

ROUTLEDGE STUDIES IN PEACE AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Conflict Transformation and the Palestinians

The Dynamics of Peace and Justice
under Occupation

Edited by
Alpaslan Özerdem, Chuck Thiessen
and Mufid Qassoum



Conflict Transformation and the Palestinians

This book explores the challenges of transforming the violent conflict between the State of Israel and the Palestinians into just peace.

There are many challenges involved in the bottom-up transformation of the violent structures that sustain the State of Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory. This book examines these structures as it assesses the actors and strategies that are contributing to the termination of cycles of violence and oppression. Consisting of contributions from both peace practitioners and academics who have conducted research within Israel and the occupied territory, the volume utilises a multidisciplinary perspective to examine promising strategies for conflict transformation in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory. Moreover, it spells out the types of nonviolent strategy that are being used to expose and undermine occupation structures, and surveys the manner in which a variety of key actors are working towards the transformation of the ongoing conflict. As a whole, the volume presents a proposal for the transformation of the conflict between Palestinians and the State of Israel that embraces the constructive potential of conflict, engages with power asymmetry, and pushes for justice and accountability.

This book will be of much interest to students of conflict resolution, peace studies, Middle Eastern studies, the Arab-Israeli conflict, and IR in general.

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Introduction

1

The evolution of conflict transformation theory and practice in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory.

Chuck Thiessen

Introduction

There are many challenges involved in the bottom-up transformation of the violent structures and systems that sustain the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory. This book contributes to the examination of these structures and it assesses the actors and strategies that are contributing to the termination of cycles of violence and oppression. In the chapters that follow, peace practitioners and academics draw both on research conducted within Israel and the occupied territory, and insights from interdisciplinary perspectives, as they look to a future in which the multi-ethno-religious inhabitants of historic Palestine and their descendants might be able to realize positive peace.¹

In many ways, the arguments presented in this volume respond to the widely perceived failure of the 1993 Oslo Accords between the government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Subsequent abortive

international peace processes for the region have included the peace negotiations held at the Camp David summit in 2000, the ‘roadmap for peace’ produced by the Quartet on the Middle East in 2003, and the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks which took place between 2010 and 2011 and from 2013 to 2014. The Oslo Accords, which were initially perceived as a dramatic breakthrough, were arguably designed to end the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory by ushering it through a series of classic conflict resolution manoeuvres into a ‘new era of mutual recognition, reconciliation, and peace’ which would prop up Yasser Arafat as Israel’s partner for peace (Peters 2013).

The upper-level Oslo Accords instigated a fervent programme of conflict resolution, reconciliation, and dialogue between Jewish Israeli and Palestinian groups and individuals. These engagements were funded and implemented by local and international organizations and donors long deprived of a supportive milieu in which to ply their conflict resolution practices. The Oslo Accords have remained the overarching reference point for government negotiators to this day as they continue to push for a two-state solution. Governmental actors such as the United States (US) and the European Union (EU) have instructed their funding arms – the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the EU Partnership for Peace – to support a two-state solution by funding peacebuilding projects that often insist upon cooperation between Israeli and Palestinian civil society peace and development organizations.

The Oslo Accords are widely seen as a fiasco by Palestinians. Some critical observers say that they were actually designed to advance Israel’s occupation by eliminating Arab economic resistance across the Middle East and providing cover for settlement expansion plans within the West Bank. A groundswell of Israeli discontent with the Accords, along with the 1995 assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, redirected Israeli politics towards a rapid expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and led to a general worsening of conditions for Palestinians living in Israel and the occupied territory.² Frustration boiled over in the second *intifada* (2000–

2005) – also known as the Al-Aqsa *intifada* – which drove the two societies back apart and elevated levels of distrust and anger. In response, Israel began construction of the West Bank Separation Wall and further intensified its programme of settlement building.

Upper-level and bottom-up conflict resolution initiatives and dialogue have struggled in this environment, and they have faced increasing resistance across both Palestinian and Jewish Israeli societies and even from within the peace movement itself. Intense resistance has emerged from within the burgeoning ‘boycott, divestment, and sanctions’ (BDS) and anti-normalization movements which accuse upper-level conflict resolution mechanisms developed under the Oslo Accords of being nothing more than a sham designed as cover for the intensification of occupation strategies. Many Palestinians, and significant portions of the peace movement, argue that most conflict resolution initiatives are primarily aimed at ‘normalization’; that is to say, they situate the oppression and occupation of Palestinian territory as a reality which must be subscribed to and lived with by local communities.

The Oslo Accords’ detractors, including sections of the Palestinian resistance and Jewish Israeli peace movements, have noted a distinct shift to the right in Israeli politics and society. This is evidenced by Netanyahu’s inclusion of far-right parties in governing coalitions with Likud and the continued marginalization of a number of groups – not only Mizrahim³ and Palestinian citizens of Israel, but also Ethiopian Jews and recent immigrants from Russia (Omer 2013). This shift to the right also reveals itself through the State of Israel’s continued reluctance to engage with ‘final status’ issues in peace negotiations, which include accelerated settlement expansion and the unprecedented numbers of Palestinian civilian casualties that have arisen from the operations of Israeli Defence Forces in Gaza (2008–2009, 2012, 2014). Open belligerence towards both the peace process and the possibility of a two-state solution is becoming more common amongst Israeli politicians who are showing reduced concern for the consequences these attitudes might

incur in terms of international diplomatic relations with the United States and the nations of the European Union.

This political and social context has had a devastating impact on the peace movement in Israel, and its activists have suffered from reduced social and political legitimacy and an oppressive working environment (see [chapter 13](#) by Marwan Darweish, Turner 2015). Yet hardening attitudes in Israel are inadvertently producing positive effects too. Some peace actors are recognizing that an open shift to the extreme right may prevent international guarantors and mediators from participating in the fiction that the State of Israel is seriously engaging in peace talks. International actors may also begin to challenge the claim, currently accepted as part of the dominant narrative in Israel, that the state lacks any partner for peace on the Palestinian side (Chazan 2013). Many peace actors are hoping that European nations will escalate their critiques of Israeli occupation and of discrimination against Palestinians in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt); they also look to these nations to propose increasingly direct intervention measures (see, for example, Moore 2015).

The social and political conditions in Israel and the occupied territory remain inhospitable for those hopeful that upper-level peace and reconciliation efforts will succeed. Peace and resistance workers feel battered, their work is suppressed on both sides of the conflict, and many of them state confidently that elite efforts to achieve peace are futile at the current juncture.⁴ This book aims to disrupt these discouraging narratives by proposing the strength and efficacy of a bottom-up course of action that might end Israeli occupation, work towards the return of Palestinian refugees to their homes in Israel, and contribute towards equal rights for all citizens in Israel and the oPt. Many of the chapters that follow build on the assumption that upper-level peace negotiations cannot flourish in the current political climate in Israel and the occupied territory. Instead, most chapters explore the roles that can be played by a series of actors and strategies which, when integrated, can form a predominantly bottom-up framework for conflict transformation activity. In such a framework, the burden of transformation rests squarely

with non-state actors. State actors are not ignored, but neither are they relied on to instigate change. Instead, they are situated as the targets of transformational pressure. Non-state actors take on the task of pushing states towards ensuring human rights, equality, and reductions in violence. This pressure will mostly emerge from civil society at the local level and will build upon the rich history of nonviolent civil action which has emerged to address the devastation wrought by the 1948 Nakba and the 1967 Israeli occupation.

Such a stance will need to be grounded in a version of conflict theory capable of tackling the heavily asymmetric relationship between Israel and the Palestinians. This book proposes a reliance on conflict transformation theory, as distinct from conflict resolution theory (Botes 2003; Galtung 1996; Lederach 1995). In the next section, I will discuss the distinct conceptual disagreements that exist in the literature about the relationship between these two theoretical strands (Ramsbotham *et al.* 2011). I will argue that the contours of conflict transformation theory mean that it is particularly appropriate for engaging with situations where power asymmetry prevails (Francis 2002). It is also valuable because, as some of the authors in this book make clear, it understands conflict intensification, not as a hopeless sign, but as a necessary provocation for the constructive change that must happen before resolution can occur (Lederach 2003).

This introductory chapter will go on to discuss how the theory of conflict transformation relates to the decision-making that is undertaken on the ground by peace and resistance actors across Israel and the oPt, and it will ask why these organizations and their donors make the decisions they do. In response to this question, I will outline two competing theories of change that seem to encapsulate the different journeys towards peace envisioned by these actors. The first theory relies on conflict resolution and a binational strategy of increased cooperation and dialogue between Palestinian and Jewish Israeli organizations and individuals. The second adopts a conflict transformation approach and proposes a strategy for escalating the use of predominantly uni-national nonviolent conflict and resistance activities in both Palestinian

and Jewish Israeli societies. The chapters throughout this volume wrestle with these two theories of change and, as several authors demonstrate, both are filled with difficult and messy dilemmas. Unfortunately, these two competing theories have divided the already struggling peace movement and, according to the reports of peace activists on the ground, there is little constructive dialogue between the two camps.⁵ This is, indeed, unfortunate. What is clear is that new thinking is urgently required. The chapters in this volume hope to clarify the role that conflict transformation, as an overarching theoretical paradigm, might serve in deepening constructive engagement with the conflict between Palestinians and the State of Israel.

The journey towards conflict transformation in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory

In methodological terms, this book resists the almost instinctive academic tendency to present the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as if both parties to the conflict are equal in nature. Instead of describing the situation with studied neutrality, it dives head first into the dilemmas associated with confronting direct and indirect violence in the oPt and Israel; it also critically analyses power differentials and mechanisms of domination in order to expose the forces that inhibit Palestinians from shaping the decisions that affect their lives (Agger 1991; Kincheloe and McLaren 2005). A central feature of this volume's proactive stance will be the work it undertakes to clarify a theoretical framework for conflict transformation, one that can be effective in contexts of asymmetric conflict, military and political oppression, and occupation. Such a framework will deliberately move beyond the pursuit of 'conflict resolution' – an approach which prioritizes the de-escalation of conflict dynamics and the diffusion of crises – and it will focus instead on deeper issues

and underlying patterns which, if addressed, can progress far beyond the temporary relief of unjust conditions. The conflict transformation framework developed in this book delves into root causes and embraces the intensification of nonviolent conflict as a means to sustainable change. The end goal of conflict transformation is to transform people, their violent relationships, and the cultures in which they exist, including the oppressive and violent structures that work to hold conflict dynamics in place.

Conflict management and resolution theory has struggled to engage with the complex dynamics of asymmetry between the State of Israel and the Palestinians, and this has, in part, motivated the development of conflict transformation theory. While the consequences of a conflict transformation approach are still unclear and are being explored at first-hand in complex environments, three broad justifications for its widespread adoption deserve investigation here. First, conflict transformation embraces the ebb and flow of conflict as a natural phenomenon that should not be suppressed. This ebb and flow is dialectical in nature (Lederach 1995) because conflict transforms everybody and everything it touches, while often needing transformation itself. In other words, conflict has a purpose. When parties to a conflict embrace its social purposes, it becomes possible for them to relinquish their deep-seated need to control the situation, and their focus can turn instead to the evolution of relationships which cannot progress within the conflict's terms.

It would be a mistake to assume that conflict transformation requires the conflicted parties or intervening actors to stand idly by as battle rages. Conflict transformation is prescriptive in nature and wary of the tendency for conflict to reap suffering and segregation while producing oppression and inequality. Conflict transformation mobilizes human intervention in order to redirect the consequences of conflict towards reduced violence, altered relationships, understanding, redistribution, structural adjustments, and work which will help to account for root causes. A transformational approach, unlike resolution-focused activity, often requires interventions that intensify a conflict. In order to produce the positive effects

of intensification without arousing fear of violence and pain, actors in conflict transformation processes adhere to the strategic prescriptions of transformation-inspired practice. In effect, they repurpose the energies of violent conflict towards nonviolent or unarmed action, advocacy, awareness, resolution, and conciliation.⁶

The second justification for a conflict transformation framework in Israel and the occupied territory is its relevance to asymmetric power relationships. Asymmetric conflicts differ from symmetric conflicts in that structural adjustments and reparations are required to equalize power between competing groups. Adam Curle (1971) was one of the first scholars to recognize that conflict resolution theory must adapt in order to tackle asymmetric power relationships. He proposed a framework of action through which the dynamics of conflict inside unbalanced relationships could be investigated. The model also allows for exploration of the strategies through which external intervention might expose and transform latent conflicts by moving them, through processes of conscientization and confrontation, towards a conciliatory settlement and sustainable peace.⁷ Curle's contribution was to recognize that the transformation of conflict begins long before the resolution or settlement phase. US-led interventions in Israel and the oPt have effectively demonstrated that a failure to address deep oppression and occupation will result in the failure of a peace process. Oppression and occupation must be confronted and power must be equalized if a real and sustainable peace is to be achieved.

The third reason why a conflict transformation theory framework is relevant to conflict in historic Palestine is its drive to produce what Schirch (2004) calls *justpeace*, or the development of increasingly robust peace processes that ensure justice. Any theoretical frameworks in support of *justpeace* will ensure that justice is actually experienced at the ground level. The drive for justice is debated between activists and advocates on the one hand, and mediators and reconcilers on the other inside the Palestinian and Israeli peace and resistance communities. Activists and advocates point out the

unwillingness of their resolution-focused counterparts to ground their activities in structural wrongs dating back at least to the 1948 Nakba; meanwhile, mediators and reconcilers accuse transformation-oriented actors of ignoring the likelihood that peace may not be sustainable in climates of hate, misunderstanding, and segregation.⁸ Conflict transformation theorists such as Lederach (1995) insist this dichotomy is misguided. They argue that sustainable transformation and peace will rely first upon advocates and activists to address unequal power and structural issues, and then on mediators and reconcilers who can negotiate peace. Many of the authors in this volume embrace this staged process and insist that a transformational approach must dig far beneath the attitudinal manifestations of conflicts to target their structural roots (Dudouet 2006).

These three justifications point towards the systematic nature of conflict transformation theory, and reinforce the theory's reliance on interlinking streams of activity that engage with conflict identities, communication patterns, and power constructs. The theory requires a division of labour, with some transformative work being aimed at the personal and relational levels, and other work being targeted at structural and cultural issues (Lederach *et al.* 2007). This division of labour mirrors competing streams of activity within the Israeli and Palestinian peace and resistance movements. Their competition is creating conflict within the movements and competing sides are undermining each other when, in fact, differing approaches are each necessary and neither alone is sufficient. In the spirit of a positive view of conflict, this book aims to weigh in on the debate and offers guidance. The next section of this introductory chapter will start outlining ways in which the theory presented above links with the current state of play in the Israeli and Palestinian peace and resistance movements.

Back and forth between theories of change – uni-national or binational

action

There is disagreement over what the journey of conflict transformation should actually look like on the ground inside Israel and the occupied territory. This chapter identifies two prominent theories of change that govern the approaches taken towards peace and conflict work in the region. A theory of change in a conflict zone aims to predict how actual social change will occur, and it provides hypotheses about how programming choices made by peace organizations might serve to build positive peace (Ashton 2007; Weiss 1974). A focus on a theory of change helps interventionists to decipher the assumptions that inform the design of any intervention staged by an organization or individual in complex environments like Israel and the occupied territory. Theories of change also serve as fundamental links between academic theory and practice on the ground in complex conflict zones. Just as they can be shaped by evolving conflict resolution or transformation theories, theories of change can also be adjusted in response to academic research and analysis if they are deemed inadequate on the basis of evidence of their faltering practice. The importance of this academic intervention is heightened in fields of study and practice, such as peacebuilding and conflict resolution, that are in their relative infancy. Both disciplines are short of case studies that rigorously test their theories in action, and, when immense human and financial resources are being pumped into conflict zones such as Israel and the occupied territory, academic research becomes important as a source for the swift and incisive analysis of practice.

Cognisant of the effects that research can produce, this section will explore the theories of change adhered to by two distinct groups of peace and resistance actors, each of which justifies its practical decisions and actions in the field on the basis of its ideological assumptions. The first theory of change, which I label binational, relies on traditional conflict resolution methodologies. It often brings Palestinians and Israelis together and is aimed at de-escalating the conflict. The second theory of change, which I call uni-national, prefers an

approach that seeks the intensification of conflict through advocacy and resistance, primarily through intragroup efforts in both Israel and the occupied territory, but also through intergroup efforts that feature a strong Palestinian lead.

Theory of change #1 – binational conflict resolution

The Oslo Accords set in motion a flurry of internationally supported cross-community peacebuilding activity that included much larger portions of the Jewish Israeli and Palestinian populations than had participated in such activities in pre-Oslo times. Two prominent donors – the EU Partnership for Peace and the USAID People to People Reconciliation Fund – initiated hundreds of peacebuilding projects that brought Jewish Israelis and Palestinians together in cooperative project ventures and dialogues. These donor initiatives followed the lead of conflict resolution and peacebuilding theory which consistently relies upon the practice of contact and dialogue between conflicting groups and individuals to resolve deep-seated conflict.

This sort of conflict resolution practice in Israel and the occupied territory is guided by an overarching theory of change that assumes the value of binational conflict resolution, and it can be best defined by a series of hypotheses:⁹

1. *If* the knowledge and attitudes of Jewish Israeli and Palestinian individuals are transformed, *then* a critical mass of people can be built to move the peace process forward;
2. *If* relationships are built between Jewish Israelis and Palestinians, *then* segregation, division, and prejudice can be reduced which will allow peace processes to succeed;
3. *If* Jewish Israelis and Palestinians cooperate together economically so that both communities realize economic benefits, *then* there will be greater resistance to violence in both communities;

4. *If* non-political social cooperation between Jewish Israelis and Palestinians is encouraged (tours, medical training, children's activities, sporting events, environmental activism, etc.), *then* the two communities will grow closer together;
5. *If* Jewish Israelis and Palestinians are allowed to work side-by-side on a variety of development and peacebuilding issues, *then* trust will be built and negative stereotypes will be disregarded.

These hypotheses have motivated a plethora of activities such as cross-communal training, workshops, dialogues, micro-negotiations, encounter groups, tours, trauma healing and sharing sessions, networking, social events, sporting and cultural activities, development cooperation, economic cooperation, and trade. This theory of change is based on the belief that encounters, dialogue, and cooperation with the 'other' will serve to reconstruct personal and communal identities and will contribute to the building of a store of public trust between communities adequate for the negotiation of a sustainable peace agreement. In this view, the journey towards coexistence cannot be forced by Palestinian and Israeli political leaders, but has as its prerequisite genuine and high-quality interactions between communities at the local level. Opportunities for direct encounter with 'the other' can facilitate a deep realization that one's 'enemy' is a fellow human being, and this can instigate a change in perceptions as well as the eventual transcendence of lingering hostilities.

This theory of change is underpinned by the contact hypothesis espoused by Gordon Allport (1954) who suggested that intergroup and interpersonal contact represent the best methods for improving relations between two conflicting groups. He observed that creating the conditions for inter-communal communication increases appreciation and understanding of the other side and reduces prejudice between majority and minority community members.¹⁰ The theory is also supported by observed and tested experiences with intergroup dialogue. Scholar practitioners such as John Burton (1997), Ronald Fisher (2009), Herbert Kelman (2006), Jay Rothman (1997), and Harold Saunders (1999) have used a

variety of conflict resolution-based dialogue groups and problem-solving workshops to bring together competing groups. Several research studies have shown that these sorts of programmes have had a constructive effect on the relationships between Jewish Israelis and Palestinians (Bargal 2004; Cahen 2012; Maoz 2000). Drawing on recent research, Lazarus (2015) reports that the contact-based conflict resolution work being carried out within civil society in Israel and the occupied territory is delivering constructive and sustainable changes in project participants' attitudes.

Some critics of these contact-based conflict resolution projects have pointed to the repeated failure of peace negotiations as proof that these initiatives are falling short of expectations. In response, proponents argue that micro-level work cannot be judged by failures at the macro-level. They believe that, instead of being jettisoned, these sorts of methods should be scaled up and adopted on increasingly grand scales over time. Advocates of this reconciliation-based approach are also hopeful that graduates of these projects will rise to prominence in Israeli and Palestinian politics and will increase the probability of success for peace processes through the influence they exert from positions of power.

Theory of change #2 – uni-national conflict intensification

Integrated binational peace activity is facing increased resistance from within the Palestinian, Israeli, and international peace and resistance movements. This resistance points to deep dilemmas facing bottom-up conflict resolution initiatives in Israel and the occupied territory. As mentioned above, dialogue and encounter-based experiences between conflicting peoples and groups have been shown, repeatedly, to lead to de-escalation of conflict. Common sense tells us that it is worth sitting and talking with 'the other' in our lives, and critics of binational peace activity are not looking to denigrate this aspect of reconciliation work. However, detractors argue

that such initiatives are trapped in the pursuit of short-term gains that will never alter the course of large-scale oppression and power asymmetry in a bitterly intractable conflict. Small incremental interventions, they suggest, must be exchanged for broader, direct, and more confrontational actions that will escalate the conflict in nonviolent ways and redirect its energies into more productive channels.

Many peace actors now claim that the political and social turmoil in which bottom-up conflict resolution activity occurs in the oPt is simply too overwhelming for any small gains to signify.¹¹ The conflict is deepening, as is evidenced by repeated wars, mounting civilian casualties, an illegal Separation Wall, mushrooming settlement building, and failed political negotiations which have taken place under the watch of world leaders whose sympathies lie with Israel.

The conflict's unique dynamics are at the heart of the problem, and the issues caused by its normalization during a prolonged period of occupation are particularly important to grasp. Under occupation, any dialogue and cooperation between the oppressor and the oppressed, and particularly any dialogue that proceeds slowly, will run concurrently with a process in which the structures and strategies of oppression become increasingly familiar. For example, Palestinian traders are beginning, however tentatively and reluctantly, to depend on the traffic produced by movement restrictions at the Wall's checkpoints, and Bröckerhoff provides an astute reading of this phenomenon in [Chapter 9](#). In troubled circumstances, as normalization creeps in, reconciliation strategies cannot bring about the resolution of a conflict. Instead, often inadvertently, they contribute to the insidious process of its perpetuation.

Peace and resistance actors sometimes liken normalization to a 'colonization of the mind', or a process through which subjected populations are led to believe that the reality of oppression is a fact of life and something 'normal' to which they must subscribe. Normalization has been defined as participating 'in any project or initiative or activity, local or international, specifically designed for gathering (either directly or indirectly) Palestinians (and/or Arabs) and Israelis, whether individuals or institutions [...] that does not explicitly

aim to expose and resist the occupation and all forms of discrimination and oppression against the Palestinian people'.¹² This definition is not developed in order to discourage cooperation and contact between Jewish Israelis and Palestinians, but it does strongly imply that any such activities should be organized on the agreed premise that Palestinians have inalienable rights which include the right of return for refugees. The definition goes further to state that cooperation and contact activities must not imply that equality between the parties involved already exists, should recognize the colonial nature of occupation, and must also affirm the right of Palestinians to self-determination.¹³

In response, a second theory of change has entered the peace and resistance narrative within Israel and the oPt and across the globe. Proponents insist that this theory is not simply a reaction to the perceived failure of conflict resolution but is motivated by a genuine belief that it represents the only viable path towards peace and justice for all inhabitants of Israel and the occupied territory at the current time. This theory of change, which I have labelled 'uni-national conflict intensification', places emphasis on resistance to the occupation as a tool for change, and it focuses its attention squarely on the oppressor. Actions inspired by this theory of change are often segregated between Jewish Israeli and Palestinian communities, although this is not a requirement of the conflict intensification approach.

This theory of change can also be defined by a series of hypotheses:¹⁴

1. *If* the underlying causes of occupation, oppression, and insecurity are highlighted, *then* multi-level internal and external pressure will foment, causing Israel to address root causes of the conflict and open up space for authentic peace processes;
2. *If* significant bottom-up mobilization occurs in opposition to oppression and occupation, *then* Jewish Israeli and Palestinian political leaders will be forced to address the occupation;

3. *If* the Israeli and international companies supporting the occupation are boycotted and resisted, *then* Israeli politics and society will be motivated to work for peace;
4. *If* the international community pressures the interests of political elites in Israel, *then* these elites will align with bottom-up movements, and make key decisions to resist the occupation;
5. *If* the international community withdraws its moral and resource support for war-making in Israel, *then* war-making systems in Israel will be transformed;
6. *If* perpetrators on both sides of the conflict are held accountable before international justice structures, *then* local populations can begin to construct a peaceful society.

This theory of change has motivated a broad suite of actions including local and international campaigns and boycotts; work to revise and correct historical narratives regarding the conflict; and the instrumental use of international justice and human rights structures such as the International Criminal Court, the United Nations, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) focused on human rights. In the chapters that follow, there is plentiful evidence that non-violent direct action, advocacy, and other strategies reach beyond the conflict zone to include calls for international sanctions and embargoes, for example, and pressure aimed at divestment from companies benefiting from occupation activities. Advocacy is also used to encourage international political leaders to exert pressure on Israeli political leaders, and there are calls on them too to reduce the funding and support they provide for Israel's military; conscientious objection to military conscription in Israel also gains international support.

While Israel bears the brunt of these activities, it would be a mistake to assume that this work cannot be undertaken by Israeli and/or Jewish organizations. In fact, numerous Israeli and Jewish groups around the globe are operating in ways that reflect this theory of change (Turner 2015). In particular, the groups colloquially referred to as the '48 organizations often align their work with uni-national theories that require conflict

intensification to take place. Their work is concentrated on problems that can be traced back to the Nakba – the forced displacement of Palestinian communities from their homes and villages and their expulsion from Israel in 1948 – and so the issue of refugees and their return is often their primary concern. Because of extensive social and political oppression, the '48 organizations form a small minority. These organizations can be differentiated from the majority of peace groups in Israel – known colloquially as the '67 organizations – which concentrate on problems that began with the Six-Day War in 1967. Members of this cluster are primarily interested in addressing the illegal occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, but often believe they can work for peace while maintaining a Zionist ideology.¹⁵

While the anti-normalization movement has been operating for decades, the last ten years have witnessed the rise of the 'boycott, divestment, and sanctions' (BDS) movement as the primary face of nonviolent conflict intensification in the oPt and across the world (Barghouti 2011). Following the International Court of Justice's advisory opinion, issued in 2005, on the illegality of the Wall that separates the occupied territory, Palestinian civil society issued a call to the global community to instigate boycotts, divestment, and sanctions against Israel until it abides by international law and recognizes Palestinian rights.

Sanctions have been largely unused because they require state support from major world powers and the international organizations those powers control; however, divestment, or the withdrawal of funding from companies complicit in violations of international law and Palestinian rights, is gaining significant momentum (McMahon 2014). The most significant aspect of BDS has been the boycott it has brought into being which affects consumer behaviour, as well as cultural and academic spheres of activity. While the cultural and academic boycott targets institutions as opposed to individuals, all BDS boycotts have proved to be controversial: both boycott and divestment initiatives have received significant criticism on the grounds that their methods are counterproductive to peace in Israel and the oPt, anti-Semitic,

unfair, and contrary to the norms of academic freedom (Fishman 2012). Part of this critique has been motivated by the claims of some BDS leaders, such as Omar Barghouti (2011), that the movement's rights-based approach rules out the possibility of a two-state solution. This is because it requires refugees to be allowed to return to their properties in Israel and calls for equal treatment to be guaranteed for both Jewish Israeli and Palestinian citizens throughout Israel.

Transformational strategies and actors in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory

When integrated into a whole, this volume's individual chapters contribute to a proposal for the transformation of the conflict between Palestinians and the State of Israel; one that embraces the constructive potential of conflict, works around power asymmetries, and pushes for justice and accountability. It needs to be noted clearly that many chapters tackle controversial themes, and the reader cannot assume that the editors or other authors in this volume agree with the viewpoints shared in each chapter.

The difficult context in which peace and resistance work occurs has been explored in this introductory chapter, and I have outlined some underlying theories that are guiding its initiatives in Israel and the oPt. The question remains as to how this book will contribute to peace and resistance theory and practice. At this volume's heart there is a commitment to a bottom-up strategy of conflict engagement that will take direct aim at the conflict's underlying root causes through direct nonviolent action and legal pressure. Many of the chapters that follow describe work that is undertaken on the assumption that top-down peace processes and their associated conflict resolution activities are inadequate. In fact, the most promising approaches currently in use in the conflict, as our contributors

demonstrate, broadly conform to a transformational theory of change.

The second chapter, by Mufid Qassoum, provides an incisive analysis of the conflict between the State of Israel and Palestinians, and argues that the conflict at hand is not fired, as is often presumed, by nationality or religion. Instead, Qassoum suggests, it has emerged as the consequence of global forces engaging in the centuries-long manipulation of historic Palestine in order to leverage the geostrategic benefits of power in the region. Those benefits have allowed them to establish and maintain a status quo characterized by global wealth creation, appropriation, and distribution. This long view of global interference in the affairs of indigenous populations in Palestine is instructive and helps cast light on the ways in which the conflict might be transformed towards positive peace. Qassoum's striking question about whether peace is even desirable for Western global powers is revealing in relation to the ongoing failures of upper-level conflict resolution initiatives, and his analysis justifies the elevation of direct engagement as a strategy for tackling these global forces which would involve Jewish Israelis, Palestinians, Arabs and global civil society rising above sectarian interests and working shoulder to shoulder to promote core and shared human interests, social and historical justice, genuine democracy, even development, and positive peace. Qassoum's argument is important for the remainder of the book (even if the individual authors adopt a different analysis of the conflict), which identifies some of the key strategies and actors involved in building positive peace in Israel and the occupied territory.

Part I investigates promising strategies for conflict transformation in Israel and the oPt. It spells out the types of nonviolent strategy that are being used to expose and undermine occupation structures. It also identifies strategies that can be used to deliver sustainable change and peace in ways that will allow the peaceful coexistence of both Jewish Israeli and Palestinian citizens, either within the same nation, or separated by a border. As a whole, this section's chapters refer to the ongoing shift of international organizations away

from philanthropy and charity towards rights-based approaches and support for direct action against Israeli occupation structures. This section opens with Maya al-Orzza and Manar Makhoul using a rights-based approach to explore sustainable solutions to the ongoing plight of Palestinian refugees and to analyse the practicalities of their return to their properties (see [Chapter 3](#)). Ana Sánchez and Patricia Sellick (see [Chapter 4](#)) broaden this discussion somewhat and consider the use of human rights approaches inside contexts defined by distinctly asymmetrical power relations. Mazin B. Qumsiyeh (see [Chapter 5](#)) tackles a related strategy in his discussion of boycotts, divestment, and sanctions as forms of unarmed resistance to the oppression of the Palestinians by the State of Israel. The controversial and rapidly expanding BDS movement represents an active bottom-up mobilization campaign that is focused on social and structural justice. It puts economic, social, and political pressure on Israel to end the occupation, ensure equal rights for Palestinians and Jewish Israelis, and allow refugees to return to their properties (see also [Chapter 9](#) by Bröckerhoff). Diego Checa Hidalgo (see [Chapter 6](#)) continues with the theme of nonviolent resistance and inspects the role of global civil society in conflict transformation in Israel and the occupied territory. In [Chapter 7](#), Raffaella Nanetti steers the conversation towards the ‘local’ and asserts that conflict transformation from within can occur as the ‘growing stock of social capital’ in Palestinian society is used both to resist defeatism and impoverishment, and embrace assertiveness, purposefulness, and collective action. Khalid Rabayah and Chas Morrison conclude this section by scrutinizing conflict and resistance in cyberspace (see [Chapter 8](#)).

[Part II](#) surveys the manner in which a variety of transformational actors in Israel and the oPt have adopted the strategies described in [Part I](#) in efforts to transform the ongoing conflict between the State of Israel and Palestinians. The compilation of chapters in [Part II](#) evidences the propensity of an expanding range of actors to utilize bottom-up actions in their bids to promote positive peace. In many cases, these bottom-up activities are upstaging the efforts of international conflict resolution initiatives, which are widely perceived to be

maintaining the status quo, however inadvertently. This section opens with Bröckerhoff's presentation of field research on Palestinian consumers and their dilemma-filled relationships with the local and global BDS campaigns (see [Chapter 9](#)). In [Chapter 10](#), Mohammed Abu-Nimer and Timothy Seidel describe the 'link between religion, conflict, and governance' and explore the potential for Jewish, Christian, and Muslim religious actors to play a part in bottom-up conflict transformation. Eser Selen (see [Chapter 11](#)) surveys the efforts of a group of Jewish Israeli and Palestinian contemporary artists to offer up forms of alternative resistance to the ongoing occupation. Ayman Yousef and Razan Abu Labdeh (see [Chapter 12](#)) interpret the transformational roles played by Palestinian university student political movements and their messy relationships with dominant political factions. In [Chapter 13](#), Marwan Darweish describes the journey of the Israeli peace and solidarity movement towards increasingly direct forms of action which include protective accompaniment, intervening in and altering Israeli public opinion, and legal advocacy. Shifting the discussion towards a focus on the international community, Aleksandra Godziejewska (see [Chapter 14](#)) ponders the unique roles that humanitarian organizations play in transforming the root causes of intractable conflict by adhering to international humanitarian law principles and a rights-based approach to humanitarian aid provision. Finally, Ibrahim Natil (see [Chapter 15](#)) critiques the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) and NGO-based conflict resolution programming and its effects on the attitudes and behaviours of young refugees in the Gaza Strip in relation to their right of return. In conclusion, Alpaslan Özerdem (see [Chapter 16](#)) synthesizes the arguments of chapter authors and proposes policy revisions that international organizations and governments might make if they are to assist in conflict transformation in Israel and the occupied territory.

In the spirit of the conflict transformation methods discussed above, this book purposely features numerous Palestinian authors and, in doing so, gives substance to one of its conclusions, which is that Palestinians must take the lead in defining what future conflict transformation initiatives should

look like. The contributions of Palestinian authors ground this book's discussion in recent conflict developments in Israel and the oPt and provide insiders' views of how violent conflict might be transformed. It also facilitates an important transformational activity: the rigorous critique of occupying structures and processes by a subjected population.

Notes

- 1 'Positive peace' is a term coined by peace scholar Johan Galtung to refer to a peaceful state of affairs characterized by social justice, fair laws, and equality in terms of opportunities and access to power and resources. Galtung contrasts this with 'negative peace', a term which refers to situations in which peace can only be discerned by the absence of direct violence and war.
- 2 This chapter will use the geographical terminology 'the occupied territory' or 'the occupied Palestinian territory' to refer to the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. It should be noted that, following its withdrawal of troops and settlements, Israel does not consider its blockade of the Gaza Strip to be an occupation. However, this chapter accepts that, in the eyes of Gazans, the blockade does represent an occupation, not least because of its dire ongoing effects on Gazan society.
- 3 Mizrahim are descendants of Jewish communities from across the Middle East and North Africa.
- 4 These interviews were carried out by the author and Marwan Darweish with peace and resistance actors in the West Bank and Israel (2013–2015).
- 5 Interviews with an international donor official and peace activists in the West Bank in June 2014.
- 6 In the occupied Palestinian territory, nonviolent action is often differentiated from unarmed action by the fact that its participants avoid throwing stones at Israeli soldiers and civilians and their vehicles.
- 7 Conscientization is a social concept and process described by the Brazilian educational theorist and activist Paulo Freire (1996). The term implies a deep understanding of the world that exposes social and political contradictions and oppressions, and leads towards action against oppressive structures and processes.
- 8 Interviews with civil society peace and solidary organizations in Israel and the West Bank (2013–2015).
- 9 These hypotheses are based on a list published in OECD (2012, p. 85).
- 10 Proponents of contact theory have had to wrestle with Allport's suggestion that its benefits are dependent on the two groups being broadly equal in status (Pettigrew 1998).
- 11 Interviews with civil society peace and solidary organizations in Israel and the West Bank (2013–2015).

- 12 This definition or normalization was proposed by Rifat Odeh Kassis at the 2007 Palestinian BDS conference in Ramallah.
- 13 Disagreement persists over the parameters of anti-normalization stances and related boycotting activities.
- 14 These hypotheses are based on a list published in OECD (2012, p. 85).
- 15 References to the West Bank in this introductory chapter are also intended to include East Jerusalem.

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2

The glocal spatial dynamics of the ‘Zionist/Israeli-Arab/Palestinian’ conflict and its transformation

Mufid Qassoum

Present as history

In May 2012, Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME) hosted Ilan Pappé, an Israeli new historian, as part of his Canadian speaking tour. His talk focused on ‘The False Paradigm of Peace: Revisiting the Palestine Question’. In introducing the ten most salient mythologies underpinning Zionist/Israeli discourse and its ‘regime of truth’, Pappé made the following claim about conflict resolution:

Any attempt to solve a conflict has to touch upon the very core of this conflict and the core more often than not lies in its history. A distorted or manipulated history can explain quite well a failure to end a conflict whereas a truthful and comprehensive look at the past can facilitate a lasting peace and solution. A distorted history can in fact do more harm, as the particular case study of Israel and Palestine shows: it can protect oppression, colonization and occupation.

The wide acceptance in the world of the Zionist narrative is based on a cluster of mythologies that, in the end, cast doubt on the Palestinian moral right, ethical behavior and chances for any just peace in the future. The reason for this is that these mythologies are accepted by the mainstream media in the West, and by the political elites there as truth. Once accepted as a truth, these mythologies

become a justification, not so much for the Israeli actions, but for the West's inclination to interfere.

(Pappé 2012, p. 1)

Pappé is quoted at length here at the beginning of a discussion which aims to critically analyse the conflict's social forces (its ideas, institutions, and material capabilities) and its spatio-temporal context. This chapter argues that the long process of transforming the conflict – a process which needs to be undertaken on the bases of social justice and humane and progressive universal values – can only succeed if the structural and historical forces that led to its protraction, complexities, and asymmetries are addressed. Only through the long-term investment of one generation in a sustained project of emancipatory transformation can both peoples reach a positive, sustainable, just, comprehensive, and lasting peace. However, this chapter's analysis does not aim to discover a resolution. Instead, it seeks to problematize attempts at 'resolution' or solving again the issues at hand. Any such attempt is understood here to reify a history that underpins the unjust, bloody, asymmetric, destructive, and malignant status quo of the conflict under discussion.

Pappé's provocative argument challenges us to consider an array of essential questions. What, for instance, is meant by 'a truthful and comprehensive look at the past' or a 'truthful' history, and what are the parameters of this comprehensiveness and its innate social forces? What is considered as belonging to 'history'? What is the starting point of this 'past', and how deep should we dig into a 'past' or 'history'? Finally, which human agency should embark on transforming the deformed historical structures and conjunctures that led to this false paradigm? Are the 'founding mythologies of Zionism and Israel' that Pappé, and several other Israeli neo-historians, revisionist historians, post-Zionists, and critical sociologists have exposed the only anomalies to be addressed and redressed in order for this situation to shift into a new paradigm? Finally, which paradigm is wanted? Empirical, descriptive, and analytical statements are not enough. Prescriptive and normative strategies must be identified,

especially in light of the state of anomie we are already in and in light of the impending regional catastrophe.

History – that is to say a truthful history offering a comprehensive look at the past – should be interpreted in terms of its historical-material dialectics and not enshrouded in the metaphysical, theological, ethno-mythological, and/or bourgeois exegesis which has produced a manipulative ‘regime of truth’. As Marx reminds us: ‘We do not turn secular questions into theological questions; we turn theological questions into secular ones. History has for long enough been resolved into superstition; but we now resolve superstition into history’ (Tucker *et al.* 1972, p. 29). The usefulness of this Marxist materialist approach is generally recognized, and Robert Nisbet, a non-Marxist, notes that:

[We] turn to history and only to history if what we are seeking are the actual causes, sources and conditions of overt changes of patterns and structures in society. Conventional wisdom to the contrary, in modern social theory, we shall not find the explanation of change in those studies which are abstracted from history [...]. Nor will we find the sources of change in contemporary revivals of the comparative method with its ascending staircase of cultural similarities and differences plucked from all space and time.

(Nisbet 1969, pp. 302–303)

In delineating a historical material framework for the glocal spatial dynamics of the so-called Zionist/Israeli-Arab/Palestinian conflict discussed here, I shall refer to the ideas of Fernand Braudel and the French historians of the *Annales* school who delineated a model of history involving three scales or levels. These are the quasi-immobile time of structures and traditions (*la longue durée*); the intermediate scale of ‘conjunctures’, rarely lasting longer than a few generations; and the rapid timescale of events. Events, for Braudel, are the ‘crests of foam that the tides of history carry on their strong backs’ and their history ‘is the most exciting of all, the richest in human interest, and also the most dangerous. We must learn to distrust this history with its burning passions, as it was felt, described, and lived by contemporaries whose lives were as short and as short-sighted as ours’ (Braudel 1993, pp. xxiv–xxv). Foucault, who took a genealogical approach, similarly regarded history not as a singularity or a

progression but as a ‘profusion of entangled events’ (Fetherston 2000, p. 208).

Informed by these ideas, this chapter attempts to examine uses of the spatial imagination – as well as spatio-cide – during various phases which have been informed by the logic of capital expansion since capitalism first emerged in the long sixteenth century (1450–1640) (Qassoum 2004). By spatio-cide I mean not only the spatial destruction of seventy-eight percent of the physical space of Palestine in 1948 and the expulsion and transfer of approximately 770,000 Palestinians in what is known as the Palestinian Nakba or the Catastrophe; the practice also encompasses the continuous, ongoing spatial destruction of the remaining twenty-two percent of Palestine’s physical space. This latter phase of destruction, which impacts on all levels and aspects of Palestinian space, is being carried out in the name of neoliberal capital expansion by neoliberal glocal social forces (including the neoliberal transnational capitalist class) and elites, or the neoliberal *historic bloc* which includes Zionism and its embodiment, Israel, as well as Arab and Palestinian elites. However, it is important to state at this early stage of the discussion that the existence of a neoliberal *historic bloc* or the neoliberal transnational capitalist class and elites in the region predates the elections of Margaret Thatcher in the United Kingdom in 1979 and Ronald Reagan in the United States in 1980, which ushered in the implementation of the neoliberal project on a global scale.

An organic ‘crisis of legitimation and accumulation’ had already swept through the core countries of the capitalist world system between 1968 and 1974. The first ‘oil shock’ brought soaring oil prices as well as tremendous, if not stupendous, petrodollar surpluses and liquidity which were channelled into the core capitalist countries and generated effects that have deeply affected the trajectory of the Palestinian struggle since those days. In a bid to counter and contain this organic crisis, to manage the growing economic competition within the core countries, and to undermine the increasing demands being made by Third World countries for the global redistribution of power and wealth, Brzezinski created one of his most

powerful and novel ideas and suggested the development of the trilateral community. He argued that

A community of the developed nations must eventually be formed if the world is to respond effectively to the increasingly serious crisis that in different ways now threatens both the advanced world and the Third World. [...] Accordingly an effort must be made to forge a community of the developed nations that would embrace the Atlantic states, the more advanced European communist states, and Japan. Progress in this direction would help to terminate the civil war that has dominated international politics among the developed nations for the last hundred and fifty years.

(Brzezinski 1970, pp. 293–295)

Brzezinski's ideas about how the new global political-economic order should be restructured brought him into a close relationship with David Rockefeller of Chase Manhattan Bank, and their friendship led to the establishment of the Trilateral Commission in July 1972. At that moment, Rockefeller proclaimed, '[b]road human interests are being served best in economic terms where free market forces are able to transcend national boundaries' (Brecher and Costello 1998, p. 15). Neither Brzezinski nor Rockefeller were considered at this point to be neoliberals; they were seen as trilateralists. Yet Rockefeller's statement is absolutely compatible with the neoliberal theorizations of the intellectual fathers of neoliberalism – Friedrich Von Hayek, Milton Friedman, Ralf Dahrendorf, and Karl Popper – who were at that time, among other things, residing in Mont Pelerin in Switzerland or experimenting on the Chilean people after the coup d'état against Salvador Allende (Gill 1990, 1985; Ranney 1993; Sklar 1980; van der Pijl 1993).

Some members of the Arab and Palestinian elites were immediately invited by the Trilateral Commission to be 'consulted' early in the 1970s about the resolution to the conflict (Gill 1990). The emerging glocal historic bloc or the transnational capitalist class in the early 1970s placed the Arab petrodollar bloc at the core of what was now a global finance system. Before the official neo-liberal project – promoted as globalization – was effectuated in the early 1980s, Egypt's Anwar El Sadat shifted towards the Saudi position via the 'Open Door Policy' under pressure from the emerging petrodollar regional order; when the Palestine Liberation

Organization (PLO) made the same move under the same pressures in 1974, it abandoned not just any work towards the liberation of all Palestine but also the very idea of securing one secular democratic state. Just a few years later, in 1977, Milton Friedman – the intellectual father of the Chicago Boys and one of the architects of the neoliberal project – visited Israel in the wake of Likud's rise to power and its '*mahapach*' or revolution to help the Israeli ruling and business classes adopt neoliberal precepts.

Accordingly, the central argument that undergirds this discussion is that there are three major global capitalist phases, characterized by specific structural dynamics and conjunctures, which led to a decimation of the Palestinian space which is still underway at this minute. The rise of capitalism during the long sixteenth century (1450–1640) marked the first phase, and it involved the spatial representation and geopolitical conceptualization of the destruction of the Palestinian space. This period extended from the long sixteenth century until the late nineteenth century. The era of liberalism and imperialism that ran from the late nineteenth century until the capital crisis of the 1930s came to mark the second phase, and it generated a shift from the imagination to the deployment and operationalization of colonial-imperial designs in Palestine. The British colonization of Palestine from 1917 to 1948 basically undermined the foundations of the Palestinian space in order to enable its collapse and destruction in 1948 through the agency of Britain's proxy, Zionism. Zionism – understood here to include Christian Zionism and political Zionism and their manifestations from the mid-seventeenth century until the present time – has been no more than a tool used towards this end. The third phase, which represents the final phase of the spatial destruction of Palestine, extends in its spatial representation, conceptualization, and imagination as well as its practices from the early 1970s, at the beginning of the neoliberal conjuncture, until the present moment.

This chapter contends that the so-called Zionist/Israeli-Arab/Palestinian conflict has always been and remains an exogenous conflict. It gestated within the structural dynamics

and interstices of capitalism's conjunctures and emerged at the core of the capitalist world system, where it is still embedded. Its entangled events trace the dystopian cycles of spatial destruction. Its wars, oppression, repression, co-optation (*trasformismo*), corruption, *under* development, poverty, inequity, inequality, violence, racism, terrorism, bigotry, intolerance, humiliation – and peoples' resistance to all of that – are no more than the 'crest of foam' that the tides of capitalism, including all their structures and conjunctures, carry on their backs. I will demonstrate that the logic of capital expansion and its social forces are behind this conflict.

Lefebvre's telling monologue is extremely instructive in this respect:

You mean to say that you would blame the whole history of the West, its rationalism, its logos, its very language? It is the West that is responsible for the transgression of nature [... T]he West has broken the bounds. And, indeed, the West is thus responsible for what Hegel calls the power of the negative, for violence, terror and permanent aggression directed against life. It has generalized violence – and forged the global level itself through violence.

(Lefebvre 1991, p. 109)

The spatial geopolitical imaginations of those capitalist social forces which have been involved in this conflict since its conceptualization have generated spatial practices and concrete spatial manifestations in the whole region of the Arab homeland, namely, the ongoing spatial destruction and annihilation of Libya, Yemen, Syria, Iraq, and Palestine. This leaves us with no analytical choice but to conclude that the 'Zionist/Israeli-Arab/Palestinian conflict' is no more than a mask aimed at concealing the real conflict. In fact, it is neither a national, ethnic, nor cultural dispute, and it is certainly not a religious one. The vast majority of the people – the popular classes and the masses – of one of the most, if not *the* most, geostrategic areas at the periphery of the capitalist world system are pitted against a network agglomerated from the ruling classes of the core capitalist countries. It includes the Zionist Ashkenazi ruling class in Israel, as well as the co-opted, oppressive, rentier Palestinian neoliberal elites, the obscurantist autocracies of the Gulf states, the new allies of Zionism, and the preferred allies of Washington who make up the neoliberal transnationalist capitalist class. Samir Amin, one

of the most prominent theoreticians of world system theory argues that

The Middle East, [...] with the bordering areas of the Caucasus and ex-Soviet Central Asia, occupies a position of particular importance in the geostrategy and geopolitics of imperialism, and particularly of the U.S. hegemonic project. It owes this position to three factors: its oil wealth; its geographical position in the heart of the Old World; and the fact that it constitutes the soft underbelly of the world system. The access to oil at a relatively cheap price is vital for the economy of the dominant triad [The United States, the European Union, and Japan], and the best means of ensuring this guaranteed access consists in securing political control of the area.

(Amin 2004)

As Amin points out, the Arab homeland's geostrategic and geopolitical importance precedes the era of oil and emanates from its geographical location in relation to the world system:

[T]he region also holds its importance equally due to its geographical position, being at the center of the Old World, at equal distance from Paris, Beijing, Singapore, and Johannesburg. In the olden times, control over this inevitable crossing point gave the Ummayyad and Abbasid Caliphates the privilege of drawing the chief benefits from that epoch's long distance trade. After the Second World War the region, located on the southern side of the Soviet Union, was crucial to the military strategy of encircling Soviet power. And the region did not lose its importance with the collapse of the Soviet adversary. U.S. dominance in the region reduces Europe, dependent on the Middle East for its energy supply, to vassalage. Once Russia was subdued, China and India were also subjected to permanent energy blackmail. Control over the Middle East would thus allow an extension of the Monroe Doctrine to the Old World, the objective of the hegemonist project of the United States.

(Amin 2004)

Palestine is located at the core of this extremely significant geostrategic, geopolitical, and geographic region, and this is the reason why capitalist social forces have spatially represented, imagined, occupied, and destroyed it, erecting in its place a sub-imperialist state. According to Amin, 'the United States operates in the Middle East in close cooperation with their two unconditional faithful allies – Turkey and Israel' (Amin 2004). Hence, in the simplest terms, when it comes to wealth and power creation and accumulation, Christian, Muslim, and Jewish ruling classes and elites cooperate congenially and strategically without paying any attention to their religious backgrounds and differences. Religion, or more accurately 'religious conflicts and wars', are

conjured up to expedite the creation, circulation, and accumulation of capital, as well as the concentration of the power exercised by ruling classes and elites. The people belonging to the masses, meanwhile, have been killed, decimated, and deprived of leadership during such conflicts and wars and are manipulated, excluded, and impoverished under the terms of questionable forms of capitalist peace.

The rise of capitalism: Christian Zionism and the representation of the Palestinian spatio-cide

Cromwell's interest in Manasseh's proposal was dictated by the same factor that dictated Lloyd George's interest in Chaim Weizmann's proposal ten generations later: namely, the aid that each believed the Jews could render in wartime situation. And from Cromwell's (1599–1658) time on, every future episode of British concern with Palestine depended on the twin presence of the profit motive, whether commercial, military, or imperial, and the religious motive inherited from the Bible.

(Tuchman 1956, p. 14)

In stark contrast to the view that prevails in most literature that specializes in what is known as the Arab-Israeli conflict, I argue here that it was during the long sixteenth century, and not in 1897, that the seeds of the conflict were sown. It was during this historical juncture that Christian Zionism was invented, cultivated, and inculcated in communities and became an integral organic part of the Anglo-Saxon political culture, popular social mood, collective subjectivity, and mass consciousness that continues to act in the service of Anglo-Saxon colonial and imperial designs today.

The genesis of the conflict should not be sought solely in the spatial practices of the political Jewish-Zionist movement at work since the late nineteenth century, but in the spatial perceptions manufactured by Christian Zionism since the sixteenth century. The very idea of Zionism is deeply rooted in the perception that the community known as 'the Jews' is no less than a set of separate, scattered, religious, or religion-

based communities (not a national people) to be resettled as a sovereign political entity in Palestine in order to establish there an exclusively Jewish nation state. The idea of Jewish Restoration, historically speaking, emerged and gained purchase in simultaneity with the historical juncture and structural transformation that marked a shift from feudalistic and tributary structures to the capitalist mode of production. As a mere idea, it even preceded the Westphalia treaty of 1648 which fixed the meanings of sovereignty and delineated the functions of the nation state.

Whereas most Jewish Zionist writings appeared during the second half of the 19th century, non-Jews had already developed the ideas and program basic to what would become the Jewish political Zionism. Indeed, non-Jews had begun to promote the Zionist idea of a Jewish national consciousness directed towards Palestine three centuries before the first Zionist.

(Sharif 1983, p. 2)

In this sense, the Zionism of the sixteenth century, even as an idea shrouded in religiosity and piety, was the most powerful social force to dominate the social revolution of the Christian Reformation. As a matter of fact, this social revolution took place instantaneously and was simultaneous with the dramatic structural transformation which occurred within the Anglo-Saxon region during that period of time. Hence, the dramatic social and structural transformation, or the subjective and the objective metamorphosis, peculiar to the first crucial phase in the history of the capitalist world system had progressed both synchronously and in a dialectical manner. Non-Jewish Zionism arose out of the socio-structural transformation which marked the end of feudalism, the rise of capitalism, and the shift from Catholicism to Judeo-Christianity or Protestantism in the Anglo-Saxon region.

Before plunging into the realm of details and analysis, some questions are in order. Why, among all the world's countries, did England – and subsequently the United States – make possible the realization of the Zionist dream in Palestine? Why, among all the world's countries, have the United Kingdom and the United States, in a systematic and consistent manner, been the protectors and advocates of Zionism and Israel respectively, working to maintain and sustain Zionism's

physical materialization through the provision of unfettered and comprehensive support of the State of Israel in multifarious forms? How did such passionate attachment between the Anglo-Saxon ethos and the idea of Zionism, including the latter's political consummation and material embodiment in the form of Israel, evolve and flourish after the socio-economic drama of the long sixteenth century?

Why did such revolutionary relationships at the socio-political, ideological, religious, sentimental, and political-cultural levels take place between Christianity and Judaism at that specific structural juncture in the development of the capitalist world system? Such relationships seem contrary to pre-Reformation Europe's distrust of, and even contempt for, Jews and a religion understood to be inferior. How did structure and agency dialectically interact to manufacture harmonious relationships between the rising structures of capitalism and a receptive, malleable, and subservient superstructure grounded upon reinvented Judeo-Christian religion in the form of Protestantism? Which ideas and ideologies were conjured up, and by who, to harness and cement the base and superstructure of the rising mode of capitalist production? What was the teleological function of the reinvented religion? And what was the ideological function of the social revolution of the Reformation or the new Judeo-Christian alliance in coercing Anglo-Saxon 'civil' societies to accept the exigencies of capitalism, colonialism, and the growing interests of the rising Anglo-Saxon bourgeoisie and 'political' society?

The rise of capitalism represented a fundamental structural transformation of the prior structures of feudalism and tributary societies, one that prompted and necessitated a reach beyond traditional territorial boundaries in pursuit of goods, markets, power, and influence. Capitalism – as a philosophy founded on the principle of expansion – prompts people to imagine geopolitical futures and to represent and conceptualize spaces around the world; while these acts involve abstraction, they also crucially anticipate real and intentional deployments of human agency that will enact capitalist geopolitical agendas in increasingly glocalised

spaces. The extension of capitalist structures around the globe, and the expansion of the capitalist world system via territorial expansion, colonialism, neo-colonialism, imperialism, and neo-imperialism, could not occur without the necessary support of geopolitical imagination.

Acts of geopolitical imagination and strategic representations of social spaces around the world, whether they take the form of real, theoretical, behavioural, or discursive acts (spoken or imagined), do not occur separate from considerations of the needs of capitalist structures. We base our conceptualizations on events, activities, organic crises, structural and social changes, phenomena, and processes which have occurred within the global system in the past, that is to say through backward analysis and descriptions. Certainly, we apply backward analysis strategically in order to affect, in functional ways, the trajectory of future spatial practices. We do this, however, via forward analysis and prescriptions that are consistent with our individual, class-based, and so-called 'national' interests in a functionalist teleology. At the interstate level within the capitalist world system in the modern period, forward analyses have been essentially produced by bourgeois 'organic intellectuals' who, according to Gramsci's categorization, speak on behalf of their class, often through and with the authority of the academy, policy communities, and think tanks involved in strategic planning and the delivery of a myriad of glocal public policies and recommendations. An analysis of geopolitical imagination in relation to Palestine will help us then to answer the question as to how the dramatic socio-structural changes that have occurred within the Anglo-Saxon region since the sixteenth century have spurred the imagination and representation of Palestinian space in a strategic manner.

Regina Sharif's research on the neglected subject of 'non-Jewish Zionism' (1983) and Barbara Tuchman's *The Bible and the Sword* (1956) both provide essential information for anyone looking to grasp the magnitude and dynamics of the structural-behavioural dialectics pervading the Anglo-Saxon region since the sixteenth century. They include the rich data and detailed descriptions necessary to illustrate the pivotal role

that organic intellectuals from the Anglo-Saxon bourgeoisie played in subordinating the Anglo-Saxon collective subjectivity (or socio-political control of civil society from below) to the needs of the rising structures of capitalism, colonialism, and imperialism, and the material interests and ideological needs of the rising bourgeoisie. Their broad historical narrative prompts us to conclude that the subjugation of popular Anglo-Saxon culture and the moulding of its collective consciousness from the early sixteenth century onwards was accomplished, in effect, via the literal interpretation of the Old Testament.

According to Sharif, it was during the religious revolution of the Reformation era in the sixteenth century that Protestant Christians accepted the Old Testament as the supreme authority of belief and conduct. This dramatic socio-religious shift meant relinquishing the idea of the infallible church, which had been represented by the pope in Rome, and it also involved Protestant culture's embrace of the infallibility of the Old Testament, known as the Jewish or Hebrew Bible. After the translation of scriptures into the vernacular in the early decades of the sixteenth century, early Protestants turned to the Old Testament to familiarize themselves with the history, geography, traditions, and laws of the Hebrews, and the Land of Israel. The adoption of the Old Testament as the highest authority for an autonomous English church became for 'three centuries the most powerful single influence on the English culture' (Tuchman 1956, p. 80). In many British homes, the Bible became 'the only book in the house and, being so, was read over and over until its words and images and characters and stories became as familiar as bread. Children learned long chapters by heart and usually knew the geography of Palestine before they knew their own' (Tuchman 1956, p. 83). Sharif tells us that

As the land of the Chosen People, Palestine was constantly present in the Protestant imagination, and their own identification with the land and people of the Book received expression in protestant liturgy, rituals and even in the given names of their children. To the Christian mind in Protestant Europe, Palestine became the Jewish land. The Jews became the Palestinian people who were foreign to Europe, absent from their Home-land, but in due time were to be returned to Palestine.

(Sharif 1983, p. 3)

By the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Anglo-Saxon Christians were, for the first time, buying Bibles and interpreting scripture for themselves. This period was characterized, in the Anglo-Saxon region, by 'Bible Syndrome' or what Thomas Huxley termed the 'national epic' of England (Tuchman 1956, pp. 1, 81.) Obsessed and infatuated with the Old Testament, Protestants turned this religious text not only into their most popular reading material but also into their only reference for general historical knowledge of Palestine. The Bible Syndrome mania, or the 'national epic' which swept through the Anglo-Saxon region from the sixteenth century onwards, reduced the total history of Palestine to only those episodes which included a Hebrew presence. People in Anglo-Saxon civil society, as the main recipients of this new socio-religious indoctrination, became conditioned to believe that nothing had happened in Palestine except those myths – hazy events, half-concealed in murky legends – and sparse historical narratives recorded in the Old Testament.

Palestinian history was appropriated and its social geography as well as its cultural richness were effaced to the extent that many Protestants began to think of Palestine as Jewish land. This relentless, systematic indoctrination can only be termed as a deformation of collective consciousness. The origins of the present-day Zionist/Israeli spatial discourse are indebted to this mythology and falsification of history which claimed that historical rights to Palestine could only be sought and found, in the Anglo-Saxon Reformation era at least, in Protestant and Puritan interpretations and writings. Mythology and a distorted history of Palestine have been accepted in the Anglo-Saxon region since that time, and so an understanding of that period is therefore crucial to an understanding of the historical manipulation of Palestine. It was not by accident that David Ben-Gurion, the first Israeli prime minister, referred to the Christian Bible as 'the Jews' sacrosanct title-deed to Palestine' (Ben Gurion 1954, p. 100, cited in Sharif 1983, p. 13).

The strategic geopolitical considerations and economic interests that generated a class-based alliance between Jewish and Anglo-Saxon members of the bourgeoisie underlie both non-Jewish and Jewish-Zionist discourses and have been, from the outset, far more significant than their religious beliefs and proclaimed piety, however. Manasseh's proposals to Cromwell in 1650 and 1655 (cited in this section's epigraph) came to represent only the debut of this alliance which has always been underpinned by class-based allegiances. By 1845, when the British colonial and imperial interests in the region were at stake, the masks of religious fervour and piety were removed and colonial and imperial policies surfaced to take advantage of 'Bible syndrome'. In that year, Edward L. Mitford of London's Colonial Office proposed 'the establishment of the Jewish nation in Palestine, as a protected state under the guardianship of Great Britain' (Halsell 1986, p. 137), a condition of tutelage that would be withdrawn once the Jews were able to take care of themselves. A Jewish state, he said, 'Would place us in a commanding position in the Levant from whence to check the process of encroachment, to overawe our enemies and, if necessary repel their advance' (Tuchman 1956, p. 216).

Among non-Jewish Zionists, prominent intellectuals who advocated or prophesied the 'redemption' of the 'Land of Israel' by the Jews were Milton, Locke, Newton, Priestley, Fichte, Browning, Finch, and George Eliot, to mention a few. Among politicians, we can number as sympathetic to the cause Palmerston, Milner, Lloyd George, Churchill, Balfour, Shaftesbury, and many other figures of note (Anderson 2001, p. 7). The era of imagining, conceptualizing, and representing the Palestinian space finally culminated in the signing of the Balfour Declaration on 2 November 1917, and Tuchman (1956, p. 216) argues that, '[w]ithout the background of the English Bible it is doubtful that the Balfour Declaration would ever have been issued in the name of the British government or the Mandate for Palestine undertaken, even given the strategic factors that later came into play'.

Despite their vivid, archival work on Christian Zionism, neither Sharif nor Tuchman elaborates on the linkage between

the Anglo-Saxon social revolution, manifested in the new Judeo-Christian alliance, and the budding structural transformation marked by the emergence of capitalism. The same charge could also, of course, be levelled against critics like Sharif who, for example, only alludes to the structural-behavioural dialectics of the socio-economic drama of that historical moment in a cursory reference to the fact that ‘the new religious climate of the sixteenth century, reinforced by a series of political upheavals, contributed to the emergence of [...] Zionist precepts’ (1956, p. 216). At any rate, their valuable work invites readers to demystify the complex relationships that persist between Judaism and Christianity, capitalism, colonialism, organic intellectuals from the Anglo-Saxon bourgeoisie, and Palestinian space. In particular, their research prompts the question as to why this dramatic shift from avowed anti-Semitism to a strategic and always selective ‘philo-Semitism’ took place specifically at this particular spatio-temporal juncture – at the historical moment and in the specific geographical region that saw capitalism emerge.

It is in this context that this chapter claims that Christian Zionism – Judeo-Christianity or Protestantism – functioned as an ideology for the nascent bourgeoisie and the rising social system of capitalism in their early stages. The literal reinterpretation of the text and the alteration of Christianity’s mission meant that religion was given a key role at the ‘civil’ level of a society that was receptive to, and looking to articulate, structural change (Qassoum 2004). Drawing heavily on Marx’s seminal work, ‘The Jewish Question’, Samir Amin explains:

[T]he formation of the ideology of capitalism went through different stages: the first was the adaptation of Christianity, notably by means of the Reformation. But this transformation only represented a first step, limited to certain regions of the European cultural area. Because capitalism developed early in England, its bourgeois revolution took on a religious, and therefore particularly alienated, form. Masters of the real world, the English bourgeoisie did not feel the need to develop a philosophy.

(Amin 1989, p. 85)

Amin rightly rejects Weber’s thesis that capitalism is the product of Protestantism and instead claims that

society, transformed by the nascent capitalist relationships of production, was forced to call the tributary ideological construct, the construct of medieval scholasticism, into question. It was therefore real social change that brought about transformation in the field of ideas, creating the conditions for the appearance of the ideas of the renaissance and modern philosophy as it imposed a readjustment of religious belief – not the reverse. [...] At the same time, the ambiguity of the bourgeois revolution at the level of real society – a revolution that dethrones the tributary power and appeals to the people for help in doing so, but only in order to exploit them more efficiently in the new capitalist order – entails the stormy coexistence of the ‘bourgeois Reformation’ and so-called heresies.

(Amin 1989, pp. 86, 87–88)

Perry Anderson notes the lineage that connects modern events to these Reformation processes:

Behind London’s decision to back Zionism [...] lay a long-standing ideological disposition within Protestant culture, with its powerful attachment to the Pentateuch, that favoured the return of the Jews to the Holy land. This strand of Christian Zionism, boasting a distinguished pedigree going back to the seventeenth century, formed an essential background to the shield extended by the British imperial elite to the build-up of Jewish settlements in Palestine, once Britain had made sure of its control of the region at Versailles.

(Anderson 2001, p. 7)

Finally, Gramsci’s relentless work to insert human subjectivity into the framework of historical materialism – together with his inexorable efforts to restore the status of consciousness, the power of ideas, and role of the human will in the making of human history and social change – are highly relevant to our discussion of this blatantly neglected *longue durée* structure and the several conjunctures in capitalism’s development during which the seeds of the Palestinian spatio-cide were sown. In one of his theoretical fragments, written in prison on 9 May 1932, he wrote that ‘an ethico-political history is by no means excluded from historical materialism’ (Gramsci 1988, p. 215).

Alas, most historical analyses about the so-called Zionist/Israeli-Arab/Palestinian conflict have ignored this extremely significant *longue durée* structure, the rise of capitalism, and its ethico-political, ideological, and cultural superstructure. Such ahistorical analyses, as a genre of academic production, are not only inaccurate but serve to perpetuate an unjust world order.

British colonialism and Palestinian spatio-side: the Nakba/Catastrophe

The Balfour Declaration of 2 November 1917 marked the culmination of Britain's geopolitical imaginings and seemed to give physical form to its strategic representations of the Palestinian space. In the Palestinian context, however, two varieties of colonialism were present simultaneously between 1917 and 1948. Palestine's scant exploitable economic resources meant that Britain could not consider it to be a traditional or typical European colony. Palestine's significance emanated instead from its strategic geopolitical location. It was conceived as a bridgehead or an outpost to protect British strategic interests in the region and beyond. These interests, included, *inter alia*, facilitating and accelerating the establishment of the 'Jewish-Zionist State', protecting British interests in Egypt including the Suez Canal, securing the route to India, and building the pipeline from the oilfields of Mosul in northern Iraq to the port city of Haifa in Palestine. This pipeline was completed in 1936. To accomplish their colonial and imperial objectives in Palestine, British colonial forces resorted to the conventional British colonial methods of coercion, multiple economic policies and regulations, manipulation, and co-optation.

The second type of colonialism, namely Jewish-Zionist settler-colonialism, viewed, and is still viewing, the Palestinians as a surplus population that has to be dispossessed and transferred. Generally speaking, two major policies have been applied by Jewish-Zionist agencies to accomplish this strategy. First, there has been the desperate policy of land purchases from landlords. Zionist efforts in this regard have resulted, over fifty years, in the purchase of only six percent of the land (Masalha 2009, p. 45). Second, there has been a strict implementation of 'Hebrew labour' (*avoda ivrit*) or the '100 percent Jewish labour' policy underscored by racial exclusion that denies Palestinians employment and job opportunities.

This policy of *avoda ivrit* dominated the Jewish-Zionist labour movement, implemented under British colonial

tutelage, and contributed immensely to the dynamics and dialectical relationships between the intertwined processes of development (among actors in the Jewish-Zionist sector) and underdevelopment (among the Arabs). On the whole, these two policies, which aimed at the impoverishment and pauperization of Palestinian workers, agricultural labourers, and the poor, were among the critical pillars of Zionist spatial discourse. It is exceedingly important to bear in mind that both policies were pursued in full consistence with Theodor Herzl's statement, made in 1895, in which he urged Zionist followers to 'spirit the penniless population across the border by denying it any employment in our country'. Since the days of Herzl, the concept of 'transfer', whether agreed, voluntary, or coerced, remains a Zionist preoccupation (Masalha 2009, p. 45).

