordan. Keeping King Hussein as a patron and reluctant host, proved to be more advantageous for the Palestinian's long term interests than the zero-sum game against the Hashemite monarchy that Habash, Wadi Haddad (PFLP), and Naif Hawatima (DFLP) played and lost.<sup>292</sup>

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<sup>291</sup> Meaning that Habash's hostility towards Hussein was in large part driven by the Hashemite regime's historical cooperation with Israeli authorities, both by Hussein and his father Abdullah, as well as by Hussein's attempts to monopolize all venues of Palestinian political expression. In this sense that it was a conflict of principle rather than an actually winnable conflict; Hussein's army boasted vastly more firepower than all the guerrilla groups combined and possessed a dedicated core of loyalists within the Jordanian army. See Shemesh: 140-141.

<sup>292</sup> Pace, Eric. "The Violent Men Of Amman." *New York Times* (July 1970): 29. ProQuest. Web. (accessed 11/29/2010). Hawatima and Habash are quoted extensively and unfavorably throughout this article, which unfortunately provides little context for the actions of both men and their groups.

## Thesis Conclusion

George Habash and the PFLP no longer frighten or inspire the popular imagination as they did during the movement's heyday in the late 1960's and early 1970's. The era of the PFLP's fantastical terrorist attacks on civilian targets in Israel and abroad and publicity-stunt hijackings slowly dissipated after the expulsion of the PLO from their Jordanian base. Further into the 1970's, Yom Kippur War between Israel and Egypt radically changed the prevailing condition of the Arab-Israeli conflict and led to the gradual marginalization of the strength of the PFLP both within the PLO and among Palestinians in the territories. The Sinai withdrawal agreements led to the Camp David Accords between Israel and Egypt and permanently removed a lukewarm Arab confrontation state from the conflict. Despite its many flaws<sup>293</sup> the Israeli-Egyptian peace accord finally broke down Israel's total isolation within the Arab world and offered incentive to other conflict states such as Jordan to make a relatively honorable peace with Israel. As it turned out, it would be the PLO that would eventually seize the olive branch before any other Arab faction or state. Additionally, the 1974 PNC session in Rabat affirmed the PLO's sole right to represent the Palestinian people,<sup>294</sup> with Habash's adversary Yasir Arafat firmly in control of the Executive Council, never to relinquish his power until his death in 2004.

That session also saw the first cracks break within the PLO towards accepting a two-state solution, however provisional,<sup>295</sup> as well as the formation of the Rejectionist Front, which the

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<sup>293</sup> Such as Egyptian President Sadat and American President Jimmy Carter's inability to coerce Israel Prime Minister Menachim Begin into guaranteeing final-status talks on the Territories with the PLO shortly after the peace agreement was sealed.

<sup>294</sup> Cubert, *The PFLP's Changing Role*: 59.

<sup>295</sup> For instance, the 1974 PNC chose different language from the National Charter, which explicitly rejected the formation of any mini-state: "The text adopted, known as the ten-point programme, was in fact entitled 'phased political programme,' which is significant, since the PLO had previously rejected any policy based on a phased

PFLP joined in opposition to any such maneuvers: “among the Palestinians, it was Dr George Habash’s Popular Front which led the opposition to the interim program [of a provisional Palestinian State in Gaza and the West Bank].<sup>296</sup> Habash boldly asserted that “the ‘doctrine of stages’ was so much wishful thinking, for the ‘present balance of Palestinian, Arab and international power made it impossible to create a national, democratic state or authority which our masses could rely upon to continue the struggle.’”<sup>297</sup> But due to the slow, inexorable movement towards Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, as well as a war-weariness in the Arab world, the PFLP and its allies began to suffer a decline in prestige and relevance. One of the PFLP’s prime, albeit grudging, ideological sponsors, the USSR, was already on its way towards détente with the USA and had a vested interest in keeping the Middle East stable; thus they tended to spurn the more radical factions within the PLO, which were viewed as antithetical to overriding Soviet interests.<sup>298</sup> It may have even been because of the Rejectionist Front’s intransigence that the Soviets sought to bar them from participating in the Geneva Conference<sup>299</sup> unless they radically changed their political program to better reflect the USSR’s increasing international caution.<sup>300</sup> The PFLP still had allies during 1974 and for a while afterwards in the form of the Chinese Communist Party, which supplied them with arms and ideological support,<sup>301</sup> but that relationship too was on a downhill slope.

