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On: 17 June 2015, At: 00:05

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Contemporary Arab Affairs

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rcaa20>

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Published online: 15 Jun 2015.



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To cite this article: Jamil Hilal (2015): Rethinking Palestine: settler-colonialism, neo-liberalism and individualism in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Contemporary Arab Affairs, DOI: [10.1080/17550912.2015.1052226](https://doi.org/10.1080/17550912.2015.1052226)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17550912.2015.1052226>

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Rethinking Palestine: settler-colonialism, neo-liberalism and individualism in the West Bank and Gaza Strip

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The 1967 occupied Palestinian territories have undergone three major types of development since the Oslo agreement between the Palestinian Liberation Organization and Israel was signed in 1993 and the Palestinian Authority was established in 1994. These developments have brought far-reaching structural changes in Palestinian politics and society. They have rendered Palestinian communities – inside historic Palestine and outside - very vulnerable, and made collective action against collective colonial repression (including a third intifada) more difficult. The three developments are identified as: the emergence of a political discourse that evicts Palestinians from history and geography and denies them a national identity; the escalation of collective repression, and settler-colonization; and the localization of Palestinian politics and the atomization of Palestinian society (in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and probably elsewhere) under the impact of settler-colonialism and neo-liberalism.

Keywords: apartheid; colonialism; Israel; intifada; military occupation; neo-liberalism; Palestinian Authority

Since the Oslo Agreement between the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel in 1993 and the establishment of the Palestinian Authority (PA) in 1994, three major developments have emerged and are gaining ground. These developments have had a decisive impact on Palestinian politics and communities. They have rendered the entire Palestinian community – from Gaza to the West Bank, including the Palestinians with Israeli nationality, as well as those in camps in Lebanon and Syria – extremely vulnerable. The three developments can be identified as follows:

- The emergence of a political discourse that evicts Palestinians from history and geography and denies them a national identity.
- The escalation of collective repression, and settler-colonization.
- The localization of Palestinian politics and the splintering of Palestinian society in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (WBG), and, mostly likely, in other Palestinian communities.

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Palestine denied, as history, as geography and as a people

The Palestinian historical narrative on how Palestinians tell their history, define their homeland and conceptualize their collective rights has been subjected to systematic distortion and misrepresentation. These distortions and misrepresentations include:

- *Shrinking Palestine to the WBG* by 22% of the territory belonging to historic Palestine, as it existed prior to the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. The term 'Palestinian occupied territory' has come to mean no more than the WBG, and the remainder of Palestine that was colonized and ethnically cleansed in 1948 no longer appears on maps as 'Palestine' but as 'Israel'. For Israel, the West Bank (named Judea and Samaria by Israel) is disputed territory to which it lays biblical claim. Palestinians suspect that Israel is manoeuvring for a Palestinian 'state' in the Gaza Strip, which makes up only about 1.3% of the territory of historic Palestine.
- *Demographic considerations constitute the only reason why Israel has not officially annexed the West Bank.* Since this region has a relatively large indigenous Palestinian population, Israel has been colonizing as much of the land as possible, while circumventing the highly populated pockets, which are, basically, where Palestinian towns and their surrounding villages are located. Israel totally controls area 'C', representing 60% of the West Bank where around 100,000 Palestinians live, and who are under constant pressure to abandon their homes and land; and area 'B', representing 22% of the West Bank; an area over which the PA can exercise civil administration but where Israel controls security. Israel continues to apply its policies of the creeping ethnic cleansing of Jerusalem and the Jordan Valley, and enforcing a strangulating siege on Gaza.

