Reducing the Conflict and the Shift from "Creeping Annexation" to "Creeping Separation" in the Zionist Settler-Colonial System in the West Bank

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Abstract

This paper aims to analyze the concept of "conflict reduction" by researching its origins, and to ask a central question regarding its indications and impact on the conflict, and whether it is a new model or a reproduction of the old Israeli policies with some improvements. This paper answers these and other questions through a critical analysis of this term and traces its origin and development, by referring to archival documents and literature of the period 1967–2021. It concludes that the original concept is old, but has been developed and reproduced to suit the changes of the Zionist settlement colonial project in the West Bank, foremost of which is the shift from the concept of "creeping annexation" to "creeping separation."

Keywords:

Conflict Reduction	Settlement Colonial Project	Indirect Rule
Non-Intervention	Inconspicuousness	Open Bridges

Introduction

The use of the term "conflict reduction" has increased in the context of the Israeli effort to engineer the relationship with the Palestinians in the areas colonized in 1967, especially in West Bank (WB). How did the term appear and what are its roots? Is it a new model? Or is it a reproduction of old Israeli policies with some improvements? What are its implications for the conflict? This paper will answer these and other questions through a critical analysis of this term, tracing its origin and development, by referring to archival documents and literature of the 1967–2021 period.

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The use of the term "conflict reduction" spread after the Israeli writer Micah Goodman advocated it in his book entitled, "*Catch 67: The Ideologies behind the Disagreements Tearing Israel Apart*," published in Hebrew in 2017, followed by the publication of an article in the Hebrew *Liberal* magazine in 2019 entitled, "Steps to Shrink the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict."

The right-wing New Hope party, which is a partner in the current coalition government (formed in June 2021), used the term "reducing the conflict" in its electoral program, as it was stated in clause No. 2 of its platform, entitled "Reducing the Conflict":

> Although for the foreseeable future there will be no permanent settlement that will end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, political measures can be implemented to "reduce the conflict," without compromising Israel's security. These are measures that serve the Israeli interest on the security and humanitarian levels: improving the conditions of border crossings for workers through new technologies, rationalizing the Palestinian operating system in Israel, regulating the electricity and energy sector, rationalizing Palestinian imports and exports, and more.[2]

After becoming prime minister in 2021, Naftali Bennett signaled some of his intentions in dealing with the Palestinians, saying de-escalation and the Palestinians' preoccupation with civil affairs will lead to developments in the economic field, reduce friction with the Israeli army, and "reduce the conflict."[3] Bennett quoted the term "reducing the conflict" from Goodman, whom he is keen to consult regularly, and previously commented on his book "*Catch 67*" on his Facebook page in May 2017, saying that while he may not agree with everything in the book, it's a brilliant piece of work that sparks constructive discussion.[4] Bennett confirmed this direction before traveling to the United States in an interview with *The New York Times*, saying that "Israel will continue the standard policy of natural growth," referring to the continuation of settlement building, and said that "there would be no resolution of the conflict with the Palestinians for the foreseeable future." He added, "This government is a government that will make

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[2] A Political-Security Hope, the official site of New Hope party, https://www.newhope.org.il/security (in Hebrew)

[3] Walid Habbas, What does Bennett Mean by "Reducing the Conflict" with the Palestinians, and How Does This Concept Meet with the Religious Zionism Agenda?, site of the Palestinian Center for Israeli Studies "Madar," 2/8/2021, https://bit.ly/2XR1tAo

[4] Op. cit.

dramatic breakthroughs in the economy," "its claim to fame will not be solving the 130-year-old conflict here in Israel," and that it "will neither annex nor form a Palestinian state… what I'm doing now is finding the middle ground — how we can focus on what we agree upon."[5]

Bennett's statements thus prompt us to research the roots of this term and how it developed, but before that we will work on framing it theoretically.

Theoretical Framing

We can argue that the "conflict reduction" model theoretically belongs to the colonial concept of indirect rule, on which the Israeli military rule in WB has been based since 1967 with the help of municipalities. But what is the concept of indirect rule?

This concept developed at the hands of the British colonial administration in India after 1857, as well as in Malaysia and with the Dutch colonial administration in Indonesia.[6] This followed rebellions against British colonialism, which had tried to impose direct rule. The rebellions included the uprising of India in 1857, the Morant Bay Rebellion in Jamaica in 1865, and the Mahdiyya revolt in Sudan in 1881–1898. The durability of this resistance forced British leaders to rethink the principles of colonial governance. Their solution was indirect rule, and the logic of the "civilizing mission" had to go so that the British could maintain control. The French also adopted indirect rule, replacing the policy of "assimilation" with that of "association." In Senegal and Morocco, the French followed the British by building a durable alliance with local elites whose moral and ideological standing was intact, even if their political power was on the wane.[7]

Direct rule, according to Mahmood Mamdani, sought to build states similar to the colonial states, while indirect rule sought merely to hold territories and exploit their resources.[8] Non-interference in the British colonial situation was in matters pertaining to the private domain and religion.[9] Mamdani argues that direct rule aims at "civilizing" elites, while indirect rule looks to impose a native subjectivity on the entire local population, seeking to shape the present, past and future of the colonized peoples by placing each of them in an indigenous mold, shaping the

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[5] Patrick Kingsley and Isabel Kershner, New Israeli Leader Backs Hard Line on Iran but Softer Tone With U.S., *The New York Times* newspaper, 24/8/2021, https://nyti.ms/3ydqG4B

[6] Mahmood Mamdani, *Define and Rule: Native as Political Identity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), p. 9.

[7] Mahmood Mamdani, *Neither Settler nor Native: the Making and Unmaking of Permanent Minorities* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2020), pp. 11–12.

[8] Ibid., p. 10.

[9] Mahmood Mamdani, *Define and Rule: Native as Political Identity*, p. 26.

present through a set of identities in the census, the past through the driving force of the new historiography, and the future through the legal system.[10]

The late colonial era witnessed a large-scale restructuring of colonial governmentality. Indirect colonial rule was devised as a response to the crisis of Empire, as an attempt to contain "rebellions" and revolutions, and as a result of the increasing incapability of colonial powers to maintain the colonial project through conventional direct rule. The basic idea of the indirect rule system is based on utilizing the native centers of power and local institutions as instruments to enable the endurance and stability of colonial governance. It, therefore, represented a fundamental realm in which local political authority and colonial governance were intermingled in the administration of everyday life for the colonized subjects.[11]

In the British-ruled African colonies, the state had a hybrid function, restructuring local production to meet the demands of the metropole,[12] and to work to cohere colonial society as this massive transformation took place. This was possible through the regular exercise of superior military force, but more effectively achieved through using legitimate authority accepted by native populations, by moving from political to civil hegemony on the back of neo-traditional structures of authority. The resolution of this problem was found in the use of "native authorities" through "indirect rule."[13] This rule was considered the ideal way to manage "native" populations in Africa, and it was used creatively in mostly franchise colonies, where the colonial state needed to manage the articulation of two overlapping and intertwined modes of production, one in the African peasant economy, and the other in the settler or colonial capitalist economy. Indirect rule functioned to administer the African peasantry through what were considered to be "native institutions" that would enable stable rule, and mobilize African populations to work and pay taxes, so that the colonial state could cover costs.[14]

Indirect colonial rule acquired distinctive features that made it strategically superior and more economically advantageous to colonial powers than traditional direct rule, in terms of its theoretical dependence on the consent of the colonized to participate in colonial governance arrangements, whether through official or informal consent. This necessarily made colonialism grant a mandate to native administration structures to rule. Therefore, they would be ruled by local power

[10] Ibid., p. 45.

[11] Tariq Dana, "Israeli conception of peace as indirect colonial rule," in Jürgen Mackert, Hannah Wolf and Bryan S. Turner (editors), *The Condition of Democracy and the Fate of Citizenship, Vol. 3: Postcolonial and Settler Colonial Contexts* (UK: Routledge, 2021), p. 73.

[12] The center/capital of the colonial power.

[13] Ben Silverstein, "Indirect Rule in Australia: A Case Study in Settler Colonial Difference," in Fiona Bateman and Lionel Pilkington, *Studies in Settler Colonialism: Politics, Identity and Culture* (UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 92.

[14] Ibid., p. 93.

holders, such as tribal chiefs and hereditary elites, civil servants, the native justice system, and local political institutions.