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policy” towards the formation of Palestinian state, such as the establishment of a ambiguous “national authority’ prior to statehood (Gresh: 168). Thus “for the first time in their history, the PLO and the Palestinian people had set themselves an intermediate goal which was not the liberation of the whole of Palestine” (Ibid. 168).

<sup>296</sup> Hirst, *The Gun and the Olive Branch*: 456-457.

<sup>297</sup> Ibid: 457.

<sup>298</sup> “The June 1974 session of the Palestine National Council was, however, severely criticized by the Soviets for the lack of unity and, specifically, for the opposition of the more radical elements to participation in Geneva and a peaceful settlement” based on UN Resolutions 242 and 338. Golan: 144.

<sup>299</sup> Craig Harris: 149.

<sup>300</sup> Golan: 128.

<sup>301</sup> Craig Harris: 149.

This evaporation of influence did not occur all at once of course; the PFLP and its affiliates performed admirably well in the intermittent municipal elections in the occupied West Bank during the late 1970's.<sup>302</sup> Furthermore, Habash's irredentist stance towards the key issues of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict did not change appreciably and this steadfastness earned him much popular affection among the Arab public.<sup>303</sup> Upon his death, one Arab-American commentator wrote a glowing and heartfelt synopsis of the George Habash he knew, one greatly at odds with the label of "terrorist tactician" given by the New York Times' obituary on the man.<sup>304</sup> The author states that "we respected him because on the personal level he was incorruptible,"<sup>305</sup> going on to cite the numerous times that he refused subsidies from wealthy Palestinian businessmen to aid him both in Jordan and later in life when his health was failing. In a moving attempt at distinguishing him from his contemporary Arafat, the author writes that:

George Habash was the antithesis of Yasser Arafat: he was honest, while Arafat was dishonest; consistent when Arafat was inconsistent; principled, while Arafat was shifty; transparent, while Arafat was deceptive; sincere, while Arafat was fake; dignified while Arafat was clownish; modest, while Arafat was arrogant; tolerant of dissent, while Arafat was autocratic, and on and on.<sup>306</sup>

Despite his political and physical decline from the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War onwards, Habash maintained his principled mystique among many Palestinians in the refugee camps and abroad.<sup>307</sup> The Palestinian Authority under Mahmoud Abbas even honored him with a three-day period of mourning throughout the occupied territories.<sup>308</sup>

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<sup>302</sup> Ben-Rafael: 90.

<sup>303</sup> Gresh, Alain, <http://www.palestineremembered.com/al-Ramla/al-Lydd/Story173.html>.

<sup>304</sup> Andrews, Edmund L. and John Kifner, "George Habash, Palestinian Terrorism Tactician, Dies at 82," <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/27/world/middleeast/27habash.html>.

<sup>305</sup> Abu-Khalil, As'ad, "George Habash's contribution to the Palestinian struggle," <http://electronicintifada.net/content/george-habashes-contribution-palestinian-struggle/7332>

<sup>306</sup> Ibid.

<sup>307</sup> Ibid.

<sup>308</sup> Obituary, al-Ahram Newspaper, <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2008/882/re31.htm>.

