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The Limits of Securitized Peace: The EU's Sponsorship of Palestinian Authoritarianism

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ABSTRACT *Since the Oslo Accords came into force in 1993, the European Union (EU) and its individual member-states have invested billions of Euros, with a view to establishing the basis for an independent and sovereign Palestinian state. As Israel's colonization of the Palestinian West Bank has progressed, Palestinian statehood has become little more than a myth. As the state-building process has atrophied, securitization has found a renewed impetus, being elevated at the expense of initiatives that seek to promote democratization. This article argues that, far from being a neutral process grounded within the building of capacities, Security Sector Reform (SSR) has strengthened the foundations of Palestinian authoritarianism. In focusing upon the development of the EU's police mission in the West Bank (EUPOL COPPS), this article argues that EU-sponsored 'reform' has contributed directly to the 'professionalization' of Palestinian authoritarianism. The article therefore suggests that the EU consistently has failed to acknowledge the political implications that extend from its technical mandate and interventions. The EU has become, to the extent that its interventions extend Israel's colonial project, part of the problem. In concluding, the article offers an assessment of the decade-long EUPOL COPPS (The European Union Police Mission for the Palestinian Territories) commitment, with a view to developing key lessons and recommendations that can inform future EU interventions.*

KEY WORDS: *Aid effectiveness; authoritarianism; European Union; Israeli-Palestinian Conflict; Palestinian Authority; peace-building; Security Sector Reform; state-building*

To speak of Israeli-Palestinian 'cooperation' ... is to use no less than a misnomer. This is not, however, simply because 'the outcome of cooperation between an elephant and a fly is not hard to predict,' as Chomsky so pithily writes ... but because under Oslo, 'cooperation' is often only minimally different from the occupation and domination that went before it. 'Cooperation', in this context, is above all an internationally pleasing and acceptable signifier, which obscures rather than elucidates the nature of Israeli-Palestinian relations.¹

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¹ Jan Selby (2003) Dressing Up Domination as 'Cooperation': The Case of Israeli-Palestinian Water Relations, *Review of International Studies*, 29(1), p. 138.

The European Union (EU) and its member states have invested billions of dollars in aid over the past decades to induce peace and security in the Middle East, and it appears likely that they will continue to do so for the foreseeable future.² The EU and its member states are now firmly established as the largest sponsors of the Palestinian state-building project. But in the absence of peace and security, they have instead prioritized political stability.³ Even as they continue, in theory at least, to promote the tenets and practices of ‘good governance’ within the Middle East—including in the Palestinian West Bank, the EU and its member states continue, in practice, to channel support and security assistance to authoritarian and repressive regimes throughout the Middle East.⁴ This investment has created deep structural deficiencies in the recipient countries’ style of governance, most notably by elevating security establishments above other actors within the domestic political process. In addition, this funding and support indirectly has perpetuated conflicts and created new ones.⁵ ‘Peace’ therefore became a mere function of securitized processes and interventions, with ‘security first’ paradigms and security-driven frameworks providing the engine of state-building intervention. The EU’s ongoing state-building intervention in the occupied West Bank—and in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) more broadly—is an excellent case-in-point that provides considerable insight into this general development.

The OPT have provided the setting in which a substantial state-building experiment has developed over the course of more than two decades. Since the establishment of the Palestinian Authority (PA), international aid channeled to the PA has exceeded \$30 billion (USD).⁶ The EU and its member states have accounted for almost half of this aid provision,⁷ which has been channeled through both bilateral relations and multilateral institutions.⁸ A large portion of the overall amount committed to good governance reforms has focused upon Security Sector Reform (SSR). The Palestinian security sector employs around half of all civil servants, accounts for nearly \$1 billion of the PA budget and receives around 30 percent of total international aid disbursed to the Palestinians.⁹

² Rosa Balfour, Francesca Fabbri & Richard Youngs (2016) Report on Democracy Assistance from the European Union to the Middle East and North Africa. *EU Spring*. Available at: https://www.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/pais/research/researchcentres/irs/euspring/euspring_eu_demo_assistance_on_template.4.pdf, accessed November 9, 2017.