The sweeping restructuring process engendered by capitalist penetration, British colonial and Zionist policies, the massive flow of capital from the Jewish-Zionist diaspora, and the introduction of new, advanced technologies, expertise, and knowledge had all coalesced to set into motion new socio-structural dynamics. The spatial restructuring process under the guidance and control of British colonial authorities, along with the complementary and compatible policies implemented by various Zionist agencies, had together determined the structural terrain and parameters for both Jewish-Zionist development and Arab *under* development processes. As Sara Roy explains,

Britain's economic policy in Palestine fostered the socioeconomic development of the Jewish sector at the expense of the Arab, through government policies that facilitated Jewish immigration, land purchase, settlement, and capitalist development, and by giving the Zionists time to establish the institutional foundation of a pre-state structure. British policies also encouraged a process of incipient proletarianization among Arab peasantry that continued long after the mandate.

(Roy 1995, p. 36)

The transformation of the means of production and the appropriation of Palestinian social surplus by the Zionist economic sector was exacerbated by the uneven distribution of resources and the growing indebtedness of peasants to urban merchants and moneylenders. These factors created regional,

urban, and rural imbalances, class conflict, social tension, and ethnic rupture which were worsened by a combination of socio-economic phenomena and processes that were simmering and threatening the imposed British-Zionist 'social order'.

The spatial restructuring of Palestine via capital penetration after 1917 in combination with British-Zionist colonial policies engendered Palestinian rural-urban migration, the dissolution of the structures of village life, the disruption of the social fabric, increasing economic dependency and vulnerability on external economic forces, a growing volume of impoverished landless peasants, and a new class of people who became the urban poor. In the face of such daunting odds, and in the midst of a profound restructuring process, the likelihood of Palestinian society competing and winning were, by any logic, grim. Financial debts, dislocation, dispossession, and a growing sense of physical and socio-economic insecurity had become among the most salient features of Palestinian life by the 1930s.

The global capital crisis of the early 1930s coincided with the rise of Nazism in Germany and precipitated Palestinian mass resistance against both the Zionist colonial settler community and the British colonial presence. This is not to say that Palestinians did not resist both colonial forces before that time. More spontaneous and short-lived uprisings or *intifadas* took place in 1920, 1921, 1929, and 1933 (Fiad 2001; R. Khalidi 2001).

The global capitalist crisis started in 1929 and the worldwide depression that followed exacerbated the economic distress of the vast majority of Palestinian people who had already borne the brunt of the economic restructuring that had gone on since 1917. The rise of Nazism and the impending existential threat to German Jews became translated into an existential threat to the Palestinian space in its entirety. Palestinians became alarmed by the prospect of massive European Jewish immigration into their country. Whereas most countries, especially the United Kingdom and the United States, coldly shut their doors to the escaping Jews, British colonial authorities implemented immigration policies which

opened Palestinian gates widely. In 1931, demographically speaking, the Zionist enterprise in Palestine seemed far from being viable. The total population of Palestine that year was made up of 957,191 people. There were 172,300 Jews who comprised eighteen percent of the total, while 784,891 Arabs made up the remaining eighty-two percent. Between 1932 and 1939, the British colonial authorities permitted the entrance of 273,157 Jews and this raised their presence to thirty-one percent of the total population of 1,435,145. In 1935 alone, at the height of this influx of refugees from Hitler's persecution, almost 62,000 Jewish immigrants arrived in Palestine, a number greater than that made up by the entire Jewish population of the country as it had stood as recently as 1919 (R. Khalidi 2001, p. 24).

The immigration policies promoted by the British colonial authorities that permitted the entrance of German and other European Jews to Palestine were, according to A. G. Frank, motivated by strategic reasons. Frank argues that

During the world crisis of the 1930s and early 1940s the British interest in suppressing Arab nationalism in the Middle East largely coincided with Jewish interests in the British Mandate over Palestine. The British – often for strategic reasons – undertook substantial infrastructural road construction and port development for Jewish, but not Arab, manufacturing industry in Palestine, and permitted the inflow of petit bourgeois Jewish migrants fleeing with their capital from Nazi Germany.

(Frank 1981, p. 48)

Realization of the extent of Zionist penetration, manifested in the massive arrival of immigrants and settlement expansion along with the declining economy, brought Palestinian national and class awareness together. A general strike broke out in Jaffa on 19 April 1936, and it spread nationwide, lasting for six months. It has been considered the longest general strike in history and it became an inspiration to many colonized people in the Third World (Fiad 2001). A Palestinian armed *intifada* broke out throughout the country in the spring of 1937. Over the next eighteen months, the British lost control of large areas of the country, including the older parts of the cities of Jerusalem, Nablus, and Hebron. To suppress the Palestinian *intifada* that ran from 1936 to 1939, Anderson writes:

London deployed 25,000 troops and squadrons of aircraft to crush the rebellion: the largest colonial war of the British Empire in the whole inter-war period. The counter-insurgency campaign was aided and abetted by the Yishuv – Jews supplying a majority of Wingate’s death squads. [...] Without the mailed force of the British police and army, the Arab majority – 90 percent of the population – would have stopped the Zionist build-up in its tracks after the First World War. Zionism depended completely on the violence of the British imperial state for its growth.

(Anderson 2001, p. 27)

On the Palestinian side, the effects and impacts of the British suppression of the uprising were devastating at all levels in the short, medium, and long terms. The iron fist used by the British and Zionist forces left approximately 5,000 dead and 10,000 wounded, and those detained totalled 5,679 in 1939 (Abu-Lughod 1990; R. Khalidi 2001; W. Khalidi 1971). The suffering inflicted upon the Palestinians by British and Zionist forces in crushing the uprising was devastating. In an Arab population of about one million, ‘over 10 percent of the adult male population was killed, wounded, imprisoned, or exiled’ (R. Khalidi 2001, p. 27).

On the other hand, the Jewish-Zionist settler community benefited immensely from the deep involvement of the British forces in crushing the revolt. It gained significant assistance in terms of its armaments and military organization, which Britain provided in order to fight the common enemy. Rashid Khalidi (2001, pp. 27–28) argues that ‘by the end of the 1930s, 6,000 armed Jewish auxiliary police were helping the British to suppress the last embers of the revolt. [...] and by 1939] the Yishuv had achieved the demographic weight, control of strategic areas of land, and much of the weaponry and military organization that would be needed as a springboard for taking over the country within less than a decade’.

By the outbreak of World War Two, British colonialism had broken the backs of both Palestinian political and civil societies, clearing the way for the post-war triumph of Zionism. When the United Nations issued the resolution for the partition of Palestine on 29 November 1947 (UN General Assembly 1947), Palestinians rejected the plan and entered the fighting with a divided leadership, exceedingly limited finances, no centrally organized military forces or centralized

administrative organs, and no reliable allies. According to Khalidi, ‘the crippling nature of the defeat the Palestinians sustained in 1936–39 was among the main reasons for their failure to overcome the challenges of 1947–48 on the diplomatic, political, or military levels’ (2001, p. 36).

On 13 May 1948, the British ended their colonial rule of Palestine. One day later, the State of Israel officially came into existence and the war began. Palestinians lost seventy-eight percent of historical Palestine, between 770,000 and 780,000 Palestinians (totalling sixty-six percent of the Palestinian people) became refugees, and 418 villages and towns were destroyed, with many later razed: the imperial design of Palestinian spatio-cide – the Nakba or the Catastrophe – was accomplished. Tom Segev (1986, pp. 66–68) calculates the moveable and immovable property of Palestinians seized by the Israeli government, army, and individuals, and he notes that a total of 45,000 homes and apartments, about 7,000 shops and other places of business, some 500 workshops and industrial plants, and more than 1,000 warehouses – as well as more than 800,000 cultivated acres of groves, orchards, and fields – were confiscated.

In the following sections, I will discuss the spatial dynamics of Palestinian space under neoliberalism. If Britain had played a dominant role in the conceptualization and destruction of the Palestinian space up until 1948, it was later to be supplanted by the United States which became Israel’s new best protector and advocate.

Neoliberal capitalist peace

The 1970s and 1980s: before the neoliberal dystopia

From the early 1970s onwards, the Palestinian popular classes, together with their organic intellectuals in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (WBGs), began to use a popular development approach for emancipation which I shall call the Palestinian

popular democratic development model (PPDDM). The rise of the PPDDM – in parallel and in stark contrast with the emerging global neoliberal project – can be attributed to a variety of local, regional, and global events and activities that took place in the world system during the late 1960s and the 1970s. They included the implementation of draconian policies and measures which were carried out by the forces involved in enforcing the Zionist Israeli occupation.

In the absence of a Palestinian national ‘political society’, and living under brutal Zionist policies, the Palestinian masses and their organic intellectuals gradually began to make use of strategies we can recognize in Gramsci’s ‘war of position’ and the Lefebvrian political strategy of ‘differential space’. As early as 1972, the process of building Palestinian mass organizations, mobilization, conscientization, and politicization had started within Palestinian civil society. The original aim was to consolidate Palestinian national identity in order to bolster the national liberation movement and its struggle to get rid of the Israeli yoke of occupation.

In the process of building structures for use in their national liberation struggle, the Palestinian popular classes and the middle class, in close cooperation with organic intellectuals, found themselves deeply engrossed in a genuine, organic process of development and spatial emancipation. What makes this case unique is the absence of a national Palestinian ‘political society’ in the WBGS. This situation granted an open playing field for Palestinian civil society’s forces to unleash their organizational imagination, planning creativity, and tactical innovation in a struggle against the Israeli occupation.

Palestinian ‘civil society’, as it was developed in the 1970s and 1980s, offers a striking case study for anyone looking to probe the powerful meaning of ‘civil society’ as a site for the legitimization, de-legitimization, and re-legitimization of ‘political society’ and to fathom the human potential for development and human emancipation outside of ‘political society’s’ conventional mechanisms and spaces. During those two decades, a historic bloc was established between the Palestinian masses and their organic intellectuals. It gradually

evolved through a dialectical and ontological process which subjected theory to practice and re-abstracted theory from that practice in an ongoing development process. What emerged was a highly engaged dialectical exchange between the masses and their organic intellectuals.

Many popular education programmes raised awareness and critical consciousness and were used to develop a new political culture that would bring the masses and organic intellectuals into an honest dialogue, a mutual learning process, and direct communication with each other. There was a clear and productive affinity between Palestinian organic intellectuals and the Palestinian masses, and the powerful idea of national liberation made possible organizational creativity, as well as innovative de-centralized, democratic, and participatory decision-making processes, social cohesion, mutual help and trust, social solidarity, networking, the active participation of women, and the inclusion of excluded groups from refugee camps, rural regions, and the urban working classes. As one observer put it: ‘while the health, agricultural and voluntary work committees remained social rather than political in their programs, they blazed a trail that others widened into a national highway’ (McDowall 1989, p. 118, cited in Shafir and Peled 2000, p. 199).

The PPDDM came, through its focus on shared aspirations, to ‘exorcise the vicious spirits’ of the vertical social relations that had governed Palestinian society before 1967. The Palestinian social formation had, to that point, been grounded in patronage, clientelism, nepotism, reverence for hierarchical patriarchal authority, semi-feudal and kinship-based patterns of loyalties, reactionary familism, co-optation, collaboration, exploitation, mistrust, and cruel, egoistic individualism. The organizational structure of PPDDM emerged, by contrast, from mass organizations which ultimately brought about the creation of virtuous horizontal social relations and obligations.

The 1970s and the 1980s represent the brightest years in modern Palestinian history. They have, in retrospect, come to represent the collective will of the Palestinian people to secure, not only national liberation, but their spatial emancipation in all its human, national, class-based, political,

social, gendered, economic, physical, cultural, semiotic, and symbolic dimensions. Thousands of neighbourhood committees and local councils, as well as new regional and national organizations, trade and workers' unions, student and youth associations, voluntary work camps, farmer and peasant unions, agricultural and health relief committees, production and consumption cooperatives, women's federations, and professional syndicates took active part in this popular spatial emancipation project. Strategies that took advantage of a 'war of position' and 'differential space' were meticulously applied at the Palestinian civil society level and succeeded, in extraordinary ways, in transcending the limits of a struggle which had traditionally focused on work-, community-, and issue-based action.

PPDDM not only led to the popular uprising or *intifada* of 1987 against the Zionist occupation of WBGS, but it was also its objective and subjective engine. PPDDM provided the *intifada* with a solid popular power base; a self-generative organizational structure; an inexhaustible reservoir of renewable, popular, effective, trusted, and charismatic leadership; a self-adjusting incubator for innovative ideas; and an active superstructure with access to a remarkable reserve of intellectual labour. The PPDDM sustained the popular uprising for almost four years (from 7 December 1987 to October 1991) and inflicted high material and moral costs on the State of Israel. The *intifada* and its underlying PPDDM became a threat to authoritarian Arab regimes, a political threat to the PLO, and a serious hindrance to Israel's global designs for its own deep integration into the emerging neoliberal global economy.

Rabin's iron fist and 'break their bones' policies against Palestinian youth failed to crush the *intifada*. The ending of the uprising on the eve of capital expansion in the 'Middle East' region was made possible first and foremost because it coincided with the class-based interests of the neoliberal elites within and beyond the region itself and so drew support from Arab oil monarchies, Egyptians, Jordanians, Palestinians, Israelis, and the ruling classes and elites from the triad regions. Arafat and the exiled PLO leadership were, according to

Robinson (1997, p. 47), ‘allowed to return to Palestine largely because they promised to end fully the revolution that they did not initiate’. Noam Chomsky similarly points out that, before the Oslo agreement was signed,

There were background discussions secretly held under the auspices of the American Academy of Arts and Science. The negotiations involved the representatives of the Israeli Mossad and their Palestinian counterparts and they were concerned with only one issue: the security of Israelis. The question of the security of the Palestinians did not arise. That was on standard racist grounds. The problems were how to assist the PLO in repressing the population in the occupied territories and controlling them. The basic idea was expressed rather nicely by Rabin: it would be a great advantage for Israel to pull out, because then the PLO forces would be able to repress the population, without any complaints from the High Court of Justice or human rights organisations.

(Chomsky 1995, pp. 95–96)

Neoliberal peace? The Oslo era and Palestinian dystopian anomie

Question: Do you think it’s essential first to have political peace in the Middle East?

Shimon Peres: Not necessarily. Joint ventures and open borders are what count.

(Lipschultz 2000, p. 246)

As we have noted, the organic crisis of 1968–1974 that swept the core capitalist countries, the 1973 War between Israel and Egypt and Syria, the first ‘oil shock’ in 1973, the Black September of 1970 in Jordan, and the establishment of the Trilateral Commission as an elite planning forum for world management in 1973 had all lethally impacted on the trajectory of prospects for the conflict’s resolution and Palestinian rights.

During this glocal juncture, the PLO was subjected to massive new pressure from the rising regional Saudi petrodollar order which came to replace Pan-Arab leadership and was consistent with the emerging, yet embryonic and amorphous, neoliberal historic bloc, or the transnational neoliberal capitalist class (Aruri 2003, pp. 44–45; Bird 1980,

pp. 349–50; Chomsky 1974, cited in Frank 1981, p. 51; Waterbury 1984, pp. 406–407). It was during this glocal juncture that the PLO embarked on its dystopian downward spiral of concessions and capitulations.

In 1977, Kai Bird (1980, p. 350) wrote that ‘the successful establishment of a leftist and secular state in Lebanon or Palestine-Jordan threatens the Saudi monarchy as well as trilateral interests. [...] The Saudis probably are counting on the creation of a right wing autonomous Palestinian state in the WBGs that excludes the Marxist elements in the PLO, and is perhaps loosely federated with the Hashemite Kingdom in Jordan’. Since the early 1970s, Saudi Arabia has played a major sub-imperialist role in undermining national, secular, and revolutionary movements in the Arab world in particular and in financing counter-revolutionary forces (in cooperation with the Central Intelligence Agency) around the world in general (see Bird 1980, pp. 349–350).

Naseer Aruri has suggested that

[t]he new definition of ‘struggle’ formulated in Arab summit conferences in Algiers, Rabat, and Cairo encouraged the PLO to promote itself together with a program of ‘self-determination’ in a mini-Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza. In return for supporting the ‘new’ PLO, with its watered-down objectives, the Arab governments demanded an unwritten quid pro quo. The PLO would drastically scale down its guerrilla operations and cease its rhetoric about a democratic secular state in all of historic Palestine. The Arab governments, in return, would offer diplomatic support and increase economic assistance.

(Aruri 2003, pp. 44–45)

In 1974, under Saudi and Egyptian pressure, the Palestinian National Council (PNC) in its twelfth session made one of its most dramatic decisions, which was to ‘establish a Palestinian “national authority” on any liberated part of the Palestinian homeland’ (Hallaj 1989, p. 670). This decision represented the PLO leadership’s capitulation to pressure from Saudi petrodollars and oil-rich monarchies, and it exposed the fact that reactionary forces were in control of the PLO. It signalled the beginning of a process in which Palestinian interests were manipulated by outside forces. It also marked the abandonment of its initial progressive aim which was to establish a secular democratic state in all of Palestine, a human

emancipation project which had been understood to offer a way beyond the ideological shackles of Zionism and imperialism, one which would allow Arabs and Jews to shrug off religion and nationalism as outdated stages of their human development.

In 1970, Fayez Sayegh, the Palestinian scholar and statesman who was eulogized in 1980 as the ‘spirit of the Palestinian people’, explained the rationale underlying the vision of the secular democratic Palestine in this way:

What is needed is a principled and courageous vision. The required vision must do precisely what a ‘compromise’ cannot. A compromise takes its departure from the actual positions of the contending parties and seeks to find a solution somewhere between them. The needed vision transcends those starting points and looks for a solution above them both. Men who cannot or will not surrender to one another may be inspired to surrender together to a higher vision – and in that surrender find freedom and fulfillment, as well as reconciliation.

(Sayegh 1970, p. 35, cited in Hallaj 1989, p. 666)

The idea of a secular democratic state in all of Palestine for all Muslims, Christians, and Jews was discussed and approved by the PNC from its fifth session in 1969 until 1974. The PLO, writes Hallaj (1989, p. 666), ‘not only endorsed the democratic secular state but also made great efforts to secure widespread popular support for it’. A spokesman for one of the main resistance groups explained that, through the idea of the democratic secular state, ‘the Palestinian revolution achieved the total defeat of traditional chauvinistic thinking’ (Hallaj 1989, p. 666) The idea of a democratic secular state in Palestine offered an alternative to what a PLO leader called ‘Arab chauvinism and Zionist racism’, and by doing so it changed the Arab-Israeli conflict from a zero sum game to a reconcilable contest and made possible a break in the ‘dialectics of oppression’ that fuelled the conflict (Hallaj 1989, p. 666).

Israel and the global conjuncture (1968–1974)

The dynamics of this global conjuncture came to mark a new stage of Israel's deep incorporation into the capitalist world system as a reliable surrogate for American power in the region. In the process, and in line with the rise of neoliberalism, a blow was dealt to its dominant-party system and its protectionist and state-centred economy between 1967 and 1977. The 1967 war, according to Samir Amin (2004, pp. 9–10), was

planned in agreement with Washington in 1965, [...] in pursuit of several goals: to start the collapse of the populist nationalist regimes; to break their alliance with the Soviet Union; to force them to reposition themselves on American terms; and to open new grounds for Zionist colonization. In the territories conquered in 1967 Israel set up a system of apartheid inspired by that of South Africa. It is here that the interests of dominant capital meet up with those of Zionism.

The occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip provided Israel with a political and business goldmine and benefits in the form of cheap and flexible labour supply, new taxpayers, captured markets, and, most importantly, free water. These benefits far exceeded the occupation costs, and by 1972 the Israeli economy was expanding 'at an average annual rate of 10 percent' (Nitzan and Bichler 1996, p. 61).

The 1967 war turned Israel into a US regional strategic asset, and US economic and military aid shot up by 450 percent in order to heighten the regional arms race (Zunes 1996, p. 92). In relation to the strategic functions of US aid to Israel, Stephan Zunes argues that 'this benefit to American defense contractors is multiplied by the fact that every major arms transfer to Israel creates a new demand by Arab states – most of which can pay hard currency through petrodollars – for additional American weapons to challenge Israel. Indeed, Israel announced its acceptance of a Middle Eastern arms freeze in 1991, but the US effectively blocked it' (Zunes 1996, p. 96).

The soaring prices of oil after 1973 created the need to recycle petrodollars into Western markets and especially into the United States' financial system, its military industrial complex, and other realms of investments. This recycling was, after 1973, a major topic discussed by the Trilateral

Commission.¹ Finishing the job of occupying all of Palestine and other Syrian and Egyptian lands in 1967, Israel won American support and protection which persists today.²

Perry Anderson (2015, p. 17) notes that

[n]ot merely does the US supply Israel with an official \$3 billion a year – in reality, perhaps over \$4 billion – in different forms of aid, plus an array of further lucrative financial privileges reserved for it alone [... but the] cornerstone of America's security commitment to Israel has been an assurance that the United States would help Israel uphold its qualitative military edge. This is Israel's ability to counter and defeat credible military threat from any individual state, coalition of states, or non-state actor, while sustaining minimal damages or casualties.

At any rate, in October 1977, after consulting with the University of Chicago economist Milton Friedman (the leading exponent of the monetarist theory that underlay neoliberalism), the Israeli government announced its economic *mahapach* (Frank 1981, p. 49), a transformation embedded in a set of public policies designed to move Israel away from a planned economy toward a free market system. It aimed to produce massive economic restructuring and substantial privatization which would be conducted in line with the canons and precepts of neoliberalism.

This new economic philosophy was not the exclusive preserve of Likud. It also became the new socio-economic perspective of the third generation of the Zionist labour movement during the 1980s and much of the 1990s. Its third generation continued, throughout the 1980s, to mount tremendous political pressure on political leaders from the second generation, such as Rabin and Peres, to adopt economic liberalization policies consonant with the exigencies of the emerging neoliberal global economy. By the mid-1980s, this new elite, emerging from the ranks of the Labor Party and ironically identified as part of the 'Centre-Left' in the Israeli political landscape, succeeded in closing the socio-economic policy gap between Labor and the Likud party.

The fundamental changes in the global mode of accumulation that had occurred since the early 1970s – namely the shift from Fordism to Toyotism or the flexible mode of accumulation accompanying the neoliberal structure – did not

only close the socio-economic gap between Likud and the Israeli Centre-Left perspectives and policies. By the mid-1980s, profound changes in the global mode of accumulation had also left 'the Israeli elites and many of the Arab ones with little choice but to accept the imperative of open borders, and global partnership' (Nitzan and Bichler 1996, p. 63).

By the late 1980s, Israel's ruling and business class faced several major challenges. The first of them was how to integrate Israel into the emerging neoliberal global economy. The second challenge was posed by the Arab boycott, which Israel needed to eradicate in order to integrate fully and deeply into the global economy. In his remarks before the Knesset Economic Committee on the Arab Boycott, Shimon Peres, who was Israel's foreign minister, stated that 'Israel loses about US\$3 billion annually to the boycott, equal to the amount we receive in financial aid from the US' (Peres 1994). Danny Gillerman, who was then president of the Israeli Chambers of Commerce, cited a study conducted by his own organization which argued that Israel had lost US\$44 billion as a result of the Arab boycott. Gillerman called on Prime Minister Rabin to consider its abolition as a top priority (Shafir and Peled 2000, p. 260).

It is worth highlighting here the tremendous pressure and arm-twisting applied by the US administration, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the G7 group, and the European Union on Arab states and the Arab League to end the boycott and to normalize relations with Israel. For example, 'GATT stated that it would not accept states as members unless they canceled the Arab boycott. [...] The seven industrialized countries, the G-7, issued a statement against the boycott, as has the European Community' (Peres 1994). The third challenge faced by Israel's dominant class was how to stop the *intifada* which broke out in December 1987, and, along with society at large, it faced the problem of trying to maintain the centripetal, tribal, ghettoized, and racist mentality underlying Zionism and the ideology of the state, in the face of peace, normalized relations with the Arabs, and the centrifugal forces and open borders favoured by globalization.

Equally significant is the question as to how American economic, political, diplomatic, military, media, and ‘moral’ support has enabled Israel’s powerful elites to overcome these contradictory, intractable, and formidable hindrances. We must ask how Israel will maintain its intimate, organic relationships with the imperial core while also integrating itself in the regional economy. Can Israel, with its ideology of Zionism and its roles and functions as a reliable sub-imperialist surrogate for American power in the region, establish peaceful, normalized relations with the Palestinian people in particular and the Arab people in general? How has Israel succeeded in turning its challenges into political gain, strategic assets, and economic profits without compromising either its ideology of expansion and exceptionalism or its roles and functions in the capitalist world system?

The definitive answers to these questions are embedded in the architecture, design, and implementation of the ‘Peace Process’ through which Israel succeeded in not only rejecting such challenges but turning them into unprecedented successes at multiple levels. The ‘Peace Process’ has been Israel’s bonanza and triumph. Since the early 1990s, Israel has been experiencing a spatial *passive revolution* in the strict Gramscian sense,³ thanks to American protection and advocacy, the collusion of the European Union, the collaboration of Arab elites, and the capitulation of the Palestinian leadership. The subsidization of the occupation by the ‘international community’, the co-optation of the Palestinian ‘intellectuals and intelligentsia’, and the pacification, de-politicization, and decimation of the leadership available to the Palestinian subaltern have also played their part. The dialectics between Palestinian’s dystopia and Israel’s utopia demonstrate that Shimon Peres, the godfather of this ‘Peace Process’, was unequivocally right in stating that ‘Political Peace, is not necessary, joint ventures and open borders are what count’ (Lip-schultz 2000, p. 246).

The peace process: the dialectics between Israel's utopia and Palestinian dystopia

The 1991 Madrid peace conference capitalized on the United States' victories in the Cold War and the Gulf War. The 'Peace Process' launched that year became, as Roy (1996, p. 59) recognized, 'a new mechanism for promoting and securing U.S. interests in the region with Israel at its core. For the U.S., the Middle East peace process – a direct policy outgrowth of American intervention in the Gulf War – has replaced the Cold War as a rationale for U.S. foreign policy'. The United States aimed to achieve several American-Israeli geopolitical objectives, but not peace. In fact, its primary, strategic objective was to reassert its dominance over the region.

To fulfil this objective, the United States had to tidy up a traditional pocket of instability, accelerate the penetration of American corporations into the region, and protect its interests as part of the American 'national interest'. Bluntly put, it tied up the loose ends left after a global knockout by turning the whole Middle East and North African region (MENA) into an American-Israeli protectorate. The European Union and other second-tier players in the capitalist world system were assigned to finance the new PAX Israeli-Americana: 'Washington also has compelled the EU – the largest donor of the Palestinian Authority during the 1990s – not to get too involved in the issue, viewing the Israel-PLO rapprochement as an entirely American affair' (Robinson 1997).

Short-term Israeli-American common objectives included the end of the 1987–1991 *intifada* and the removal of the Arab boycott, and so they facilitated Israel's integration into the global economy. After the regional and global events of 1989–1991, Israel was to be rewarded for its Cold War services by sharing in the United States' economic domination of the region. The 'Peace Process' that began in Madrid culminated with the signing of the Oslo Accords, known as the Declaration of Principles, on 13 September 1993.

According to various observers, the peace process came to institutionalize and legitimize the historic Israeli and US rejection of Palestinian national rights and self-determination (Anderson 2001; Chomsky 1995; Christison 1999; Da'Na and Khoury 2001; Pappé 2002; Roy 1996, 2002). The dramatic changes in the United States' official political position with regard to the conflict on the eve of the Oslo Accords is extremely astonishing. Kathleen Christison (1999) argues that the objectives of the peace process were reframed only a few months before the signing celebration on 13 September 1993:

In June 1993, for instance, only a few months into Clinton's first term, Dennis Ross authored a statement of principles, released under Secretary of State Warren Christopher's name, that in a key way reframed the objectives of the peace process [...]. The statement subtly but fundamentally altered the U.S. position on the ultimate disposition of the occupied West Bank and Gaza, undermining the concept of territory for peace, which had always been a bedrock of U.S. policy. [...] The United States thereby came to consider the territories to be 'disputed' not, as previously, 'occupied'. Whereas longstanding U.S. policy had always been that Israel's control of these territories was temporary, it now adopted the Israeli position that Israel had the right to negotiate the retention of some or all of the territory. Under these new terms of reference, what had always previously been understood to mean 'full territory for full peace' had become instead, as far as the United States was concerned, 'some territory for full peace'

(Christison 1999, pp. 278)

Christison notes another significant turn in US policy toward the 'Israeli-Palestinian' conflict when she points out that, in 1993, the United States

failed for the first time in over forty years to support the UN General Assembly's annual reaffirmation of Resolution 194, adopted originally in 1949, which expressed support for the right of Palestinians who fled Palestine in 1948 to return to their homes as long as they were willing to live in peace with Israel. The United States had voted for the original resolution and forty subsequent reiterations of it. [...] In 1994, U.S. Ambassador to the UN, Madeleine Albright suggested in a letter to General Assembly members that, in light of the recent peace agreements, the General Assembly 'consolidate,' 'improve,' or 'eliminate' certain resolutions judged by the United States to be contentious.

(Christison 1999, p. 278)

In the aftermath of the signing of the Oslo Accords, a series of neoliberal economic summits were held at Casablanca (1994), Amman (1995), Cairo (1996), and Doha (1996) (Naqib 1997). These summits were organized and convened by the New York

-based Council of Foreign Relations, the World Bank, Harvard University's Institute for Social and Economic Policy in the Middle East, and the Davos-based World Economic Forum. They were then, in essence, the launching pad for the US-Israeli neoliberal bourgeois project in the region. Their strategic goal was not only to restructure Arab economies and societies along the basic principles of neoliberalism, but to subject the Arab world to US-Israeli domination. In practical terms, the summits were designed to translate into practice Peres' vision of the 'New Middle East' which was clearly in harmony with the United States' geopolitical strategic objectives in the region (Naqib 1997). These summits involved thousands of representatives from (mainly American) multinational corporations, governments, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and businesses from the region and beyond. In fact, they were the sheer embodiment of the transnational neoliberal historic bloc and the concrete representation of the structural-behavioural dialectics underlying the neoliberal bourgeois project in the MENA region which had been pursued under the smoke screen of the 'Peace Process'.

Since the early 1990s, the 'Peace Process' has succeeded in shattering the Arab boycott, integrating Israel into the global economy, and facilitating the neo-colonial restructuring of the occupied WBGS territories. In addition, Israel has successfully established itself as a regional foothold for global capital and as an outpost for multinational corporations. Israel was able to exploit the advantages of the global economy by 'importing' docile and low-wage foreign labour, exporting its production plants to cheap production sites in the region, and accessing fresh markets, including Arab ones; yet all this was only made possible under the veil of the 'Peace Process' which also allowed Israel to double the number of its settlers in the West Bank and East Jerusalem in the one decade after the Oslo Accords. The rate of settlement growth in the West Bank and Israeli-annexed East Jerusalem is staggering. At the end of 1993, there were 115,700 Israeli settlers in the occupied territory. The number of settlers in the West Bank now exceeds 350,000. There are an additional 300,000 Jews living in settlements across the pre-1967 border in East Jerusalem

(Shlaim 2013), and this has atomized the Palestinian space of the West Bank into small enclaves (Areas A, B, and C). The massive network of segregated bypass road systems alone has made the emergence of a viable, contiguous Palestinian state virtually impossible.

Since the 1990s, massive foreign direct investment has been injected into the Israeli economy, and Israel has benefited from an unprecedented volume of exports. More than 300,000 legal and illegal foreign labourers came to replace the Palestinian labour force, and all of these dramatic structural changes in the Israeli economy have been manifested spatially. In fact, since the 1990s, under the mask of the 'Peace Process', Israel has experienced a spatial revolution, passive and bourgeois in character, which has been led by Likud and Labor elites, both of Ashkenazi origin. The elite members of the labour movement and the Israeli 'Left' were the staunchest proponents of neoliberal economic restructuring and political liberalization and the main supporters of the so-called peace process with the Palestinians and the Arab world. By the late 1990s, Israel was gentrified, and socio-economic, political, and physical forms of polarization became the most salient indicators of the new Israeli spatial landscape (Naqib and Qassoum 2015; Qassoum 2004).

A range of factors helped Israel to enter the elite club of rich global countries. These included the privatization of public wealth, the super-exploitation and racist harassment of foreign labourers, the export of production plants (to Jordan and Egypt, for example), foreign direct investment, high and unprecedented rates of export, the development of high-tech industry including weaponry, new markets, and the circumvention of its responsibilities as an occupying force. This passive, bourgeois revolution produced a spatial polarization, the likes of which Israel had never witnessed, and, as a result, ten percent of the population came to control seventy percent of the country's wealth (Naqib and Qassoum 2015).

According to the World Bank, Israel's gross domestic product (GDP), derived from a population of 8.3 million, is approximately US\$290 billion, and its GDP per capita is

around US\$36,000. By contrast, the West Bank and Gaza Strip – with a combined population of 4.5 million – have a combined GDP of approximately US\$11 billion and a GDP per capita of about US\$2,700 (Dunsky 2015, p. 78).

Parallel with Israel's ongoing spatial and passive revolution since the 1990s, glocal neoliberal forces have launched offensive schemes of socio-political re-engineering, co-optation, coercion, and control from above and below against the Palestinian popular classes and the whole space at large, and these too have resulted in substantial spatial restructuring. In fact, these glocal forces have succeeded where Yitzhak Rabin and Israel failed. Foreign aid came to end the *intifada* between 1990 and 1991. The global neoliberal agenda of maintaining and prolonging the 'Peace Process' in the region overrode the Palestinian agenda of national liberation, development, and democracy. Foreign aid helped to establish a paradigm of conflict between Palestinian 'political' and 'civil' societies, yet both 'societies' have been engineered and steered to serve glocal neoliberal interests. Palestinian 'political' society represented by the Palestinian Authority was assigned to control the Palestinian popular classes from above through a well-trained and well-equipped police force and by co-optation via a bloated bureaucracy. This whole process has not gone unnoticed, and Aisling Byrne subjected it to a striking critique in her 2011 article for *Foreign Policy*:

'If we are building a police state – what are we actually doing here?' So asked a European diplomat responding to allegations of torture by the Palestinian security forces. The diplomat might well ask. A police state is not a state. It is a form of larceny: of people's rights, aspiration and sacrifices, for the personal benefits of an élite. [...] The roots of this manipulation of the Palestinian aspiration into its opposite – cynically dressed up and sold as statehood – were present from the outset.

(Byrne 2011)

The 'donor countries' have generously financed both the police force and the inflated bureaucracy as major mechanisms of coercion and co-optation. Meanwhile, swathes of the Palestinian intelligentsia – around 25,000 people – were drawn away from the kinds of social and cultural work that had gone on in the 1970s and 1980s into the employ of the kinds of hybrid non-governmental organizations (i.e. local and northern

non-governmental organizations, or NGOs) which were, in various ways, involved in delivering and administering the neoliberal agenda of the peace process. Women and young people in refugee camps in particular have been co-opted into NGO-led projects which focus on neoliberal goals such as capacity-building, democracy promotion, and good governance. A measure of the distance between this work and the people-centred projects of the 1970s and 1980s is that many modern project events take place in high-end hotels.

By the end of the 1990s, the involvement of the Palestinian community's intelligentsia in hundreds of NGOs (Qassoum 2004) had produced the effective de-politicization, de-radicalization, pacification, and co-option of Palestinian society by neoliberal global forces. Leftist Palestinian political factions which had opposed the peace process because it lacked the intention to bring 'just peace' were now atomized by the enticements and pressure of foreign aid (Qassoum 2004). The intelligentsia, serving for all intents and purposes as organic intellectuals in service of the new order, were now contributing to the de-politicization, de-radicalization, and manipulation of the vast majority of the Palestinian people. The Palestinian space is now in a worse condition than it was before 1967, and the social-political cohesion and trust built with such energy and purpose in the 1970s and the 1980s, along with the achievements of the Palestinian Popular Democratic Development Model (PPDDM) and the *intifada*, are gone. In their place remains a Palestinian space characterized by a state of dystopian anomie.

Transforming the conflict: a *longue durée* strategy towards positive socialist peace

[D]o international relations precede or follow (logically) fundamental social relations? There can be no doubt that they follow. Any organic innovation in the social structure [...] modifies organically absolute and relative relations in the international field, too.

(Gramsci 1971, p. 176)

The bottom-up, *longue durée* strategy of transforming the so-called Zionist/Israeli-Arab/Palestinian conflict proposed here draws heavily on Antonio Gramsci's concepts and arguments and on the neo-Gramscian school of thought set out by Robert W. Cox, Stephen Gill, Kees Van Der Pijl, and Henk Overbeek. It owes a debt to Samir Amin's (1997) analysis of the dynamics of the capitalist world system and its impacts on the Arab world, as well as on the analysis of the Palestinian critical thinker Adel Samara (1997a, 1997b, 2000, 2001; Samara and Arbid 2007). It also draws on the work of David Harvey on the subjects of capitalism, neoliberalism, and the 'new imperialism', along with Perry Anderson's analysis of the conflict and its political implications.

This strategy is in part a response to the perceived failure of the top-down approach represented by the US-led 'Peace Process' which has been in train since 1991. That process has never aimed at *re-solving* the conflict, never mind achieving its transformation, because it exists only as a necessary mechanism for managing and containing the conflict so that neoliberal social forces can work towards their unspoken geostrategic objective of securing domination of the region by the United States and Israel. The mechanism applied to implement this grand design was the trilateral mechanism of *piecemeal functionalism* (see Sklar 1980, p. 21). According to this mechanism, which was developed, Sklar argues, by the Trilateral Commission (see Sklar 1980, p. 21), no comprehensive blueprints would ever be proposed and debated, but, bit by bit, the overall design would take shape. Its functional components were to be adopted in more or less piecemeal fashion in order to lessen people's opportunities to grasp the overall scheme and organize resistance. It is worth noting that it has never been in the interests of the capitalist media to question this strategy.

The pursuit of a genuine, just, lasting, and comprehensive peace, especially in the Middle East context, runs against the interests of US capitalism, which acts on behalf of the neoliberal transnational capitalist classes. Wars, instability, destabilization, tension, and destruction – including creative destruction – are more beneficial, profitable, and functionally

useful than peace. They are essential for economic, technological, scientific, ideological, demographic, cultural, social, and political purposes. A just, comprehensive, and lasting peace – with the Palestinians in particular, and with Arab people in the region as a whole – is against the interests of Israel's Ashkenazi ruling class. Any such peace would unpick the myth of Israel's 'classless society' and challenge the hegemonic project, with its manipulative clerical-secular mythologies, which allows Israel to function as a reliable sub-imperialist surrogate for, and beneficiary of, American power in the region. Neither the United States nor Israel can justify a genuine peace in terms of their own self-interests.

It is unsurprising then that a firm political will on the part of the triad (the United States, the European Union, and Japan) to solve the conflict has been entirely absent. As Amin (2004, p. 10) argues:

The alliance between Western powers and Israel is thus founded on the solid basis of their common interests. This alliance is neither the product of European feelings of guilt for anti-Semitism and Nazi crime, nor that of the skill of the 'Jewish Lobby' in exploiting this sentiment. If the powers thought that their interests were harmed by the Zionist colonial expansionism, they would quickly find the means of overcoming their guilt complex and of neutralizing this lobby. This I do not doubt, not being among those who naively believe that public opinion in the democratic countries, such as it is, imposes its views on these powers. We know that opinion also is manufactured. Israel is incapable of resisting for more than a few days even moderate measures of a blockade such as the Western powers inflicted on Yugoslavia, Iraq and Cuba. It would thus not be difficult to bring Israel to its senses and to create the conditions of a true peace, if it were wanted, which it is not.

While the strong relationship between the United States and Israel continues unchanged, it seems immutable. However, as this chapter has shown by tracing strong connections between capitalism and ideas about Palestine through the centuries, it is in fact founded on capitalist expediency alone and is potentially vulnerable to change and dissolution. Such a dissolution would open up the possibility of securing a just, lasting, and comprehensive peace in the region. This kind of peace would put an end to the conditions of permanent war, occupation, colonization, neo-colonization, and oppression which are reliant on and perpetuate racism, discrimination, impoverishment, *under* development, poverty, misery, pain,

humiliation, vicious cycles of violence, terror (especially state-orchestrated terror), and spatial destruction and annihilation. It would take the whole region on a new trajectory towards genuine democracy and evenly distributed development for all the people in the region.

The region's people should not wait for, nor rely on, the 'will' of the capitalist and imperialist forces and their regional surrogates to achieve this aim because the pursuit of a just peace will involve challenging the logic of capital expansion and its permanent goals of capital accumulation and power concentration. Amin (2004, p. 10) asserts that

a rich, powerful, and modernized Arab world would call into question the right of the West to plunder its oil resources, which are necessary for the continuation of the waste associated with capitalist accumulation. Therefore, the political powers in the countries of the triad – all faithful servants of dominant transnational capital – do not want a modernized and powerful Arab world.

There is a stark absence of the will to promote a just, comprehensive, and lasting peace in the region. Meanwhile, the anomie, dystopia, and spatial annihilation and destruction that has been inflicted on it over several decades has destroyed the viability of a 'two-state' solution and exacerbated the geo-strategic importance of the region in a world system where what happens in the Middle East has implications for the entire globe. A *longue durée* 'positive socialist peace' strategy is suggested here to supplant the false capitalist 'peace' project that has been at work in the region since 1978.

One might conclude at this point that any chances to transform the so-called Zionist/Israeli-Arab/Palestinian conflict under the current structure of neo-liberal global capital and its accompanying power relations and structures are slim if they exist at all. The current asymmetric relations – structural, strategic, and political – that exist between the vast majority of the region's people, even aside from those between the Palestinians and the neoliberal transnational capitalist classes, are tremendous and represent a major hindrance to any attempts to transform the conflict.

Positive peace towards socialist peace

In his seminal 1967 work, Johan Galtung drew a distinction between positive and negative peace. Peace, according to Galtung (1967, p. 14), is

something more than just absence of violence [...]. It is the search for the conditions for the absence of negative relations, and the search for conditions that facilitate the presence of positive relations [...]. These two aspects of the search for peace are not unrelated [...] and the most promising way to reduce negative relations to a minimum is via an increase of positive relations. Positive peace should be embedded in the following positive relations: presence of cooperation, freedom from fear, freedom from want, economic growth and development, absence of exploitation, equality, justice, freedom of action, pluralism and dynamism.

Certainly, other progressive, humane, and emancipatory categories and values should be devised to bring this hoped-for positive peace towards its socialist destination, and the best site in which to explore these categories, values, and ideas is civil society where the legitimization, de-legitimization, and re-legitimization of any social order, hegemonic project, and/or regime of truth is carried out. For the purposes of this strategy, this emphasis on positive peace creates a counter-weight to International Relations' realist theory, which gives too much credit to the state.

Gramsci's concepts of hegemony, civil society, organic intellectuals, historic blocs, and the 'war of position', among others, can serve as instructive tools as the glocal movement becomes established. Equally important might be the work of the neo-Gramscian school, and, at its core, Robert W. Cox's Critical Theory (CCT) which offers a comprehensive framework for understanding social change (Cox 1992, 1995). Cox's framework recognizes the ways in which social forces, states in various forms, and world orders interact and influence each other. In particular, it positions social forces (either within state-society complexes or interacting with political authorities) as potential catalysts for the transformation of states and world order. CCT provides a non-mainstream alternative for those who subscribe to a world view that emphasizes social equity (across identities such as gender,

race, ethnicity, and class), civilizational diversity (or plurality), and environmental sustainability. It also focuses critically on the potential of multilateralism as a means to achieve these ends.

To facilitate this long-term process, a democratic social/ist movement must emerge as soon as possible. Furthermore, any social movement which aims at transforming this conflict and building a better future for the people of the whole region and beyond should realize from the outset that this conflict was not, is not, and will not be either a national conflict or one based on religion or ethnicity. Rather it is a conflict in which global capitalism and the neoliberal philosophy which facilitates its expansion represent the most toxic elements and for which global remedies need to be identified. Capitalism, from its embryonic stages until the present, has been tremendously successful in manufacturing, manipulating, hijacking, and subjecting religions, nationalisms, and ethnicities – through a resilient process of *trasformismo* (co-optation) – to serve its ruling classes, factions, and elites, alongside co-opted intellectuals and administrative cadres. Any social movement developed in response to the conflict must be global in orientation, democratic, inclusive, and participatory in its praxis, as well as socialist in its goals, if it is to articulate a response beyond capitalism's normative purview.

Gramsci (1971, p. 176) sought an 'organic innovation in the social structure to modify organically absolute and relative relations in the international field', and any such innovation must begin at the site of the conflict's daily dynamics, dialectics, and manifestations. It must start then in the contested spaces occupied by the Palestinian population under Israeli control, in Israel, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip, as well as in the real, imagined, and virtual diasporic sites occupied by Palestinian refugees in Arab countries and beyond. The departure point of the movement should be the abandonment of the defunct 'two-state' solution. Any moves forward need to be undertaken on the basis of a new strategy focused on securing one socialist democratic state which

recognizes as axiomatic the indelible right of return possessed by the Palestinian refugees of 1948.

In an age of rising regionalism and alliance-building (the European Union, NAFTA, MERCOSUR, South Asia – SAFTA, ECO, AFTA, to mention a few; see Pomfret 2006)⁴ – a ‘two-state’ version of a Palestinian state, incorporating the West Bank and Gaza Strip, would impoverish opportunities for genuine self-determination, social justice, and political viability, and would be at best impractical. The geographic, demographic, economic, and environmental intricacies underlying the daily lives of the two peoples – not least in relation to water supplies – militate against the partition of the country. This discussion has shown that historical Palestine cannot afford such a partition. Two states for two peoples will serve the global and local ruling classes and elites rather than the people themselves, and the region cannot afford this kind of perpetual fragmentation, unless a permanent state of war and conflict is to be its immutable destiny.

A just solution to the conflict in its first stage involves the establishment of one socialist democratic state based on political and civil rights and social justice. The paradigm of political and civil rights only, which has been implemented in South Africa, is not adequate and would lead sooner or later to the renewal of the conflict. Therefore, the paradigm of social justice through which material resources will be redistributed to the vast majority of the people – after the Palestinian refugees of 1948 get back all of their mobile and immobile property – offers the only guarantee of a successful solution. Collective ownership of the means of production is essential over and above political rights which will, alone, only lead to the circulation and rotation of power among established elites and to the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of the already-powerful few. Civil rights are important and necessary, but they offer only symbolic rewards unless social justice and the redistribution of power and wealth can be secured.

In the second stage of conflict resolution, a focus on regional integration with neighbouring countries will facilitate and accelerate the move towards development. The strategy

assumes that, in this phase, Israel/Palestine will be functioning as a socialist democratic country rather than as a surrogate of the imperial centre in the region. The fragmented system of minor Arab states has been among the greatest hindrances to peoples' development and self-determination – and the primary cause of *underdevelopment* – for the Arabs in this massive, rich region. The system, which was imposed on the region by external, colonial, and imperial forces in the early decades of the twentieth century, should be rejected, dismantled, and redressed. Only through a regional integrative approach can the region move toward development and away from the interference of the core capitalist countries. Cooperation between people who interact on an equal footing – that is to say, via interdependency – is necessary for acculturation and cooperation on developmental issues. In order for that interdependency to be achieved, Israel – and indeed the whole region – will need to break its dependent relationships with the core capitalist countries. Any continuation of that strong dependency will deepen underdevelopment and intra-regional conflicts including the so-called Zionist/Israeli-Arab/Palestinian conflict.

The ambitious, *longue durée* socio-economic and political project outlined here will need to be put into action by a new generation of progressive, critical, and humane organic intellectuals made up, not just of Palestinians, Jews (Anti-Zionists and Anti-Imperialists), and Arabs, but also of progressive African, Asian, Latin American, European, and North American intellectuals who are committed to genuine development at the global level and opposed to capitalist 'peace' and wars. Their first assignment will be to produce a discourse of truth to demystify that promulgated by the global neoliberal historic bloc. This discourse must expose the organic relationships as well as the shared class consciousness that cements relations between the global neoliberal bourgeoisie and their elites in the region as well as at the global level. Likewise, the discourse has to trace the real causes of the conflict and not be misled by the false premises of nationalism, religion, ethnicity, race, and culture. This has been a conflict over wealth accumulation and power

concentration, and an understanding of this reality must be the focus of efforts to move towards a just future.

This new generation of progressive organic intellectuals should first be sought from within Palestinian, Israeli, and Arab progressive movements and should seek to expose in detail the role of the Israeli Ashkenazi ruling elite in the global capitalist system both before and since the establishment of the State of Israel (Beit-Hallahmi 1987; Halper 2015).⁵ The losers in neoliberal Israel, namely, the Mizrahim (Arab Jews) and Palestinian Arab citizens, should be mobilized in constructive ways to help achieve a just, lasting, and comprehensive peace, and the new generation of organic intellectuals should focus on developing new modes of communication that allow them to connect with and transform ideas in the populace as a whole. The new generation of organic intellectuals should embark on a campaign of education for awareness, critical consciousness, and cultural action for freedom and conscientization. In other words, they should launch a new socio-economic and political project based on a 'war of position' which uses 'civil society' as the essential site for spatial emancipation and the de-legitimization of the neoliberal order in the region and beyond. This local initiative should seek supporters around the world, especially progressive forces in the core region and other regions, such as those currently involved in the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) and Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI) campaigns.

Neoliberal elites and hybrid NGOs have, perhaps counter-intuitively, deepened the processes of underdevelopment, dependency, and manipulation which have brought about unprecedented levels and forms of destruction and violence in the region. Most intellectuals operating within the structures of hybrid NGOs have been inadvertent partners in the neoliberal global structure. Instead of producing any useful commodity for the local population, they have produced services for the 'donor' countries that maintain a neo-liberal status quo which is coming, over time, to seem true and immovable. Thus, a new generation of progressive organic intellectuals, capable of linking underdevelopment and spatial destruction at local and

regional levels with the penetration of neoliberal capitalism into the region, must be engaged in action. Otherwise, the region, under the manipulative influence of glocal elites and co-opted intellectuals, will continue to suffer from vicious cycles of bloodshed and spatial destruction if not annihilation.

Notes

- 1 See the various reports of the Trilateral Commission (1977) about energy in 1974, 1975, and 1978, and the special report on OPEC in 1975.
- 2 For a detailed account of US economic and military aid to Israel since 1948 and the shift in such aid after the 1967 and 1973 wars, see Dunsky (2015) and Sharp (2015, pp. 29–31). Sharp (2015, p. 29) notes that the cumulative total of ‘regular’ bilateral aid to Israel from 1949 to 2016 was \$124.3 billion (not including supplemental missile systems development aid), while bilateral aid from 1949 to 1967 had totalled just \$1.22 billion (Sharp 2015, p. 30).
- 3 ‘Passive revolution’ is, in Gramsci’s phrase, ‘revolution without revolution’ or ‘revolution-restoration’; in other words, a process or a series of transformations involving neither upheavals nor the active participation of the masses. Alternatively, it is a process of modernization presided over by the established elites, who used the ‘revolutionary’ changes to maintain their supremacy and consolidate the extant order (see Cox 1983, p. 166; Femia 1981, pp. 48, 261; Forgacs 1999, p. 247).
- 4 Although this discussion suggests the necessary integration process of the Arab homeland countries as a prerequisite for genuine development, it does not and must not be based on the precepts and canons of neoliberalism. Instead, it must be oriented towards a people-focused rather than an elite-led development project.
- 5 For further analysis and information about Israel’s role in serving the transnational capitalist class, and the role of the ruling classes and elites around the world in suppressing their popular classes and the global public at large, see the recent important work of Jeff Halper (2015).

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Part I

Transformational strategies
under occupation

3

Rights-based approaches to the return of Palestinian refugees

Maya al-Orzza and Manar Makhoul

Introduction

This chapter will investigate durable solutions to the ongoing displacement of Palestinians from the viewpoint of Palestinian refugees and their right to return. Our analysis takes into consideration the evolution of the historical and political context of the conflict in the past century and offers a rights-based analysis of future options. Conventional approaches to the conflict have tended to be based on either political pragmatism or humanitarian assistance. By focusing on rights, we will address the root causes of the ongoing displacement of Palestinians – which we identify as forced population transfer, colonialism, and apartheid – and outline the fundamental rights and freedoms of the Palestinian people. Our approach has its basis in international law, but it is also influenced by the best practices exemplified by other states and by transitional justice theories.

Historical and legal framework for durable solutions

Palestinian refugees form one of the largest and longest standing refugee groups in the world today. At the beginning of the twentieth century, most Palestinians lived inside the borders of Palestine. This area is now divided into the State of Israel; the West Bank, including East Jerusalem; and the Gaza Strip. The West Bank and Gaza Strip were occupied by Israel in 1967 and are collectively known as the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt).

Palestinian refugees are defined as refugees vis-à-vis the State of Israel, and approximately two-thirds of the world's Palestinian people are forcibly displaced. Our own organization, BADIL (a resource centre for residency and refugee rights) estimates that there are at least 7.98 million Palestinian refugees and internally displaced people, who represent sixty-six percent of the global population of 12.1 million Palestinians (BADIL 2015). The global Palestinian population includes 5.1 million Palestinian refugees who are registered with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). It is estimated that a further one million non-registered refugees were forced to leave their homes and country by the Nakba, or mass exodus, in 1948; and a further 1.1 million refugees were displaced by the 1967 war (BADIL 2015). An unknown number of refugees, belonging to neither of these groups, is mostly made up of people who have been displaced out of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip since 1967 (BADIL 2015). Approximately 720,000 of the uprooted Palestinians (that is, around six percent of their number) are internally displaced within Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory (BADIL 2015).

For the sake of simplicity, the term 'refugee' will be used in this chapter to refer both to registered and non-registered refugees irrespective of when their first displacement occurred. The United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (OCHA 1998) define internally displaced people as 'persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence [...] who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border' (OCHA 1998). From a rights-based perspective, any advocacy that calls for a practical return must

go beyond any such limited legal definition to focus on the rights of all those people who have been displaced as a result of the conflict, whether they are recognized as internally displaced persons (IDPs) or refugees.

The right of return for Palestinian refugees had achieved customary status in international law by 1948 (Takkenberg and Tahbaz 1989). Customary norms are legally binding upon all states, and states are, therefore, legally obligated to follow the rules codified by these norms. The massive scope of Palestinian displacement prior to, during, and immediately after the 1948 war led the United Nations to call for a durable solution that would meet the collective needs of the 1948 Palestinian refugees as a group. The United Nations reaffirmed the status of the right of return as a customary norm applicable to Palestinian refugees in General Assembly Resolution 194 (UN General Assembly 1948a). This resolution also affirmed their right to return to their homes of origin inside Israel, called for the restitution of properties to the refugees and compensation for the injuries suffered, and asserted voluntary repatriation as the best and most sustainable solution for Palestinian refugees. United Nations General Assembly Resolution 194

Resolves that refugees wishing to return to their homes and live in peace with their neighbors should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss of or damage to property which, under principles of international law and equity, should be made good by the Governments or authorities responsible;

Instructs the Conciliation Commission to facilitate the repatriation, resettlement and economic and social rehabilitation of the refugees and the payment of compensation, and to maintain close relations with the Director of the United Nations Relief for Palestine Refugees and, through him, with the appropriate organs and agencies of the United Nations [...].

(UN General Assembly 1948a)

Those paragraphs establish a clear hierarchy of solutions for Palestinian refugees. The first and best option involves return; housing and property restitution; and compensation for loss of, or damage to, property. Resolution 194 does not ‘resolve’ that Palestinian refugees should be resettled (UN General Assembly 1948a); rather, refugees who choose not to exercise

the rights set out in paragraph 11 (a) may opt for local integration in the host state or resettlement in a third country, as well as housing and property restitution, and compensation as delineated in paragraph 11 (b).¹ The main consideration in the process of integration or resettlement for each Palestinian refugee is the active and free choice of the refugee not to return to his or her place of origin (UNHCR Handbook 1996). The assumption underlying this process is that all Palestinian refugees, including those who have obtained citizenship in any state, have agency and should be involved in finding an effective and sustainable solution to their ongoing displacement. Since return has never been on the table for them, Palestinian refugees have not been able to exercise this free choice.

By 1948, the principle of voluntariness was already established in international refugee law and practice (UNCCP 1950). It provided a framework for the delivery of voluntary repatriation, voluntary local integration, or voluntary resettlement to a third country (Goodwin-Gill and McAdam 2007), as well as property restitution (Rempel 2003). Under international refugee law, and in the best practice of modern states, voluntary repatriation is considered to be the preferred method of resolving refugee crises (Goodwin-Gill and McAdam 2007). Most importantly, of the three durable solutions on offer, return (or voluntary repatriation) is the only one that is a human right and the only one the state of origin is obliged to honour.

The right of return is a customary norm of international human rights law, and it is explicitly affirmed in many instruments as a human right. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) stipulates that '[e]veryone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country' (UN General Assembly 1948b), and Article 12 (4) of the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (ICCPR) states that '[n]o one shall be arbitrarily deprived of the right to enter his own country' (United Nations General Assembly 1966). Denial of return, nationality, and/or residence – among other rights – when justified on the basis of race, religion, ethnic origin, or other discriminatory grounds, is

regarded as arbitrary and is therefore expressly prohibited under international human rights law (UN General Assembly 1965). If Israel were to abide by the contention that a refugee makes a ‘return to *his country*’, the return of Palestinian refugees would have to be accompanied by Israel’s recognition both of nationality for such persons, and, by concession, their right of admission. These are obligations that Israel has been liable to since 1948 pursuant to the law of state succession (Black 2006; Boling 2007; International Law Commission 1999a; Radley 1978), though it disputes this liability, as we will demonstrate later.

Following subsequent hostilities and crises which produced further Palestinian displacement, the United Nations issued resolutions that (re)affirmed the right of Palestinian refugees to a just solution based on return. Following the 1967 war, for example, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 237, and its first paragraph

Calls upon the Government of Israel to ensure the safety, welfare and security of the inhabitants of the areas where military operations have taken place and to facilitate the return of those inhabitants who have fled the areas since the outbreak of hostilities [...].

(UN Security Council 1967)²

Seven years later, the language of the United Nations General Assembly’s Resolution 3236 includes a pointed reference to existing, and, by inference, ignored resolutions on the same matter:

Recalling its relevant resolutions which affirm the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, [the United Nations General Assembly]

1. *Reaffirms* the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people in Palestine, including:
 1. (a) The right to self-determination without external interference;
 2. (b) The right to national independence and sovereignty;
2. *Reaffirms* also the inalienable right of the Palestinians to return to their homes and property from which they have been displaced and uprooted, and calls for their return;

(United Nations General Assembly 1974)

The right of refugees to return to their homes and properties – sometimes referred to as their places of last habitual residence (ICRC 2016a) – is anchored in four separate bodies of international law: the law of nationality, as applied upon state succession; humanitarian law; human rights law; and refugee law, which is a subset of human rights law and also incorporates humanitarian law (Boling 2007). The right of return applies when persons have been deliberately barred from returning after a temporary departure and in cases of forcible expulsion, whether on a mass scale or otherwise. In the latter case, there is an even stronger obligation on the state of origin under international law to receive back illegally expelled persons. Any type of governmental policy which is designed to block the voluntary return of displaced persons is strictly prohibited under international law (ICRC 2016a). The official Israeli view differs significantly from this argument. The Israeli government denies that international law requires return, and some authors who support this view argue that international law did not prohibit the expulsion of Palestinians (Kent 2012). These arguments are analysed in more detail later in this chapter.

The law of state succession applies whenever one state (a predecessor state) is followed in the international administration of a geographical territory by another state (the successor state) (United Nations 1978). In the case of Palestinian refugees, the predecessor state was the embryonic state of Palestine which, under international law, was under British ‘tutelage’ throughout the period from 1923 to 1948 during the British Mandate for Palestine (Goodwin-Gill and McAdam 2007; League of Nations 1922). It was partially succeeded by the State of Israel as a result of the UN Partition Plan of 1947 (UN General Assembly 1947). When territory undergoes a change of sovereignty, the law of state succession requires that habitual inhabitants of the geographical territory, who now find themselves under new sovereignty, be offered nationality by the new state (UN General Assembly 2001). Furthermore, this rule applies regardless of whether or not the habitual residents of the territory so affected are actually physically present in the territory undergoing the change of sovereignty on the actual date of the change itself. This rule

represents a customary norm of international law and is binding upon all states (International Law Commission 1999a).

These arguments have been challenged by the State of Israel since its establishment in 1948. It claims that it is not the successor of Mandatory Palestine, and so is not bound by treaties signed by the British (O'Connell 1951). In fact, it has passed legislation which states that only those former citizens of Mandatory Palestine who remained in what became Israel are entitled to Israeli citizenship (Peretz 1954). Israel, as a sovereign power, can choose to admit or not to admit to the state those people who are not deemed citizens by law. In connection to this, Israel claims that, since it is not a successor of a previous state, it is in a position to choose who can be deemed a citizen, and it chooses to exclude most of the citizens of Mandatory Palestine. This self-reinforcing logic is employed to argue that it would not be mandatory for Israel to allow Palestinians the right of return (Kent 2012).

The right of return is also anchored in humanitarian law, which is the body of law that regulates what states are permitted to do during war. The 1907 Hague Convention Respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land, and the Hague Regulations annexed to it, are universally recognized, by Israel and other states, to have achieved customary status by 1939 (International Conferences – The Hague 1907). These regulations, and the 1949 Geneva Conventions (of which Israel is a signatory), provide for the right of return of displaced persons to their homes following the cessation of hostilities (UN General Assembly 1949).

The provisional government of Israel, because of its responsibility for its army and for the Zionist paramilitary forces which preceded it, was fully bound by the rules of humanitarian law when its forces unilaterally embarked upon the enterprise of trying to establish a state through military means. Palestinian communities were progressively displaced in 1948 as Zionist forces gained control over specific geographical areas and established successive 'zones of military occupation'. The Israeli state argues that it only became party to the Geneva Convention in 1951 and so has no

obligations under humanitarian law in connection to events which occurred between 1947 and 1949 (ICRC 2016b).

While humanitarian law is concerned with the laws of war and armed conflict, human rights law works differently. It confers rights directly upon individuals, rather than on individuals through the state, but it also enshrines the right of return. Every individually held right recognized under human rights law imposes a corresponding duty upon states to recognize that right. The right of return is a customary norm of international human rights law and is found in a vast array of international and regional human rights treaties (see UNHCR Executive Committee 1980, 1985). The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which provides the foundation for the right of return in human rights law, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) both recognize the right of return, as we have noted. The State of Israel has signed and ratified the ICCPR and has not entered any reservations to Article 12 (4), which contains the right of return (United Nations General Assembly 1966). In relation to human rights, Israel presents an argument similar to that it uses in relation to international humanitarian law. It claims that, since it only became signatory to the ICCPR in 1991, its stipulations cannot be applied retroactively to the events that took place between 1947 and 1949 (Kent 2012).

Under refugee law, the principle of refugees' absolute right of return on a voluntary basis to their place of origin (including to their homes of origin) is vouchsafed and is central to the implementation of sustainable solutions designed by the international community to address refugee flows. Of the three durable solutions available – voluntary repatriation (i.e. return), voluntary host country integration, and voluntary resettlement – the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) considers voluntary repatriation to be the most appropriate solution to refugee problems (see UNHCR Executive Committee 1980, 1985). Only voluntary repatriation represents a right accorded to the individual, and it generates a corresponding obligation on the part of the country of origin from which the refugee flow was generated. Since the return is to one's 'home of origin', it includes, thereby, an associated

right of restitution, or repossession (BADIL 2001). The other solutions represent neither rights of refugees, nor obligations on the receiving states. Israel argues in this case that, because Palestinian refugees residing in UNRWA's areas of operation are excluded from the 1951 Convention, these rights do not apply to them (Kent 2012).

Since 1948, the United Nations framework for a sustainable solution to the Palestinian refugee question has been welcomed and supported by Palestinian refugees and they maintain their demands for the right to return to homes and properties now located in Israel, to receive restitution for their lost properties, and to receive adequate and fair compensation (Nabulsi 2005). Still, more than six decades after the first mass displacement, no such durable solution has been achieved, despite political negotiations between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), and other efforts. In the remainder of this chapter we analyse why efforts which seek to achieve workable solutions by political means have failed. We argue that, instead of continuing down a purely political path, all concerned states, actors, and civil society organizations need to adopt a rights-based approach which founds its claims on the rights of Palestinians.

Achieving durable solutions: the political track

The participation of citizens in stable societies is generally understood as a viable strategy for ensuring effective citizenship. For victims of conflict, such as the Palestinian people in general and the forcibly displaced in particular, being involved in decision-making is essential if their suffering is to be ended and if their inalienable rights are to be achieved (Rempel 2012). The engagement of Palestinian refugees in processes that seek to resolve their ongoing displacement should be mandatory and based on two overlapping principles. First, as a matter of law and justice, their involvement would indicate a respect for the rights of

refugees, and, second, it would begin to address the root causes of their forced displacement, thereby making the reoccurrence of rights violations and further forced displacement less likely. In fact, during the political negotiations between Israeli and Palestinian leaders throughout the last decades, Palestinian refugees have been excluded from the decision-making process and their plight has been left out of discussions altogether.

Sentiment against the right of return in Israel is strengthening so that no organic change can be expected to bring benefits to refugees. The State of Israel, since its creation, has put in place legal mechanisms to hinder the return of those Palestinians who left the territory. The cornerstone of this discriminatory legal structure is the Status Law (1952), supported by two Basic Laws: the Law of Return and the Law of Citizenship. Under the Law of Return, only Jews are allowed to come to the areas controlled by Israel (both Israel proper and the occupied Palestinian territory) and they acquire their new civil status as Jewish nationals through 'return'. The notion of Jewish Israelis being 'Jewish nationals' who return to their homeland is the foundation of Zionism and is ideologically unique among colonial settler states. The Law of Citizenship applies to non-Jews, and this law removes Palestinian nationality from all who remained inside Israel at the time of enactment, despite the customary international law of state succession automatically entitling them to this right. Israeli citizenship is only available to non-Jews who were present in Israel between 1948 and 1952 and their descendants.

Israel regards that population as a demographic and political threat because it might challenge the existence of a Jewish majority in Israel (Beit-Hallahmi 1993; Orenstein 2004). Being a 'Jewish state' is the central point of Israel's identity, and Israeli politicians have long claimed the right of Israel to exist as such. It is because of this need to maintain the Jewish nature of the state that any changes threatening this demographic balance are a cause of concern for Israel. Palestinians are the largest minority inside Israel and they make up a group almost equal in number to Jewish Israelis in

the territory which was historically recognized as Mandatory Palestine. This sense of demographic threat is hardening positions. The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics predicts that the numbers will equalize in 2016 with Palestinians forming a majority by 2020, and these figures intensify the Israeli state's sense that it is subject to a demographic threat (PCBS 2015). The current demographic balance and Jewish majority would be drastically affected by a return of those Palestinians displaced in 1948 and their descendants whose homes of origin are located in Israel. Such a move would make Palestinians the largest demographic group in the State of Israel, and so recognition of the right of return would be tantamount to Israel giving up its identity as an exclusively Jewish state. This is something which it has, to date, resolutely refused to do (Alon and Benn 2003). Meanwhile, Western states have continued to fail to enforce international law and United Nations resolutions in the face of Israel's objections (BADIL 2009).

