

Completing the Circle: Peacebuilding as Colonial Practice in the Occupied Palestinian Territory

MANDY TURNER

Council for British Research in the Levant

Abstract

After nearly 20 years' of negotiations and peacebuilding, Palestinians are no nearer to self-determination. The article explains this failure through an analysis of the context and peacebuilding framework created as a product of the Oslo Accords and the assumptions of western donors about how peace would be achieved. It argues that the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) is subject to an assemblage of colonial practices – some of which are the product of western peacebuilding. While the practices of the occupying power, Israel, has constituted one part of the colonial equation (extracting and controlling resource and settling its own people), western peacebuilding has played another through its pursuit of a modern version of the 'mission civilisatrice'. The ideological discursive framework that binds these two parts of the colonial equation together and gives them common purpose is the 'partners for peace' discourse that has been used to justify a multitude of practices, including the arrest and detention of Palestinian politicians, military action, the withdrawal of aid and regime change.

Keywords: Palestine, peacebuilding, regime change, statebuilding, colonialism

One of the choices is for the Security Council to demand from the states of the world recognition of a Palestinian state on the 1967 border. We will not make recourse [to the UN] unless we are forced to, and all the other doors are closed. We don't want to go to the Security Council and the General Assembly, but if Israel insists on not accepting negotiations and on not stopping settlement, what is to be done? Where will we go? There is always a place to go, and that is the Security Council, which is international legitimacy.
Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, Al-Anba', 4 November 2010¹

On 23 September 2011, the Palestinian Authority (PA) President, Mahmoud Abbas, delivered a speech to the UN General Assembly seeking recognition for a Palestinian state based on the 1967 borders. After 18 years of failed bilateral peace negotiations instituted after the signing of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements (otherwise known as the Oslo Accords), this was an attempt to 're-internationalize' the Palestinian quest for self-determination and turn (back) to the UN for support. This strategy – undertaken by a Palestinian leader that had always previously endorsed the bilateral route – was the result of disenchantment with US President Barack Obama's administration as a mediator and the increasing realization that bilateral negotiations would continue only on Israel's terms. Israel had refused to stop expanding its colonies in the West Bank, to withdraw from the West Bank and to lift the siege of Gaza – vital preconditions for

building a viable sovereign Palestinian state. There would thus be no 'balancing out' of the unequal power relations that existed between Israel and the Palestinians – despite initial faith in Obama to do so.²

Abbas and the PA elite faced two further challenges – one at the local level and one at the regional level. At the local level, as well as the continuing division between the political movements, Fateh and Hamas³, and the lack of an electoral mandate,⁴ the PA and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) had been severely discredited by the publication of the 'Palestine Papers' in January 2011 by the Doha-based media network, al-Jazeera.⁵ The revelations that Palestinian political elites were willing to compromise on key Palestinian demands, particularly the right of return for refugees and the status of Jerusalem, were damaging and added to the PA's declining credibility. At the regional level, the events of the so-called 'Arab Spring' had toppled a key Fateh ally, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, in February 2011,⁶ and prompted the '15 March Movement' which called for reconciliation between Fateh and Hamas, restructuring of the PLO, and parliamentary and presidential elections.⁷ In such a context, defying the United States and Israel by taking the UN route was regarded as a necessary step for the 'Old Guard' (i.e. the PLO exiles who returned in 1994 and took the main positions in the PA) to regain its legitimacy.⁸

The speech also came in the context of the 'completion' of a two-year statebuilding programme instituted by the PA that had been endorsed and praised by donors and the international institutions involved in peacebuilding in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt),⁹ many of which had recommended in April 2011 that the PA was ready for statehood.¹⁰ Despite this, huge amounts of political pressure were brought to bear on the PA and the PLO before and after the UN speech to try to dissuade it from a strategy that would lead to (what was referred to in diplomatic circles as) a 'train wreck', where Israeli and US retaliation would have grave consequences for both the Palestinian people and the UN.¹¹ Indeed, on a visit to Israel and the oPt in February 2012, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon told Abbas he was worried that the PA's strategy would damage the UN due to cuts in US funding – threatened if any UN agency 'recognized' Palestine by granting it full member status.¹² The UN agency, UNESCO, had already suffered that fate in October 2011 with the withdrawal of US funding, which constituted 22 per cent of the organization's annual budget.¹³ And the United States, of course, followed through on its threat to cut funding to the PA by abruptly freezing aid worth US\$150m.¹⁴

These responses indicated that, despite Palestinian self-determination having been endorsed by UN resolutions and (at least rhetorically) by most of the world's states, and that the PA had been regarded as 'ready for statehood', it could not count on the support of key donors and the UN for the final push. It is therefore important to ask, after 20 years of negotiations and billions of dollars of aid, what was the goal of peacebuilding in the oPt? What did the donors and the UN hope to achieve? And how did this compare with what the Palestinians wanted?