The indirect rule system is a cost-benefit strategy, and it was intended to help tighten colonial control over the colonies without the need to deploy large bureaucracies and armies. This system was made possible because the local ruling elite accepted to mediate between the colonial power and the colonized societies, through local institutions. Despite the apparent autonomy of local leaders in the exercise of power, colonial officers effectively constituted the highest authority, issuing orders, formulating policies, and dictating the political decisions of local leaders.[15] The colonial powers worked to invent a local authority and a leadership that were tied to, and directed by, the colonial masters. To give this local authority legitimacy, the colonial powers supported a local clientelist patronage system.[16] Here is where the distinction from the Palestinian situation in 1967 lies, where such local authorities were not invented, but rather existed and were elected since the time of the Jordanian rule. They remained on the ground and did not migrate, as happened with most of the leaders in 1948.

The question here is how the Israeli government applied the concept of indirect rule in the 1967 territories, and how things developed into a "conflict reduction" model. This is what we will discuss in the following sections.

Israeli Military Rule in the 1967 Territories (1967–1981)

Defense Minister Moshe Dayan, who was primarily responsible for setting population management policies in the areas occupied by Israel in 1967, was influenced by the colonial concept of "indirect rule." Moshe Dayan sought to implement it in the 1967 territories through municipalities and developed Israel's military rule policies there. According to the administrative divisions of the Israeli government, the administration of the affairs of the population under military rule was made the prerogative of the Ministry of Defense. Dayan controlled these policies and laid the foundations for them, being the only expert who combined experience in military rule in the Gaza Strip (GS) in 1956 while he was in command of the army, and his experience in military rule in the 1948 territories during his tenure at the Ministry of Agriculture in 1959–1964. In 1966, he visited

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[15] Tariq Dana, "Israeli conception of 'peace' as indirect colonial rule," p. 74.
[16] Ibid., p. 75.

(South) Vietnam, as a reporter for the *Maariv* newspaper, to benefit from the experience of the French and Americans in the colonial military rule of Vietnam.[17]

The Israeli colonial system combined its experience in military rule with the American experience in Vietnam, to produce the administration and control system that was established after 1967. This was evident through the Israeli practices that were identical to the conclusions and observations of Dayan in his book "Vietnam Diary." Indeed, Dayan summoned Chaim Herzog, the first military governor of WB, on the first day of the occupation of Jerusalem, advising him, "Don't set up an Israeli administration," "Use the existing Jordanian administrative apparatus. Don't make the same mistake that the Americans made in Vietnam. See to it that the essential services return to normal as quickly as possible, but by the Arabs themselves. Concentrate first on Jerusalem. The eyes of the whole world are upon it."[18]

The military administration sought to raise the standard of living of the territories *HaShtahim*,[19] to avert social unrest. From the first day, there was a quest to normalize life and return to the pre-war lifestyle, and the expression of this policy appeared in three areas: non-presence, non-interference, and open bridges.[20]

The basic features of military rule were published in an official document in October 1967, which called for retaining the occupied territories as a bargaining chip to secure a radical political solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, while encouraging immigration, working on the full integration of the population, and finally separating WB from Jordan. After some time, these policy features were altered.[21]

These features demonstrate the confusion and contradiction in the administration of military rule; indeed how could the policy of displacement and the use of areas as a bargaining chip be used in conjunction with the full integration of the population, and the separation of WB from Jordan while adopting a policy of open bridges? One explanation for this contradiction may be the political uncertainty, and the assumption by the leaders of the military government

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[17] Moshe Dayan, *Yoman Vietnam* (Vietnam Diary) (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1977), p. 15. (in Hebrew)

[18] Shabtai Teveth, *The Cursed Blessing: The Story of Israel's Occupation of the West Bank*, (Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, Schocken: 1969), p.28. (in Hebrew); and Shabtai Teveth, *The Cursed Blessing: The Story of Israel's Occupation of the West Bank*, translated by Myra Bank (Lume Books, 2018), Kindle edition.

[19] Hebrew Israeli term used in reference to the settled areas in the territories of 1967, including the Golan Heights, the West Bank (WB), Gaza Strip (GS), Sinai, but particularly WB and GS.

[20] The Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT), Three Years of Military Rule: Data on Civilian Activities in Judea, Samaria, GS and North Sinai, 1967–1970, site of Ministry of Defense, June 1970, p. 11. (in Hebrew)

[21] Shlomo Gazit, *Al-'Asa wa al-Jazarah: Al-Hukm al-Israeli fi al-Daffah al-Gharbiyyah* (The Carrot and the Stick: Israel's Policy in the West Bank) (Cyprus: Bissan for Publishing and Distribution, 1984), p. 229. Original: *The Carrot and the Stick: Israel's Policy in Judea and Samaria 1967–68.*

expressed by Shlomo Gazit who said at the time that they will not stay in the WB for more than three months.[22]

On 15/11/1967, the Israeli cabinet approved a policy of "inconspicuous" Israeli military rule. Dayan explained his policy by saying that they have to make sure that the points of friction between the two peoples are few, and in order to achieve this, a goal must be set, which is for the military rule not to interfere in the life of the local Arabs as long as they do not break the law, and without the need to talk to any representative of Israel who represents an occupying power.[23] According to Dayan, inconspicuousness means the reduction of signs indicating Israeli presence, such as banners, army patrols, and Israeli flags. The second feature of the military rule policy was non-interference in the local population's management of their life affairs, with the exception of areas that directly affect Israel such as public health and economic problems. With regard to the policy of open bridges, it was an expression of the attempt to normalize life under military rule, and the removal of psychological barriers between Jews and Arabs.[24]

Military rule in the 1967 regions was influenced by the experiences of British colonial rule, in terms of seeking to achieve "economic prosperity."[25] In some colonized regions, British rule sought to achieve a "reasonable" economic situation for the colonized peoples, (which remains naturally much lower than the standard of life in the colonial powers), in order to prevent rebellion. As an example, we can cite the behavior of British colonialism in Egypt.[26] Israel applied this policy in its dealings with the Palestinians in the 1948 territories under military rule, believing their feeling of persecution and their economic conditions would push them to revolt and pose a security threat to Israel. Then Israeli Prime Minister Levi Eshkol expressed this policy in a speech in 1965, saying, "The government's policies are directed at integrating Arab and Druze citizens into the society and the

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[22] Archives of the State of Israel, Interviews with Persons, א–5002/13, 26/4/1985 , p. 22. (in Hebrew)

[23] Shlomo Gazit, *Al-To'm fi al-Masyadah: Al-Siyasah al-Israeliyyah fi al-Daffah al-Gharbiyyah wa Qita' Ghazzah 1967–1997* (Trapped Fools; Thirty Years of Israeli Policy in the West Bank and Gaza Strip 1967–1997), translated by 'Alian al-Hindi (Ramallah, Bab al-Wad for the Media and Press, 2001), p. 62. Original: *Trapped Fools: Thirty Years of Israeli Policy in the Territories.*

[24] Ibid., p. 62.

[25] It should be borne in mind that "economic prosperity" under the Israeli settler colonial system is a relative matter, compared to the previous economic situation under Jordanian rule in WB and Egyptian rule in GS. Despite the relative improvement in economic conditions under Israeli rule, the state of discrimination was institutionalized, whether in terms of the difference in wages of Palestinian workers compared to Israeli workers, or the infrastructure in the settled areas in 1967 compared to the settled areas in 1948, in which there was a Jewish majority after the displacement of most Palestinians. This is in addition to the consolidation of Palestinian economic dependence and the decline of the Palestinian means of production, and the lack of competitiveness throughout the years of Israeli rule. Therefore, the difference between the per capita income of the Israelis and the Palestinians remained huge (5–10 times in favor of the Israeli individual). Unfortunately, this situation was later institutionalized by the annexes of the Oslo Accords through what was known as the Paris Economic Protocol, not to mention the looting of Palestinian water and natural resources.