³ Alaa Tartir & Benoit Challand (2016) Palestine, in E. Lust (ed.), *The Middle East*, pp. 707–737 (Los Angeles & London: CQ Press and SAGE Publications).

⁴ Melani Cammett, Ishac Diwan, Alan Richards, & John Waterbury (eds) (2015) *A Political Economy of the Middle East* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press).

⁵ R. Youngs & Jake Gutman (2015) *Is the EU Tackling the Root Causes of Middle Eastern Conflict?* Carnegie Europe, December 2015. Available at: <http://goo.gl/ScsmEj>, accessed October 30, 2016.

⁶ A. Tartir & Jeremy Wildeman (2017) *Mapping of Donor Funding to the Occupied Palestinian Territories 2012–2014/15*, AidWatch Palestine, November 2017, p. 16. Available at: <https://alaatartirdotcom.files.wordpress.com/2017/11/aidwatch-study-published.pdf>, accessed November 10, 2017.

⁷ Are Knudsen & A. Tartir (2017) *Country Evaluation Brief: Palestine*, Chr. Michelsen Institute & Norad, June 2017, p. 15. Available at: <https://www.norad.no/om-bistand/publikasjon/2017/country-evaluation-brief-palastine/>, accessed October 5, 2017.

⁸ Anne Le More previously has observed that the World Bank, the Europeans, and the Americans and the Israelis each make a distinct contribution to the so-called peace process. The World Bank provides conceptual ‘capital’, the Europeans provide extensive financial support, and the Americans and Israelis provide political impetus (Le More 2008).

⁹ A. Tartir (2017a) Criminalizing Resistance: The Cases of Balata and Jenin Refugee Camps in the Occupied West Bank, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 46(2), p. 7.

The security sector consumes more of the PA's budget than the education, health, and agriculture sectors combined. The sector currently employs 83,276 individuals in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.¹⁰ This figure includes 312 brigadier generals (232 report to the PA and 80 to Hamas); here it should be noted that the entire US Army has 410 brigadier generals. The ratio of security personnel to the population is as high as 1:48, one of the highest ratios in the world.¹¹ Despite the limited successes of this security-focused aid, European aid continues to be invested in the expectation that it will help to build the institutions of a future independent and viable Palestinian state,¹² and thus ultimately contribute to the establishment of a two-state solution. While it is focused upon internal security, this 'investment in peace' also and invariably is justified with reference to peace-building aims and objectives.¹³ However, in the absence of the essential conditions for state-building and peace-building, European aid has produced a range of perverse effects that have impacted negatively on the daily lives of Palestinians and their internationally recognized right of self-determination.¹⁴ In apparent defiance of this pervasive reality, business-as-usual continues: EU funds continue to be spent on Palestine despite the fact that previous and existing provision manifestly has failed to produce positive outcomes in any of the priority areas: peace-building, security reform, democracy promotion and state-building.

There are numerous reasons why interventions in each of these areas have failed.¹⁵ However, in seeking to identify the precise causes, international donors and political actors frequently overlook the *securitization* of peace and aid. There are two explanations which provide considerable insight into this oversight: Firstly, the 'domination of

¹⁰ Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) (2016) Securing Gaza, The Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, Unpublished report, Geneva.

¹¹ A. Tartir (2017b) The Palestinian Authority security forces: Whose security? *Al Shabaka: The Palestinian Policy Network*, May 2017, p. 3. Available at: <https://al-shabaka.org/briefs/palestinian-authority-security-forces-whose-security/>, accessed May 16, 2017.