This article, therefore, critically interrogates western peacebuilding in the oPt.¹⁵ It argues that there are, as one might expect, some striking similarities with other peacebuilding missions, but points out that what distinguishes it is that it operates in a context also subjected to Israel's occupation and colonization practices. It therefore concludes that the oPt is subject to an assemblage of colonial practices – some of which are manifested through western peacebuilding. Colonialism is thus understood here as constituting a dual process of exploitation/domination *and* development/modernisation – with each concrete

example being a unique mixture of these two aspects. The article argues that western peacebuilding in the context of the oPt has attempted to constitute one important part of the equation of colonialism: the *mission civilisatrice* of 'developing' the local population and preparing them for statehood – or at least some version of 'self-governance' or conditional autonomy.¹⁶ Simultaneously, the practices of the occupying power, Israel, constituted the other part of the equation of colonialism: extracting and controlling resources, and settling its own people. The 'partners for peace' discourse – a subtle and seemingly innocent concept that in its application has had at its core the goal of manipulating and controlling Palestinian political elites – was the essential ideological discursive framework for the application and continuation of these colonial assemblages (and indeed binding them together).

The analysis unfolds in four sections. The first outlines Israel's colonial practices in the oPt – its control over key factors of production (land, labour, water and capital), the continuation of military law, the expansion of settlements and the construction of 'graduated citizenship'. The framework instituted through the Oslo Accords did not change this. Section two critically interrogates peacebuilding in the oPt and shows that, in its pursuit of a modern version of the *mission civilisatrice*, it has played an important role as part of an assemblage of colonial practices imposed on the oPt, a key part of which has been the control and manipulation of local elites. This lays the basis for section three which unpacks the phrase 'partners for peace' – a label widely applied in the context of the Israel–Palestine peace process. It argues that the 'partners for peace' discursive framework (as an example of an attempt to control local elites) is visible in other peacebuilding missions; however, in the context of the oPt it has played a huge role in weakening and fragmenting the Palestinian national liberation movement, particularly through its application for the purposes of regime change. It has thus assisted the implementation of a 'colonial peace'. While this article focuses on an analysis of the framework of control imposed on Palestinians, it does not deny Palestinian agency. Section three therefore briefly analyses the struggle between different sections of Palestine's political elite; for reasons of space it does not explore the resistance strategies of ordinary Palestinians. The article concludes, in section four, by arguing that pursuing statebuilding and national liberation in the context of Israeli colonisation and the dominant peacebuilding framework of neoliberalism has been fraught with contradictions for the Palestinian people.

Israel's Colonial Practices in the oPt

The prevailing western narrative and practice of peacebuilding after the 1993 Oslo Accord was that international assistance should be targeted at the PA and at the population living inside the Gaza Strip and the West Bank (but not in East Jerusalem, which was annexed by Israel after the 1967 war including an additional 64 square km of the West Bank¹⁷). Leaving the future of East Jerusalem and the refugees outside the oPt to final status negotiations reflected the strength of Israel's position during the Oslo 'back channel' negotiations.¹⁸ And so, indeed, did the framework instituted. Until Oslo, the international consensus had favoured a complete Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and the right of Palestinians to an independent state in these areas. The Oslo Accords¹⁹ instead instituted a peace process whereby borders, settlements, the status of East Jerusalem and the (re)settlement of the refugees were up for negotiation.

And yet the Oslo Accords were heralded as a glowing example of what peacemaking could achieve and allowed Israel to reconfigure its international legitimacy at a time when the first intifada (1987–93) had done much to damage its reputation. What the Accords did not do, however, was establish a viable framework for Palestinian self-determination; rather it reconfigured Israel's control and 'subcontracted' some tasks to a non-sovereign quasi-state, while Israel retained territorial rights and control over key factors of production (including land, labour, water and capital). In addition, Israeli military law still ruled supreme, and the lack of territorial contiguity between the West Bank and Gaza laid the groundwork for the further fragmentation of the Palestinian body politic. The Accords, in effect, allowed Israel to continue colonising Palestinian land and were, according to Sara Roy, an extension of the 1967 Allon Plan and the 1978 Drobless Plan both of which proposed a framework for Israeli colonial expansion, land annexation and 'native' control.²⁰ Indeed, one could conclude that the Oslo Accords presided not over a peace process but over an acquisition process.²¹

Ingenuously, the Oslo framework allowed Israel to withdraw from Palestinian high-density population areas while continuing to control access to and from them. The West Bank was divided into Area A (under PA civilian and security control), Area B (under PA civilian control and Israeli military control) and Area C (Israeli settlements, the Jordan Valley, military zones and the settler-only roads under Israeli control); Areas H1 (akin to Area A) and H2 (akin to Area C) in Hebron; and Yellow and White Areas in Gaza. Israel retained overall control over more than 70 per cent of the West Bank.²² Withdrawals and the transfer of power were frozen in 2000, so that by 2012 there had been no significant redeployment of Israeli forces, apart from Gaza (i.e. the 2005 Israeli withdrawal) which remained under siege.²³ These divisions created internal 'borders' inside the oPt policed by checkpoints and roadblocks. Settlers (and the Israeli military) are the only ones with freedom of movement, including for trade purposes, in and around the West Bank. Under this 'matrix of control'²⁴ Israel's colonial practices of annexing land and settling its own population, and controlling the water resources of the West Bank continued unabated. By 2007, the infrastructure for (and connecting) Israel's colonial settlements, whose inhabitants numbered 483,453,²⁵ constituted nearly 40 per cent of the West Bank.²⁶