[26] Roger Owen, *Lord Cromer: Al-Imberiali wa al-Hakem al-Isti'mari* (Lord Cromer: Victorian Imperialist, Edwardian Proconsul), translated by Raouf 'Abbas (Cairo: Supreme Council for Culture, 2005), p. 338.

economy in Israel, by preserving and respecting their religious (heritage) traditions and culture. Integration is possible after changes and improvements in the way of life, its standard, and the degree of education."[27]

Simultaneously, Israel paved the way for the integration policy during the rule of GS in 1956. From the outset, Israel's priority was jumpstarting the economy so that people would not revolt, to the extent that Dayan thought about renewing a railway linking GS with Tel Aviv, some of which parts had been dismantled at the borders of the Strip, in order to resume the export of citrus from GS, which was estimated at 300 thousand boxes of citrus at the time, to Europe through the Haifa port.[28]

The Israeli administration worked to achieve what it called "economic prosperity" in occupied Palestine in 1967, with the aim of confronting the resistance and armed "rebellion."[29] Shlomo Gazit pointed out that "the most effective war against subversive acts can be accomplished when the individual Arab sees himself losing more than he gains, if he does not act properly and if calm does not prevail in the region."[30] Dayan summed up the philosophy of seeking to improve the living situation in his discussion with an Israeli officer, "It would be in our interest if we deal with a rich man instead of a poor, backward neighbor. Don't you see? ...this is a philosophy."[31] A poor "backward" neighbor from Dayan's point of view would seek revolution and resistance because he has nothing to lose.

Dayan points out in his notes on Vietnam that the Americans had to provide a good standard of living, so that they could "win hearts and minds,"[32] to argue for the necessity of such a policy, the use of which goes back as a concept to the French colonial general Hubert Lyautey. He used this as part of his strategy to counter the insurgency in Vietnam in 1895, and derived it from British colonial policy in India, and applied it in Morocco, based on the assumption that "all men, even Arabs, could be taught to act in their own interests, as these interests were defined by the Europeans."[33]

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[27] Yair Bäuml, *A Blue and White Shadow: The Israeli Establishment's Policy and Actions Among the Arab Citizens, the Formative Years: 1958–1968* (Haifa: Pardes for Publication, 2007), p. 114. (in Hebrew)

[28] Moshe Dayan, *Diary of The Sinai Campaign* (New York: Harper Row, 1966), p. 170.

[29] Shlomo Gazit, Acquired Lands: Policies and Actions, *Maarachot* Magazine, No. 204, January 1970, p. 30. (in Hebrew)

[30] Shlomo Gazit, *Al-'Asa wa al-Jazarah* (The Carrot and the Stick), p. 232.

[31] Shabtai Teveth, *The Cursed Blessing*, p. 173.

[32] Moshe Dayan, *Yoman Vietnam* (Vietnam Diary), p. 145.

[33] Douglas Porch, "Bugeaud, Gallieni, Lyautey: The Development of French Colonial Warfare," in Peter Paret, Gordon A. Craig and Felix Gilbert (editors), *Makers of Modern Strategy: From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 393.

Moshe Elad[34] credits Dayan with embodying the principle of inconspicuousness "seen and unseen,"[35] meaning that military rule controls the course of things without the need to appear in a conspicuous manner. But returning to Yair Bäuml, we find a reference to Eshkol's adoption of the "seen and unseen" policy, when he abolished military rule in the 1948 territories in 1966.[36] At the time Dayan was not a minister in the government, which gives us an indication that this policy was not an "invention" by Dayan, but rather a result of the Israeli establishment's conclusions and evaluation of the experience of military rule in the 1948 territories.

Dayan instructed Herzog to adopt the inconspicuousness policy, saying, "I want an Arab to be born, live, and die without coming into contact with the Israeli bureaucracy."[37] The main aspiration of the Israeli government was "that an Arab be born in the hospital and receive his birth certificate, grow up, receive his education, marry and raise his children and grandchildren until his death without having to interact with Israelis."[38] This tendency was manifested by placing most of the administrative matters supervised by the military rule in the hands of Arab employees, while limiting the number of Israeli supervisors.

A report issued by the Israeli military administration confirmed this trend, claiming that every presence of the Israeli authority was based on non-contact, including the location of government buildings, the Israeli flag, patrols, and banners, with the aim of not being visible. As an indication of this, Dayan gave an order to Israeli soldiers to remove the Israeli flag, which was hung on the Dome of the Rock mosque, following the occupation of Jerusalem on 8/6/1967.[39]

We can say that Dayan previously tried to implement the policy of inconspicuousness with the occupation of the GS in 1956, by giving instructions to avoid Israeli deployment in the residential centers.[40] When the residents of GS announced a general strike in schools and shops in protest of the occupation, Dayan summoned the GS mayor and told him:

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[34] Military governor of Jenin in 1982.

[35] Moshe Elad, *If You Wish It-It Is the West Bank: The Israeli Regime in the West Bank in the First Decade, 1967–1976* (Haifa: Pardes Publishers, 2015), p. 52. (in Hebrew)

[36] Yair Bäuml, *A Blue and White Shadow*, p. 238.

[37] Moshe Elad, *If You Wish It-It Is the West Bank*, p. 57.

[38] The Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT), Three Years of Military Rule: Data on Civilian Activities in Judea, Samaria, the Gaza Strip and North Sinai, 1967–1970, site of Ministry of Defense, June 1970, p. 5.

[39] Neve Gordon, *Israel's Occupation* (University of California Press, 2008), p. 1.

[40] Moshe Dayan, *Yoman Vietnam* (Vietnam Diary), p. 130.

> Our army will remain outside the country. If you close the shops, your citizens will suffer. If you close the schools, this will harm your children. We will not interfere. Our duty as occupiers is to provide food for you, and we will do that. If you want the Israeli army to help fight the outlaws, we will help you. If you want financial assistance for schools, hospitals, etc. we will give you, but if you want to close the institutions, we will not open them (by force) and we will not turn civil institutions into a battleground against foreign occupying forces.[41]

The policy of inconspicuousness was clearly crystallized after Dayan's visit to Vietnam in 1966, as one of the conclusions in his study of the experience of the US military rule, which he expressed by saying, "The Americans, regarding civil affairs, should reduce their presence as much as they can. They should work indirectly, they should create a situation where if the Vietcong (Vietnamese rebels) try to damage the arrangements in place, the war in this case should be directed at their own people and not the (Americans) foreigners."[42] Accordingly, Dayan instructed the military rulers in the early weeks of the occupation to withdraw from the city centers and to avoid raising Israeli flags.[43]

Non-Interference

The Israeli military administration claims that it does not interfere in the lives of the residents under occupation. This philosophy was summed up by Dayan in his address to the Israeli officers, who were not convinced of this approach by saying, "Let them manage themselves."[44] He added, "We do not want to control them. We do not want to interfere in their lives. We do not want be commissioners or a mandate bureaucracy. We want them to live their lives in their own cities, supervise their own schools, and direct their farmers."[45] But the facts on the ground indicated the opposite of what Dayan called for. Indications and evidence point to the military administration's interference in the lives of Palestinians, whether by setting plans, or interfering with managing matters, and the simplest example of this is the attempt to influence the results of the municipal elections and appoint loyalists.

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[41] Ibid., p. 137.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Shlomo Gazit, *Al-'Asa wa al-Jazarah* (The Carrot and the Stick), p. 236.
[44] Shabtai Teveth, *The Cursed Blessing: The Story of Israel's Occupation of the West Bank*, translated by Myra Bank.
[45] Moshe Elad, "The Birth of the Core Issues: the West Bank and East Jerusalem under Israeli Administration 1967–76 (part 1)," *Israel Affairs* journal, Routledge, Vol. 18, Issue 4, 2012, p. 578.

Open Bridges

The military administration saw "open bridges" as one of the foundations of its policies in managing the 1967 territories, particularly WB and GS. However, there is a contradiction in the position of the Israeli establishment towards the policy of open bridges. On the one hand, Israel tried to implement the policy of open bridges in the Golan, similar to what happened with Jordan, but Syria refused.[46] On the other hand, the planners in Israel were looking at the disadvantages of this policy rather than the advantages; according to the Israeli point of view, the advantages lay in solving the problem of agricultural surplus, as well as the continuation of normal life in the 1967 territories, and the dependence for services on military rule, which may lead to accords and normalization of the Israeli presence. As for the negatives, they are limited to the association with the Jordanian government, and the possibility of producing a security problem, in addition to the permanent risk of an economic crisis if the crossings are closed. This assessment was reflected in the long-term agricultural planning recommended by the Minister of Agriculture Haim Gvati. It revolved around reducing trade links with the east bank of the Jordan valley, preparing an alternative plan to address agricultural production problems in the event of sudden closure of bridges, and developing new agricultural branches in WB that complement the Israeli economy, suitable for export to Europe, or suitable for Israeli industry.[47]

A memorandum written in 1973 indicated that the real achievement of this policy was maintaining an atmosphere of normalization that contributed to achieving relative calm. It was stated in the memorandum that if the open bridge policy had been abolished, there would have been a need to speed up economic integration, and to give the residents of the occupied regions political rights, which would have meant de facto annexation. The closure of the bridges would have also prompted a part of the population of the occupied regions to revolt.[48] According to Shlomo Gazit, closing the bridges would have implied abolishing the Green Line.[49] This is what some Israeli politicians feared.