A further commentator gave him a lavish hagiographic farewell, stating that:

For those in anti-colonial movements across the world who learned and trained under him, his name embodies that inextinguishable human demand for justice and freedom. His exhilarating emancipatory model of resistance to injustice, his radical optimism and, above all, his tight political organisation scorched the consciousness of young people across the Arab world, mobilised masses and inspired a huge wave of talented artists and intellectuals.<sup>309</sup>

These comments reinforce the image of Habash that this paper has sought to convey; a man who grew into his revolutionary idealism after a long process of personal and professional change, leading him to reject the corruptibility of his political predecessors in Mandate Palestine as well as his contemporaries within the PLO and the wider Arab world. Yet this very incorruptibility damaged his ability to attain a critical mass of supporters, Palestinian and Arab, and to secure sufficient foreign support to outlast and upstage his rival Yasir Arafat.<sup>310</sup>

Until the end of his life from heart failure in 2008, he remained adamantly opposed to 1) negotiations with Israel in any fashion, even by proxy, 2) the construction of Palestinian “mini-state” in the West Bank through negotiations with Israel<sup>311</sup> (opposing this even when this state’s creation was couched in the theory of “stages” mentioned in chapter three), 3) to any attempt by King Hussein of Jordan to “federate” the West and East Banks under de facto Jordanian sovereignty, 4) to any peace deal between individual Arab States and Israel, exemplified by his hostility to the Camp David Accords and later, the Oslo Accords, and 5) to any agreement or political current that might strip the Palestinian refugees around the world of their right of return

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<sup>309</sup> Nabulsi, Karma. “Obituary: George Habash;[Al Hakim] Revolutionary, Palestinian and Internationalist,” <http://www.organizedrage.com/2008/01/obituary-george-habashal-hakim.html>

<sup>310</sup> Cubert: 182.

<sup>311</sup> Interestingly enough, the PFLP, after rejoining the PLO Executive Committee, voted against the PLO’s overall acceptance of Resolutions 242 and 338, yet decided to remain within the organization and abide by the majority’s choice. See Sayigh, Yezid. “Struggle Within, Struggle Without: The Transformation of PLO Politics since 1982.” *International Affairs*, Vol. 65, No. 2 (Spring 1989): 254-255. <http://www.jstor.org/> (accessed 9/26/2011).

to their ancestral homes in Israel. All of these points may seem to only emphasize Habash's oppositional and contrarian side, but they were all rooted in a strong belief in the inherent justice of the Palestinian national movement. They also emerged out of his awareness of his own people's history before the state of Israel's creation. Habash, along with many others of his generation such as Ghassan Kanafani,<sup>312</sup> Wadi Haddad and Constantine Zurayk,<sup>313</sup> believed that the conflict-avoidant attitude of the old Palestinian notables contributed heavily to the Israel's triumph. They believed that if the Palestinian political elite openly opposed Zionism and the British Mandate from an early stage and advocated a strong Palestinian nationalism then perhaps the Palestinian people might have been able to mobilize their social, military and diplomatic resources against their opponents more effectively. Even though Hajj Amin al-Husseini for instance became an implacable foe of the British, he began his career as their ally.<sup>314</sup> Additionally, he maintained a conservative worldview which privileged Palestine's historic elite and rejected popular participation in government, something that the PFLP and Habash roundly criticized him for, stating that the "1948 defeat came at the hands of religious feudal Palestinian

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<sup>312</sup> Kanafani was a prominent Palestinian literary figure, eventually assassinated in 1972 by a Mossad car-bomb in Beirut. His political career began in tandem with George Habash, who helped him join the ANM in 1952-1953, and wrote extensively on the plight of the Palestinian diaspora. He condemned the "flippancy" of his generation, which was not yet as politically committed and revolutionary as it he thought it should be: "he makes it clear that his only hope lies with that part of the Arab youth which is committed enough to sacrifice their own private life to bring about the necessary radical change in Arab society" away from the old corrupt Palestinian notables, the leaders of the Arab states, and their pointless intrigues against each other. Kanafani's political metamorphosis into a Marxist focused on class struggle preceded and likely influenced Habash's, as "by discussing and reading Marx, Engels, Lenin and other socialist and communist authors his [Kanafani's] conviction grew that the conflict between the state of Israel and the Palestinian Arabs was not only a national conflict but also a conflict between colonizers and colonized, exploiters and exploited." See Wild, Stefan. *Ghassan Kanafani: The Life of a Palestinian* (Wiesbaden, GER: Otto Harrassowitz, 1975): 1-17.