Meanwhile, in Gaza, Israel continuously extended the maritime restrictions and the 'buffer zone' which encompasses 30 to 40 per cent of Gaza's agricultural land and a significant number of water wells.²⁷ In East Jerusalem, the accelerated processes of colonization have been crystal clear when one observes the creation of new settlements, the restrictions on building permits, the number of residency rights of East Jerusalem Palestinians being revoked, the issuance of new laws in the Israeli Supreme Court biased towards supporting settlement activities, and the harassment of Palestinians by both settlers and the Israeli military.²⁸ Between 2000 and 2010, 33 per cent of Palestinian residents from Area C and East Jerusalem had either left or been forced to leave.²⁹

Similar to debates about whether colonialism benefited the British and French economies, there is disagreement about whether the occupation is a source of profit to Israel – and this has gone through different phases, with the first phase of Israeli control being seen as far more profitable and the period after the first intifada being regarded as more of a burden. After the outbreak of the second intifada (September 2000), Shir Hever argues that analyses entered a third phase with more focus on how certain Israeli business sectors had done extremely well, particularly military

and 'homeland security' companies.³⁰ In the post 9/11 world, Israel has carved out a profitable niche for itself in the global economy as a specialist in 'homeland security' – technology and products developed to control (and tested in) the oPt.³¹ However, it is clear that donor aid has benefited the Israeli economy; firstly, by letting it 'off the hook' of providing for a population under occupation as obliged under the conditions of the Fourth Geneva Convention; second by financing the oPt's trade deficit with Israel.³²

Israel's permanent 'state of emergency' and 'stratified citizenship' constitute two colonial methods used to subdue and control the indigenous Palestinian population. Extra-judicial killings, administrative detention (incarceration without trial) and deportations have been the obvious and violent face of the occupation. A less visual method, however, has been the use of differential citizenship rights. Central to colonialism is the 'rule of difference'. Modern empires were more explicit about codifying difference (particularly racial) than aristocratic empires – because inclusion and exclusion has enormous implications if citizenship is granted in a rights-based political system.³³ This is clearly the case in the oPt. Israel controls the whole of the area from the Mediterranean to the Jordan River, but there are three main categories of citizenship and rights. The first category comprises those with full citizenship, Jewish and non-Jewish citizens of Israel, which includes the Jewish settlers in the West Bank.³⁴ The second category comprises East Jerusalem Palestinians who have 'permanent residency' status, which is the same status as a foreign national living and working in Israel. The third category comprises 'Green' and 'Orange' ID Palestinians who reside in the West Bank or Gaza Strip. Yoav Peled has referred to this differentiation as 'stratified citizenship in a frontier society'.³⁵ Furthermore, Israel controls the Palestinian population registry and so has the power to dictate the demographic composition of the oPt.³⁶

The Oslo framework also changed little in the nature of Israel's control over the West Bank's other precious resource, water. Israel appropriated all water resources in 1967 and, despite the creation of a Joint Water Committee (JWC) after the Oslo Accords, they remain under its control in a system that Jan Selby has referred to as 'domination dressed up as cooperation'.³⁷ Under this system, most of the water of the West Bank continues to be diverted to Israel and its settlements.³⁸

In this context, endless bilateral discussions between Israel and the PLO, through which nothing short of complete Palestinian capitulation was sought by Israel (as shown by the Palestine Papers³⁹), bought time for the colonization of the oPt to continue – right under the noses of the UN and the donors who were simultaneously instituting other forms of colonial practice in the oPt.

Peacebuilding and the *Mission Civilisatrice*

After the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza in 1967, a few actors provided aid (largely Arab and Palestinian, but with some assistance from USAID after the 1978 Camp David Accord between Israel and Egypt).⁴⁰ In this period, aid and humanitarian assistance was used mainly to promote 'steadfastness' (*sumud*) and solidarity (*tadamon*) motivated by the desire to help Palestinians remain on the land and resist the occupation (promoted by the PLO and funded by Arab states), or assist in the development of Palestinian well-being and quality of life (promoted by USAID, the UN Relief and Works Agency and the UN Development Programme).⁴¹ After 1993 the amount of aid and donors ballooned: by 2010 42 donor countries and

20 UN and other multilateral agencies were involved in peacebuilding activities, and aid rose yearly from US\$178.74m in 1993 to US\$2.52bn by 2010.⁴²

The Oslo Accords do not explicitly refer to a Palestinian state; however, forms of statehood was the goal implicit in the negotiations. The objective of western peacebuilding in the oPt was therefore to underpin the peace process by building a Palestinian economy and state institutions in preparation for final status negotiations guided by the assumption that the occupation would end and there would be a 'two-state solution'. Despite the large number of donors and peacebuilding agencies involved in the oPt, the most important were the United States, the EU, the World Bank and the UN. The UN and the EU, however, were denied a role in the negotiations and were relegated to trying to influence the diplomatic process through the aid agenda.⁴³