Gazit acknowledges that the policy of open bridges was used to pressure Jordan and encourage immigration to it.[50] The military government's goal in the 1967 territories was the "quiet displacement" of the population, similar to what Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett had called for in the early 1950s, to deal with the Arab

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[46] Nazir Majali, *Al-Julan…Malhamat Sumud* (The Golan... The Epic of Resistance) (Acre: Arabesque Publications, 1982), p. 58.

[47] Yigal Drucker, "Ministry of Agriculture in Judea and Samaria June 1967 – June 1969," Ministry of Agriculture, United Artists, 1969, p. 15. (in Hebrew)

[48] Amos Shifris, *Israel Galili: A Man of Words and Deeds* (Ramat Gan: Yad Tabenkin, 2010), pp. 292–293. (in Hebrew)

[49] Archives of the "State of Israel", interviews with persons, p. 11.

[50] Shlomo Gazit, *Al-'Asa wa al-Jazarah* (The Carrot and the Stick), p. 232.

population in the 1948 territories.[51] Dayan expressed this tendency clearly in his defense of the open bridges policy, before the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Security Committee, saying, "Movement through a bloody crossings has its drawbacks, but it is like a goose that lays golden eggs, and facilitates the exit of people with their property... We do not want the people of Nablus to demonstrate in favor of Israel.... We must buy watermelons from them so that they do not rot, provide them with support, and pay salaries.... We must help those who want to cross to the east, if we succeed in getting 150,000 to cross, we will have made an achievement."[52]

As mentioned above, one of the objectives of the policy of open bridges was to normalize the status quo and break the boycott, but popular rejection of the Zionist project in the region prevented the achievement of this goal. Dayan expressed this goal by saying:

> Our goal is to achieve recognition by the Arab world of the establishment of the State of Israel, and to achieve open borders between us and the Arab world. Here and in light of the current unusual situation, we have achieved the removal of any borders between Tel Aviv and the wall. Open borders between Israel and HaShtahim, and between HaShtahim and the Arab world created a precedent in which persons and goods flowed through open borders. So what is the logic in restoring the iron wall between us and the Arab world? If we close HaShtahim, we turn ourselves into principal agents of the Arab boycott.[53]

The opening of the crossings, according to Sara Roy, helped distribute the agricultural surplus and prevented it from becoming a burden on the Israeli economy. The open bridges policy did more than enable Israel to control Palestinian export, it allowed it to promote Israeli products and turn the occupied territories into the second largest market for Israeli exports after the United States.[54] According to Moshe Elad, after the bridges were opened, the Israeli company Tnuva's vegetables and crops began to enter the Arab countries.[55]

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[51] Ahmad Sa'di, *Al-Raqabah al-Shamilah: Nash'at al-Siyasat al-Isra'iliyyah fi Idarat al-Sukkan wa Muraqabtihim wa al-Saytarah al-Siyasiyyah Tijah al-Filastiniyyin* (Thorough Surveillance: The Genesis of Israeli Policies of. Population Management, Surveillance and Political Control Towards the Palestinians), translated by Al-Harith Muhammad al-Nabhan (Beirut: Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, 2020), p. 52. Original: *Thorough Surveillance: The Genesis of Israeli Policies of. Population Management, Surveillance and Political Control Towards the Palestinian Minority.*

[52] Archive of the State of Israel, Knesset Foreign Affairs and Security Committee session regarding the unification of Jerusalem and its policies on 26/9/1967, file: א–8/8161, Session No. 84, pp. 9–12.

[53] Archives of the Israeli Knesset, Proceedings of the 22nd Session of the Seventh Knesset, 5/1/1970, p. 397. (in Hebrew)

[54] Sara Roy, *Qita' Ghazza: Al-Siyasat al-Iqtisadiyyah li al-Ifqar al-Tanmawi* (The Gaza Strip: The Political Economy of De-development), translated by Muhammad Tarabay (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies. 2018). p. 188.

[55] Moshe Elad, *If You Wish It-It Is the West Bank*, p. 182.

Municipalities

In addition to the political representation of the population, municipalities played a key role in managing the daily life of the population in the 1967 Palestinian territories. We can say that the municipalities went through two prominent historical stages, namely the elections of 1972 and 1976. The municipal elections of 1972 took place against the backdrop of the United Kingdom plan put forward by King Hussein to establish a federation with WB, following the clash between the Jordanian regime and the *feda'iyyin* (freedom fighters).[56] This is while the Palestinian National Council (at that time) saw the elections as a Jordanian-Israeli conspiracy, and therefore the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) rejected them.[57]

Israel sought to achieve a set of goals by holding elections. It was important to hold elections in the WB for three reasons:

▶ 1. It expressed the state of normalization and the successful return to routine life in WB.
▶ 2. It was a challenge to Jordan and the PLO.
▶ 3. These elections would give legitimacy to elected leaders, thus allowing them to cooperate more closely with the military government.[58]

About 85% of those who were eligible to vote participated in the 1972 elections, and the traditional elite won most of the votes, which Israel considered a victory.[59] After the elections and in a further indication of Israeli interference, the military government appointed 14 mayors in the territories.[60]

Eligible voters in WB did not respond to the PLO's and Jordan's call to boycott the elections, driven by their interests and a cost-benefit calculation. Israel held the elections to produce an alternative leadership, but instead of producing a leadership affiliated with the military government, the Palestinian National Front was born. It was headed by the mayor of Ramallah Karim Khalaf and the mayor of al-Bireh 'Abdul Jawad Hamayel, and it included the Communist Party, the Ba'ath Party, Arab nationalists and factions from the PLO, with the aim of representing Palestinians instead of the Jordanian regime.[61]

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[56] Mordechi Nisan, *Israel and the Territories: A Study in Control 1967-1977* (Ramat Gan: Turtledove Publishing, 1978), p. 122.

[57] Moshe Maoz, *Al-Qiyadah al-Filastiniyyah fi al-Daffah al-Gharbiyyah: Asrar, Taharrukat wa Mawaqif* (The Palestinian Leadership in the West Bank: Secrets, Movements and Positions), no translator (n.p: n.p, 1986), p. 5.

[58] Shlomo Gazit, *Al-To'm fi al-Masyadah* (Trapped Fools), p. 203.

[59] Ibid.

[60] The Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT), Territories Acquired in 1971/1972: Data on Civilian Activities in Judea, Samaria, the Gaza Strip and North Sinai, An-Nour Publications, site of Ministry of Defense, September 1973, p. 122. (in Hebrew)

[61] Moshe Maoz, *Al-Qiyadah al-Filastiniyyah fi al-Daffah al-Gharbiyyah* (The Palestinian Leadership in the West Bank), p. 8.

According to Neve Gordon, Israel hoped to use the 1976 elections to undermine the PLO, which had gained significant popularity in the occupied territories during the 1970s. Although Israeli intelligence was aware that the new elections might lead to undesirable results, then Defense Minister Shimon Peres decided to hold the elections as planned, meeting with notables and mayors to advance the "self-administration plan" that would expand the authority of local councils, giving them more responsibility for managing daily life in WB. Peres hoped that the traditional elite would be able to maintain their position, which could be used as a counterweight to the PLO.[62] Indeed, a date for municipal elections was set for April 1976.