The Israeli government's position was strengthened by the 2015 election of a right-wing coalition; meanwhile, Palestinians have no recourse to a powerful leadership willing to advocate for their rights. While the PLO retains the title of 'sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people' (UN General Assembly 1988), it has increasingly been supplanted by the Palestinian Authority (PA) in most practical and meaningful respects, and is in a state of disrepair. Despite its legacy, the PLO is criticized for its leadership's non-representation of the Palestinian people, as well as for the inefficiency of its essential bodies and departments which are perceived to be inadequate to the demands of the current political reality. In particular, many Palestinians question the PLO's custodianship of the refugee issue in relation to the failed peace process (Brown *et al.* 2008; International Crisis Group 2014). The erosion of the PLO's supremacy, as well as the Oslo Accords and subsequent 'peace process', have brought little comfort to Palestinians over the last two decades. It is widely believed that the PA, which usurped many of the PLO's roles, is as ineffective as its predecessor, and it is regarded as having no clear liberation or resistance strategy

vision, and no clear mandate in relation to Palestinians in exile (Nabulsi 2005).

This stalemate should come as no surprise, as Oslo was founded on a political approach that took neither international law nor human rights into account, but instead depended on the power balance between the parties involved (Roy 2012). This further weakened the popular and official position of the PLO. When the focus of the negotiations fell on purely political questions, the PLO's ability to negotiate effectively for Palestinian rights was stymied by the uneven power balance between the PLO and Israel, with the latter having the political backing of the United States (Brown *et al.* 2008). As a result of its 2006 fallout with Hamas, the PA was only in administrative control of a fraction of the Palestinian population in the oPt, and could only claim to represent people living in the West Bank. The 2012 UN status upgrade which changed Palestine from a 'non-member observer entity' to a 'non-member observer state' at the United Nations blurred claims about who the PA and the PLO could claim to represent still further. The reality at the present time is that the majority of the Palestinian people – Palestinian sub-citizens of Israel; Palestinians in Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon; and the global Palestinian diaspora – are unrepresented.

In recognition of its responsibility for the creation of the Palestinian refugee question, which partially arose as a consequence of the 1947 UN Partition Plan for Palestine (UN General Assembly 1947), the United Nations has, over more than sixty-eight years, passed more than one hundred resolutions and established a set of special procedures for agencies such as the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine (UNCCP), UNRWA, and UNHCR to protect and promote the rights of the Palestinian people (see UN General Assembly 1972a, 1972b, 1972c, 1972d, 1972e, 1972f). Despite all of this activity, the United Nations has failed to induce Israel to comply with international law and its resolutions, and it has also failed to prevent further colonization and forced population transfer. Furthermore, it has yet to bring about a rights-based solution that includes the recognition of the rights of Palestinian refugees.

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, the United Nations has become even more divided on the question of Palestine. The United Nations' major decisionmaking and policymaking arm, the Security Council, is led by the political agenda of its privileged permanent members, and the United States regularly vetoes resolutions that would allow for effective enforcement of international law in response to violations by the Israeli government. While the Security Council has passed strong resolutions for the enforcement of the right of return of people displaced in most conflicts, it has largely refrained from doing so in the case of Palestinian refugees (UN General Assembly 1948a; UN Security Council 1967), and has thereby obstructed effective action by the entire UN system.

The policies and practices of the State of Israel demonstrate and enact the structural asymmetry of its relationship with Palestinian people, both in and beyond the occupied Palestinian territory. Israel benefits from international support, and it gains a certain amount of impunity from its standpoint in relation to key legal, human rights, and humanitarian frameworks. Meanwhile, it continues to use mechanisms of belligerent occupation, colonization, and apartheid, which facilitate the forced displacement of Palestinians on both sides of the Green Line. These policies of forced population transfer – the Annexation and Separation Wall, for example, or land confiscation, limits on Palestinian's access to their agricultural lands and livelihoods, and relocation plans for Bedouins in the Naqab – arguably facilitate the ongoing transfer of Palestinian land to the ownership of the State of Israel and the Jewish National Fund (JNF), and this process has been described by some as ethnic cleansing (Falk 2014; Pappé 2006). Israel denies Palestinian refugees the right of return, and so forces them to remain displaced. BADIL makes the case that Israel's refusal, when combined with other ongoing violations of individual and collective human rights, promotes further violations of the individual and collective rights of Palestinian refugees.

Without the right of return, Palestinians remain marginalized and vulnerable to secondary and even multiple

displacements. This issue grows more important as instability increases in states that host Palestinian refugees – namely Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and potentially Egypt as well. Palestinians may face dangers in these states that render them unable either to remain in their present places of refuge or to return to their places of origin. The war on and occupation of Iraq in 2003, and then the ‘revolutions’ popularly known as ‘Arab Springs’, especially in Syria, brought to light the extreme vulnerability of Palestinian refugees. Their treatment by host countries has not, historically, been regulated by national laws or clear legislation, and while it is subject to administrative and security provisions (Akram 2002; Fábos 2015), this offers them no secure guarantees.

Arab governments in the region are politically, ideologically, and historically divided, and, as undemocratic regimes, they have shown themselves unwilling to protect and promote the rights of either their citizens or refugees. Meanwhile, the PLO and PA leaderships have been interested in maintaining good diplomatic relations with Arab governments, and their self-interest has prevailed over any political will to advocate for refugees’ rights in these states. In other words, the PLO has given up its mandate to represent refugees in order to avoid confrontation with, or to gain support from, Arab states. In the absence of effective representation by the PLO, Palestinian refugees in Arab host countries have lacked protection. Their vulnerability in these countries, and the Palestinian leadership’s failure to represent the entire refugee population, are some of the main reasons why the political approaches pursued through peace agreements have failed.

The political agreements of the past have not made the rights of Palestinian refugees their starting point, and so political solutions have not included all Palestinian refugees or IDPs, irrespective of their official status. Any solutions reached without consideration of the rights of refugees will prioritize political power imbalances and political strategies and not the rights of those concerned. All Palestinians have a right to protection from forced displacement; moreover, Palestinians, including refugees and IDPs who live under

occupation, have the legal status and rights of protected civilians. These rights risk being put aside during a political agreement.

A rights-based approach to resolving the refugee issue

The need for a rights-based approach

An approach to conflict resolution which is based on human rights will encompass the norms, principles, standards, and goals of international human rights, as well as the best practices of states which, through their institutions and processes, can seek to ensure human dignity and justice (Global Protection Cluster Working Group 2010). A conflict-solving methodology is characterized by mechanisms, methods, tools, and activities that endorse and are designed to further struggles for freedom, equality, justice, and development for all. Debates are ongoing about the levels of overlap between concepts of human rights, peacemaking, and peacebuilding, but, regardless of any fine distinctions, it is increasingly acknowledged in the academic world that peace – strictly defined as stability, safety, and security – cannot be recognized to exist when fundamental human rights and freedoms are being violated (Laplante 2008; Mertus and Helsing 2006).

A politically driven approach to conflict resolution may result in an ‘agreement’ being met, one which would establish a specific set of conditions designed to tackle and solve an unequal balance of power. However, such an agreement would be temporary because it would lack the participation, and accordingly the satisfaction, of those affected by the agreement. In the context of the issues discussed in this chapter, such an approach would involve the exclusion of the refugee population and thereby the majority of Palestinians from a decision-making process that would shape their future.

A human rights-based approach represents, then, the only viable framework for constructing a long-hoped-for and durable solution to this protracted conflict. The State of Israel's ongoing refusal to tackle the refugee question in line with a rights-based approach, and the reluctance or failure of Western policymakers to resolve the issue, mean that there is a continuing need for contributions from, and the participation of, refugee community organizations, refugee-rights initiatives, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). These groups represent vital components of any attempts to find a just solution for the Palestinian refugee question and to secure peace and stability in the region.

Attempts to resolve the refugee issue and the broader conflict by political means have failed for a number of reasons, but chief among these is the fact that refugees have been excluded from discussions both as participants and as a central issue of concern. Their absence has accentuated Israel's advantage in a process in which, as observers have noted, the United States and other international parties cannot be considered impartial mediators because they prioritize their strategic alliances with Israel over other concerns (Lewis 1999; Mearsheimer and Walt 2007). This imbalance has allowed a situation to continue in which Israel can refuse to recognize the rights of Palestinian refugees and can further avoid committing to their protection or the prevention of additional displacement.

Israel's ongoing lack of accountability undermines the legitimacy of international law and, in particular, human rights, humanitarian law, and international criminal law (Boisson De Chazournes and Kohen 2010). In order to secure that legitimacy, it will be necessary to ensure that international law offers more than utopian rhetoric. It must deliver a robust and fair legal system which protects rights, establishes obligations, and, most importantly, creates realities that mirror its core values and principles. Two decades of US-led peacemaking efforts in the Middle East have bypassed international law, human rights (including refugee rights), and the majority of the Palestinian people themselves because they have disregarded those Palestinians – mostly refugees – who

live outside the occupied Palestinian territory. Palestinian refugees continue to demand a rights-based solution shaped by both international law and the United Nations, which would include all Palestinian refugees and their inalienable right of return. Moreover, Palestinian refugees believe that – if permitted to do so – they could play a constructive role in peacebuilding and reconciliation in the region.

The elements of a rights-based approach

An approach based on human rights can lead to a sustainable and just peace for Palestinian people, and it should be founded upon international law, the key principles of justice, and equality for all. Any such approach would therefore necessarily include the recognition of a number of rights: the Palestinian people's right to self-determination; the right of refugees and internally displaced persons to reparation (voluntary return, property restitution, and/or compensation); the right to development (control of, and access to, natural wealth and resources and cultural heritage); and the right to peace (safety, security, and stability).

A focus on rights should create a process that addresses the root causes of the conflict, namely forced population transfer, belligerent occupation, colonization, apartheid, and their associated mechanisms. The effects of these root causes are propagated through policies which, in turn, produce and underpin a range of human rights violations (BADIL 2014). These policies include the denial of displaced people's right of return, land confiscation and denial of access, discriminatory zoning and planning policy, permit regimes, denial of residency, denial of access to natural resources and services, oppression of people's expressions of resilience and resistance, and harassment by non-state actors. Human rights violations can also be seen clearly in practices such as revocation of residency, the creation and expansion of settler colonies, home demolitions, ongoing forcible displacement, and restrictions on freedoms of movement. These practices or violations represent some of the other ways in which the conflict has an

impact on the lives of Palestinian people in both Israel and the oPt.

Another element of a rights-based approach will involve ensuring that the rights of all parties and individuals are met without discrimination. Solutions need to be identified which can be enacted without causing either injustice or the mass displacement or elimination of the other parties. All rights holders engaged in a sustainable process of this kind would emerge with the ability to exercise their legitimate and legal rights, and this would set the foundations for ongoing peaceful and cooperative relations between people, groups, individuals, and states. An ability to guarantee rights will be an intrinsic component of a just peace and is essential for reconciliation which, in turn, will be achieved through the implementation of transitional justice.

The goal of transitional justice lies in the transformation of a defective society into a reconciled one through corrective, compensatory, and transformative strategies (Peled and Rouhana 2004) that address root causes. A range of judicial and non-judicial mechanisms and tools can be used to this end, including criminal prosecution, reparations, institutional reform, and truth commissions. There is no doubt that any sustainable resolution of the protracted conflict between Palestinians and Jewish Israelis will emerge as the result of a political negotiation process, yet this should not constitute an excuse to avoid addressing root causes before such a process is underway, nor should a delay be allowed to sideline the freedoms of the Palestinian people and their fundamental rights to self-determination, return, and development.

How can a practical rights-based return be achieved?

Refugee participation

A successful resolution process will have to include the voices of displaced Palestinians in decision-making processes because Palestinian refugees and internally displaced persons need to contribute to decisions about their own future (Dumper 2006; Rempel 2012). An important step towards improving or realizing the participation of Palestinian refugees and, more generally, all Palestinians in decision-making was taken between 2003 and 2006 when the Civitas Project – a large civic mobilization of thousands of Palestinian refugees – took place in twenty-four countries around the world (Nabulsi 2005). The project's series of self-organized meetings in each participating country served as a platform which allowed refugees to raise their issues of concern and register their collective demands.

Two main demands emerged from the three-year Civitas project. The first called for a firm commitment to the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, and especially to the right of return of all displaced Palestinians. The second demand was for national representation through a directly elected Palestinian National Council (PNC) (Nabulsi 2005). These demands were followed by a campaign which urged all Palestinians around the world to register for PNC elections – though it lacked the support of the PLO, the PA, and Palestinian political parties – and has so far failed to advance the registration of Palestinian electors across the world. The holding of the PNC elections generated a host of legal, political, administrative, and logistical challenges, but their initial lack of success should not detract from the fact that PNC elections provide a realistic, comprehensive, and immediately available mechanism for allowing Palestinian refugees to have a say in decisions that affect their lives.

Another more recent effort to involve Palestinian refugees in decision-making has been undertaken by the BADIL Resource Center through a Refugee Working Group (RWG) and the Global Palestinian Refugee Network (GPRN). The RWG includes both Palestinian and international actors. It aims to enhance the political participation of Palestinian refugees and to advocate for their rights – and specifically for the right of return – at the international level. GPRN is a

network comprised exclusively of Palestinian actors and they are mainly drawn from community-based organizations and committees that are active among refugees. It focuses on raising awareness among Palestinian refugees themselves and on raising their voices so that their needs and rights can gain a wider audience.

BADIL's projects work to increase refugee participation in different initiatives and in decision-making, and they give power to the voices of Palestinian refugees at local level and beyond. The organization is also trying to challenge stereotypes about the right of return, and how it would work in practice, on three levels. It works with Palestinians and helps to communicate to refugees the idea that 'return' does not mean the restoration of a reality that existed sixty-eight years ago. Among Jewish Israelis, it challenges the Zionist argument that return would cause a new mass displacement of the Jewish people. Finally, on the international level, it advocates return as the practical framework for enabling rights holders – in this case, Palestinian refugees – to achieve a durable and just resolution of their issues through participation. BADIL's approach assumes that any workable solutions for the ongoing conflict will need to be based on the guarantee of rights for all.

BADIL, and a range of other Palestinian, Israeli, and international activists and organizations, work to show that return is not just a right but an achievable proposition that can be realized within a framework that honours human rights. They focus on the practicalities of return in order to allay fears and counter myths about what it would involve, and they make the case for the value of transitional justice approaches to resolving the conflict. One of the main principles of transitional justice involves placing disempowered actors, in this case displaced Palestinians, at the centre of conflict resolution and peace-building processes (Peled and Rouhana 2004). While the political participation of citizens in 'stable' societies exists to ensure effective citizenship, for victims in a conflict, this involvement in decision-making is necessary, not only to end their suffering, but also to ensure the sustainability of peace.

The necessity of rights holders' participation in a resolution to the Palestinian refugee question is based on two interrelated principles: first, respect for their rights is required as a matter of law and justice, and second, the need for future prevention of violations can only be satisfied if they are involved in unravelling the conflict's root causes. The participation of refugees is also important on the grounds that they would represent a Palestinian population, the majority of which is made up of either refugees or internally displaced persons. When these reasons are considered, the fundamental differences between managing the conflict via a politically driven approach and solving it via a rights-based approach become starkly apparent. While the former focuses on concluding a peace agreement, even if it has to be maintained by force, the latter focuses on reaching a sustainable solution that meets the satisfaction of rights holders and can command their active support.

Practicalities of return

Our discussion here assumes that the State of Israel's hold on power in the occupied Palestinian territory and its discriminatory policies inside Israel are unjust and have to be addressed by the international community. We believe that the restitution of land and property to displaced Palestinians needs to be carried out as part of a transitional arrangement in order to bring about restorative justice, and this arrangement would involve a role for a transitional authority with access to resources such as state funds and expertise. The transition we call for would take place within a framework that guaranteed justice for both Palestinians – including those now in exile – and Jewish Israelis, and it would recognize the legitimate rights of everyone involved in the process. Over time, one secular democratic state, able to guarantee rights for all of its citizens, could successfully emerge.

The purpose of the reconciliation process we propose is twofold: it would redress injustice through restitution (implemented through mechanisms determined by the

transitional authority), and produce public acknowledgement of injuries suffered. While accountability must be ensured to address serious breaches and hold perpetrators accountable, a focus on truth-telling rather than on crime and prosecution would encourage the majority of Jewish Israelis to confront and work through Palestinian stories of loss, imprisonment, and resistance. It would also promote collective healing and a renewed sense of shared humanity. This is necessary because reconciliation between peoples first requires reconciliation with history (Bracka 2014): ‘the way forward begins by stepping back into the past. It begins with the truth’ (Meyerstein 2006–2007).

The Palestinian case is not the only one in which mass, forced displacement has been carried out, nor will it be the only one in which return will constitute part of a just solution. Indeed, there is much to learn from cases of expulsion and return in places such as East Timor and Former Yugoslavia, as well as in Cyprus, Rwanda, Zimbabwe, and South Africa. The idea would not be to replicate processes that were used in these contexts but to learn from them and incorporate them into creative solutions in the Palestinian situation. These case studies may serve to guide actors who face the many significant dilemmas and barriers that will arise as they consider processes of refugee return. How, for instance, is return to be materialized when a village that was home to fewer than two thousand residents before the Nakba now contains tens of thousands of people? Are the descendants of large landowners to return to bountiful properties, while the majority of people – as descendants of workers, sharecroppers, and tenant farmers – return to no property at all?

One of the challenges that might arise, if the right of return is implemented, centres on the problem of refugees looking to return to actual homes which have either been destroyed or are subject to secondary occupancy. Solutions will need to be found as current restitution practice and its codifying principles make it clear that restitution, as a right distinct from return, is a key element of restorative justice (Peled and Rouhana 2004). Customary international law on state responsibility says that an alternative to direct restitution

might reasonably be offered if it is ‘materially impossible’ or ‘out of proportion’ to return a property in any simple sense (International Law Commission Report 2001). In this scenario, the right to property restitution would be satisfied by other forms of compensation.

Certainly, the destruction of refugee houses has not prevented the return of refugees in other parts of the world. Sixty-four percent of the housing stock in Kosovo, fifty percent in Bosnia, and seventy percent in East Timor, was destroyed (Fitzpatrick 2002; International Crisis Group 1997). In each of these cases, the international community supported the right of refugees and displaced persons to return to their places of origin (UN Security Council 1997, 2000, 2002). The logical solutions to the problem of damaged or destroyed housing are rehabilitation and reconstruction, and moves to reconstruct houses for Palestinian refugees would be helped by the fact that the land expropriated from refugees has remained largely vacant. Around ninety-two percent of Israelis live in urban areas, leaving the rural areas only sparsely populated (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2010). This would make any return of Palestinian refugees easier because the majority of the non-Jewish population of Mandatory Palestine lived in these now vacant areas and most Palestinian refugees therefore originate from them (Salman 2001). The fact is that the return of Palestinian refugees would not result in the displacement of the majority of the existing Jewish population from their homes and communities.

In cases where someone lives in the home or property of returning refugees, a balancing exercise will be necessary to decide whose rights will apply. The right to property of the secondary occupants and the right of refugees to regain their property will need to be assessed, and creative solutions will need to be found to ensure that neither party is made homeless (Salman 2001). The starting point for resolving outstanding housing and property claims is international law, as it provides a set of precedents and procedures for overcoming many obstacles that will occur in situations where the rights of Palestinians and Jewish Israelis are in conflict (Rempel 2003).

Possible solutions to difficulties can be found in places where similar work has been undertaken in the aftermath of conflict. In Bosnia, the rights of secondary occupants were cancelled in cases where the property had been acquired illegally or via discriminatory laws (Prettitore 2009). International interventions favoured clearly the rights of those who had been displaced during the conflict, but, to avoid a new displacement, alternative housing was offered to the secondary occupants (Cox and Garlick 2003). In Israel, the state owns most of the land and buildings in areas where similar disputes would arise, and therefore a restitution programme based on the Bosnian model would not significantly interfere with the private property rights of secondary occupants, as the property is owned by the state (Rempel 2003). However, conflicts could develop in relation to long-term leases granted to the occupants which give them a right to protection from homelessness.

Conclusion

The right of return for Palestinian refugees is recognized by several United Nations resolutions and, as we have noted, it is anchored in four different bodies of international law. As we have demonstrated, the legal framework surrounding the rights of displaced Palestinians is clear, at least in theory. The refugee community itself has expressed support for this framework with different representative bodies and groups endorsing it on several occasions (Nabulsi 2005). However, sixty-eight years after their first displacement, Palestinian refugees have still not had their rights realized. The politically driven approach has failed to bring about a just resolution to the plight of Palestinian refugees, and the need to adopt a human rights-based approach, is now apparent.

Any politically driven approach will have to be inflicted upon the population by the decision makers in power, and so any agreement reached by that means will last only for as long as these decision makers remain in power. By contrast, a

rights-based approach, and in particular a participatory rights-based one, will be agreed in a process that satisfies rights holders in every concerned party, and so it will be able to secure and sustain grassroots commitment to change and new realities. A resolution will be more likely to become permanent if it is agreed upon by the population as a whole. Conflicting rights exist in this conflict, but they can be managed through the application of transitional justice principles if careful attention is paid to lessons learned in similar situations around the world.

Its potential for providing stability, satisfaction, and durability recommends a rights-based approach to the refugee issue. It also casts an unfavourable light on the flaws inherent in the realpolitik approach which has been used for the past twenty-four years in bids to solve the ongoing forcible displacement of Palestinians. As we wait for an authoritative rights-based process to emerge, much work can be done to establish mechanisms, and support existing initiatives, that will contribute to delivering a rights-based practical return.

Notes

- 1 It is important to note that UNGA Resolution 194 (III) has a character different from all other UN resolutions. It has been reaffirmed by the General Assembly every year, and represents the overwhelming majority view of the UN member states, and this can be seen to constitute 'strong evidence of its authority as customary international law on the Palestinian refugee question' (Akram 2000).
- 2 Resolution 237 was adopted unanimously at the 1361st meeting of the Security Council (1967). A similar statement was adopted on 4 July 1967 by the General Assembly through Resolution 2252 (UN General Assembly 1967).

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4

Human rights as a tool for conflict transformation

The cases of the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement and local unarmed popular resistance

Ana Sánchez and Patricia Sellick

Introduction

This chapter, like others presented in this volume, responds to the disappointing outcomes of the 1993 Oslo Accords between the government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). The Oslo Accords were initially perceived as a dramatic breakthrough and were arguably designed to end the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory. Instead, they have contributed to a deepening of the occupation, the increased securitization of Israeli and Palestinian political cultures, growing inequality between Palestinians and Jewish Israelis, and the continuing dispossession of Palestinian refugees.

The Oslo Accords were based on a classic top-down conflict resolution process facilitated by external actors. The limits of this strategy, and of an agreement which prioritizes Israeli security, have been discussed elsewhere (Kaufman and Bisharat 2002). In this chapter, we ask whether human rights

can be deployed effectively to change the asymmetric power relations between Israel, as the occupying military power, and the Palestinian people. The authors of this chapter have experience of working as practitioners with international civil society organizations committed to peace and justice (Hofer and Krienbuehl 2012). This experience informs two case studies of resistance which focus respectively on the transnational movement for boycotts, divestment, and sanctions (BDS 2005); and on local, unarmed,¹ popular resistance to the occupation. Both types of resistance use human rights to challenge, not only direct violations of individual human rights, but also the state apparatus of structural violence.

Human rights and the state

The term ‘human rights’ is used throughout this chapter to refer to the particular conception of ‘freedom, justice and peace’ that was articulated in the Universal Declaration of the Human Rights (United Nations 1948). The role of the state as guarantor of human rights is understood to be critical, and human rights are narrowly interpreted as political and legal instruments for holding states, as duty-bearers, to account. Our focus is on the particular, normative, and institutional system for realizing the Declaration’s objectives in the context of the member states of the United Nations.

The Preamble of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights makes an explicit link between human rights and conflict. The Declaration is founded on a common acceptance of universalist principles concerning the inherent dignity, and the equal and inalienable rights, of all members of the human family; it also enshrines the aspirations that all people should enjoy freedom of speech and belief, and freedom from fear and want (United Nations 1948). If these equal and inalienable rights are violated by a tyrannous state, the consequence is rebellion. In order to avoid people having recourse to violent rebellion against the state, the state must provide legal

protection for human rights. Human rights violations are thus presented as both a cause and a consequence of violent conflict (Parlevliet 2010).

The Declaration was agreed by the member states of the United Nations (UN), and the states and their judicial systems are its primary duty-bearers in terms of the protection of human rights. If a non-state actor abuses an individual's rights, then the state still has a duty to protect that individual from harm. Even if the individual is not a citizen, the state still has the same duty. The language is universal and idealistic, but, at the same time, the discourse reflects a realist, state-centric world view. Practitioners and scholars alike have found that 'applying the perspective of human rights forces a greater emphasis on structural conditions, especially the role of the state, systems of governance and issues of power in generating, escalating and transforming violent conflict' (Dudouet and Schmelzle 2010, p. 8).

As the sections that follow illustrate, human rights, once lauded as universal, are now best seen as political and legal instruments that serve two purposes: they articulate the needs of marginalized and excluded people, and they hold states, as duty-bearers, to account. Advocates of human rights, within this framework, operate within the limits of the nation state, and seek to make it more respectful and protective of human rights. While it could be said that this allows them to push for regime change or regime improvement, it can also be argued that, in this scenario, human rights become devices that reinforce the status quo (Clements 2001; Hopgood 2013; Perugini and Gordon 2015; Santos 2009).

Our interest is in finding out whether human rights can be used not to reinforce but to modify power relations between the occupier and the occupied. In their book, *The Human Right to Dominate* (2015), Perugini and Gordon detail the appropriation of human rights as a tool for oppression; however, they also outline the possibility that human rights can be used as a tool for liberation. 'The issue is simultaneously one of form and of substance. When in a given situation the existing forms of human rights mobilizations do not help undo domination, human rights activists should

reconceptualize and reframe the struggle’ (Perugini and Gordon 2015, p. 138). By speaking of struggle and oppression, Perugini and Gordon reject the symmetrical, dialogical relationship that underpins the conflict resolution perspective and introduce a perspective that acknowledges that the relations of forces are asymmetrical. From this perspective, conflict resolution mechanisms based on equality of power are inappropriate. What is needed is for the power relations to be transformed. ‘Conflict transformation is not about making a situation of injustice more bearable, but about transforming the very systems, structures and relationships which give rise to violence and injustice’ (RTC 2009, cited in Parlevliet 2010, p. 3); instead, it aims towards a profound structural transformation of society (Atack 2012, p. 86). In this view, conflict transformation, unlike the classic approach of conflict resolution, opens up possibilities for the ‘creation of alternatives to the conventional social and political structures (such as the state) that depend ultimately upon the suppression of popular power and the use of armed force or organized violence to maintain themselves’ (Atack 2012, p. 86). We find below that a close examination of the power relations which sustain the systems and structures of the state reveals that there are multiple points of resistance, some of which are susceptible to human rights interventions by non-state actors (Schirch 2006).

Power and the State of Israel

In the case of Israel, a corollary of the state’s legitimate monopoly of violent coercive power is the risk of the militarization of Israeli politics, a militarization that legitimizes the use of force to solve what should be political problems. An unquestioning acceptance of the use of force by the majority of the Jewish Israeli population is not just proof of the state’s coercive power; it is also a function of its hegemonic power. That hegemonic authority rests on consent given by this majority to the idea that Israel is a Jewish state to which the Palestinians pose an existential threat. Educational

institutions, the media, the Jewish Agency, and other organizations manufacture this consent. Closely allied to the idea of threat is the self-evidence of the social order in which the lives of Jewish Israelis are privileged over those of Palestinians. ‘The specifically symbolic power to impose the principles of the construction of reality – in particular, social reality’ (Bourdieu 1977, p. 165) perpetuates a discriminatory social structure favoured by, and serving the interests of, those who benefit from it.

The majority of people in the Jewish Israeli population consent, not just to the militarization of politics, but also its securitization and ‘the little security nothings’ (Huysmans 2011) embedded in their daily practices. There is an intrusive presence of security personnel at every shopping mall, university, and public building, both in Israel, and in areas B and C of the occupied Palestinian territory. The segregation of housing and the creep of hate speech into social media are also tolerated. The Israeli military uses a biometric system to control movement within the Palestinian territory and this has been cited as an example of Foucault’s concept of disciplinary power (El-Sakka 2015), a power that operates at the most insidious and humble levels to co-opt and deny human dignity.

This power constructs young Israeli people as agents of control and occupation, and it permeates and constitutes Palestinian society and the roles permitted within it too: for example, members of its leadership group can be identified by the privileges the Israeli state bestows on them as they move with minimal delay through checkpoints. Palestinians and visitors to the occupied Palestinian territory become, in effect, tacit collaborators with these systems, organizing their lives around their limited and unpredictable opportunities for movement.

While the analysis of power relations conducted above is necessarily incomplete, it does at least provide several key insights. First, it shows that power is plural in form, and, second, it demonstrates that a transformation of the asymmetric power relations between Israel – as the occupying military power – and the Palestinian people will require a rolling back of the state-sanctioned use of violence. Third, it

becomes clear that the consent that individual Jewish Israelis grant to state-manufactured discourses of threat needs to be withdrawn, and individual cooperation with the micro-practices of disciplinary power must also be reversed. This understanding of the plural nature of power makes it possible to see how human rights interventions aimed at states, as duty-bearers, can be part of a wider transformational endeavour.

The first opportunity for transformation arises from the dependence of the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory on the support of Israel's allies. Much has been made of the success of the twentieth century's civil resistance movements; their successes against oppressive governments have been attributed to pragmatic nonviolence and the collective withdrawal of consent to be governed (Chenoweth and Stephan 2011; Schell 2003). The theory of consent was clearly elaborated by Gene Sharp (1990) who argued that

The rulers of governments and political systems are not omnipotent, nor do they possess self-generating power. All dominating elites and rulers depend for their sources of power upon the cooperation of the population, and of the institutions of the society they would rule. The availability of those sources depends on the cooperation and obedience of many groups and institutions, special personnel, and the general population.

(3)

However, the persistence of the Israeli occupation cannot only be explained by the continued compliance of the occupied people. Israel's coercive power does not just rely on its authority as a state and the consent of the people it governs: it is also contingent on the support of its powerful international allies. This dependence creates opportunities for those who seek to resist the Israeli occupation because, if they succeed in gaining widespread international support, they may be able to destabilize external connivance or collaboration with Israeli rule (Atack 2012). Within this context, human rights become a political and legal instrument for articulating the needs of Palestinians and for holding both Israel and its allies to account. This is especially true within the secular tradition of Western Europe and in the United States (US), where the language of political and civil rights has resonance. Human rights therefore have integrative power and invite participation across national boundaries.

Human rights advocates can play a transnational role by influencing Israel's powerful allies. They can also help to bring about change by transmitting and maintaining ideas and norms that disrupt the close identity between Jewish Israeli people and their political and social institutions. The power of the Israeli political elite arises, not only from its centralized control of the coercive state apparatus, but also from its subtle, because dispersed, cultural hegemony (Turner 2015a). Ideas about human rights can be used to disrupt the organized consent that 'the governed' grant to ideas that help maintain a status quo characterized by inequality between Palestinians and Jewish Israelis.

Foucault's awareness that forms of power are plural and diffuse (Foucault 1991, p. 53) should alert us to the fact that the Israeli disciplinary matrix is not the only system of power operating in Israeli and Palestinian society. While it works to co-opt people and deny human dignity, it can exist simultaneously with types of resistance that reassert human dignity. For example, the same Palestinian who carries an Israeli-issued magnetic card and is controlled at the Israeli checkpoint can also be a blogger who asserts his dignity by persuading an international audience to boycott Hewlett Packard because of its involvement in the magnetic card system. The discussions that follow focus on the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement (BDS) and popular unarmed resistance to illustrate the ways in which individual Palestinians, Jewish Israelis, and international allies are making tactical use of human rights to challenge, subvert, or replace the plural forms of power that sustain the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory.

The Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement

In July 2005, Palestinian civil society called for boycotts, divestment, and sanctions against Israel 'until it complies with international law and universal principles of human rights'

(BDS 2005). The call was signed by political parties, unions, associations, coalitions, and organizations that represented ‘the three integral parts of the people of Palestine’: Palestinian refugees, Palestinians under occupation, and Palestinian citizens of Israel. The BDS campaign is based on the assessment that all forms of (primarily state-led) international intervention and peacemaking employed to date have failed to convince or force Israel to comply with humanitarian law, to respect fundamental human rights, and to end its occupation. It therefore appeals, over the heads of states, to ‘people of conscience’.

The BDS movement deliberately set out to use pressure as a means to bring about change: ‘We appeal to you to pressure your respective states to impose embargoes and sanctions against Israel. We also invite conscientious Israelis to support this Call, for the sake of justice and genuine peace’ (BDS 2005). The situational logic behind the use of pressure involves an acknowledgement of the asymmetric power relations that exist between Israel and the Palestinians and the application of nonviolent coercive means to change those relations. Nonviolent coercion involves exerting force on an opponent without intending them physical or psychological harm, and it relies on a pragmatic approach designed to achieve objectives in situations in which opponents are actively resisting a change of perspective (Atack 2012). By 2005, Palestinians had experienced nearly forty years of occupation and nearly sixty years of dispossession. They had ample experience to convince them that the political elite in Israel was unlikely to be converted to the justness of their cause; however, they did acknowledge that individual Israelis could be persuaded to share their view and invited them to join the movement through Boycott from Within.²

In addition to applying nonviolent direct pressure on states, the BDS movement exerts nonviolent indirect pressure on Israel and its allies. It has targeted business enterprises that profit from Israel’s violations of Palestinian human rights, and so it has opened the way for business enterprises to be held to account by a global movement of individual consumers and shareholders.³ Through the Palestinian Campaign for the

Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI), it has also called upon intellectuals and academics worldwide to ‘comprehensively and consistently boycott all Israeli academic and cultural institutions’ because of their complicity in an Israeli system ‘that has denied Palestinians their basic rights guaranteed by international law, or has hampered their exercise of these rights, including academic freedom and the right to education’ (PACBI 2014).

The BDS movement, including PACBI, makes a clear distinction between individuals and institutions, and it uses boycotts in principled ways that are anchored in the precepts of international law and universal human rights. There are no boycotts of individuals based on their opinions or identities (on the grounds of citizenship, race, gender, or religion, for example). If, however, an individual is representing the State of Israel or a complicit Israeli institution in the role of dean, rector, or president, for example, or is commissioned or recruited to participate in Israel’s efforts to ‘rebrand’ itself, then that individual’s activities do become subject to the institutional boycott called for by the BDS movement (PACBI 2014).

BDS has become a transnational solidarity movement and its success arises from the way it harnesses integrative power, or the ‘power with’ (Boulding 1990), that arises from cooperation. It brings together people who have chosen to withdraw their collaboration from economic and cultural activities that strengthen Israel, and it has proved adept at securing participation from a diverse range of supporters from protestant churches and students to Members of the European Parliament. BDS has also been flexible in terms of the repertoire of actions it promotes, from individual consumer boycotts to the refusal of institutional research and development contracts. This flexibility makes it inclusive and enables it to grow, both vertically and horizontally. According to the World Investment Report published by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development in June 2015, foreign direct investment in Israel plunged from almost \$11,804 million in 2013 to just \$6,432 million in 2014, the lowest figure in more than a decade (UNCTAD 2015). Roni

Manos, an Israeli economist and one of the authors of the report's summary, told the Israeli new agency Ynet, 'We believe [that the factors which] led to the drop in investment in Israel are Operation Protective Edge and the boycotts Israel is facing' (Glantz 2015).

The BDS movement has also made significant use of symbolic power (Bourdieu 1984) by cultivating comparisons with the US civil rights movement and the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa. In both of these cases, the culturally dominant notion of a just social order has shifted within living memory. One such symbolic victory for the Palestinian BDS movement saw the withdrawal in August 2015 of the French transnational company Veolia (2014) from all of its activities in Israel. The first subsidiary that it sold delivered local bus services, designated for Jewish passengers only, in the West Bank. When Palestinians attempted to board these Veolia buses, they deliberately emulated the 'freedom riders' who, in 1961, had challenged the segregated bus system in the American South; they also drew parallels between Israeli policies in the occupied West Bank and the South's 'Jim Crow' laws on racial segregation. The symbolic power they mobilized contributed to their success in winning public support in the United States for the boycott of Veolia.

In the United States, nonviolent political consumer boycotts are protected by law (*NAACP v. Claiborne Hardware Co.* 1982). By contrast, in Israel, an anti-boycott law was enacted in July 2011 (*Law for Prevention of Damage to the State of Israel through Boycott 2011*) which imposes sanctions on any individual or entity discovered to be calling for an economic, cultural, or academic boycott of Israel's West Bank settlements, or of Israel itself. A petition filed by Israeli human rights organizations and political movements against the anti-boycott law was substantially rejected by the Israeli Supreme Court on 15 April 2015 (*Avnery et al. v. Knesset et al.* 2015).

Kobi Snitz, an Israeli member of the Boycott from Within campaign, says that:

BDS tactics are the only example I can think of where the Palestinian movement has a built-in advantage and the Israelis have no effective way to

suppress it. The impact on Israel is felt very strongly. Incidentally the boycott is felt in Israel mainly through the right-wing backlash but it is felt very clearly.

(Snitz 2016)

The fact that the Israeli government perceives this nonviolent movement as a ‘strategic threat’ (Beaumont 2015) is itself a success for the campaign. It suggests that the BDS movement has succeeded both in raising public awareness of the discriminatory practices of the Israeli government and in challenging the image of Israel prevalent in the culturally sympathetic European and US media (Carter Hallward 2013). Snitz is, in effect, describing the practical application of the ‘political ju-jitsu’ identified by Gene Sharp (1973). As Israel enacts more repressive laws, inconsistent with the practice of democracy, a wedge is driven between Israel and its allies. In a further development, as Israel’s allies have closed ranks and sought to protect Israel, they too have introduced repressive measures against their own citizens, limiting the possibility of boycott (Mason 2016). Examples of these repressive measures can be seen in France or Canada, where BDS actions have been treated by governments as hate crimes (Green-wald 2015; Keefer 2014).

The BDS movement explicitly uses its nonviolent coercive power to change the asymmetric power relations that obtain between Israel and its allies and the Palestinians. Its use of pressure distinguishes BDS from conflict resolution mechanisms that focus on dealing with symmetrical conflict. Lisa Taraki, sociologist and co-founder of PACBI, says that ‘diplomacy has proven to be futile [...] and] deliberately avoids acknowledgment of the basic colonizer-colonized relationship’ (Taraki and LeVine 2011), and so, instead of seeking to change the current status quo, it normalizes it. In order to challenge these disproportionate relationships, the BDS movement has adopted a conflict transformation approach that tackles the very systems, structures, and relationships that give rise to violence and injustice. The movement embraces human rights, not to solve isolated legal cases, but to challenge the basis of legal institutions and to advocate for relationships based on equality for all.

Unarmed popular resistance: the case of Bil'in

Unarmed popular resistance against the Israeli military occupation also combines a conflict transformation approach based on changing power relations with linked and separate human rights interventions. In contrast to the BDS movement, which works internationally to bring pressure to bear on Israel, popular resistance generally takes place in situ, within the occupied Palestinian territory.

The agricultural village of Bil'in is located northeast of Ramallah in the West Bank, and has a population of no more than 1,800 residents (Hammad 2011). In 2004, the Israeli government ordered the confiscation of 4,000 dunums (equivalent to approximately 1,000 acres) of the village's agricultural land. The residents of Bil'in responded to this confiscation order by setting up a Popular Resistance Committee, which employed both unarmed protests and legal tactics to oppose the building of the Wall and the extension of the two Jewish-only settlements of Modiin Illit and Matityahu. Villagers have been organizing demonstrations on a daily, and latterly weekly, basis to protest against the confiscation of their agricultural land. Their unarmed popular resistance movement has gained support from both international and Israeli activists, and it has become a source of inspiration to communities in other villages.

Critical to the success of popular resistance has been the prevalence of shared values within the village. A Palestinian from Al-Masara village, whose lands were also under threat from the Wall, described this enviable social solidarity: 'When I went to Bil'in, I found the villagers sitting under the trees, on the land with the farmers, socializing, eating, and dancing. This strengthened the villagers' social relations and motivated them to join in the demonstrations' (Soliman 2016). Members of the leadership in Bil'in were acutely aware that this local social solidarity was necessary but insufficient in their struggle against the Wall. They knew they had to capture the attention of the international media. One of their tactics was to create

controlled critical situations that demonstrated the differential power relations between unarmed demonstrators and the Israeli army. Images of unarmed protesters, who included children, women, and men, contradicted the predominant security discourse in which Palestinians were portrayed as a threat in order to justify the use of coercive power and violence against them.

The resistance movement in Bil'in was distinctive because of its ability to keep generating new and productive moments of crisis. Each week the protests took a new form. In one Friday demonstration, the villagers compared their situation to that of a fictional group of people in the globally successful film 'Avatar' (*The Guardian* 2010) who defend themselves against a corporation that is trying to mine their land for resources. This demonstration caught the public imagination and was even featured on CNN (2010). As their cause gained international recognition, the villagers were visited by non-state actors, such as Nobel Prize laureates Desmond Tutu and Jimmy Carter, who lent their symbolic power to the campaign. Civil society organizations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have also participated in, or made statements that expressed their support and solidarity with, their struggle (Al-Jazeera 2011).

Kobi Snitz (2016), an Israeli activist who has been participating in Palestinian protests for over ten years, sees their influence on Israeli society as twofold: 'First, the activists who protest with Palestinians are quickly transformed by it and join a core of anti-Zionists living in Israel. Second, the idea that Israelis can be in a Palestinian village without a gun and be friends and comrades with Palestinians undermines the logic of segregation'. However, Snitz (2016) goes on to say that 'The second point, although important, tends to be exaggerated to the point that some will prefer it to struggle – that I don't agree with'. Snitz's point is that resistance must come at a cost to Jewish Israelis, otherwise, visits to a Palestinian village are still part of the logic of dialogue and conflict resolution and can work to normalize the asymmetric power relations between occupier and occupied. This is particularly the case while only Israelis have the freedom to

travel to the West Bank and Palestinians do not have a reciprocal freedom of travel to Israel.

Civil disobedience is only one of the tactics adopted by the villagers. They have also employed the legal tools of the International Court of Justice and the European Union to challenge the military law operating in the West Bank and to contest the hegemonic idea that Palestinians are a threat to Israeli security. In 2004, the International Court of Justice (2004) issued an advisory opinion stating that ‘the court finds that the construction by Israel of a wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and its associated regime are contrary to international law’. This advisory opinion became an important legal tool in the Palestinian resistance to the Wall.

The European Union Guidelines for Human Right Defenders (EU 2004) have offered resistance groups another important legal tool. According to the guidelines, Palestinians who participate in nonviolent demonstrations – against the Wall, the Israeli military occupation, or the settlements – can be defined as human rights defenders, and can claim protection as such (OHCHR 2015). This runs counter to the Military Code applied in the West Bank under which these Palestinians could be accused of violating Military Order 101, found guilty of committing a ‘security offence’, and sentenced to a term of imprisonment or to the payment of significant fines. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other international actors had already been active in denouncing the fact that Palestinian, Israeli, and international protesters engaged in the same action were being treated differently, and therefore unjustly, by the courts.⁴

Lawyers who represented activists in front of the Military Courts quickly began to present arrested Palestinian protesters as human rights defenders, and, over time, their approach has had an impact on the discursive conventions that surround these activists. Discussions about unarmed demonstrations and protesters are now more likely to locate them within egalitarian narratives about human rights than within hegemonic discourses about security. This deconstruction of the security narrative has had a significant impact: nonviolent Palestinian protesters are no longer being defined as security

threats (people you need to get protection from) and have become human rights defenders at risk (people you need to give protection to).

Villagers in Bil'in have not shied away from using the Israeli civilian court system to achieve their ends. Some Palestinians argue that this strategy is tantamount to the legitimization of the rule of Israeli law. However, others will argue that short-term gains are necessary to encourage people to continue in the work of resistance. One protester, a Palestinian participant in the resistance, offered us his explanation of how this logic works in practice: 'What is victory in the mind of the farmer? Conflict transformation, media coverage, and advocacy do not amount to victory for him. No, he wants to reach his land. To be able to go freely to his olive trees each morning is a physical victory' (Soliman 2016).

In 2005, Bil'in village submitted a petition to the Israeli Supreme Court demanding that the Wall be re-routed. The Wall put about 500 acres of the village's agricultural lands on the side under full Israeli control, and the villagers had only limited access to it through a gate in the fence which the Israeli Defense Forces opened and closed. The Israeli government argued that this was for the sake of the security of the village's Jewish neighbours in Mattityahu East B. In 2007, the Israeli Supreme Court ruled in favour of the petitioners (Barrows-Friedman 2007). Chief Justice Dorit Beinisch noted in the ruling that 'We were not convinced that it is necessary for security-military reasons to retain the current route that passes on Bilin's lands' (Kershner 2007).

The return of part of the confiscated land came at a great cost to the villagers. As Sharp (1990, p. 9) observed, protesters are likely to meet with repression aimed at ending their protest, and protesters must be ready to suffer if they continue:

If the rulers' power is to be controlled by withdrawing help and obedience, the non-cooperation and disobedience must be widespread. These must, in addition, be maintained in the face of repression aimed at forcing a resumption of submission. Once, however, there has been a major reduction of, or an end to, the subjects' fear, and once there is a willingness to suffer sanctions as the price of change, large-scale disobedience and non-cooperation become possible.

One of the first casualties of the protests in Bil'in was the Israeli lawyer Lymor Goldstein, who was shot in the head with a rubber bullet at less than five metres' distance by Israeli border police during a protest against the Wall in 2006 (Edelman 2009). Subiyeh Abu Rahmah spoke to the American Friends Service Committee about the cost to herself and her Palestinian family. Her son Basem was killed in April 2009 by an Israeli soldier while he was participating in an unarmed demonstration against the Wall. In December 2011, her daughter Jawaher died of asphyxiation after inhaling tear gas fired at her by an Israeli soldier while she observed, from a distance, unarmed demonstrations near the village. Another of her sons, Ashraf, came to the attention of the world when a video was released by the Israeli human rights organization, B'Tselem (American Friends Service Committee 2013; B'Tselem 2008). It showed an Israeli soldier shooting Ashraf in the leg with a rubber bullet from close range while he was bound and blindfolded.

The Bil'in legal case was successful because the villagers identified and exploited multiple points of resistance. They had discovered the power of solidarity with Jewish Israeli individuals and the role the international media could play in amplifying the counterhegemonic idea of nonviolence. They also encouraged Palestinian, Israeli, and international human rights organizations to document and broadcast evidence of human rights violations. In his study of resistance under military occupation, Jacques Sémelin (1989, p. 8) noted that when a society feels less and less submissive, it becomes more and more uncontrollable: even if the occupier keeps its power, its authority is lost. Civilian resistance, as he describes it, consists primarily of a clash of wills that is expressed above all in a fight over values, a fight that, in this case, the villagers won.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have analysed the effectiveness of human rights in contributing to conflict transformation. We began from the realist and unpromising position that the conception of human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is limited by the power of the state. The power of the state is based not only on its monopoly over organized violence, but also on its alliances with other states. The power of states is also hegemonic, which is to say that it operates in dispersed and subtle ways to secure the consent of the majority of the population. This preliminary, and necessarily incomplete, analysis allows us to identify points of advantage for transforming the asymmetric power relations between Israel and the Palestinians. If the plurality of power is recognized, then the potential of human rights and conflict transformation approaches can be mobilized in mutually reinforcing ways. Both have integrative power: people can work together to achieve mutually beneficial goals and objectives even as they experience coercion, or they can act in solidarity across borders. Both also have counterhegemonic power: ideas of equality and nonviolence have the potential for popular legitimacy at local and transnational levels. Together they draw on the symbolic power of other struggles to shift the cultural acceptance of what is a just social order. Attention to practice also shows that there are multiple sites of resistance where Palestinians courageously assert their inherent dignity despite living under military occupation.

Edward Said, in his description of a just peace, talks about the potential of ‘thinking contrapuntally’. He claims that

We need to think about two histories not simply separated ideologically, but together, contrapuntally. Neither Palestinian nor Israeli history at this point is a thing in itself, without the other. In so doing we will necessarily come up against the basic irreconcilability between the Zionist claim and Palestinian dispossession. The injustice done to the Palestinians is constitutive to these two histories, as is also the crucial effect of Western anti-Semitism and the Holocaust.

(Said 2006, 193)

Said concludes that Palestinian and Jewish Israeli histories can only continue to flow together, not apart, within a broader framework based on the notion of equality for all, and that this

requires a narrative of emancipation and enlightenment for all, not just for one's own community.

Conflict transformation is not only about ending the occupation of Palestinian territory, nor is it simply about the liberation of the Palestinian people from the coercive control of the Israeli military occupation; it will also involve the liberation of Palestinians and Israelis from the asymmetric power relations immanent in all encounters between 'possessor and dispossessed', 'occupier and occupied'. These changes will need to affect all Jewish Israelis – whether they live within the State of Israel or in illegal settlements within the occupied Palestinian territory – and all Palestinians, whether they are living in Israel, under occupation in Palestinian territory, or as refugees. Just as the histories of Palestinians and Israelis are constitutive of each other, so too are their future power relations. Both the BDS movement and the unarmed Palestinian resistance movement intentionally appropriate and reconceptualize human rights. They recognize that the symbolic universalism which is foundational to human rights, and which is antithetical to ethnonationalism, is essential to the contrapuntal and creative thinking required to protect the inherent dignity of all Palestinians and Israelis. Palestinians in these two movements may be showing the way by refusing to be silent about the injustice done to them and by generating nonviolent power relations that can transform not only their futures but also those of Jewish Israelis.

Notes

- 1 'Unarmed' rather than 'nonviolent' is used to describe this resistance because it may include stone-throwing.
- 2 Boycott from Within refers to a group of Palestinian and Jewish citizens of Israel, who have joined the Palestinian call for a BDS campaign against Israel (Boycott 2016). For a detailed discussion of Boycott from Within, see Turner (2015a).
- 3 A global standard for preventing and addressing the risk of abuses of human rights linked to business activity was put in place in 2011. The Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNHRC 2011) – known as the Ruggie principles – were designed to implement the United Nations' 'Protect,

Respect and Remedy' framework, and are applicable to all states and to all business enterprises, whether transnational, national, or local.

- 4 Military Order 101 applies to Palestinians but not to Israelis or international citizens, even if they are participating in the same action together at the same place.

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5

A critical and historical assessment of Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) in Palestine

Mazin B. Qumsiyeh

Introduction: a brief history of the BDS movement

Palestinians have engaged in unarmed resistance against an avowedly colonial Zionist project since 1880 when they began to respond to increased Jewish immigration into Palestine from Russia and Europe. That unarmed resistance continues to the present day. The Zionist movement was founded in the late nineteenth century, and its growth accelerated under the British mandate (1918–1948) which set out to deliver on the Balfour Declaration (1917) and its favourable view of ‘the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people’ (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2013). The Zionist project has necessitated the transformation of the land of Palestine from an area that had a predominantly non-Jewish population into a ‘Jewish state’ (Qumsiyeh 2004, 2012). The ‘Jewish state’ was founded in 1948 by force of arms, was expanded in 1967, and has continued to displace and

impoverish local Palestinian populations to this day (Pappé 2004; Qumsiyeh 2004; Roy 2001). Throughout this period, Palestinian populations have been relegated to ever shrinking areas of land, and native Palestinians have responded by resisting Zionist tenure and hegemony. This chapter will survey the history of this Palestinian resistance, and will focus, in particular, on efforts to initiate boycotts, divestment, and sanctions as forms of unarmed resistance to the Zionist project.

Early resistance movements were not concerned with an economic boycott of Jewish colonies since Jewish people had limited economic interactions with the native Palestinians. Instead, popular resistance to Zionism during the Ottoman era took the form of petition-writing and demonstrations (Qumsiyeh 2012). For example, in 1886, villagers from Al-Khdaira and Malbas protested verbally against the expansion of the settlement of Petah Tikva, and were successful in persuading the Ottoman government to restrict the settlement of those who had entered the country as tourists and overstayed their three-month entry visas (Mandel 1976). Verbal protests in 1890 were followed by a petition, signed by Muslim and Christian notables, which was presented to the Grand Vizier on 24 June 1891 in Jerusalem; it called on him to prevent foreign Jews from purchasing Palestinian lands (Al-Kayyali 1990, pp. 66–67). Given that their Ottoman rulers responded to such tactics, Palestinians had little motivation to employ additional tactics of resistance against the small and marginal Zionist colonies that existed during this period. This situation changed after the Balfour Declaration in 1917 and the subsequent British occupation of Palestine.

In the second half of May 1918, the Arab flag and the Arab national anthem of revolt were adopted by the Palestinian national movement despite objections by the British. These moves were followed in the first week of June 1918 by the establishment of a number of nationalist organizations, most notably in Jaffa and Jerusalem. The first boycotts under British rule commenced after the appointment of the first Zionist ruler of Palestine, Herbert Louis Samuel, on 30 June 1920. Mass resignations from government positions ensued, including that

of the famous Khalil Sakakini. Calls for boycotts were common and widely disseminated among educated Palestinians. Writing in *Al-Difa'* on 15 January 1935, Sami Al-Sarraj urged his readers to join this form of protest: 'Come oh Arabs let us disobey the laws one time. Come ye writers let us disobey the laws without worry about what the legal system will do to us [...] and ye Arab, there is nothing that forces you to buy products of foreigners and certainly not products of your enemies' (Mahaftha 2000, p. 67).

The uprising that took place from 1987 to 1993 also included highly successful boycott actions (Qumsiyeh 2012). The third declaration of the United Leadership of the Resistance issued on 18 January 1988 called for a boycott of all Israeli products for which local alternatives could be sourced; a tax strike, and other methods of popular resistance, were also recommended. This uprising had a significant negative impact on the Israeli economy in the areas of agriculture, tourism, construction, and military expenditure (Rosen 1991). However, following the uprising and the signing of the Oslo Accords, the political structure of Israel has continued to drift further to the right. Recent governments have passed more laws that discriminate against non-Jews in the 'Jewish state' and, in the 2015 legislative election, right- and ultra-right-wing parties increased their seats in the Knesset to form a majority under Prime Minister Netanyahu. These political developments offer little hope for the repeal of more than fifty laws which discriminate against non-Jews inside the borders established for the State of Israel in 1949 (Adalah 2012), or for the rescindment of hundreds of military orders which discriminate against Palestinians who are subject to Israeli rule in the areas occupied in 1967 in the West Bank and Gaza (Kirshbaum 2007).

The acceleration of BDS: 2005–2015

Calls for BDS, at local and international levels, have been invigorated since the beginning of the Palestinian uprising

(2000–2005) by worsening political and social conditions in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt). BDS efforts were propelled by Israel's ongoing violations of the international humanitarian laws that govern occupied areas and of the International Court of Justice's (2004) ruling on the illegality of Israel's Separation Wall. On the anniversary of the ICJ's ruling, Palestinian civil society issued a call to action which featured an initiative that went on to become known as the Palestinian BDS National Committee (BNC). Initially signed by 171 non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the BNC's call has since been endorsed by NGOs across Palestine, Israel, and the world. The resulting BDS movement calls for the use of methodologies of resistance, similar to those used in South Africa under apartheid, until Israel complies with the following international and humanitarian obligations:

1. Ending its occupation and colonization of all Arab lands and dismantling the Wall;
2. Recognizing the fundamental rights of the Arab Palestinian citizens of Israel to full equality; and
3. Respecting, protecting, and promoting the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in UN Resolution 194.

(BDS 2016)

As noted by McMahon (2014, p. 78), 'The BDS campaign is a networked contestation of the discourse of Palestinian-Israeli politics. The call's first demand about ending colonization, for example, fits together matrix-like with the longer historicizing encouraged by the call's third demand. This is the source of its effectiveness, its power'. The backlash the campaign has provoked confirms the power of these demands which cannot be reconciled with continued violations of the human rights of native Palestinians. Three significant aspects of the boycott will now be surveyed to illustrate the reach and effects of the BDS movement: these are the academic and cultural boycott, church participation in BDS campaigns, and broader economic boycotts and sanctions.

Academic and cultural boycotts

Calls for an academic boycott were first made in the United States (US) in February 2002 and in the United Kingdom (UK) in April of that year. The Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI) was launched in April 2004 following a statement issued by Palestinian academics and intellectuals in October 2003. In this public statement, the founders of PACBI articulated the vision and direction of the movement and focused on a number of key concerns: these were the Nakba (the forced dispossession and eviction of Arab Palestinians during the 1948 Palestine war), occupation and colonization, and racial discrimination (PACBI 2008). An open letter calling for academic boycott was signed by over 120 academics, led by Steven and Hilary Rose in the United Kingdom, and this letter was published in *The Guardian* in April 2002 in response to Israeli occupation and violence. These campaigns quickly gathered over 1,500 signatures from academics in Europe and North America who pledged to boycott Israeli educational institutions. Since then, thousands more academics around the world have joined the campaign (USACBI 2014).

A growing number of scholars are justifying the strategy of academic boycott and contest any arguments that it violates the principles of academic freedom (Baker and Davidson 2003; Butler 2006; Doumani 2006; Makdisi 2003). Even inside the United States, where there is significant support for Zionism, there has been tremendous growth in the number of academic boycotts (USACBI 2016a). This form of protest gained a significant boost when the renowned physicist Stephen Hawking withdrew from a conference that was to be held in Israel in 2013 (Cressy 2013; Davidson and Jad 2004). Desmond Tutu has argued that interaction with academics in Israel 'can never be business as usual. Israeli universities are an intimate part of the Israeli regime, by active choice. While Palestinians are not able to access universities and schools, Israeli universities produce the research, technology, arguments and leaders for maintaining the occupation' (PACBI 2008). Tutu made this statement shortly before the University

of Johannesburg cut ties with Ben Gurion University of the Negev. In May 2015, the student council presidents of five South African universities issued a statement explaining why student groups at the University of South Africa, Cape Peninsula University of Technology, Durban University of Technology, Mangasutho University of Technology, and the University of the Western Cape were joining the boycott of Israel. Academic boycotts of Israeli institutions are justified by participants on the grounds that Israeli academic and cultural institutions are directly complicit in perpetuating apartheid (Barghouti 2011; Davidson and Jad 2004; Rose and Rose 2008). Participants cite, as an example of that situation, the fact that Arabic Studies departments at Israeli universities often lack Palestinian faculty members (Gould 2013).

In the cultural arena, dozens of performers have cancelled appearances in Israel to comply with the BDS call (for a list of cultural boycott supporters, see USACBI 2016b). For example, the May 2015 cancellation of a Lauren Hill performance in Tel Aviv resulted from a campaign that included thousands of signatures, letters from fans, creative videos, and songs. The importance and effectiveness of academic and cultural boycotts had already been made clear in South Africa where these forms of action played a key role in securing the end of apartheid in the 1990s (White 2015; Younis 2000). Momentum for change grew there when members of the country's cultural elites such as academics, artists, and athletes were no longer welcomed in Western capitals but instead were faced with signs calling on them to 'end apartheid' and 'free South Africa'.

The academic boycott in the Palestinian context has been promoted on the grounds that, as well as raising awareness, it promotes long overdue debates about Israeli policies in the conflict. BDS discussions grow in influence when they are included in journals like the *British Medical Journal* (Hickey 2007) or *Nature* (Cressy 2013) because these debates, conducted in the spirit of academic freedom and free speech, provide an important sense of legitimacy for the academic boycott overall (Rose and Rose 2008; USACBI 2016a). High-profile sophisticated debates about BDS in respected

publications help to establish the campaign's credibility. They also encourage other respected professionals, such as scientists, engineers, and artists, to establish positions on the issues, which are based on peer-reviewed information, as well as their own consciences.

Church participation in BDS

The first organized Palestinian boycotts of Zionist settlements were initiated by Christian-Muslim associations formed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Qumsiyeh 2012). This boycott movement accelerated during the British occupation (1918–1948) and involved significant leadership contributions from the religious community and women's groups (Mogannam 1937). In recent decades, the Israeli government has oppressed both Christians and Muslims in the occupied Palestinian territory, and acts of resistance conducted by Christian Palestinians have continued to be rooted in their theological understanding of their role in the struggle (Ateek 1990; Chacour 2003; Raheb 1995), as well as in secular political ideas (Mogannam 1937). For decades, Christian and Muslim groups tended to act in isolation, but, during the 1987–1993 uprising, Palestinian Christian denominations joined other faith-based communities in supporting calls for BDS made by groups like the United Leadership of the Uprising.

This coordination was advanced dramatically in December 2009 when a Christian Palestinian initiative was launched by the group Kairos Palestine. The Kairos Palestine document, setting out the groups' goals, was entitled *A moment of truth: a word of faith, hope and love from the heart of Palestinian suffering* (Kairos Palestine 2016); it was inspired by the original Kairos South Africa document which had been circulated to churches around the world in 1985 to promote BDS actions grounded in faith, hope, and love (Kairos Palestine 2012, 2016). The Kairos initiative promoted the idea that religion can and should play an active and positive role in helping people to achieve peace combined with justice:

‘Kairos offers a truly prophetic human vision, a vision that continues to see – and insists on seeing – the image of God in all people, whether occupiers or occupied’ (Kairos Palestine 2016). Churches around the world began divestment actions related to their church pensions and other holdings. Some successes started to accumulate after 2004 and included church divestment from companies, such as Caterpillar, which are complicit in the violence committed against Palestinians (Clarke 205).

Economic boycotts and sanctions

This section provides a basic overview of consumer boycotts and government sanctions in the struggle against structural inequalities in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory. A significant amount has been written about the Arab boycott of Israel. The first boycotts were implemented shortly before the formation of the State of Israel, and their use accelerated in the following three decades (Iskandar 1966; Losman 1972). Primary boycotts were directed at Israeli companies, while secondary and tertiary boycotts were implemented against companies that did business in Israel. These boycotts forced Israeli apologists to push for anti-sanction legislation in the United States congress from 1959 onwards, and, in 1977, an amendment to the Export Administration Act stated that if companies were to comply with the Arab boycott, they would be in violation of the law. This statute also requires companies to report any requests for them to participate in boycotts, and, in 2006, US companies submitted a total of 1,291 reports on boycott-related requests (Weiss 2007).

It should be noted here that regional boycotts did appear to have an effect on Israel. Fershtman and Gandal (1998) have shown that, after the signing of the Oslo Accords, the Israeli economy benefited from a so-called peace dividend. In some cases, even before sanctions were implemented, policy reversals were enacted in order to comply with demands. For example, in 1979, the threat of sanctions by Arab League states forced the Canadian government to reverse its decision

to move its embassy to Jerusalem (Ripsman and Blanchard 2002). Unfortunately, significant normalization of Israeli occupation through the Oslo process has contributed to the erosion of effective international governmental sanctions.

In 1988, more countries recognized the state of Palestine than those that had diplomatic relations with Israel. An increase in the economic development of Israel was prompted by the Egyptian President Sadat in the 1970s, and further encouraged by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) with its 1974 Ten Point Program, 1988 Declaration of Independence, and 1993 Oslo Accord; Jordan's 1994 peace treaty with Israel also improved Israel's economic position. The Oslo peace process created the problematic impression that Israelis and Palestinians could negotiate their differences bilaterally under the aegis of the US government, an important supporter of Israel's position. The civil society-level BDS movement described in this chapter grew in the 1990s in response to this government-level détente (Dajani and Isma'il 2014).

Looking to the future, Crawford-Browne (2004) suggests that the most effective types of economic sanction policy which might be pursued in the near term can be modelled after the October 1985 actions of Bishop Desmond Tutu, Dr. Allan Boesak, and Dr. Beyers Naude in South Africa. They targeted the banking sector, and, since all wire transfers and interbank transfers are now carried out through the Belgium-based SWIFT system, a campaign directed at that system could carry significant sway in motivating change on the part of Israel.

The success of the BDS campaign

The last ten years have witnessed the acceleration of BDS actions with hundreds of NGOs, churches, unions, local governments, companies, and other organizations and entities engaging in BDS activities across the globe. Giora (2010) usefully identifies some of the key milestones in the evolution of the movement. A BDS (2016) timeline, as well as relevant

names, details of actions taken, and descriptions of activities on the academic and cultural fronts are also available online (Corporate Watch 2016; PACBI 2008; Who Profits? 2016).

There have been some key victories for the BDS movement. In particular, the campaign against Veolia Transport and Alstom delivered significant successes when both companies were labelled complicit with the occupation and lost contracts worth several billion US dollars. The campaign against Veolia and Alstom started because both companies were participating in the construction of infrastructure for Jewish settlements in the oPt. The Jerusalem light rail system, in which both companies were involved, was constructed on illegally occupied territory. In November 2006, ASN – a Dutch bank – broke off financial relations with Veolia. In 2008, the Triodos Bank – another Dutch institution – and Stockholm Community Council joined the campaign, and Veolia suffered a multibillion dollar loss of revenue. Between 2009 and 2011, Veolia was excluded from contracts by Sandwell Council, Dublin City Council, Swansea City Council, the Greater Bordeaux local government, Edinburgh Council, South London Waste Partnership, and the Victoria State Government in Australia. In 2012, Veolia suffered another setback in the Netherlands when The Hague excluded Veolia from its public contracts for all bus transportation. A further success in this BDS campaign was confirmed when the North London Waste Authority revealed that Veolia had withdrawn its bid to manage water and fuel services for the city, missing out on contracts worth £4.5 billion. In 2013, Veolia was dropped by Sheffield University in the United Kingdom, and the Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association (IAA-CREF) divested from Veolia in some of its funds. Veolia and Alstom announced in 2010 that they were ending their relationship with the Jerusalem light rail project; however, they appear likely to continue to profit from the transportation scheme for several years, and further BDS campaign action was carried out against the companies between 2010 and 2014.

Other BDS successes followed. After a number of successful campaigns against security company G4S around the world, the company announced in June 2014 that it would

end its Israeli prison contracts. Palestinian and Jewish Unity launched a campaign in 2010 to make Montreal's St. Denis Street an 'apartheid-free zone' (CJPME 2016). St. Denis Street finally closed in 2014 after much media coverage of the political turmoil associated with its sale of Israeli products (CJPME 2016). A similar result was achieved against the Israeli cosmetics company Ahava, and, in 2009, the Israeli firm Elbit was dropped from the Norwegian government pension fund.

BDS initiatives have gained traction thanks to the formation and actions of groups such as US Labor for Palestine, US Labor against the War, and Artists Against the War. Meanwhile, Israel Apartheid Week has become an annual international event devoted to publicizing BDS in hundreds of campuses and cities around the world (Apartheid Week 2016). BDS campaigners have pointed to strong denunciations of Apartheid Week activities as evidence of their effectiveness. As further evidence, they have noted the Israeli government's public pronouncements about its efforts to deal with the 'threat of BDS'.

I have had personal experience of the ways in which pro-Israeli responses to BDS can open up broader discussions. I published an article entitled 'Boycott Israel' which appeared in the official online magazine of The World Economic Forum (WEF) in January 2006 (Qumsiyeh 2016a). The WEF brings thousands of political and business leaders from across the globe to Davos, Switzerland, each year to exchange information. After the article provoked complaints, Klaus Schwab, founder and executive chairman of the WEF, apologized for publishing it. The article had been posted on the WEF website, and was subsequently removed. However, Schwab's act of censorship generated such a buzz that dozens of media stories about the article and his actions were published across the globe. I suspect that few of the 5,000 world leaders who attended the WEF would have read the article had it not been for the controversy and media attention the censorship generated, and I received hundreds of letters of support, including messages from key government officials around the world, as a result of Schwab's pro-Israeli gesture.

The challenges faced by the BDS campaign

The BDS movement has achieved significant growth since 2005, and the campaign has ensured that a variety of strategies are utilized to challenge structural discrimination against Palestinians. University student senates, churches, community gatherings, cities, districts, and boards of corporations have all become spaces in which the status quo of oppression and occupation is exposed and challenged. BDS initiatives work in conjunction with other forms of resistance such as popular civil disobedience, demonstrations, and critical media work which highlight the abuses perpetrated during the occupation (Qumsiyeh 2012; Sharp 1973). Uses of the different individual components of BDS activity ebb and flow, like other forms of resistance, according to external events, and so, for example, the use of boycotts spiked during uprisings in 1921, 1929, 1936, 1974, 1987, 2000, and 2015 (Qumsiyeh 2012).