¹² A. Tartir (2014) Re-inventing European Aid to Palestine, *European Council on Foreign Relations*. Available at: http://www.ecfr.eu/blog/entry/re_inventing_european_aid_to_palestine, accessed July 4, 2017; Dimitris Bouris (2014) *The European Union and occupied Palestinian Territories: State-building without a state* (London: Routledge); Amir Khalil (2017) To What Extent does the European Union Promote Democracy Effectively in the Occupied Palestinian Territories? *Arab Reform Initiative*, October 2017. Available at: <https://www.arab-reform.net/en/file/2004/download?token=3c5YnAbX>, accessed December 4, 2017.

¹³ Federica Bicchì & Benedetta Voltolini (2017) Europe, the Green Line and the Issue of the Israeli-Palestinian Border: Closing the Gap between Discourse and Practice? *Geopolitics*. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/14650045.2017.1305953>, accessed July 22, 2018; D. Bouris & Daniela Huber (2017) Imposing Middle East Peace: Why EU Member States Should Recognise Palestine, *IAI Commentaries* 17, November. Available at: <http://www.iai.it/it/publicazioni/imposing-middle-east-peace-why-eu-member-states-should-recognise-palestine>, accessed November 17, 2017; Anders Persson (2017a) Shaping Discourse and Setting Examples: Normative Power Europe can Work in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 55(6), pp. 1415–1431; A. Persson (2017b) Palestine at the End of the State-building Process: Technical Achievements, Political Failures, *Mediterranean Politics*. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13629395.2017.1339921>, accessed July 22, 2018.

¹⁴ A. Tartir & Filip Edjus (2017a) Effective? Locally owned? Beyond the technocratic perspective on the European Union Police Mission for the Palestinian Territories, *Contemporary Security Policy*. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13523260.2017.1407486>, accessed July 22, 2018.

¹⁵ J. Wildeman (2015) 'Either You're with Us or Against Us': Illiberal Canadian Foreign Aid in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, 2001–2012. Unpublished PhD, University of Exeter, UK; Beáta Paragi (2017) Contemporary gifts. Solidarity, Compassion, Equality, Sacrifice and Reciprocity from NGO perspective, *Current Anthropology*, 58(3), pp. 317–339.

the powerful'; and secondly, the conceptual and theoretical supremacy of 'security first' paradigms.

As a direct consequence, the PA's state-building dynamics, along with the contours and outlines of the wider peace-building project, continue to be driven and sustained by a security rationale and understanding.¹⁶ Security, as opposed to the political priorities of the Palestinian people (specifically their interest in transparent, accountable and legitimate governance), therefore anticipated and underpinned the external engagement with the OPT from the outset.¹⁷ Even the form of security that was envisioned quite clearly derived from the worldview and priorities of the powerful, as opposed to the powerless or colonized. Policy practice therefore does not render or reproduce the 'bottom-up' human security approach that so frequently is evoked within the discursive representations and rationalizations of key European actors.

On the contrary, this practice instead more closely approximates to a top-down imposition that blurs a range of dichotomies (repression/security, violence/resistance and legitimacy/authoritarianism) and redefines them in the vernacular of powerful local and external actors. Jan Selby's quote, which opened this article, quite clearly demonstrates that security is a power game that is conducted in the interests of the powerful. If external actors fail to acknowledge this fact, and specifically relate it to governance and security reforms, then external engagement will continue to be a deeply problematic enterprise that is underpinned by numerous contradictions.

Closer reflection suggests that it is the interest of the Palestinian people which is the missing variable in the equation of external intervention and general assessments of external 'assistance' to the OPT's internal governance. The EU's Police Mission to the Palestinian Territories (EUPOL COPPS), which has operated over the past decade, quite clearly brings out this point and also reiterates that the organization's engagement with the PA security apparatus has produced a professionalization of authoritarianism. This occurred because this engagement has been evaluated within the framework of technical reform; as a consequence, the power relations that conjoin different actors have not been factored into the analysis.