Evicting Palestinians from history

Two major events coincided in the second half of the 1960s: Israel occupied the WBG, and the PLO was established as the movement representing the Palestinian people. The coinciding of both events has since been misconstrued to mean that Palestinian history began in 1967 with the emergence of the PLO and the occupation of the WBG. This suited the powers that be as they turned a blind eye to the ethnic cleansing of Palestine, and conveniently overlooked the long and bloody struggle of Palestinians for self-determination, during the first half of the 20th century, against British military occupation and forced Zionist colonization. This is referred to by Palestinians as the Nakba.¹

This 'abridgment' of Palestinian history also serves to market the two-state solution, as Palestine was compressed to the size of the WBG, which is 22% of historic Palestine, and the Palestinian question was minimized to simply a matter of ending the Israeli occupation of the WBG, and the establishment a Palestinian state there.

Palestinians are those living in the West Bank and Gaza Strip

Like the phrase 'Palestinian occupied territories', which, in current discourse, means the WBG, Palestinians, in the same discourse, are those living in the WBG who are not Israeli colonial settlers: in other words, non-Israelis who hold Palestinian identity cards that are issued with the permission of Israel. The rest of the majority of Palestinians are either refugees, whom Israel does not recognize as having any rights as far as it is concerned, indigenous Palestinians holding Israeli nationality, but who are

classified as a religious or ethnic minority like the Christians, Moslems, Druze and Bedouins, and not as a national group.

Israel portrayed as a democratic state, rarely as a settler-colonial state

Dominant international discourse describes Israel as a democratic state (sometimes as a Jewish democratic state, not realizing that this is an oxymoron). It is very rarely, if ever, seen as a settler-colonial state that imposes on Palestinians a system combining features of apartheid, e.g. ethnic discrimination and confinement within Bantustan, as was formerly the case in South Africa,² without the systematic exploitation of indigenous labour by the settlers, with features of the ‘reserve’ system, used for Native Americans and Australian Aborigines.³

The Israeli demand that Palestinians recognize Israel as a Jewish state⁴ is a demand for total surrender, for Palestinians to renounce their historic narrative, accept second-class status in Israel and endorse the Zionist narrative (where *Nakba* be replaced by the Independence Day celebrated by Israel).⁵ It is a call for Palestinians to abandon their right of return, and for those with Israeli nationality to accept their status as second-class citizens. It seeks to get Palestinians to internalize their defeat.

Disseminating myths and misrepresentations

Following the establishment of the PA, a number of myths and misrepresentations gained currency, even within the PA leadership, many Palestinian non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international organizations and the mass media. These include:

- Development is achievable in the WBG, under settler colonialism, limited Palestinian self-rule and a neo-liberal agenda is a myth that is still in circulation.
- To facilitate the former, another myth promoted was the existence of a Palestinian economy. This latter one is strongly believed in by the PA, promoted by the World Bank, and many NGOs and international bodies, despite the fact that the PA has no control over natural resources, border crossings, trade and freedom of movement within the WBG. In addition to the fact that what really exists are three separate market areas represented by the West Bank, Greater Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip, which are all run by different local authorities under the control of the occupying colonial power. To market the myth of ‘development’, the World Bank and major international donors continue to deal with the territories of the WBG as they did in the early years of the Oslo Agreement – in a post-conflict context – and not as a settler-colony occupied by Israel, thus remaining very much in an ‘in-conflict situation’.⁶
- Another myth that dominated the policy of the PA for some time contended that Palestinian statehood would be hastened with the building of efficient and transparent institutions under occupation: This myth was advocated by former PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad, and promoted by the European Union. The myth asked Palestinians to prove that they are capable of managing a state. Apart from its ‘orientalist’ and racist implications, it denies Palestinians the right to self-determination. Despite the high marks given to the state-like institutions of the PA by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the PA’s hoped-for state never happened, simply because Israel is against an independent state on the WBG,

and the United States, as has become abundantly clear, will not support a resolution of the conflict if it is not endorsed by Israel.

The myth of a two-state solution is still held strongly by many parties, including the PA and the European Union.⁷ This is despite the repeated failure of bilateral Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, under US auspices, for over two decades, the demographic, geographic and economic transformation of the WBG – done by settler-colonialism – where nearly one in every four persons in the West Bank was, in 2014, an Israeli settler, and the ongoing ‘Judaization’ of Jerusalem, with the slow but persistent ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from the city.