Reaction and resistance to the emerging BDS campaign movement has been strong, and a comparison with the South African experience is instructive. Criticism of the BDS movement in South Africa came primarily from corporations and politicians in receipt of benefits from the continuation of the apartheid regime. In the case of the BDS campaign for Palestinian rights, campaigners face a well-structured and international lobby system that supports the Zionist project, particularly in Western countries (Findley 2003; Mearsheimer and Walt 2007; Shahak 1997). These lobbies mobilize their grassroots networks, and commission Zionist academics and politicians to counter growing BDS sentiments.

Strong criticisms are levelled against the BDS movement by Zionist lobbies on the right, and even by some groups on the left. Zionists and their sympathizers have claimed that the BDS campaign ignores 'Jewish rights' and is inherently 'anti-Semitic' (Curtis 2012; Fishman 2012). Such claims are countered by those who argue that the vision of the BDS movement is to create equality for all people regardless of their religions, and that this commitment involves

guaranteeing rights for Muslims, Christians, and Jews in a postcolonial world (Barghouti 2008, 2011; Qumsiyeh 2012). It is worth noting that many BDS initiatives across the world are led by Jewish or predominantly Jewish organizations, and Jewish leadership and participation in these initiatives challenges the notion that BDS work is inherently anti-Semitic (Qumsiyeh 2016b). There have also been strong calls from within Israel in support of BDS. Among the Israelis who support the movement are notable authors including Uri Davis (2003), Neve Gordon (2009), Jeff Halper (2010), Tikva Honig-Parnass (2003), Baruch Kimmerling (2003), Naomi Klein (2009), Ronit Lentin (2008), Ilan Pappé (2004), Miko Peled (2012), Nurit Peled-Elhanan (2012), and Tanya Reinhart (2002). Neve Gordon (2009) explained his involvement by noting: ‘Nothing else has worked. Putting massive international pressure on Israel is the only way to guarantee that the next generation of Israelis and Palestinians – my two boys included – does not grow up in an apartheid regime’.

Critiques from the political and social ‘left’ focus on the idea that the three conditions for ending the boycott identified by the BDS movement are not framed in clear or strong enough language to lead to decolonization. The three conditions involve ending the occupation of Arab lands, respecting and implementing the right of return for refugees, and securing equality between Palestinians and Jewish Israelis. The first condition (ending the occupation of Arab lands) is not inherently clear and has been interpreted by some to include all of Palestine and the Golan Heights. Others have interpreted it differently as being restricted to the West Bank, Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights. Some of the original formulators of the 2005 call for BDS have explained that the lack of clarity was intentional in order to avoid creating a debate about the call’s relation to either a one-state or two-state solution. However, a commitment to a democratic secular state future is evident in the call’s clear references to the right of refugees to return to their properties inside Israel proper, and to people’s right to be treated equally regardless of religion. Indeed, BDS supporters would do well to insist and focus on the issues of ‘return’ and ‘equality’ in

order to work effectively towards a positive and liveable future for all populations in the region (Qumsiyeh 2004).

Another disagreement within the BDS movement concerns whether the boycott should apply only to Israeli settlement products, or whether instead it should apply to products from Israel more broadly. Still others have argued that BDS initiatives should avoid politically contentious terms such as ‘apartheid’ or ‘colonialism’, though it is noteworthy that several of the commentators who took this position have shifted their rhetoric over time to adopt more direct and confrontational language (Davis 2003; Erakat 2010; Kimmerling 2003).

Still, the challenges posed by critiques of BDS as a strategy pale in comparison to challenges emerging from within local, regional, general and geo-political contexts. As an example, boycott efforts in the 1936 uprising were very promising but were undercut by the efforts of feudal Arab leaders to undermine and usurp power from the grassroots movement (Qumsiyeh 2004, 2012). Similarly, over the last decade, Zionists have engaged in multiple efforts to undermine BDS efforts. One effective strategy is to infiltrate Palestinian solidarity movements in order to steer them away from BDS and from investing in structures that will allow for a future Palestinian state. Considering that as much as seventy-two percent of international aid to the Palestinians ends up under the control of Israeli authorities (Hever 2010, 2015; Murad 2014), and that many Palestinian political factions and a majority of civil society organizations called for a boycott, this international pressure towards ‘positive investment’ in the status quo seems to ignore voices on the ground.

A second example of a challenge to BDS concerns the consistent pressure for Palestinians to normalize relations with Israeli colonialism. This pressure began after the 1973 Arab-Israeli war with the overzealous efforts of President Sadat of Egypt, who was eager to please Israel and the United States (Safty 1991). Many authors who have studied the period that followed the 1973 war have noted the United States’ decisive intervention in the course of the conflict as well as the shift in the psychology and strategy of the PLO after the war was over.

The PLO's adoption in 1974 of the Ten Point Program began the process of normalizing relations with Israel which eventually culminated in the Oslo Accords signed under the auspices of the United States in 1993 and 1994 (Chomsky 1983; Finkelstein 1995; Hadawi 1998; Pappé 2004; Qumsiyeh 2004; Said 1995). I propose that BDS represents the antithesis of this normalization because 'the effectiveness of BDS as a strategy of resistance and cross-border solidarity is intimately connected with a challenge to the hegemonic place of Zionism in western ideology' (Bakan and Abu-Laban 2009, p. 29). Many supporters of BDS believe the movement's most critical benefit is that it prevents the normalization of a hierarchized colonial system; this has the effect of stressing that system and putting its operations on a defensive footing. Ultimately, this stress adds significantly to the cost of maintaining the oppression to the point where rational calculations by those in power may well lead to its complete abandonment.

A further discussion of this important topic is beyond the scope of this chapter, but there are numerous examples of what we can label the 'Oslo effect'. Some of its key components are outlined here. First, the accords, and particularly the second Oslo agreement (1994), restricted the 'interim Palestinian authority' to the extent that it was forced to act as a subcontractor for the occupation's structures in order to guarantee Israel's security (Qumsiyeh 2004; Said 1995; Weizman 2007). Second, the Paris Protocol on Economic Relations, which formed an annex to Oslo, entrenched Palestinian dependence on Israel and Israel's economic hegemony (Hever 2010). The annex also increased corruption and cronyism, enriching elites at the expense of freedom (Murad 2014; Nakhleh 2012). Third, it is psychologically devastating for those sacrificing and engaging in resistance to see those who represent Palestine undermine BDS and also profit from claiming a history of resistance. The number of NGOs and politicians that claim their actions benefit Palestinians is noteworthy. Finally, the division between Hamas and Fatah which followed the Oslo process has significantly hampered all forms of popular resistance, including BDS (King 2007; Qumsiyeh 2012, 2015).

Conclusion

With these challenges and barriers in mind, important choices need to be made by international governments and communities in the future that will decide between a liveable political and social environment based on justice and human rights for both Palestinians and Jewish Israelis, or an environment based on the principle that 'might makes right'. The choice of 'might makes right' has created significant suffering for both Palestinians and Jewish Israelis with important and unintended consequences. Viewed through the eyes of its victims, Zionist ideology is responsible for and has fostered division and violence (Said 1978). Strategic choices about how to address the ongoing occupation, violence, and human rights violations must be carefully considered. This chapter has described the use of BDS as a key tactic within strategic efforts to achieve justice and human rights for all people residing in Israel and the occupied territory, and for the broader Palestinian population.

The evolving conflict and violence in Palestine is viewed by many commentators and scholars as the epicentre of wider conflicts in Western Asia and North Africa. This chapter has discussed the efficacy of BDS as a tool with the capacity to transform conflict in this region and strike a path away from colonialism and towards a future of peace and coexistence. The challenge for Palestinians, Israelis, and the global community now is to integrate BDS into the broader struggle and resistance against the occupation. Coalition and network-building between various groups and strategies of resistance will be crucial in future efforts to increase the leverage of every component of the campaign, including those used in BDS actions. Many campaigners believe that the use of strategies such as BDS needs to be ramped up in order to expedite the realization of justice and peace: when those things exist together, people and their livelihoods can prosper.

Of primary concern is the manner in which the BDS campaign can reverse the destructive trends set in motion by the Oslo Accords; entrenched economic inequalities alongside

extensive corruption have wasted significant amounts of money and have perpetuated the status quo of oppression (Crawford-Browne 2007; Nakhleh 2012). While Israeli apartheid is far more sophisticated and entrenched than that practised in South Africa (Abdelnour 2013; Dugard and Reynolds 2013), the BDS movement is proving its ability to catch the attention of, and in some cases cause panic among, supporters of the Israeli position, as is evidenced by public statements made by the Israeli government and Zionist organizations around the world (Steinberg 2006). The BDS movement is being challenged to expand the scope of its actions into new geographic locations across the globe, and to develop new strategies and change processes. If it rises to these challenges, it will elevate the struggle against the occupation and help to realize an era in which structural inequalities are removed and full human rights for all of the people of the region will be ensured.

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6

Struggling against the occupation

Nonviolent international interventions for conflict transformation in Palestine

Diego Checa Hidalgo

Introduction

This chapter investigates the contributions that global civil society has made to conflict transformation in Palestine. The power of global civil society has been growing exponentially since the latter part of the twentieth century. The increasing complexity of ‘international society’ has coincided with the development of new information technologies, communications, and affordable transport, and this has facilitated the growing participation and influence of civil society groups in world politics (Kaldor 2003); this has been particularly clear in debates that focus on anti-capitalist struggles, the defence of human rights, and the environment (Weber 2010). In contexts where violent conflict is ongoing, civil society influence often takes the form of humanitarian aid or post-war reconstruction; there is also evidence of a growing willingness to intervene to support peacekeeping and conflict management initiatives (Paffenholz 2010). This chapter narrows in on one type of direct intervention made by civil society in Palestine in order to investigate a largely unexplored

phenomenon whereby nonviolent international intervention is brought to bear to achieve conflict transformation.

Nonviolent international interventions are part of a civilian and transnational phenomenon that mobilizes a subsection of global civil society and secures its participation in conflict transformation processes beyond and across national borders. Interventions typically incorporate a set of strategies that are used to confront physical and structural violence and which also promote peace using exclusively nonviolent means. To be effective, these interventions need to focus on supporting local nonviolent efforts in the struggle to overcome violence and oppression (Checa Hidalgo 2011). The emerging literature on this topic uses terms such as civilian peacekeeping (Schirch 2006), unarmed peacekeeping (Weber 1996), and unofficial nonviolent intervention (Rigby 1995) to refer to these forms of nonviolent action. Global civil society intervention in Palestine has been strengthened by the international solidarity that exists between pro-Palestinian groups across the globe and Palestinian civil society organizations. The suffering that Palestinian people have endured during the protracted conflict with Israel has generated a stream of worldwide solidarity towards the Palestinians, and this has fed nonviolent international interventions in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt).

The aims of this chapter are, first, to identify the nonviolent international interventions implemented in Palestine; second, to understand the potential of these interventions to prevent violence and empower local movements; and third, to explore the primary contributions that nonviolent interventions make, as well as the challenges they face, in their efforts to transform the conflict in the occupied Palestinian territory. This chapter is based on field research carried out between 2013 and 2015. It investigates data from semi-structured interviews with key informants from Palestinian and international civil society organizations.¹ In addition, this chapter includes data from my own non-participant observation of nonviolent direct actions which were being carried out by people involved in a variety of Palestinian popular committees from across the West Bank. My observations also explore the activities of a variety of

international organizations that are working to implement non-violent interventions in the region. The findings of this research evidence the importance of nonviolent international intervention as a fundamental conflict transformation strategy in contexts, such as the oPt, where a severely asymmetric conflict is in evidence.

The findings set out in this chapter reveal the potential of nonviolent direct action as a transformational activity that can be used to resist the Israeli occupation; they also highlight the relevance of global civil society action beyond the spheres of humanitarian aid, reconstruction, development, and peacebuilding activities. Nonviolent interventions help to support local movements that are struggling to bring about social and political changes, both in Palestine and Israel. This research also provides evidence that nonviolent international intervention has the potential to help prevent violence, empower civil society groups, and promote a broader culture of peace and nonviolence in the region.

Local civil resistance and nonviolent struggle in Palestine

Though the Oslo Accords represented an attempt to overcome a status quo characterized by asymmetric conflict, occupation, and human rights violations, they ultimately provided motivation for the second *intifada* in 2000. This initiated a period of violent struggle which continued until 2005 and involved numerous armed clashes and bombings in Israel. Following the second *intifada*, Palestinian resistance against the occupation entered a new phase in which non-violent struggle once again became prominent, especially in the West Bank. In this new phase, various nonviolent strategies have been deployed to tackle four main areas of struggle, namely, landlessness, settler colonization, restrictions on freedom of movement, and the curtailment of personal freedoms.

The struggle against landlessness focuses on preventing land expropriation and forced displacement. Its most visible campaign involves opposition to the construction of the Separation Wall. Israel began to build this physical barrier in 2002 in order to separate its territory from the West Bank, and justified the Wall's construction on the grounds of its security concerns. Other observers claimed that the main goal was, in fact, to grab Palestinian land, citing the fact that the Wall's path diverges from the internationally recognized Green Line and enters into West Bank territory at many points (Broning 2011, pp. 139–140). The Wall represents a significant hindrance for Palestinian farmers and shepherds who have been separated from their lands. Resistance emerges here simply as a matter of economic survival, and Palestinians from towns and villages affected by the Wall have organized informal popular committees to coordinate the struggle (Darweish and Rigby 2015, pp. 72–74). On some occasions, this resistance has achieved success. For example, the Wall's path has been modified in Budrous and Bi'lin (Moroni 2014; Norman 2010), and the forced displacement of Palestinian communities in the South Hebron Hills has also been prevented (Omer-Man 2013).

Resistance against settler colonization focuses on the struggle against the maintenance of the military occupation and on the expansion of settlements and segregation in Palestinian territory. It complements broader efforts to reduce discrimination against Palestinian citizens of Israel and defend refugee's rights. This resistance is, in effect, a struggle against many of the principal legal features of colonialism articulated in the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Peoples and Territories, which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1960. The Declaration states that factors such as the arbitrary assertion of political authority over the indigenous population, forced economic integration with the ruling country, the expropriation of natural resources, separate legal regimes based on ethnic privilege, and the denial of self-determination are characteristic features of colonial rule.

The Israeli military severely restricts movement for Palestinians through a matrix of control which prevents the free movement of people between the West Bank, Jerusalem, Israel, and the Gaza strip. B'Tselem, the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights, has created an extensive database to document these growing restrictions, and the Freedom Flotillas' attempts to break the Israeli-Egyptian blockade of the Gaza Strip represent perhaps the most well-known examples of struggle against them (Arraf and Shapiro 2011; De Jong 2012). The deprivation of personal freedoms for Palestinians is also evident in the treatment of political prisoners. There is growing evidence that Palestinians repeatedly suffer from administrative detention in Israeli prisons without charges or trials (Addameer 2013). The use of solitary confinement, the refusal of family visits from Gaza, denial of medical treatment, and the torture of these prisoners have all been noted by Amnesty International (2013, pp. 133–136). Their treatment has provoked resistance processes which have developed into a significant movement in Palestine. On occasion, prisoners organize themselves within prisons and utilize strategies of civil disobedience such as hunger strikes to push for improvements to their living conditions. Outside the prison, Palestinian society supports prisoners' actions through mobilization and awareness campaigns (Qumsiyeh 2011, pp. 195–196). However, civil resistance processes in Palestine have not brought about the end of the occupation; neither have they secured broad assurances that human rights will be provided for Palestinian citizens (Chenoweth and Stephan 2011; Rigby 2010, pp. 4–5). This chapter now turns to the potential that international civil society intervention has to support local Palestinian resistance against the Israeli occupation of Palestinian space.

Mapping nonviolent international interventions in Palestine

Global civil society activism and solidarity with Palestine and Israel have grown significantly since the first *intifada*. The *intifada* altered global public perceptions by revealing the extent of Palestinian society's suffering under oppression; it also displayed the efficacy of nonviolent resistance against the occupation's military force. As a result, an increasing number of initiatives have emerged which involve the deployment of international activists to Israel and Palestine in order to support local resistance. These initiatives led by global civil society organizations have produced four types of nonviolent international interventions which involve protest, support and solidarity, humanitarian aid, and conflict resolution (Rigby 1995, pp. 453–467).

The activity of the Palestinian Center for Rapprochement Between People (PCR) clearly illustrates this transformation of international activity in relation to the conflict in Palestine (Qumsiyeh 2011). In 1989, the Center began to mobilize the support of international civil society activists and organizations to strengthen Palestinian nonviolent resistance against the occupation. For example, it campaigned for the creation of a peace camp to protest against the construction of the Har Homa settlement in East Jerusalem, and the camp benefited from the presence of Palestinian, Israeli, and international activists (Qumsiyeh 2011, p. 171). The PCR's work facilitated the formation of the International Solidarity Movement at the beginning of the second *intifada*, and these relationships between experienced activists and support networks have become increasingly organized and entrenched.

International nonviolent interventions involve the deployment of activists on the ground in the midst of conflict (Rigby 1995, p. 494). These interventions have often utilized a long-term approach in order to prevent violence, facilitate conflict transformation, and promote peacebuilding. This section will describe these interventions and focus on eight international organizations that have worked with the Palestinian resistance during the period from 2011 to 2015. The groups involved were the Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT); the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI); the International Solidarity

Movement (ISM); the International Women's Peace Service (IWPS); *the Instituto Internacional para la Acción Noviolenta* (NOVACT); *Operazione Colomba* (OC); *Asociación Paz, Igualdad y Solidaridad Internacional Unadikum* (Unadikum); and KURVE Wustrow.

Christian Peacemaker Teams

Christian Peacemaker Teams is perhaps the most experienced international organization developing a nonviolent international intervention programme in the region. It has worked in Palestine since 1995 without interruption, and is a grassroots organization that emerged in 1986 from within global networks of Mennonite and Anabaptist churches. Since its formation, CPT has deployed peace teams in areas of conflict across the globe. In 1995, after the signing of the Oslo Accords, the organization received an invitation from the mayor of Hebron, Mustafa al-Natshe,² who wanted the organization to establish a violence reduction team in the city to help tackle the tense situation which had developed after an Israeli settler killed twenty-nine people inside the Ibrahimi mosque; the mass Palestinian protests and riots which followed that incident had intensified an already febrile atmosphere (Kern 2000, pp. 188–192).

CPT supports the development of Palestinian nonviolent resistance processes which are used to contest the occupation. It also liaises closely with other Israeli and international organizations. CPT's portfolio of work includes interventions to prevent human rights violations being committed during Israeli military searches of Palestinian shops and homes. It also monitors the treatment of Palestinians as they cross checkpoints in the centre of Hebron. The CPT has worked beyond the city in the nearby village of Al-Tuwani to protect local community members from settler violence which takes the form of harassment of children during their daily commute to school, or attacks on shepherds and farmers as they work in the countryside close to settlements (Kern 2009).

Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel

Christian churches across the globe have participated in the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel. This was initiated by the World Council of Churches in 2005 after a process which developed from a request made by thirteen local churches in Jerusalem in June 2001 (EAPPI 2005, p. 16). The campaign has generated an accompaniment project based on CPT's prior experience, a call for Christians to boycott goods produced on Israeli settlements in the oPt, and a call for global Christian churches to support acts of civil resistance in Palestinian society (World Council of Churches 2001). During its ten years of existence, EAPPI has deployed more than 1,500 volunteers to Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory. Its activity has expanded from Jerusalem across the West Bank to include Bethlehem, Hebron, the South Hebron hills, the Tulkarem area, and the Jordan Valley. EAPPI has focused on protecting vulnerable communities, monitoring and reporting human rights abuses, and supporting both Palestinian and Israeli groups that are working through nonviolent means to achieve justice for Palestinians.

International Solidarity Movement

The International Solidarity Movement was created in the summer of 2001 in the context of the second *intifada*. It works to support and strengthen Palestinian civil resistance, and has grown to become the most visible proponent of international activism in the region (Seitz 2003, p. 50). It operates as a Palestinian-led movement, and it strictly adheres to the principles and methods of nonviolent direct action. ISM has also worked in Gaza, but its team was removed after the unlawful killings of two of its staff in 2003. Although ISM resumed its work in Gaza in 2008, its activities have been significantly hindered by Israeli blockade restrictions, and the organization currently has only two teams deployed in the West Bank. These teams work in the Nablus and Hebron areas

with international activists (ISM 2015). ISM participates in weekly demonstrations organized by Palestinian civil society groups in order to protest against the Separation Wall and the illegal confiscation of land. It also takes part in acts of civil disobedience against barriers to movement. ISM's activists operate as observers with a number of roles: they monitor human rights; document International Humanitarian Law violations; and report to international society on violations and oppression in order to procure support for their organization's local partners (Dudouet 2009, pp. 125–138).

International Women's Peace Service

The International Women's Peace Service works similarly to the ISM, except that its peace teams are made up exclusively of women. The activity of the IWPS (2012) is located in the rural area of Salfit, near Nablus in the West Bank, and the organization has been working there continuously since 2002. Salfit is a rural area where the population faces significant difficulties as a consequence of illegal Israeli settlements being built in the area. The IWPS supports Palestinian civil resistance that opposes abuses of human rights and the confiscation and destruction of Palestinian land and property by the Israeli state and settlers. Like the other international organizations reviewed above, the IWPS provides protective accompaniment for vulnerable rural communities in the face of settler violence, accompanying people while they carry out activities which might come under threat. The IWPS also supports Palestinian and Israeli grassroots organizations in their nonviolent struggle through campaigns such as the boycott, divestment, and sanctions campaign (IWPS 2015).

Instituto Internacional para la Acción Noviolenta

Instituto Internacional para la Acción Noviolenta is a Spanish non-governmental organization committed to developing a violence-free society based on human security. NOVACT's work in the Middle East began with a project promoting nonviolent action in Gaza in 2005 (NOVA 2006, p. 2). Since then, NOVACT has expanded its support for local civil resistance, and it has a team in Ramallah which supports local civil society groups by training them in the use of non-violent tactics and strategies. NOVACT (2013) also tries to deter settler attacks and repression by Israeli security forces, monitors human rights violations, and has developed early warning systems. It is also coordinating efforts with local and international partners to secure funding for Palestinians' grassroots organizations. NOVACT carries out lobbying actions at national and international levels to raise awareness of local resistance initiatives. It also strives to impact on Palestinian and European public opinions in order to create demand for public policies that will improve human security and promote a just peace.

Asociación Paz, Igualdad y Solidaridad Internacional Unadikum

Asociación Paz, Igualdad y Solidaridad Internacional Unadikum emerged from the Freedom Flotilla campaign in 2010 (Unadikum 2015). Inspired by that campaign, some Spanish citizens decided to keep up the Flotilla's struggle to break the blockade of the Gaza Strip, and they created Unadikum. It focuses on providing a civil peace service and works to monitor human rights in Palestine as well as to protect fishermen and agricultural workers in Gaza as they go about their daily duties. Unadikum also raises awareness within global civil society about issues such as the Palestinian refugee crisis and the need for support for victims of violence (2015).

Operazione Colomba

The Italian organization *Operazione Colomba* was created in 1995 by a group of activists belonging to the *Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII*. They created a peace service which promotes nonviolent conflict transformation by sending volunteers into conflict areas. Its work in the oPt began in May 2002 with the deployment of a team which strove to reduce violence against civilians in Gaza. Since then, OC has supported Palestinian civil society groups in the West Bank in their struggle against the Separation Wall. Following a request from the Al-Tuwani community in 2004, OC established a permanent presence in the village to prevent settler violence against community members. Subsequently, OC's work has extended to many more communities located in the South Hebron hills (OC 2015). OC supports Palestinian civil resistance, accompanies shepherds and farmers in their daily activities to deter attacks against them, documents and denounces violence committed by settlers and the Israeli security forces, and promotes the creation of spaces for reconciliation in collaboration with Israeli civil society groups.

KURVE Wustrow

KURVE Wustrow is a German centre created in 1980 to support training and networking in relation to nonviolent action. KURVE's focus is on strengthening civil society through nonviolent action and education, not only in Germany, but across the globe. In order to deliver on its aims, KURVE commissions peace-workers within the framework of the German Civil Peace Service. The organization has worked in Palestine since 2002, and its peace-workers supports local resistance movements and organizations that are using nonviolence as a political strategy for social change. It provides training in strategic nonviolence, supports the development of Palestinian organizations, and conducts media capacity-building. KURVE also facilitates networking between

Palestinian organizations and international organizations, particularly those based in Germany (KURVE 2015).

Global civil society, the prevention of violence, and social empowerment

Global civil society organizations, such as those surveyed here, work in Palestine to prevent violence and support local resistance against the occupation. In order to achieve those goals, they develop nonviolent tactics that are deployed in line with a long-term approach which aims to support local Palestinian groups and individuals, irrespective of their political affiliations. These nonviolent international interventions in Palestine have typically utilized four fundamental strategies, namely, physical accompaniment and presence, civil diplomacy, the dissemination of alternative information through global communication channels, and support which strengthens local partners who are working in the face of direct violence.

The most visible of these international civil society intervention strategies is the accompaniment effort. This involves the physical presence of international activists alongside local activists as they encounter direct or indirect threats. The intensity and scope of the accompaniment effort depends on a risk assessment. In high-risk situations, groups are accompanied during daily activities like walking to and from school or harvesting on their land. Communities in places like Yanoun village have benefited from the sustained round-the-clock presence of international activists; and some checkpoints, like that at Qalandia – the primary access route to East Jerusalem from the West Bank – are also monitored regularly. When risk diminishes, international accompaniment is reduced accordingly.

A cycle emerges whereby international activists make regular short visits to organizations and communities and develop tailored accompaniment strategies, if and when a

threat is identified. High-risk activities such as public demonstrations will then be continuously monitored by international personnel, and their accompaniment of local people serves to protect activists and vulnerable communities. The perpetrators of the threat are deterred by the presence of international monitors, and their unwanted visibility raises the costs and consequences of violent actions. Perpetrators realize that the dissemination of information about their violent actions collected during the accompaniment can have significant impact on the global scene. As the political cost of inflicting violence rises, its use may cease to be judged worthwhile and efficacious. In fact, the powerful side may cease its use of violence altogether (Mahony and Eguren 1997).

The second strategy employed in international nonviolent interventions is civil diplomacy which is used to prevent violence and support local civil society. International activists who take this approach maintain contacts both within the oPt and Israel, and at the international level where they liaise with civil authorities, civil society organizations, churches, universities, trade unions, political parties, state institutions, diplomats, donors, and international organizations. These contacts are maintained so that the parties concerned can exchange information and ensure that all relevant local and international actors are connected in advocating for a just and peaceful resolution to the conflict. These links also help to create a communication process which facilitates a better understanding of the objectives, work, and reality for all actors involved, and they particularly concentrate on sharing the experience of local actors in Palestine.

The purpose of civil diplomacy is twofold. First, it makes clear that local organizations do not resort to violence to achieve their goals and that they act within the framework of local laws and international humanitarian and human rights law. Second, it communicates to those local groups that there is international concern about the violence that Palestinian partners suffer under occupation structures and processes. These strategies mobilize global society and encourage it to provide political accompaniment, over and above physical

accompaniment. Political accompaniment, like its physical counterpart, increases the political costs of violence, provides protection, and helps to deter violence against Palestinian populations (Mahony and Eguren 1997).

A third strategy involves the dissemination of alternative information regarding the conflict and keeping key communication channels open. Most international organizations involved in nonviolent interventions produce reports and periodically distribute information in order to raise awareness of human rights violations and insecurity on the ground. This communication strategy announces the activities of local partners and their international backers to a broad global audience. The evidence shared has typically been collected from multiple sources including the mass media at local and national levels, a variety of independent sources, and local partners. This strategy benefits the credibility of local partners and it increases their national and international impact. International activists also gather information during their accompaniment and civilian diplomacy activities, which is often analysed in, and distributed through, public reports, blogs, websites, newsletters, newspaper articles, and social networks. This communication provides essential support for protective accompaniment work by raising awareness of local incidents. This awareness and information can then be fed back into civil diplomacy efforts to mobilize political support for communities and groups under threat. The availability of field data and analysis has another benefit when these resources are incorporated into the risk assessment processes used by organizations which value reliable sources of precise and timely information.

The final strategy used to prevent violence and support local organizations is local capacity-building. Capacity-building activities strengthen local skills in individual and group self-protection, risk assessment, and vulnerability reduction. Training might relate to the dynamics of nonviolent action, or high-impact strategies for the use of media and communication channels, for example. Other interventions in Palestine by NOVACT and KURVE also facilitate reflection spaces that allow local groups to develop their capacities for

planning and strategizing. These activities all enhance the resilience of local organizations and communities that are suffering the effects of violence, and they intensify people's desire to continue the difficult process of resistance against the Israeli occupation.

Although the four strategies mentioned above focus mainly on preventing violence and protecting vulnerable individuals and groups, their effects are far broader. They also contribute to bolstering local social power, and this is highly significant in the context of an asymmetric conflict. Nonviolent international interventions contribute to social empowerment by providing direct support to local partners, and this serves to reduce fear of violence and helps to overcome discouragement. Three processes in particular contribute to the local social empowerment of Palestinian people.

First, nonviolent interventions prevent and reduce violence in different settings. For instance, ISM argues that its work deters the use of live ammunition against demonstrators by Israeli security forces at public protests (ISM 2014), and so has reduced the risks associated with participating in advocacy activities. EAPPI staff members concur that an international presence reduces the aggressiveness of soldiers and settlers towards Palestinians (EAPPI 2011). Meanwhile, CPT has shown that the presence of its teams and other international organizations facilitates the transit of, and reduces the harassment experienced by, Palestinian young people and adults at security checkpoints in the old city of Hebron and elsewhere (CPT 2015). The pattern noted by these organizations has been confirmed by local activists. One of the interviewees for this study explained that, at that main Hebron checkpoints, 'when they [EAPPI] are very close, soldiers and settlers do not do any action against the kids' on their way to school (Youth Against the Settlements 2015).

Second, international interventions deter direct attacks, and serve to protect small rural communities from settler violence. For example, in the village of Yanoun, the permanent presence of EAPPI has decreased the number of attacks against the local population (EAPPI 2014). In other cases, the interventions may not deter but do successfully delay the

assaults. This was the experience of Unadikum in 2014 when Israel attacked Gaza; the organization was able to provide some extra time for the evacuation of patients and civilians from hospitals before direct bombings began (OC 2015). These interventions also increase the freedom of movement for social activists and local communities by providing basic but minimal guarantees of safety. These guarantees are secured both by lobbying relevant authorities and through physical accompaniment. As a result, Palestinian activists are able to participate more fully in public events such as demonstrations, conferences, or meetings that would otherwise be too risky to attend. Assurances of security give people access to places where they would otherwise be very vulnerable, like crop fields, restricted military areas, and active conflict zones. For example, the OC's work in Al-Tuwani has successfully reduced settler violence and increased the freedom of movement for local individuals. OC's intervention also allows members of the local community to harvest their crops, in defiance of significant settler pressure (South Hebron Hills Popular Committee 2015).

Third, international interventions provide crucial moral support for local Palestinian social activists who are subjected to violence, isolation, and stigma-tization. Organizations that intervene embody global civil society's solidarity with the Palestinian people and concern for their difficult situation. This support can also help to raise awareness in the outside world about the conditions that Palestinians face under occupation. Civil diplomacy and alternative information and communication channels are fundamentally important in helping to generate this international moral support. Interventions by international organizations are also important because they help to legitimize the work of the local social activists these organizations collaborate with, and this has an impact on the behaviour of local and national authorities.

The global support that nonviolent international interventions embody has stimulated the growth of local partner organizations and facilitated increased local agency over the objectives and strategies of resistance on the ground. International support has also fostered networking and

coordination between local partner groups, from both Palestinian and Israeli communities. The combined international and local campaign to prevent the eviction of Palestinian communities from Masafer Yatta in the South Hebron Hills is a prime example of this empowerment process at work (B'Tselem 2013). Another example is evident in the large-scale mobilization and direct action at the Bab al-Shams camp in 2013, which asserted Palestinian rights to local land in the face of expanding settlements in East Jerusalem (Oakley 2013). It is clear that international-local partnerships have become increasingly successful in influencing the public policies of Israel, the Palestinian Authority, and international bodies such as the European Union (Sherwood 2013).

Positive results and the challenges ahead

The nonviolent intervention of global civil society in Palestine has produced some positive, albeit limited, outcomes. International groups that promote nonviolent approaches are confident that, in certain situations, their interventions can reduce violence. They also believe that they can socially empower vulnerable groups within asymmetric conflict situations. The research undertaken for this chapter highlights that international groups can additionally contribute to the propagation of a culture of peace and nonviolence in Palestine. These efforts help to resist various forms of militarism, including the dominant rhetoric of violence. Palestinian activists and communities have shown increasing influence over the flow of conflict, as local people, freed from crippling fear, have begun to determine their own political choices and organizational processes to become agents of conflict transformation.

International nonviolent interventions also promote cooperation between Palestinian and Israeli groups that are struggling towards the common goals of just peace and an end to occupation. One instance of this cooperation can be found in the way that popular nonviolent resistance committees at the

local level coordinate with the national Popular Struggle Coordination Committee (PSCC), which remains open to activists, regardless of their political affiliation, and work closely together with select Israeli organizations (PSCC 2014). This joint struggle has gradually promoted the creation of a critical mass of resistance. However, it should be noted that these nonviolent international interventions have, to date, failed to win over broad sections of Israeli society. They are yet to produce increased demands from across Israeli society for an end to occupation, or for the revision of policies that discriminate against Palestinians living inside Israel.

Nevertheless, progress, while limited, is palpable. Without international support, the Palestinian civil resistance movement would struggle to an even greater extent to achieve visibility among national and international audiences. The work of a local popular committee, together with the PSCC, to publicize the struggle in the village of Bi'lin secured a huge amount of international attention with the support of ISM and NOVACT, for example. Bi'lin enjoyed worldwide exposure after the movie *5 Broken Cameras* was nominated for an Oscar in the best documentary feature category at the 2013 Academy Awards, and the resistance of this village was also recognized by the European Union. A spokesperson for the EU High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy openly criticized an Israeli military court's decision against a nonviolent Palestinian activist from Bi'lin and reaffirmed the legitimate right of Palestinians to engage in peaceful demonstrations (EU 2011). In the case of Bi'lin, popular resistance was able to alter the path of the Separation Wall near the village, but it was unable to stop the construction of the Wall in other locations nearby (NOVACT 2013).

The research I have conducted for, and discussed in, this chapter indicates that local resistance, and international contributions to supporting that resistance, have resulted in only sporadic changes in a context which continues to be overwhelmingly characterized by direct and indirect violence. It is all too common for demonstrators who are protesting peacefully against the Separation Wall to be met with rubber bullets, tear gas grenades, sound bombs, and other so-called

non-lethal crowd control methods. Meanwhile, entire Palestinian communities are affected by collective punishment measures, such as arbitrary restrictions on movement, particularly in Hebron, East Jerusalem, and those parts of the West Bank designated as ‘firing zones’ (OCHA 2015). Palestinians also suffer indirect violence through the imposition of a legal system that grants impunity to those who commit violations of human rights (Amnesty International 2013).

Conclusion

This research on nonviolent international intervention in Palestine offers key lessons about the ways that international organizations and local civilians can contribute to resistance against the Israeli occupation. First, it shows that nonviolent international interventions are effective and can contribute to strengthening local resistance movements. These international interventions protect local nonviolent movements and facilitate their empowerment in the face of significant repression. Further, they challenge the culture of militarism and violence that is deeply entrenched in Palestinian and Israeli societies and promote a culture of peace and nonviolence in the region in its place. It remains difficult to assess the contribution that nonviolent international interventions make to conflict transformation in the wider community and in the sphere of political decision-making. The findings of this research indicate that international work has, so far, failed either to secure significant changes in the distribution of power, or to equalize a starkly asymmetric conflict. International intervention has also struggled to make a deep impact on Israeli society.

Second, the findings of this research reflect the significant changes occurring in international society in the post-Oslo period. This chapter has described the increasingly relevant role international civilians can play in the field of conflict management in conflict zones. In the case of Palestine, the

presence of international activists on the ground helps to demonstrate solidarity with local populations, prevent violence, and build a more just and peaceful society through partnerships between international organizations and local grassroots social movements. These international interventions also evidence the feasibility of collaborations between so-called Western groups and local organizations in Palestine. They show that international initiatives can overcome cultural differences and build peace in ways that successfully reflect local interests and respond to local needs. Despite the constraints produced by small-scale projects, low operational budgets, and limited human resources, their work has produced positive results. International civilian support is clearly becoming a viable alternative to traditional military intervention in conflict zones, and can complement UN peacekeeping efforts and peacebuilding ventures.

Notes

- 1 All interviews are in the possession of the author, D. Checa Hidalgo.
- 2 The city has been divided into two parts – H1 and H2 – since 1997: H1 is administered by the Palestinian Authority. H2, the central and smaller part of the city, has 40,000 Palestinians living alongside several hundred Israeli settlers, and is under Israeli military control. Palestinians are restricted from several areas in H2 due to Israeli settlements, and this has resulted in the abandonment of hundreds of Palestinian businesses and homes (OCHA 2013).

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7

A means to conflict transformation

Social capital as a force for Palestinian communities

Raffaella Y. Nanetti

Introduction

In the last few years, the world has witnessed a major increase in the number of full-scale armed conflicts occurring among ethnic and religious factions. These conflicts have ranged across a wide geographical area which covers sub-Saharan and northern Africa as well as Syria and Iraq in the Middle East; its reach also extends to include Afghanistan, Pakistan, and western China too. In the West, these new conflicts are popularly associated with radical expressions of Islam, and responses to them have tended to feed the revival of the concept of a 'clash of civilizations' (Huntington 1993) with an unyielding 'we' (the West) set against a disruptive 'them' (Islam).

The occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) is located at the centre of this large geographical area. The Palestinians, who have a strong sense of national identity, have suffered for decades due to a conflict that arose from war with, and occupation by, the Israelis. In mid-2014, renewed episodes of violence and war in the oPt captured worldwide headlines. Incidents included the disappearance and murder of three Israeli teenagers on 12 June 2014; the mass arrests of Palestinians, including the arrest of the president of the Palestinian parliament, Abu Mazen, by Israeli forces; the killing of two Palestinian youths by the Israeli army; and raids against Hamas in Gaza. The appeal made by President Abu Mazen, which called on people to avoid another *intifada*, was followed by the killing of a Palestinian teenager on 2 July and by further street revolts. This series of incidents culminated in Israel's launch of Operation Strong Cliff on 8 July 2014 in the Gaza Strip which is controlled by Hamas.

This massive Israeli military retaliation against Palestinian rocket attacks produced seven weeks of bombardment and ground assaults in Gaza in which 2,220 Palestinians were killed, including 1,492 civilians.

A year after the conflict, it is clear that a striking change has occurred. A multiplication of intense regional conflicts has effectively sidelined the longstanding conflict over the Holy Lands between Palestinians and Jewish Israelis. The human rights of Palestinians and their economic conditions under occupation have worsened, and their land continues to be encroached upon by new Jewish Israeli settlements. However, the search, at an international level, for peace and a resolution of the 'Palestinian question' has been displaced. The international community has new geopolitical priorities which include countering the rise of the radical Islamist movement known as the Islamic State (IS). The movement occupies areas in Iraq and Syria, pursues a policy of widespread atrocities against opponents and minorities, and has proclaimed the creation of a political caliphate. The international community is also focused on tackling incipient civil wars in Libya and north-eastern Nigeria and dealing with the phenomenon of the mass migration of refugees who are escaping wars and persecution.

At the same time, another less obvious trend can be detected within the international community. The recognition of Palestine and open expressions of support for a two-state solution have intensified in recent months, and, in October 2014, Sweden became the first Western European Union (EU) member state to recognize the putative state.¹ The Swedish move was followed by similar if non-binding parliamentary votes in the United Kingdom (UK), France, Ireland, Spain, and Italy. In December 2014, the European Parliament voted in favour of the 'recognition [of] Palestinian statehood and [a] two state solution'; in May 2015, a similar announcement was made by the Vatican to coincide with President Mahmoud Abbas' official visit. The announcement expressed the view that an alternative solution needs to be sought outside the current binary of violent resistance or passive acquiescence to continued occupation. This message is finding strong support within the European Union.

Despite these developments, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict survives with all of its international and territorial contradictions intact. The European Union has gradually ramped up its policy in this area and now excludes goods originating from illegal settlements in the oPt from preferential import tariffs, but, on the

ground, the populations of the settlements have reached 600,000 and continue to increase. The proliferation of checkpoints is generating further restrictions on Palestinians' free movement and their other basic human rights. Meanwhile, the electoral victory in March 2015 of the right-wing coalition led by Benjamin Netanyahu promises the continuation of policies for the renewed expansion of Jewish settlements and security zones.

In this context – given that the Oslo Accords have failed to generate positive results and the international visibility of the conflict has diminished – it is timely to shift the focus of a solution from the external actor, represented by the international community, to the internal actor that is the Palestinian community itself. In this chapter, I will argue that 'social capital' can be the transformative and reconstructive force which generates solutions from within. Social capital is created when people within existing social networks engage in a collective effort to achieve greater internal cohesion for their common good. It also has the potential to help Palestinians increase their capacity to act as members of the international community. Social capital augments Palestinian society's ability to assert views beyond the positions that have traditionally been articulated by the Palestinian elite. Indeed, an increased stock of social capital can potentially be used to leverage the efforts of Palestinian society as a whole in pursuit of a vision of Palestine which would exist on an *ex aequo* basis with Israel. In the sections that follow, I elaborate on strategies for social capital accumulation that can be used in development planning and conflict transformation in Palestine. In particular, I single out the leadership role of educational institutions and social movements in promoting this transformation. Due to the limited scope of this chapter, an in-depth discussion will be reserved for future work.

Conflict transformation from within

The challenge that any approach to conflict transformation faces is how to create the conditions for a positive sum game which, in different ways, rewards both parties. In asymmetric conflicts, the stakes of the challenge are particularly high for the party that has been in the weaker position (Miall 2004). The protracted conflict between Palestinians and Jewish Israelis, with all of its peaks and troughs, offers no exception. The Palestinians, as the weaker party,

have suffered the worst impact of the apparently intractable conflict with Jewish Israelis, and that impact has manifested itself in the form of under-development and marginalization processes which have fed hopelessness and suffocated any vision of positive change. Indeed, over the decades, these negative conditions have severely aggravated a chain of interrelated problems at the level of Palestinian civil society. They have exacerbated a sense of resignation, the deep mistrust of others, the almost exclusive reliance on family ties, distance from institutions, and the rejection of cooperative activities; for some, they have also increased the attraction of violent solutions.

These interrelated problems undermine the potential of Palestinian society in two fundamental ways. On the one hand, when we look at the situation within the oPt, they greatly reduce the collective capacity of Palestinians to act as a cohesive territorial community in the pursuit of a positive future, notwithstanding the limiting external regional context. On the other hand, and from a wider international perspective, it is clear that these problems help maintain the Palestinians' self-imposed sense of inferiority which denies them equal status on an *ex aequo* basis with Jewish Israelis.

I contend that growing the stock of social capital in the oPt is an essential component of any successful approach to conflict transformation in these circumstances. This is because no degree of international effort to achieve a lasting peace between Palestinians and Jewish Israelis, and no amount of resources donated to improve conditions on the ground for Palestinians, will bring improvements if Palestinians do not strengthen their capacity to function as a cohesive community. While many approaches to conflict transformation call for the intervention of external parties (ECPR 2003; Fisher 2001), I focus here on the dimension of conflict transformation from within Palestinian civil society itself. The social capital approach to conflict transformation involves more than advocating the development of a nonviolent campaign (Ackerman and DuVall 2000; King 2007). It also centres on the structural change needed to redress asymmetry in the relationship between Palestinians and Jewish Israelis.

[Figure 7.1](#) conceptualizes the direction, and the eight principal dimensions, of the internal change required in Palestinian society if it is to contribute to redressing the asymmetry in its relationship with the Jewish Israelis. The first dimension of change is spatial in nature. It acknowledges the severe development gap that exists between urban and rural areas in the oPt. Rural areas are doubly penalized by

the focus of domestic policies on urban centres, and by the reduction in productive agriculture land which has taken place in order to allow for the continued expansion of illegal Israeli settlements (Niksic *et al.* 2013). Indeed, poverty is proven to have increased even more for rural communities than for other social groups: they have almost three times less access to public goods such as water, electricity, and schooling than their urban counterparts according to the Multidimensional Poverty Index (Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative 2015). In future, Palestinians ought to adopt a more balanced approach to development policies that recognizes the complementarity of urban and rural communities. Such an approach would also promote more sustainable environmental outcomes.

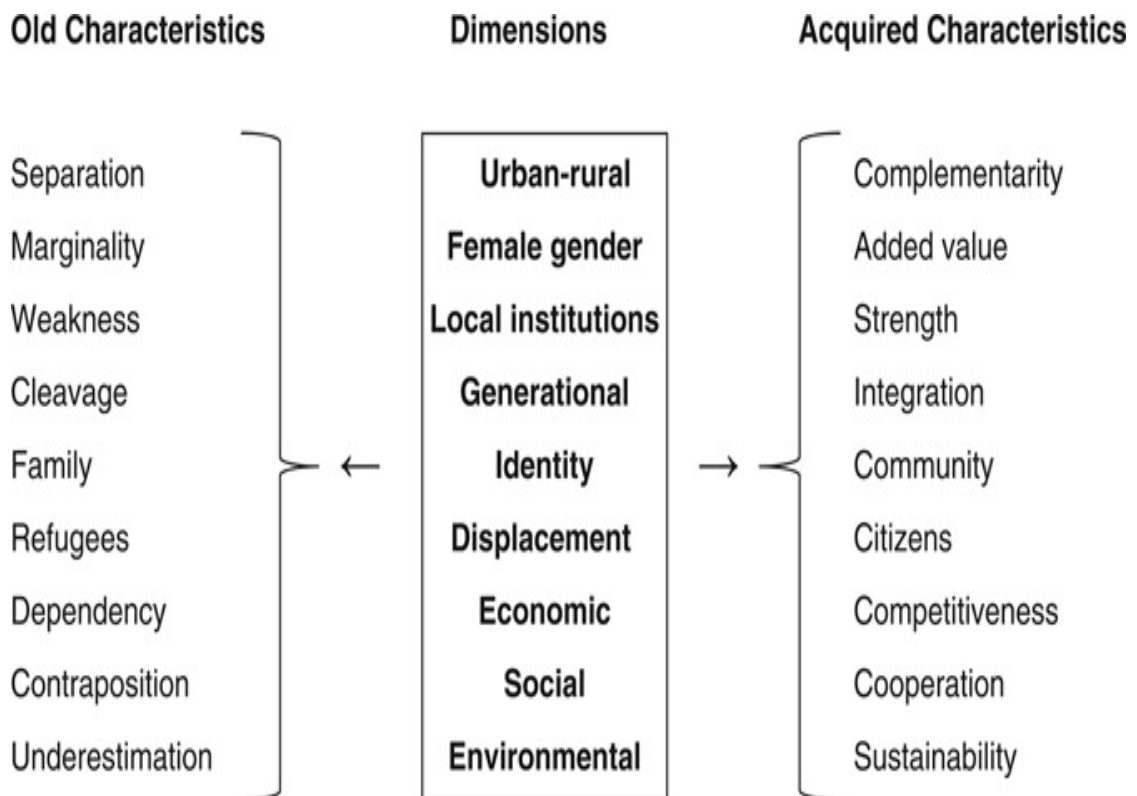


Figure 7.1 Principal internal change dimensions for Palestinian civil society

Source: Adapted from Nanetti and Holguin (2015) with the permission of Palgrave.

The gender dimension represented in [Figure 7.1](#) highlights the marginal role played by Palestinian women in comparison to Palestinian men in community policies. For example, Palestinian women have one of the lowest rates of workforce participation in the world at only seventeen percent; they also account for two-thirds of the very high youth unemployment rate, which sits at forty-one percent. While the Palestinian rate of illiteracy is comparatively low, it is higher for Palestinian women (7.4 percent) than men (2.1 percent) (UNCTAD 2014). Women ought to be acknowledged in

their full capacity as community assets or civil society will continue to operate sub-optimally. Change is also necessary to tackle a significant divergence of views between younger and older generations in Palestinian communities. The intensity and intractability of the conflict has helped to push different age groups into confrontational positions in the debate about which solutions to pursue. The split is exacerbated by the different expectations that young people and their more traditional elders have about their respective roles.

Local Palestinian institutions have often been shown to lack the level of administrative capacity required to tackle the severity of the problems they have to face, and this undermines people's willingness to rely on their community for support. Clearly, capacity-building efforts ought to be continued and increased, but, if community identity is to be strengthened, attention also needs to be paid to a dimension of social relations which has long been ignored. The social separation between Palestinians who are refugees and those who are local community residents has to be faced. The concept of citizenship for all Palestinians and the promise of equal rights it contains will need to be acknowledged and then delivered upon in practice.

Economic factors shape every aspect of Palestinian society and ensure its continued dependence on external international support. While the volume of available agricultural land continues to contract (Niksic *et al.* 2013), the urban Palestinian economy is dependent on the unstable work and trade opportunities provided by Israel, and their availability is further complicated by the copious rules and restrictions that go with them. Nonetheless, efforts to bring about change should move in the direction of making the Palestinian economy more internally competitive. New markets within the international community should, of course, be explored, but the current economic situation also demonstrates that there is an urgent need for profound changes in social relations across classes within the occupied Palestinian territory. The traditional dominance of the Palestinian social elites ought to be replaced by the type of leadership that promotes opportunities across social classes; this would help move Palestinian society in the direction of greater social cooperation and cohesion. A strong sense of national identity could also be fostered through this approach, so that Palestinians would be encouraged to shift from an almost exclusive focus on their own individual families to a more inclusive community-centred approach.

If the conflict is to be transformed from within, then Palestinians have to make a challenging choice: either they must risk pursuing profound internal societal changes, or they must be content to continue living with the status quo as the weaker party in a relationship controlled by Jewish Israelis. [Figure 7.2](#) conceptualizes the elements of this fundamental choice, starting with the first cycle of decisions that would need to be made in the process of conflict transformation. In these times of increasing territorial interdependence when powerful countries and country blocs compete for ever bigger market share, smaller communities face challenges in trying to assert themselves and ensure a future of prosperity and peace for their residents.

In particular, a Palestinian community that has experienced protracted conflict and which continues to struggle under occupation faces a substantial challenge in trying to reject the pervasive influence of defeatism, marginality, rebellion, and impoverishment. Any moves towards assertiveness, confidence, purposefulness, and collective action will involve complex changes within the community first, so that it can build the capacity to formulate the strategies that will be required for dealing with external actors. Incrementally, over a number of cycles of change, a focus on conflict transformation from within can facilitate practical improvements in the Palestinian national community's prospects. The conflict transformation approach makes this change possible because it transforms the community's vision and focus, and it shifts people's main priority from 'fighting the external' to 'constructing the internal'. At the internal level, the community embraces the vision of the pursuit of peace in order to create space for development processes to flourish; when it pursues its external aims, it focuses on acquiring parity in relation to Israeli communities and other national groups. Conflict transformation has the potential to ignite a development process that will equip the community to pursue not only the regional interests it shares with Israel but also its inter-regional interests beyond the Middle East, and so it has the potential to transform the Palestinian economy. To embark on these processes of internal and external change, the Palestinian community must engage in collective action through the use of social capital.

Elements

(Cycle 1): Time 1

Dimensions

From/to	Vision	Purpose	Collective action
Internal (Within)	Pursuit of peace for development	Development process: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sustainable• Integrated• Inclusive	Leveraging (own) community's assets: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Social capital• Other assets
External (Without)	Equality in relations (mutual recognition)	Identification/pursuit of complementary regional and inter-regional interests	Initial interfacing with others' community assets

[Figure 7.2](#) The choice of conflict transformation: elements and dimensions of purposive cycle(s)

Source: Author.

Social capital as a transformative community force

All people possess the asset of social capital, but Palestinians may have only partially recognized its significance (Jamal 2008).² When properly leveraged, social capital can become a transformative force that produces the convergence of a community's human and institutional capital and its capacity to act. Social capital, like other forms of capital, is at risk if it is not invested, and it increases when properly put to use. Policies that reward investments are needed for each type of capital. For example, human capital, if it is not continually upgraded, becomes obsolete relative to the new demands of the labour market. Financial capital, if it is not monitored by adequate regulations, can be destroyed for many by the speculation of a few. Environmental capital, if its use is not administered properly, is eroded by exploitation. Likewise, social capital, if it is not leveraged, either becomes a wasted community asset or leaves a

vacuum that may well be filled by ‘unsocial’ capital (Levi 1996; Nanetti and Holguin 2015).

Social capital has the potential to increase the Palestinian community’s internal social and institutional capacity so that its people are empowered to address the external threats and constraints that hamper their development. This kind of positive and incremental transformative change in the community’s outlook would help to produce a better quality of life too because it would help create a more balanced, socially diffuse, and economically sustainable economy. A significant stock of social capital facilitates these kinds of outcomes because it produces a process of development planning which is informed by the perspectives of both the institutional decision makers and of a broad and expanding range of Palestinian stakeholders from across the socio-economic spectrum.

A significant body of literature vouches for the assertions made here and provides the empirical evidence that social capital is associated with positive community outcomes. Researchers have noted improvements in students’ educational performance and in the health conditions of the populations of territorial communities. They have also observed that fostering social capital produces results in terms of neighbourhood development, the transformation of transitional economies, and conflict transformation (Bjørnskov 2005; Danchev 2005; Griffiths *et al.* 2005; Jones 2006; Leonardi 1999; Nanetti and Holguin 2015; Nanetti and LaCava 2006; Nanetti and Leonardi 2013; Zhou and Bankston 1994).

In order to make a specific case for the use of social capital in the Palestinian context, I will now move to define the constitutive elements of social capital and the forms in which it is expressed. It is widely accepted that social capital differs from other types of capital because it is produced by certain types of social relations rather than by individuals (Nanetti and Holguin 2015). Individual Palestinians participate in the production of social capital when they relate in certain ways to other fellow Palestinians; this participation requires them to share trust and have a shared understanding of what solidarity will involve. They must be prepared to work together with other individuals and with other social networks to which they do not belong in pursuit of mutually agreed community goals.

[Table 7.1](#) illustrates the concept of social capital in terms of the forms and elements that characterize its social relations. In relationships imbued with social capital, the primary element is

diffused trust or, in other words, the confidence that allows people to rely on each other's expected behaviour. This kind of trust is, for example, exchanged between Palestinians in their multiple roles as employers and workers, educators and students, and professionals and clients. The second element in these kinds of social relations involves the sharing of a system of solidarity-based norms and values. This is necessary if individual Palestinians are to believe that there is a version of community good that actually enhances their own individual and family interests. The third element is the capacity of Palestinians to participate in social relations that engage them in the pursuit of community objectives through purposive policies.

Table 7.1 Social capital in Palestine: defining elements and forms

<i>Elements</i> \ <i>Forms</i>	<i>Bonding</i> →	<i>Bridging</i> →	<i>Linking</i>
Trust ↓	Intra-family group	Inter-groups	Toward institutions
Solidarity norms ↓	Toward family group	Multiple issues	Legal framework
Actions	Informal associational networks	Formal associational networks	Engagement and participation

Source: Adapted from Leonardi and Nanetti (2008) and Nanetti and Holguin (2015) with the permission of Palgrave and Guerini.

Through these characteristic elements in their social relations, Palestinians produce three types of social capital which are manifest in forms of relationship which are not mutually exclusive. The first is the bonding social capital that is produced at the level of the extended family group, which serves as the primary social unit in Palestinian society (Challand 2009; Robinson *et al.* 2007). Within the extended family, trust is diffused and exchanged. However, trust is not necessarily exchanged across family boundaries in ways that involve interchange with the remainder of society, even though it may be diffused among other neighbouring families. Bonding social capital involves the expression of solidarity, in a variety of ways, that keep in mind the interests of a person's family or families and those in close proximity to the family unit. The importance of bonding social capital for Palestinians cannot be underestimated because it has for decades constituted the most direct support for

people living under the constraints of occupation (Malek and Hoke 2014; Taraki 2006).

However, conflict transformation requires the use of other forms of social capital as well. Bonding must be the platform for the creation of social capital in its bridging form, and this involves the incremental strengthening of Palestinian's associational capacity (Costantini *et al.* 2011). More formal aggregations need to emerge to engage with the wide range of economic, social, and political relations that extend beyond the realms and priorities of families and neighbourhoods. Their emergence would stimulate social relationships in which trust and solidarity is expressed at the horizontal level and would impact too on the community's ability to tackle multiple policy issues. In turn, bridging social capital would become the basis for producing linking social capital: this would be manifested in sustained communal action that would allow Palestinian civil society to communicate the people's interrelated policy demands to institutions. As well as contributing to the formulation of integrated policy demands, linking social capital enables communities to monitor the performance of institutions, and so it contributes to the delivery of community-wide development outcomes. I would argue that social capital, as it has been described here, offers a purposive approach to enhancing the internal capacity of Palestinians to act with autonomy. When Palestinians become able to act as a cohesive and assertive community, they begin to transform the conflict from within.

[Table 7.2](#) shows in detail the types of results that can be produced by the three forms of social capital described here. I differentiate between the 'means' Palestinians use in pursuing the results and the 'outputs' and territorial impacts or 'outcomes' that are produced. Bonding social capital within families produces goods and services for family members through self-help mechanisms, and this form of social capital sustains Palestinians on a day-to-day basis with great difficulty but also with great efficiency. Bridging social capital produces broader and more significant results for the Palestinian community as a whole because it combines and identifies convergence in the demands expressed by a wide range of Palestinian associations. It helps communities to produce inter-sectorial programme demands that are formulated in consultation with, and addressed toward, institutions. The interconnected nature of associations is key to bridging capital because it helps a community to produce trade-offs across policy demands.

[Table 7.2](#) Results produced by social capital in Palestine: means, outputs, and outcomes

<i>Results</i> <i>Forms</i>	<i>Means</i>	<i>Output</i>	<i>Outcome</i>
<i>Bonding</i>	Self-help	Ad hoc services/assistance to family	Increased wellbeing of family
<i>Bridging</i>	Formal associational networks	Sectoral programmes and actions	Sectoral development
<i>Linking</i>	Coordinated policy demands	Integrated development policies	Sustainable territorial development

Source: Adapted from Leonardi and Nanetti (2008) and Nanetti and Holguin (2015) with the permission of Palgrave and Guerini.

Linking social capital produces changes in conditions which serve as observable benefits for Palestinians on the ground. Those benefits arise because interconnected associations have the capacity to mobilize and link up with representative institutions which can then support their platform of integrated demands. This form of social capital accelerates decision-making processes and so advances the implementation of policies produced at community level. Over time, Palestinians benefit from the broad-scale development impacts that emerge from these processes, and, because these impacts reflect interrelated rather than sectorial interests, they tend to be sustainable.

While linking social capital clearly has the potential to produce powerful results, bonding social capital remains hugely significant for a number of reasons. Although it is the least productive form of social capital in terms of development results, it is of great importance to the people themselves because it has provided essential support for Palestinians in the dire circumstances generated by the occupation. It is held in great esteem and is highly valued as a coping mechanism. Yet, of all the forms of social capital available, bonding social capital has the greatest capacity to produce negative results for the community at large because of the differential impacts that it can produce.

[*Table 7.3*](#) Bonding social capital: taxonomy of producers and results, by example

<i>Result</i>	<i>Producers</i>				
	<i>Informal networks</i>			<i>Criminal networks</i>	<i>Other networks</i>
	<i>Family</i>	<i>Neighbours</i>	<i>Friends</i>	<i>Clans</i>	<i>Tribes</i>
Means	Self-help	Self-help	Self-help	Self-help	Self-help
Output	Aid to family members/loans	Aid to children/elderly	Friendship/assistance	Internal to network	Internal to network
	Support	Crime watch/exchanges	Loans/exchanges	External to network	External to network
Outcome	Greater wellbeing of group	Improved livability at street level	Better support network for group	Internal to network	Internal to network

Source: Adapted from Leonardi and Nanetti (2008) and Nanetti and Holguin (2015) with the permission of Palgrave and Guerini.

In the illustrative rather than exhaustive taxonomy in [Table 7.3](#), I show how these negative impacts occur in communities across the globe. As I noted earlier, the bonding form of social capital is produced in informal networks made up of primary groups such as families, neighbours, and friends whose actions yield benefits for each other. Their actions include personal assistance, loans, bartering, and other forms of interpersonal support. Among Palestinians, families are the most prominent groups and their members are connected by strong bonds of care and affinity. Within those families, the role of women is very significant, particularly when decisions are being made about family members, children, and education. The actions of these social capital producers have a positive, if indirect, impact on the wider community, and their outcomes may include the increased wellbeing of families and the betterment of neighbour-hood surroundings.

In certain communities around the world, producers of bonding social capital also include criminal networks and clans. While such networks may well be large in terms of their memberships and powerful in terms of resources, they still operate as ‘informal networks’ because they are clandestine and anonymous. Their modus operandi are similar to that of other ‘informal groupings’ in that they most often provide help for group members. While criminal networks and clans contribute to prosperity by providing employment and support, they differ fundamentally from other informal groupings because of their devastatingly negative impact on their territorial communities. Indeed, the greater the control a criminal network or clan has over a territory, the more capacity the group has to dominate a local economy, suffocate civil society

organization, control the work of institutions, and ultimately impede communities that are seeking socio-economic and civil development. This deleterious type of bonding social capital has been dubbed ‘unsocial’ (Levi 1996). In [Table 7.3](#), I also sketch the case of tribal networks in other territorial contexts simply to underline the fact that there are producers of bonding social capital outside the family whose contributions are differentiated and need to be so understood.

How to increase the stock of social capital

Territorial communities around the world are, of course, diverse in terms of the assets they are able to leverage and the challenges they have to face. Palestine, with its history of conflict and occupation – as well as its endowment of human and natural resources, institutional structures, and sociocultural values – faces unique challenges. The Palestinian community needs to engage in a process of conflict transformation from within, and an enhanced stock of bridging and linking social capital will be required to sustain it. To this end, strategies ought to be conceived and implemented that are congruent with the characteristics of the Palestinian community. While social capital, like any other form of capital, is a productive asset that can be maintained and increased when it is invested, it has to be employed in ways that are appropriate to a specific set of community conditions.

Two main steps must be taken in order to formulate a longitudinal strategy that would strengthen the internal social cohesion and economic capacity of the Palestinian community. The ultimate aim of the strategy outlined below is to redress the asymmetry that feeds the conflict between Palestinians and Jewish Israelis. The strategy proposed here will allow Palestinian society to build its internal cohesion and capacity to the point at which it would be able to project a confident and capable external profile. This incremental process would over time equip Palestinians to conduct their dealings with the Israelis on an *ex aequo* basis. The first step that needs to be taken to put this strategy into practice involves informed commitment, while the second step is operational in character.

Informed commitment

In order for any strategy to work, it will be fundamentally important for the Palestinian community to acknowledge its present ability to produce social capital. This will involve *assessing* existing social capital levels and reflecting on the contributions that the three forms of social capital discussed above currently make to community policies, the community's ability to assert itself, and the wellbeing of its members. Factors that limit the production of social capital will also need to be identified.

Bonding

The family-based component of the social capital stock present in the lives of Palestinians is powerful but insufficient to produce community-wide transformation. However, it ought to be spatially mapped and measured so that it can be properly recognized as the best survival and coping asset people possess. This is particularly true for those in poorer rural communities and neighbour-hoods devastated by conflict. In different parts of the oPt, vulnerable social groups have swelled and there are disproportionately large numbers of elderly people without family support and women with orphaned children. Where bonding social capital has been reduced by the heavy loss of family members due to war and outward migration, it will need to be supplemented or replaced by community provision.

Bridging

Bridging social capital is a precondition of conflict transformation from within because it supports the generation of community policies that can in turn produce community-wide outcomes. Its existing use needs to be understood and mapped, spatially as well as by sector, and this will involve the collection of information on the membership of associations, their geographical and sectorial coverage, programme activities and funding, inter-associational relations, and leadership. Gaps in geographical and sectorial coverage will need to be identified. Additionally, the degree of interconnection among existing associations, which allows them to operate as policy networks, ought to be assessed and emphasized. Indeed, associational capacity and the propensity of the Palestinian community to act cohesively need to be developed and strengthened if change is to be achieved.

Linking

Linking social capital creates institutional connections and also links networks of social and economic groups and associations with Palestinian representative institutions to secure more effective and sustained participatory governance. Effective linking means that associational networks contribute to policy formulation and gain the capacity to monitor policy implementation. Assessments will need to be made so that the present characteristics of the governance system can be evaluated. These assessments will determine where participatory linking connections are scarce and inadequate, and whether existing connections include or exclude significant networks.

Operational capacity

The work outlined above would allow the Palestinian community to determine its current social capacity and its strengths, but also its weaknesses and limitations. It would also generate the community's informed commitment to the project. The next stage would necessitate the adoption of an appropriate long-term strategy capable of enhancing the stock of social capital in the oPt and fostering conflict transformation from within. This would be put into practice through the formulation of ad hoc development policies, specific to the differentiated territorial conditions of the oPt, that would incorporate the three forms of social capital identified here into the process of community policymaking. The formulation of community policy always involves the following elements:

- initiator and associational stakeholders
- initial funding and ongoing funding to enable continuity
- priorities of the community-wide development programmes
- participatory mechanisms of programme formulation
- participatory and monitoring mechanisms of programme implementation
- assessment of results and feedback mechanisms
- programme adjustment and continuity

I have found, over years of work on social capital, that the element of leadership is the common factor in cases in which social capital has effectively improved community conditions. In [Table 7.4](#), I present a taxonomy of leadership-based social capital enhancement

strategies used in the process of development. The taxonomy is built to illustrate cases that I have studied (Nanetti and Holguin 2015) and therefore it does not provide an exhaustive list of policies, but the strategies are examined in terms of a number of factors. The type of leadership used by those who have taken the initiative in a particular community with regard to developing a social capital accumulation approach is noted, as is the operational approach that is adopted. The table also records the aims that are pursued, the impact that action is expected to produce, the level at which the impact occurs, and the time frame of the duration of the action.

It should be noted that I have singled out in [Table 7.4](#) the case of the Palestinian community under occupation for two reasons. On the one hand, the needs of Palestinians seem most likely to be met by the pursuit of a purposive strategy that seeks internal socio-economic cohesion but also produces conflict transformation as a result. Therefore, the leadership provided by the

[Table 7.4](#) Strategies of social capital accumulation in development planning and in conflict transformation in Palestine (the latter in grey), by type of leadership

Analytical Dimensions						
<i>Type of leadership</i>	<i>Starting point</i>	<i>Development approach</i>	<i>Aim pursued</i>	<i>Impact</i>	<i>Level of action</i>	<i>Time frame</i>
Political-institutional	Elected leaders	Prescriptive	Public goods	Social-economic opportunities	Local/regional	Medium
Non-profit educational	Non-profit educational institutions	Inclusive	Social inclusion	Human resources	International & local	Short & long
Entrepreneurial	Entrepreneurs	Small projects	Diffusion of entrepreneurship	Social-economic opportunities	Local/regional	Short & medium
Associational	Issue oriented groups	Network	Engagement of civil society	Issue oriented groups	Local/regional	Medium
Movements	Common causes	Area wide synergy	Change in development approach	Sustainability	Regional	Long
External agency	Technical staff	Stimulus for collaboration	Cohesion & local development	Continuity & sustainability	National/ local National/local	Short & long

Source: Author.

Palestinian social movement would promote a development model that moves incrementally away from direct dependence on foreign assistance: that old approach can only produce growth results in selected Palestinian communities for certain groups of beneficiaries. The new model would focus on leveraging the local assets that were carefully evaluated and differentiated in the strategy's first phase. It would strive to upgrade human resources, identify niche markets for value-added products and smart services, and adapt institutions in order to improve participatory governance. Such a movement would

be engaged in long-term initiatives to promote the quality of the Palestinian economy and to protect the resources of cities which include their historical centres and cultural heritage.