The US hegemonic role and unconditional support for Israel has meant that criticism has largely been directed at how peacebuilding has 'masked' Israel's continued colonization;⁴⁴ but there has been less criticism levelled at the actual *content* of the policies.⁴⁵ Donor activities in the oPt, while dominated by a focus on Israel's security, have also been guided by liberal peacebuilding assumptions and policies. Liberal peacebuilding missions have had a core of common prescriptions: neoliberal policies of open markets, privatization and fiscal restraint, and governance policies focused on enhancing instruments of state coercion, 'capacity building' and 'good governance'.⁴⁶ The promotion of one model of governance – a particularly 'western' (and ahistorical) socio-political form – has echoes in colonial practice. Indeed, Roland Paris has argued that modern peacebuilding, with its promotion of 'capacity building' and 'good governance', is a modern version of the *mission civilisatrice* – "the colonial era belief that the European imperial powers had a duty to 'civilize' their overseas possessions".⁴⁷ Colonialism was not just about extracting goods and wealth – it was also about restructuring economies and polities. But, argue liberal peacebuilding proponents (including Paris), similarities between modern peacebuilding and the *mission civilisatrice* both begin and end with the common goal of exporting 'western' cultural and socio-political forms; the key difference, they argue, is that the former is by consent (leaving aside Iraq and Afghanistan) whereas the latter was by force.⁴⁸ And yet this distinction does not stand up to a brief interrogation of the historical record.⁴⁹

By treaty or by force, all non-European societies eventually had to adhere to 'international' law and commercial practices as European 'international society' expanded out from its core.⁵⁰ And yet, if compliant local rulers 'adapted themselves to European intrusion', they avoided military defeat and direct colonization.⁵¹ Colonialism involved diverse sets of practices, which were heterogeneous and often contradictory – settler colonies, French assimilation practices, British trusteeships, and plantations.⁵² And these more overt mechanisms of control were often initiated only after more indirect methods had failed, such as unequal treaties and capitulations. Indeed, it was centuries of European capitulations and treaties that caused the Ottoman Empire to fragment and become indebted – processes that created the conditions for its eventual implosion and imperial carve-up.⁵³ Attempts to manipulate and control local elites are also central characteristics of modern peacebuilding and statebuilding practice based on a core donor belief that there needs to be 'effective' local partners. High levels of donor involvement and control in recipient governments ensure that 'technocratic' governments are favoured over 'democratic' governments in the creation of, what Graham Harrison has referred to

as 'governance states' where sovereignty is contingent.⁵⁴ This has echoes in colonial practice where attempts were made to co-opt and control indigenous elites.⁵⁵

The experience of statebuilding after decolonization or secessionism, however, has been patchy.⁵⁶ Until the 1980s, development was defined as a state-centred process requiring a high degree of government intervention dominated by protectionist and corporatist policies.⁵⁷ After the 'neoliberal turn', the type of policies that states could follow became increasingly circumscribed as the transformation of the global political economy proceeded apace, into the brave new world of the post-Cold War era and the age of globalization. While economic nationalism in the developing world has always been opposed by the US (and before it, Britain and France) and, during the Cold War, was often the trigger for invasion and 'regime change', there has been a paradigm shift in what is regarded as fundamental and allowed in terms of state policy.⁵⁸ Historically, political sovereignty was constructed as a relationship of power connecting citizens with the state – and for third world, post-colonial states this involved embracing a 'developmentalist social contract' (rather than a liberal democratic social contract model). This sometimes involved threatening western commercial interests as indicated by, for example, Iran's nationalization of its oil industry in 1951 and Egypt's nationalization of the Suez Canal in 1956 – actions that triggered western intervention in both countries to try to institute regime change and protect western commercial and strategic interests. Sovereignty in the neoliberal era, on the other hand, has been reconstructed as a relationship of power where states promote 'the social relations of the market and the participation of the citizenry in that project' – in the context of a powerful international architecture of regulation that was built on the ashes of the period of Bandung and the New International Economic Order.⁵⁹

The PA's experience has been one of quasi-autonomy (negotiated with Israel) supplemented with a form of contingent autonomy (negotiated with the donors). The aid coordination structures set up to monitor and support the PA involved donors, the PA and Israel – and so the two methods of control became mutually constitutive.⁶⁰ The Paris Economic Protocol (PEP), the economic part of the Oslo agreements, also gave Israel a huge level of control over Palestinian economic well-being as it instituted a tax transfer scheme where Israel collected and passed to the PA the taxes and custom duties on Palestinian imports from or via Israel, and income tax collected from Palestinian workers in Israel.⁶¹ This was a powerful weapon which has been used by Israel on many occasions to ensure PA compliance.