By agreeing to hold elections, Israel wanted to prepare for the emergence of an autonomous leadership and show the world the "liberalism" of the occupation. At that time, Peres and his advisors estimated that supporters of the PLO would win only a third of the municipalities, and that the large municipalities in Nablus and Hebron would remain in the hands of the "conservatives."[63] In an indication of election interference, the Israeli military government put pressure on the "conservatives" such as Sheikh Muhammad 'Ali al-Ja'bari in Hebron, who declined to run, and Ma'zuz al-Masry in Nablus to re-run for the elections. At the same time, it expelled Hamza al-Natsheh from Hebron and 'Abdul 'Aziz al-Hajj from al-Bireh to enhance the chances of the "conservatives" winning.[64] However, this move backfired and contributed to the victory of the National Bloc.

The leaders of the military government expected the patriotic movement to win the elections, but that did not prevent them from being held. The philosophy of the military government at the time was based on not pushing people to underground resistance, and keeping them under tabs so that they could be controlled. This was expressed by the Arab affairs advisor at the Ministry of Defense by saying:

> The big question we must ask ourselves is not whether we want to hear an (extremist and patriotic) voice, but rather where do we prefer to hear it. Would we prefer to hear it in elected municipal councils under our control, or would we prefer to see national leaders in the streets, distributing leaflets and supporting acts of terrorism? The election of these persons does not mean that they will not engage in such acts. However, in this case, we can always use legal means against them.[65]

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[62] Neve Gordon, *Israel's Occupation*, pp. 101–106.

[63] Moshe Maoz, *Al-Qiyadah al-Filastiniyyah fi al-Daffah al-Gharbiyyah* (The Palestinian Leadership in the West Bank), p. 36.

[64] Ibid., p. 37.

[65] Shlomo Gazit, *Al-To'm fi al-Masyadah* (Trapped Fools), p. 203.

PLO Supporters participated strongly in the elections, and the slogans of the national candidates were political, not economic, represented by the call for the establishment of a Palestinian state, rejection of self-rule and the project of the United Kingdom and the support of the PLO. The result was that 75% of the elected were new faces, i.e., 153 out of 205.[66]

In 1978, following the municipal elections, the "National Orientation Committee" was established, consisting of the heads of large municipalities, including the Gaza municipality headed by Rashad al-Shawwa. It represented social organizations, professionals and workers. This was at a time when the policy of Likud—that came to power in 1977—was based on imposing restrictions. It either arrested the mayors, as happened with the mayor of Nablus Bassam al-Shak'ah in 1979, or deported them, as happened with the mayor of Hebron Fahd al-Qawasmi, and the mayor of Halhul Muhammad Melhem in 1980, all under the pretext of supporting "terrorism." The matter did not stop there, but rather explosive devices[67] were planted in the cars of al-Shak'ah, the mayor of Ramallah Karim Khalaf, and the mayor of al-Bireh Ibrahim al-Tawil. Israel culminated its actions in 1982 by dissolving and outlawing the "National Orientation Committee."[68]

Village Leagues

After the visit of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat to Jerusalem in late 1977, Israel included the establishment of self-rule in WB and GS in its peace plan.[69] The ministers in the Likud government headed by Menachem Begin were divided into two factions, the hardline Sharon-Begin axis versus Dayan-Weizmann "liberal" axis. Defense Minister Ezer Weizmann adopted the same line as Dayan, supporting the establishment of Palestinian autonomy through elected mayors. He met with Palestinian mayors, met their demands, and called for renewing financial support

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[66] Moshe Maoz, *Al-Qiyadah al-Filastiniyyah fi al-Daffah al-Gharbiyyah* (The Palestinian Leadership in the West Bank), p. 41.

[67] In 1979, a clandestine movement was formed by prominent members of Gush Emunim. Its leader was the head of the municipal council of Kiryat Arba. Their attacks were not only motivated by revenge, but also by a quest to force the Arabs to flee. The movement attempted to assassinate Palestinian mayors, and opened fire on a crowd of students at Hebron University. In 1984, one of them was arrested while placing bombs on five Arab buses in East Jerusalem. During their interrogation, they revealed that their ultimate goal was to blow up the Dome of the Rock mosque in preparation for the construction of the Third Temple, see Gershon Shafir, *A Half Century of Occupation: Israel, Palestine, and the World's Most Intractable Conflict* (University of California Press, 2017), p. 110.

[68] Moshe Maoz, *Al-Qiyadah al-Filastiniyyah fi al-Daffah al-Gharbiyyah* (The Palestinian Leadership in the West Bank), pp. 79–83.

[69] Shlomo Gazit, "Early Attempts at Establishing West Bank Autonomy (The 1968 Case Study)," *Harvard Journal of Law & Public Policy*, Harvard Society for Law & Public Policy, 1980, pp. 150–151.

for them. He even allowed them to travel and attend conferences, and allowed the PLO to bring in funds.[70] Weizmann expressed his position by saying:

> We are not working hard enough to develop the regions and the local economy...because that requires money, and we don't want to allocate money from the Israeli budget. So I will ask the mayors to bring the money needed to finance the development of their cities and I don't care from where they will bring it. I have encouraged Karim Khalaf (the mayor of Ramallah) to travel to Abu Dhabi and bring money from there to finance a municipal sewage network.[71]

The mayors of the municipalities rejected the self-rule project proposed during Egyptian-Israeli negotiations in 1978, on the sidelines of their meeting with US envoys in sessions meant to solicit their opinions. Most of the mayors indicated the need to speak with the PLO about any political proposal.[72] This rejection prompted Weizmann to abandon Dayan's approach, and to turn to the idea of "Village Leagues." One of the foundations laid by Dayan was to not deal with "collaborators," and to bolster Israeli rule through elected persons even if their background was nationalist. According to Gazit, Dayan did not use "collaborators," because he found that this solution is unrealistic and unsustainable. He did not care about the political opinions of mayors, if they did not engage in "subversive" activities.[73]

Menahem Milson,[74] who was close to the Labor Party, presented the Village Leagues project during his service in the army. Milson worked as a university professor, after reaching the rank of colonel in the army in 1976 and worked as an advisor on Arab affairs in the military government.[75] The contacts and meetings between the former Jordanian Minister Mustafa Dudin, the military governor of Hebron Yigal Karmon and the Minister of Defense, resulted in the formation of

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[70] Moshe Maoz, *Al-Qiyadah al-Filastiniyyah fi al-Daffah al-Gharbiyyah* (The Palestinian Leadership in the West Bank), p. 113.

[71] Shlomo Gazit, *Al-To'm fi al-Masyadah* (Trapped Fools), p. 101.

[72] Geoffrey Aronson, *Siyasat al-Amr al-Waqi' fi al-Daffah al-Gharbiyyah: Israel wa al-Filastiniyyin min Harb 1976 ila al-Intifadah* (De-facto Politics in the West Bank: Israel and the Palestinians from the 1967 War to the Intifadah), translated by Hosni Zeina (Beirut: Institute for Palestinian Studies, 1990), p. 198. Original: *Creating Facts: Israel, Palestinians and the West Bank*.

[73] Archives of the State of Israel, interviews with persons, pp. 4–5.

[74] Under Military Order No. 947, Menahem Milson served as the first official of the Civil Administration after its establishment on 1/11/1981. See 'Atallah Kitab and Raja Shehadeh, *Al-Idarah al-Mdaniyyah fi al-Daffah al-Gharbiyyah al-Muhtallah: Dirasah Tahliliyyah li al-Amr al-'Askari 947* (Civil Administration in the Occupied West Bank: An Analytical Study of Military Order 947), translated by Mona Rishmawi (Ramallah: Omar National Publications), p. 2. Original: *Civilian Administration in the Occupied. West Bank: Analysis of Israeli Military. Government Order No. 947*, https://www.alhaq.org/cached_uploads/download/alhaq_files/publications/ Civilian_ Administration_in_the_Occupied_West_Bank.pdf

[75] David Hirst, *Al-Bunduqiyyah wa Ghusn al-Zaytun: Juzur al-'Unf fi al-Sharq al-Awsat* (The Gun, and the Olive Branch: The Roots of Violence in the Middle East), translated by 'Abdul Rahman Iyyas (Beirut: Riyad al-Rayes for Books and Publishing, 2003), p. 569.

the "Hebron Village League" on 20/7/1978.[76] The Village leagues used agriculture to begin their work, as represented by the objectives they set in their statute, most notably: developing and modernizing farming methods, and encouraging cooperatives in order to improve the conditions of farmers.[77]