<sup>313</sup> Writing in the aftermath of 1948 *nakba*, "Qustantin Zurayk described the consequences of the failure in Palestine in the following terms: 'Over and above the material disaster, there was a moral one reflected in the lack of confidence of the Arabs in their governments and in their leadership,' from Kazziha, *Revolutionary Transformation*: 18.

<sup>314</sup> As mentioned earlier from Khalidi, "The Palestinians and 1948."

leaders such as Hajj Amin al-Husseini,”<sup>315</sup> as well as the various “bourgeoisie” political parties and the “Arab feudal regimes.”<sup>316</sup>

Habash was eulogized as a terrorist, a freedom fighter, an impediment to peace, and a hopeless idealist. From his modest beginnings as a Christian child of relative privilege in Lebanon, to an idealistic young doctor who provided free medical care to the poor, to a vaguely fascistic, right-wing militant activist in the ANM, and finally to a Marxist-Leninist Pan-Arab revolutionary, George Habash exemplified the many contradictions embedded within a still-fractured Palestinian society.

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<sup>315</sup> PFLP. “The Political Report”: 158.

<sup>316</sup> Ibid: 158.

## Appendix

*Initial attempt at thesis formulation. Possible dissertation concept for the future.*

*Might be a fruitful line of research for other scholars.*

### **Popular Fronts and Global Networks: The Internationalization of Guerrilla Warfare and Terrorism in Palestine, 1967-1973.**

The purpose of this master's thesis will be to analyze the political ideologies and practices of several radical-left wing Palestinian guerrilla groups during the late 1960's and early 1970's, with a particular focus on their international connections with other like-minded organizations in non-Soviet bloc countries during the height of the Cold War. I will focus on Palestinian groups such as the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine – General Command (PFLP-GC), and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP). On the international side, I will similarly analyze the political ideologies and practices of urban guerrilla groups such as the German Red Army faction (also known as the Baader-Meinhof Gang) or the Japanese Red Army Faction, as well as rural revolutionary groups such as the Maoist Shining Path in Peru, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia, or the Basque Homeland and Freedom (ETA).<sup>317</sup> In each case, I will provide a short history of the formation of each group, their founding members, and the particular variant of Marxist-Leninist-Maoist ideology they espoused.<sup>318</sup> Additionally, principle attention will be

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<sup>317</sup> Acoca, Miguel. "Basques Fight for Autonomy." The Washington Post, 26 May 1975: Pg. A18.

<sup>318</sup> It is possible that some of these groups divert considerably from orthodox Marxist-Leninist ideology, and may have been anarchistic. Nevertheless, there are still parallels between Marxist-Leninist and anarchist critiques of

paid to how these various guerrilla groups and the Palestinian radical-left wing groups reciprocally influenced each other's political ideologies and practices, but I will also address how, or if, these groups were all ultimately bound by the common ideological thread of Maoist revolutionary thought. The main thesis is that these radical leftist groups, from 1967 to 1973, constituted the vanguard of violent and irredentist resistance against the Israeli state and the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, and that they, along with the transnational guerrilla and terrorist groups mentioned above, collectively constituted a short-lived "revolutionary moment" in global history. I also contend that for the radical leftist Palestinian groups, their political and military marginalization after October 1973 opened a doorway for new groups of militant radicals whose tactics and strategies against Israel dovetailed with their Marxist-Leninist predecessors, but whose legitimating discourse was political Islam, or Islamism.

In terms of Palestine, many of these groups, especially European "New Left" urban terrorist groups, derived both inspiration for their own guerrilla struggles against "imperialist" governments in Europe and the United States from the plight of the Palestinians in Israel and the Arab states after the 1967 war and legitimation from them as well: the Palestinian diaspora and what was and still is seen as the brutality of Israeli occupation gave them groups the moral legitimacy (in their eyes at least) to carry out violent attacks against civilian targets. Oftentimes, they targeted anything remotely linked to Israel, such as Tel Aviv airport, El Al Airlines, and Israeli athletes. In the eyes of the PFLP and similarly motivated groups, simply being associated with Israel or in Israel meant that you became fair game, having been "warned" previously.<sup>319</sup>

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capitalism and the kinds of remedies prescribed for the overthrow of the capitalist economic system. The difference appears in what, if anything should arise in its stead.