Collective repression, fragmentation and intense colonization

Palestinians in the WBG have been subjected to intensive colonization, a suffocating siege, and territorial fragmentation, denial of rights, pauperization and national humiliation. All these forces are collective in scope and nature.

Collective control has been maintained by the splintering of the WBG into areas that combine features of ‘Bantustans’, where Palestinians are confined in geographic areas with self-administration, but slightly different to the South African model in that there is limited use of cheap labour. Nevertheless, in the WBG model of a ‘Bantustan’, the region was and remains a captive market for Israeli products, and with some features of the Native American, and Australian Aboriginal ‘reserve’ system. To implement this system, various mechanisms of control and confinement were employed, including a network of bypass roads – for Israelis only – a segregation wall, military checkpoints, curfews and a siege, the detention and imprisonment of militants,⁸ the demolition of homes, maintaining the conditions of economic and financial dependency in the WBG on international aid,⁹ and external transfers of customs tax collected by Israel for the PA that Israel can and does withhold at anytime with impunity. The splintering of the territory involved the isolation of East Jerusalem from the WBG, and Judaization of the city, in addition to security control on road networks, and violence by settlers. This is all managed in such a way that the West Bank can be turned within minutes into three major ‘reserve’ areas: north, middle and south.

The Oslo Agreement (1993) was enacted to tighten Israel’s colonial grip on the WBG and to use excessive force against Palestinian resistance. To this end, Israel imposes total control over all aspects of life in these areas, including restrictions over movement, detention without trial, emergency laws, the demolition of housing, the assassination of political leaders and militants, the control of borders, skies, seas, underground water, trade, and supplies of fuel and electricity, and outright large-scale military onslaughts, as happened in the invasion of the West Bank cities in 2002. Such conditions and the three wars against the Gaza Strip since 2008 – the latest in the summer of 2014 – ensure that Palestinians are kept in a highly vulnerable and risky situation, with practically no control over their own future.

Israel did not significantly change its policies towards the Palestinians following the Oslo Accords. It maintained its settler-colonial policy and collective repression, albeit with a faster tempo. Between 1990 and 2014, the number of settlers in the West Bank almost trebled, which meant, as of 2014, the presence in the West Bank of one Israeli settler for every four Palestinians. Not only has the number of settlers increased, but also their political influence has increased significantly in Israeli politics, particularly in the government of Benjamin Netanyahu. Seventeen per cent of the Gaza Strip,

which has the highest population density in the world, has been made inaccessible to Gazans, since it has been turned into a buffer zone. The imposed siege has turned it into an explosive ghetto and prison camp, with seven gates (which are kept closed most of the time) for the 1.8 million Palestinians, needing food, medicine, fuel, etc. and who are totally dependent for their survival on access to the outside world.¹⁰

The real function of Israeli-Palestinian security coordination, as specified in the Oslo Agreement, has been to ensure the security of the colonizer by the colonized.¹¹ In addition, the Oslo Accords transferred the burden of administrating the WBG from Israel to the PA, relying on external aid – mainly from the United States and the European Union – and transfers from the customs taxes collected for the PA by Israel for a fee.

The PA has been weakened to the degree that its president, Mahmud Abbas, has described it as an ‘authority without authority’, and as an authority that makes the Israeli occupation the ‘cheapest in history’. It is known that Abbas pledged himself against the eruption of a third *intifada*. To this end, he can rely on the PA security service, which makes up about 45% of its workforce, and consumes 27% of the annual budget.¹²

The breakdown of the bilateral negotiations in 2014, sponsored by the US Secretary of State, John Kerry, came as a result of Israel’s commitment to continuing the colonization of the West Bank, and its refusal to define its borders. Israel is the only country that has no declared borders. There is no faith, among Palestinians, that bilateral negotiations will put an end to their collective repression.