On the other hand, the Palestinian community can also benefit from the use of a leadership model current in the non-profit sector which would involve networking among its educational institutions and particularly its colleges and high schools. Such a model builds on the traditional high regard for, and pursuit of, educational opportunities for young men and women, both of which are characteristic of the Palestinian community. These networking efforts could be financially assisted and mentored by international agencies, and they would also help to generate productive connections with external educational institutions and investors. A highly skilled human resource base, together with increased investment opportunities, would transform Palestine into a striking example of a cohesive community on the path to development, an example of which Israel and the world would take notice.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the argument has been made that the transformation of the conflict between Palestinians and Jewish Israelis can be pursued by shifting the focus from the external actor, represented by the international community, to the internal actor that is the Palestinian community. Social capital represents the society's capacity for transformation and reconstruction from within, and, when Palestinians engage in a collective effort toward greater internal cohesion, they also increase their capacity to act as members of the international community. An increasing stock of social capital, particularly in its bridging and linking forms, will help leverage the contribution that Palestinian society can make to the pursuit of a vision in which Palestine exists on an *ex aequo* basis with Israel. Social capital has value because it augments the ability of people from across Palestinian society to exert their authority and to make their views known alongside those of members of the Palestinian elites.

This chapter has dwelt on the choices that Palestinians ought to make and I have argued that, by enhancing their own internal capacity as a cohesive community, they can bring about positive change in the terms of the conflict. The concept and forms of social

capital and its potential as a transformative community force have been outlined and explored. I have also elaborated on the most congruent strategies for social capital accumulation in the oPt, strategies which would facilitate the pursuit of internal development and conflict transformation. Among others, two structural features of change have been singled out in this strategy for their capacity to transform the conflict from within: an enhanced role for Palestinian women in community life and the overcoming of the urban–rural development divide both represent significant opportunities for transformation. In particular, the role of women, when extended beyond the family structure into expanding networks of community-service-oriented projects, has the potential to become strategically important.

Notes

- 1 Hungary and Poland recognized Palestine before becoming EU members. As I write, more than 130 countries in the world have recognized Palestine.
- 2 Investigating the period of the Oslo peace process (1993–1999), this author argues that civil society engagement in private associations in state-centralized environments may produce qualities of ‘authoritarian citizenship’ because of the client-patron relationship between private associations and institutions. One of the findings is that social capital is expressed by the elite Palestinian families. However, this work only focuses on one aspect of social capital and it underestimates and does not address the potential of civil society as the movement for change in Palestine.

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8

Cyber-conflict and resistance in Israel and the occupied territory.

Khalid Rabayah and Chas Morrison

Introduction

This chapter explores the increasing number of ways in which the seemingly intractable conflict between Palestinians and the State of Israel is being played out in cyberspace through the use of a variety of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools. During the 1980s, telecommunications, computers, and media technologies began to emerge and were eventually aggregated under the ICT label. The internet incubated and integrated these technologies into a unified system. ICT evolved into a general purpose technology and has become the foremost disruptive technology of the modern age. It is disruptive in the sense that it redefines and challenges how we understand and constitute public and private spheres, and it is also transforming the ways in which we live and work (Ekekwe and Islam 2012). This disruption impacts on the political arenas of peace, conflict, community, and nationhood. ICT has enabled the formation of transnational communities and networks outside established state boundaries in ways that, even a few years ago, would have been unimaginable. It also allows agents of change to

engage in much more complex and far-reaching activities than traditional media can facilitate. A key effect of the disruption ICT produces is that communication capacity and power can be transferred to non-traditional actors who include not just citizens, activists, and hackers, but also peace advocates.

ICT technologies introduce new models for learning, business, communication, and even conflict operations. Within the field of conflict, political agitation, manoeuvring, and negotiations can all now take place without rivals or collaborators ever meeting face to face. Cyberspace opens up new arenas for interaction in which Palestinian and Jewish Israeli internet users can target hearts and minds as they work to amass support, sway popular opinion, and provoke reactions. The highly reflexive nature of social media and the complexities of its reach and influence mean that online activities cannot be easily separated into 'pro-peace' or 'pro-conflict' categories. Raising awareness online does not always produce the effects that the author seeks. However, a number of activists on both sides of the conflict have found cyberspace an avenue for nonviolent action and resistance and a window for dialogue, reconciliation, and peacebuilding (Seib 2009). For these peace activists, who address quite different constituencies, cyberspace does not only represent a shared hope that conflict can be transformed; it also becomes a space in which constructive communication about a better future can begin.

The relationship between technology, including ICT, and the dynamics of violent conflict is the subject of a relatively new area of research, and it provokes divergent opinions. Some social scientists who subscribe to the idea of technological determinism tend to believe that technology is always a positive influence on justice movements (Abdulla 2011; Fuchs 2014). Others, informed by the idea of social determinism, believe that technologies tend to hinder effective social movements and activism (Gladwell 2010; Morozov 2009). A third view is more relativistic, and its adherents argue that the association between social media and social movements is complex and cannot be understood unless political, historical, and cultural contexts are taken into consideration (Aouragh

2012; Fuchs 2014). Some scholars have investigated the role of social media in contemporary political activist movements and have concluded that its techniques, which include instant messaging and live updates, for example, facilitate actions and movements on the ground thanks to the way they deliver information to and on behalf of supporters of specific causes (Gerbaudo 2012; Tawil-Souri and Aouragh 2014).

In this discussion, we understand ICT and conflict to have a highly complex relationship. The chapter begins by explaining the concept of cyberspace and explores how it has evolved to the point where it has become a dominating presence in most people's lives. It then describes and contrasts the use of cyberspace in Israel with that in the occupied Palestinian territory before going on to illustrate how conflicting sides can inflict damage on each other through reciprocal cyberattacks. The chapter also examines another type of 'soft conflict' in which competing actors strive to delegitimize each other through the promotion of competing historical narratives and propaganda. Finally, we survey further ways in which cyberspace has been used to mobilize resistance, promote human rights, and work towards peace through dialogue and friendship-building.

Cyberspace and conflict

Cyberspace can be defined as the notional environment in which communication over computer networks occurs. One of its principle features is its mimicry or replacement of real-world activities. The new 'geography' created by chat rooms, online shops, electronic classrooms, digital libraries, virtual tours, and electronic banking means that cyberspace is encroaching on 'real' space, and breaking down any meaningful distinctions between online and offline realms. Most censorship of cyberspace is patchy or minimal, and the freedom that people currently experience online is unparalleled with that available in other spheres of human activity.

A high percentage of vital services and systems are computerized and networked, particularly in developed countries: these include the systems that govern power generation and distribution, transportation (e.g. railways, subways, and aerospace), water supplies, banking systems, and telecommunication and data networks. Major industries and services are managed and controlled often semi-automatically in cyberspace in a manner that, if compromised, would affect entire nations and produce massive economic consequences. For wealthier countries, cyberspace operates as a kind of central nervous system which relies on millions of interconnected computers, both within and outside national geographic boundaries. This dependency on systems that reach beyond borders makes these countries vulnerable to attacks from virtually anywhere.

The use of cyberspace is increasingly being mediated by a range of functions which are referred to collectively as ‘social media’. Innovative social media ‘apps’ including Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google Plus, WhatsApp, Snap-chat, Instagram, and YouTube have added social and human dimensions to the internet, and they have attracted hundreds of millions of users and subscribers over a matter of years. These applications facilitate the creation of virtual communities, as well as user-generated actions and content. Thus, ICT is widening the range of ways in which individuals can give meaning to their lives, and it is also significantly broadening our understanding of what constitutes collective action (Castells 2012).

Our online identities are simultaneously discrete and interconnected. The internet is a great leveller. Relationships that are established online are generally constructed horizontally and so can pose challenges to traditional power structures which tend to be predicated on the maintenance of vertical and hierarchical relationships. As a communication tool, the internet has the potential for significant change, even if much of its content is reactionary and short term. For many young people, online social media activity is a major influence on the way they conceive of their own personal identities, and it generates a range of psychological impacts. The growing use

of social media and advancements in computerized applications and systems has meant that many interactions are becoming increasingly dependent on these technologies and more vulnerable to interventions by external actors. The threats posed by these kinds of interventions and the effects they might produce are motivating organizations, including states, to review and securitize their activities against cyberattack and other types of disruption (White House 2003). Reviews of this kind acknowledge both the strategic position of these technologies and their vulnerabilities, and these are precisely the qualities which encourage actors to make them the target of offensive operations. Revenge, the desire to preempt an attack, and entertainment are among the factors that can inspire challenges to cybersecurity. The interconnectivity of global communications creates added value for corporations and states in that it boosts revenue, expands markets, and enables the outsourcing of production among other critical benefits. But it is this same interconnectivity which provides the motivation for global threats and new instances of aggression.

As new media reshape what we understand to constitute identity, belonging, and nationality, the definition of conflict is being extended and its nature radically transformed in the age of disruptive technologies. Conflict can now be seen to occur, not just on streets and on battlefields, but online where it is performed on different kinds of apparatus – like tablets, apps, smartphones, and the cloud – in environments such as YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, and Wikipedia which did not, until recently, exist. Social networks have emerged and are developing beyond the reach of security forces, and, as the international political environment responds to a range of emerging challenges, new forms of media are also vitally involved in disrupting established political regimes, hierarchies, and affiliations. In these complex and shifting circumstances, the conceptual borders that drew distinctions between the outbreak and cessation of a conflict, legitimate and illegitimate protest, and dissent and reportage are becoming blurred, conflated, and unpredictable.

Emerging ICT networks enable public mobilization, engagement at a distance, and self-organized or leaderless systems to operate. More crucially, they also now influence people's identities in terms of their national, religious, and political affiliations, as well as their attachments to specific geographical locations. These new identities are having effects on the ways we analyse political protest and dissent because they demand a more bottom-up approach for research which needs to focus less on state security apparatuses and political decisions and more on grassroots groupings, connections, and networks. ICT allows for a wider range of responses to unpopular or coercive politics than mere dissent, toleration, or support. As the citizen journalist footage coming out of Gaza and Syria testifies, ordinary people (those not explicitly aligned with any political or civil action groups) are gaining more opportunities to engage with conflict dynamics or efforts towards peace. The kind of real-time networking and information access made possible by mobile phones, text messaging, and RSS feeds reduces people's reliance on traditional media as primary sources of up-to-date information on conflict events.

New media users also make use of collaborative alternatives to what is available from dominant media and networking monopolies. This helps provide social and political movements with access to information that traditional media organizations find more difficult to disseminate. Mobile devices that enable online access offer new ways for people to organize civil disobedience, protests, riots, and other forms of street activism; however, their use tends to be reliant on government-operated information technology (IT) networks, and is vulnerable to network closure and surveillance by state security. In response, some protest movements (for example, those involved in pro-democracy efforts in Hong Kong) have made use of direct mobile-to-mobile communication tools and a variety of offline apps which are used to reduce a government's capacity to interfere.

Cyberspace has practical uses for activists, and, on a more fundamental level, it has – as Strangelove (2005) argues – become the social environment most conducive to the

contestation of the actual ‘meaning of things’. While much internet culture is normative and reactionary, there are also large aspects of it which subvert and challenge mainstream meanings and belief systems, often through the use of symbols which only have rich meaning online. There is no offline equivalent of a Facebook ‘like’, for example. What exactly does it mean to ‘like’ an online photograph of a missile explosion or footage of displaced people fleeing a shell attack?

The nature and evolution of communications technology has altered what it means to broadcast, consume, and disseminate information, and, also, definitions and characteristics of conflict are being re-examined. It is therefore not possible to think about the relationship of technology to conflict without re-examining the nature of conflict and considering how to define civil society, protest, mobilization, peacebuilding, and other related phenomena.

New media highlight the distinctions that separate ‘manipulative communication’ – of the kind practised via traditional mass communication media such as newspapers and television – from the ‘participative communication’ enabled by innovations in ICT. Governments in many countries have responded to mass protest and revolutionary activities by applying harsh controls and regulations to communication tools, most notably the internet and networks such as Facebook and Twitter. Several countries have also adapted laws on hate speech and human rights to reflect this new environment. The ‘hard power’ mechanisms they use to subjugate resistance efforts may well be redundant or ineffective when deployed against the ‘soft power’ embodied in popular uses of new media. The erosion of democratic ideals, freedom of speech, and freedom of association is now part of a new political reality or ‘state of exception’ characterized by an emphasis on security (Agamben 2005). Evidence of this has been apparent across Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory, particularly since the 2006 Lebanon war.

Cyberspace in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory

Israeli security doctrine and its links with technology are quite distinct from Palestinian security practices and strategies. In order to understand the anxiety with which Israelis treat cyberspace security, it is crucial to investigate its nature and linkages with Israel's broader security strategies. Because Israel perceives itself to be surrounded by enemies, successive governments have built its security doctrine on the assumption that any attempt to attack it – physically, politically, or electronically – is an existential threat to its existence which justifies swift and harsh responses as required. Israel's security is based on the premise that it must sustain its superiority in all strategic spheres, on land, sea, air, and cyberspace (Caldwell and Williams 2012).

The conflict between Palestinians and Jewish Israelis can be characterized as an agitation for a broad re-alignment of power, although this may be incoherently expressed. It is vital to consider this conflict in terms of its wider ramifications, not only regionally for Arab nations, Turkey, and Iran, but also for the United States (US), the European Union (EU), and other states across the globe. Palestine has become a rallying point, a symbol of structural injustice, and indicative of a modern conflict type that pits 'David against Goliath'.

Israel has several prominent research and study centres in the field of security that analyse and work to strengthen the current state of Israeli dominance. One of these institutions is the Institute for Policy and Strategy in Herzliya, home to the annual Herzliya conference at which Israel's national policies and the upgrading of its strategic security decision-making processes are reassessed (Herzliya 2013). El-Gendy (2010) suggests that there are four pillars for the Israeli security doctrine: reliance on the conviction that Jews are God's chosen people, strategic ties with the United States, reliance on excellence in technology, and, to a lesser extent, an emphasis on maintaining superiority over neighbouring countries in the Middle East in terms of economic strength and media

representation. These Israeli research centres cooperate with and support Israeli organizations which operate the huge arsenal of electronic, digital, and space systems that allow Israel to dominate any cyberspace battle. Israeli cyberspace is very sophisticated in terms of its technological advancements and influence. Israel began to develop its advanced space programme in 1963, and, by 2015, it had successfully launched thirteen satellites, most of which were designed for spying and surveillance. The state has also developed sophisticated intelligence services which are responsible for gathering and classifying the information deemed necessary for its protection.

A major component of Israeli cyberspace is its media apparatus, which plays a significant role in defending Israel's image and promoting its soft power globally. Israel has encouraged the development of an active and engaged internet community, and its online population is estimated to include over 5.9 million people out of a population of around 7.9 million (IWS 2015). The Israeli people enjoy extensive mobile broadband coverage and are served by four mobile communications operators. By comparison, Palestinian cyberspace in the occupied territory remains noticeably underdeveloped. Shortly after its establishment in 1994, the Palestinian Authority (PA) assumed responsibility for local telecom networks. The PA then spearheaded the development of the ICT sector and its activities by founding the Ministry of Telecom. The PA has made several attempts to launch initiatives related to computing and the use of ICT in various sectors, starting with the construction of the Government Computer Center in Ramallah which offers IT services to all government bodies. The PA has also established the Palestinian Information Technology Association (PITA), and it has attempted to build national technology gateways that are capable of operating without Israeli involvement.

In 2011, the PA received funds from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), to build an e-government platform for all Palestinian public sector bodies. Under this remit, Palestinians are trying to design a framework and information security strategy, founded in best practice,

that will build the capacity of PA organizations and enable them to operate securely. They are also developing the terms of reference needed to establish a Palestine Cybersecurity Emergency Response Team (PalCERT), with the hope that it will help secure Palestinian cyberspace and reduce cyber-attacks and incidences of hacking (Nasser-Eldin 2014).

Israel expends considerable resources to assert and retain control over cyberspace in the occupied territory, and it does this by dominating the use of the entire spectrum, the flow of equipment, and interconnectivity within global networks. Israel also connects all occupied territory civil services (such as trade regulation, taxation, birth registration, and so on) to its central computer system which is located in Beit-Eiel, an Israeli settlement near Ramallah in the West Bank. This allows Israel's security personnel to monitor all kinds of Palestinian transactions.

Cyber-conflict in Israel and the occupied territory

Palestinian and Arab resistance movements have increasingly shifted their actions into cyberspace, and this shift has motivated hackers across the globe to undertake cyberattacks on behalf of the Palestinian cause. Israel has publicly labelled these efforts as 'acts of terror' that threaten its existence; however, many analysts argue that this is an exaggeration. They suggest that, in fact, cyberattacks and resistance differ from cyber-terrorism, and it is incorrect to conflate the two (Kenney 2015). The first major cyberattacks exchanged between Israelis and Palestinians occurred in 2000 following the breakdown of US-led official peace talks at Camp David and the eruption of the second Palestinian *intifada*. In response, pro-Palestinian and pro-Israeli hackers worked to block major websites and prevent their competitors from accessing major news web servers. This work was accompanied by website hacking, and hacked sites were used to transmit messages which proclaimed the attackers'

identities and effectively served as declarations of war against each other's online territories. For example, some Israeli hackers broadcast a pornographic photo on Islamic group websites, including one owned by Hamas (Karatzogianni 2006).

The 2006 Israeli war against Hezbollah in Lebanon produced intensive conflict, and Israeli and Arab conflict on the ground coincided with parallel 'battles' online. Both sides used new web technologies to wage psychological warfare against each other and targeted both combatants and civilians. Hackers scanned competing websites for vulnerabilities and gained access where possible to convey messages, engage in aspects of psychological warfare, snip data, and inflict server damage.

During the 2008 Israeli bombardment of Gaza, 'cyber-fighters' from around the world launched online action against Israeli targets. A Moroccan hacker team managed to bring down portions of Israeli internet networks and posted an online leaflet which warned the State of Israel that if 'you kill Palestinians; we kill Israeli servers'. Palestinian hackers launched widespread attacks on Israeli sites including banks, news agencies, newspapers, and government agencies, with the help of Arab hackers, and they managed to force approximately 1,000 Israeli websites offline (Palinfo 2008). During the same war in 2008, a British hacker launched a website which published the personal data of hundreds of Israeli officers and soldiers who were participating in the war against Gaza and labelled them as 'war criminals'. This led Israel to request that British authorities close down the offending site (*Daily Mail* 2010).

Cyberattacks escalated again in 2010 when the Israeli navy raided ships that were carrying humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip. In response, pro-Palestinian hackers who were aligned to the international cyber-organization Anonymous issued a message on YouTube that threatened harsh retaliation against Israel (Anonymous 2011). Immediately after this message was aired, numerous Israeli websites were hacked, including the sites of the national intelligence agency Mossad, the internal security agency Shin Beit, and the Israeli Defense Force (IDF).

The Israeli authorities quickly denied reports that pro-Palestine hackers were responsible for these websites' difficulties, and, instead, they claimed the compromised websites were struggling due to technical faults. Online conflict was further escalated in 2011 through the activities of the Saudi hacker '0xOmar', who claimed to be in possession of hundreds of thousands of sets of Israeli credit card details and threatened to publish them on the internet. On the same day that 0xOmar made his statement, a number of websites belonging to major businesses like the Tel Aviv stock exchange and the Israeli airline El Al were brought down (AFP 2012).

During the 2012 Gazan war, Palestinian hackers obtained approximately 5,000 Israeli soldiers' mobile phone numbers and sent them messages stating that 'Gaza will be your grave, and Tel Aviv will be set on fire' (AFP 2012). The Anonymous group struck again and launched cyberattacks on hundreds of Israeli websites in an operation called 'OpIsrael'. Anonymous orchestrated attacks on Israeli websites in response to the 2012 IDF attacks on Gaza and claimed to have brought down 700 sites (Russia Today 2013). During the same period, Facebook accounts belonging to Israel's vice prime minister were hacked by a pro-Palestinian group called Z-Company Hacking Crew (Klimas 2012). Also in 2012, pro-Palestinian hackers launched a concerted effort to cripple Israeli sites online. According to the *Times of Israel* magazine, these websites faced over sixty million hacking attempts, but most of these failed to inflict any concrete damage (Shameh 2013). It has been alleged that, during the 2012 Gaza war, there were about forty-four million attacks on Israeli websites, resulting in 650 sites being either brought down or suspended from the internet (CNN Arabic 2012).

Public contestation and opinion in cyberspace

Palestinians and Jewish Israelis and their respective supporters have realized the importance of the internet and social media

as means to shape public opinion and source support. Social media allows citizens on both sides to contribute their views on the conflict and to position apps as ‘battlegrounds’ on which fierce clashes between competing viewpoints take place. In these skirmishes, Palestinians tend to rely on voluntary contributions by activists and supporters, while the Israeli government takes the lead in systematically orchestrating the production of online opinion. The Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs works to monitor, analyse, locate, and attack Palestinian websites that incite violence against Israel. It endeavours to find examples of hate speech and incitement and then disseminates them to demonstrate that Palestinians spread anti-Israeli hatred. The ministry also encourages supporters of Israel to lodge complaints against websites on which these violations have been published in order to have them closed down (see Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2015).

Social media provides the public with platforms for participation in the conflict, and people participate in digital competitions over public opinion, often with very little risk of censorship. Social media applications allow a variety of content such as images, videos, or text to be uploaded, and these forms of media can be deployed to defend a point of view or to refute competing opinions. Both Jewish Israelis and Palestinians are increasingly relying on such technologies in the competition for favourable public opinion both locally and across the globe. Major Avital Leibovich of the IDF’s foreign press office has stated that ‘the blogosphere and the new media are another war zone, and we have to be relevant there’ (Kuntsman and Stein 2010).

The use of social media during times of war and violent conflict has attracted the attention of traditional news media and observers. According to one UK newspaper, Israelis and Palestinians were the first to use Twitter during times of warfare (*Spillius* 2012). Throughout the 2009 Gazan war, #gaza was among the ten most popular hashtags in use globally. The Israeli consulate in New York opened a special Twitter account to disseminate war news combined with Israeli views, and this move led the main Israeli daily

newspaper Haaretz to claim that ‘Twitter [had] revolutionized Israeli diplomacy’ (Shamir 2009). Twitter was heavily utilized by Israeli supporters to publicize the ‘knock on the roof’ technique whereby an Arabic-speaking IDF commander would warn Palestinian residents that their houses were soon to be demolished. When the IDF launched its own Twitter account in 2012, the Boston Globe reported that it gained more than 50,000 followers within its first twenty-four hours.

The State of Israel has shown itself to be well prepared for cyber-conflict. For example, when Israeli incursions into Gaza were occurring in 2008 and 2009, it recruited and prepared volunteers to defend the morality of Israel’s war against Gaza and opened large computer centres where volunteers fluent in foreign languages could defend and justify Israeli actions. During the same period, traditional media reporters were banned from approaching the battlefields, and this prevented them from directly witnessing war actions and their consequences on the ground. In December 2008, the IDF established its own YouTube channel (YouTube 2008). It featured aerial footage of Israeli strikes on Gaza, as well as interviews with IDF spokespeople justifying the actions aired on screen. The channel helped the Israeli side to defend its actions despite the high number of Palestinian casualties.

Activists across the globe made attempts to challenge and refute the IDF’s justifications for violence, and, by the end of the war in 2009, some of their videos had been viewed more than two million times. In response, and in a bid to sway public opinion, Israel mounted video cameras across its borders with Gaza to demonstrate that an influx of humanitarian aid was arriving in the area. As part of Israel’s efforts to improve its image during the war, the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs funded a project to strengthen Israel’s external reputation and flooded the internet with images that reflected the country’s positive attributes (Kuntsman and Stein 2010).

Palestinians and their supporters learned significant lessons in the aftermath of this conflict, and many of them now use social media with much greater effectiveness. For example, during the war in Gaza in 2014, Palestinians relied on social

media to convey the effects of the war from the field directly to the rest of the world, and some observers claimed that the Palestinians won the social media battle on this occasion (Al-Jazeera 2014). As regular Palestinian citizens took on the roles of informal journalists, professional journalists started using Twitter to report the scenes they were witnessing, and their tweets were shared globally. With hundreds of images from the battlefield streaming through social media, Israel found it difficult to mask what was happening on the ground during a bombardment. According to the Al-Jazeera news channel, the hashtag #GazaUnderAttack had been used in more than four million tweets by July 2014 (Al-Jazeera 2014). As a result, observers around the world have increasingly moved away from accepting official accounts of the conflict, and have instead turned to social media in order to gain a direct understanding of events (Al-Jazeera 2014). In a bid to control the ways in which the conflict was reported, the Hamas-led government in Gaza issued guidelines on the effective use of social media. For example, it advised social media reporters and activists to label any casualty as an ‘innocent civilian’, and any Israeli attack as a ‘cruel attack’. In response, the Israeli government established a virtual social media room, Hasbara, from which hundreds of university students convey pro-Israeli messages to the rest of the world in thirty different languages.

The struggle to narrate the conflict

The competition for favourable public opinion is also played out on Wikipedia. There is particularly heavy contestation of the site’s descriptions of the conflict’s historical origins and its current dynamics. Wikipedia’s content is generated and edited by users, and entries on issues relating to the history of the conflict between Jewish Israelis and Palestinians have been written and altered many times by competing contributors. Since these repeated edits sometimes lack objectivity, the entries are carefully monitored and regulated by competing interest groups. One such organization – Yesha, an Israeli settlements council in the West Bank – has trained

approximately fifty people so that they can use Wikipedia to defend Jewish settlements in Palestinian lands and promote a more positive image of the settlers and their expansionist movement. Yesha even offered the gift of a hot-air balloon trip to the individual who submitted the highest number of pro-Israeli entries (Issacharoff 2010).

The efforts of Jewish Israelis to influence the online narrative have met with aggressive resistance, and Palestinian interest groups have campaigned to have these Wikipedia entries rewritten so that they present a different perspective. The Association of Palestinian Journalists has called on Palestinian institutions to edit Wikipedia entries and it has argued more generally that there is a need to respond digitally to the latest developments affecting Israel's public relations. The most intense ongoing editing clash on Wikipedia concerns the definition and description of Jerusalem. Since its creation in October 2001, the entry on Jerusalem has been subject to 11,000 edits, with 3,217 editors participating in shaping the content and the phrasing of the page (Wikipedia 2015).

Online resistance action

Other avenues of online action have proven effective in the ongoing conflict. ICT and social media enable activists, both locally and globally, to support the Palestinian cause and organize campaigns to increase economic and political pressure on Israel to comply with international laws. For example, several Palestinian, Israeli, and other international organizations have set up web and Facebook pages as well as Twitter hashtags that call for an end to Israeli occupation, the dismantling of settlements, and equality for Israel's Arab Palestinian citizens. These sorts of online activity can be classified as forms of nonviolent mobilization and confrontation. Instances have included declarations of support for, and the promotion of, the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement against Israel, and online calls for university demonstrations against speakers who are perceived

to support the ongoing occupation. These movements rely heavily on social media platforms on which actors can disseminate their messages and coordinate collective action. Gerbaudo (2012) has analysed the BDS movement's use of social media and argues that it is being used principally to provide people with instructions about how to act, argue, and sustain their presence in the public sphere. The Flotillas for Gaza campaign also utilized social media to support Palestine, and it encouraged Palestinian and international audiences to engage in and organize activism (Nabulsi 2014). These direct forms of online action are blurring the distinction between peace- and activism-focused movements.

Facebook is perhaps the most prominent social media platform to have been used to mobilize supporters and coordinate demonstrations against the occupation and ongoing human rights violations. The well-known Facebook group 'Third Intifada', created in 2011, was inspired by the use of social media in the Arab Spring, and it called on Palestinian refugees in Israel's neighbouring countries to march towards Israel and storm its borders on the anniversary of the Nakba. This Facebook group quickly gathered more than 300,000 supporters. In response to its popularity, the Israeli government decided to intervene, and Facebook finally acquiesced to its request for the page's removal; however, this did not stop thousands of Palestinian refugees from storming the Israeli-Syrian and Israeli-Lebanese borders and clashing with Israeli border police. These confrontations left ten people dead and over sixty wounded, and many individuals successfully infiltrated Israel (Tawil-Souri and Aouragh 2014).

The Israeli government views these movements as part of a strategic threat that seeks to delegitimize Israel's existence, and so its security apparatus has initiated surveillance of international pro-Palestinian organizations and activists (Cohen 2015). The Israeli government and its supporters employ highly sophisticated technology to track activists and prevent them entering Israel, and Israel asks allied countries to do the same (Hovel 2015). Blumenthal and Carmel (2015) describe a secretive website called Canary Mission which tracks pro-Palestinian American students and blacklists them,

labels them as anti-Semites, and hinders them from obtaining future employment.

Virtual dialogue and peace talks

Social media has also been used to promote cross-community dialogue and peacebuilding. However, to date, there are only a few examples of initiatives that use social media as a platform for discussion and the peaceful exchange of ideas between Jewish Israelis and Palestinians at grassroots level. One relevant and highly visible initiative that has attracted significant media attention is Yala Young Leaders, which was founded by Uri Savir who was the chief negotiator for Israel in the 1993 Oslo Peace Accords with the Palestinians. *Yala* is an Arabic word which means ‘let’s go’ or ‘let’s move’.

The Yala Young Leaders Facebook group was started in 2011 with its aim being to allow young Palestinians and Israelis to communicate online about the ongoing conflict (Yala Young Leaders 2011). A number of major funders like the Peres Center for Peace, the United States Agency for International Development, and the Clinton Foundation have backed the initiative and helped it to transform into a fully fledged movement. The organization now runs peacebuilding activities and offline training courses that bring together activists and students from across the Middle East and even further afield. The Yala movement is progressing from its incubator stage in virtual space towards a mature role in the more challenging offline environment. It represents a prime example of an online group that has gone on to become a real-world organization, and it claims to be the broadest and fastest growing Middle East peace initiative at present. By 2015, the Facebook page had one million supporters who represented over thirty nationalities, and over 1,200 students had participated in Yala’s two online courses in citizen journalism and conflict resolution. An online academy has been established to equip peace activists and leaders with the

knowledge and skills they need to exert influence on their local communities and policymakers.

Conclusion

This chapter has analysed a variety of ways in which the conflict between Palestinians and the State of Israel is played out in cyberspace. The internet and social media have been shown to serve as platforms where conflict escalation and competition for favourable public opinion during times of war take place. Cyberspace provides a venue for the narration of the conflict and its causes, and it is also used to mobilize resistance to the ongoing occupation and human rights abuses. In this regard, social media has proven itself particularly effective in instigating emotional connectivity and interactivity among supporters, both factors which influence the success of social activism (Castells 2009, 2012; Gay 2010). Cyberspace is also beginning to reveal itself as a platform for activities that foster de-escalation, such as dialogue and friendship-building.

More research is needed on the emerging effects of new media technologies and the ways in which they disrupt and redefine the political sphere in intractable conflict zones such as Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory. New media has revealed several avenues for action that might lead to alternative solutions to the problems faced by Palestinians and Jewish Israelis. In this context, new forms of media have altered the nature of the relationship between the ‘occupied’ and the ‘occupier’, a relationship that can no longer be defined merely as one of either compliance and toleration or dissent and protest. On the contrary, new media is revising the dynamics of power, information access, and communication in ways that are not yet fully understood. The conflictual and resistant potential of cyberspace appears to have been well utilized in relations between Israel and the Palestinians and has been discussed reasonably widely, but the potential of cyberspace to facilitate bridge-building and dialogue has received less attention to date. While long-term solutions to

the conflict have not been identified, it is certain that cyberspace will have an increasingly important role to play in framing the conflict's dynamics, engaging parties with each other, influencing popular opinion, and amplifying opportunities for peace.

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Part II

Transformational actors

9

Consumer resistance or resisting consumption?

The case of Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions in the occupied Palestinian territory.

Aurélie Bröckerhoff

‘Money and revolution is like a mouse and wheat. The mouse will eat its way through all the wheat!’

(Darweish and Rigby 2015, p. 107)

Introduction

In 2005, Palestinian civil society called for an international campaign of boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) against Israel. The ongoing BDS campaign represents an attempt to produce both Israel’s compliance with international humanitarian law, and Israeli recognition of Palestinian rights. Economic and political pressure on Israel is to be exerted until three conditions are met, namely, the end of the occupation, equal rights for Palestinians in Israel, and the right to return for Palestinian refugees (BDS 2005). The campaign encourages Palestinians living in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt, i.e. the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza) and Israel, Israelis, as well as the global diaspora and those wishing to express solidarity with Palestinians, to engage in the cultural, economic, and academic boycott of Israeli goods and services. It also asks governments and organizations, at

home and overseas, either to divest from companies that directly or indirectly facilitate the ongoing occupation and the oppression of Palestinians, or to impose political and economic sanctions (BDS 2015a). The BDS movement has encouraged a wider and more sustained conversation about the politics and economics of the Israeli occupation than any other campaign (Hever 2015).

This chapter offers reflections from an ongoing study which focuses on the role that market liberalization plays in shaping participation in boycott movements within the oPt. During a field visit to the West Bank in 2015, I met with both ordinary and activist Palestinians and gathered data about their lived experiences through interviews and observations. In this chapter, which draws on that research, the term ‘Palestinian’ will be used in a restricted sense to refer to research participants based in the Jenin and Bethlehem governorates of the West Bank.¹ Jenin and Bethlehem fall largely into Area A of the West Bank, and so the participants referred to as ‘Palestinian’ here are under the control of the Palestinian Authority.

The paradox of economic activity in the West bank

After hearing quite different accounts of people’s experiences at Israeli checkpoints in the West Bank, I am unsure what to expect as my friends’ car snakes its way out of heavy Ramallah traffic towards the West Bank’s Qalandia checkpoint just outside Jerusalem. As we get close, I am surprised to see a huge advertising billboard towering over the gridlocked traffic. I notice street vendors offering their wares to people waiting in queues, in cars, or on foot. People are getting in and out of the queuing cars, taxis, and buses, or walking along the street in between idling vehicles. Some are buying fruit, coffee, or ingredients for a meal.

Alongside this everyday activity, there is a security barrier, about three metres high, with its watchtowers, armed guards, and security contractors surveying and patrolling the area; there are long metal tunnels and gateways in which people are queuing for their papers to be checked by Israeli border officials. Were it not for this visible heightened security presence amidst the commercial bustle, I might think I was approaching a busy train station, airport, or even market, and not a checkpoint that controls movement in and out of the West Bank. Near 'the Wall' in Bethlehem, I encounter similar examples of enterprise that surprise me. Shops are selling occupation-themed paraphernalia including postcards, T-shirts, and bags decorated with anti-occupation graffiti, mainly produced from photos taken just a few metres away.

Existing economic challenges which include high levels of unemployment, a slowing economy, and political and economic uncertainty have made it increasingly difficult for Palestinians to sustain their livelihoods (Klein 2007). One could argue that the existence of such economic activity is an attempt to respond to these challenges. It provides a necessary source of income and can be viewed as a form of 'resistance through persistence', a reaction to difficult economic conditions in an uncertain political climate (Tawil-Souri 2009).

These activities also evidence the deep, structural entrenchment of the ongoing occupation in the Palestinian economy. Checkpoints generate traffic that can transform them into new centres for commerce and consumption, as people travelling through them become a captive market and engage in an emerging 'checkpoint economy' (Tawil-Souri 2009). If Palestinians can meet their daily shopping needs and go about their daily business while queuing at checkpoints, then those checkpoints make their day-to-day tasks simpler to achieve and their lives easier. While this checkpoint economy may be a useful development, it also makes it possible for the control checkpoints exercise over Palestinian lives to become obscured, and can make their existence less contested (Tawil-Souri 2009).

Darweish and Rigby (2015) point out that there has been a low level of participation in BDS – the movement that tries to establish a conversation about this very entanglement of the politics and economics of the occupation – from within the oPt. At the same time, the proliferation of entrepreneurship by the checkpoint and the Wall suggests that Palestinian daily micro-economic activity is more likely to work within the parameters of the occupation than it is to challenge them effectively. So how has a situation emerged in which some Palestinian economic activities can be understood to partially reproduce, or at least to normalize,² the ongoing structures of occupation?

This chapter is inspired by research interviews I conducted with Palestinian consumers in order to shed light on their views and illustrate their roles in and relationships with the BDS campaign. In the sections that follow, I draw connections between the Palestinian consumer boycott and existing consumer resistance literature, and I argue that the rise of liberal market economics in the West Bank has contributed to a situation in which many Palestinians are excluded from this new market arrangement and find themselves without political agency in economic terms; meanwhile, those Palestinians who have gained within this process may not view consumer choice as a political tool. The research here suggests that, when so many other choices in the daily lives of Palestinians are limited by the occupation, choice in the marketplace may represent an experience of normality and freedom that cannot otherwise be enjoyed. This chapter contributes to the literature on BDS by highlighting the ideal and the real roles of Palestinian consumers in the campaign.

BDS: independent economic development and disrupted hegemony

The BDS movement is part of a Palestinian tradition of nonviolent, popular resistance. It also draws inspiration from other social movements and has modelled itself on the boycott

that formed part of the strategy for fighting apartheid in South Africa (BDS 2005). Although on the surface the BDS movement uses an economic strategy to bring about change, its proponents are seeking a more general shift in the international community's perception of the conflict and in the views of Israelis and Palestinians alike (Hever 2015). The Palestinian BDS National Committee, in addition to calling for divestment and sanctions, also encourages three types of boycott – cultural, academic, and consumer – which have key roles in the BDS movement's strategy. The consumer boycott is defined as the 'boycott of Israeli companies, goods and services or of international companies involved in Israeli policies violating Palestinian human rights and international law' (BDS 2015b). It operates, like the wider BDS campaign, in two ways: first, it puts economic pressure on Israel, and second, it seeks to raise public awareness in order to challenge the established discourses of Jewish Israeli-Palestinian relations (McMahon 2014).

The contemporary BDS movement has been effective in internationalizing the Palestinian side of the conflict and in increasing international participation in the BDS movement. It has achieved this by involving more international civil society actors in its campaign and by employing new channels of online communication. Although it has made advances in becoming a national movement for Palestinians across the oPt, it still faces significant challenges at home (Bakan and Abu-Laban 2009; Darweish and Rigby 2015; McMahon 2014). Besides widespread lack of political support (McMahon 2014), the changing political economy in the West Bank since the Oslo Accords and the concomitant effects on Palestinians' everyday lives may help to explain why participation levels there have remained relatively low compared to those noted during previous boycott periods (Darweish and Rigby 2015; Rigby 1991).

Calling on consumers to boycott (or not)

Consumers across the globe have been motivated to take part in boycotts for political reasons and in the name of many different causes because of their desire to effect change in the world. Consumer boycott has often been used as a form of protest against domination and to reclaim powers that have been lost: it has been used as a strategy for promoting nationalism in postcolonial settings (Varman and Belk 2009), improving companies' business ethics (Shaw *et al.* 2006), shaping public policy (Halkier and Holm 2008; Simon 2011), and drawing attention to environmental sustainability and global justice issues (Bossy 2014; Simon 2011). It has also been leveraged in campaigns which seek to bring about an overall reduction in consumption and that offer resistance against the market per se (Fournier 1998; Iyer and Muncy 2008; Penaloza and Price 1993).

At any given point in time, somewhere in the world, consumers are likely to be exercising their consumer power by participating in boycotts. At the time of writing, Amazon UK is the target of consumer boycotts taking place in protest against the company's tax avoidance strategies; a consumer boycott against Air France also continues because the company is believed to be the only airline still carrying primates to laboratories for testing (other airlines have stopped this practice as a result of consumer pressure). In 2004, the UK office supplier Staples responded to consumer pressure by increasing the percentage of its stock made from recycled paper.

Much of the literature that looks at consumer motivations for engaging in actions that will change company strategies and policies, such as the boycotts outlined above, focuses on the reasons that are in play when people participate in a particular campaign; the reasons why consumers refrain from involvement tend to be inferred from that primary data. These inferred reasons for reluctance include people's realization that their actions as small-scale consumers have limited impact on a vast market. Reliance on other people's participation in a boycott and fear of further harm resulting from participation, through job losses, for example, are also understood to dissuade people from action (see Klein *et al.* 2004). However,

research which draws on theories about human reason suggests that the reasons people have for non-participation are not always the logical opposites of the ones that justify participation; the strategy of inferring reasons from those opposites clearly has its limitations (Lee and Chatzidakis 2013).

Yuksel, who has conducted research that specifically explores consumers' non-participation in boycotts and their underlying motivations, defines consumer boycotts as 'acts of exiting a relationship with an organisation [...] accompanied by a promise to re-enter the relationship once certain conditions have been met' (Yuksel 2013, p. 205). Consumer boycott then is a temporary act that relies on consumers recognizing that they are making a 'trade-off [...] and sacrificing their short-term utility in the hope of collectively achieving a goal [...] that will maximise the long-term utility of the society, if achieved' (Yuksel 2013, p. 205).

This study outlines some key reasons which, among others, explain non-participation in boycott, or the lack of willingness of consumers to sacrifice their own short-term gains for the benefit of society. First, boycotting challenges consumers' belief in the perceived freedom of their consumer choices; second, people fail to attribute the problem at hand to consumption, and so underrate the value of consumer resistance as a tool for effecting social or political change; third, boycotts ask people to break with their personal brand attachments; and fourth, people perceive themselves or the boycott as too insignificant to effect change.

Palestinian boycott as a form of political consumption

Consumer boycotts concerning relations between Israel and the Palestinians can be found throughout Palestinian history, and started well before the latest call to action (Qumsiyeh 2010; Schmidmayr 2012). However, changing global

geopolitics in the post 9/11 world and the impact of neoliberal development in the oPt have represented a shift for the BDS movement towards a more globally connected and internationally targeted boycott (Bakan and Abu-Laban 2009). For example, in August 2015, the French company Veolia sold its final shares in Jerusalem Light Rail and so ended its operations in the Israeli market which had provided services to Israeli settlements in lands occupied by Israel in defiance of internationally recognized borders. Similarly, early in 2016, G4S announced that it planned to sell its Israeli subsidiary and exit the Israeli market. Both companies had been the target of global BDS boycotts.

In the early 1990s, political negotiations between the State of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) established what some commentators have referred to as a 'peace of markets' (Davidi 2000). Since then, the accelerated transformation of the West Bank's economy and the 'neoliberal restructuring of the Palestine/Israel social formation' (McMahon 2014, p. 66) has involved the advancement of capitalism and market liberalization (Thiessen 2011). For a large part of the Palestinian population, it has been the reason behind 'disappearing markets, less work, [and] less freedom' (Klein 2007, p. 433). In 2010, one quarter of Palestinians were living below the poverty line, and about the same number of people were unemployed (Palestinian Central Bureau of National Statistics 2010). Within the context of this 'capitalist peace' (Gartzke 2007), BDS emerged as a strategy that could be used to help people reclaim ownership of Palestinian economic development, both physically and symbolically.

Parallels can be witnessed between the ongoing economic transformations in the West Bank over the past two decades and experiences of the spread of global consumer culture in other parts of the world (Samara 2000; Shikaki and Springer 2015). It is not surprising, then, that researchers and critics have drawn connections between the BDS movement and international protest movements opposed to the proliferation of global capitalism (Bakan and Abu-Laban 2009; McMahon 2014), many of which incorporate the Palestinian cause into

their own discourses. Palestinians do not necessarily return the favour: often, little reference is made to the problems of global capitalism in their protests (Public Solidarity 2012).

In many neoliberal economies, consumer culture has become ‘ideologically entangled with politicised ideas of empowerment, modernity, democracy and freedom [...] an ideological battlefield’ (Bradshaw *et al.* 2013, p. 209). When consumption can operate as ‘the continuation of war by other means’ (Bradshaw *et al.* 2013, p. 209), every act of consumption can become a politicized act. As a result, people can increasingly be called upon to take action and exert political agency through their consumption practices (Bradshaw *et al.* 2013; Halkier and Holm 2008; Shah *et al.* 2007). This transformation of citizens into citizen consumers, ‘voting by the proverbial pocket books’ (Thompson 2011, p. 139), opens up the space for new forms of civic engagement and political activism.

At the same time, global consumer culture may be an appealing idea to a people who have some of the most basic rights denied to them, which can explain why Palestinians are reluctant to politicize their consumer choices (Public Solidarity 2012). Other processes also hinder the execution of political agency through the market. First, capitalism as a system encourages concealment of the politics of production, meaning that consumers are rarely encouraged to question how products have made it into their local shops (Bradshaw *et al.* 2013). Second, consumers who understand the processes of the political economy and how change could be effected through politicized purchasing patterns may be discouraged from boycotting because they do not see how individualized actions can bring about real change within a global capitalist order (Halkier and Holm 2008). While mature liberal economies have witnessed an overall rise in politicized consumption, consumers in emerging markets are often initially less aware of this new social force (Eckhardt and Mahi 2004). This could, in some way, explain the international rise in BDS participation as opposed to the low levels of domestic participation.

Existing research is ambivalent about the power of consumers and of consumer resistance to effect change. Market-based resistance may be futile or risk being co-opted back into the market, but it may also succeed if certain conditions are met (Ritson and Dobscha 1999). Simon (2011, p. 162) argues that consumer resistance needs to engage with the more formal forces of state power if secure, lasting social and political change are to be achieved: while the politics of buying can be a useful tool in consumer economies, political decisions are often still made through established governance channels. Encouraging consumers to see individual purchases as a form of political activism, according to Simon (2011, p. 162), allows consumers to express their frustrations with a particular situation, without this necessarily translating into the necessary momentum for change: ‘The politics of buying, in these cases, doesn’t solve things; more often, it covers them up with a band-aide’ ([sic] p. 162). Rather than becoming a vehicle for change, then, consumer resistance dissipates consumer frustrations without challenging established political, economic, or societal structures. The more citizens engage in potentially futile acts of consumer resistance, the less likely it is that they will see that resistance as a political engagement strategy with the genuine capacity to alter their living conditions.

One way of overcoming this difficulty embedded within political consumption – that is, the politicized deployment of consumer choice – lies in the way that consumer resistance is made public. Often, when political activism shifts towards the market, it becomes less publicly visible, at least at the outset, because individual actions in the realms of people’s everyday lives are likely to go unnoticed (Cherrier 2009; Shaw *et al.* 2006; Simon 2011). The Palestinian BDS National Committee recognizes the complexities of political consumption in globalized liberal economies. Although consumer boycott as part of the campaign is seen as an individual act, the BDS committee advises people to learn about some of their collective actions and boycotts either on the BDS website, or through local BDS coordination committees; this helps to heighten awareness and economic pressures in ways that consumers cannot achieve individually (BDS 2015b). This

publicity can, however, prove problematic for consumers who prefer their political acts to remain private rather than have them publicly communicated (Cherrier 2009).

The morality and effectiveness of boycott actions are widely debated to this day. Some of the particular challenges that the BDS consumer boycott faces are contextual and unique to the Palestinian situation. As a result of the ongoing occupation and the large availability of Israeli goods in Palestinian markets, Palestinian economic productivity has greatly declined (Qumsiyeh 2010). Critics of the BDS movement have linked participation in the boycott to expressions of anti-Semitism (Bakan and Abu-Laban 2009), and this may alienate those Palestinians who do not wish to engage in conflict dynamics that are expressed along lines of ethnicity and ethnic solidarity (Gould 2013). The ambiguity embedded within the aims of the boycott allows its critics to suggest that BDS's ultimate aim is to seek the elimination of the Jewish state (see Curtis 2012; Fishman 2012).

Some critics argue simply that 'boycotts will never create revolutions' (Gould 2013, p. 586), yet the examples set out earlier in this chapter show that consumer boycott actions have achieved some successes. Boycotts, like BDS, that have been conducted under the banner of liberation have also achieved results: historical examples include the consumer actions undertaken between the 1950s and 1994 in South Africa which, in the long term, contributed to the end of the apartheid era there (Smith 1987). The boycott of British goods in India during the Gandhian struggle for independence up until the middle of the twentieth century (Varman and Belk 2009), and the widespread boycott of foreign goods during the Republican-era in Shanghai in the early 1900s (Gerth 2004), represent further successful examples of boycotts organized in support of liberation campaigns.

Dubner (2016) argues that boycott successes usually indicate that the concern embedded in a boycott managed to tap into the wider political and social sentiments of the time. Although it is difficult to untangle the relationship between the call to boycott and the growing public discourse on Israeli-Palestinian relations, the rising visibility of the BDS boycott

and some of its successes (in the case of Veolia or G4S, for example) have shown that, at this point in time, the BDS campaign can have a direct impact. Reflecting on these issues led the Israeli documentary maker Tarachansky (2015) to refer to 2014 as ‘the year of the boycott’.

While Israeli exporters have seen a reduction in sales in international markets, particularly during the recent operation in Gaza in 2014 (Deas 2014), the domestic Palestinian market is still dominated by Israeli imports (Palestinian Central Bureau of National Statistics 2015). Dependency on the Israeli economy does not end with consumer goods, though, because many Palestinians also rely on the Israeli labour market (Hever 2009). If Palestinians are dependent on Israeli firms, not just for products, but also for their jobs, they may be uninclined to participate in any overt political action that might ultimately challenge their job security and livelihoods. People who are vulnerable in this way may be more willing to become involved in positive action, choosing to buy Palestinian goods rather than boycotting Israeli ones, for example. Consumer resistance can be expressed through anti-consumption – that is through opposition to, and a rejection of, consumption – but resistance could also involve an active consumer choice of one product over another (Chatzidakis and Lee 2012). In the case of BDS, this could lead to consumers rejecting Israeli goods, choosing Palestinian goods and services, or even establishing Palestinian structures for alternative economic development. In order for the BDS movement to reach out to those consumers who are not motivated to campaign for external change through their consumption practices, participation in the boycott could be positioned as a kind of involvement in ‘ethical citizenship missions’ (Yuksel 2013, p. 213), expected from all citizens for the public good. A modification of the boycott’s oppositional stance may have the additional effect of lowering the barriers which prevent participation by people who are fearful about boycotting because of their dependency on the Israeli economy.

Consumer resistance or resisting consumption?

The market can be understood either as a dominating structure of oppression, or as an arena for consumer empowerment. Depending on one's stance, consumer resistance might be conceptualized as an emancipatory project that requires consumers to take on significant personal cost in an attempt to be liberated from the market, or as a set of tools and tactics that can challenge the status quo and positively enhance everyday life (Izberk-Bilgin 2010).

In an emerging liberal economy like that in the West Bank, the introduction of consumer culture moves consumption beyond the point where it is merely a necessary practice and transforms it into a symbolic one. When material possessions become central to people's ambitions and aspirations, society can become stratified along a consumption spectrum. The overtly spectacularist or conspicuous consumption practised by businesses and urban elites increases, as do more traditional forms of consumption. Some of these traditional forms are motivated by fundamentalist or religious values or a rejection of the perceived threat posed by newly imported lifestyle options, often seen to be the result of Western-led and ideologically motivated globalization (Eckhardt and Mahi 2004; Ger and Belk 1996; Izberk-Bilgin 2010; Sandikci and Ger 2002). While some will benefit from these changes to economic structures, others will be excluded and experience that exclusion as a potential marginalization from their own society (Üstüner and Holt 2007). The stratification of consumption may not, in itself, explain a lack of social solidarity, and it would be a mistake to resort to idealizing the cohesion of the society that existed before market expansion, for example. Still, it is not difficult to see how a rapid growth in consumption might contribute to a sense that there is a lack of social solidarity, when lifestyle expressions are increasingly fragmented (see Sandikci and Ger 2002).

In this way, once the market becomes the established form for organizing social relations, consumers' sense of being part

of a collective declines. They may become less willing to bear significant personal costs for the sake of others with whom they now seemingly have less in common. Proponents of the 'capitalist peace' could be right that consumers in liberal market economies become less likely to seek revolt. Darweish and Rigby's fable about the mouse (money) and the wheat (revolution) warns consumers that they may find 'money has squashed a revolution and the mouse has eaten its way through the wheat' (Darweish and Rigby 2015, p. 107). A rejection of the spread of liberal marketization while under occupation may be necessary for a fairer and more equitable political development in the West Bank; however, the politics of consumption and markets, rather than their presence per se, leads to negative societal effects, such as growing social fragmentation and inequality.

Resisting consumption rather than consumer resistance may be a desirable strategy for Palestinians. However, it may also be an unlikely strategy for success (Ger and Belk 1996). Although ordinary citizens are frequently the passive recipients of the structural forces of globalization, they also have the opportunity to shape its differential effects on local consumption contexts in active ways (Dunn 2015; Ger and Belk 1996; Sandikci and Ger 2002; Scriven 2014). In contexts where stark power asymmetries exist, positive social change can result from consumers seeking incremental market adjustments (Chalamon 2010). Effective acts of citizenship, therefore, are those that successfully employ the tools made available to them via the market (Arnould 2007).

The 'conscientization' of the consumer – the development of consumer literacy – becomes a prerequisite if consumers are successfully to be called upon to exert political influence through their consumption practices (Eckhardt and Mahi 2004). Once citizens realize their roles as citizen consumers or consumer citizens more fully, they may become more willing to use, and more adept at mobilizing, their consumer choices for political ends; if this is the case, then the market has created a new resource – consumer power – which, once explored and understood, can be utilized to create far-reaching political changes.

While I am in the West Bank, I meet a Palestinian from Bethlehem who tells me that he dislikes the Wall being covered in street art and slogans. He wants the Wall to look ugly, so that it reminds the world of what it is. He does not want people to forget its true purpose. He worries that if it looks ‘cool’, it may distract people from its meaning. Similar arguments have been made at the academic level to suggest that the entrepreneurial activities of the ‘checkpoint economy’ have distracted people from the role that checkpoints play in the ongoing occupation. Yet, while the occupation continues to restrict economic growth, the repurposing of these spaces for commerce, consumption, and interaction by Palestinians themselves can also be taken as a sign that people are developing strategies to sustain their own livelihoods in spite of difficult prevailing conditions (Tawil-Souri 2009).

The greatest challenge for Palestinians may well involve finding ways to use the tools of the market to sustain economic activity under occupation without this activity leading to a continuation of the political and economic restrictions that they face. The ongoing BDS campaign is a step in this direction. The true potential of the consumer boycott will be reached if it successfully communicates to Palestinians their new role as consumers, highlighting to them the benefits, costs, and wider socio-political implications of their consumption under occupation.

Notes

- 1 One of the challenges involved in researching the everyday lives of Palestinians – and of speaking of a ‘Palestinian experience’ more widely – is that the long-term occupation has contributed to an ongoing fragmentation of the Palestinian people. Physical boundaries (e.g. checkpoints) and restrictions on movement (e.g. curfews and permits) have meant differential outcomes and lives for Palestinians, even within the occupied territory. Therefore, depending on whether or where they live in Gaza, the West Bank (further divided into zones A, B, and C) or East Jerusalem, Palestinian involvement with, and access to, their markets and consumption are restricted, but often in different ways (Shearer 2006; Tawil-Souri 2009). The politics of this fragmentation and its implications are too complex to cover in this chapter, but mean that findings from this study are not generalizable to all Palestinians living under occupation.

2 'Normalization' is a contested term: Palestinian activists and pressure groups, including the BDS campaign, have argued that the occupation should not become seen as a normal fact of life with which Palestinians must learn to cope. For more information, see Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott (2011).

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10

Religion, politics, and conflict transformation in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory.

Mohammed Abu-Nimer and Timothy Seidel

Introduction

Attending to the role of religion in peacebuilding and conflict transformation is essential, yet it can be complicated, especially in a place like Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt). In the fields of international relations (IR) and, to some extent, in peacebuilding and conflict transformation, religion has not received proper attention but has often been regarded as irrelevant, or worse as an obstruction, to an effective resolution of conflict (Appleby 2000). According to this view, a society's development into a modern state requires the relegation of religion to the periphery where politics does not *really* happen. This view relies on the illusory assumption that people and policymakers can mechanically separate or delink politics from religion; this has proven inaccurate, especially in relation to non-Western societies and their governance frameworks, particularly in areas where conflict is occurring.

The analysis in this chapter is based on the assumption that there is a link between religion, conflict, and governance. We

argue that the main challenge which faces conflicted societies, like those in Israel and the oPt, Sri Lanka, Mindanao, Yemen, Syria, and Iraq is to manage this link in a way that allow conflicts to be peacefully resolved. In order to establish the process involved in this kind of management, we must first ask the basic question: what role does religion play in conflict transformation? In this chapter, we will look at the role of religion in peacebuilding and conflict transformation practices, and we will argue that an approach which relegates religion to the periphery – especially in Israel and the oPt – is inadequate. More specifically, this chapter will explore the relationship between religion and identity, and its impact on peacebuilding contexts and processes. We will pay particular attention to the often Western- or Euro-centric – at times even Orientalist (Said 1978) – character of peacebuilding models, especially in international contexts.

The role of religion has received some attention in the literature of conflict transformation (Abu-Nimer 1996, 2003; Appleby 2000; Gopin 2000; Johnston and Sampson 1994), and there has been broad discussion of the ways in which conflict, and violent conflict in particular, have been expressed through the dis-cursive frameworks of religions, which operate through symbols, institutions, and scriptures, among other forms. The role religion plays in conflict resolution situations – through the deployment of its values, rituals, symbols, and institutions – has also been explored. Existing studies have attended to the various types of religion and religious identity adhered to and performed by conflicting parties. They have also reflected on the nature and effects of peace-builders' identities in relation to religious affiliation, and they have investigated the impact generated when appeals to religion have been used in efforts to produce transformative moments in conflict.¹

Johnston and Sampson (1994, p. 332) argue that religion should be taken seriously because it functions as a 'complicating factor' in many post-Cold War conflicts but can also create opportunities for 'spiritually motivated peacemakers'. Sampson (1997, p. 276) explores the roles of those peacemakers motivated by religious or spiritual concerns who take on roles such as advocate, intermediary, observer, or

educator. She points out that there are aspects of peace-building and conflict resolution that are best understood in religious terms, not least because they emerge from religious rather than secular contexts. In this literature, the ‘ambivalence of the sacred’ (Appleby 2000) is a term used to reflect the potential for religion to work, either as a resource for violent conflict and war, or as a tool for promoting peace and the nonviolent resolution of conflict situations. The term underscores, for some, not just the tensions between religions, but the tensions that exist within religious traditions, which can generate either constructive or destructive effects. However, as the discussion below will illustrate, these descriptions of religion leave intact problematic categories that, when interrogated, have the potential to open up productive lines of enquiry and practice.

Religion and the state: the secular bias

While some attention has been given to the role of religion in conflict transformation, it has been an understudied issue in the broader field of IR. One explanation for this can be found in Talal Asad’s discussion of religion, the secular, and secularism. Asad (2003, p. 13) argues that the liberal nation state is required to define the genuinely ‘religious’ in order to lay claim to the secular. Similarly, Cavanaugh (2009, p. 226) argues that the religious-secular distinction does not identify facts about the world but rather ‘authorizes certain arrangements of power in the modern West’. The ‘myth of religious violence’, argues Cavanaugh, replicates ‘a story of salvation from mortal peril by the creation of the secular nation- state’, and the construction of that story identifies ‘others and enemies, both internal and external, who threaten the social order and who provide the requisite villains against which the nation-state is said to protect us’ (2009, p. 226). The result, suggests Cavanaugh, is that the characterization of religion in this story ‘legitimizes the direction of the citizen’s ultimate loyalty to the nation-state and secures the nation-state’s monopoly on legitimate violence’ (2009, p. 226; see

Mavelli 2012 for a discussion on the ‘secular bias’ in IR and the possibilities of ‘postsecular’ alternatives). The problematic aspect of this assumption is clearly reflected when political arrangements, driven by secularism, are imposed on transitional societies such as those in Libya, Iraq, and the occupied Palestinian territory. The religious actors in a conflict are integral to the political and cultural structures of the societies in which they operate and to which they are theoretically subject, and so religious identity often competes with the state to gain citizens’ loyalty. In other words, the state tries but potentially fails to interpellate them as citizens (Althusser 2001), and their failure or refusal to subject themselves becomes a crisis for the state.

One might argue that peacebuilding and conflict transformation organizations which describe themselves as secular are compelled to define themselves in opposition to religious groups and religious parties. They must define the ‘religious’ in order to carry out their work as ‘secular’ organizations. It is precisely their ‘secular’ status that compels them to delineate and circumscribe the ‘religious’. This constitutive form of engagement is a tenuous process that leads to homogenized and static definitions of people and groups, and arguably it limits organizations’ ability to provide advocacy and policy guidance to all parties in a conflict. Perhaps most importantly, it grants secular institutions the power to name and (de)legitimize religious organizations and actors. For example, politicians who are mediating a conflict in Afghanistan may choose to confine their contacts to people from an exclusively secular and diplomatic set of actors; they may further choose to delimit the framework of mediation in such a way that the process and results will be open only to the small group of elite Afghan politicians whose values and belief systems correspond with a Western, secular approach. This will inevitably lead to the majority of the remaining leaders, as well as the wider community, feeling alienated from the discourse and framework of negotiation that have been established.

When religion is included in such processes, but only in ways that instrumentalize its ability to influence people, it can

have negative effects. To return to the scenario in Afghanistan, a Western or United Nations (UN) mediation process may simply inject a few prayers into the initial or final ceremonies of a process, or secure the blessing of tribal leaders when an agreement is signed, but, by placing religion at the periphery, it would effectively maintain a hard and fast distinction between religion and secularism. Instead of bolstering the mediation process, the incorporation of such instrumentalized religious gestures and symbols may actually, in the view of some local audiences, delegitimize not only the agreement itself but those religious leaders who blessed it. Religion is, in these cases, being treated as an add-on to a fundamentally secular process rather than as something to be taken seriously on its own terms. This kind of approach certainly informed US policy on many occasions when the United States engaged with the councils of indigenous Afghan tribes. While religion was completely ignored in the early stages of the war, military commanders and politicians gradually realized that they needed tribal leaders and their cultural structures if they wanted to certify and legitimize any new policy or reality on the ground. Politicians began to utilize traditional cultural structures like the Loya Jirga – grand assemblies for regional and national decision-making – in their attempts to market new policies.²

If we accept the critique of existing categories and concepts of religion and religious identity, then we must recognize the implications it has for political and civil society initiatives that are concerned with peacebuilding, conflict transformation, and international relations. From this new viewpoint, the processes of peacebuilding and conflict transformation intervention will begin to look different. Religious identities will become central rather than peripheral to models of conflict transformation and public diplomacy which have previously marginalized them; furthermore, those models will be constructed in such a way that they privilege the parties involved in any conflict, and engage with their values, instead of imposing structures and values that come from other cultures and systems of belief.

Why and how religion matters: power and politics

Our overview has demonstrated the critical importance of giving consideration to religion, whether in international relations or conflict transformation, but acceptance of this principle does not necessarily translate into better practice. It matters exactly how we consider religion. For example, in our discussions and conceptions of peacebuilding and conflict transformation, how do binaries that consist of religion and secularism present themselves? And how do they contribute to or restrict our ability to imagine and (de)legitimize new possibilities? A focus on these questions might help to combat the impulse in discussions of this kind to replicate simple binaries between religion and secularism. It can be easy to rely on assumptions and discursive conventions which cast ‘religiousness’, and its perceived irrationality, as the other of the ‘political’, which retains its association with reason and the secular – implicitly Western – realm where the ‘political’ is assumed to have operated in real terms throughout history. This assumption persists in the public diplomacy and peace work undertaken by many European government organizations and agencies: progress in empowering secular civil society in Middle Eastern and Muslim societies is often pursued as a criterion for success, while support for local or regional religious associations and organizations is rarely considered as an option. In fact, important institutions such as the United Nations, the European Union, the United States Agency of International Development (USAID), the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development, and Germany’s *Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit* have only recently begun exploring systematic ways to engage with faith-based organizations (Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development 2016).

This is a critical reason why Jabri (2006) takes the field of conflict resolution to task for what she feels is its tendency to depoliticize conflict. She holds that the elements of conflict resolution, in its conventional form, are subject to controversy

and hence ‘steeped in political contestation’ (Jabri 2006, p. 69). She makes the case for bringing politics (and ethics) back into our thinking about conflict resolution and change and demonstrates that ‘agency (including that of the conflict analyst) cannot be conceptualised, nor even conceived, without at the same time recognising that agency is implicated in the structural continuities of social and political life, continuities that are both discursive and institutional’ (Jabri 2006, p. 70).

When US diplomats intervened in the political dynamics of the Arab Spring, or when international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) implemented a conflict resolution project in such a context, they ran into direct contradictions with local cultural and religious agencies because their supposedly neutral conflict resolution strategies were understood to be culturally specific. In fact, the nature of international interventions should be shaped by recognition of these local, context-specific realities. One of the ways this can be made to happen, Jabri observes, is when the complexity of conflict and its resolutions are reduced to the interpersonal. A focus on the dynamics of the interpersonal has its attractions and even benefits in that it can help people to focus on the more manageable elements of a conflict, but it can also have a dehistoricizing effect because it can end up ‘dislocating it from its specificities in time and place’ (Jabri 2006, p. 71). This choice, like other choices and factors which set the parameters for conflict resolution engagements, is shaped by the complex power relations and histories that inform a conflict situation, as Jabri astutely observes:

The institutions of modern existence – the state and the international political economy – have profound implications for the choices available to parties involved in conflict just as they do in determining not just the capacities of potential third parties but the discourses they draw upon in conceptualising a conflict, the grievances involved and the outcomes envisaged.

(Jabri 2006, p. 71)

In the sections that follow, we argue that attention to religion not only opens up productive lines of enquiry, but also serves to destabilize dominant modes of peacebuilding and conflict transformation practice. It can challenge the peacebuilder, in a

productive sense, to address and interrogate the ways in which religion and identity are reified in the processes at hand, and it can demonstrate how these categories produce limitations for the peacebuilder (Seidel 2012).

A consideration of this problematic raises questions about the relationships between religion and the state. Attention to religion destabilizes the state-centric approach to conflict transformation, and raises several significant possibilities, particularly in relation to efforts to uncover the effects that power has in conflict situations. For example, appeals to religion have the potential to either ignore and obfuscate, or uncover and challenge, power in conflict, and they can help to identify and locate power in forms where it is expressed by agents other than the state (Abu-Nimer 2001).

Religion, peacebuilding, and conflict transformation in Israel and the oPt

In this next section, we delve further into this discussion about religion in order to explore situations in which these concepts and categories have had a particular impact on peacebuilding and conflict transformation practices in Israel and the oPt. The cases we study help us to begin to identify some of the categorical instabilities implicit in modernist discourse which, if investigated further, can lead to a deeper interrogation of the secular-religious distinction. The case studies that follow illustrate the range of roles that religious agencies can play in a deep-rooted conflict situation.³

Rabbis for Human Rights

In Israel, Rabbis for Human Rights (RHR) is one group that has conducted many peace activities with a view to translating religious faith into action. This grassroots organization was founded in 1988

in response to serious abuses of human rights by the Israeli military authorities in the suppression of the Intifada. The indifference of much of the country's religious leadership and religiously identified citizenry to the suffering of innocent people seen as the enemy was a cause of concern to Rabbis for Human Rights organizers.

(Hanan 2003)

The group represents over one hundred Jewish rabbis and rabbinical students from Orthodox, Reform, Conservative, and Constructionist strands of Judaism. It is probably one of the most politically active religious peace groups in Israel. RHR operates from a Jewish moral principle which holds that every human being is created in the divine image. Its members are Israeli citizens and have no affiliation with any political ideology or party. They are involved in ecumenical dialogue and educational activities, and they also deal with violations of the human rights of Israeli Arabs and West Bank Palestinians.

This solidarity group does not aim to resolve or even explore theological differences between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, nor is it focused on the typical issues that Jewish rabbis in Israel generally debate or address, such as kosher dietary laws, religious education, or Sabbath observance. As a mono-religious group devoted to action and solidarity, it emphasizes Jewish religious opposition to the occupation. It is unique among interfaith and faith-based peace groups in that its agenda includes participation in acts of solidarity alongside underrepresented groups which make a stand against injustice. Its members use a wide variety of strategies and have, for example, protested against Palestinian home demolitions by Israeli authorities, opposed and challenged the siege of Palestinian villages, attempted to penetrate curfews, supported Jahalin Bedouin people uprooted from their traditional grazing land, lobbied for the rights of foreign workers, protested against government policy and its impact on poor communities, and made hospital visits to the injured on both sides of the conflict, a move that has not been made by any other group in Israel or the oPt.