<sup>319</sup> Farrell notes that in 1971, the PFLP had made it clear that anyone coming to Israel and receiving an Israeli visa meant that they implicitly recognized the state of Israel, and were therefore choosing sides in a war and thus open

In terms of timeframe, I will begin my analysis in the aftermath of the June 1967 war between Israel and the Arab states of Egypt, Jordan and Syria. This is an ideal departure point for any study of the “New Left”<sup>320</sup> Palestinian guerrilla groups and the development of their global connections. Prior to this time period, most radical guerrilla groups were not especially inspired by Marxist-Leninist philosophy or by Maoism; most groups such as the Arab Nationalist Movement were aligned too closely to established nation-states or their leaders, such as Nasser of Egypt<sup>321</sup> or the Syrian Ba’ath Party. It was only after the defeat of the Arab armies in 1967 that smaller, independent and more ideologically sophisticated groups emerged and articulated new political philosophies that were distinct from and often hostile to most Arab states in the region.<sup>322</sup>

Following from the June 1967 war until the end of the Yom Kippur War in 1973, I will focus on the ideological crystallization of the various Palestinian leftist guerilla groups, their relationships to their host countries (Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, etc.) and the ways in which they all sought diplomatic, political and military support from sympathetic civilian groups in Western nations such as France and the United States, as well as their connections to other radical leftist guerrilla groups in non-Soviet bloc countries. Obviously, considering the geopolitical significance of the Soviet Union at that time, I will not ignore the contributions that

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game for any attacks, such as the gunning down of Israelis and a dozen Puerto Rican tourists. See Farrell, William R. *Blood and Rage: The Story of the Japanese Red Army*. Lexington, Mass.; Toronto: Lexington Books, 1990: 142.

<sup>320</sup> Ismael, Tareq Y. *The Arab Left*, Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1976, pp. 92-107. Contains a lengthy discussion of reasons behind the dissolution of the Arab Nationalist Movement which avidly supported Nasserist socialism, but became disillusioned with the efficacy of the Arab nation-states in securing Palestinian self-determination in the Palestinians homeland after the defeat of 1967. George Habash, the most prominent organizer of the AMN, welded together disparate Palestinian guerrilla groups after the defeat to form the PFLP. For a longer discussion of the formation and political thought of the AMN, see Kazziha, Walid. *Revolutionary Transformation in the Arab World: Habash and his Comrades from Nationalism to Marxism*, London: C. Knight, 1975.

<sup>321</sup> Kazziha, Walid. *Revolutionary Transformation in the Arab World: Habash and his Comrades from Nationalism to Marxism*, London: C. Knight, 1975, pg. 15.

<sup>322</sup> “Our enemy in the battle is Israel, Zionism, world imperialism, and Arab reaction.” From *Jabhah al-Sha ‘bīyah li-Tahrīr Filasṭīn [A strategy for the liberation of Palestine]*. Amman, Information Dept., 1969, pg. 17. Somewhat ironically, the “Arab reaction” in this quote included Jordan, the very place where this pamphlet was published!

the Soviet Communist Party made to these Palestinian groups, but I assert they exercised considerable independence from the Soviets and frequently committed high-profile international acts of terror that often embarrassed their potential patrons. Rather, I will explore how the Soviets served as a political conduit through which international guerrilla and terrorist organizations were able to network; sharing ideas and planning attacks against civilian and military targets in Western countries, including Israel.

The years between 1967 and 1973 were the heyday of the Palestinian radical leftist guerrilla groups, but their strength and significance declined significantly after Egyptian President Anwar Sadat's "victory" over Israel in 1973, which for perhaps the first time made a negotiated peace between Israel and her Arab neighbors seem possible. The net result for the radical leftist guerrilla groups was of political marginalization, as their uncompromising stance against peace negotiations, as well as the international condemnation heaped upon them for terrorist attacks against civilians (such as the 1972 Munich Olympics) significantly reduced their appeal to both Arab states, as well as to transnational student movements in the West. Ultimately the Palestinian radical leftist guerrilla groups became marginalized even within Syria, Jordan and Lebanon due to their combative stances against all "reactionary" Arab regimes, and their ability to coordinate attacks against Israeli or high-profile international targets dissolved.