The Village Leagues received financial support from the military government. Before, in 1978, only three thousand dollars were spent on 75 villages in the Hebron governorate. After the establishment of the Village Leagues, the amount was raised to two million dollars in order to support Dudin's position.[78] The Village Leagues also obtained marketing contracts for Palestinian agricultural products in the Israeli market.[79]

During the 1979–1981 period, the Village Leagues received financial support estimated at about $17 million, in the form of projects, including building agricultural roads in WB, agricultural equipment, and marketing contracts for agricultural products in Israeli markets.[80] They also sold fertilizers, obtained from the military administration, at below market prices. At times, Village Leagues leaders were able to rescind home demolition orders and issue building permits to residents. At the same time, the military government gradually halted development projects for villages that refused to seek help from the Village Leagues.[81] Many mayors of municipalities opposed to military rule were arrested and deported, in addition to facing house arrest, constant prosecution, and harassment such as travel bans.[82]

Israel sought to link the largest possible segment of the population to the clientelist system of Village Leagues, to have a large social base that would give the Village Leagues the legitimacy necessary to negotiate on behalf of the Palestinians and establish limited self-rule on Israeli terms. As part of a "divide and rule" policy, the leagues were used to incite internal Palestinian violence between PLO loyalists and Village Leagues, and more broadly to stoke tensions between urban and rural resident. Indeed, the Israeli military administration allowed Village Leagues to set up armed local militias and acquire vehicles and weapons. Despite extensive Israeli investment in Village Leagues, the Palestinians vehemently refused to cooperate with them and resisted the attempt to impose them

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[76] Mukhtar Al-Ba'ba', "On the Municipal Crisis in the Occupied Territory and its Impact on the Process of Steadfastness," *Samed al-Iqtisadi* Magazine, no. 49, 1984, p. 124.

[77] Raja Shehadeh, *Qanun al-Muhtal: Israel wa al-Daffah al-Gharbiyyah* (The Law of the Occupier: Israel and the West Bank) (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1990), p. 112.

[78] David Hirst, *Al-Bunduqiyyah wa Ghusn al-Zaytun* (The Gun and the Olive Branch), p. 571.

[79] Maher Al-Kurd, "Dismantling the Municipalities and Building the Village Leagues," Samed Al-Iqtisadi Magazine, No. 39, 1982, p. 64.

[80] 'Umar Bashir, "Israel and the Village Leagues: From Establishment to Dissolution," Master's Thesis, Al-Quds University, 2014, p. 66.

[81] Neve Gordon, *Israel's Occupation*, pp. 110–113.

[82] 'Umar Bashir, "Israel and the Village Leagues: From Establishment to Dissolution," p. 78.

as an authority.[83] Later, PLO loyalists assassinated the head of the Villages League in Ramallah, Yusuf al-Khatib, on 17/11/1980.[84] This rejection and resistance against the Village Leagues project led to its failure.

Civil Administration

The Civil Administration replaced the military government in WB and GS, following the signing of the Camp David Accords agreement with Egypt, specifically after 1981, in a change of name without a change in substance. For the Civil Administration assumed responsibility for almost every aspect of daily life.[85] The Civil Administration was a representative of the Israeli army, administering affairs by means of military orders, while the Palestinians considered it a deceptive representation of the military occupation. The Civil Administration suppressed every local social and economic initiative, banned representative groups and civil society organizations, and dismissed mayors who rejected the Civil Administration. Meanwhile, it developed and encouraged Village Leagues, as a local body acting as a proxy and under the direct supervision of the Israeli authorities.[86] However, the Palestinian people's rejection of the Village Leagues, and the targeting of their leaders by assassination at the hands of the national movement, prevented the development of this model.

The Israeli Hillel Cohen argues that Village Leagues as an organizational framework had failed, but that as an idea and theory it has succeeded. According to Hillel, the failure of the Village Leagues framework was due to several reasons, among which was the rejection of the idea by some leaders of the military government, the leftists and settlers. The left rejected it because it entrenched Israeli colonialism and the settlers feared that it will affect their settlement projects. On the Palestinian level, the leagues failed due to the internal differences between their leaders in addition to their corruption, and because the Palestinians dealt with them as collaborators with the occupation. But the idea of having representatives of the Palestinians who manage daily life and maintain security remained, and the Oslo Accords came to produce a Palestinian Authority (PA) that has great similarities with the Village Leagues. Hillel even cites the opinions of some

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[83] Tariq Dana, "Israeli conception of 'peace' as indirect colonial rule," p. 80.

[84] Moshe Maoz, *Al-Qiyadah al-Filastiniyyah fi al-Daffah al-Gharbiyyah* (The Palestinian Leadership in the West Bank), p. 140.

[85] Tariq Dana, "Israeli conception of 'peace' as indirect colonial rule," p. 79.

[86] Ibid., p. 80.

academics, such as As'ad Ghanem, who claims that the PA is worse than the Village Leagues.[87]

Indirect Rule in the Post-Oslo Period

Tariq Dana argues that the PA is a successful model of indirect rule,[88] as:

> The signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993 represented an unprecedented convergence in the history of the anti-colonial struggle, between the national liberation movement and the settler colonial project. In sharp contrast to previous paths of national liberation movements, which consistently applied the principle of self-determination through decolonization, the PLO made significant concessions that facilitated the restructuring and outsourcing of many Israeli colonial tools. In particular, the establishment of the PA in 1994 replaced the vital structures and functions associated with the anti-colonial liberation movement with a fragile entity characterized by territorial disconnect, economic dependence, institutional weakness, and social fragmentation.[89]

The post-Oslo territorial division reflected an upgraded version of Yigal Allon's plan, particularly with regard to the complex and fragmented re-mapping of the Occupied Palestinian Territories. This includes extensive construction of large settlement blocs in strategic locations, the annexation of East Jerusalem, the colonization of the Jordan Valley and the siege of populated areas, which ensured Israel's full control over occupied Palestinian territories. In addition, Israel financially and legally excluded the Palestinian population from independent citizenship or the Israeli citizenship system, which has rendered them stateless. The territorial division of the Oslo Accords gave Israel full control of more than 60% of the land, known as Area C, an area characterized by arable land and abundance of natural resources, while the PA was given civil and security responsibilities in densely populated areas,[90] which constitute about 18% of WB. The remaining areas, called Area B, are controlled by the Israeli security forces

[87] Hillel Cohen, "Village Leagues: Failure of the Framework, Success of the Theory, and Lost Peace," *HaMizrach HaChadash* (The New East) Magazine, no. 2013–2014, p. 276. (in Hebrew)
[88] Tariq Dana, "Israeli conception of 'peace' as indirect colonial rule," p. 81.
[89] Ibid., p. 82.
[90] Ibid.

while civilian control is left to the PA, bearing in mind that region A and B are not adjacent.

The Oslo Accords were based on, among other things, "security coordination," which led many Palestinians to view the PA as a "revamped version of Village Leagues."[91] This is confirmed by Nasser al-Kidwa, a former member of the Central Committee of the Fatah movement, who said, "What we have now has nothing to do with Oslo, because Oslo was supposed to be a transitional governance arrangement coupled with negotiations for a final solution. What we have is something new that we can call City Leagues."[92] This is in light of the deadlock in the "peace process" following the failure of the Camp David negotiations in 2000, and the failure of the PLO to achieve the goal of establishing the authority, namely, to pave the way for the establishment of a Palestinian state in the 1967 territories.

Stabilization Initiative

Following the deadlock in Palestinian-Israeli negotiations, some Israeli politicians presented initiatives and ideas about how to deal with the Palestinians, among them Naftali Bennett, who at the time headed the Jewish Home party. In 2012, he launched what he called the Stability Initiative, which was built on the idea of conflict management and temporary solution. Bennett's model was also built on the idea of annexing Area C in WB,[93] the naturalization of Palestinians residing in it, while giving autonomy to the Palestinians in WB, on the condition that no refugees are allowed to return.[94]

Muhannad Mustafa argues that Bennett developed his plan since the Israelis lost hope of displacing the Palestinians, and based on their rejection of full annexation. In this initiative, the right-wing discourse is being renewed by accepting the results of the Oslo Accords on the ground, without moving them forward. The results can be summarized as follows: the establishment of a PA, the division of WB into three areas A, B, and C, turning this division into a political and geographical reality, and the geographical and political separation between WB and GS. Since the results of the Oslo Accords cannot be canceled, Bennett based his Stability Initiative on accepting the results of Oslo, renewing the right-wing discourse,

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[91] Ibid., p. 83.