The bilateral peace process, overseen by the United States, was based on an unstated principle that any change in the Palestinians' status depended entirely on Israel's consent – and this was codified in these structures. The Oslo framework thus granted Israel the defining role in determining what constituted 'legitimate' and 'illegitimate' political practice for the PA (and Palestinians in general) and so helped to institute a more sophisticated form of Israel's long-standing policy of trying to gain control over, and manipulate, Palestinian political elites. Initially, after 1967, Israel had tried to control Palestinian municipalities; when this failed it introduced the Village Leagues in the late 1970s.⁶² And in the 1980s, in an attempt to undermine support for the PLO, Israel lent legitimacy and status to the Islamist movement, Hamas.⁶³ After signing the Oslo Accords with the PLO, elite manipulation by the occupying colonial power was repackaged – and 'rubberstamped' with international approval – as being about ensuring 'partners for peace'.

‘Partners for Peace’ and Elite Manipulation

The phrase ‘partners for peace’ has become popular parlance in the context of the Israel–Palestine conflict. While it has been used by Palestinian leaders as well as by Israel and donors, the ability to decide whether someone is or is not a ‘partner for peace’ and thus act on this decision is unequal. This phrase, therefore, made Israel’s attempts to control Palestinian political elites seem innocuous. It also allowed donors to believe that funding and working with Palestinian elites regarded by Israel as being ‘partners for peace’ would assist their mission of supporting the peace process.⁶⁴ In its application this paradigm has variously meant Israel justifying cutting-off revenue transfers to the PA, arresting and detaining democratically-elected Palestinian politicians, extrajudicial executions and military violence. It has also been used by donors to justify cutting off aid, reverting to ‘bad governance’ practices, and supporting regime change. It has been, in effect, the discursive framework that has bound the two practices of control together and has given them common purpose.

While it is crucial to give due weight to the asymmetrical power relations between Israel and the Palestinians, it is also important to analyse the role of Palestinian political elites in adapting, co-opting or rejecting the ‘partners for peace’ discursive framework. It is not altogether clear why the PLO leadership accepted the ‘partners for peace’ paradigm. Was it because they could not but fall into the post-colonial governance game and wanted access to rents and a place at the UN table, or was it because they were worried about being eclipsed by other potential Palestinian ‘partners’?⁶⁵

According to Selby, peace processes are ‘inter-elite political accommodations whose aim is often not so much “peace” as the reconfiguration of domestic hegemony and/or international legitimacy’.⁶⁶ While Oslo allowed Israel to reconfigure its international legitimacy,⁶⁷ it also resurrected the PLO at the international level and ensured its dominance over domestic opponents at the local level. The PLO’s credibility and international standing had been damaged by its support for Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait in 1990–91: it had incurred the wrath of the United States and the Gulf states, leaving it bankrupt and isolated.⁶⁸ This strengthened the position of local Palestinian elites. However, using a variety of techniques, the external Fateh-led PLO managed to marginalize the internal United National Leadership of the first intifada and outmanoeuvre the non-PLO negotiating team in Washington DC, thus ensuring it became Israel’s preferred ‘partner for peace’.⁶⁹ The Oslo negotiations and subsequent Accords were ‘a clear attempt to bypass the local leaders of the West Bank and Gaza and restore the status of the PLO leaders in Tunis’.⁷⁰

The concessions made by the ‘Old Guard’ represented by the PLO exiles (and led by Yasser Arafat, chairman of the PLO and first president of the PA) in the signing of the Oslo Accords ensured widespread opposition from other Palestinian resistance groups in the oPt.⁷¹ Donors and UN agencies therefore put disproportionate effort – both financial and practical – into building up the PA’s security services, including the construction of a massive covert operations programme by the CIA.⁷² The primacy given to policing in the statebuilding (or rather, in this case, ‘quasi-statebuilding’) process meant that the West Bank and Gaza Strip had one policeman to every 75 civilians – one of the highest in the world.⁷³

But the PA had to juggle contradictory roles – satisfy Israel and the United States on security issues, reward its own supporters, meet the needs of its population, and retain its position as leader of the Palestinian resistance. Command

of the PA and the system of control instituted by the PA's security services gave Arafat and his supporters power over their Palestinian opponents (as well as over other sections of the Fateh movement).⁷⁴ Arafat, in this regard, operated no differently to the majority of post-colonial rulers in trying to control/destroy his opponents and consolidate his rule, the main difference being, of course, that the PA was not in a post-colonial situation. Israel had the power to dictate which Palestinian elites were in favour and which were not. While it regarded Arafat as a 'partner for peace', Israel collaborated with the PA in ensuring that mutually-beneficial trading monopolies (beyond IFI control) were instituted and that these monopoly revenues, as well as official tax remittances, were transferred into Arafat's 'special accounts'.⁷⁵ The collapse of the Camp David talks (July 2000) and the outbreak of the second intifada (September 2000) changed this.