Ultimately it was not Marxist-Leninist successor groups that would continue guerrilla and terrorist warfare against the Israeli state after October 1973, but explicitly Islamist militant groups; this new "moment" would utilize many of the same uncompromising and ruthless tactics as the PFLP and the Black September group, but with radically different ideological fixtures. For Islamic groups the rhetoric is not concerned with stamping out global capitalism *per se*, and it is not concerned with class warfare. However, it can be claimed that the destruction or

assassination of the targets chosen by the radical leftist groups and the current Islamist groups result in the same end: the diminishing of Western (particularly American and Israeli) economic and political might, which could potentially compromise the efficacy and confidence of world markets, which depend on the ability of governments to provide for the security of critical infrastructure and the safety of their citizens abroad. Much more will be said about the confluences of strategy and tactics that bridge the gap between the radical leftist group of the 1960's and 1970's and the current, much more potent and durable generation of Islamist terrorists, whose efforts to attack major Western targets have helped propel the United States and other countries into both costly wars and exhausting long-term occupations of Muslim lands, something that the radical leftist groups were never able to do.

One of my contentions is that these internationally dispersed radical leftist groups were all strongly influenced by Marxist-Leninist political thought, as well as Maoist theories of rural guerrilla warfare.<sup>323</sup> However, they were not identical, and some, such as the German Red Army Faction, were strongly influenced by anarchist thought and were ill-disposed towards “democratic centralism” and ideological subordination to any kind of central committee.<sup>324</sup> I will provide general overviews of the ideology and praxis of the non-Palestinian groups who operated in their own revolutionary contexts, but the main object of analyses will be the radical

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<sup>323</sup> Some of these tenets were rooted in a faith in historical materialism (chapter one) and the inevitability of world-wide class revolution by the proletariat (or possibly the peasantry, if conditions for the rise of proletariat were not sufficient); the refusal of parliamentary democracy, whereby political parties with socialist and egalitarian aims seek to cooperate within the political systems of capitalist states and try, through electoral strength and controls over the mechanisms of government, to make capitalism more humane and responsive to the needs and desires of the lower classes. Social democrats in Europe today would qualify under this designation, and have no revolutionary or violent tendencies, despite possible identification with some of Marx's critiques of capitalism and its economic violence towards the poor and dispossessed. Oftentimes social democrats would be harangued or even killed by more radicalized communist groups throughout the twentieth century, such as during the Russian civil war in 1917 with the Mensheviks tending to support the Provisional government, which featured parliamentary democracy, in opposition to the Bolsheviks, who favored the abolition of parliamentary democracy and the leadership of the “dictatorship of the proletariat,” as well as armed violence against supporters of the deposed Tsarist state.

<sup>324</sup> See Karmon, Eli. *Coalitions between Terrorist Organizations: Revolutionaries, Nationalists and Islamists*. Leiden, UK: Brill Publishers, 2005: 60.

left-wing Palestinian groups and how they attempted to synthesize Marxism-Leninism and Maoism into their own political reality. For instance in the case of the early PFLP, George Habash and Wadi Haddad, joined soon after by Nayif Hawatmeh (DFLP) attempted to emulate a rurally-centered revolutionary strategy against Israel, similar to the Chinese Communist Party's victory over Chiang Kai-Shek's Kuomintang, but they were ultimately hobbled by the Palestinian's own historical, geographical, political and cultural realities. Additionally, I will narrate the ideological fissures that erupted within the Palestinian leftist "fronts" soon after their formation, and how (if at all) the various groups differed in their ideology and praxis towards securing Palestinian statehood.