[92] Al-Kidwa: Oslo No Longer Exists, and What's There is "City Leagues," site of Ma'an News Agency, 20/9/2021, https://bit.ly/39wmhQh

[93] It extends over 62% of the WB lands, and under the Oslo Accords is completely under Israeli control, in which 150 thousand Palestinians and 325 thousand Israeli settlers live, in 235 settlements and outposts, see site of Government Media Center, Ministry of Information, 2015.

[94] Moran Azulay, Bennett Initiative: Annexing 60% of the land and 2% of the Palestinians, site of *Yedioth Ahronoth* newspaper, 23/2/2012, see https://bit.ly/3Del11H (in Hebrew)

adopting the left's arguments in settling the conflict, and the demographic discourse. Consequently, Bennett's initiative can be considered new within the Israeli right. Previously, the solutions offered ranged between two options, either establishing a Palestinian state on the land of WB, or annexing the population. However, most of the Israeli public understood the difficulty of implementing these two solutions, so Bennett stands in the middle by dealing with the most important results of Oslo through the annexation of Area C unilaterally, and at the same time granting citizenship to the Palestinians in Area C, which is unlike Benjamin Netanyahu, who refused to do so. Bennett's plan also includes recognizing the PA as an autonomy, "recognizing the authority as it is now," provided that the Arabs are allowed to travel freely without checkpoints, while improving the economic situation. There must also be full economic relations between Israel and the PA, as "economic cooperation will create coexistence." In addition, Bennett's plan disallows any refugee to return to the areas of the PA, while the security control over WB remains in Israel's hands. In the sixth clause of the initiative, he refers to the consolidation of the separation between WB and the GS, in contrast to the idea of a safe passage. He calls for the necessity of strengthening this separation, because if such a connection were forged, it would bring the problems of GS into WB.[95]

The Trap of 1967

Micah Goodman argues that the left has changed its social slogans (equality) into political ones (peace). The left realized after the failure of the Camp David negotiations in 2000 that the conflict is not to end the occupation, but rather continues because of the absence of political alternatives to end the conflict. The first *Intifadah* destroyed the right's dream of the Greater Land of Israel, while the second *Intifadah* broke the left's dream of peace with the Palestinians. The salvation religious thinking based on settlement building and the interpretations of Rabbi Zvi Kook were practically demolished after the evacuation of the GS settlements in 2006. However, the weakness of this thinking did not weaken the right, but the opposite happened due to its focus on a new-old dimension, which is security.[96]

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[95] See the recording of the policy symposium "Naftali Bennett and the Palestine Issue: The Concept of "Reducing the Conflict"," The Palestinian Forum for Israeli Studies (Madar), 18/8/2021, site of YouTube, https://bit.ly/2Woo9r6 (in Arabic); See also C1. Naftali Bennett, "The Israel Stability Initiative," February 2012," *Jouranl of Palestine Studies*, vol. 41, no. 4, pp. 195–196.

[96] Micah Goodman, *Masyadah 67: al-Khilafat al-Fikriyyah alleti Taqif Khalfa al-Inqisam al-Siyasi fi Israel* (Trap 67: The Intellectual Differences Behind the Political Division in Israel), Translated by Al-Hudhud (Dvir, 2021). Original: *Catch 67: The Ideologies behind the Disagreements Tearing Israel Apart.*

Goodman argues that "the left today does not say that the withdrawal from the Palestinian territories will lead to peace, but that the continued occupation of these territories will lead to disaster, and even the right says so."[97] According to Goodman, the dilemma, the trap, lies in the demographic problem and its contradiction with the Zionist concept of security. At the demographic level, the problem of the Arabs turning into a majority has emerged and poses a threat to the State of Israel and its Jewish supremacy. Therefore it is forbidden for Israel to stay in WB, and on the security level, it is forbidden for Israel to withdraw from it. "It is forbidden for Israel to withdraw from WB, but it is supposed to withdraw from there."[98]

Goodman proposes two programs to get out of this trap on a pragmatic, not ideological, basis: the "Partial Settlement Plan" and the "Separation Plan." The "partial settlement" rearranges the conflict without ending it and changes the form of the conflict instead of managing it. Through this plan, the left will abandon the dream of a comprehensive settlement. This is while the "principle of separation" expands the powers of the PA to become a quasi-state that includes quasi-citizens. By this principle, the right will abandon the dream of "Greater Israel." Both plans do not end the conflict, but rather form the basis of getting out of the trap and reorganizing the problem to deal with it.[99]

Goodman concludes that ideological thinking tends to be binary: occupation/ democracy, and conflict/ peace, while pragmatic thinking tends to be quantitative, meaning reducing the size of the problem, for example: a mayor who reduces killings by 40%, neither succeeds nor fails, however, he has contributed to reducing the problem. Consequently, "the more we reduce the control over the Palestinians, the more we reduce the occupation. The direct Israeli withdrawal from the daily life of the Palestinian population, and lifting restrictions on freedom and movement, will reduce Israeli control and occupation of the Palestinian population."[100] "These plans do not end the occupation, but rather contribute to reducing it and reducing control over the civilian population. They do not contribute to reaching a final solution, but rather to achieving existential security."[101]

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[97] Ibid., p. 28.
[98] Ibid., p. 33.
[99] Ibid., pp. 55–64.
[100] Ibid., p. 65.
[101] Ibid., p. 66.

Goodman developed the ideas of his book *Catch 67* to come up with an eight-point program to reduce the conflict, which correlates with five points to maintain security. In an article published in the Hebrew *Liberal* magazine in 2019,[102] Goodman linked his book and the ideas that evolved in the Israeli military establishment and think tanks, including the Security First plan by the Commanders for Israel's Security (CIS) headed by Amnon Reshef; the Stability Initiative of Naftali Bennett; and the publications of the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS), mainly the paper "Strategic Framework for the Israeli-Palestinian Arena," by Amos Yadlin, Udi Dekel and Kim Lavi.

Goodman claims that there is a fundamental and conceptual difference between the move to reduce the occupation presented in his plan, and the plans mentioned earlier. Bennett's plan, he added, aims to strengthen Palestinian autonomy, as part of a larger and broader annexation program, while the CIS plan and the INSS have important ideas. Some of them are mentioned in the plan for the development of Palestinian autonomy, whereas their stated goal is to create the conditions for a political settlement that will resolve the conflict once and for all. On the other hand, Goodman's plan is not a first step to annexation, nor a first step to withdrawal, but its goal is to win. The plan is a maneuver that eliminates demographic risks without security risks. It is a plan for embarrassed Israelis who are not looking for plans to resolve the conflict, but rather for measures to get out of the trap. However, after the maneuvering and the reorganization of the conflict, as a conflict between neighbors rather than between rulers and citizens, we may see things from there that we do not see from here.[103]

The Eight Step Plan is divided into three axes: In the first axis, we find the first three steps that seek to improve the lives of the Palestinians; in the second axis we find the following three steps that are concerned with dealing with the Palestinian economic life, in order to reach a political separation from the Palestinian people in conjunction with economic integration, with an increase in "freedom" on the one hand, and economic prosperity on the other. In the third axis, we find the last two steps that aim to raise the status of Palestinian autonomy, which will lead to a radical change in the Palestinian entity, from a punctured, torn, and weak entity to an independent and continuous space, connected to the world, economically prosperous and with symbols of the status of the state. In total, the eight steps would lead to a shift from the process of "creeping annexation" in the territories,

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[102] Micah Goodman, Eight Steps for Conflict Reduction, *The Liberal* Magazine, 18/3/2019, see: https://bit.ly/383beNM (in Hebrew); and Micah Goodman, Eight Steps to Shrink the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, *The Atlantic* magazine, 1/4/2019, https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2019/04/eight-steps-shrink-israeli-palestinian-conflict/585964/

[103] Ibid.

to "creeping separation," without an agreement, evacuation of settlements, or division of Jerusalem. These eight steps do not lead to a "two-state solution," but in fact create a two-state situation. The purpose of these steps is not to eliminate the conflict, but to change the nature of the conflict. Transforming it from a conflict between a state and its subjects to a conflict between a state and its neighbors. This is, according to Goodman, a plan that removes the demographic danger without increasing the security risk.[104]