Simultaneously with its 2002 military offensive (Operation *Defensive Shield*), Israel lobbied donors for a policy of regime change, which involved promoting reform of the PA in order to create an alternative leadership.⁷⁶ Efraim Halevy, director of the Mossad at the time, claims it took only 10 weeks for Israel to persuade key donors of the necessity of regime change.⁷⁷ In the aftermath of the 11 September 2001 attacks that destroyed the World Trade Center, Israel was able to (re)frame its violence against the second intifada as an essential part of the wider US-led 'war on terror'.⁷⁸

The Quartet (the United States, the UN, the EU and Russia) established in 2002 to restart the peace process, pursued the reform agenda through the 'Roadmap',⁷⁹ which included (among other reforms) establishing an 'empowered' prime minister and a new Cabinet.⁸⁰ That this was a sophisticated form of diluting Arafat's power and imposing a new leadership was not lost on some young Fateh activists, who suggested that the new post of prime minister be filled by Hamid Karzai, the US-installed prime minister of post-invasion Afghanistan.⁸¹

Practices to institute regime change were used overtly again in the aftermath of the January 2006 Palestinian general election. The victory of Hamas, the Islamist party proscribed as a terrorist organisation by the United States and the EU, showed that the Palestinian people (when given a choice) voted for a party that rejected the Oslo Accords, advocated redistributive policies and proposed breaking the control of Israel and the Quartet over the PA.⁸² One of Hamas's electoral slogan was: 'America and Israel say "no" to Hamas ... What do you say?'⁸³ Hamas won 76 seats, Fateh 43, while Salam Fayyad's 'Third Way' party (the favourite of the Quartet) received only two seats.⁸⁴

The Quartet demanded that the new Hamas-led PA renounce violence, accept all previous agreements and recognize Israel. Hamas believed the result gave it a mandate to change the PA to reflect the needs of Palestinians in the post-Oslo era and to renegotiate previous agreements. Hamas's refusal to accede to the Quartet's demands led to the imposition of economic and political sanctions, enforced by the US Treasury using anti-terrorist legislation.⁸⁵ Alvaro de Soto, the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Middle East Peace Process, complained that the Quartet had 'set unattainable preconditions for dialogue', and resigned soon afterwards.⁸⁶ EU policy focused on developing a 'temporary international mechanism' to bypass Hamas and channel money through the Office of the President. Implemented for 'humanitarian purposes', this reinstated practices used by the PA under Arafat that the Roadmap reforms were targeted to eradicate.⁸⁷ The United States resorted to cruder, more direct, methods of regime change – it poured millions of dollars into building up a presidential guard that could defeat Hamas,⁸⁸ and it threatened the UN with loss of funding to keep it on board.⁸⁹ Israel, for its part,

arrested 64 Hamas officials including cabinet members and parliamentarians.⁹⁰ Since 2006, the United States has used political and economic pressure to prevent a unity government that includes both Hamas and Fateh, while Israel has used revenue transfers as an effective control strategy. At the elite level, therefore, there is little room for manoeuvrability – apart from the PA unilaterally disbanding itself – and so it is largely accepted that pressure will have to come from the grassroots.

Palestinians have experienced and negotiated over 60 years of dispossession and over 40 years of occupation in a variety of ways, including forms of resistance, collaboration, acquiescence and migration – which have not necessarily been mutually exclusive. The everyday lives of Palestinians and their resistance strategies have been conditioned by the shifting geography and political economy of Israel's control and by the global neoliberal developmental consensus into which the PA emerged – regulated through the Oslo framework. Israel's initial strategy of 'partial integration' (1967 until early 1990s) was replaced by the pursuit of 'asymmetric containment' (early 1990s until the present day) which has ensured Israel's economic dominance and a poor developmental context for the oPt.⁹¹ The Oslo Accords and the framework of quasi-autonomy entangled the PA in a web of control and created incentives for certain sections of the Palestinian elite to increasingly embrace neoliberal policies, which have accelerated inequality and poverty in the West Bank and increased the oPt's economic dependency on Israel.⁹²

The application of liberal peacebuilding in the oPt needs to be understood in its context, particularly as part of a region-wide attempt to reconfigure Middle Eastern states, open them up and plug them into the global economy. For the Palestinians, though, in the context of their struggle for self-determination this has created a fundamental contradiction because, as Khalidi and Samour have argued, '[c]rucially, the economic liberalization and new trade initiatives that have resulted are consonant with an agenda of political and economic normalization with Israel (the "New Middle East")'.⁹³ The circle is complete.

Conclusion: Implementing a 'Colonial Peace'

Peacebuilding in the oPt has been guided by two core underlying beliefs. The first and most fundamental was that Israel would eventually grant the Palestinians a state because it was in its interests to do so. Donors therefore considered it prudent to support Palestinian political elites that Israel endorsed as 'partners for peace' – the innocuous phrase used to justify a multitude of practices which have, at their extreme, included military violence and regime change. Similar methods of elite control are evident in other peacebuilding missions; however, in the context of the oPt, it granted Israel control over its negotiating partner – and legitimized this control.