A second and broader contention is that the sum total of these radical leftist guerrilla groups (excluding the CCP or the North Vietnamese, though the Viet Cong can certainly be centered in this moment) participated in and helped create a global, anti-state and predominantly secular "revolutionary moment" during the late 60's and early 70's. By revolutionary moment I mean a convergence of historical, economic and political forces across the world, particularly in non-Soviet bloc countries, that militated against the established capitalist economic systems of many countries and also against United States backed governments, be they authoritarian or liberal democratic in their political structure. Examples include Colombia, West Germany, Japan, Italy, and Greece. By anti-state I mean they were interested in the violent overthrow of existing political and economic orders and sought to create fundamentally new states, based on radically different economic and political models.

In the Palestinian case, anti-state feeling was emphasized because of the trauma that the Arab countries of the Middle East experienced after Israel's victory in the 1967 war and the way in which that war revealed the impotence of statist regimes who many members of the Arab

Nationalist Movement (ANM) had previously pinned their hopes to. By secular I mean that their discourses, broadly speaking, were based along class rather than religious lines, and they frequently saw established religion as inherently conservative and opposed to their revolutionary aims.<sup>325</sup> I do not mean that religion played absolutely no role in these groups' mobilization or in the private lives of their leaders and cadres. Instances of this "reactionary" attitude by organized religious institutions can be seen both in Chile when many Catholic leaders supported Augusto Pinochet's coup against Salvador Allende's elected government in 1972, as well as the heavy support that the United States received from Catholic politicians such as Ngo Dinh Diem in South Vietnam.

This revolutionary moment was clearly a product and a producer of rapid de-colonization in much of the "Third World," was profoundly influenced by the United States' invasion of Vietnam, and derived considerable economic and political support from the CCP and the Soviet Union, but it cannot be reduced to such general causes.<sup>326</sup> For instance, the Palestinian radical left-wing guerrilla groups' struggle against Israel was not a product of decolonization; rather, the PFLP and others believed that their land and their sovereignty had been "recolonized" by a Western people with direct support from the United States. Lastly but very relevant to this revolutionary moment was the rapid progress of communication, electronic and physical, technology during the late 1960's and 1970's which enabled previously splintered and isolated

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<sup>325</sup> For a different interpretation of the role of religion, specifically Islam, in relation to Marxism, see Sonn, Tamara. "Bandali al-Jawzi's *Min Tarikh al-Harakat al-Fikriyyat fi'l-Islam*: The First Marxist Interpretation of Islam." *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (Feb., 1985): pp. 89-107. For an alternative scholarly analysis on the compatibility of Islamic legal and political thought with Marxism, see Rodinson, Maxime. *Marxism and the Muslim World*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1982.

<sup>326</sup> However, both Yasser Arafat of Fatah and to a lesser degree, George Habash, both received tepid diplomatic support from the Soviet Union during the early 1970's, despite major differences of opinion over UN Resolutions 242 (June 1967) and 338 (October 1973). More often however, Palestinian radical leftist guerrilla groups in the 1960's and early 1970's were too weak to attract the dedicated patronage of Moscow, especially since these small groups advocated the overthrow of several of Moscow's Arab client regimes. See Golan, Galia. *The Soviet Union and the Palestine Liberation Organization: An Uneasy Alliance*. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1980, pg. 43 and 67-69.

social movements, or revolutionary groups, become globally aware of the presence of like-minded organizations with similar ideologies and praxes and gave them the means to rapidly communicate or congregate. The expansion and decreasing costs of airline services would prove particularly important for the PFLP and its splinter Fronts, who would pioneer airplane hijackings in the late 1960's and the mid 1970's (such as at Entebbe in Uganda) with encouragement and material assistance from European terror groups such as the German Red Cells.<sup>327</sup> Similarly, the Japanese Red Army Faction would also assist the PFLP (though they would deny involvement) in several airline hijackings, such as the takeover of a Japan Air Lines flight on July, 20 1973.<sup>328</sup>

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<sup>327</sup> Varon, Jeremy. *Bringing the War Home: The Weather Underground, the Red Army Faction, and Revolutionary Violence in the Sixties and Seventies*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004: pp. 250-251.

<sup>328</sup> Farrell, William R. *Blood and Rage: The Story of the Japanese Red Army*. Lexington, Mass.; Toronto: Lexington Books, 1990: 149-153.

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