According to Goodman, when it comes to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, we are faced with only two options: to end the conflict or to remain in the status quo, however, there is a third way: reducing the conflict. Goodman sets his sights on answering a basic question: Is it possible to reduce the occupation for the Palestinians without reducing the security of the Israelis? Therefore, he sees his plan as proactive measures that can be taken in agreement with the Palestinians, but not as part of a formal agreement with the Palestinians. What are the eight steps to answer this question, within the two mentioned criteria (reducing occupation + security):

1. "Keep It Flowing"

Goodman points to the problem of the non-contiguity of Palestinian "autonomous" areas A and B, because they are surrounded by areas under Israeli control and classified as C, and by military checkpoints that prevent freedom of movement. Thus, Palestinians remain at the mercy of the Israeli army, which may close these roads at any time. Therefore, the solution lies in implementing a plan developed by the Israeli army's Planning Directorate dubbed "Keep It Flowing," which aims to pave roads bypassing settlements and linking various parts of the PA, including bridges and tunnels, but creating Palestinian contiguity via transport. The plan refers to the existence of technological solutions that can be implemented without reducing the level of Israeli security, and therefore the "Keep It Flowing" plan falls within a series of measures that can be taken to remove the demographic threat, without paying the political cost of evacuating the settlement blocs and dividing Jerusalem, which meets the two criteria on which the plan is built to reduce conflict.[105]

2. Expand the Palestinian Autonomous Zones

The occupation realizes that autonomous areas are very limited and do not adapt to the growth rate of the population. For example, in recent decades about

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[104] Ibid.
[105] Ibid.

20 thousand houses that spill over the boundaries of the autonomous zones were built. These, from the Israeli point of view, are illegal and unregulated buildings, against which demolition orders have been issued, but are still pending. To solve this problem, the CIS Security First plan proposes that Israel transfers a few percentage of Area C to the Palestinians, and thus expanding the autonomous areas and letting the Palestinians develop, grow, and prosper.[106]

3. Ease Palestinians' Travel Abroad

The Palestinians lack an airport of their own. The construction of a Palestinian airport would boost their independence at the expense of the Israeli security. Thus, Palestinians' gateway to the world can be expanded in two steps: taking measures that will significantly reduce waiting time at the Allenby Bridge (Jordanian Bridge) by introducing advanced technological means that would speed up and ease border crossings; second, the Palestinians can also be allowed to travel around the world through Ben Gurion Airport, via direct secured shuttles (after a security check for passengers) that will connect WB to the airport.[107]

4. Expanding Work Permits in Israel

In recent years, the Israeli military concluded that the number of permits for Palestinians with permits to work in Israel can be increased significantly, and opened up for many women and older men with "clean" security records, where 400 thousand could be admitted instead of the current 100 thousand (2019). In their view, this will dramatically improve the Palestinian economy, and inject a lot of money into the local markets.[108]

5. Allocating Lands for Economic Development and Industrial Spaces

The INSS plan "Strategic Framework for the Israeli-Palestinian Arena" shows the possibility of allocating parts of Area C for the benefit of Palestinian economic development and industrial estates. The plan would encourage international investment in these areas, and establish a special credit scheme allowing private loans to build businesses in new development areas.[109]

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[106] Ibid.
[107] Ibid.
[108] Ibid.
[109] Ibid.

6. Land and Sea Corridors for Palestinian Goods

The isolation of the Palestinian economy from the outside world is one of its greatest weaknesses. A new railway between the northern WB and Haifa and constructing a Palestinian seaport in Haifa Bay, under Israeli supervision would solve this problem. The army has a plan called "Door to Door," whereby Israeli security inspectors will supervise the loading of goods into containers, and therefore the full and accelerated implementation of this plan would enable the goods to be easily transported from WB to the ports of Ashdod and Haifa, and from there to the whole world.[110]

7. Striving for Full Economic Independence

The Palestinian economy is completely dependent on the Israeli economy, according to the annexes to the Oslo Agreement, such as the "Paris Protocol." The entire tax and customs system, as well as exports and imports, depend on Israel and are controlled. Therefore, the Paris Protocol can and must be amended. Measures must be taken to reduce the Palestinian economic dependence on Israel. In the INSS framework, which was previously referred to, there is a detailed economic plan to give the Palestinians full economic independence.

8. Recognition of Palestine, Not its Borders

The PA made concerted diplomatic efforts to obtain international recognition of its independence, while Israel has been fighting the Palestinians' pursuit of international recognition. But if Israel chooses to change its mindset and turn an "aspiration to end conflict" into an "aspiration to reduce conflict," it can stop fighting the PA's diplomatic effort and join it instead. But this must be done with one clear reservation: Israel must recognize Palestine, not its borders. Through this move, Israel can increase the independence of the Palestinians without complicating the lives of settlers and the presence of Israeli soldiers. Thus, Israel will not be classified as a border breacher, because there are no borders. The idea here is to strengthen diplomatic efforts that make Palestine a recognized state without recognized borders.

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[110] Ibid.

Do not Repeat Disengagement

Goodman denies that his plan repeats unilateral disengagement from the GS. The disengagement from the GS, as it was implemented, does not meet the two criteria he set (reducing the occupation + security). It is true that Israel obtained a great demographic gain by disengaging from the GS, but it paid a security price for that, which the south suffers from.

Goodman points out that the security of the Israelis stems from the fact that the Israeli security forces prevent on a daily basis the formation of guerrilla cells in WB, and their great success stems from the fact that Israel has a wide-reaching intelligence network in Palestinian cities and villages. Thus, in order to ensure this intelligence efficiency, Israel needs free military access to every part of the Palestinian autonomous areas. This is what Israel abandoned when disengaging from the GS, it withdrew the army and dismantled most of its intelligence services, losing the ability to thwart guerrilla action in the GS at an early stage. Goodman says this mistake must not be replicated in the context of unilateral moves in WB.

Based on the foregoing, Goodman incorporated five security principles into his plan, to ensure continued security for Israelis, which are as follows:

• The Israel Security Agency—ISA (*Shabak*) and Israeli intelligence will continue to operate throughout WB.

• The Israeli army will continue to hunt down Palestinians.

• The permanent Israeli military presence will remain in the Jordan Valley.

• The airspace will remain under full Israeli control.

• Electromagnetic field will remain under full Israeli control.[111]

Conclusions

The plan to "reduce the conflict" is based on political separation from the residents of WB, in conjunction with strengthening their contiguity and economic dependency. In essence, it shifts from the idea of "creeping annexation" previously espoused by the Israeli right to the idea of "creeping separation" from the population, but not from the land. The aim is to get out of the trap of the 1967 territories, represented by the demographic danger and the security.

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[111] Ibid.

Based on the foregoing, we can claim that the "conflict reduction" plan is in essence a reproduction of the policy of military rule in the 1967 territories, which was planned by the Israeli government led by the Labor Party, and revolved around the policies of: inconspicuousness, non-intervention, and open bridges, all policies associated with notions of colonial indirect rule.

We can claim based on the "conflict reduction" plan, and before it, the Stability Initiative by Bennett, that the main objective of these plans is to preserve the status quo. The current situation would be developed so as to ensure its continuity, which is an ideal situation for the Israelis: an occupation without cost, an authority that carries the burden of governing the population, and the development of the disengagement from GS based on the security lessons learned.

We can conclude that the plan stems from sensing the need to strengthen the status of the PA, as a "self-governing" authority, even if this means recognizing it as a "state," granting it more powers and improving its economic situation. The objective is to ensure that the PA status quo would continue as an authority, but without an actual one, and it would be based on security coordination while economically being dependent on Israel. As an indication of this conclusion, we cite the INSS report, which refers to the weakness of the PA, and the need to prevent its collapse,[112] and the statement by Israeli Defense Minister Benny Gantz that the PA and its leadership are the representatives of the Palestinians in the region, and we work to strengthen the PA in WB.[113]

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[112] Yohanan Tzoreff, The Palestinian Arena: Dangerous Deterioration, Institute for National Security Studies, Insight No. 1513, 25/8/2021, https://www.inss.org.il/publication/west-bank-escalation/

[113] Israel's Defense Minister, Benny Gantz, "won't rule out" action against Iran, site of Israel International News, 25/8/2021, https://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/312422