An active member of the group compares his RHR work with other inter-religious peace efforts:

When I was young and participated in interreligious encounters, I was very optimistic, but now when I am older and more a veteran in this field, I do not go to encounters with such high expectations. My work is more on human rights work. I bring volunteers and activists to Bedouin communities. The situation is very difficult and I bring people to see the reality and show them the picture to realize that they can and need to do something. That encounter is not made for the Bedouin or the Jewish visitors to know the family and the personal life of the Jew who comes, but to enter and leave with more realization of the situation.

(Milgrom 2005)

One of the major political activities that RHR has taken on involves solidarity and action to protect Palestinian farmers during the olive harvest. As a form of collective punishment, the Israeli government often prohibits or threatens farmers from gathering their harvest; in addition, some Jewish settlers destroy these crops or actually uproot trees and sell them in Israel. In late 2015, during the olive harvest season, a masked Israeli settler was caught on video attacking Rabbi Arik Ascherman with a knife as Ascherman, who co-founded RHR, was joining an annual olive harvest in the West Bank village of Awarta outside of Nablus. The village's olive groves are located inside a closed military zone, and Rabbi Ascherman's group had been accompanying Palestinian farmers to the area daily during the three-month autumn harvest season (Deger 2015).

Some of the most confrontational solidarity work that RHR has been involved in has seen its members challenging the Israeli army's efforts to cut off entire villages with huge trenches and boulders. Rabbi Ascherman describes his personal decision to challenge this policy of collective punishment. In his view, his actions, which are interpreted by the army as political and confrontational, simply represent the act of living out the human rights creed which he understands to be at the core of his religious faith and practice:

I asked myself, what can I do so that if, one day, my infant daughter asks me what I did in these terrible times, I could answer her without shame. RHR decided to move from protest to nonviolent resistance, removing mounds of earth and filling in ditches near Palestinian villages, like Rantis. I was arrested close to ten times, interrogated but never jailed. But the army grew harsher in clamping down on dissidents, and our Palestinian partners were getting injured, so we decided to curtail these activities so as not to injure them. People called

us ‘radicals,’ but most of us felt like middle-of-the-road citizens who were simply taking our religious values to their logical conclusion.

(Dina 2004)

Another aspect of RHR’s work involves the Interreligious Coordinating Council of Israel (ICCI). Founded in 1991 by Rabbi Dr. Ronald Kronish, ICCI describes its mission as being to harness the teachings and values of the three Abrahamic faiths and transform religion’s role from a force of division and extremism into a source of reconciliation, coexistence, and understanding for the leaders and the followers of these religions in Israel and the wider region (RHR 2016). This grassroots work of interreligious dialogue and education has four major elements. The first involves personal interaction, with participants getting to know each other as human beings and discussing personal identities in group situations. The second aspect involves interreligious, text-based learning whereby texts are chosen from the sacred canons of each religion and used for teaching in a way that can be readily understood and appreciated by ‘the other side’. Third is the discussion of the conflict’s core issues in an open and honest way with facilitators present. Finally, the ICCI’s work also involves different faith groups taking action, either separately or together. This kind of activity might include simple gestures such as visiting the sick or elderly, or more political actions; in either circumstance, the important commitment here involves participants spreading the message about cooperation when they return to their own communities to produce a ‘multiplier effect’ (RHR 2016).

We should note that efforts to produce dialogue in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory proliferated during the Oslo era and continue into the present. While the Interreligious Coordinating Council of Israel offers one example of this from a faith perspective, it is nonetheless vulnerable to the same critiques that are levelled at other initiatives based on dialogue. In particular, such initiatives are condemned for their inattention to the power asymmetries that differentiate their Palestinian and Israeli participants; they are also criticized for their failure to fully acknowledge the lived experiences of Palestinians under military occupation and for their use of

dialogue to harmonize or normalize relationships which form part of an oppressive status quo that requires positive change (Nader 1991). These themes of liberation and justice, while found in some aspects of Rabbis for Human Rights work such as Ascherman's nonviolent direct action, can be understood to be far more critical components of those peace and conflict transformation processes participated in by active Palestinian, Christian, and Muslim groups.

Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center and 'Christ at the Checkpoint'

Sabeel is an ecumenical grassroots liberation theology movement which is coordinated by Palestinian Christians. Inspired by the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, Sabeel's liberation theology seeks to deepen the faith of Palestinian Christians, promote unity among them, and lead them to social action (Sabeel 2016). It is an organization that focuses on 'advocacy for liberation' and it generates activities that confront negative mythical perceptions that are generally accepted as true by Israeli and American audiences. These myths, which reinforce the conflict's dynamics, include myths about Palestinians in general, and more specific stereotypes, like the idea that Christians are not Palestinians or Arabs. Sabeel has successfully organized dozens of nonviolent faith-based conferences in the United States and elsewhere. Mostly hosted by local churches, these three-day events have involved thousands of participants and mixed panels of American Jews, Palestinians, Israelis, and American Christians who share their experiences of the situation in Israel and the oPt. At a Friends of Sabeel North America conference in Denver, Colorado, a Christian woman was in tears when she testified in front of a panel on the conditions in refugee camps: 'I did not know this situation existed among Palestinians. I feel that as a Christian I have failed to walk the path of Christ if I do not advocate and support these refugees in Bethlehem'.⁴

Utilizing the values of solidarity, justice, and unity, Sabeel conducts several unique ecumenical activities, one of which

combines a day of bible readings, prayer, and fasting with a service in one of the local churches. Also, during Ramadan, Sabeel participates in a joint Iftar with Muslims, joining them to break their fast in a gesture that encourages interfaith unity among Palestinians of all faiths. In another type of nonviolent action, Sabeel organizes visits to Palestinian communities isolated by the occupation to show solidarity with their priests and bear witness to their struggles.

Sabeel's youth group has also participated in the planting of olive trees and olive-picking. This type of nonviolent direct action has become one of the greatest symbols of solidarity with Palestinians in the West Bank who cannot access their land because of Israeli checkpoints, settlements, and the presence of the Separation Wall. In 2009, Sabeel's youth programme organized an olive-tree-planting operation to support a Muslim farmer in Beit Ijza, West Bank, whose access to his land was limited because of a settlement built between his land and the village. Around thirty-six young people, made up of participants in Sabeel's youth group and Israeli Jewish peace activists, climbed up the mountainous road to the farm and successfully planted trees (Sabeel 2009).

Another example of Palestinian Christian engagement and efforts at peace-building and conflict transformation can be found in the 'Christ at the Checkpoint' conference series. Begun at Bethlehem Bible College in 2010, its mission is 'to challenge Evangelicals to take responsibility to help resolve the conflicts in Israel-Palestine by engaging with the teaching of Jesus on the Kingdom of God' (Christ at the Checkpoint 2016a). This Palestinian Christian initiative has a very specific goal in that it seeks to engage and change opinions among Evangelical Christians in the West. Evangelical movements are known for their theological alignment with Christian Zionism, and this tends to generate strong support for the State of Israel among their members.⁵ According to the conference organizers, the four main objectives of the Christ at the Checkpoint conferences are to:

1. Empower and encourage the Palestinian church role in achieving peace, through building trust and respect

- between the peoples of the land, removing hatred, practicing tolerance and acceptance, and being able to appreciate and understand all people who share this land.
2. Discuss the realities of the injustices in the Palestinian territories, and create awareness of the obstacles to reconciliation and peace.
 3. Create a platform for serious engagement with Christian Zionism and an open forum for ongoing dialogue between all positions within the evangelical theological spectrum.
 4. Motivate participants to become advocates for the reconciliation work of the church in Israel/Palestine, and its ramifications for the Middle East and the world.

(Christ at the Checkpoint 2016a)

A close examination of this Christ at the Checkpoint manifesto reveals a strong rootedness in faith identity and action: evangelicals are called on to ‘reclaim the prophetic role in bringing peace, justice and reconciliation in Palestine and Israel’ (Christ at the Checkpoint 2016b). The manifesto also shows a commitment to tackling ‘real injustices taking place in the Palestinian territories’ and it prioritizes equality issues in order to ‘respect the equity and rights of Israeli and Palestinian communities’ (Christ at the Checkpoint 2016b). Peacebuilding and the nonviolent transformation of conflict are endorsed and participants are reminded that ‘all forms of violence must be refuted unequivocally [... because] any challenge to the injustices taking place in the Holy Land must be done in Christian love’ (Christ at the Checkpoint 2016b).

Over the years, RHR and Sabeel, and more recently the Christ at the Checkpoint initiative, have mainly devised activities to target their own constituencies and have occasionally joined in with each other’s nonviolent direct action activities. Their strategy has been to invoke the theological beliefs and norms of their faith group in support of liberation, in Sabeel’s case, and human rights protection, in the case of RHR. Nevertheless, it is clear that these organizations and initiatives offer a unique and much-needed paradigm for

secular Israeli and Palestinian peace activists, who tend to avoid faith-based peace and dialogue activities.

The campaign to protect Al-Aqsa Mosque

In light of these two examples of the liberation theology model of religious peacebuilding, a question is often raised about whether there exists a Muslim faith-based organization that supports nonviolent direct action and liberation theology. There is no doubt that such an entity is needed and might have an important space to claim. However, it must be noted that much Muslim faith-based resistance activity is taking place through individual mosques and religious leaders who participate in and organize protests, strikes, petitions, and other activities. Many of these religious leaders are also members of other local resistance groups such as the various committees that coordinate protests against the Wall or offer protection to agricultural workers during the olive harvest season. A good example of a growing, popular, nonviolent, direct action movement is the Al-Aqsa Mosque Protection Committee led by Sheikh Raed Salah from the city of Umm al-Fahm.

The sheikh is the leader of the northern faction of the Islamic Movement in Israel. He and his movement have been campaigning to protect the Al-Aqsa Mosque from right-wing Jewish religious fundamentalist groups which have attempted on several occasions to enter the site. Work also goes towards protecting the mosque from any Israeli policy that would change the mosque's boundaries and structure. The movement has managed to organize weekly trips for Palestinian Muslims from the Galilee triangle and al Naqab. People who sign up for these trips take the bus and pray in the Jerusalem mosque as a form of solidarity and as an expression of their stand against the Israeli policy of expansion and the violation of Islamic heritage in Jerusalem.

An Israeli journalist writing in 2007 explained that Sheikh Salah's movement had mainly mobilized Palestinian Muslims in Israel:

Since his release from prison two years ago, Sheikh Salah has been steadily building a name for himself as a leader for all Muslims, this despite the fact that he lives in Israel. By focusing on social issues he has won over people from the bottom up, though his followers say his humbleness, manners and simple attire also helped establish his persona as a leader. He is a daily newsmaker in the Arab media and for now, his star seems to only be rising.

(Nahmias 2007)

Since then, Salah's popularity and capacity to mobilize his followers has grown tremendously. He has been imprisoned twice by Israeli security forces but was released without any negative impact on the movement he coordinates. On the contrary, he gained more support from the various political factions: every leader among the Palestinians in Israel visited and paid respects to the sheikh when he was released from his last imprisonment in December 2010. On the day of his release, the movement gathered over 30,000 followers to express their support and renew their commitment to the cause of protecting the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Sheikh Salah has also initiated a campaign to restore and reclaim all of the Muslim mosques and cemeteries which were inside Israel's boundaries in 1948 and have since been vandalized or destroyed by the Israeli government or public. Another unique form of direct nonviolent action initiated by the movement – and one that expresses its resistance to the Israeli policy that restricts economic aid and donations to the mosque – is the 'tin can' donation campaign. Each member takes responsibility for filling one or more 'tin cans' with the intention being to dedicate the proceeds to Al-Aqsa. The impact of this work is multiplied when all of the cans are opened in one ceremony or celebration which is attended by tens of thousands of people in the mosque itself.

When Sheikh Salah's speeches are analysed, it becomes clear that he has managed to construct a discourse of nonviolent resistance for Palestinians in Israel which is rooted in the Qur'an and the Hadith. He has also personally modelled the types of activities that can be orchestrated to resist, in nonviolent fashion, the Israeli occupation in the West Bank and the policies of discrimination that affect the Palestinians in Israel. In a recent interview on Al-Jazeera, a week after his release from four months in solitary confinement, Sheikh

Salah emphasized that his strong faith is the main source of his steadfastness, and he reiterated his belief that he has a calling to act nonviolently against Israeli policies both in the State of Israel and the West Bank.

Although Sheikh Salah's movement has boycotted the Israeli elections on various occasions, today it stands as one of the strongest forces among Palestinians in Israel. His tactics and strategies of nonviolent resistance are growing and improving, and it is obvious that the Israeli security forces are having difficulty containing his influence. This reality was clearly reflected during the Gaza flotilla incident in December 2009 when mere rumours about his death on board the ship sent thousands into the streets in protest. The capacity of this Islamic nonviolent movement in Israel will certainly grow and come into confrontation with Israeli security forces if the current policies of discrimination, and the alienation of Palestinian citizens of Israel, continue.

In the wake of escalating violence in and around Jerusalem in late 2015, Sheikh Salah described the Islamic Movement's response in terms of peaceful presence, worship, and prayer:

Our plans are the same as before. We will continue to defend al-Aqsa Mosque through our presence there, and by continuing to pray there. We also encourage Palestinians everywhere to worship in it and visit it. Our work is lawful and peaceful because we are only exercising our right to worship freely in our own holy places.

(Younes 2015)

In November 2015, Sheikh Salah was sentenced to eleven months in prison for 'incitement', and the northern branch of the Islamic Movement was shut down by the Israeli government.

Conclusion

Unfortunately, policymakers, and especially those who operate outside of the region, rarely engage in work with the kinds of religious agencies we have discussed here, and so they fail to incorporate, or find genuine ways to manage, the role of

religious identity in the conflict. In the eight years of formal shuttle diplomacy and direct negotiation that took place from 2008 to 2016 as part of a US-led peace initiative, Israeli and Palestinian religious agencies were kept completely outside the process.

Through our exploration of a number of community-based peacebuilding and nonviolent resistance case studies, we have attempted to illustrate the overlapping and shifting relationships that constitute religious identity, peace-building, and conflict transformation in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory. This has allowed us to show that ‘Muslim’, ‘Christian’, ‘religious’, and ‘secular’ categories are products of contingent and fluid relationships, rather than static identities. While we have examined how distinctions such as the ‘religious-secular’ divide can be destabilized if and when the voices we have heard win a wider audience, it is important to note that approaches to religious identity remain diverse and complex.

Perhaps one of the most important points to consider is that identities are never static, but are instead dynamic, contingent, and always under construction and negotiation. As Weaver (2007a, p. 100) explains: ‘Being ‘Christian’ in the Middle East – or anywhere in the world [...] does not exhaust one’s identity: national identities, regional identities, educational and class factors, all shape people’s understanding of who they are. How individuals and groups negotiate these multiple strands of identity vary dramatically across time and place’. The point here is not to erase differences between religious and political agencies in terms of the expectations we should have of them, but to problematize our understanding of seemingly common-sense distinctions and how they play out in conflict situations which are themselves more complex than they are often seen to be.

There are several additional implications to be drawn from this consideration of the role of religion in Israeli and Palestinian conflict transformation. An obvious one is the critical importance of recognizing and acknowledging cultural and religious differences among conflicting parties. As we showed above, this approach also aids us in identifying and

interrogating the state-centric biases that persist in international conflict resolution mechanisms. A realpolitik that maintains a state-to-state focus is inadequate because it neglects issues that pertain to culture and religion. International power politics have an effect on local and regional cultural identities and their manifestation, and they can help to shape conflict dynamics by contributing to either conflict escalation or de-escalation, the evaluation of peacebuilding outcomes, or the design and credibility of peace intervention models.

Making this argument is not simply an intellectual exercise. It carries important implications because to ignore this history is to obscure the contradictions inherent in secular states and organizations that must circumscribe the 'religious' in order to define themselves as 'secular'. That process enables self-described secular institutions to ascribe meaning and legitimacy to the particular forms of religiosity they sanction, and this becomes especially important when we consider that relief and development organizations enjoy financial and political support from powerful institutions such as the US government or the World Bank only if and when those organizations choose to legitimize them through the granting of aid. While working to gain their recognition might be productive, an alternative option would involve striving to dissolve secular-religious schisms to expose previously unimagined possibilities for life-giving interventions and solidarities that are foreclosed by an allegiance to liberal notions of secularism.

There are a growing number of interreligious organizations and initiatives that operate in the Israeli-Palestinian context, but their activities focus mainly on interfaith dialogue at the grassroots level of participation. Although their contribution to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process is symbolic, it is important to have such religious peace actors as a part of the overall networks for peace in the region. Their importance stems from the fact that the mere existence of their organizations and activities presents a counter-narrative to the typical conflict discourse which asserts that religion is only a source of violence and that no resolution to this conflict is

possible without the defeat of one faith group. Thus, the Israeli and Palestinian religious discourse of nonviolence and conflict transformation is essential to any efforts to counter cultures of violence.

Finally, in the context of relations between Israel and the Palestinian people, there is no way around religious peacebuilding. Religious actors from all communities who hold leadership roles have voiced their desire to take an active role in formal and informal conflict transformation efforts. In this context, any social or political change initiative that seeks to be effective and gain popular support must speak to religious identity; otherwise, it will lack public credibility. This does not mean that effective peace and conflict transformation processes have to be exclusively led by religious figures or leaders, but it does mean that formal political leaders and peacebuilding actors should look for creative ways to incorporate the voices of religious constituencies into conflict transformation processes.

Notes

- 1 The increased attention to the role of religion in international relations is also reflected in the creation of a number of international organizations such as the King Abdullah Center for Intercultural and Interreligious Dialogue (KAICIID), which focuses on closing the gap between religious leaders and institutions and policymakers. See KAICIID (2016).
- 2 For example, the crucial decision about the presence of US military forces in Afghanistan was debated in this tribal cultural structure. See Associated Press (2013).
- 3 The failure of distinctions between ‘the religious’ and ‘the secular’ in relation to identity and the motivations behind peacebuilding and conflict transformation can be found in the concept and practice of *sabr* (‘patience’) and *sumud* (‘steadfastness’) which illustrate the existence of an indigenous and localized framework of religious and interreligious peace work for both Palestinian Muslims and Christians. For more on a Muslim perspective, see Abu-Nimer (2003, 2004). For a Palestinian Christian perspective see Ateek (1989, 2008) and Zaru (2008).
- 4 Quote taken from a workshop at the Friends of Sabeel North America conference ‘Ending the Silence, Working for a Just Peace in Palestine and Israel’, Denver, Colorado, October 21–22, 2005.

5 For more on Christian Zionism see Ateek *et al.* (2005) and Weaver (2005, 2007b). For more on Evangelical Christian engagement with Islam, see Abu-Nimer and Augsburg (2009).

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11

Occupied experiences

Displays of alternative resistance in works by Palestinian and Jewish Israeli artists

Eser Selen

Introduction

In this chapter, I perform a critical analysis of the transformative potential of works of contemporary art in the context of the long-standing conflict between Jewish Israelis and Palestinians.¹ My aim is to contribute to discourses of conflict transformation by showing how the work of Jewish Israeli and Palestinian artists offers forms of alternative resistance to the occupation. My primary focus will be on seeking to understand how the conflict between Jewish Israelis and Palestinians has affected the works of artists within these communities, and how their creations can help to transform the conflict. In order to create the context for this discussion, it will be necessary to evaluate the notion that contemporary art can serve as a means of alternative resistance through its engagement with the discourses of conflict transformation and strategies of peacebuilding.

Following a brief overview of the history of the occupation, a number of works will be assessed with reference to the literature of resistance studies: these will include Khaled Jarrar's *Whole in the Wall* (2013) and *Live and Work in Palestine* (2011); Joshua Neustein's *Inverse Israel* (1991) and

Marionette Map (2005); Basma Alsharif's *Home Movies Gaza* (2013) and *Farther Than the Eye Can See* (2012); and Ohad Meromi's *Who Owns the World?* (2008a) and *The Exception and the Rule* (2007). This study will pay particular attention to art produced by Palestinians because there is a significant gap in the academic literature about the transformative potential of the contemporary art they present in the context of their ongoing conflict. It is worth noting, however, that the discussion will not dichotomize art produced within different communities, or set up simplistic binary contrasts between Jewish Israeli and Palestinian artists. Instead, the discussion will juxtapose artists in a complementary manner and consider, side by side, their communications and effects.

Each artist in this study has had works displayed in significant art spaces around the world. The Palestinian artists featured here have followed in the footsteps of predecessors such as Mona Hatoum, Laila Shawa, and Bashir Makhoul, who have each been on the radar of the global contemporary art scene for more than three decades and have exhibited in numerous international art galleries. Palestinian artists from this earlier generation have participated in significant prestigious contemporary art events such as the Venice Biennale, the Istanbul Biennale, the Berlin Biennale, and the Documenta Exhibition in Kassel, Germany, to name just a few. Their groundbreaking work has ensured that the term 'Palestinian' has been re-established as having associations with a strong, geographical, cultural, and national identity. Jarrar and Alsharif are now gaining a share of this visibility in contemporary art circles, and, as their reputations grow, a broader range of Palestinian narratives that feature new, multifaceted, and cross-generational storylines are gaining exposure.

Among the contemporary Israeli artists who have enjoyed established art careers and participated in numerous exhibitions across the globe, Joshua Neustein and Ohad Meromi produce work of particular significance. These artists, like their Palestinian counterparts, help to inform contemporary art audiences about the conflict through their active acknowledgement of the occupation of Palestinian land.

They also use artistic representation to provide critical reflection on the historical and cultural dynamics of the ongoing conflict.

Conflict transformation through representation and resistance

With its roots in the nineteenth century, the ongoing conflict between Jewish Israelis and Palestinians renders human lives dispensable on both sides. Enduring violence and continual fear and terror have become normal life experiences. The conflict is fuelled by the continuing effects and continued cultural resonance of the Nakba (Pappé 2011, p. 14). The term *Nakba*, meaning ‘disaster’ or ‘catastrophe’ in Arabic, refers to the Palestinian exodus which involved approximately 726,000 Palestinian Arabs fleeing, or being forcibly expelled from, their homes during the civil war in Mandatory Palestine (1947–1948) and the first Arab-Israeli War (1948). The inability of these refugees to return to their homes and land, and the unending occupation of Palestinian territory following the subsequent 1967 war, triggered two prominent uprisings, known as the first and second *intifadas*, in 1987 and 2000 (Makhoul 2012, p. 13). The second *intifada* was particularly destructive in nature and was met with a brutal response by the Israeli authorities. Their actions included the construction of the Separation Wall which began in 2002. The ever-expanding Wall has functioned to separate geographies, nations, and cultures, while also co-opting and isolating Palestinian lands on the borders of the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt). The populations of a large number of communities in the oPt find themselves increasingly ghettoized and restricted by the Wall, with communication, travel, identification documents, and access to electricity and water remaining under the control of the Israeli state.

A brief survey of Palestinian history confirms the Nakba as a hugely significant event, and every cultural production from, or related to, the oPt explores its significance, and the issues it

raises, in the form of iconic representations such as ‘the black, white, red and green colors of the Palestinian flag; a dove; a *kuffiyeh*; the Dome of the Rock; referring to *al-Nakba* (the 1948 catastrophe), to sieges, checkpoints, or the ugliness of camps’ (Tawil-Souri 2011, p. 468). In their introduction to *The Origins of Palestinian Art*, Bashir Makhoul and Gordon Hon (2013) designate the Nakba as a point of departure when they assess what gets to count as contemporary. While Makhoul and Hon (2013, pp. 1–2) problematize the notion that there can be true ‘origins’ or ‘beginnings’, they acknowledge that, in relation to contemporary Palestinian art, ideas about origin are ‘bound up in the issues of national identity and the trauma of the Nakba’. They argue that the Nakba can be regarded as the beginning of the conflict’s current state of affairs and so becomes a recurrent theme throughout Palestinian art more broadly. Moreover, highly significant moments in the conflict, such as the first and second *intifadas* and the predicaments surrounding the 1993 Oslo Accords, are often filtered, in artistic works, through interpretations of the Nakba experience.

Makhoul and Hon choose to illuminate the conflict between Palestinians and Jewish Israelis through the lens of art history and declare that the manner in which Palestinian art is narrated matters. Referring to the research of historians such as Kamal Boullata and Gannit Ankori, who highlight the development of Palestinian art before 1948, they declare that the Nakba ‘has inevitably become the most significant historical event because of its effects on the conditions for the production and dissemination of art and as a constant, explicit and implicit preoccupation as subject matter’ (Makhoul and Hon 2013, p. 8). They argue that much of the ‘cultural development since the Nakba [...] could be described as *non-linear* and *giving rise to a multi-levelled coherence of dispersion*, which would also make it a *beginning*’ (Makhoul and Hon 2013, p. 9). The ‘beginning’ Makhoul and Hon discern in contemporary Palestinian art is, I will argue, also the beginning of an alternative form of Palestinian resistance through art-making.

After the Nakba, Palestinians have responded to Israeli power and occupation of Palestinian land in a number of ways

other than through rebellion. The first and second *intifadas* provided many Palestinians with strong evidence that armed rebellion could not contribute to the termination of the occupation. Resistance has shifted, accordingly, in multiple directions, and has taken many diverse forms. At the personal level, small acts of everyday resistance are undertaken by Palestinian people residing in the oPt, and they have been significant in shaping contemporary life. One example that reflects the nature of everyday resistance occurred in the summer of 2013 when Palestinians showed their solidarity with Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons who were on hunger strike by bearing witness – in complete silence – to the sit-ins held at tents pitched around the town centres in the oPt. Although everyday resistance does not create a sea change, it can work as a mundane activity, and sometimes as a ritual, that proves vital for the sustainability of everyday life; it also provides a source of normalcy in a conflict situation. Everyday resistance has the potential to foster local agency and to bind a community in solidarity. It may also have influence in the sense that it can enable peacebuilding during times of conflict de-escalation or escalation. However, Galvanek (2013, p. 13) argues that this type of resistance is limited in scope because it ‘is carried out by generally powerless groups and individuals, which intrinsically limits the approaches and methods of resistance employed’.

Galvanek (2013, p. 12) endorses Vinthagen and Lilja’s (2006) account of ‘resistance’ when she notes that it ‘can be organised or spontaneous, individual or collective, violent or nonviolent’. Observing that ‘[o]ne may associate resistance with armed guerrilla movements or, conversely, with the numerous and creative forms of nonviolent resistance’, Galvanek points out that ‘[s]trategies of resistance will vary greatly depending on who the resister is, what they are resisting, and the methods of their resistance’ (2013). She suggests that attention needs to be paid to the significance of the form of a resistance narrative, to its context, and its relationships with cultural difference and political geography. Galvanek’s concept of resistance is, then, highly useful in an analysis of works produced by Palestinian and Israeli artists

which can be seen to function as ‘creative forms’ of alternative resistance.

Many Palestinian artists’ productions are the medium through which they resist the ongoing occupation and the consequences of the Nakba. As they engage with the Nakba and the occupation through their art, the work serves as a form of empowerment, peacebuilding, and civil resistance. In this way, artists function as people who resist and contest the historical, cultural, and geographical impacts of Israel’s occupation. They exert their influence through artistic productions in which they employ their visual methods to create representations of and expand the overarching narratives about conflict, as well as cite, contribute to, and challenge its discursive and visual conventions. These works are then displayed in a variety of contexts to a wide audience of people who may not be aware of the dynamics of the conflict between Jewish Israelis and Palestinians.

In their essay on conflict resolution in art and popular culture, Ramsbotham *et al.* (2011) describe the role that art has played in empowerment and civil resistance movements. They draw examples from music and theatre, and claim that these forms have been used for building peace and motivating resistance across a range of geographies. They suggest that the exploration of feelings and the transformation of perception can be observed ‘just as powerfully in the arts in general’ (Ramsbotham *et al.* 2011, p. 5), and that this has particular value in relation to conflict situations. They argue that the powerful ways in which artwork speaks to populations in conflict represent mainly ‘underutilized reservoirs and motivators for conflict resolution’ (Ramsbotham *et al.* 2011, p. 349). Referring to the works of radical theatre theorists and writers such as Augusto Boal (2005) and Paulo Freire (1996), they suggest that activist theatre – also known as ‘theatre from below’ – draws its success and sustainability from its focus on real-life situations, lives, and settings which help their messages to resonate in the minds of audiences with enhanced clarity (Ramsbotham *et al.* 2011, p. 351).

Similar arguments have emerged concerning projects that have incorporated these ideas into practical projects. Sonja

Kuftinec and Chen Alon undertook an educational project in 1996 which involved students and prisoners, working together over a nine-month period and staging a collective performance entitled 'Who is a Hero?' at the Ma'asiyahu prison, Israel (Kuftinec and Alon 2007, p. 275). In this project, Kuftinec and Alon were investigating the 'complex dynamics of the prison-political system' and, working through Tel Aviv University's Community Theatre programme. They mobilized Jewish Israeli students (the majority of whom were women), and male prisoners (many of whom were Arab-Israeli) as representatives of 'two more or less homogenous groups that represent polarized social sub-cultures' (Kuftinec and Alon 2007, p. 275). According to the authors, '[t]he students represent the "normative society" to which the prisoners will return' after release from prison (Kuftinec and Alon 2007, p. 275). Both students and prisoners were trained together to act as facilitators of understanding and awareness, and these skills were fostered through theatre methods and productive encounters between students and prisoners in the performance. Kuftinec and Alon showcased and evaluated the project and the performance in their article entitled 'Prose and cons: Theatrical encounters with students and prisoners in Ma'asiyahu, Israel' (2007). They claimed that their framework originated from 'the question of social justice in Israel' and ended with a suggestion that the State of Israel should 'grapple with the political reality of occupation and the proposition that the rule of law of the "only democracy in the Middle East" has transformed into what Giorgio Agamben (2005) has described as a state of exception' (Kuftinec and Alon 2007, p. 289).

Drawing heavily on the work of influential theatre writers and practitioners such as Martin Buber, Carl Rogers, and Augusto Boal, Kuftinec and Alon argued that their project provided a 'space [that] allows for deeper knowledge of oneself and one's subject position in relation to society' (Kuftinec and Alon 2007, p. 278) and contained 'both the representation of reality and the reality of the representation' (Kuftinec and Alon 2007, p. 283). Boal believes that on the theatrical stage 'one can rehearse alternative modes of social relations and re-invent the human being' (Boal 2005, p. 110), and Kuftinec and Alon's activist theatre initiative effectively

performed the idea that the stage can function as a safe space in which conflict can be displayed, negotiated, and ultimately transformed. It is clear then that art, in many different forms, can operate as a means to explore conflict across private and public realms and can facilitate questions about the relationship between reality and representation.

As I have argued elsewhere (Selen 2012), the stage – as a conceptual space in which artists and audiences meet – is, by no means, a space exclusive to theatrical or musical productions. It can also encompass the ways in which viewers, as audiences, experience contemporary artworks in galleries and museums. The space in which an exhibition takes place contributes significantly to the reception of many art events. Upon entering a gallery or museum, the viewer begins to engage with the work, and the physical presence of the viewer who engages with the work in a particular space at a particular historical moment brings a range of dynamics into play. The work of art encountered in this situation may well deal with internal, social, and political conflicts while also encouraging a transformation of conflict dynamics. Prominent contemporary artists engaged in this kind of work include Joseph Beuys, Marina Abramovic, and Chris Burden. Picasso's renowned painting 'Guernica' (1937), one of the most significant anti-war statements in the history of art, represents perhaps the most famous individual artwork to contribute to resistance in this way (Ramsbotham *et al.* 2011, pp. 349–350).

In her expansive account of the conflict between the State of Israel and the Palestinian people, Gil Z. Hochberg (2015) pays particular attention to concepts such as 'vision', 'gaze', and 'experience'. She features Jewish Israeli and Palestinian artistic productions across various visual art and literary genres in an attempt to 'expose and reframe the conditions of vision that underlie the Israeli-Palestinian conflict' (Hochberg 2015, p. 3). She argues that these conditions dictate 'the oppressive relationship between the Israeli occupiers and the Palestinian occupied, which is articulated through and manifested in uneven distribution of "visual rights"' (Hochberg 2015, p. 3). Arguing that this structural inequality

is ‘rooted in the historical and geographical condition associated with the 1948 establishment of the state of Israel as a settler colony’ (Hochberg 2015, p. 3), Hochberg enquires into the visual configurations of the occupation and asks: ‘What does it mean to speak about a conflict in terms of how it appears or how we come to see it?’ (Hochberg 2015, p. 5).

Hochberg thoroughly interrogates the visual narratives of the conflict and targets the colonial optical arrangement to reveal the extent of the inequality in the ‘visual rights’ granted to Jewish Israelis and Palestinians (Hochberg 2015, p. 163). In doing so, she provides a model which enables our understanding and analysis of visual representations of the conflict, occupation, and resistance. In particular, she draws our attention to those instances when the right to vision is suppressed or ceases to exist for Palestinians and Jewish Israelis working against the occupation (Hochberg 2015, p. 3).

In the discussion that follows, I suggest that, in the asymmetric conflict that has engulfed the lives of Palestinian people throughout the ongoing occupation, contemporary art provides a viable stage on which attempts to resist the occupation and foster change can be played out. However, despite the vigour evident in the works of art that I review in the following sections, I do not believe that any such work can transform the complex dynamics of this conflict ‘in the blink of an eye’. Rather, I will focus on the subtle transformations that can emerge from the artist’s and the viewer’s long-term experience of a work of art.

To this end, I will investigate the forms and narratives which Palestinian artists use to sustain their artistic integrity regardless of the demands placed on them by the politics of resistance. Further, I will seek out the narratives in Israeli artists’ works that move beyond declarations against the occupation to provide deeper and much-needed cultural, political, and geographical visibility and visual commentary on the conflict. The historical, cultural, and political points of connection that emerge in the narratives of Palestinian and Jewish Israeli artists’ works will ultimately allow for dialogue and sociocultural negotiations inside and beyond the contemporary art world.

The artworks featured in this chapter were chosen in order to reflect the actual and conceptual ‘sides’ of the conflict, and to clarify the extent of resistance to the occupation that can emerge through art-making. I will discuss how the featured works represent the Nakba as a seminal event and how they shape the ongoing conflict between the State of Israel and the Palestinian people in its current form. I will also argue that these works of art represent acts of alternative resistance that might help in transforming the conflict in terms of meaning and form. When viewed in this light and considered side by side, these works by Jewish Israeli and Palestinian artists demonstrate that art can evoke the occupation and its totalizing boundaries (both real and imaginary) in ways that enact forms of alternative resistance.

Resistance through realism: Khaled Jarrar and Joshua Neustein

Born in 1976 in Jenin, Khaled Jarrar was exhibited solo at the Ayyam Gallery in July 2013. In his London show, as elsewhere, his works have provided a critical display of everyday life as he experienced it in the occupied Palestinian territory (Mongoois 2013). Jarrar’s site-specific installation from the London exhibition, *Whole in the Wall* (2013), features a 2.5-metre-high concrete wall that divides the gallery space longitudinally.

Whole in the Wall situates visitors in an active and realistic confrontation with the Separation Wall, and enacts the impact of such a structure in the daily life of both Palestinians and Jewish Israelis. The actual Separation Wall is still being built, despite the recommendations of the International Court for Justice,² and its construction continues to be used as a device that legitimates the illegal confiscation of Palestinian land.

Each of the two sides of Jarrar’s wall faces a different arrangement of complementary works in the gallery (for a video walk-through of the exhibition, see Jarrar 2014). One

side of the exhibit faces framed works hung on a black wall, and the other side faces different works installed against a white wall. To experience Jarrar's other works in the exhibition, the viewers must stand with their backs, literally and figuratively, against the wall. This position restricts their movements, and so puts viewers in a volatile and temporary but voluntary situation that offers a brief glimpse of, and potentially a sense of solidarity with, people in the oPt whose lives are restricted by the Wall in genuinely limiting and long-term ways.

This installation, and most of the other Jarrar works in the exhibition, were made from actual Separation Wall fragments which Jarrar 'took' from the Wall near Ramallah in broad daylight. The taking of the fragments, staged as an artistic intervention in itself, is documented in his video entitled 'Concrete' (2013). The gallery wall rises before the viewer, rupturing communication, vision, and movement between the two halves of the gallery space. At the centre of the wall, the viewer faces a void, cut out of the concrete, in the shape of pre-1948 Palestine. Jarrar's articulation of his artistic vision here involved re-using the concrete fragments of the Separation Wall and 'trafficking' them to other contexts. This process can be interpreted as Jarrar's gesture towards acquiring his 'visual rights' (Hochberg 2015, p. 3) and it stages a symbolic representation of, and response to, the oppression and humiliation of Palestinians.

A related and ongoing work by Jarrar is called *Live and Work in Palestine* (Perel 2013), and it began with Jarrar stamping tourists' passports with the 'State of Palestine' seal at the Ramallah bus station in 2011. He has continued the project to this day through social media and has staged displays of this work in significant art locations around the globe. The stamp's design consists of the Palestinian sunbird motif placed at the centre of a circle. The bird is associated with Palestinian land and its image was previously used on postage stamps in Palestine before 1948. It is also a well-known national and folk symbol for the Palestinian people. As symbolic as this work might be, it should also be read as enacting profound resistance against Israel's denial of the

Palestinians' right to form a nation state. This work poses striking challenges to a number of aspects of the status quo in the oPt, including restrictions on movement and the Israeli state's control of mechanisms for identification and transit.

Jarrar's work enacts resistance by critiquing and displacing the apparatus of the Israeli state. It asserts the claims of Palestinians to a nation state and the mundane but meaningful mechanisms that belong to people with the right of self-determination. However, although his works are politically charged and align the artist with Palestinian resistance movements, Jarrar states that his artworks are not 'political'. Rather, he insists that they offer realistic representations of the daily experiences of many Palestinians, including himself.

Jarrar's installation, *Whole in the Wall*, establishes a dialogue across boundaries by communicating with Joshua Neustein's 1991 work, *Inverse Israel*, even though the two works contribute to alternative narratives and traditions in this binarized conflict. Jarrar's and Neustein's works succeed in rendering visible omitted and obscure aspects of the conflict's geopolitical dynamics in their quite different narratives. While Jarrar's work is characterized by sharp formalism, Neustein's primarily minimalist art typically requires a close reading if the audience is to experience the full potential of his provocative works. Neustein is best known for his map paintings on canvas, or his rusted metal and collage work from the mid-1980s. His works are visually compelling, deeply personal, and political, and the artist pushes his audiences to seek a narrative in the work he has produced. As examples of what Neustein calls 'refugee art', his works resist offering any settled solution to dilemmas about how to master, work through, and come to terms with a traumatic past; instead his audience is challenged to engage with and experience the discourse (or agenda) that underlies his visual communication.



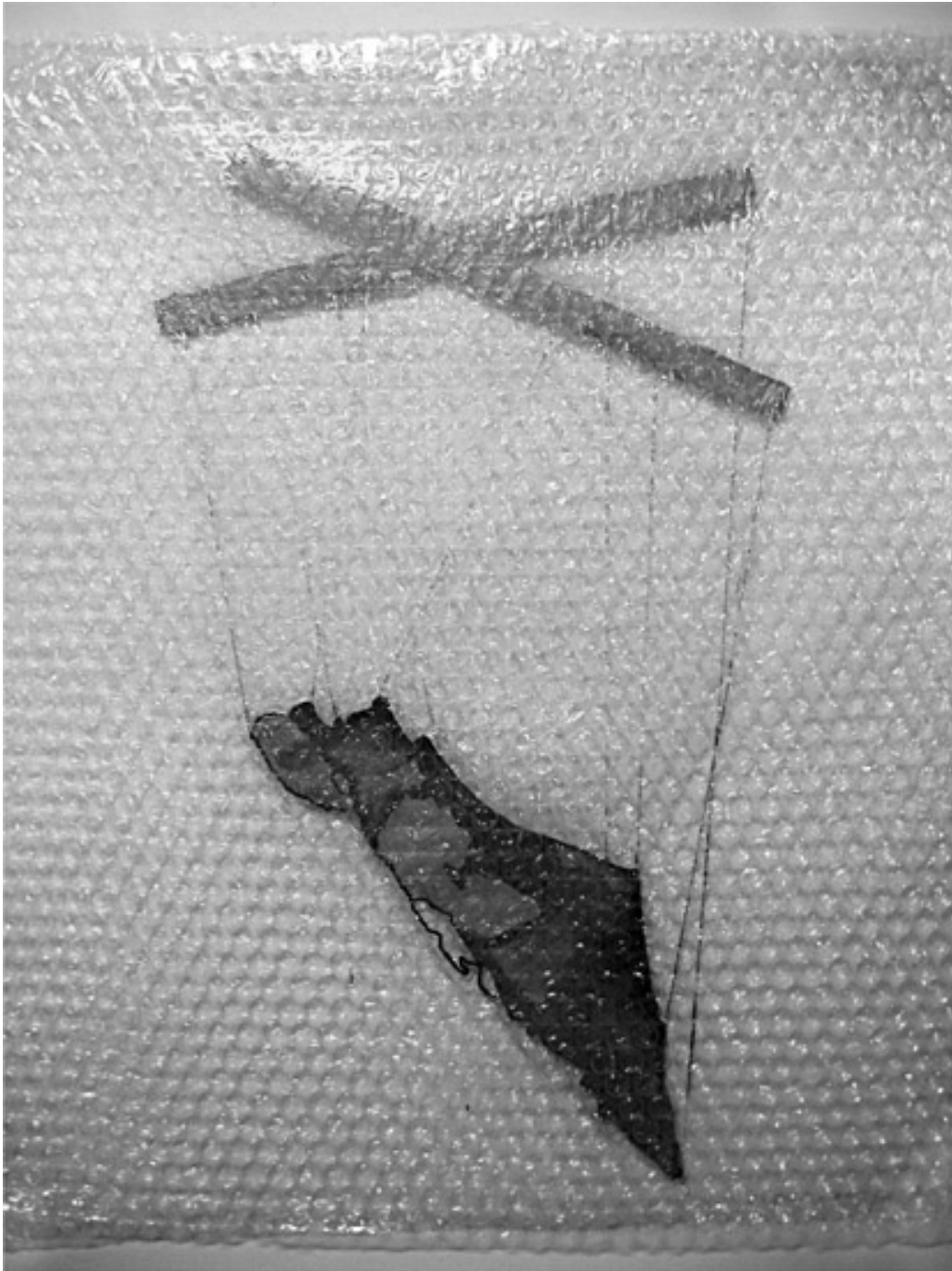
[Figure 11.1](#) Joshua Neustein, 'Inverse Israel', 1991

Source: Joshua Neustein. Displayed at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art.

Neustein was born in 1940 in Danzig, currently known as Gdansk, in Poland, and lived for roughly two decades in Israel before moving to New York where he has pursued his career as a multidisciplinary artist working in forms such as drawing, painting, photography, video, installation, and performance. Although his work repeatedly makes use of rust as a material, and ephemera often appeared in his earlier works, *Inverse Israel* is a departure piece. The work is on permanent display at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art in a large-scale survey exhibition entitled *Museum Present Itself: Israeli Art from the Museum Collection*.³ *Inverse Israel* is carved out of rust, like Neustein's other map paintings, and depicts the contours of Israel's post-1948 borders, but it leaves the West Bank and Gaza out. The map of Israel appears as a foreground image

located at the bottom-right corner of the frame and is inverted like a reflection in a mirror, hence the title of the work.

As the viewer contemplates the work, the subtlety with which Neustein represents ideas about Israel as a nation state begins to be appreciated. The art, then, provides a dramatic encounter both with a land in conflict and with the competing discourses that surround it. The audience is invited to consider and reflect on the acts of finding, processing, cleaning, claiming, and reclaiming that have been performed in the production of this work. By cleaning and polishing the interior so that it is completely free from rust, and by inverting



[*Figure 11.2*](#) Joshua Neustein, 'Marionette Map', 2005

Source: Joshua Neustein. Displayed at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art.

the image while keeping the rust intact with the rest of the frame, Neustein intentionally displaces and isolates the idea of Israel which is, in a further move, very clearly operating at the level of an image on a mirror: it is an ideal rather than a reality. He places the image in the lower right-hand corner of the frame to suggest entrapment 'by Israel' and 'of Israel', at least symbolically. Through this rust painting, Neustein's

critique of Israel as a geographical and political entity functions at a number of complex discursive levels, but it still offers a realistic representation: Israel is a piece of land carved out from another land, Palestine, which is uninhabitable for those opposed to the occupation.

Neustein's other work from the same exhibition, entitled *Marionette Map* (2005), extends the narrative of *Inverse Israel* until it reaches a global scale. The work consists of a rectangular frame that is covered with plastic bubble wrap. The transparency of the plastic allows the viewer to see what is hidden beneath: a map of Israel in the form of a puppet. In a similar gesture to the one used in *Inverse Israel*, the Palestinian West Bank and Gaza Strip are depicted through the utilization of a light-coloured material while Israel appears darker. The difference in colour and shade reminds us of something the work already makes conspicuous: the idea that there are other forces controlling the agenda in the land where the conflict originates (Kadi 2015). Neustein's representation of Israel as a puppet suggests that 'these other forces' might be the chief beneficiaries of the conflict and that they hold the human rights of the people of both nations in their hands.

Resistance through abstraction: Basma Alsharif and Ohad Meromi

Born to Palestinian parents in Kuwait in 1983, Basma Alsharif is a multimedia artist whose works involve video, installation, and performance. Raised in the United States and France, Alsharif has lived and worked nomadically since 2007. Her imagery is complicated, and the idea of transformation disrupts the vision and the viewer's experience of it, but it is powerful too. Alsharif's elaborate technique involves manipulating multiple images, sounds, and texts into a single idea and her work delivers this to the viewer in a matter of minutes.

For example, Alsharif's 2013 video work entitled *Home Movies Gaza*, exhibited at the Iman Farés Gallery in Paris, introduces the viewer to 'the Gaza Strip as a microcosm of the failure of civilization' (Alsharif 2013). The video starts off with footage of the streets of Gaza, which Alsharif took from the window of a car (Nash 2015). The speed and movement of the car distort the moving image and generate a sophisticated sense of abstraction in the content and form of the work. In the video, time moves forwards and backwards, and several sets of superimposed footage are shown at the same time to create a time-lag effect that adequately represents the suspension of Gaza's present.

During her editing process, the artist overlaps her footage of the street with harbour scenes which morph into one another over time. Similarly, after she transforms the harbour footage into the interior of a home in Gaza, she cuts sharply to a television in the living room. The TV's signal is weak, and the image on the screen is not always clear. On the television, the viewer is faced with a lengthy scene in which an elephant is being attacked by several predators on the Discovery Channel. The elephant's fierce fight for its life becomes a pivotal scene in the video, and it is followed by extended portrayals of people, animals, and sites from everyday life in Gaza. Arguably, there is not one whole or unified storyline throughout the work, but Alsharif displays the idea of resistance through the notion of the impossibility of sustaining stability of time and space for Gaza. However dystopic it may seem, the underlying content of *Home Movies Gaza* demonstrates a desire to tell the story of Gaza in the present.



[Figure 11.3](#) Basma Alsharif, 'Home Movies Gaza', 2013 – video still

Source: Basma Alsharif. 'Home Movies Gaza', 2013 [online]. Available from: <https://vimeo.com/58171442> [Accessed 11 June 2015].

Alsharif believes that the fact she was not born in Palestine is irrelevant to her strong relationship with the land which has affected the way she 'experiences the world' (Nash 2015). Still, even though both of her works featured in this chapter represent life and the living in a site that is physically torn apart, socially invaded, and politically contested, she claims that her work is not just about Palestine. Her art problematizes any easy assumptions about space and time and, often, her artworks explore the human condition concerning her experiences of various political landscapes and contested histories (Nash 2015).

Alsharif's distinctive non-linear style in her chosen medium of video allows her to convey widely differing perspectives. Her elaborate four-channel video installation entitled *Farther Than the Eye Can See* (2012) provides a rich example of the possibilities that emerge when art-making and diverse viewpoints in politics and identity converge. Based on the experiences of a woman who is recounting her memories of the Nakba, *Farther than the Eye Can See* highlights the multiplicity of experiences that arose out of the mass exodus while also tracing out the losses that the Nakba created. Since the video uses reverse chronology, the audience moves from the woman's arrival in her new life back towards the point of

her departure in the mass exodus. This rupture in time creates a sense of estrangement, and, with great affective power, the narrative communicates the inconsolable loss that the woman, and by extension, the community, has experienced as memories of the Nakba have deteriorated, though, as Alsharif's film shows, they are not lost.



Figure 11.4 Basma Alsharif, 'Home Movies Gaza', 2013 – video still

Source: Basma Alsharif. 'Home Movies Gaza', 2013 [online]. Available from: <https://vimeo.com/58171442> [Accessed 11 June 2015].

The four-channel video – shown in her 2012 exhibition at the Sharjah Art Foundation, in the United Arab Emirates – flows through four synced screens, and different moving images are assigned to each one. The screen on the upper left-hand corner of the installation, for instance, mostly displays two versions of a text composed from transcriptions of the woman's story in Arabic and English, and they enter and exit from opposite sides. A man's voice, audible at the same level throughout the video, narrates a translation of the woman's story in English. When the woman and the man are not being heard, the audience hears a collection of ambient sounds. Installed in a darkened space, the viewer notices a woman walking with a camera towards the far end of a terrace. When the screen next to it starts to show footage of the surrounding environment, the viewer realizes that what they see on the next screen is the scene that the artist is shooting.



Figure 11.5 Basma Alsharif, 'Farther Than the Eye Can See', 2012 – video still from a four-channel video installation

Source: Basma Alsharif. 'Farther Than the Eye Can See', 2012 [online]. Available from: <https://vimeo.com/49228383> [Accessed 11 June 2015].



Figure 11.6 Basma Alsharif, 'Farther Than the Eye Can See', 2012 – video still from a four-channel video installation

Source: Basma Alsharif. 'Farther Than the Eye Can See', 2012 [online]. Available from: <https://vimeo.com/49228383> [Accessed 11 June 2015].

Both of Alsharif's video works concentrate on the formative experiences of Palestinian identity, which become dissociated from a single physical space in the context of exodus and diaspora. Unlike *Home Movies Gaza*, *Farther Than the Eye Can See* was shot in a location outside the oPt, and so the composition, and the experiences and effects of the Nakba, are abstracted from the single geographic location with which they tend to be associated. Alsharif superimposes sights and sounds on top of or alongside one another, and so the video moves out from the personal and into the collective memory and trauma of the Nakba. Personal accounts, memory, place, and history take the form of collective abstraction in her works and yet still disclose the effects of loss, dispossession, and domination produced by an ongoing trauma.

The same kind of process can also be discerned in Ohad Meromi's large-scale installation, *Who Owns the World?* (2008a), which can be seen to create a stimulating dialogue with Alsharif's imagery. Born in Israel on Kibbutz Mizra in 1967, Ohad Meromi is based in New York and uses a combination of sculpture, installation, and video in his multimedia works. He deals with the idea of space, whether actual or fictional, but always addresses 'the moments of agency, a moment of potent reflexivity where the subject changes its relationship to an oppressive matrix' in the context of the social sphere (Foundation for Contemporary Arts 2008). Through his work, which is based on architectural constructions, he rethinks myths and 'reenacts some of these myths with clashes of futurism and primitivism, international style and ethnic folklore, totalitarianism and utopic positivism' (VCU 2013). When asked if his work is political, he answers reflexively: '[m]y fascination with the turn-of-the-20th-century moment and its belief in the inevitable link between a certain aesthetic and a political agenda stems from a sense of a contemporary failure to hold exactly such a conviction' (Simon 2012). In his installations, he creates situations in which architecture is treated as a body that conveys layered narratives of the past, present, and future (Simon 2012).



Figure 11.7 Ohad Meromi, 'Communal Sleeping' (installation view) from 'Who Owns the World', 2008

Source: Ohad Meromi. Previously displayed at the Harris Lieberman Gallery, New York.

Meromi draws on modernist architecture and takes a keen interest in Israeli kibbutzim.⁴ The works of Bertolt Brecht and the constructivists significantly and visibly influence and shape his art process (Stillman 2008).⁵ His fascination with Brecht enables him to question ‘hyperideological moments [...] for their sense of relationship with the future’, which is perhaps why he is interested in kibbutz architecture and the kinds of spaces into which he was born (Meromi and Chan 2010). His use of abstraction as a form and as an idea strengthens his ‘play’ on the notions of the ideological and the imaginary (Gat 2015). The references and ideas he brings into his work range from the ‘failure of Zionism’,⁶ and the kibbutz movement, to labour relations, and the image of the worker. As Meromi wryly remarks, ‘I have to humor people into understanding’ (Gat 2015).



[Figure 11.8](#) Ohad Meromi, ‘The Exception and the Rule’, 2007 – video still

Source: Ohad Meromi.

The Tel Aviv Museum of Art provided almost half of an entire wing to house Meromi’s *Who Owns the World?* (2008a) installation, which was named after a 1932 Brecht film.⁷ Carefully and methodically dispersed to form an architectural compound, the installation has multiple parts with various story-lines. The part entitled *Communal Sleep* (2008b) is

located at the centre of the installation, and faces *The Exception and the Rule* (2007), a video named after a play by Brecht (1977; Vicentini 1975). The video displays a communal activity which involves the methodical learning of a series of movements. The women and men who perform in the video, wearing a version of *kuffiyeh* – a form of traditional head covering worn by Palestinian men – over their casual clothing, are standing side by side at arm's length from each other, and repeat the moves as they are instructed to do.

The details of the installation serve as a puzzle, challenging the viewer to understand the ultimate meaning of this abstract environment. Speakers are placed away from the video near the projector, but they are reversed, and the perplexed viewer has to work to find the source of the sound. Aside from the subtle drumming, the voice of the movement instructor, and the steps of the performers, the viewer hears occasional ambient sounds from the footage.

Clothing is hung on the skeletal construction, and, while this is initially suggestive of a lived space, over time it becomes nothing but an emptied place haunted by the memories of the past. Soon after, the eye catches a glimpse of a recognizable object that could have belonged to anyone, but is left behind: a guitar. The viewer is pulled towards the guitar by the allure of a found object, only to encounter the writing behind it which reads: 'END THE OCCUPATION'. The ideology behind Meromi's installation does not differ substantially from that of any Palestinian who desires a peaceful end to the occupation.

Conclusion

The primary objective of this study has been to display the extent to which contemporary art can serve as a venue for resistance and conflict transformation. Narratives of two cultures' experiences of the same land have been shown to coexist in the context of contemporary art, and the four bodies of work explored here even occasionally enter into tentative dialogues through allusion. This chapter suggests that there is

the distinct possibility that contemporary art can be utilized as a platform that promotes communication between dominant narratives that concern the conflict. The works here, especially when juxtaposed, are valuable because they are powerful enough to dis-integrate dominant narratives and destabilize subject positions and traditions while rendering them uncanny. Perhaps the narratives may never appear to be in unison, or even in harmony with each other, but recognition of how they work with one another is an utmost necessity for the transformation of the conflict between Jewish Israelis and Palestinians.

The four artists featured in this chapter generously share their views of the conflict with viewers and offer their works as models of alternative resistance which work to bring about the betterment of the people. And yet, two important theoretical and practical questions remain: how would cultural hegemony function if these works were to be displayed side by side in Tel Aviv or Ramallah? Are they, in fact, capable of acting as a counterhegemonic force in local and global politics to help achieve significant transformation of the conflict? As challenging as it might be, given the laws of occupation and the conflicting ‘politics of resistance’ in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem, further research is needed to explore how Israeli and Palestinian contemporary art can be used to foster peacebuilding, and contribute to a transformation of the conflict.

Palestinian artists face challenges if they are to participate in any such efforts. As they strive to sustain their artistic excellence and relevance on the international art scene, they may come under pressure to deliver more accessible creative work and palpable political results. The challenge for Israeli artists is to strengthen their positions and persevere in their resistance against occupation, despite the economic, cultural, and political ramifications of their actions for the State of Israel. Nevertheless, within the current socio-political situation, these artists are already making a significant contribution by disrupting the conceptual frameworks of the conflict, and re-imagining ideas about home, place, history, and identity.

Both Jarrar's and Neustein's works defy, in remarkable ways, competing ideas about the Palestinian 'state' and Israel's wholeness. The inversion of the concept of the 'w/hole', both physically and psychologically in their work, indicates both absence and presence simultaneously. The hole cut out of the concrete, in Jarrar's work, disrupts real and metaphorical walls, and draws parallels with the image carved out of rust in Neustein's work. Alsharif's and Meromi's works do not set out to claim ownership of a geographical location, but they interrogate the idea of 'belonging' in their artistic processes. Alsharif was not born in, and, while visiting frequently, has never lived in Palestine. Meromi left Israel for New York almost two decades ago (Nash 2015). They experience the idea of home in the abstract and through representation, and they encourage viewers to question some of their certainties about identity and place. Both artists generate spaces for people to deliberate on the conflict between Jewish Israelis and Palestinians.

The works considered in this study can be seen as articulating an urgent call for a new critical dialogue about 'possession', 'reclamation', and 'belonging'. Each work can be perceived as having a relationship to other works which also utilize art as a form of alternative resistance, and each individual artwork contributes to informing the viewer about the many underlying causes and effects of the conflict between Jewish Israelis and Palestinians. Khaled *Jarrar's Live and Work in Palestine* demonstrates that the oPt, in its current state, is a globally recognized problem and nothing less. Meanwhile, Joshua Neustein's representation of the Israeli state, visualized as a puppet whose responsibility is also enabled by 'other forces' holding the ropes, speaks to the validity of the Israeli state's arguments. The memories of Palestinian people, which are tightly woven with trauma and losses over the decades, are made affectively discernible in Basma Alsharif's videos and will certainly inform generations to come in the making of contemporary Palestinian identity. And finally, Ohad Meromi's shrewd display of the writing behind the body of the guitar – 'END THE OCCUPATION' – is a gesture which signals to occupation leaders that they will eventually have to 'face the music'.

Notes

- 1 The research for this chapter is mainly drawn from my fieldwork which took place from 2012 to 2013 in Palestine (in Jenin, Ramallah, and East Jerusalem) and Israel (in Tel Aviv and West Jerusalem). The research was funded by a joint European Union/Marie Curie Research Project entitled ‘Perspectives of Conflict Transformation from the Middle East and Europe (CTMEE)’ with Coventry University, United Kingdom; the Arab American University of Jenin, Palestine; and Kadir Has University, Istanbul.
- 2 Stop the Wall (2014) explains that ‘the International Court of Justice (ICJ) issued its verdict on the “Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory” and declared this construction illegal, choosing to refer to it as a “wall” in July 2004’.
- 3 The works entitled *Private Identities, 1960–1990*, *Inverse Israel* (1991) and *Marionette Map* (2005) are displayed in the second chapter of a three-chapter exhibition, at the Tel Aviv Museum of Contemporary Art. The first chapter is entitled ‘Joint Identities, 1906–1960’ and the third chapter is entitled ‘Glocalism, 1990–2011’. See Tel Aviv Museum (2016).
- 4 Blumen (2002, p. 567) describes a kibbutz as ‘a cooperative settlement based on socialist ideals of equality and collectivism. It emerged in early Jewish Palestine as a pioneer, mostly agricultural, commune and became a powerful Zionist icon of a modern, equal society’.
- 5 Bertold Brecht (1898–1956) was a world-renowned German poet, playwright, and theatre director. See Suvin *et al.* (1968).
- 6 Throughout the literature of the conflict, the usage of the phrase ‘failure of Zionism’ proves to be problematic, as is the definition of Zionism itself which is arguably one of the most contradictory terms in the conflict between Jewish Israelis and Palestinians. The way one defines the term depends on the perspective from which one looks at the conflict. Martin Carcasson (2000, p. 214) notes that ‘[f]rom a Palestinian perspective, the Zionist settlers were invaders, interlopers, usurpers of the Arab homeland’ whereas ‘from an Israeli perspective, the Jewish settlers have “done nothing more than return peacefully to their own historic land”’.
- 7 Brecht co-wrote the 1932 film entitled *To Whom Does the World Belong?* (*Kuhle Wampe oder: Whem gehört die Welt?* (Dudow 1932) with Ernst Ottwald and it was directed by Slatan Dudow.

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12

The transformative potential of the Palestinian university student youth movement

Ayman Yousef and Razan Abu Labdeh

Introduction

This chapter will explore the strategies used by the university student political movement in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) between 2007 and 2013. Underlying this investigation are the effects produced by two important external forces that have affected student movements in the oPt. First, the political and geographical division between Fatah and Hamas in 2007 paralyzed social and political institutions across the oPt and had significant implications for student social movements in the West Bank and Gaza. Internal Palestinian skirmishes and political fragmentation have forced people in the youth student movement to revise their priorities, and, while they work towards strengthening student democracy in Palestinian universities, they also recognize the need for political reconciliation and increased participation in the ongoing popular resistance efforts. Second, the ongoing confrontation between Palestinians and the Israeli occupation is having a distinct effect on the shape of student movements, an issue which will be further explored in this chapter. Through its investigation of the student youth movement in the

oPt, this chapter addresses a definite hesitancy among Palestinian authors when it comes to identifying constructive roles for young people inside the conflict between the State of Israel and the Palestinians.

Student democracy inside Palestinian universities contributes to the broader resistance movement across the oPt because it guarantees the rights of all student blocs and factions to participate in the annual elections for student councils at Palestinian universities. We argue that the intellectual and practical endeavours of student movements also help to bring about political and social reconciliation within Palestinian society. As we will demonstrate, these movements promote peaceful popular resistance and use peaceful symbolic means to resist the Israeli occupation.

The research for this chapter relied on empirical data collected through interviews with student political leaders, activists, and participants in popular resistance across the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Many of the interviewees were active within the Palestinian student blocs, or wings of local political parties, and political factions. The discussion that follows focuses on the following research questions: how did the student movement define its priorities after the 2007 political division between Fatah and Hamas, has the university student movement succeeded, and what factors have either aided or limited its progress. It should be noted that, since university student groups are intimately tied to broader youth movements and activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, these groups will be discussed together at key points in this chapter.

A brief history of the Palestinian student movement

After the establishment of the General Union of Palestine Students (GUPS) in November 1959, Palestinian student leagues noticeably broadened their political activities,

especially in branches of the GUPS in Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt. The conflict in the oPt and broader contributions made to the conflict by neighbouring Arab nations were exacerbated by a number of new political realities, in particular the rise of Nasserism in Egypt, the rise of Arab nationalism in Syria and Iraq, and the defeat of Arab forces in the war of June 1967. In that war's aftermath, Israeli occupation forces deliberately acted to weaken Palestinian educational institutions. For example, Palestinian academics were exposed to deportation and house arrests, and many programmes and courses that related to history, geography, and political sciences were banned in schools and universities at this point (Saleh 1982).

In response to this struggle, GUPS, as a cohesive and coherent organization, was able to revise its agenda for action and develop unique strategies for communicating with Palestinian students across the Arab world. Its stability formed a contrast with the fragmentation that was occurring in Palestinian society more generally. Political developments such as the 1974 Geneva agreement, the Ten Point Program put forward by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), and the 1993 Oslo Accords had all contributed to divisions, disputes, and conflict within Palestinian politics and society. Despite the difficult contexts in which it worked, GUPS proved that it was capable of handling and overcoming the difficulties posed by the internal conflicts within Palestinian society; it was also careful to consider, not only the circumstances of the Palestinian diaspora, but also the condition of students who studied abroad (Abu Azeez 2000).

Over time, the increasing number of students in Palestinian universities and the ongoing Israeli occupation motivated GUPS to expand to more than fifty branches, and many of these new branches emerged in the Arab states, Eastern Europe, and Western countries. Within the oPt, the growth in student numbers in universities and colleges resulted in the broader expansion of higher education programming. For example, several universities were established in the 1970s, and these included An-Najah National University in Nablus, Birzeit University near Ramallah, and the Islamic University of Gaza.

From the mid-1970s onwards, new factors enhanced and consolidated an increasingly vibrant Palestinian student movement. It benefited in particular from the 1976 municipal elections in large urban centres across the West Bank and Gaza Strip in which PLO-supported candidates often triumphed. In 1977, the Likud party came to power and formed an Israeli government that increased the pace and scope of land confiscation and adopted tougher ideologically oriented rightist policies towards Palestinian communities (Ghayyadeh 2000). These moves helped to drive young people into student activism, but they also had painful consequences. The challenges GUPS faced deepened due to traumatic events that were occurring across the occupied territory such as ongoing land confiscation and forced changes in the geography and demography of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. These problems were exacerbated because leaders and activists from the student movement were increasingly being arrested and detained, and this created a power vacuum at student leadership level (Yousef 2013).

Before analysing the role that the student movement played in enhancing student life and student democracy in Palestinian universities, a few of its characteristics need to be highlighted. First, it is important to note that the formation of student councils in Palestinian universities in the late 1970s was motivated by action against the Israeli occupation rather than by conflicts between students themselves, or between students and university administrations over non-political issues (Abdulhadi 1994). The councils therefore reflect the highly nationalized and politicized nature of the student movement in the occupied territory. Second, student blocs are often extensions of Palestinian political parties and factions that existed outside the oPt before the 1993 Oslo Accords were signed; this helps to explain ongoing tensions over whether or not student councils have the ability to make decisions concerning student affairs without the interference of political party interests and leaders. Some student council leaders have raised the possibility that a strong student movement could exist which is detached from the political interference of vested political interests. Third, the Palestinian student movement has been exposed to political divisions and

organizational stagnation since the Oslo Accords were ratified, and its activities have been characterized by rigidity, romanticized conceptions of political action, and the use of slogans and rhetoric. Many student leaders are concerned that the movement has failed to solidify an organizational structure that would be capable of reflecting student concerns without coming under direct pressure from political forces. Fourth, limited female involvement in student-led activities in Palestinian universities is superficial and distinctly at odds with student demographics. In the period since the 1970s, the high-water mark for women's seats in university student councils has been eleven percent. Male dominance has meant that women's concerns have been given limited audience, and councils have exploited and maintained in university and college environments the socially conservative attitudes that have negatively affected Palestinian women in general (Maliki 2000).

Students represent a formidable demographic force according to statistics published by the Ministry of Higher Education. The total number of Palestinian university and college students is estimated to have been approximately 240,000 during the academic year that ran from 2013 to 2014. As students make up a significant demographic group in the occupied territory, the decisions they make impact directly on Palestinian society. This is the case with the student democracy movement, which is explored in the next section.

Student democracy

By introducing the concept of student democracy, we intend to highlight the political and non-political aspects of student life inside Palestinian campuses. Maturing student bodies and blocs have succeeded in pushing for student democracy despite the national political fragmentation experienced since 2007, and – while student groups have worked to strengthen the cohesion of their groups – political elites in both Fatah and

Hamas have failed to conduct elections for the Palestinian Legislative Council or for the presidency.

Thousands of Palestinian students inside university campuses practise youth democracy through their participation in the election of the student council. While these councils represent students' daily and academic interests and needs to the college authorities, involvement in these markedly political organizations, with their commitment to defying the Israeli occupation and resisting settlement activities, is in itself a political gesture. By involving students in the consideration of social and political issues, student groups have helped to produce a mature generation of student leaders with the ability to understand the obstacles and contradictions faced by Palestinian society. Student movements have taken leading roles in defending the Palestinian cause and in resisting the occupation that followed the 1967 war, and their role reflects the ongoing Palestinian belief that the liberation of Palestine can only be achieved by Palestinians themselves, assisted by clear political and moral support from Arab countries (Abu Azeez 2000).

In practice, student blocs impose their presence early on in a new student's career, and they carefully promote their political and social programmes to young people with little knowledge of existing student blocs and their political allegiances. If you were to walk into any Palestinian university during the election period, you would find a heated political atmosphere, and flyers and brochures would be being handed out full of promises about what each bloc claimed to be capable of achieving if successful in the elections (Ghayyadeh 2000, pp. 80–89).