The second belief was that peacebuilding required the successful transformation of the political economy of the oPt which was distorted through clientelism (solved by 'good governance' initiatives) and barriers to private sector growth (solved by free market strategies). Not being plugged into the global economy was therefore a key source of the oPt's problems in addition to the structural realities of occupation and colonization. Unable to directly influence the 'external' environment (which could only be changed through the bilateral peace process), agencies such as the EU, the World Bank and the UN focused on the PA's 'internal' environment. But rather than helping to enhance the developmental capacity of the PA, donors, transfixed by the neoliberal paradigm and a belief that

this could underpin peace, merely ensured, through their policies, that the 'asymmetric containment' imposed by Israel's colonial practices were enhanced.

The assemblage of colonial practices imposed on the oPt, including quasi-autonomy (negotiated with Israel) and contingent autonomy (negotiated with the donors) in pursuit of *Eretz Israeli* (at the expense of Palestinian self-determination) and the *mission civilisatrice* (at the expense of a development strategy for national liberation) has ensured the implementation of a 'colonial peace' favourable to Israel. But for the Palestinians, and the region as a whole, this 'peace' will ultimately be destabilizing and detrimental.

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Notes

¹ Quoted in International Crisis Group, 'Curb Your Enthusiasm: Israel and Palestine after the UN', Middle East Report 112, 12 Sept. 2011, p.2, n.14.

² International Crisis Group, 'Palestine, Israel and the Quartet: Pulling Back from the Brink', Middle East Report 54, 13 June 2006, p.1; author's interview with member of Palestinian negotiating team, East Jerusalem, Aug. 2011.

³ The division has been in place since June 2007 when a pre-emptive Hamas coup split off Gaza from the West Bank.

⁴ There have been no elections (either in the West Bank or Gaza Strip) since the term of office of the Palestinian Legislative Council (the PA's legislature) expired in 2010.

⁵ Clayton E. Swisher, 'The Palestine Papers: the End of the Road?', Chatham: Hesperus, 2011.

⁶ International Crisis Group, 'Palestinian Reconciliation: Plus Ça Change ...', Middle East Report 110, 20 July 2011, Brussels, p.1. The relationship between Hamas and its key regional ally, Assad's regime in Syria, also ended when Hamas supported the opposition forcing its political leadership based in Damascus to move to Egypt and Qatar.

⁷ 'The Demands of the Mar15 Movement Youth of Palestine', 19 Mar. 2011 (at: <http://occupiedpalestine.wordpress.com/2011/03/19/the-demands-of-the-mar15-movement-youth-of-palestine/>).

⁸ Author's interview with senior PA official, Ramallah, Aug.2011; Adam Shatz, 'Is Palestine Next?', *London Review of Books*, Vol.33, No.14, 14 July 2011, pp.8–14 (at: www.lrb.co.uk/v33/n14/adam-shatz/is-palestine-next).

⁹ Palestinian National Authority, 'Ending the Occupation Establishing the State: Programme of the 13th Government', Ramallah, Aug. 2009.

¹⁰ UN Special Coordination Office for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO), 'Palestinian Statebuilding: a Decisive Period', Ad Hoc Liaison Committee Meeting, Brussels, 13 April 2011; IMF, 13 April 2011; World Bank, 'Building the Palestinian

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¹¹ ICG, (see n.1 above), p.1.

¹² Barak Ravid, 'UN chief to Ha'aretz: Palestinians will only get a state through negotiations', *Ha'aretz* (Tel Aviv), 3 Feb. 2012 (at: www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/un-chief-to-haaretz-palestinians-will-only-get-a-state-through-negotiations-1.410687).

¹³ Harriet Sherwood, 'US pulls UNESCO funding after Palestine is granted full membership', *The Guardian* (London), 31 Oct. 2011 (at: www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/oct/31/unesco-backs-palestinian-membership). This was made possible because of the US Congress's United Nations Transparency, Accountability and Reform Act of 2011.

¹⁴ Reuters, 'Palestinians start budget crisis talks', *The Jerusalem Post*, 6 Feb. 2012 (at: www.jpost.com/MiddleEast/Article.aspx?id=256703).

¹⁵ This article focuses only on western donors and agencies. Arab donors have a different perspective. Research is scant on this, but see Sultan Barakat and Stephen A. Zyck, 'Gulf State Assistance to Conflict-affected Areas', Kuwait Programme on Development, Governance and Globalization in the Gulf States, Report 10, Centre for the Study of Global Governance, London School of Economics, July 2010. Preliminary interviews conducted by this author have shown that Qatar adheres to the concept of *sumud* (which roughly translates as 'steadfastness') and *tadamon* (solidarity) in its oPt aid policies.

¹⁶ I have qualified this because if the goal of the third parties was Palestinian statehood, then it begs the question: why did most of them not ultimately endorse it through the Palestine 194 campaign at the UN. I am grateful to Tawfiq Haddad for this point.

¹⁷ B'Tselem, 'Legal Status of East Jerusalem and its Citizens', n.d. (at: http://www.btselem.org/jerusalem/legal_status).

¹⁸ Åre Hovdenak, 'Trading Refugees for Land and Symbols: The Palestinian Negotiation Strategy in the Oslo Process', *Journal of Refugee Studies*, Vol.22, No.1, 2009, pp.30–50; Hilde Henriksen Waage, 'Norway's Role in the Middle East Peace Talks: Between a Strong State and a Weak Belligerent', *Journal of Palestine Studies* Vol. 34, No. 4, 2005, pp.6–24.