Individualization, fragmentation and conspicuous consumption

Many factors have interacted to promote a process of the individualization of Palestinian communities. By individualization is meant the social process that legitimizes and prioritizes individual interests as paramount. It amounts to the internalization of the individualistic and capitalistic values of self-interest, without regard for public interest. These values are reinforced in the marketplace, the workplace, as well as in news, films and daily gossip. Their impact is clearly visible in the undermining of solidarity among individuals and communities. In the WBG, the following factors have been active in promoting this process.

Embracing the neo-liberal agenda

It is not surprising that the PA adopted a neo-liberal economic agenda, since it was established, in 1993, at the height of the neo-liberal era, and was nurtured and supervised by the World Bank and the IMF, and financed by US and European Union donors. Thus, the free market economy was made binding in Palestinian Basic Law, as approved by the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC). Furthermore, the neo-liberal agenda was promoted, directly and indirectly, by the many hundreds of Palestinian NGOs that emerged with, or following, the establishment of the PA, and, naturally, by the emerging private sector.

The emerging private sector, heavily invested with mainly expatriate Palestinian capital, was granted, under the hegemony of the neo-liberal dogma, a determining role in shaping the economy and society in the WBG. With the Paris Protocol on Economic Relations, signed between Israel and the PA in 1994, the ongoing Israeli extensive

control over economic life in the WBG was ensured. PA dependency on foreign aid and Israeli customs' tax transfers maintained its vulnerability to external pressures, and exposed its large public sector employees to the precariousness and volatility of external aid and Israeli policy.

Dismantling national institutions

The Oslo Agreement – taking place within the context of the collapse of the Soviet Union and disarray in the Arab world following the war on Iraq in 1990 – hastened a rapid process of marginalizing Palestinian national institutions. This was most evident in the freezing of PLO institutions and mass and professional organizations. Up until the Oslo Accords, the PLO had acted as the national body representing all Palestinian communities inside and outside historic Palestine. Wagering on the fact that the PA would be transformed into an independent Palestinian state after the end of the five-year interim period, in 1999, all efforts went into building the PA's institutions, and the PLO was seen as redundant. This proved a very short-sighted policy, as not only did the Palestinians lose their national representative institutions, but also they ended up losing the PA as a self-rule authority over the WBG, following the split it witnessed in 2007, with the paralysis of the PLC and the creation of two self-governing authorities, both under occupation and siege: one in Gaza and the other in the West Bank.

In short, Palestinians no longer possessed unified national institutions, nor a unified leadership, or a clear national strategy, which would address the mobilization of their various communities in the struggle for their right to self-determination and to further their collective interests. In the first *intifada* it was the presence of a unified leadership and mass and professional organizations that sustained them and ensured their mass base.

Impact of Palestinian non-governmental organizations (NGOs)

A significant increase in the number and role of the NGOs took place after the Oslo Agreement and the establishment of the PA. To finance their programmes, medium and large NGOs depend on donor money, much of which is aimed at maintaining the constantly shaky 'peace process'. The latter was made shaky by the asymmetrical power relations built into it. The significance of the expansion in number and scope of NGOs is to be found in their replacement of representative and voluntary associations which, together with political organizations, played a significant role in organizing and mobilizing Palestinian society before the establishment of the PA. The new NGOs were professionalized structures geared, at best, to service provision. They were not representative and/or voluntary associations like those that were established in the late 1970s and 1980s, originally by left-wing political organizations that were then followed by Fatah, to mobilize women, workers, students, teachers, etc. NGOs were now accountable to their donors and not to their beneficiaries or political parties, as before.

Bureaucratization and localization of politics

The generally egalitarian political culture 'of brothers and comrades', and the relatively easy access to political leaders of the various political factions and of mass

and professional bodies that dominated the Palestinian political culture before the establishment of the PA, were quickly replaced by pseudo-state institutions with rigid hierarchical structures and official nomenclature – minister, deputy, director-general, director, etc., and with highly differentiated military and police ranks – with privileges accorded to status and rank. What this entailed was the diminished capacity of the political organizations (including Fatah and Hamas) to mobilize mass support on national issues. Most of the cadres of Fatah and Hamas have been absorbed in the formal institutions erected by both movements in the WBG (Fatah in 1994, Hamas in 2007). In short, militants were turned into emasculated and enfeebled civil servants in institutions of self-government under settler-colonialism.