During their four-year journeys through higher education, Palestinian students gain political skills due to their voluntary participation in these blocs, and they gain experience of a wide range of activities which include election campaign management, public speaking, and persuasion at political debates. Palestinian universities provide a rich seedbed for the development of national youth leaders, and the democratic experience gained by students on university campuses serves to enhance the overall realization of democracy across

Palestinian society. In fact, robust student democracy is considered to be one of the most significant factors involved in the enhancement of that wider social democracy for Palestinians. Experience of student democracy is associated with a mature understanding of politics and electoral participation, as well as with adherence to the values of tolerance, and pluralism, whether political, social, or religious in nature.

Balancing political and non-political roles in student movements

Although student blocs are being affected and influenced by factional politics, they are, at the same time, performing pragmatic non-political duties. Student leaders realize that working for and serving all students should be at the core of their programming, and they recognize that many of the students who require representation resist being politicized. Support from the broader student body is essential if a bloc is to secure the maximum number of student seats in the annual election, and so student groups are careful to support all students, whatever views they hold about political action.

Student movements aim to play a significant role in strengthening relationships between students themselves, and they do this by organizing and promoting a variety of academic and social activities that enhance in-group and cross-factional relationships. Another major responsibility sees student organizations offering non-political and extra-curricular support to students who are struggling financially. Support is often procured from familial connections and other extensive networks so that students can continue their studies with the help of academic scholarships and student loans. Difficult economic circumstances in the oPt mean that student groups have to step in and provide relief for those students in need, and, at the various conferences and workshops we have attended, we have heard repeated pleas on behalf of students who need funding to access their studies. The issue of

students' financial struggle has pressured student blocs to act as one unit, despite the ideological and political differences between them, in order to establish small student support projects both inside and outside universities.

As a member of an Islamic student bloc suggested to us, support projects would almost certainly benefit from the involvement of students majoring in business and economics under the supervision of interested faculty members (Islamic Bloc Leader 2007). Such cooperation would serve to build positive relationships between students and faculty and accelerate the chances of success for projects which aim to support students financially. There are a number of other benefits that this kind of small project could achieve, under the aegis of the student movement. They would allow the fulfilment of students' financial needs without the constant need to call on external financial help,¹ and they would also encourage a culture of investment and entrepreneurship among students that would contribute to the broader development of a Palestinian economy which has become primarily dependent on external financial aid.² Projects such as this would also foster students' loyalty to their universities as young students would learn to appreciate the opportunities created when they work together with academics.³ Ultimately, these kinds of projects have the potential to expand students' horizons, introduce them to new ideas and concepts, and provide an environment in which young people could test and practise the skills they had acquired at university in real-life situations.⁴

It is clear that student movement activities are extremely diverse. These organizations help to provide student fees for those in need, and they also work to lower those fees; provide a helping hand for students enrolling in certain classes; enter negotiations with university faculty in relation to students' academic and financial affairs; and coordinate activities, contests, concerts, and workshops, along with other events, that solidify a national culture and political awareness. Yet despite this range of activities, it remains true that much student group activity is political in nature. Student movements identify youth leaders, contribute to their development as factional leaders, and excel in refining

leadership qualities and competencies during college years. After graduation, these immanent political figures sometimes take up opportunities for leadership in community work, civil society organizations, and legislative authorities, while others join the security forces (Khader 2008).

The history of the Palestinian student movement is similar to that of factional Palestinian politics. The student movement has been utilized by political forces as a platform for debate and for the promotion and broader adoption of political ideologies. Fatah, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Arab Nationalist Movement, and, more recently, Hamas and other Islamic groups have used student politics for these ends. Student movements have been welcomed into competing political parties and factions through active recruitment of the movements' members, and student involvement has served to bolster Palestinian national movements more broadly both inside and outside the occupied Palestinian territory. The inclusion of students benefits political movements which are able to incorporate educated individuals into their organizations. Student involvement adds volume to these groups but it also enhances their strategic capacity so that they are better able to resist the Israeli occupation effectively. The inclusion of university-educated young people in political activity also helps to legitimize political parties in the eyes of the Palestinian people (Yousef 2013, pp. 11–12).

Despite student input, political parties remain characterized by division and fragmentation, and this causes significant difficulty for the student movement today. The connections that exist between political groups and student groups have made ambiguous the distinctions that are supposed to exist between political and non-political activities undertaken by student movements. The inability of student groups to demarcate the line between their political and non-political work has inadvertently facilitated the ongoing interference of political factions in their work, and this has hindered the effective functioning of the student movement.⁵

Political activities have also resulted in the loss of student leaders through arrest by the Israeli authorities, and this has

sometimes created a vacuum of effective leadership. This lack of leadership has led to the emergence of spontaneous practices that have not had the best academic or social interests of students at heart. For example, ethical disagreements have arisen about students' attitudes and practices during the second Palestinian uprising, and, in particular, about the acceptability of carrying weapons on campuses or threatening university lecturers and teachers. Political extremism and a culture of insults have taken hold. As a result, political factions have attempted to push other student blocs to the margins, and pluralism on campuses has been reduced.

Youth and national reconciliation

Student activism has taken place against a backdrop of political uncertainty. In this section, we will deal with the efforts of youth student activists to end the political rupture and factional splits that have torn the oPt's social and political scene apart. These student activists showed extraordinary courage by speaking out openly, without reservation, about the performance of the dominant political parties and the obstacles and hindrances these parties have placed in the way of the Palestinian nation-building project.

Hamas took part in the 2006 legislative council elections after its leaders concluded that its military involvement in the fight against the Israeli occupation was inadequate without political action. Hamas achieved a significant victory when it secured a majority of seats in the Palestinian Legislative Council; however, this unexpected victory produced unexpected challenges for the organization. Factional infighting with Fatah ensued, and the party was besieged internally and externally. Fatah and other secular groups refused to join the Hamas-led government due to its narrow factional politics, and many regional and global powers continued to label Hamas as a terrorist group that should be boycotted at all levels.

As political movements have failed, social movements have had to take on new responsibilities within the oPt, and they carry significant influence in societies torn by conflict. Social movements exhibit a high degree of mobility and flexibility and can secure participation from a diverse range of people within a divided community (Bajis 2012). Such movements are not rigidly situated in relation to social and political forces, and their doors are open and accessible for various organizations and networks of activists bound, not by emotional attachments to particular ideologies, but rather by a collective national identity. Student movements have formed an integral part of the broader social movement in the Palestinian context by facilitating a deeper understanding of existing political divisions. Although student blocs predominantly operate as wings of political parties, they nevertheless manage to maintain autonomy as they mobilize resources for the sake of achieving political goals.

Since the fragmentation of the relationship between Hamas and Fatah, youth and student movements have represented the need for national reconciliation between conflicting parties, and have pushed for political parties to restore domestic peace. Young activists have realized that reconciliation is a much-needed and potentially all-encompassing societal process that requires the building of alliances. Different student blocs and factions that work in Palestinian universities have realized that building constructive relations between political factions will have positive implications for broader social reconciliation in the occupied Palestinian territory.

Palestinian young people have tried to ensure that they play a significant role in ending the state of political division because they, as a group, are sorely affected by this debilitating state of affairs.⁶ They have intervened in many different ways. Some have taken part in fighting and street confrontations, others have remained neutral, and still others have tried to leverage an end to political division through the use of strategic initiatives and activities. For example, social media has been used to promote the 15 March Movement, which was established by a group of young activists who sought to end the division between Palestinians. The 15 March

Movement includes student councils, youth unions, other youth groups, and networks formed by non-governmental organizations (NGOs). While other youth movements do exist – Youth for the End of Internal Divisions is one example (Barbar 2011) – the 15 March Movement has achieved special importance due to the substantial support it has received from national figures, political leaders, union members, and cultural and social icons.

During their 2011 March press conference, representatives of the 15 March Movement demanded that Palestinian leaders from both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip should end political fragmentation. They also called on both sides to release all political prisoners from the competing party and to follow this move by setting up an independent commission for human rights that would investigate violations including the killing of innocent people. The movement also put strong pressure on both Hamas and Fatah to enter into negotiations in order to put an end to their division and activate PLO institutions with refined political goals.⁷

Previous research reveals that most Palestinians classify the 2007 political division as the second most important source of threat and insecurity after the Israeli occupation, and, in conversations and arguments among young people across the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the need to resolve this division emerges as a significant priority (Abu Ajweh and Asaleyeh 2013). A poll conducted by the Sharek Youth Forum in 2011 showed that fifty percent of young Palestinian people think that the responsibility for the ongoing division lies with the Palestinian parties and organizations themselves. As for solutions, polls also reveal that forty-eight percent of young Palestinians see the formation of a government of national unity as essential to the solution of the conflict; twenty-two percent of those polled would prefer to see legislative and presidential elections take place without the need to form a national coalition government, while twelve percent support other views. It should also be noted that, in the main, young people's trust in those Palestinian parties currently active in the political scene has decreased noticeably since 2007 (Sharek Youth Forum 2011). This deficit of trust is likely to

stem directly from the internal crises in Palestinian society that have resulted from political division (Abu Rukbah 2004).

At the same time, young people's trust in the NGOs and civil society organizations that work in the area of youth services has increased. This trust is clearly granted with discernment, given that support for governmental organizations working in the same field, including the Ministry of Youth and Sport, is significantly lower. These fluctuations in levels of trust are easily understood if we note that NGOs and civil organizations have shown themselves willing to stand up for young people's demands for human rights and freedom in both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank (Zamareh and Abu Kamesh 2010).

In response to their unfavourable ratings, some political party leaders have suggested the importance of adopting a series of steps to enhance their image among young Palestinians. This has led to the launch of joint efforts between young people and political parties to resolve mutual problems like the leadership vacuum, mistrust, and the weakness of internal democracy inside existing parties. Together they have sought to renew the visions, programmes, and structures of political parties by removing obstacles in the way of youth engagement with political leadership. The idea of a specific role for young people in political decision-making has also been explored.

The student movement has used the slogan, 'the people want the end of division' as a way of pushing for Palestinian unity. Young Palestinians welcomed the signing of a reconciliation agreement between Hamas and Fatah in Doha in 2012, and committed to applying pressure on both parties so that they would fulfil their commitment to executing this reconciliation on the ground. Student involvement, combined with significant pressure from the Palestinian public, helped to bring both parties under significant pressure to deal with the widespread neglect of local concerns that had followed the political division.⁸ Youth movement activists see their roles as central to new relationships between the Palestinian public and political parties, and as vital too in efforts to restore control over the Palestinian cause to the Palestinian people

themselves. However, young Palestinians have expressed the fear that the agreement signed between Hamas and Fatah in Cairo faces the same fate as other failed agreements because of the narrow-minded partisan polarization that holds sway in Palestinian politics.⁹

The existence of reconciliation agreements does not mean that the role for youth groups is complete; rather, it highlights the fact that continued pressure will need to be exerted on both party leaderships if they are to translate their agreements into changes on the ground. Changes in the course of everyday life will signal to the Palestinian population that these agreements actually mean something and can help society to overcome obstacles. Political reconciliation will, as an added bonus, serve to address the decrease in global support for Palestinian politics. Evidence of internal reconciliation may also legitimate the Palestinian cause in the eyes of the world community. Local student-led events across the West Bank and Gaza have been organized to encourage young people to become involved in pressuring political parties. These kinds of events provide public support for individuals and groups that are working towards an end to political division, and they also ensure media coverage for events that address that division and the problems it causes (Jadallah 2012).

A range of principles have been adopted to increase the success and credibility of youth movement activity. Demonstrations and events are to be conducted peacefully, and, when crowds are addressed, speakers are to focus on the topic of national unity. Self-control is to be carefully exhibited and conflict avoided with occupation forces in order to give the events and activities an atmosphere of peace. This self-control is required to ensure that high numbers of people from across Palestinian society can take part; it also denies the occupation forces any pretext to foil these peaceful gatherings. The use of partisan banners and flags is banned, and instead, the Palestinian flag, cheering, and chanted calls for national unity – limited to approved slogans – are supposed to dominate during marches and gatherings. Organized press conferences and media outreach coincide with street demonstrations and marching. Special committees exist in

different locations and sites across West Bank to manage marches and resolve any conflicts that may occur between different parties (Banat 2012). Finally, communication strategies ensure that there is proper coordination and cooperation between Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and in the West Bank.

Youth movement activities will also need to learn from past failures and shortcomings in addressing political division in the occupied Palestinian territory. For example, the lack of clear leadership of youth-led events affects their nature and reduces public trust in the events and the views they espouse; this lack of strong coordination has led student groups to fear that they will lose control over demonstrations, which will, as a result, no longer be peaceful. Without careful logistical preparation, demonstrations and other events can develop a chaotic atmosphere. Student groups must be wary of attempts by political powers to exploit and devalue their movement in bids to fulfil their own partisan needs. Careless media strategies can also be problematic because they lead to disunity in the political messages emerging from events. Finally, the internal dynamics of student movements and demonstrations must be carefully considered. In our view, leaders must push for a number of basic principles within their movement: these would include the adoption of unified policies and strategies, and the quick incorporation of new groups into the movement to align them with its strategies and values. Work must also be done to address and dissipate feelings of competition and mistrust between different blocs and factions.¹⁰

Student-led public resistance

Popular peaceful resistance has been a significant phenomenon in the domestic Palestinian political scene that emerged after 2007. Although nonviolent popular resistance is an established strategy in the occupied Palestinian territory, the violent developments that occurred during the second militarized

intifada marked a new era in the Palestinian liberation process. The unfulfilled goals and aspirations of the second *intifada*, the construction of the Separation Wall, the expansion of settlement activities, and internal Palestinian political infighting have all contributed to a new sense of urgency in debates about how to create new, nonviolent platforms for popular Palestinian resistance.

Our telephone and personal interviews with several Palestinian resistance activists across the West Bank revealed that, in order for nonviolent civil resistance to succeed against the Israeli occupation, Palestinians must be able to develop a sense that collective resistance is operating effectively at the national level. This resistance must remain fundamentally loyal to the idea of a shared national identity and cultivate social solidarity with local Palestinian communities struggling with the occupation. Ongoing resistance continues in numerous locations, in Jenin, Tulkarem, Qalqelia, Ramallah, Bethlehem, Hebron, and in the Gaza Strip, for example. The near daily acts of resistance at these sites have raised their visibility and heightened their impact, and many have been able to attract and welcome foreign supporters as a result. The involvement of senior political leaders in these events, as well as the active participation of youth and student leaders, has served to convince the wider public that volunteering in the daily routine actions of the popular nonviolent *intifada* is worthwhile.¹¹

Youth leaders have demonstrated their ability to provide effective leadership in the field of resistance activities and they have ensured that these activities are coherent in terms of vision and strategy. Young people have also proved their ability to comprehend and deliver on people's demand that more creative and innovative strategies be used for resisting the occupation and working against settlements. For example, they have been crucially involved in key locations such as Bil'in village near Ramallah, and have emerged as important participants in nonviolent action there. They have also contributed to the institutionalization of resistance through their roles in the formation of local committees at village level.¹² Some youth-led events have served to unify a wide

variety of resisting actors such as other civil society organizations, NGOs, popular committees, student committees and unions in schools and universities, local youth councils, women's groups and charities, and committees focused on media strategy and legal work.

One prominent coordinator of a popular committee for the anti-Wall campaign in a small village west of Ramallah shared an example of young activists' coordinating ability which emerged when Israeli bulldozers began ruining land: local young Palestinians gathered and formed a popular committee that included all parties and organizations in the village, and they went on to engage in marches and demonstrations on an almost daily basis. He described other creative strategies used by youth activists to confront the forces of occupation, the construction of the Wall, and settler activity. He noted that young people succeeded in generating a group effort, established a clear division of tasks and labour, carefully coordinated field activity, and took responsibility for dealing with the media (Saleh 2012).

In Bil'in, young activists have used public marches and demonstrations to attract the attention of local and global communities, as well as the media, in order to draw attention to what is occurring in the village as a result of the occupation. For example, Palestinian protesters tied themselves to olive trees in contentious sites so that their bodies would form a line of defence to prevent the destruction of the trees. Young Palestinians have also organized events with high symbolic value, leading candle-lit marches and hanging nooses on trees, for example; they have also held events such as weddings, music concerts, and sports tournaments at contentious sites in order to affirm the value and persistence of normal community life in the midst of conflict (Saleh 2012, p. 29). Other young people have participated in clashes with soldiers, resisted curfews, and worked against the illegal acquisition of Palestinian land for the expansion of settlements.

Conclusion

University student communities have proved to be transformative forces in the occupied Palestinian territory thanks to their creativity and influence over the difficult and divided social and political conditions within which they operate. Vibrant young communities of students are often eager for openness and seek to instigate cultural and social change; they are also willing to lobby political leaders and make use of nonviolent events to address political fragmentation and the ongoing occupation. Student groups, as a collective force, have performed crucial tasks and taken key responsibilities in these efforts, and, as they represent a significant demographic force, their actions have become highly visible and meaningful. Student council elections have continued to take place, and this means that democracy continues to thrive at the local level, despite the shortcomings and limitations of Palestinian politics in fractured political parties, institutions, and the community at large.

Student movements have launched numerous local initiatives that put pressure on Fatah and Hamas to resolve their differences and bring about national reconciliation. Although the success of these efforts has been limited, the young people involved have pursued an important cause and mobilized public opinion, helping to promote both an end to political division and the possibility of renewed unity. Youth-led efforts have created greater public awareness of just how destructive the status quo is for Palestinian society.

Nonviolent popular resistance has become a viable national option in the face of occupation policies and a deadlock in official peace processes, and students have contributed substantially to this change. Given that Palestinian options for confronting the occupation are diminishing, activists involved in student movements and youth groups have come to the conclusion that popular peaceful resistance must become the primary strategic choice for Palestinians in the occupied territory. Despite limited success in resisting the occupation and emancipating people and their land, activism involving non-violent popular resistance has emerged as an important model for the national struggle. It has succeeded in challenging the occupation on a daily basis without significant

losses of human life or material costs. However, student and youth movements have a lot of work to do at the strategic and political levels. Political division, factionalism, and narrow party political considerations continue to affect student groups and movements. Student blocs and councils must show themselves able both to serve the needs of student populations through ‘pure’ student politics and to push for independence from political party politics.

Notes

- 1 Telephone interview with the president of the student council at Najah National University during 1995–1996, 22 February 2007.
- 2 Personal interview with the president of the student council at the Arab American University 2006–2007, 10 March 2013.
- 3 Personal interview with a student political leader at the Arab American University 2006–2007, 12 March 2013.
- 4 Personal interview with a student political leader at the Arab American University 2005–2006, 10 March 2013.
- 5 Personal interview with a student council member at the Arab American University 2005–2006, 10 March 2013.
- 6 The political split between Fatah and Hamas took place in summer 2007 after both factions formed a national unity government headed by Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh. That government lasted for one year only before Hamas fighters in Gaza rebelled against the existing administrative institutions and security apparatus of the Palestinian Authority as it was dominated by the Fatah faction.
- 7 Personal interview with a youth and field activist, Ramallah, 26 August 2013.
- 8 Personal interview with a youth activist, Nablus, 27 August 2013.
- 9 Electronic interview with a human right activist, Gaza, 9 December, 2013
- 10 Personal interview with a youth and human rights activist, Ramallah, 10 December 2013.
- 11 Personal interview with a popular resistance activist, Ramallah, 14 September 2013.
- 12 Personal interview with a popular resistance activist, Tubas, 29 August 2013.

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13

Israeli peace and solidarity organizations

Marwan Darweish

Introduction

The Israeli peace and solidarity movement serves as a key external support to Palestinian efforts to resist Israeli occupation, and it works by leveraging pressure and mobilizing its influence in relation to the Israeli government and Israeli society in general. This chapter analyses the role of Israeli peace and solidarity organizations in nonviolent direct action, and it highlights the challenges and dilemmas these groups face. It also provides insights into the actions that will need to be undertaken if Israeli society is to be addressed successfully in relation to ongoing conflict and violence.

The literature on nonviolent direct action reflects two theoretical approaches that focus respectively on either ‘principled’ or ‘pragmatic’ strategies. This categorization helps us to understand both the nature of the actions carried out by Israeli peace and solidarity organizations and the ideas that inform their attempts to transform Israeli society and its politics. The ‘principled’ approach promulgated by Gandhi places value on dialogue as a means to transform the oppressor who can, it is argued, be won over when the destructive effects of the occupation and oppression are revealed (Galtung 1989).

Peace actors who use this approach aim to ‘shame the power’ and urge occupiers to take action themselves to end the oppression they perpetrate. When Israeli peace and solidarity organizations mobilize this approach, they engage their society in a dialogue and draw attention to violations of Palestinian’s basic rights. Their aim is to convince Israelis that the values and principles that liberal sections of society espouse should be shared by the nation too.

The ‘pragmatic’ approach proposed by Sharp (1979) places much more emphasis on the asymmetry of power in the conflict. It assumes that only by changing the power relations between the parties in conflict and creating a new balance of power can a desirable and just outcome be realized. For this to happen, the pillars of power which maintain an occupation must be undermined and destabilized. In the case of the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt), a pragmatic approach involves identifying the pillars of power that maintain the Israeli occupation, fostering the development of effective strategies to undermine and defeat an occupying ‘enemy’, and mobilizing people into action to enact those strategies (Sharp 2005).

Some organizations in the Israeli peace and solidarity movement adopt pragmatic tactics that promote nonviolent direct action such as demonstrations, blocking roads, sit-ins, and participating in the boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) movement; these processes encourage international pressure on Israel in order to raise the price Israel pays for its occupation policies and practices. Others work to raise the visibility of principled ideas through their focus on education, awareness-raising, the documentation of rights violations, political solidarity, and humanitarian actions. In this chapter, I will analyse the roles of, and actions taken by, Israeli peace and solidarity organizations that work in these varied ways, and I will suggest that, while their approaches may appear to be diametrically opposed, they are in fact overlapping and complementary.

This chapter will explore the roots of the Jewish Israeli peace and solidarity movement which began with the work of Martin Buber in the 1920s. It will then consider the ways in

which relationships between Jewish Israelis and Palestinians, and the evolution of the peace and solidarity movement, were affected by a number of changes which reconfigured those communities. When the State of Israel was established in 1948, it included Jewish Israeli society and the Palestinians; its composition changed again when Israel occupied the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967.

This chapter bases its discussion upon existing research, twenty in-depth interviews with Israeli solidarity and peace activists and social commentators,¹ and a survey of 600 Israeli citizens which was carried out in 2012 by an Israeli polling agency.^{2,3} The discussion is limited to a focus on Jewish Israeli peace and solidarity actions, and it does not focus on the role that Palestinian citizens of Israel play in resisting occupation and supporting their fellow Palestinians. It will instead focus on the types of engagement activities undertaken by Israeli solidarity and peace organizations, which include protective accompaniment, addressing Israeli public opinion, and legal work. It concludes with a sobering reflection on the challenges that face the Israeli peace and solidarity movement at the present time.

The evolution of Israeli peace and solidarity organizations

The first instances of Jewish peace activism date back to a period early in the British Mandate when the conflict between Arabs and Jews in Palestine became increasingly overt. A small number of Jewish intellectuals and political activists emerged to explore options for the possible resolution of the conflict. A small organization founded in 1925 called Brit Shalom (Covenant of Peace) was Palestine's first Jewish-recognized peace group. Its founders included Martin Buber, who sought peaceful coexistence between Arabs and Jews through the creation of a binational state within which both peoples would enjoy equal rights (Hermann 2009a, pp. 74–

76); however, the group failed to convince any significant sections of Arab and Jewish societies of its value (Flapan 1979, pp. 168–173). In the 1948 war, Zionists achieved their aim of Jewish state-hood in Palestine, and Buber rightly predicted that this would bring ‘a stunted peace, no more than non-belligerence, which at any moment, when any new constellation of forces arises, is liable to turn into war’ (Cited in Leon 1999). The wars that Buber had predicted came to pass, and, in June 1967, Israel occupied the West Bank and Gaza Strip. This brought about a change in the approach taken by the small minority of Israeli peace activists. After advocating unsuccessfully for a binational state based on equality, support emerged for the division of the land into two states. A small socialist group called Matzpen retained its commitment to a binational model, and its members were the first, alongside the Israeli Communist Party, to begin campaigning for withdrawal from the occupied oPt. However, their view put them in a distinct minority for several years in Israel, and the majority of Jewish citizens celebrated the ‘spectacular military victory in the six-day War’ and the ‘liberation’ of Jerusalem (Shlaim 2009, p. 30). Israel was inspired by post-war triumphalism and military and economic superiority over divided Arab countries.

Immediately after its 1967 victory, Israel witnessed the emergence of national religious parties and the birth of the settler’s movement, Gush Emunim (The Bloc of Faithful), which perceived the victory as the delivery of ‘God’s promise’ in relation to their right to the land of Israel. Gush Emunim immediately began to spearhead the campaign to build settlements in the oPt (Zertal and Eldar 2007). Shortly after the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, a new group called Courage and Peace emerged to counter the rapid growth of settlement building and it also highlighted the consequences of settlement construction for Israel. However, this Orthodox group did not achieve significant visibility in Israeli society and failed to integrate into the secular peace movement.

A number of groups with a military focus emerged in the late 1970s and worked to raise awareness about, and to contest, settlement policies. Egypt’s President Sadat visited

Jerusalem in 1977 to start negotiations about the territories occupied in 1967, and, as well as calling for Israel's withdrawal from Sinai, he sought to discuss the future of the oPt. The Israeli ruling party, Likud, drew up plans for intensive settlement building in the oPt, and this prompted action by a group of reservists who were appalled by the government's policy and saw it as a threat to the prospect of peace. 'The Officers' Letter', as it has become known, was sent in March 1978 by 350 officers and soldiers to Prime Minister Begin, and it warned of the impact of the proposed policy; the protest subsequently led to the formation of Peace Now (Shalom Achshav) (King 2007, pp. 250–255). Approximately 30,000 people attended one of the first demonstrations it organized, an unprecedented number, and, as the Peace Now movement continued to grow, it tried to stimulate mainstream public support in Israel through its use of slogans such as, 'Peace is Greater than Great Israel' and, 'Settlements – An Obstacle for Peace'. Its aim was to change opinions by sharing a 'peace message' as widely as possible among Jewish Israelis, but no steps were proposed as to how an end to the occupation would be achieved.

Peace Now's position in relation to certain types of action led it to withhold its support from other groups within the peace and solidarity movement. These groups included 'The Letter of the Hundred' which emerged in 1977 and was made up of reservist soldiers who refused to defend settlements in the oPt. Peace Now refused to support the group's endorsement of civil disobedience and any form of conscientious objection, either to military service in the oPt, or to participation in the Lebanon war of 1982. It did organize several protest actions against the war and the complicity of the Israeli army in the massacre of Palestinian refugees in Sabra and Shatila refugee camps, and one such demonstration which attracted 400,000 protesters 'passed into the folk-memory of Peace Now supporters as the high-point of the movement' (Rigby 1991, p. 120). Still, as Hermann argues, by the 1990s, Peace Now had suffered because of the limited effects it had achieved: it had 'failed to prevent the Lebanon War in 1982 although we knew it was coming in advance' (Hermann 2009a, p. 165) and had proved unable to break the

stalemate in Israeli society's views of the peace with the Palestinians. Although Peace Now changed attitudes within the liberal sections of society, 'it failed to reach a majority' of the population (Hermann 2009a, p. 160). Even after the Lebanon war, its activists proved unable to change the Israeli national consensus despite their calls for an end to the occupation of the oPt and their support for conscientious objectors.

The Yesh Gvul ('There Is a Limit') organization emerged in the early 1980s and was one of the first peace organizations to call on people to refuse to serve in the oPt and Lebanon; it also advocated for political conscientious objection. During the course of the Lebanon war, some 2,500 reserve soldiers signed the petition, and about 160 of them were tried and sentenced for their refusal to take part in the invasion. When the war in Lebanon ended, Yesh Gvul lost much of its impetus, although a small number of activists kept the organization alive as a support group for its existing members. A larger number of people joined later after the outbreak of the first *intifada* in 1987. Yesh Gvul and 'Courage to Refuse', another group that emerged during the *intifada*, promoted views that 'represented a face-to-face contradiction with [those of] the Israeli mainstream, in whose eyes military service had to be totally separate to soldiers' political views' (Hermann 2009a, p. 93); they also highlighted the implications of serving in the oPt (Kaminer 1996, p. 80).

This period also witnessed the emergence of several new women's organizations that demanded a withdrawal from Lebanon and an end to the occupation. The most visible were Four Mothers, Women in Black, and New Profile. Women in Black was established in 1988 and developed out of the group 'End the Occupation', which had sought out innovative forms of resistance. The group initiated a weekly vigil, first in the centre of Jerusalem and then in other cities in Israel, as a protest against the occupation. Four Mothers led a campaign which called for the withdrawal of Israeli mothers' sons from Lebanon, and some commentators attribute Israeli's withdrawal in 2000 to the successful actions of this group. Hermann (2009a, p. 167) argues that the success of women's

organizations ‘stemmed from the widely acknowledged and highly respected natural desire of women to protect their offspring’.

By the time of the outbreak of the *intifada* in 1987, the peace and solidarity camp in Israel could be characterized as a loosely structured movement composed of a number of organizations that had failed to make a significant impact on, or produce any shift in, Israeli public opinion. However, the *intifada* created a new atmosphere of resistance and hope. Within the oPt, a home-grown constructive nonviolent resistance movement had emerged and this inspired action in Israeli groups such as End the Occupation, Yesh Gvul and Women in Black, among others. In effect, the *intifada* led to the proliferation in Jewish Israeli society of the number of sectional groups, task groups and political groups focused on peace and solidarity (Keller 1987).

The so-called sectional groups represented professional organizations and bodies. They included people from the health sector such as doctors (who began to work under the name Physicians for Human Rights in 1988), mental health workers, social workers, psychologists, and others. Academics and writers, who formed their own organizations and held seminars and workshops, were primarily active against the closure of Palestinian universities. The emergence of several women’s organizations was significant, and they included the Women’s Network for Peace, Israeli Women Against the Occupation, and the aforementioned Women in Black.

Alongside sectional groups, task groups formed. Their actions were organized around specific issues and aimed to extend relief and provide concrete support and solidarity to Palestinians living under occupation. The Women’s Organization for Political Prisoners was formed in 1988 to support Palestinian women imprisoned for their political and social activities, and it also acted as a relief agency for prisoners. Similarly, a group of rabbis formed a task group and used an appeal to Jewish moral imperatives to challenge the degrading and humiliating treatment of Palestinians. The most well-known of these task groups is B’Tselem – the Israeli information centre for human rights – which was formed in

1988 and serves as an authoritative monitoring and dissemination organization that highlights human rights abuses in the oPt. Since the creation of B'Tselem, a number of organizations have been established to focus on human rights and legal issues (see Kaufman-Lacusta 2010, pp. 106–125).

Political groups have focused on direct action and on presenting clear political perspectives on how best the conflict can be resolved. This category of organization includes Twenty-First Year which was established in December 1987 and called for a refusal to collaborate with the occupation in all of its forms and manifestations. End of Occupation and Down with Occupation were similar groups, and, while both were linked to particular political organizations, they shared the same general message.

Some fundamental divisions exist within the peace and solidarity movement. Zionist groups accept the Jewish nature of the state as ontological, act within the Jewish national consensus, and argue against the occupation on the grounds that it harms Israel's moral fabric and image internationally. Non-Zionist groups question the assumptions Zionist groups make, and, taking Palestinian rights as their point of departure, envisage a society in which Palestinians and Jews are able to live as equal citizens. Peace and solidarity organizations are also divided in the ways they view the Israeli army. Some groups criticize the peace movement for having sold out to the political establishment and Zionist creed, while others criticize it for being naive and irrelevant. However, despite its marginality and failure to change policies, the peace and solidarity movement has been 'more successful at changing the overall climate of opinion' in the country and challenging some previously unchallenged national myths and narratives. This is true on both the elite and the general public levels' (Hermann 2009a, p. 165).

The support of Jewish Israelis for the peace movement has fluctuated over the years. The first *intifada* marked a high point in cooperation between Palestinians in the oPt and the Israeli peace movement, and the second *intifada* in 2000 marked its nadir. Unfortunately, the signing of the Oslo Accord in 1993 was seen by many in the peace movement as

the end of the conflict rather than as an opportunity for a new and different type of activism, and their reaction to it reveals the movement's political limitations. The peace movement was unwilling to criticize the government for its refusal to accept the right of Palestinians to an independent and sovereign state, or to condemn the killing of thirteen Palestinian citizens of Israel by Israeli police in October 2000 (Darweish 2010). As a consequence, public support for the peace process sank from fifty-five percent in mid-1999 to thirty-four percent in 2000 (Yaar and Hermann 2000). The years 2001 to 2003 are often considered to represent a 'dark tunnel' for the peace movement, and it was alienated by the public and the establishment in Israel during this time.

In the context of the second *intifada*, Peace Now showed itself to be fundamentally lost and without direction. Several scholars (Halper 2010, p. 17; Hermann 2009a; Kaminer 1996) have suggested that Peace Now operated within the framework of Zionist ideology and discourse in its dealings with the conflict. This passivity was most noticeable with regard to Israel's construction of the Separation Wall and the abandonment of the Palestinian minority in Israel, both of which were supported by a majority of Israeli Jews. The opposition to the Wall was limited to new and small young radical groups and some human rights and legal groups. The newcomers brought energy and creativity to the issues at hand, and they focused on activism, direct action, and building links and cooperation with Palestinian groups and individuals. They criticized the mainstream peace organizations for being old-fashioned, outdated, and part of the establishment. The newcomers made shrewd use of social media and organized highly visible cultural and musical events such as 'Rave Against the Occupation'. While these groups brought a fresh perspective and dynamism to the Israeli peace constituency, one thing did not change: they remained a minority with views on the margins of Jewish public opinion (Parry 2010).

Types of engagement undertaken by Israeli groups

The number of Israeli peace and solidarity groups grew to about ninety after the first *intifada* (King 2007, p. 253) and these organizations gave rise to a spectrum of activities that were conducted in support of Palestinian unarmed resistance to the occupation. This section will discuss the different ways in which Israeli organizations support Palestinians in their struggle to end the occupation. The strategies discussed here will include offensive co-resistance, solidarity, social action, and legal action.

Offensive co-resistance and direct protest action

Several Israeli organizations have been engaged in different forms of direct action against the construction of the Wall that reflect a distinctly pragmatic approach. They have also been involved in taking action against the forced displacement of Palestinian populations from Areas B and C in the West Bank, where Palestinians have been driven out as a result of Israeli occupation policy and attacks by Israeli settlers. Their activities have included solidarity visits as well as participation in demonstrations and confrontations with the army, and their actions form part of the struggle against the construction of the Wall and against the related threats to the wellbeing of Palestinians living under occupation. Perhaps the best known group involved in this kind of activity has been Anarchists Against the Wall (AATW), which was established in 2003 (Anarchists Against the Wall 2015). Initially, Israeli activists had tended to join Palestinians and international citizens in actions associated with the International Solidarity Movement, a Palestinian-led organization which began to operate during the second *intifada* and which primarily called for help from international activists (Carter Hallward 2013). Some Israeli participants in protest activities eventually decided that they needed to publicize their engagement as

Israeli citizens alongside Palestinians resisting the construction of the Wall. AATW was created with the principle of joint struggle in mind, and its Israeli involvement is always organized through local Palestinian popular committees rather than unilaterally. The AATW states that:

It is the duty of Israeli citizens to resist immoral policies and actions carried out in our name. We believe that it is possible to do more than demonstrate inside Israel or participate in humanitarian relief actions. Israeli apartheid and occupation isn't going to end by itself – it will end when it becomes ungovernable and unmanageable. It is time to physically oppose the bulldozers, the army and the occupation.

(Gordon and Grietzer 2013, p. 19)

It is important to note that, by engaging in forms of co-resistance alongside Palestinians, AATW activists were giving substance to their conviction that any sustainable future relationship between Israelis and Palestinians must be based on the principles of cooperation and equality. As an activist from AATW explained, 'systems of segregation are very powerful. The idea of entering a Palestinian village seems to most Israelis dangerous and unthinkable. Breaking it with an ethos of cooperation and equality is critical to political reconstruction on both sides. Imagining a joint future and partnership is essential'.

This sense that activists embody, through their actions, an alternative pattern of relationship between Palestinians and Israelis was expressed particularly strongly in a direct challenge to Israeli law made by the group *Lo Metsaytot* (Women Who Disobey). This network is made up of Israeli and Palestinian women who began taking day trips together to parks and the seaside in Israel; in the process, they repeatedly broke an Israeli law that restricted the entry of Palestinians into Israel. Their actions reject an ideology that keeps Israelis and Palestinians apart and establishes them as enemies. Our informant from Anarchists Against the Wall explained in 2013 that, through their activities, 'dozens of women experience a new reality of acquaintance, engaging in a joint political venture, overcoming fear and expressing solidarity. It is an act of civil disobedience [...]. We are claiming the freedom to build an alternative reality'.

Solidarity through accompaniment

Palestinians living within Area C in the West Bank have very few basic rights under the Israeli occupation.⁴ Popular resistance in such circumstances has its own distinctive character and often makes manifest its reliance on the support and solidarity of international and Israeli activists. Members of the Israeli group Ta'ayush ('living together' in Arabic) have worked alongside the villagers of the South Hebron Hills to powerful effect since the first year of the second *intifada*.⁵ Its Jewish and Palestinian members from Israel have worked in fields, helped dig wells, and repaired damage caused by the army and extremist settlers. In the process, they have experienced some of the violence and intimidation that Palestinians experience every day (Omer-Man 2011). As one of their founding members explained during this research, 'We used the direct action of humanitarian-aid and solidarity to support Palestinians'.

There is no hard and fast division of labour between Israeli peace and solidarity groups. Thus, one informant from Youth Against Settlements in Hebron expressed his appreciation not only of Ta'ayush, but also of activists with the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHD) when he noted that the organization had renovated the property his group uses as a community centre, with support from other Israeli groups. In similar fashion, when homes were destroyed by the army in the village of Makhoul in the Jordan Valley, and Israel prevented international humanitarian agencies from intervening, Israeli activists from Machsom ('Checkpoint') Watch made use of their contacts and turned to other agencies and sources to seek assistance: 'We put ads in the Israeli newspaper asking for donations to support the village and organised activity days to build new shelters'. In similar fashion, organizations like Israeli Physicians for Human Rights have provided medical care for patients and secured passage for ambulances by accompanying them through checkpoints en route to Palestinian hospitals (see Kaufman-Lacusta 2010, pp. 106–125).

A number of Palestinian activists interviewed for this research referred to the senses of empowerment and solidarity they derive from the presence of Israeli activists alongside them in their struggle insofar as it helps to counter their sense of isolation. This view was expressed particularly clearly by an activist from Nabi Saleh who explained that their cooperation has helped to build new bridges of trust: ‘Before we had the example of the soldiers shooting and killing; the settlers stealing our land. This is the first time I have experienced the other side of Israel – as partners in our struggle against a common enemy. They also suffer’. By their willingness and preparedness to accompany Palestinians in their encounters with settlers and soldiers from the occupation force, Israeli solidarity activists have performed a significant protective and defensive function simply by being present. The Israeli army’s code of conduct is markedly different when Israeli activists are there, and violence, while still severe, is significantly lower. Genuine appreciation was expressed by Palestinian activists for the ‘defensive line’ created by Israeli and international activists during clashes. As one informant put it: ‘They are a form of protection, they would be on the front line like a human chain against the army – like a shield’. This view was confirmed when Palestinians in the oPt were asked to rank what they considered to be the most important role played by Jewish Israeli activists. Forty-five percent of respondents mentioned the impact they can produce on Israeli society to the benefit of Palestinians; twenty-nine percent mentioned ‘protection’; and twenty-five percent cited the political support they provide. As well as recognizing key protective functions, these results indicate Palestinians’ clear and urgent desire that Israeli society should be addressed.

Addressing Israeli society

A number of Palestinian informants, while appreciating the presence of Israeli activists, said that the primary role of Israeli activists should involve influencing Jewish Israeli public opinion. As one Palestinian activist explained, ‘They should become a real radio, broadcasting on behalf of the

Palestinians, speaking the truth about the occupation'. Of course, activists the world over see it as part of their *raison d'être* to influence bystanders and the public at large. The challenge in this particularly intense ideological conflict is to extend the chain of influence from individual activists to their families and friends and then to the circles of influence they have within the Israeli society. This is not an easy task when this message runs absolutely counter to hegemonic discourse and the self-interest of the Jewish population. As one Israeli activist explained, 'the Israeli public has no interest in ending the occupation. It has no direct effect on their lives. They are not occupied'.

Attempts to raise awareness and gather testimony are, nevertheless, ongoing. One of the groups that has gained visibility within Israel and beyond is Breaking the Silence. It is made up of veteran combatants who have served in the Israeli military and have taken it upon themselves to expose the reality of everyday life in the oPt to the Israeli public. Its members gather testimonies from soldiers who are serving with the occupation force and then document the 'reality' of occupation. The testimonies they publish help to inform the Israeli public about the price that has to be paid for occupation, and they emphasize that occupation, by its very nature, rests on violence and the abuse of human rights. In January 2012, one of the founders of Breaking the Silence prefaced his interview with me and a fellow researcher by observing that Israeli society had no idea about the oPt. He remembered making a presentation to a class of former soldiers during which it emerged that half of them thought the oPt was part of Israel. He described his contribution to change in modest terms:

We are veterans of the second Intifada that try to increase resistance to occupation through gathering testimonies and publishing them. We try to use our experience and testimony as an educational tool. We tell stories to illustrate this. We also give an approval stamp to what Palestinians have been saying for years.

(see Breaking the Silence 2016)

While Breaking the Silence has focused on influencing Israeli public opinion, it has also targeted diasporic Jews, opinion

leaders, and decision makers overseas, and it organizes regular visits by Israelis to the oPt in order to inform them about the situation and the nature of the occupation.

Other groups concentrate not only on trying to influence the Jewish Israeli public, but also on questioning the deep cultural foundations of Israeli society that render the occupation of another people's lands completely acceptable. New Profile (2016) – a movement for the 'civilization of Israeli society' founded in 1988 – insists, for example, that Israeli society is permeated by militarism and a militaristic culture. It draws attention to the presence on the streets of large numbers of armed soldiers and the fact that senior ex-army personnel occupy the top positions in all spheres of Israeli life (Gor 2005). It demonstrates that militarism pervades every aspect of political, cultural, economic, public, and domestic life with the consequence that: 'Israeli culture generates an image of a world in which war was, is and will always be inevitable, a necessary and acceptable way of solving our problem' (New Profile 2002). New Profile's members use various forms of public education including exhibitions, presentations, and alternative summer camps to challenge militarism. They also advise and support Israeli 'refusers', those people with a conscientious objection to serving in the Israeli military.⁶ Their work highlights the ways in which militaristic values and prevailing power relationships are hegemonized through the media and the formal educational processes in Israel. As one of their activists explained: 'The last few years we have made more effort to talk to the Israeli public, creating a situation where people have to think. They might not agree with us but such encounters can resonate, generate interest'.

Israeli militaristic culture is based on what might be termed the 'founding myths' around which the society's identity has been constructed. One such narrative concerns the nature of the 1948 'War of Independence', which laid the basis for the Israeli state and was also the occasion for the destruction of Palestinian villages and the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from their land (Masalha 1992; Pappé 2006). One group that has sought to challenge this pillar of Israeli-Jewish self-identity has been Zochrot ('Remembering'), which was

founded in 2002 with the aim of bringing knowledge of the Palestinian Nakba ('Catastrophe' in Arabic) to Israelis. It assumes that awareness and recognition of the Nakba, and Jewish Israeli's acknowledgement that they carry some responsibility for this tragedy, are necessary conditions for any meaningful process of reconciliation between the two peoples. Their activities include exhibitions, tours to destroyed Palestinian villages, the erection of signs in Hebrew and Arabic to indicate the sites of destroyed villages, the collection of oral histories and testimonies, and work with teachers to help them introduce the issue into formal and informal curricula. This is challenging work, as one of their members noted:

We know Israelis know very little about the Nakba. Knowing about it is to acknowledge it. When you learn about the Nakba you understand that there were and are many morally wrong things done, and attempts to resolve the conflict neglect this. We have a responsibility for the future, to open the possibility for reconciliation between Jews and Arabs living here.

Legal work

Israeli partners have helped Palestinians to navigate the Israeli legal system in successful bids to resist the expropriation of their land which can occur either during the routing and construction of the Wall or through the actions of settlers. In particular, Rabbis for Human Rights (RFHR) have played a role in challenging the military expulsion orders imposed on villagers in the South Hebron Hills, and the Yesh Din ('There is Law' in Hebrew) was closely involved in the case that resulted in the rerouting of the Wall near the village of Bil'in. Both of these organizations illustrate particular facets of the broader Israeli peace and solidarity movement in work which challenges the threats that occupation poses to human rights.

RFHR was founded in 1988 during the first *intifada*. During its early years, according to one of its founding members, 'we saw ourselves as an announcing tool rather than a grassroots organization [...] By our presence we could announce there was a more spiritual and moral approach to issues... Five rabbis emerging from a taxi can create an impact!' By the

1990s, RFHR's main focus had shifted and its members were involved in the formation of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions. During the second *intifada*, RFHR's emphasis shifted again towards work in support of Palestinian farmers. Some of its members were involved in the formation of Ta'ayush, and – alongside Ta'ayush in the South Hebron Hills – they were instrumental in obtaining court orders affirming the right of Palestinian villagers to have military protection from settlers when accessing their lands (Darweish 2012). A member of RFHR explains:

We have one foot in the grass-roots and the other in the corridors of power. We are now trying to develop a third foot. We obtain court victories but these have no impact on the public. So now we are using social media to reach at certain targeted sectors. In some ways we are the right-wing of the anti-occupation movement. We say the occupation must end for the sake of human rights, peace is necessary for human rights – but not what kind of peace settlement.

The peace and solidarity movement in Israel is small, and a map of the different groups would resemble a family-tree: activists move from one group to another, creating new ones in response to fresh challenges or opportunities. Just as activists from RFHR participated in the establishment of ICAHD and Ta'ayush, so activists from Machsom Watch helped to set up Yesh Din, another group involved in legal challenges to occupation practices and abuses. This move in 2005 followed the realization that, while there was a need to report abuses and infringements at checkpoints, Palestinians also needed legal support.

Yesh Din's work has developed along three related tracks. Track one has focused on law enforcement in relation to the actions of Israeli settlers in the oPt. By the end of 2013, Yesh Din had handled over one thousand cases, each one involving volunteers in documenting a case, escorting Palestinians to police stations to report an incident, and taking on power of attorney in order to follow up on complaints until a file was closed.⁷ The second similar track was carried out in relation to dealing with complaints against members of the Israeli occupation forces who stand idly by while abuses are perpetrated by Jewish settlers against Palestinians.⁸ The third track has involved dealing with land confiscation and illegal

seizures, usually by settlers, but also by the state. In a typical situation, Yesh Din will complain to the police on behalf of a Palestinian landowner, petition the High Court to issue an administrative order of expulsion against the settlers, and then petition the court to enforce its own order. Yesh Din has also published reports which have been used to engage decision makers and raise issues in the public domain.⁹

Challenges facing Israeli peace and solidarity activists

Israeli peace and solidarity organizations face considerable challenges as they advocate and lobby for an end to the Israeli occupation of the oPt. They are working against sophisticated social and political structures and a set of entrenched values and attitudes that reject Palestinian political and human rights. Hermann (2009b, p. 262), an Israeli peace researcher, has argued that peace activists ‘can be critical of a specific policy – and listened to by public and national and leaders – as long as they do not take it upon themselves to publicly expose the basic defects of the overall sociopolitical order or call for far-reaching political transformation’.

Like their fellow Palestinian activists against the Israeli occupation, Israeli activists have managed to hold onto their humanity while also summoning the courage to put their bodies and their livelihoods repeatedly at risk by openly defying the occupation under which they are forced to live. The Jewish Israeli activists interviewed for this research inspire by example, and they show courage in sticking to their moral and political convictions in the face of the incomprehension and animosity of their fellow citizens for whom they remain deviants, undesirables, or even traitors.

It is important to understand the nature of the challenges Israeli activists face in pursuing their vocation. The Palestinian nonviolence movement needs to find ways to enable Jewish Israeli activists both to be more effective within their own

society and to build the necessary infrastructure for peace. The strategy must be founded on achievable objectives, and must be able to win over more sections and professional groups within Jewish Israeli society. In order for progress to be made, Palestinians and Israeli activists against the occupation need to develop joint plans to address Israeli society.

Public indifference to the occupation

Israeli peace activists are marginalized within their own society. Moreover, they are viewed as threats to the national interest by some of the more right-wing networks in Israel, and the offices of several organizations having been damaged on a number of occasions. As one of our informants, an active member of Machsom Watch, explained: ‘those who admit to having done terrible things, they are viewed as traitors. My friends distance themselves from anything to do with Machsom Watch’. This compounds a situation in which popular Palestinian resistance is seen as a security threat. Another activist, a regular participant in Friday protests, reflected ruefully on the lack of impact such actions had on the Israeli public: ‘It is not so much that the protest actions are delegitimised, it is that they are virtually non-existent for the Israeli public. There is no reporting of the Friday protests’.

Loss of hope

Isolated and marginalized, Jewish Israeli activists have to work hard to combat a loss of hope for the future. ‘The main challenge we face is how to engage more Israeli activists. Despair and alienation prevent many activists from engaging with education and advocacy in Israeli society’, one explained. Another activist pointed out that ‘once you start to lose hope you start to question the nature of your commitment, you start to lose the will to continue the struggle, especially when the cost in terms of social pressures from friends and family, aligned with the stress of occupying a different moral universe

from the majority of your fellow citizens, takes its toll'.¹⁰ Israeli peace and solidarity activists face a significant challenge when they seek to gain interest and provoke action amongst the Israeli public, and this can be daunting and depressing. As one activist said, 'we are all sinking into a swamp. The responsibility is on Israelis to change. We are the Masters'. Activists argue that resistance combined with boycott offers the best hope for the future. Boycotts bolster the work of Israeli activists because, through them, the world puts Israel in a position where it cannot ignore the occupation.

So, how do activists sustain themselves and keep their sanity in their struggle? One strategy simply involves counting their 'small victories': 'For us, a small success is a house not demolished, settlement plans frustrated. Also, when we bring Israelis who did not want to know to a demonstration and they experience the violence from the soldiers, for the first time they are victims of their own soldiers'. Another method, one which has been adopted by social, religious, and politically deviant minorities throughout history, involves withdrawal. Demonstrations can offer occasions for socializing with like-minded comrades away from hostile or indifferent people, and increasingly electronic networks and various forms of social media allow people to create their own virtual communities. Others survive through pure will and stoicism. As one veteran activist confessed, 'You never know in advance what is going to work – sometimes something might happen! [...] I have to confess I have given up on the Israeli public – we lost them along the way'. Others continue their struggle because each time they witness the abuses perpetrated on Palestinians in the name of Israel, their anger, shame, and the desire to redeem their own society galvanizes them back into action.

It is important to recognize that many Israeli activists do get burned out. They devote such massive amounts of time, energy, and commitment to the struggle that their personal and professional lives suffer. When their substantive achievements are so small and seemingly insignificant in the context of the wider picture, it is not surprising that a high 'drop-out' rate exists as people become exhausted, dispirited, and weary. Consequently, it is important to acknowledge the strength of

will, the resilience, and the moral stature of such people. Probably the bulk of Israeli solidarity activists would define themselves as secular Jews, but many of them would identify with the sentiments expressed by an activist from RFHR:

What sustains me? Maybe it is like moving deckchairs on the Titanic but some changes have happened. In Judaism we say, 'Save a life and you save the world'. Our work at the micro-level will not change everything, but it is important that we should play our part and have faith in God or whatever that things are moving and you never know what effect your actions might have.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the emergence of the Israeli peace and solidarity movement and presented the ways in which Israeli organizations engage with the occupation through offensive co-resistance, solidarity, accompaniment, and protection. Analysis of the range of activities carried out by Israeli organizations can be understood in terms of their adherence to either principled or pragmatic theoretical approaches. Some organizations tend to adopt more pragmatic approaches focused on direct action and BDS to undermine the occupying power and transform the asymmetry of power; others are focused on education, protection, and legal and humanitarian actions which tend to be more in line with the principled approach. However, based on our interviews, it is possible to conclude that, on the ground, there is significant overlap.

Analysis of the Israeli peace and solidarity movement reveals that it has a very significant role to play, both in Palestinian and Israeli societies and in contributing to an end to the occupation. This is because they present a counter-discourse to the dominant narrative presented by the Israeli government and political forces in Israel which would deny the rights of Palestinians. However, Israeli organizations have struggled with limited success to engage with Jewish Israeli society through education and awareness-raising programmes, advocacy, and legal work.

In response, the Palestinian resistance movement and Palestinian political groups should take a leading role and have open discussions with Israeli peace and solidarity groups in order to develop a shared strategy that would be carried out through joint activities and which would work to end the occupation. This strategy might combine pragmatic and principled approaches and create a new shared culture and vision within movements that would work through co-resistance and cooperation to end the occupation. In any process designed to develop such a strategy, each side could contribute insights and understanding about their own society and the challenges it might face. A joint co-resistance movement could be established in coordination with local popular resistance groups and it would address specific issues that affect the wellbeing of the Palestinian community, such as land confiscation, land access problems, and the need for protection from the army and settlers. It is important that such cooperation will involve agreement on concrete and achievable objectives. A strategy could also be developed to address Israeli society with the aim of 'winning over' sections of Israeli society and strengthening the weight of nonviolent pressure on the Israeli state.

Palestinians should join Israeli groups in the struggle to transform Israeli society. Their role would involve addressing Israeli society's concerns, peacefully communicating stories about the destruction caused by the occupation, and raising awareness among Israeli Jews that they have a vested interest in ending the occupation. It is conceivable that Palestinian and Israeli activists could begin to strategize together and develop a plan of action that would promote active roles and responsibilities for Jewish Israelis in the struggle for peace and an end to the occupation.

Any strategy based on either principled or pragmatic approaches should focus on shifting the power relations between the occupier and the occupied to erode the pillars of power that maintain the occupation; it should also provide an alternative to the status quo and offer an inclusive vision of society based on equality and social justice. These sorts of approaches must also include and be developed together with

the Palestinian citizens of Israel because they hold a strategic position in both Palestinian and Jewish Israeli societies.

Notes

- 1 All interviews are in the possession of the author, M. Darweish.
- 2 The polling agency describes Palestinian citizens of Israel through the use of the term 'Arabs and Jews in Israel'.
- 3 Portions of the research for this chapter are based on work carried out with Professor Andrew Rigby as part of the fieldwork for *Popular Protest in Palestine: The Uncertain Future of Unarmed Resistance* (Darweish and Rigby 2015).
- 4 Area C consists of sixty percent of the occupied Palestinian territory and remains under full Israeli civil and security control.
- 5 The tag line of Ta'ayush (2016) is 'Israelis and Arabs striving together to end the Israeli occupation and to achieve full civil equality through daily non-violent direct action'.
- 6 Another group which works with 'resisters' is the Druze Initiative Committee (Hassan 2014).
- 7 According to Yesh Din's records, over ninety percent of cases are closed by the police due to 'lack of evidence'. For more information, see Yesh Din (2016).
- 8 We were informed that research by Breaking the Silence has revealed that soldiers are not aware that, while they are expected to protect settlers, they also have a responsibility to protect Palestinians.
- 9 Yesh Din is a 'hybrid' organization insofar as it has a professional staff and a volunteer body who participate in the collection and checking of information, and serve on the organization's steering committee, which is composed entirely of active volunteers.
- 10 There can also be real costs in terms of arrests, fines, and imprisonment. The establishment of a Human Rights Defenders Fund was prompted because of the challenge involved in finding funds to cover mounting legal costs due to the increased state assault on anti-occupation activists within Israel (see HRDF 2015).

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14

Humanitarian organizations and international humanitarian law in the occupied Palestinian territory.

Aleksandra Godziejewska

Introduction

In the post-Cold War era, humanitarians have increasingly debated the role of traditional principles such as ‘humanity’, ‘impartiality’, and ‘neutrality’ in humanitarian aid. Questions have focused on how to relate these principles to more recent concerns such as right-based approaches to international aid and peacebuilding. In response to them, humanitarian organizations have made substantial revisions to organizational mandates that promoted ideas of sustainable approaches to humanitarian aid. They have also taken into account relevant political, social, and cultural contexts, and assumed responsibility for the long-term impacts of humanitarian actions. This shift in emphasis has resulted in a need to engage with political actors; it has also cemented the strong position of advocacy and international humanitarian law (IHL) in humanitarian work in conflict areas.

In this chapter, I analyse the unique roles that humanitarian actors and the nature of their work play in the process of transforming the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. The chapter focuses on assessing if and how, by adhering to IHL principles, humanitarian actors are able to play a part in the transformation of this seemingly intractable conflict. I propose that the adoption of a rights-based approach to humanitarian aid – and, in particular, a strong focus on IHL in humanitarian programming and advocacy – contributes to addressing the roots of violence. Links are shown to exist between humanitarian work in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) and theories of conflict transformation. The particular ability of humanitarian aid to contribute to the transformation of social systems, conflict issues, actors, and the rules of the conflict is explored here.

In order to cast light on the issues and dilemmas generated by links between humanitarian work and conflict transformation, face-to-face interviews were conducted with twelve representatives of leading humanitarian agencies working in the oPt. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the United Nations (UN), and donors were all involved, and the selection of representatives reflected the relative significance of each organization's contributions to policy discussions and to the formulation of wider humanitarian, development, and advocacy strategies for the oPt. The organizations all belong to coordination networks – the Association of International Development Agencies (AIDA), the Palestinian NGO Network (PNGO), the UN Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG), or the UN Humanitarian Country Team (HCT). These groups regularly meet and engage in discussions in order to formulate common methods of operation and joint advocacy positions. All of the research participants held senior positions within their organizations at the time of the research. They were often senior policy or advocacy managers of international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs) and UN agencies, senior communications or international relations managers in local NGOs, or senior policy or humanitarian representatives of donors. The interview narratives reflected the opinions and strategies prominent within the humanitarian system in the

oPt. They also captured some important internal tensions and revealed the evolving relationship of aid with conflict transformation.

The discussion in this chapter is structured as follows. After a brief presentation of the context, I explore aspects of IHL and rights-based approaches to humanitarian aid. The chapter goes on to discuss methods of operation in use within the humanitarian sector, together with guidelines for humanitarian programming in the oPt. Special attention is given to the link between these methods of operation and theories of conflict transformation and the manner in which social systems might be transformed. Humanitarian advocacy is then proposed, in the context of the oPt, as a way to address the roots of conflict and to include new actors in transformative action. Finally, the dilemmas involved in humanitarian work based on IHL are discussed.

The legal status of Israeli occupation

Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territory began in 1967 after the Six-Day War between Israel, Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. To this day, Israel continues to occupy the West Bank, East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip, and the Golan Heights. Israel claims that its occupation of the Gaza Strip ended with its disengagement in 2005; during that process, the Israeli army withdrew from Gaza City, and all settlements within the territory of the Gaza Strip were dismantled. However, the legal status of the Gaza Strip continues to be disputed. Some insist that Gaza is still occupied and that Israeli obligations towards this territory have not changed. These arguments are primarily based on the territorial unity of the West Bank and Gaza as specified in the Oslo Accords (both are vital to the self-determination of the Palestinian people and therefore partial withdrawal does not end occupation); occupation is also understood to continue while the Israelis exercise effective control of land and maritime borders, territorial waters, and air space (Darcy and Reynolds 2010; Dinstein 2009; Scobbie

2006; Stephanopoulos 2006; Van der Vyver 2009). While others claim that occupation in the Gaza Strip has ended and that the law of occupation should no longer be applied (Samson 2010; Shany 2009), the international community – including the UN Security Council, the UN General Assembly, a majority of international governments, and international human rights organizations – maintain that Gaza remains under occupation.

The occupied status of the territory is affirmed by the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the UN General Assembly, and the UN Security Council. This official occupied status triggers and mandates the application of international law including The Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907, and the Fourth Geneva Convention (IVGC) in the areas occupied by the Israeli state. IVGC regulates the roles and obligations of all parties in the conflict. These parties include the Occupying Power, recognized authorities in the occupied territory, and relevant third parties, including international and humanitarian organizations.

The conflict between Israelis and Palestinians continues to be characterized by ongoing violations of IHL (B'Tselem 2013, 2015; Diakonia 2013a). The expansion of settlements, destruction of private property, denial of access to land and natural resources, forced displacement, recurring hostilities, the Gaza blockade, and illegal administration of the occupation represent just some of the daily violations the occupying power has been seen to commit to the detriment of the protected population (Baker 2012; B'Tselem 2013, 2015; Diakonia 2013a, 2013b; HRW 2010, 2012). IHL violations are creating a major humanitarian problem in the oPt, where they continue to weaken the protected status of the occupied population and maintain destructive levels of power asymmetry. The enduring lack of adherence to IHL contributes to the downward spiral of violence, and it significantly undermines any chances for meaningful peace negotiations that might lead to a durable conflict settlement (AIDA 2015; Diakonia 2013b).

The development of rights-based approaches to humanitarian aid

A great deal has been written about the shifting nature of humanitarian principles and philosophies. During the 1970s and 1980s, humanitarianism became a much more self-conscious movement than it had previously been, and humanitarians keenly debated their roles and the guiding principles they observed. In the 1990s, analysts and practitioners began to question directly both the fundamentals and interpretations of traditional humanitarian values such as humanity, impartiality, and neutrality, as well as the character of humanitarian operations. In the late 1970s Jean Pictet (1979), Vice president of the International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC), offered the view – often considered the basis for the traditional approach – that humanitarian principles are principally concerned with ‘an altruistic and disinterested love’ characterized by charity, pity, and compassion (p. 14). According to the ICRC approach presented by Pictet, humanitarian aid provides access to the ‘minimum things’ needed to ensure human respect (Pictet 1979, p. 17), and so the ICRC has primarily concerned itself with alleviating suffering. As Pictet (Pictet 1979, p. 22) noted, the ICRC ‘refuses to weigh the merits or faults of this or that individual’. Pictet (Pictet 1979, p. 39) went further to argue that ‘One cannot be at one and the same time the champion of justice and of charity. One must choose, and the ICRC has long since chosen to be a defender of charity’. Since the 1990s, humanitarians have aggressively critiqued such interpretations of humanitarian aid on the basis that they are increasingly irrelevant to the changing political reality in many conflict zones.

The post-Cold-War era witnessed the emergence of the ‘liberal peace’ concept (Duffield 2001) and the global domination of the Western values enshrined in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The UDHR promoted freedom and justice for every human individual, and encouraged international and intergovernmental organizations

to pay more attention to the obligations state institutions have towards their citizens. Many international humanitarian organizations began to search for new approaches suitable to complex and conflict-prone settings, and some of these organizations recognized that adopting rights-based approaches to humanitarian aid constituted the most appropriate and sustainable strategy for present circumstances (see, among others, CARE n.d.; Cornwall and Nyamu-Musebmi 2004; Darcy 1997; Dufour *et al.* 2004; Gready 2008; Gready and Ensor 2005; Kindornay and Carpenter 2012; Mackintosh 2000; Oxfam America 2001; Slim 1997a, 1997b, 2001). In the oPt, this revision of traditional humanitarian approaches was first noticed in the 2000s. After the signing of the Oslo Accord in 1993, and as a reflection of peacebuilding strategies, technical and development support began to be promoted, and significant donor funds were invested in infrastructure (Abu-Zahra 2005). Yet, many organizations, as well as some of the humanitarian and development-focused donors, quickly realized that traditional development is not sustainable under military occupation. The realities of occupation turned their focus towards the value of the right-based aid embedded in International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and International Human Rights Law (IHRL) (AIDA 2014; Azza 2012; Delen 2008; ECHO 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015; OCHA 2015; OHCHR 2014).^{1,2}

A rights-based approach to aid draws on a conceptual framework, founded on international human rights standards, which seeks to promote and protect human rights. It is oriented towards the analysis of inequalities so that action can be taken which is aimed at transforming the discriminatory practices and unequal distribution of power that often constitute the root causes of humanitarian problems. A rights-based approach elevates its beneficiaries to the status of ‘rights-holders’ and insists that states are ‘duty-bearers’ with rights and obligations specified and regulated by the provisions of international law. According to rights-based approaches, humanitarian aid is to be delivered as a moral duty, rather than as an empathetic gesture (Slim 2002).

The basis for a rights-based approach to humanitarian aid can be found in the provisions of IHL, which is the primary reference point in situations of war and conflict. IHL is a powerful tool for humanitarians, since it was specifically designed to limit the excessive use of force by belligerents and to provide minimum levels of protection for civilians during acts of war. IHL continues to preserve the delicate balance between the principles of humanity and military necessity (Cannizzaro 2014; Cassese 2014; Dolzer 2002; Meron 2000; Schmitt 2010, and others), but, since World War Two, there have been continuous attempts to raise its standards for civilian protection, a trend which indicates the increasing humanization of war (Meron 2000). Its supporters advocate the unconditional and universal character of obligations and the ‘inalienability of individual rights’ for protected persons (Meron 2009, pp. 623–624). They claim that Article One of the Geneva Conventions (GC) binds parties ‘to respect [it] *in all circumstances*’ (Meron 2009, p. 622). IHL prohibits unnecessary suffering for civilians, promotes the principle of distinction between civilians and combatants, and supports proportionality, which makes it necessary to weigh a proposed military gain against the possible unintentional damage it might cause (Cannizzaro 2014). Therefore, many researchers and practitioners strongly support the move towards mainstreaming rights-based protection and a strong role for IHL in humanitarian projects (Mackintosh 2000; Slim 1997a, 2001).

This section has outlined the changing trends in humanitarian aid which have been produced by shifting interpretations of humanitarian principles and by a new focus on IHL and rights-based approaches. The next section turns to a discussion of the findings that emerged from field interviews with humanitarian leaders working in Israel and the oPt. The interviews concerned the role of humanitarian actors in the transformation of the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians.

Humanitarian programming based on international humanitarian law

This section discusses the character of humanitarian work and the rationale for choosing strategies for humanitarian action in the oPt; the analysis focuses on the possibility of transforming social systems inside conflict zones (see Lederach 2003; Maney *et al.* 2006; Miall 2004; Schwerin 1995; Väyrynen 1991). Findings from the interviews conducted for this research clearly indicate that humanitarian programming in the oPt has shifted away from the traditional needs-based approach applied by humanitarian actors in health emergencies, natural disasters, and situations of war. In cases of protracted man-made crisis – like that produced by prolonged occupation – in which continued IHL violations are committed by the occupying power, humanitarian actors have made substantial revisions to the strategies on which they have traditionally relied. A rights-based approach to humanitarian aid has become increasingly widespread among donors, NGOs, and UN agencies working in the oPt. This approach has been broadly discussed and promoted within coordination forums such as the UN-led Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), the UN Inter-Cluster Coordination Group, and the Association of International Development Agencies (AIDA), and it places IHL at the centre of humanitarian programming.

All interviewees agreed that humanitarian programming should concentrate on addressing the IHL violations which generate the majority of humanitarian needs within the oPt. As one respondent who represented an international NGO stated, ‘It is not sufficient in any way, shape, or form, appropriate, or effective, to just deliver the material aid without addressing those core issues, denouncing the violations’. Humanitarian programming based on IHL involves designing actions, focused on the protection of the occupied population, which address IHL violations or prevent them from taking place. As several respondents pointed out, various strategies can be applied to reduce the impact of existing threats to civilian protection. This goal can be achieved via humanitarian

assistance delivered in the form of material, financial, or legal support given to the victims of IHL violations. This can involve the provision of housing materials, food, or blankets, for example. It can also be realized by enhancing the resilience and resistance capacity of local communities so that they can withstand the negative consequences of the occupier's illegal actions. This approach refers mainly to efforts that can contribute to the prevention of the displacement of protected populations in the West Bank. It also helps protect vulnerable groups such as the people who live in the Access Restricted Area of the Gaza Strip (a place exposed to regular military incursions) and are denied access to its agricultural land; other beneficiaries would include people who suffer the long-term effects of the blockade of the Gaza Strip.³ As a number of interviewees noted, the prevention of displacement can be achieved by providing shelter and stable sources of water, facilitating access to land, and supporting livelihoods or education in the local community. Restricted access to natural resources – a consequence of Israeli military rule – results in poverty for local communities. Additionally, a discriminatory planning system relating to Area C forces communities to abandon their lands and begin moving to cities in Areas A or B.⁴

Actions that prevent displacement require very different methodologies from those traditionally used by humanitarian actors. These new methods aim to classify protection vulnerabilities and mitigate the risks of IHL violations rather than identify beneficiaries on the basis of needs. This approach to humanitarian programming positions humanitarian aid far from the concepts of pity, charity, alleviation of suffering, and compassion. Although this approach does not completely exclude the idea of empathy, it shifts the primary focus of humanitarian aid toward ensuring the rights, access to justice, and protection of local populations.