¹⁹ The term 'Oslo Accords' includes Oslo I (1993) and subsequent agreements under the framework.

²⁰ Sara Roy, *Failing Peace: Gaza and the Israel-Palestine Conflict*, London: Pluto Press, 2007, p.324.

²¹ I am grateful to Mike Pugh for this point.

²² Geoffrey Aronson, 'Recapitulating the Redeployments: the Israel-PLO Interim Agreements', The Jerusalem Fund Information Brief 32, 27 April 2000.

²³ UNOCHA oPt, 'Area C: Humanitarian Response Plan Factsheet', East Jerusalem, Aug. 2010 (at: www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_area_c_humanitarian_response_plan_factsheet_2010_09_03_english.pdf).

²⁴ Jeff Halper, 'The Matrix of Control', 2011 (at: <http://www.mediamonitors.net/halper1.html>).

²⁵ 'Palestinians: Number of West Bank Settlers Jumped by 4 per cent in 2007', *Haaretz*, 3 Aug. 2008 (at: www.haaretz.com/news/palestinians-number-of-west-bank-settlers-jumped-nearly-4-in-2007-1.251039).

²⁶ UNOCHA oPt, 'The Humanitarian Impact on Palestinians of Israeli Settlements and Other Infrastructure in the West Bank', East Jerusalem, July 2007, p.9.

²⁷ Save the Children, 'Gaza Buffer Zone Fact Sheet, London, Oct. 2009.

²⁸ UNOCHA oPt, 'East Jerusalem: Key Humanitarian Concerns', East Jerusalem, Mar. 2011; Human Rights Watch, Dec. 2010, 'Separate and Unequal: Israel's Discriminatory Treatment of the Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territories', New York, p.5.; UNSCO, 'Palestinian Statebuilding: a Decisive Period', Ad Hoc Liaison Committee Meeting, Brussels, 13 April 2011; author's interviews with diplomatic missions, UN personnel and Palestinian civil society organizations in Area C and East Jerusalem [April 2011].

²⁹ Human Rights Watch, Dec. 2010, 'Separate and Unequal: Israel's Discriminatory Treatment of the Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territories', New York, p.5.

³⁰ Shir Hever, *The Political Economy of Israel's Occupation: Repression beyond Exploitation*, London: Pluto, 2010, p.52.

³¹ Author's interview with Jeff Halper, Jerusalem, April 2011.

³² UNCTAD, 'The Palestinian War-torn Economy: Aid, Development and State Formation', Geneva, 2006, p.46.

³³ Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006, p.20.

³⁴ Much research has been conducted into the difference in citizenship experience between Jewish and non-Jewish citizens of Israel (as well as between different Jewish groups by origin, e.g. Ashkenazi versus Mizrahi). See, for instance, Yoav Peled, 'The evolution of Israeli citizenship: an overview', *Citizenship Studies*, Vol.12, No.3, 2008, pp.335–45.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.336.

³⁶ Human Rights Watch, 'Forget About Him, He's Not Here: Israel's Control of Palestinian Residency in the West Bank and Gaza, New York, 5 Feb. 2012.

³⁷ Jan Selby, 'Dressing Up Domination as 'Co-operation': The Case of Israeli-Palestinian Water Relations', *Review of International Studies*, Vol.29, No.1, 2003, pp.121–38 (at: p.130). See also, World Bank, 'Assessment of the Restrictions on Palestinian Water Sector Development', Washington D.C., 2009 (at: <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/MENAEXT/WESTBANKGAZAEXTN/0,,contentMDK:22145826~menuPK:294370~pagePK:2865066~piPK:2865079~theSitePK:294365,00.html>); Amnesty International, 'Troubled Waters – Palestinians denied fair Access to Water, Israel – Occupied Palestinian Territories', London, 2009.

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³⁹ Swisher (see n.5 above).

⁴⁰ David Shearer and Anushka Myer, 'The dilemma of aid under occupation', in Michael Keating, Anne Le More and Robert Lowe (eds), *Aid, Diplomacy and Facts on the Ground: the case of Palestine*, London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2005, p.167.

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⁴² Statistics from OECD aid database (at: <http://stats.oecd.org/qwids/>).

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⁴⁴ See e.g., Le More (n.43 above); Neve Gordon, *Israel's Occupation*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008.

⁴⁵ Apart from one of two exceptions, e.g., Mushtaq H. Khan, George Giacaman and Inge Amundsen (eds.) (with) *State Formation in Palestine: Viability and Governance During a Social Transformation*, Abingdon: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004; UNCTAD 'Policy Alternatives for Sustained Palestinian Development and State Formation', Geneva, UN doc., UNCTAD/GDS/APP/2008/1, 2009.

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⁴⁸ Ibid; Roland Paris 'Saving Liberal Peacebuilding', *Review of International Studies*, Vol.36, No.2, 2010, pp.337–65.

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