Enlargement of the middle class

The setting-up of the PA initiated significant class transformations in the WBG. Not only because the PA was instrumental in the making of a large new middle class – mostly from the lower-middle class – but also, together with the NGOs and an emerging private sector, it widened the gap in the distribution of wealth in the WBG, and made inequality more conspicuous. Inequality became clear in the different rates of poverty and unemployment between regions, cities, villages and camps, as well as in gender and education.

A sizeable urban middle class emerged that is largely dependent on employment in the ministries, services and security agencies of the PA, in NGOs, and in the modern sectors of the economy of the WBG, in fields of communication, electronics, insurance, banking, finance, advertisement, mass media, etc. This coincided with a huge expansion in the sector of pre-university and university education, and in healthcare, in addition to the noticeable increase in the professions of law, engineering, architecture and expertise in various fields, which evolves with the building of urban centres such as Ramallah and Gaza City.

With the availability of easy bank loans and the regularity of receiving monthly salaries to pay the banks by instalments,¹³ large numbers of the new middle class were enticed to use such loans for buying consumer goods such as cars, furniture, etc., as well as homes. Any real delay or faltering in the payment of salaries from the PA, NGOs or the private sector would put at risk a large section of the new middle class who would not be able to cover their bank loans. Such delays and faltering on more than one occasion in the last decade are still vivid in the memories of the middle classes, as a result of the hardships that accrued. Israel and the United States frequently remind the middle classes that their income is not secured if the PA does not toe the line.

A dependence on salaries from the PA, NGOs and the modern private sector explains why the Palestinian middle class in the WBG remains reluctant to engage in any collective action that could jeopardize its source of livelihood and privilege. In Tunisia and Egypt, the mostly young new middle class played a noticeable role in launching and maintaining the popular uprisings against their dictatorships. In both those countries, workers and professional trade unions were crucial in making the uprising popular and sustainable. The same cannot be said about the present conditions of the new middle and working classes in the WBG, since the national question has priority and the Palestinian political elite in the WBG is careful not to let the situation in both areas get out of hand. Attempts by middle-class youth to initiate uprisings between

2011 and 2013 in the WBG failed, as they were either contained or repressed by the two ruling political movements (Hilal 2013).

The emergence of a large middle class in neo-liberal circles, a service-oriented economy representing one-third of the employed working force in the WBG, with only 24% of the labour force employed in agriculture and manufacturing – both sectors contributing less than 18% to gross domestic product (GDP)¹⁴ – as well as dependency on aid have enhanced an ethos of individualism and a consumerist lifestyle. This is a lifestyle that is very precarious, for reasons noted above, but all the more so because of the dominance of the settler-colonial situation in which it operates.

Distinctions of class and status, based on wealth, office and office rank, have never been as glaring as they have come to be in recent years. In the first *intifada* the distinctions that were glaring were those between the Israeli middle class – the occupiers – and the large Palestinian working class – the occupied. Now the differences are noticeable among the occupied themselves, as Israelis are not seen much in WBG towns and villages, and Palestinians need permits to visit Israeli cities.