The majority of respondents positioned IHL as a necessary entry point for any type of humanitarian programming in the oPt. Many admitted that IHL was already playing an important role inside their organizations or expressed their commitment to moving towards an increased reliance on it. All of the

participants in this research believed that allowing a strong role for IHL in humanitarian programming would constitute a new phenomenon for many humanitarian actors. This shift in practice towards IHL can be interpreted as a contribution to the transformation of the oppressive social system which maintains the conflict.⁵ By preventing IHL violations from happening and providing support to their victims, humanitarian actors are trying to address imbalanced access to resources for local populations inside a conflict zone. Humanitarian actors make efforts towards reducing the growing inequalities, and the lack of respect, experienced by the occupied population, effects which are largely produced by the ongoing occupation and continuing colonization of the occupied Palestinian territory. This work might well play a role in conflict de-escalation, and, while it is unlikely to serve to motivate the end of the occupation itself, the approach has the capability to increase the sense of dignity, and reduce the levels of uncertainty, among people in the occupied population.

Activities that prevent displacement have an indirect role in maintaining the possibility of a two-state solution, since they help keep the occupied population from leaving their properties. Interviewees were keen to emphasize that it is not their aim to contribute to a two-state situation: this is not their mandated purpose. Rather, by working in the occupied Palestinian territory, they somehow preserve the status quo and help guard against the threat of the West Bank's annexation by Israel. It can be argued, therefore, that humanitarian aid becomes an instrument for political stabilization, and this seems rather dissonant with ideas about transformation. Paradoxically though, when transformation resulting from IHL-based humanitarian programming contributes to the preservation of the status quo, it can be understood as a way of ensuring that the underlying rules of occupation are respected, and this respect is something the Israeli right-wing government has been continuously undermining. Nonetheless, preserving the status quo is not really the desired intention of most humanitarian actors. Interview respondents believed that the delivery of aid is insufficient in itself, and is indeed not

sustainable in the context of the oPt, and so humanitarian actors need also to address the root causes of IHL violations. This goal can be achieved when the causes of IHL violations are addressed through humanitarian advocacy.

Humanitarian advocacy based on international humanitarian law

All of the interview respondents placed a strong emphasis on the complementarity of IHL-based advocacy with the delivery of humanitarian aid. Advocacy is a strategy that involves building social pressure in order to bring about political and social change, and it typically involves targeting actors outside of upper-level peace negotiations. Advocacy also has the power to transform the problematic issues that are considered to underlie a dispute.⁶

The interview narratives reveal that it is not enough to provide humanitarian assistance while ignoring the original IHL violations; such an approach may, in fact, lead to the impression that IHL violations are actually ‘lawful’. As a UN official pointed out, ‘The question is, what are you doing to address the actual violation in the first place, because the violation is the demolition [of property]; therefore providing services after the demolition [...] is almost like saying it is in line with IHL’. A practical example of this dilemma involves the payment of rental subsidies to families whose houses have been demolished. While this step responds to a humanitarian and protection need, it may cause more harm in the long run if no action is taken to prevent these kinds of demolition from occurring in the first place. A related issue concerns reconstruction in Gaza and how to support the rebuilding of damaged houses without justifying the Israeli security narrative and its violations of the principles of proportionality and distinction.

The provision of legal aid to Palestinians in Israeli courts in East Jerusalem also prompts dilemmas. Humanitarian

imperatives would seem to urge humanitarian actors to provide legal support to people in need, but the problem is that, according to IHL, Israeli jurisdiction and control over East Jerusalem is illegal based on the area's annexation in 1967. In all of the situations mentioned above, organizations might make productive use of advocacy. In the last case, for example, it might be used to stress that the provision of legal aid in Israeli courts in East Jerusalem does not constitute recognition of the system as lawful and that there is a need for political change. These situations have imperfect solutions, but organizations provide legal aid in order to support Palestinian individuals at the current time because no other better tools for protection are available. Still, support needs to be represented carefully if acts such as demolition are to remain palpably unlawful and attempts to ameliorate suffering are not to conceal its causes.

One of the ways to deal with these dilemmas is to embed advocacy within humanitarian action. Through advocacy, humanitarian actors can stress that the rights of the occupied population are inalienable and must be respected. As interview respondents observed, advocacy can prevent the waste of humanitarian resources; it can also prevent some IHL violations from happening and contribute to long-term change. According to this view, humanitarian actors carry an ethical responsibility to advocate both for change and for ethical political leadership that respects the provisions of international law. Some of the interviewed representatives from humanitarian agencies indicated that humanitarian organizations have an important role to play in pushing for Israel's accountability for its actions.

To be effective, advocacy must move beyond addressing isolated events. Several research participants insisted that advocacy strategies should engage with long-term goals and overarching political events and processes. While a variety of advocacy strategies are invoked by humanitarian actors in the oPt, many actors design activities and deliver messages in line with the coordinated AIDA advocacy strategy. AIDA's primary long-term objectives are to 'support Palestinian's presence and right to self-determination and to realize full

social, political, and economic integration between Gaza, East Jerusalem and the rest of the West Bank' (AIDA 2014). In working to achieve these goals, AIDA directs its advocacy towards European Union (EU) actors. One of the respondents argued that its aims are still too limited in nature and that humanitarians should be targeting states at the highest political levels, such as at the UN Security Council, for example. Other interviewees indicated that there is also work to be done on corporate responsibility which would involve targeting businesses and cooperatives. Humanitarian advocacy already concentrates on issues related to the cooperation of various actors, states, or private businesses with settlement industries and projects that support the occupation's infrastructure, by collaborating on construction of the Separation Wall or providing equipment for the Israeli military, for example. A lot of advocacy work has focused, too, on labelling settlement products sold within EU nations (ECCAP n.d.).

Advocacy strategies are clearly oriented towards the inclusion of actors other than those involved in the bilateral peace negotiations, brokered by the United States (US), which have been ongoing between Israel and the Palestinian National Authority since 2000. Many humanitarians believe that the inclusion of EU Member States and the Security Council might stimulate the transformation of the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, since, in their view, these actors are able to escalate pressure on Israel to adhere to IHL standards. Attempts to involve the private sector and mobilize the influence of its members are part of a similar strategy which aims to broaden the number and type of influential actors who might help to trigger political change. Furthermore, the respondents believe that humanitarian IHL-based advocacy has the power to reshape dominant narratives and focus them on the most substantial issues which drive the conflict.

Several interview respondents indicated that IHL can also play an important role in transforming the discourse of conflict negotiations. These humanitarian workers pointed out that the lack of IHL language in the Oslo Accords is very problematic. Because these documents did not explicitly recognize the Israeli occupation of Palestine as such, they created a loophole

which allowed for further construction of Israeli settlements and exploitation of natural resources in the West Bank. A fundamental weakness of the Oslo agreements was that they presented the conflicting parties and their key issues on equal terms. West Bank aquifers were referred to as containing ‘joint water’, for example. The application of IHL in political negotiations could clarify both the asymmetrical nature of issues such as this and the relations that underpin them. It would, for instance, make a significant impact on the negotiations if an IHL approach highlighted the fact that an occupier has no sovereign right to the resources of an occupied territory. Several respondents noted that during past peace negotiations, there has been a tendency to brush IHL under the carpet, since a strong focus on IHL has been thought to restrict the solutions available to negotiators. Yet, ironically, the purpose of focusing on IHL in an asymmetrical conflict is to protect the weaker party from the abuses of war by the stronger party. The humanitarian workers interviewed for this research believed that there is evidence that occupied Palestinians are being pushed to compromise fundamental rights, and so are being asked to travel an unsustainable path towards undesirable ends. These interview respondents argued that, without a proper assurance of rights, there will be no security; from this perspective, it is in the self-interests of the Israeli government to negotiate a fair and sustainable deal with the Palestinians.

The dilemmas of humanitarian work based on international humanitarian law

The fusion of humanitarian and rights-based approaches in the Israeli-Palestinian situation is not without significant dilemmas. Several of the humanitarian leaders interviewed for this research argued that, when humanitarian programming relies on advocacy, its work comes dangerously close to being ‘politics’. Some respondents asserted that their organizations cannot legitimately claim to engage in the area of international

law because their organizational mandates do not justify a 'legal' focus. However, several other respondents claimed to have adopted a rights-based approach in their programming partly because this is a requirement if they are to win funding from certain donors. Interviewees noted that many humanitarian organizations continue to insist that IHL-based programming remains the remit of advocacy or human rights organizations, but, paradoxically, most also pointed out the error of this assumption and suggested that a strong IHL-based approach should be adopted by all humanitarian actors in Israel and the oPt.

Most of the interview respondents believed that a refusal to refer to, and apply, IHL to humanitarian activities is, in itself, a distinctly political decision. One humanitarian NGO leader commented that those organizations which do refuse to use IHL 'allow themselves to be dragged [in]to the political sphere and further away from the human rights-based approach'. Their choice to remain silent about ongoing violations becomes non-neutral, and, in its own way, politically charged. Their stances may result from political influence on an organization, political sympathies, or the perceived risk of stepping on the occupier's toes; one of the interviewees pointed out that NGOs often regard the legal terminology surrounding an IHL-based approach as controversial and insist that more neutral language should be relied upon. Yet several interview respondents viewed IHL, to the contrary, as an objective tool and as a strong basis for neutral, independent, and impartial analysis of the conflict. For example, one NGO representative explained that relying on IHL allows her organization to strip away the dominant and confusing narratives that cloud decision-making in an extremely complex conflict zone.

Some of the interviewees emphasized the importance of a clear separation between rights-based advocacy and prominent political debates about issues such as the desirability of a two-state solution. Since IHL constitutes an objective tool for advocacy, humanitarian actors cannot restrict their messages within the limits of what is perceived as politically feasible. A rights-based approach is valid in itself and should not be

swayed by political pressure in ways that mean its basic tenets in support of a specific end-state solution are compromised. There is evidence of this pressure at work in the widespread avoidance of the Palestinian refugee issue, the relative silence about the ongoing land swap discussion, and agreements to cooperate with the Gaza reconstruction mechanism which can entail the need to procure materials such as cement from Israeli settlements.

Many of the respondents expressed the opinion that it is not up to NGOs or other humanitarian actors to decide where to compromise; they should, the respondents argued, follow a principled approach in order to solidify the position of IHL both locally and globally. As one interviewee explained, this would counteract the distinct erosion of IHL that is taking place in the conflict in the oPt, which has serious implications for humanitarian work around the world. Another respondent insisted that compromise on the part of the international community takes that community down a path of no return and weakens its ability to revert at a later point to a more principled approach: ‘Once you start compromising on some of these humanitarian principles, it is very difficult to roll that back [...]. You compromise, you say we just go a little bit, and then a little bit more, but it’s very hard to come back’.

However, there are serious reputational and operational risks attached to a rights-based stance that relies on IHL. Interview respondents noted several significant hazards related to applying a strongly principled approach. They talked about effective advocacy campaigns that were punished by Israel through a reduction in operational space for the NGOs involved. One such instance arose when Oxfam conducted a campaign against the actress Scarlett Johansson, who agreed to advertise a product for an Israeli settlement company. At the time, Johansson was one of Oxfam’s Global Ambassadors. The campaign forced her to leave that role (BBC 2014), but it also resulted in Israel blocking access to the Gaza Strip for Oxfam’s international workers.

While some of the interviewees expressed their understanding of the fact that organizations might be afraid to lose access to beneficiaries by incurring Israeli punishment for

strong advocacy, other respondents believed that operational and reputational risks should not dissuade organizations from taking a principled stance based on rights and law. In their opinion, stepping back from engaging with Israel creates the distinct risk that organizations will become irrelevant in the oPt, and this would do more harm than good. A few respondents noted the weak position of the International Committee of the Red Cross in the oPt and suggested that the ICRC's level of complicity with the occupation has become problematic. They argued that, by not taking a position on IHL violations, this prominent humanitarian organization has lost respect in the eyes of other humanitarian actors, and, ironically, the work of the ICRC in the oPt has become highly politicized thanks to its avoidance of 'politics'. Neutrality itself has become political in the conflict at hand.

Many of the interviewees agreed that IHL addresses the main drivers of the conflict. They described it as a neutral, impartial, and objective tool which allows humanitarian actors to enter difficult discussions with confidence and strong backing. They insisted on viewing IHL as a tool that provides clarity and which has the potential to depoliticize and universalize discussions by providing a common foundation for different parties' discussions and actions. Moreover, in the view of the research participants, IHL usefully contextualizes the work of humanitarian actors because it provides a deeper justification for the actions of humanitarian organizations and humanizes occupied populations.

Perhaps counter-intuitively, one of the most important roles IHL plays is in the preservation of certain aspects of the current political situation. Many of the interviewees expressed their feeling that IHL protects the legal status and roles of the occupier and the occupied, roles which a right-wing Israeli administration eagerly wants to revise. Like all legal language, IHL has the power to define positions and outline the limits of the complicit parties. IHL therefore has a distinct political role to play in providing a framework which can stop illegal actions from being committed by parties to the conflict. Yet, the selective use of IHL by political forces to confirm their own self-interests significantly weakens IHL's power and

authority. When law allows itself to be shaped by political pressures, it becomes negotiable, and one interviewee was worried that, if IHL continues to be ignored and disrespected in the oPt, it is in danger of losing its meaning and force across the globe. A lack of accountability in the oPt erodes IHL's credibility as a tool for use in other complex conflict environments. Concerned about this problem, several interviewees strongly stated that the legal vacuum created by Israel cannot be tolerated any longer by the international community.

Conclusion

This chapter has analysed the role of humanitarian actors in the process of transforming the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. The qualitative study of interviews with humanitarian leaders in the oPt has demonstrated that much of the transformational potential of humanitarian organizations relies on their shift towards rights-based approaches to humanitarian programming and advocacy. IHL-based programming and advocacy can be interpreted as fruitful methods for transforming the social systems, issues, actors, and rules involved in the conflict. Even though humanitarian organizations do not often see themselves as agents of conflict transformation, this research has shown that many of their senior staff working in the occupied territory do indeed link their activities and approaches with strategies of conflict transformation. This is important to note for humanitarian workers who desire to build a better understanding of the impact of their actions and the values and risks of IHL-based programming and advocacy.

The research here demonstrates that there is little distinction to be made between rights-based approaches to humanitarian aid and IHL-based programming and advocacy. Any rights-based programming in a conflict context has to be based on international legal standards.⁷ Organizations that programme in ways that are separate from these legal standards risk

becoming irrelevant and may be doing more harm than good. Without complying with IHL standards, humanitarians can contribute to further IHL violations and endanger their status as neutral actors in the oPt. Humanitarian organizations in the oPt need to coordinate carefully to develop sound joint positions regarding their stance towards IHL. By acting as a unified block, they can serve to protect endangered humanitarian space. Humanitarian actors hold a significant amount of power, since their withdrawal from occupied Palestinian territory would significantly raise the cost of occupation for Israel. The presence of humanitarian actors may also serve to avert the political crises that would result from the humanitarian emergencies their withdrawal would instigate.

There is some work to be done before IHL achieves its full potential in the oPt. The legal capacities of humanitarian organizations need to be urgently strengthened. In particular, knowledge and understanding of IHL needs to be bolstered, and organizations' abilities to address IHL in their humanitarian interventions need to be carefully considered. It is straightforward to include in a funding proposal a declaration that humanitarian activities will be in line with IHL, but it is more difficult to move beyond generalized commitments to specify how activities will actually comply with its precepts. Organizations that struggle with this task risk being excluded from funding opportunities since many donors now require strong IHL analysis and the inclusion of advocacy components before monies will be released. This recognition that IHL is a key component of humanitarian activities in the oPt is a positive sign of progress.

Notes

- 1 There is an interesting development in ECHO's reading of the context and program-matic approach in recent years. The 2015 Humanitarian Implementation Plan (HIP) for Palestine embeds ECHO's programmatic approach in IHL and IHRL: 'The long-standing political stalemate in the Middle East Process (MEPP) and the policies of Israel have resulted in a protracted protection crisis with humanitarian consequences caused by

- prolonged occupation and recurrent violations of international humanitarian law (IHL) and International Human Rights Law (IHRL)’ (ECHO 2015). See also the 2014 HIP: ‘In the meantime, International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and International Human Rights Law (IHRL) violations continue in near complete impunity resulting in a protection crisis with humanitarian consequences’ (ECHO 2014).
- 2 The OCHA oPt website states that ‘Although there has been a reduction in the levels of violence in recent years, many Palestinians continue to have humanitarian needs that are created by ongoing violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, including threats to life, liberty and security, restrictions on access and movement of people and goods to and within the oPt, and the risk of forced displacement’. It adds that ‘OCHA oPt seeks regular dialogue with the Israeli and Palestinian authorities at various levels to promote respect for international humanitarian and human rights law, including to protect the civilian population from violence and to facilitate the provision of assistance to those who need it’ (OCHA 2015).
 - 3 Gaza IHL-based programming needs further exploration. The interviews conducted for the present study have been primarily focused on the West Bank.
 - 4 In the Oslo Accords, Area C refers to ‘areas of the West Bank outside Areas A and B, which, except for the issues that will be negotiated in the permanent status negotiations, will be gradually transferred to Palestinian jurisdiction in accordance with this Agreement’ (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2013). Currently Area C covers over sixty percent of the West Bank and it is still under the administration of the Israeli Civil Administration.
 - 5 Triggering a change in the existing social structures with the aim of fostering social cohesion is one of the aims within the theory of conflict transformation (Lederach 2003). Grievances might result from unjust, imbalanced access to resources and discriminatory access to decision-making processes. The transformation of social systems involves institutional changes (Väyrynen 1991), as well as changes in social conditions to facilitate economic and social justice and equal access to political procedures (Lederach 2003).
 - 6 Conflict transformation theory proposes the modification of the actual content of the conflict. It suggests that by transforming what the conflict is about, belligerents might find new avenues for negotiations. If possible, parties to the conflict might try to change their agendas or put emphasis on other interests which were previously not highlighted (Miall 2004).
 - 7 This chapter has focused on International Humanitarian Law, but International Human Rights Law should also be applied.

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15

Internationally sponsored conflict resolution programming for youth in the Gaza Strip

Ibrahim Natil

Introduction

Do internationally sponsored conflict resolution programmes change the ways that young Palestinian people think about their right to return to their properties in historic Palestine? In this chapter, I argue that such programmes will not make significant headway in changing young people's social and political attitudes while the conflict between the State of Israel and the Palestinians remains active. To justify this claim, I will use a case study that focuses on young refugees who live in the Gaza Strip. The study will assess the impact that services delivered by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) and international and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have on the attitudes and behaviours of young refugees in relation to the right of return. Large populations in Gaza are looking to return to historic Palestine, where their parents and grandparents used to live and own property before the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. Young Palestinians have inherited the status of refugees

from their ancestors who were expelled from their homes inside Israel's Green Line, which demarcated its pre-1967 borders. As a result, these young refugees are entitled to numerous UNRWA services either in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt), which includes the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, or in the neighbouring countries of Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan.

UNRWA is mandated to provide relief, as well as social and education services, for the thousands of young refugees born and brought up in these areas in the period since the first Oslo Accord was signed in 1993. The organization delivers its education programme under the aegis of its 'human development and humanitarian services' (UNRWA 2016a). This chapter focuses in particular on its human rights programming which has been introduced in the form of conflict resolution programmes. Through these programmes, UNRWA looks to educate young people and equip them 'with an understanding of their place in the world and a common set of key values, including dignity, tolerance, cultural identity, gender equality and human rights', while also 'helping them develop the skills to thrive as adults in an evolving, challenging landscape' (UNRWA 2016b). I will examine the engagement of young Gazan refugees in these conflict resolution activities and discuss how, and to what extent, the programmes they undertake actually contribute to long-term changes in attitudes. The chapter considers whether it is realistically possible to bring about change in the middle of an unresolved conflict, particularly when it is unlikely that young people's rights of return to their homes in historic Palestine will ever be realized.

The question of Palestinian refugees

The suffering of Jews in Europe, combined with pressure from the Zionist movement, intensified Jewish immigration to Palestine during the period of the British Mandate, which ran from 1917 to 1948. At the end of that period, after the defeat

of the Arabs on 15 May 1948, Zionists succeeded in establishing the State of Israel in lands which had historically been recognized as Palestine. The creation of Israel, and its forced expulsion of more than 750,000 Palestinians from their homes and land, redefined the map of the Middle East. These Palestinians became refugees in different locations, namely the West Bank, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and the Gaza Strip. It is estimated that the indigenous population of the Gaza Strip had stood at between 60,000 and 80,000 people before the establishment of Israel (Hulal 1992, pp. 33–74).

The defeat of the Arabs and the metamorphosis of historic Palestine contributed to the development of a new form of national identity for the indigenous people who had lost both their homes and lands in 1948. The defeat and displacement of thousands of inhabitants to different locations did not alter their fundamental Palestinian identity. Many Palestinians now lived as refugees in camps which had often been set up by the United Nations (UN), and the United Nations established the United Nations Relief and Working Agency (UNRWA) on 8 December 1949 to support them. It became operational on 1 May 1950 and was mandated to relieve the humanitarian crisis and disaster that was being generated in neighbouring countries by the influx of refugees who were fleeing the emergent State of Israel. UNRWA was created with a remit to deliver services and assistance wherever refugees are located until their problem is solved. To this day, UNRWA manages schools, youth centres, rations, and clinic hospitals as it strives to deliver vital services to refugees. In order to assist in social healing, UNRWA established grassroots centres for young people in twenty-six refugee camps in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in the early 1950s. These centres continue to deliver support to young refugees in the form of activities related to socializing and culture, and they also provide education and recreation services. UNRWA has been providing essential technical and financial support to these centres to sustain them despite frequent reductions in the forms of assistance they receive (UNRWA 2013).

All refugees are registered as stateless by UNRWA, and the organization promotes the right of return for all Palestinian

refugees. This right is shared by successive generations, who automatically inherit their Palestinian identity and refugee status through their parents; this inheritance occurs regardless of whether they are born on Palestinian land, or form part of the Palestinian diaspora in the region or across the globe (BADIL 2012). Meanwhile, Israel uses its public policies to do everything to ensure they never do return: it assumes that its efforts will succeed in time because the old will die and the young will forget. In fact, the problem of refugees is passed from one generation to the next, and the refugee question remains central to any official conflict resolution process between the State of Israel and the Palestinians.

Young Palestinian refugees are consistently active in resistance against the Israeli forces that first occupied the Gaza Strip and the West Bank on 4 June 1967. Many young refugees continue to dream about returning to their homes inside the Green Line, and they regard the refugee question as central to any future peace between the State of Israel and the Palestinian people. Young Palestinian refugees have suffered ongoing Israeli aggression and collective punishment in the form of restrictions on their movements, the expansion of settlements in Palestinian land, and the siege on the Gaza Strip; their right to freedom and the right to form an independent Palestinian state have also been denied.

Gaza's demographics highlight the importance of heeding young people's beliefs and activities. Palestinian refugees make up over seventy percent of the population in the Gaza Strip. Of these young refugees, 37.4 percent are adolescents aged between fifteen and nineteen, while 62.6 percent are young people aged between twenty and twenty-nine. Among young people, there is a ratio of 104.1 males to 100 females, and in mid-2015 the estimated population in the oPt totalled 4.68 million (PCBS 2015). The United Nations has injected a massive amount of resources into the Gaza Strip in response to the refugee problem, and its services provide support for young people as well as much-needed employment. UNRWA's expenditure in 2013 surpassed US\$423 million, a figure equivalent to fifteen percent of Gazan GDP (UNRWA 2014). UNRWA has over 12,000 experienced staff in the area as well

as established mechanisms for expanding its operational capacity. In 2013, UNRWA operations accounted for 8.1 percent of all employment in the Gaza Strip and contributed to reducing the unemployment rate by 5.5 percentage points (UNRWA 2014).

Young refugees, UNRWA, and new political structures

In May 1994, the political structure of the Gaza Strip altered dramatically after the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) established the Palestinian National Authority (PA) in the Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank in accordance with the Oslo Accord signed with Israel on 13 September 1993 in Norway. The agreement divided the occupied Palestinian territory into areas labelled A, B, and C. The PA assumed responsibilities for civil administration and policing in area A, but administers civil affairs only in area B. The PA has no reach into area C, and Israeli forces enter into all areas under the PA's control, freely and without restriction. This agreement was intended to hold for an interim period of five years, after which the question of refugees – deferred in the earlier round of negotiations – would theoretically be discussed as a final status issue.

During this interim period, UNRWA supported Palestinian refugees in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip by introducing its Peace Implementation Programme (PIP) on 6 October 1993 in consultation with the PLO and UNRWA's major donors. PIP projects were designed to provide support for the transitional arrangement and for the Oslo peace process in the occupied Palestinian territory. They were used to improve the provision of infrastructure and services for refugees, and PIP also prioritized the creation of employment opportunities (UNRWA 1993). This strategy has become a prominent component of UN efforts to support peacebuilding operations and intervention in many countries including Cambodia,

Guatemala, Bosnia, and East Timor (see Pinto 2014, pp. 57–74).

The growth of UNRWA services occurred alongside a similar growth in the range of services offered by the PA, the remit of which expanded under the terms of the Oslo Accords. Many refugees worried about overlaps in provision and were concerned that the establishment of the PA would decrease the services UNRWA made available in its area of operations. However, the reduction in UNRWA's services has actually had a number of causes, which have included reduced funding as well as the effects of shifts in the political landscape after the signing of the Oslo Accords. Like UNRWA, the PA signed agreements with a number of donors to develop the services it delivered to refugees in the Gaza Strip. For example, the Ministry of Local Governments supervised a long-term project to improve the capacity of so-called 'municipalities' in four refugee camps in the Gaza Strip. This project was funded by the government of Denmark as part of its efforts to support both the Oslo peace process and the PA. The project also improved the sanitation services, sewage system, and infrastructure of the refugee camps.

At the same time, the PLO's refugee committees, local groups, non-profit initiatives, and civil society organizations effectively took on responsibility for fostering and promoting a political discourse which emphasized the 'right of return'. The PLO's local groups – called 'the popular committees for refugees' – remain engaged in running activities, such as commemorations of the Nakba anniversary each 15 May, that raise awareness about the refugees' right of return to their homes in historic Palestine. These groups have launched various advocacy campaigns locally and internationally to emphasize the fact that the displaced indigenous populations of Palestine have the right to return to their homeland.

There have been no dramatic changes in young people's perceptions of their right of return, as is evidenced by the results of a 2012 survey conducted by the BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights. BADIL examined young people's strategies for explaining their identities and their social ties to their Palestinian homeland,

and this research focused on third- or fourth-generation displaced Palestinians, between fifteen and nineteen years of age, who were living in different geographical locations in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and Israel, as well as in Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon. The 2012 survey revealed that young refugees had strong ties to their national identity, despite the fact that most of them had never been to the territories formerly recognized as Palestine (Pinto 2014, pp. 57–74). For these young people, national identity is clearly linked to the concept of the right of return.

The results of this survey indicate that Palestinian national identity for young refugees is not merely a question of citizenship, travel documents, or privileges, but is instead part of a much wider concept that concerns the key principles of liberation, freedom, and self-determination.

Changing roles for young refugees

The Oslo agreement encouraged the PA and UNRWA to develop curricula which would introduce the idea that the occupied territory of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank could be a future Palestinian state. The PA developed textbooks that recognize the existence of Israel, and UNRWA promotes concepts of conflict resolution through school programmes which teach human rights, tolerance, and conflict resolution. In 2001, UNRWA introduced its Human Rights, Conflict Resolution and Tolerance programme (HRCRT) for delivery across all grades and schools in each of UNRWA's five fields of operation in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon (see Pinto 2014, pp. 57–74).

HRCRT aims to empower Palestinian refugees so that they can enjoy and exercise their rights, be proud of their Palestinian identity, and contribute to their society. The programme relies upon international human rights codes including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the World Programme for Human Rights Education, which is

coordinated by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (Pinto 2014, pp. 57–74). Human rights education (HRE) plays a crucial role in establishing the infrastructure needed for a transition to a stable society (Bartal and Rosen 2009, p. 564), and it is crucial in educating young people about conflict resolution in a very sensitive political environment while the conflict between the Palestinians and Jewish Israelis remains unresolved.

The implementation of UNRWA's human rights and conflict resolution programme involved the training and hiring of a number of teachers charged with implementing it in the schools where it was to operate. Despite these strenuous efforts, UNRWA has still drawn criticism from local groups in the Gaza Strip which claim that the programme's coverage of the Holocaust is excessive in relation to the attention it pays to Palestinian suffering. In 2014, Motesem al-Minawi – spokesman for the Hamas-run Ministry of Education – is reported as saying that 'the textbooks, used in grades 7 through 9, did not sufficiently address Palestinian suffering and did not acknowledge the right to battle Israel. There is a tremendous focus on peaceful resistance as the only tool to achieve freedom and independence'; he stated that this did not suit the 'ideology and philosophy' of the local population (Haaretz 2014).

Hamas makes the case that UNRWA's programme is introduced for pupils as part of the school curriculum alongside other enforced policies which, it believes, neutralize Palestinian teachers' abilities to educate young Palestinians to resist the Israeli occupation and the Palestinian rights of return. This difference of opinion between Hamas's Ministry of Education and UNRWA over the content of human rights programming poses another challenge for internationally sponsored programmes because the agitation caused by local criticism affects implementation processes. This criticism goes beyond Hamas, and some local Palestinian groups in the Gaza Strip have complained that the programme not only ignores Palestinian suffering but also avoids tackling the issue of the refugees' right to return. When Salim Abdel Khaleq, a forty-eight-year-old father of three children at UNRWA schools

shared his concerns about the situation with the media, ‘He said he supported introducing his children to new ideas, as long as they fit into local cultural norms’ (Haaretz 2014). Khaleq voiced the opinion that ‘UNRWA should work on the subject with the government and avoid this headache every year [...]. We respect UNRWA, but they must respect our history as well’ (Haaretz 2014)

Despite these problems, young people have generally learned from, and engaged with, civil society and its burgeoning activities in the aftermath of the Oslo agreement. Their political ideologies have been formed and strengthened within the cultures of various factions or political groups, and they play an active role within the new political structure of the PA. However, an unstable environment has generated competing ideas about how peace is going to be achieved. Fatah, the political faction of the PLO, has had its nationalism significantly moderated within the culture of the peace process, and it now pushes for statehood and nation-building (see Natil 2012, pp. 166–182). The new political structure that emerged in Palestinian society after the 1993 Oslo agreement promoted dialogue and peaceful coexistence with Israel as a ‘legitimate state’ that is recognized by the PLO. The same approach, within the framework of a state-building process, was fostered by international donors who commissioned numerous civil society organizations to promote and support peace-building through mechanisms based on dialogue and education (Natil 2014). In a different vein, religio-political groups or parties typically invoke history and religion to justify their contemporary political positions and policies in the occupied Palestine territory. For example, Islamic and ultra-nationalist groups such as the Popular Front, Hamas, and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad movement use religious slogans and/or ideologies to justify the liberation of the occupied Palestinian territory.

While young people have remained actively involved in organizations within the Palestinian liberation movement, they are now also increasingly engaged in working with NGOs funded by international donors; this is partly because they experienced limited opportunities to participate in the change

process after the establishment of the Palestinian Authority in the 1990s (see Natil 2012, pp. 166–182). NGOs, however, have limited capacity to challenge and contribute to the policymaking processes that could tackle poverty alleviation and civil society empowerment, and this is because they face an unstable political environment and funding crises. Major international NGOs (INGOs) often control and monopolize resources. For example, both local and international NGOs often submit applications in response to the same funding calls made by major international donors such as the European Union (EU), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and other governments and agencies.

INGOs often prove more successful than their local counterparts in bids to secure funding because they can draw on advanced technical capacities and expertise as well as significant established networks of contacts to win over donors. Similarly, it is easier for the UNRWA to acquire funding for its programmes and overheads from donor governments than it is for local NGOs to achieve the same results. As a result, many INGOs work directly with the beneficiaries of aid and avoid direct partnership with local NGOs, and highly trained staff are recruited from outside the region. This situation weakens the capacity of local NGOs which, when they are involved at all, are treated as subcontractors rather than as partners (Murad 2014). These challenges influence the sustainability of NGOs; they also affect their ability to provide rapid responses to the Palestinian people in general and to cater for young refugees' needs in particular.

However, despite these challenges, some international donors have sought to promote conflict resolution in the Gaza Strip by providing very limited funding to local NGOs and UNRWA. They have been helped to engage young people in community activities that train them in dialogue and peacebuilding. A very limited number of NGOs have succeeded in securing small-scale funds for their conflict transformation activities. These donor-driven activities have been challenged by a number of internal and external circumstances and factors that have included violence,

occupation, and divisions between the PA and Hamas. Still, they have achieved results. For example, Society Voice Foundation (SVF), a Gaza-based NGO led by and serving young refugees, launched a three-year project funded by the European Union to activate and train young people in advocacy, networking, peacebuilding, and dialogue (Natil 2014). SVF worked successfully with more than ninety local organizations to train 300 young leaders from different social and political backgrounds, including refugees, in conflict resolution, peacebuilding, and human rights. As an indicator of behaviour change in the young people involved, a number of trainees actually went on to engage in the project's implementation and conducted advocacy activities such as town hall meetings and the broadcast of thirty-six radio programmes on dialogue, tolerance, and reconciliation themes.

These sorts of NGO initiatives, alongside UNRWA work, provide young refugees with a platform which allows them to participate in their local communities and deliver outcomes at a variety of levels. Local civil society organizations have implemented various actions to target and educate a large number of young people on the values of democracy, human rights, and peacebuilding. Meanwhile, some local NGOs are trying to engage young refugees via a holistic approach which combines discussions and dialogue, coalition-building, interviews, and various interactions between the young people themselves and other stakeholders. These select initiatives are informed by need-based design processes, and so they are responsive to the broader political changes taking place around them and able to adapt to the specific requirements of the younger elements within the Palestinian population. These initiatives transform conflict through methodologies of education and training, and they seek to empower young people by engaging them in community-based organizations (CBOs). Some CBOs use education to promote reconciliation and dialogue within the Palestinian community between various competing Palestinian groups. Youth involvement in community activities is a core principle of conflict resolution approaches which also promote dialogue and other peacebuilding mechanisms and tools. For example, young refugees supported by NGOs and UNRWA remain trapped by

the division between Hamas and Fatah on the one side and the Israeli occupation on the other, and they need access to the new tools and techniques made available by social networking so that they can express their views and engage with issues without facing constraints and suppression by the Palestinian security agencies.

In early 2011, peaceful and youthful revolutions in North Africa and the Middle East ousted the dictators of Egypt and Tunisia. Young people played a major role in a range of nonviolent protests against dictatorships, which became widely and collectively known as the Arab Spring (see Pace and Cavatorta 2012, pp. 125–138). Young Palestinians, including refugees, watched the events of the Arab Spring and hoped that these revolutions in the Arab world would help to effect positive change in the Palestinian situation. Some Palestinian youth leaders attended activities and regional meetings in Tunisia and Egypt to learn from the experiences of their colleagues within the Arab Spring movement, and, as a result, young Palestinian people began to organize themselves under the aegis of different initiatives inspired by the ideas they were encountering elsewhere. These youth initiatives, which focused on revolt against the status quo, did not contradict what UNRWA and the PNA were teaching in the schools. In fact, they mark a positive milestone in changes in young people's attitudes as many of them are clearly seeking to end the status quo by using peaceful means.

Recent instances of youth activism in the oPt demonstrate the effects that contacts with other young people in the region are producing. In February 2011, a group of young activists met in a café in Ramallah in the West Bank to make plans for protests. They arranged a Skype conversation with four activists from the Gaza Strip and so were able to use social media effectively and efficiently to reignite protests amongst Palestinians. As a result of this work, on 15 March 2011, youth groups, mainly from refugee populations, organized massive peaceful marches and nonviolent protests to make a stand against the division and conflict between Hamas and Fatah in the occupied territory. These groups combined to form the 15 March Movement, and it employed a range of modern social

media and networking tools to orchestrate its protests, which became the first well-organized marches to take place in the OPT since 2007.

The 15 March Movement, coordinated by young people, posed a real challenge for Hamas and Fatah because it had the potential to become a similar phenomenon to the Egyptian youth revolution. In the end, it forced the prime minister of Hamas, Ismail Haniyeh, to invite the Palestinian president, Mahmud Abbas, to visit Gaza, and he responded positively to the call. This rapid response represented an attempt by Hamas and Fatah to take into account peaceful youth protests and their efforts to unify Palestinian society. Hamas and Fatah also wanted to avoid more protests and campaigns in the near future (Natil 2012, pp. 166–182). The 15 March Movement was a brave initiative and it marked a step forward, but it did not succeed in bringing about genuine change like that which occurred in Tunisia or Egypt because there are many social, political, and cultural differences between Palestine and other Arab countries. Without the external intervention of the ‘Arab Spring’, the Movement found it difficult to continue its efforts to force Fatah and Hamas towards unity and reconciliation.

Young people have looked outside their own situations, and they have worked to bring about change within Palestinian society in the face of Israeli occupation as well. For example, young refugees actively and regularly participate in peaceful protests against the Israeli settlements and the Separation Wall. These initiatives began before the Arab Spring but continue as acts of popular resistance that contest the current status quo. Most of the protesters against the Wall and the settlements have been affiliated to youth groups, and these groups have played key roles in shaping the views and directions of Palestinian citizens with regard to the repercussions of the Arab Spring. It remains clear that the 15 March Movement was inspired by regional events; however, this youth movement is also part of a series of peaceful efforts directed against the Israeli occupation that have emerged in different areas of the occupied Palestinian territory over the last few years. Many youth members of the 15 March Movement had been educated at UNRWA schools or had attended workshops

run by NGOs. They had learned lessons about the use of nonviolent resistance there from the examples of Gandhi and Martin Luther King, and they were able to put them to use in continued efforts to contest the Israeli Separation Wall in the West Bank and the security fence in the Gaza Strip.

Challenges faced by projects working to impact refugee youth

Efforts to influence the views and actions of young Palestinian refugees face a wide range of serious challenges due to a hostile political environment and an absence of human security at all levels. Young refugees in the Gaza Strip have been living in very vulnerable and risky circumstances since the last Palestinian elections occurred in 2006. The Gaza Strip remains isolated from the entire world by a blockade and its residents have restrictions on their ability to travel to the extent that they struggle to meet their basic needs. Young people also face very high levels of unemployment due to a lack of jobs and an array of social problems, including growing levels of drug addiction, all of which are exacerbated by occupation policies. The issues the coastal strip faces will be exaggerated if Gazans, as UN reports predict, effectively become unable to access useable water by 2020 (Harvard 2015). As a result of these factors, the entire population, including young people, has become dependent on international assistance.

Young Gazans also suffer from high levels of psychological problems, and these arise in large part because the coastal strip has faced three recent large-scale Israeli military offensives that have killed thousands of their peers, women, and children; these assaults have also ruined what remained of an already impoverished infrastructure (UNRWA 2013). The latest iteration of fighting occurred between the Islamist groups Hamas and Islamic Jihad, and the State of Israel. This war, which lasted for fifty-one days in the summer of 2014, left 100,000 Gazans homeless and over 2,100 dead; the majority of

them were Palestinian civilians, and the seventy-six Israeli fatalities were mainly made up of soldiers (UNRWA 2014). This complicated and hostile environment imposes huge challenges on UNRWA and NGOs working in the Gaza Strip as they strive to realize their agendas for peace and development. This environment also obstructs them as they struggle to meet citizens' needs and demands transparently and efficiently. The severe shortage of resources caused by ten years of Israeli blockades also causes regular problems. After his first visit to Gaza on 29 April 2015, the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, gave a personal response to the scene he found there: 'No human being who visits can remain untouched by the terrible devastation that one sees here in Gaza and as shocking as the devastation of the buildings might be the devastation of peoples' livelihoods is 10 times more shocking' (UNRWA 2015).

The United Nations mechanism for reconstructing the Gaza Strip after the 2014 war has made limited progress and the current reconstruction of Gaza could take seventeen years given that just five percent of the required building materials have been allowed into the area in one year (Natil 2015). The slow mechanism of recovery represents another serious challenge that faces young refugees who want to play a real role in peacebuilding in the Gaza Strip. The security environment there is extremely fragile because the entire population has been suffering the impact of the war and of ongoing border closures and the unreasonably slow processes of reconstruction. Additional constraints have included the continued failure of internal Palestinian reconciliation mechanisms between Hamas and Fatah and the failed peace process between the PLO and Israel. Against this backdrop, young people grow up in very dangerous circumstances that impose serious challenges for them and for any youth-focused conflict resolution programmes. Before any such programmes can succeed, young people need to satisfy their basic need to live in a stable and sustainable economic environment, free from foreign occupation. Only once these conditions are in place can any realistic and sustainable transformations in their political behaviours occur.

Conclusion

The refugee question in the Gaza Strip is fundamental to the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Palestinian people. I have argued in this chapter that the installation of the PLO's administration in the occupied Palestinian territory after the Oslo agreement has allowed young Gazans to participate in conflict resolution programmes. However, the contributions and engagement of young Palestinian refugees in international conflict resolution processes and other civil society-sponsored programmes is challenged both by the absence of peace in the wake of the failed political process and by the continuation of Israeli occupation. Foreign occupation generates suppression, oppression, and violence, and continues to be a major obstacle for young people as they seek to live securely, plan for the future, and realize their rights.

As they work to alter the attitudes and behaviours of young people through a variety of activities and endeavours, UNRWA and NGOs encounter a variety of political, economic, and security difficulties. This unstable political environment hinders the functioning of these organizations as they work to deliver services that educate young people about peacebuilding and human rights. UNRWA and NGOs need extraordinary financial support from the international community to strengthen and expand their activities in what remains a hostile environment. While these conditions remain, their activities will continue to be humanitarian in nature and will not be able to focus entirely on working towards sustainable social change and peacebuilding.

The international community must, therefore, renew its efforts to achieve a just and lasting peace that solves the Palestinian refugee question in the Middle East. The international community must exert significant influence over Israel's decisions, and its members need to work creatively to achieve justice and establish human rights which include the right of return. Within the oPt, international donors must prioritize youth education that is centred on community peacebuilding and human rights issues. In their funding of

such initiatives, they should also address the shortage of funding provided to local NGOs that work with young people. Major INGOs continue to produce limited impact and incur high operational expenses. In its entirety, internationally supported youth work forms an integral part of the local context and contributes to the delivery of important developmental and nation-building agendas. It is crucial that local communities endorse conflict resolution and human rights programming that is designed to help young Palestinian people to better understand their rights. It is also important that internationally funded projects do not ignore the conflict's historical and political context and the unresolved right of Palestinians to return to their homes. It is hoped that these programmes will provoke the transformation of young people into peacebuilders and advocates for human rights both before and after any comprehensive peace agreement prevails. There are substantial grounds for optimism, but funded work with young refugees will continue to have very limited impact on the Palestinian peace and development agenda for as long as the Israeli occupation maintains a status quo that is characterized by violence and fragmentation.

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Conclusion

16

The future of conflict transformation in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory.

Alpaslan Özerdem

Internationally driven peace processes are launched with great fanfare, bedecked in the language of aspiration and generalities, and freighted with expectation. Yet while they start with high hopes and expectations and look to surge beyond challenging socio-economic conditions and political enmities, they too often give in to the impulse to brush past root causes and the injustices they entail. By the time that those involved in peacebuilding realize the severity and scale of the problems that dog their efforts, peace negotiations and subsequent peacebuilding activities are often already derailed or fatally discredited.

The fundamental assumption that conflicts can be ‘resolved’ through peace processes is in itself problematic. As Qassoum points out in [Chapter 2](#), a single ‘solution’ brokered by a third party in liaison with conflicting actors will often have no bearing on what is happening in reality. The Oslo Peace Process promised much in terms of what it could deliver for the Middle East as a whole and in particular for Palestinians who had endured decades of occupation, injustice, and suffering, yet it was doomed to failure because the conflict resolution approach on which it was predicated and the tools it put to use were not adequate to the challenges posed by an asymmetric and deeply entrenched armed conflict.

As Thiessen and Qassoum established in their wide-ranging introductory chapters, the international community's seemingly multifaceted engagement in the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians as a broker, maker, and builder of peace over many decades has in fact taken the form of ineffectual tinkering and an often wilful refusal to engage with the conflict's causes and realities. The day-to-day suffering of Palestinians has continued, and the international community has made little effort to listen to, or respond effectively to, their perspectives. Meanwhile, the effects of the Israeli occupation have been exacerbated by the conflict resolution strategies that have been put in train to enact international policy in the occupied Palestinian territory. Funding mechanisms, international intermediaries, and representatives from local elites have done little more than normalize what can only be described as a demeaning and miserable existence for millions of Palestinians in the occupied territory and in places of refuge in neighbouring countries and beyond. This volume is in no doubt that there will indeed be a need for a political settlement in order to establish a sustainable peace between the State of Israel and Palestinians, but the experience of the Palestinians since the Nakba suggests that any attempt to achieve this objective via an approach based purely on conflict resolution is likely to fall short again. It is now imperative that the international community change its policy to move away from conflict resolution approaches and towards conflict transformation. As every chapter of this volume has shown, Palestinians have the capacity and capabilities to take control of their own destinies and chart a path beyond the conflict that constrains them.

The struggles that conflict resolution as a strategy has faced in Israel and Palestine have been surveyed in many of the chapters here and reflect the ongoing deficiencies that have emerged when Western liberal peacebuilding interventions have been made in other conflict zones across the globe. In fact, the experience of conflict resolution – with its tools of post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding, in use since the end of the Cold War – shows that, however large the funding support, internationally led interventions often fail in achieving their ultimate goal of *justpeace*. From Sierra Leone,

Afghanistan, Iraq, and Lebanon to Cambodia, El Salvador, and Angola, conflict resolution practices inspired by liberal peacebuilding have often either collapsed completely or transformed the armed conflict into other types of violence. Many conflict-affected communities across the globe which have been on the receiving end of the tools and programmes of a Western 'liberal peace' response within a conflict resolution framework have been disillusioned with the 'peace' that prevails. There is a consistent tendency for communities to question whether liberal conflict resolution processes have impacted meaningfully on the injustices, bad governance, nepotism, corruption, elite control of resources, criminality, enduring poverty, chronic unemployment, discrimination, and cultural violence that ordinary people experience. Even the most widely accepted tools of liberal peacebuilding (such as democratization, privatization, decentralization) and the strengthening of civil society appear to succeed on the level of appearance rather than substance.

In most liberal peacebuilding implementation cases, the urgent need for democracy is effectively deferred and downgraded when processes of 'democratization' are put in place: there is little that is democratic about any process for conceiving and realizing democracy which assumes that 'democratic' and 'civilized' Western powers are needed to democratize people who are, by implication, undemocratic, uncivilized, inferior, conflict-prone, destructive, and 'other'.

In Afghanistan, democracy is said to have been installed after external actors were parachuted in and organized a couple of national elections, yet the status quo that has emerged from a conflict resolution process that began with the aim of winning Afghan's 'hearts and minds' sees Afghan civilians becoming the 'collateral damage' of aerial bombings by military personnel who are also tasked to serve as peacekeepers and deliver humanitarian aid. The same conflict resolution blueprint has left Libya divided and lawless after a military intervention which enacted the West's supposed 'Responsibility to Protect' and has wreaked havoc in the lives of millions of Iraqis. This kind of conflict resolution process privatizes a state's assets in the name of creating a market

economy and lifts protectionist measures in order to promote economic development, but it does not allow meaningful economic reciprocity and interdependence for countries emerging from armed conflict. The liberal peace agenda advocates the strengthening of civil society as one of its main pillars of response, but, instead of devolving real power to local people, it establishes local intermediaries who implement programmes planned far beyond their own localities with little or no input from the programme recipients. Local ownership only involves conceding to local control as much power as can be devolved without the intervening powers losing their ability to control and rule.

This volume has favoured conflict transformation over conflict management and resolution approaches, but the contributors have not claimed that this relatively new and still-debated strategy addresses all of the shortcomings that hamper more traditional responses to conflict situations. The potential of conflict transformation to produce more effective and sustainable responses to conflict relies on key features such as the fact that it is relationship centred, draws on long-term perspectives and strategies for the de-escalation of violence, and addresses key structural, contextual, and cultural root causes in collaboration with communities still experiencing their disastrous effects. Lederach (2003, p. 9) declares that the role of '[c]onflict transformation is to envision and respond to the ebb and flow of social conflict as life-giving opportunities for creating constructive change'. This understanding has guided the development of our volume which seeks to introduce an alternative view as to how best the challenges involved in dealing with the asymmetric conflict between the State of Israel and Palestinians can be tackled. The volume is also crucially informed by the idea that conflict transformation is capable of transforming 'the structure of conflicts and the process of moving towards "just peace"' (Fischer and Ropers 2004, p. 13) by 'inducing change in the parties' relationship through improving mutual understanding' (Yarn 1999, p. 121). In Thiessen's words ([Chapter 1](#)), this is ultimately a 'uninational' approach which begins by dealing with conflicts within the parties concerned, before, or at the same time, as focusing on 'binational conflict resolution'. It is also important

to state that, while conflict should never be assumed to be a natural and insuperable phenomenon, it can serve as a useful source of constructive change.

This volume shows that conflict transformation approaches focus on generating fundamental changes in human relations, changes that address the structural, political, economic, social, and cultural root causes of the conflict, primarily within the conflicting parties themselves. However, it also subjects conflict transformation to appropriate scrutiny, with every chapter engaging in some way with questions about whether and how conflict transformation methodologies can provide a solid basis for addressing the dynamics of protracted conflicts.

Clements (1997); Lederach (2003); Notter and Diamond (1996) and Yarn (1999), identify four dimensions of conflict transformation as being critical in attempts to change conflict situations to peaceful ones. Firstly, the structural dimension involves changing patterns in relationships between the various disputants in terms of social interactions, dominant patterns of discourse, norms, rules and distribution of resources. Second, the actor-related dimension seeks to change conflict-affected people's own perceptions of the factors that motivate them and so turns attention to individual identity, emotions, and goals. Third, the relational dimension is about the affectivity, power, and interdependence of human relationships and how to transform them for peaceful purposes. Fourth, the cultural dimension seeks to identify and respond to the cultural patterns that contribute to the transformation of violent conflicts. With these four key dimensions of conflict transformation in mind, it is possible to draw the following findings from the chapters in this volume.

Al-Orzza and Makhoul ([Chapter 3](#)) adopt a rights-based approach in their bid to analyse the ongoing displacement of Palestinians and their right to return in the context of international law. As well as investigating root causes such as forced population transfer, colonialism, and apartheid, they use the lens of transitional justice and structural conflict transformation approaches to explore durable solutions to the displacement of Palestinians. The use of these approaches is predicated on the principle that the 'engagement of Palestinian

refugees in processes that seek to resolve their ongoing displacement should be mandatory' because, as al-Orzza and Makhoul argue, such an approach will 'indicate a respect for the rights of refugees' and allow root causes to be addressed in ways that may help to prevent similar forced displacements in the future. Operating collectively as a third party which structures its intervention in terms of conflict resolution, Western states have not only failed to involve Palestinian refugees in the political negotiations between Israeli and Palestinian leaders, but have also 'continued to fail to enforce international law and United Nations resolutions in the face of Israel's objections'. Al-Orzza and Makhoul point out that Israel continues to 'enact the structural asymmetry of its relationship with Palestinian people', and, more worryingly, 'benefits from international support, and [...] gains a certain amount of impunity from its standpoint in relation to key legal, human rights, and humanitarian frameworks'. They suggest that after nearly seven decades of a politically driven conflict resolution approach which has failed to bring about 'a just resolution to the plight of Palestinian refugees', a rights-based approach focused on conflict transformation 'will be able to secure and sustain grassroots commitment to change and new realities'.

Sánchez and Sellick ([Chapter 4](#)) make a similar case when they argue that an approach based on human rights could be applied effectively to 'change the asymmetric power relations between Israel, as the occupying military power, and the Palestinian people'. Their investigation of the cases of the boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) movement and of local unarmed popular resistance to the occupation concludes that Israel's coercive power of occupation is more than the result of Israel's authority as a state or of the way in which that authority produces the consent of people in Israel and the compliance of the occupied population. In their view, 'it is also contingent on the support of its powerful international allies', and they effectively endorse al-Orzza and Makhoul's claim that 'human rights [could] become a political and legal instrument for articulating the needs of Palestinians and for holding Israel and its allies to account'. For Sánchez and Sellick, the real value of BDS and unarmed popular resistance

movements lies in their capacity to mobilize ‘the potential of human rights and conflict transformation approaches [...] in mutually reinforcing ways’. The authors demand recognition for the plurality of power and argue that people ‘can work together to achieve mutually beneficial goals and objectives even as they experience coercion, [...] and] can act in solidarity across borders’. In the BDS and unarmed Palestinian resistance movements, they find clear examples of people working to ‘intentionally appropriate and reconceptualize human rights’, and suggest that this kind of strategic approach and counterhegemonic action at local, national, and transnational levels has the potential to secure ‘the liberation of Palestinians and Israelis from the asymmetric power relations immanent in all encounters between “possessor and dispossessed”, “occupier and occupied”’. Moving beyond the incremental model for change reflected in conflict resolution approaches, Sánchez and Sellick advocate the use of the strategic and situational ‘nonviolent power relations that can transform not only [...] Palestinian’s] futures but also those of Jewish Israelis’.

Qumsiyeh provides a critical and historical assessment of the BDS movement in [Chapter 5](#) which helpfully clarifies the lessons that can be drawn from its successes and the challenges it has faced. He concludes that the international community is today at a critical juncture between either co-opting the injustices of asymmetric power or securing ‘a liveable political and social environment based on justice and human rights for both Palestinians and Jewish Israelis’. He advocates ‘the efficacy of BDS as a tool with the capacity to transform conflict and strike a path away from colonialism and towards a future of peace and coexistence’. He goes on to argue that – as long as the BDS movement can overcome a number of challenges orchestrated by ‘a well-structured and international lobby system that supports the Zionist project’ – BDS can indeed ‘elevate the struggle against the occupation and help to realize an era in which structural inequalities are removed’.

Checa Hidalgo, in [Chapter 6](#), focuses on interventions for conflict transformation in the occupied Palestinian territory in

order to investigate the largely unexplored phenomenon of global civil society's contribution to this struggle. Checa Hidalgo assesses interventions such as civilian peacekeeping, unarmed peacekeeping, and unofficial nonviolent intervention for their value and impact in terms of preventing violence and empowering local movements. His chapter pays particular attention to the main nonviolent international interventions employed in the occupied territory, which are 'physical accompaniment and presence, civil diplomacy, the dissemination of alternative information through global communication channels, and support which strengthens local partners who are working in the face of direct violence'. He concludes that such strategies have so far 'resulted in only sporadic changes in a context which continues to be overwhelmingly characterized by direct and indirect violence'.

While recognizing the importance of global civil society's efforts to strengthen local resistance movements in the occupied territory, Checa Hidalgo argues that its work has so far 'failed either to secure significant changes in the distribution of power, or to equalize a starkly asymmetric conflict. International intervention has also struggled to make a deep impact on Israeli society'. Despite this stark reminder of the limited impact some conflict transformation strategies might have in contexts like that provided by the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, Checa Hidalgo nevertheless asserts that such interventions have the potential to become 'a viable alternative to traditional military intervention in conflict zones, and can complement UN peacekeeping efforts and peacebuilding ventures'.

Moving from nonviolent global civil society interventions to actions at the local level, Nanetti, in [Chapter 7](#), makes the case that Palestinian social capital needs to be increased and well-utilized if conflict transformation is to progress. She argues that 'an increased stock of social capital can potentially be used to leverage the efforts of Palestinian society as a whole in pursuit of a vision of Palestine which would exist on an *ex aequo* basis with Israel'. By focusing on the leadership role of educational institutions and social movements in relation to conflict transformation, Nanetti – drawing specific examples

from the Palestinian context – investigates different aspects of social capital that can be used to bring about conflict transformation in asymmetric conflicts. Underlining the importance of investing in its growth, Nanetti argues that ‘social capital, if it is not leveraged, either becomes a wasted community asset or leaves a vacuum that may well be filled by “unsocial” capital’. She recommends that, if the stock of social capital is to be increased, ‘[t]he Palestinian community needs to engage in a process of conflict transformation from within, and an enhanced stock of bridging and linking social capital will be required to sustain it’. Nanetti, like other contributors, is calling for action by and in support of communities on the ground, and she makes the case that ‘strategies ought to be conceived and implemented that are congruent with the characteristics of the Palestinian community’. Key to this kind of work is the empowerment of currently marginalized groups, and Nanetti notes that ‘an enhanced role for Palestinian women in community life and the overcoming of the urban–rural development divide both represent significant opportunities for transformation’.

This empowerment of local groups can, as Rabayah and Morrison suggest in [Chapter 8](#), be accelerated in important ways through the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), which is already being put to service in order to contest, as well as to prosecute and exacerbate, the conflict by a wide range of actors. They show how cyberspace has been employed in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory by competing parties to inflict damage on each other and to delegitimize each other’s historical narratives and propaganda, but they also explore ways in which these tools have been employed to mobilize resistance and promote peace through dialogue. Rabayah and Morrison rightly conclude that ‘new forms of media have altered the nature of the relationship between the “occupied” and the “occupier”, a relationship that can no longer be defined merely as one of either compliance and toleration or dissent and protest’. They assert that, ‘[o]n the contrary, new media is revising the dynamics of power, information access, and communication in ways that are not yet fully understood’, and so ICT needs to be taken seriously in terms of the ways it relates to the structural, actor-related,

relational, and cultural aspects of the conflict transformation approach. It is, generally speaking, true that conflict transformation practitioners have yet to recognize the potential that cyberspace has to enhance their efforts in terms of ‘framing the conflict’s dynamics, engaging parties with each other, influencing popular opinion, and amplifying opportunities for peace’.

The chapters in [Part II](#) of this volume explore further the potential of actor-related, relational, and cultural types of conflict transformation, and in [Chapter 9](#) Bröckerhoff turns the focus again to BDS, this time in order to unpack the role that market liberalization plays in shaping participation in boycott movements in the occupied Palestinian territory from a consumer resistance perspective. Underlining the significance of consumer resistance, Bröckerhoff points out that ‘once the market becomes the established form for organizing social relations, consumers’ sense of being part of a collective declines. They may become less willing to bear significant personal costs for the sake of others with whom they now seemingly have less in common’. She concludes her nuanced argument by noting that the main challenge for Palestinians ‘may well involve finding ways to use the tools of the market to sustain economic activity under occupation without this activity leading to a continuation of the political and economic restrictions that they face’. The role of consumers within conflict transformation might be enabled through the use of consumer boycott for effective change if Palestinians are equipped with awareness about ‘the benefits, costs, and wider socio-political implications of their consumption under occupation’.

While the successes of the BDS movement focus several contributors on the ways in which consumer capitalism can be leveraged to produce conflict transformation, Abu-Nimer and Seidel in [Chapter 10](#) make an intriguing turn towards religion and explore the ways in which the secular rhetoric of conflict resolution has proved problematic. They demonstrate the importance of the nexus between religious belief and identity and investigate the potential for religious organizations to contribute to peacebuilding processes. The suspicion and

marginalization of religion in traditional conflict resolution approaches is opened up to scrutiny, and the authors argue that ‘attention to religion not only opens up productive lines of enquiry, but also serves to destabilize dominant modes of peacebuilding and conflict transformation practice’. The case studies provided by Abu-Nimer and Seidel illustrate the wide range of roles that religious agencies can play in conflict environments. The authors note that when policymakers engage only rarely in the types of important work that are currently undertaken by religious agencies ‘they fail to incorporate or find genuine ways to manage the role of religious identity in the conflict’.

Abu-Nimer and Seidel interrogate ‘the state-centric biases that persist in international conflict resolution mechanisms’ and provide a powerful theoretical ‘counter-narrative to the typical conflict discourse which asserts that religion is only a source of violence and that no resolution to this conflict is possible without the defeat of one faith group’. While they acknowledge the symbolic value of the kind of interfaith dialogue recognized in conflict resolution approaches, they argue that it is precisely by engaging with difficult cultural and religious differences that change can be realized. The task is ‘not to erase differences between religious and political agencies in terms of the expectations we should have of them’ but to engage with those differences in order ‘to problematize our understanding of seemingly common-sense distinctions and how they play out in conflict situations which are themselves more complex than they are often seen to be’. Abu-Nimer and Seidel directly challenge policymakers to find ‘creative ways to incorporate the voices of religious constituencies into conflict transformation processes’.

Culture represents another realm in which actors can contribute to conflict transformation processes, as Selen makes clear in [Chapter 11](#). She investigates the ability of Jewish Israeli and Palestinian artists to offer forms of alternative resistance to the occupation. After exploring the impact of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on the works of artists from these communities, Selen makes the case that, ‘in the asymmetric conflict that has engulfed the lives of Palestinian people

throughout the ongoing occupation, contemporary art provides a viable stage on which attempts to resist the occupation and foster change can be played out'. In a number of works by Palestinian and Israeli artists, Selen locates 'a distinct possibility that contemporary art can be utilized as a platform that promotes communication between dominant narratives that concern the conflict'. While she underlines a number of specific challenges faced by those artists, and particularly by the Palestinians among them, Selen nevertheless concludes that 'these artists are already making a significant contribution by disrupting the conceptual frameworks of the conflict and re-imagining ideas about home, place, history, and identity'.

The possibilities embodied in actor-related conflict transformation strategies are taken up by Yousef and Abu Labdeh in [Chapter 12](#) where they highlight the transformative role and potential of Palestinian university student youth movements. A historical review of the Palestinian student movement and of the political and non-political roles adopted by such organizations is used to show how students and youth groups have participated in, and demonstrated leadership in relation to, public resistance and national reconciliation issues. Yousef and Abu Labdeh point out that student movements, through their creative responses to a wide range of highly divisive and challenging issues, have managed to act as 'transformative forces in the occupied Palestinian territory'. While they note that the activities undertaken by student youth movements 'have created greater public awareness of just how destructive the status quo is for Palestinian society', they also caution that these movements face a wide range of internal challenges such as political divisions, factionalism, and polarization. In order to ensure their more active role in the conflict transformation process, they argue student groups and youth organizations will first need to transform their own conflicts from within.

In [Chapter 13](#), Darweish investigates the role of another type of transformational actor: the Israeli peace and solidarity organization. His analysis explores some of the activities undertaken by such organizations, which include non-violent direct action, the challenges they face, and how their activities

might be improved further, particularly in terms of the need to address Israeli society successfully. In his review of a number of ‘principled’ and ‘pragmatic’ nonviolent direct action approaches such as offensive co-resistance, solidarity, accompaniment, and protection, Darweish argues that Israeli peace and solidarity organizations have ‘a very significant role to play, both in Palestinian and Israeli societies and in contributing to an end to the occupation. This is because they present a counter-discourse to the dominant narrative presented by the Israeli government and political forces in Israel which would deny the rights of Palestinians’. It is important to note that – whether they are discussing student groups, artists, or Israeli peace and solidarity organizations – the authors in this volume establish a consensus that one of the most important conflict transformation roles that such actors can play is in developing counter-narratives against the continuing Israeli occupation and its flawed justifications. Darweish’s emphasis on the importance of transforming Israeli society is particularly significant. For this aim to be realized, he calls on Palestinians to join Israeli groups in work which will involve ‘addressing Israeli society’s concerns, peacefully communicating stories about the destruction caused by the occupation, and raising awareness among Israeli Jews that they have a vested interest in ending the occupation’.

The culpability of benevolent organizations committed to conflict resolution in the occupied territory is explored in the final chapters here. Continuing the volume’s investigation of the roles played by a wide range of actors, Godziejewska focuses on the contributions made by humanitarian organizations, and she argues that humanitarian actors could play a much more effective role in the intractable conflict between Jewish Israelis and Palestinians by both adhering to the principles of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and adopting a rights-based approach to humanitarian aid. This argument is particularly pertinent because humanitarian organizations ‘often do not see themselves as agents of conflict transformation’, despite the fact that, as Godziejewska ably demonstrates, there is huge potential for such actors to engage in conflict transformation work. Even by withdrawing from the occupied Palestinian territory, as she explains,

humanitarian organizations ‘would significantly raise the cost of occupation for Israel’ and this in itself could create effective leverage against the occupation. However, in order for them to make a real and transformative impact, humanitarian organizations in the occupied territory ‘need to coordinate carefully to develop sound joint positions regarding the stance towards IHL’. They also, Godziejewska argues, need to recognize that by ‘acting as a unified block, they can serve to protect endangered humanitarian space’.

In [Chapter 15](#), Natil questions the value and effectiveness of internationally sponsored conflict resolution programming for young people in the Gaza Strip vis-à-vis the issue of Palestinian refugees’ right to return. The chapter reviews the possibility that young refugees can act as agents of change when they engage in a wide range of political and civil society activities based on the premise of conflict transformation. Natil shows that young refugees try to engage in conflict transformation as much as possible, but that this ‘is challenged both by the absence of peace’ and because ‘occupation generates suppression, oppression, and violence, and continues to be a major obstacle for young people as they seek to live securely, plan for the future, and realize their rights’. This argument is particularly significant in relation to the timing of conflict transformation initiatives and to the question as to whether or not conflict transformation would be a viable approach in the absence of a sustainable political settlement. However, as Natil’s chapter suggests, in protracted armed conflicts such as the continuing Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territory, every effort should be made to sow seeds of peace, no matter how distant the prospect of that peace might seem to be.

Overall, this volume has argued that there are three main prerequisites for the transformation of the conflict between the State of Israel and Palestinians. Firstly, it is important to recognize the constructive potential of conflict and understand it from a perspective of socio-political change. Rather than solely trying to ‘re-solve’ the situation (an endeavour that has repeatedly failed), it is imperative to acknowledge that conflict exists and is being perpetuated by root causes which remain

intractable while they are ignored. The difficult task of addressing those causes must be undertaken in the midst of the conflict because all attempts to defer them to some later date have been shown to be doomed to failure.

Second, agents at all levels of political and civil society involved in making policy in response to the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians need to accept that the conflict concerned is an asymmetric one and cannot proceed on the basis of 'equal' treatment of unequal sides. The making and application of policy that concentrates on addressing inequity will allow parties to move towards a point at which policy based on equity would actually produce fairness and justice. Before this juncture, as many of the contributors have shown through meticulously researched case studies, work must be done at ground level in order to engage individuals, communities, and organizations in the active structural, contextual, relational, and cultural transformation of the injustices created by deeply entrenched asymmetric power relations. This work is urgently needed because, as this volume makes clear, the passage of time is contributing to those relations becoming increasingly normalized.

A conceptualization of the conflict and its root causes which engages with its difficulty, learns from past failures, and is attentive to ongoing injustice is essential if peacebuilding interventions are to have a real chance of achieving justice and accountability. The conclusions reached here affirm this volume's commitment to a bottom-up strategy of conflict engagement and explain its deliberate and careful attentiveness to the perspectives of Palestinian authors. The chapters assembled here make their own contributions to the third and most crucial prerequisite for change, which involves all participants really listening to Palestinian voices and recognizing that Palestinians must lead the planning and implementation of their own conflict transformation.

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