A fragmented and vulnerable working class

Workers in the WBG are not well-positioned to organize themselves in collective action against their national oppressor. Palestinian workers have much less job security, receive far lower wages and have higher unemployment rates – with the exception of university graduates – and fewer social entitlements than the new middle class. The new middle class is more unionized than manual workers. Such conditions call for collective protests against the self-rule authorities just as much as an uprising against the settler-colonial authority, but the fragmentation into tens of thousands of tiny enterprises, with hardly any unionization, is a fact not conducive to collective rebellious action. Some 10% of the labour force in the West Bank depends on employment in unskilled and semi-skilled jobs in Israel and Israeli colonies in the West Bank.¹⁵

In short, the situation of the working class in the WBG is not favourable to its initiating an active resistance movement against the Israeli occupation, as the Tunisian workers were able to do against their oppressive regime in 2011 through their well-organized trade union movement. The work situation and condition of small farmers, shopkeepers, craftsmen and owners of very small workshops – ‘*petit-bourgeoisie*’ in the language of the old left – is not much better than manual workers.

A business class seeking profit and stability

The new business class that emerged following the establishment of the PA, whether from expatriates or indigenous businessmen (Dana 2014), has been careful to keep good relations with the PA leadership and vice versa, and with the Israeli authorities, to ensure the smooth running of business with respect to markets, imports, exports and the necessary permits to move around with ease. As such, this class cannot be said to be ready to support any action against the occupation that would jeopardize its class interests, or support any action that would further weaken the PA and destabilize its situation.

Conclusions

The objective conditions in the WBG call very strongly for a major *intifada*; the heightened Israeli collective repression has never reached the ferocity that we witness today. Yet, the 'subjective' conditions prevailing in Palestinian politics and in Palestinian society are not equipped, as yet, to rise to the challenge. The demise of national institutions, the vertical divisions within Palestinian politics, the atomization of society in the WBG, the accentuation of class inequality, the individualist and consumerist values in the prevailing neo-liberal setting, the PA's and NGOs' dependency on external aid, are all factors holding back collective resistance to settler-colonialism, apartheid and outright racist discrimination.

The two major ongoing types of changes that have impacted the WBG of collective repression and colonization, on the one hand, and fragmentation and individualization, on the other, are not likely to end in the near future. However, cumulative conditions pushing for collective popular action, leading to organized popular resistance against the Israeli colonial occupation, should not be excluded, given the entrenchment of the political deadlock and the policy of collective repression and punishment, as well as the ongoing intensification of colonization and national humiliation, and an extremely right-wing Israeli government¹⁶ re-elected to the Knesset earlier this year, headed by Netanyahu. It is possible that, faced with such policies and conditions, sections of the Palestinian political elite and of the middle class in the WBG will come to feel that they have nothing to lose but the chains of their empty privileges and their salaries that require their docility towards their oppressor. At this point a new Palestinian political movement, as happened in the 1960s, could begin to be built.

What seems more likely in the coming months is a continuation of individual and locally based confrontations with the Israeli occupation and its settlers in the West Bank, and the occasional military flare-ups in the Gaza Strip. The collective repression, political deadlock and the strength of Palestinian identity – kept aflame by successive generations of collective repression, dispossession, suffering, discrimination, Israeli racism and the settlers' daily belligerence – will keep the Palestinian cause alive in song, film, literature, and oral and written narratives, and in individual and collective acts of resistance. The situation in historic Palestine will remain explosive with the mounting intensification of racism against the indigenous Palestinian minority.¹⁷ The turmoil in the surrounding Arab countries is a factor that adds to this explosiveness. Palestinians have failed, so far, in their struggle for freedom and self-determination, but they have not been defeated.

Basic to facilitating collective and coordinated action against the collective repression and the apartheid-cum-reserve system is the ending of the polarization in the Palestinian polity. This will pave the way for the reconstruction of a new Palestinian movement, with national institutions true to the aspirations of all Palestinian communities, and capable of articulating a clear national strategy, based on collective rights and not on state-building at any cost, that mobilizes the energies of all the Palestinian people, and activates regional and international solidarity with the Palestinian cause as an international cause. Resistance needs to be understood in a holistic manner – not reduced to one form, but informed by popular cultural, economic, diplomatic and civic forms. One such form has been initiated by the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign, and there is an urgent need to make Israel accountable for its war crimes¹⁸ and its violation of international law. The economy in the WBG needs to be put under social regulation to move towards building an economy oriented to the

needs of Palestinian steadfastness, and to delink it from the Israeli economy and external dependency. Above all, there is a need for investment in cultural capital, in the widest sense of the term, and in social capital, through informal and formal associations, the social media and cross-border interaction and collaborative efforts, to keep Palestine alive as a symbol of the struggle for emancipation, freedom and justice.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes

1. Anthropologist and oral historian Rosemary Sayigh notes, with bafflement, that the absence of the *Nakba* from the trauma genre, both reflects *and reinforces* the marginalization of Palestinian claims to justice and recognition of the *Nakba* in world politics, and thereby, it contributes to the continuing failure to reach an equitable settlement. (Sayigh 2013).
2. An Israeli anthropologist sees the ongoing political status quo of deepening Israeli colonization and Palestinian resistance as ‘creating an undeclared, yet profound, process of institutionalizing “separate and unequal” rights for Jews and Palestinians living under the same regime’ (Yiftachel 2013, 3).
3. One of the best expressions of the parallels and connections between Palestinians and Native Americans is Mahmud Darwish’s poem *Speech of the Red Indian*. Here are the first few lines.
4. Zionism transforms Judaism from a religion into a nation with a national identity. Judaism is, thus, turned into an identity opposed to Palestinian national identity. Historic Palestine remains for Palestinians their historical homeland, regardless of any political settlement that might be reached. It is worth recalling here the fears that some Israelis have expressed regarding the ‘nationality’ bill that the Israeli extreme right-wing Netanyahu is sponsoring. See, for example, the article by Akiva Eldar which argues that Netanyahu’s stubborn insistence on pushing through the nationality bill is not driven by political motives alone, but reflects his and his cohorts’ belief that the Palestinians are not even a people (Eldar 2014).
5. It is worth quoting Zeev Sternhell, Israeli historian, political scientist, writer and considered one of the world’s leading experts on fascism, on this issue:

The demand that the Palestinians recognize a Jewish state is no coincidence; it’s not to be taken lightly. It’s the way to demand that the Palestinians admit their historic defeat and recognize the Jews’ exclusive ownership of the country.’ Reviewing Israeli policies in the West Bank, he adds, ‘The occupation will continue, land will be confiscated from its owners to expand the settlements, the Jordan Valley will be cleansed of Arabs, Arab Jerusalem will be strangled by Jewish neighborhoods, and any act of robbery and foolishness that serves Jewish expansion in the city will be welcomed by the High Court of Justice. The road to South Africa has been paved, and will not be blocked until the Western world presents Israel with an unequivocal choice: Stop the annexation and dismantle most of the colonies and the settler state, or be an outcast. (Sternhell 2014)

6. The percentage of those living below the poverty line in the WBG rose from 20.3% in 1998 (16.3% in the West Bank without Jerusalem, 33.0% for the Gaza Strip) to 25.7% in 2010 (18.3% for the West Bank, 38.0% for the Gaza Strip). The unemployment rate in the WBG rose from 14.1% in 2000 (prior to the second *intifada*) to 23% in 2012 (figures from the Palestine Economic Research Institute (MAS) and various issues of *Economic and Social Monitor*). If the ‘international community’, whatever that means, wants to help Palestinian development,

it must confront, expose, and challenge Israel's containment of the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT). This includes the rejection of the façade of a two-state solution or 'peace process' and an acknowledgement of the way that Israel is managing the Palestinian population and their economy in perpetuity, by refusing to consider any arrangement that either separates them into a sovereign state or integrates them into a bi-national state. In addition, it is past the time for the international community to call out the racist vision of differential rights for Jews and non-Jews within Israel as well as in the Occupied Palestinian Territories that underpins this strategy. While such positions by the international community would not guarantee a 'solution' one way or the other, they would certainly support the struggle against what might otherwise be perennial political containment and economic backwardness. (Ahmad 2014)

7. In her visit to Gaza and occupied Jerusalem on 8 November 2014, the European Union's new foreign affairs chief, Federica Mogherini, said, 'We need a Palestinian state – that is the ultimate goal and this is the position of all the European Union.' But all she managed to say on Israeli policies was no more than that Israeli settlement building in the West Bank was simply an 'obstacle to a negotiated peace', and not illegal acts as United Nations resolutions state. For the full account, see <http://www.dw.de/eu-foreign-affairs-chief-mogherini-calls-for-palestinian-state/a-18048838/>.
8. According to the Palestinian Prisoner Affairs Ministry, since 1967 the number of Palestinians arrested has amounted to 800,000. As a result, more than 70% of Palestinian families have had at least one family member arrested at some stage. Prisoners are, for the most part, male and often the sole breadwinner for their families, with a significant impact that this has on the family's financial situation (see, <http://www.ochaopt.org/annual/c1/7.html/>).
9. Since 1993 more than US\$24 billion in aid has been invested in 'peace and development' in the WBG. That aid was meant originally to support the Oslo 'peace process' through engendering economic development. However, neither peace nor economic development has materialized, and both remain very unlikely (Wildeman and Tartir 2014).
10. Ilan Pappé calls the Israeli policies towards Gaza an 'incremental genocide' (Pappé 2014). In contrast, Israeli generals called the periodic onslaught on Gaza as 'mowing the lawn'. On the language used by right-wing Zionists to describe Palestinians and assaults on them, see Lloyd (2014).
11. A poll of Palestinian WBG residents earlier in 2014 showed that 80% of respondents opposed continued security coordination with Israel. The recent threat by Abbas to stop the security coordination with Israel 'if the situation remains as it is and there are no negotiations' is not, in all likelihood, for implementation but as a request for the resumption of bilateral negotiations under US sponsorship (see <http://english.dohainstitute.org/file/Get/8c85f60b-1071-46de-8e64-ceb72c06cd71/>).
12. For a full account, see *Middle East Monitor* (2014).
13. A survey conducted in December 2014 found 18% of those surveyed had bank loans for housing, cars, to cover marriage expenses, etc. Just like banks, the greatest majority of these salaried employees are not likely to lend to manual workers, artisans, the unemployed or the self-employed, as the risk of non-payment is very high (Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research 2014).
14. On different economic indicators for the WBG, see *The Economic & Social Monitor* (Ramallah: Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS)) (see www.pma.ps).
15. Still, mobilization of the working and middle classes can take place on the national question if there are credible political parties and/or social movements. As things are, it is difficult to mobilize workers in the workplace but they could be mobilized in the area where the surplus value is generated, i.e., areas of consumption where value is consumed in the form of rent, credit card charges, telephone bills, electricity and water bills, and the payments for goods and services. On this aspect, see *Jaddalyia* (2013).
16. Netanyahu, the current Israeli prime minister, has raised the possibility of revoking the citizenship or residency rights of relatives of those who attack Israelis or who show support for such acts, regardless of whether the latter are civilians, armed settlers or army personnel.
17. Generally, Palestinians tend not to perceive time in a straight linear frame, but rather they see the past as embodied in the present which will beget the future.

18. In the 50 days of the Israeli military onslaught on Gaza, in the summer of 2014 some 2250 Palestinians were killed, 10,890 wounded and 17,200 homes totally destroyed or severely damaged. This is equivalent, proportionally to Italy's population, for example, to over 75,000 people killed, 363,000 wounded and over 570,000 homes destroyed or damaged (Italy's population is about 60 million, Gaza's 1.8 million). Yet, Israel is not made responsible for the killing, maiming and destruction; in effect, it benefits from the reconstruction by exporting building material and equipment. More than three months after the ceasefire agreement, it seems that the lifting of the siege on Gaza was in no way being implemented, and as for the reconstruction, it will take many years, and Gaza will be managed as one big prison for some time to come. Israeli historian Pappé describes Israeli policies towards Gaza as 'incremental genocide'.

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