The omission of Palestinians from the overall 'cost-benefit analyses' (to adopt the EU's tortured vernacular for a moment) becomes even more problematic when the colonial attributes of the working context are acknowledged and considered in their full significance. When considered from this perspective, it is not merely the case that the basic meaning of security and peace has been recognized insufficiently or even

¹⁶ A. Tartir (2015a) Securitised Development and Palestinian Authoritarianism under Fayyadism, *Conflict, Security & Development*, 15, pp. 479–502.

¹⁷ While it is crucial to begin with a clear distinction of the 'soft' and 'hard' security approaches, which were enacted by EUPOL COPPS (EU) and USSC (US) respectively, it is similarly important to recognize that both actors collectively have contributed to two negative outcomes: firstly, their efforts contributed to 'better' collaboration with the occupying power, and thus helped to sustain the *status quo*; secondly, they contributed to the violation of Palestinian rights (and national security) by national security forces. Both 'contributions' have been documented in extensive detail – See Human Rights Watch (2011) No News is Good News: Abuses against Journalists by Palestinian Security Forces. Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/report/2011/04/06/no-news-good-news/abuses-against-journalists-palestinian-security-forces>, accessed November 18, 2017; Human Rights Watch (2012) Palestinian Authority: Hold Police Accountable for Ramallah Beatings: Donors Should Re-evaluate Support for Palestinian Security Forces. Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2012/08/27/palestinian-authority-hold-police-accountable-ramallah-beatings>, accessed November 18, 2017; Amnesty International (2017) State of Palestine: Alarming attack on Freedom of Expression. Available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/MDE1569832017ENGLISH.pdf>, accessed November 18, 2017.

subverted.¹⁸ Rather, it is instead the case that external intervention has perpetuated colonial relations by rendering a situation in which unrepresentative and illegitimate local authorities function as subcontractors to the colonial regime. Under these precise conditions, external ‘assistance’ and ‘capacity building’ becomes part of the problem.

This article’s focus upon SSR therefore is closely aligned with the second thematic focus of this Special Issue, which is concerned with the proposition that European actors, and in particular the EU, are part of the problem within the current existing dynamics, as opposed to the solution. The current article makes a distinctive contribution because it offers a Palestinian (‘bottom-up’) perspective, which is diametrically opposed to the terms in which security, at least in the Palestinian context, is conceptualized and theorized. It offers an important innovation by suggesting that the perspective of the ‘locals’ should be the starting point for an analysis and appraisal of ongoing interventions that are undertaken with a view to furthering SSR.

This, it suggests, is essential if observers are to ‘unpack’ fully the wider implications that extend from ‘technical’ initiatives that aspire towards improved capacities and capabilities. The ramifications of these interventions, it suggests, only can be appreciated fully within this wider context. This article develops in accordance with the following outline. It initially provides historical and political context by discussing reforms of the Palestinian security sector that were initiated through external intervention in the aftermath of the PA’s establishment. After sketching these initial outlines, it then proposes to problematize the role of the EU by viewing it through the lens of the EUPOL COPPS intervention. The article then concludes with five key lessons and recommendations that could inform future EU interventions.

Palestinian SSR and External Intervention

The reform of the Palestinian Authority security apparatus can be broken down broadly into three separate phases:¹⁹ The Oslo Accords (1993–1999); the Second Intifada (2000–2006); and the post-2007 state-building project.²⁰ Each phase was not particularly part of an intelligible process but instead reflected shifting donor priorities. These shifts in turn impacted SSR and had wider implications for European intervention in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

The first phase was characterized by a fundamental clash between the imperatives of state-building and national liberation. The former implied the construction of pre-state or state-like institutions (although in reality it resulted in an inflated

¹⁸ A. Tartir (2016) What Peace? State Disorders and Non-State Orders, *Open Democracy*, November 25. Available at: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/north-africa-west-asia/alaa-tartir/what-peace-state-disorders-and-non-state-orders>, accessed November 25, 2016.

¹⁹ A. Tartir (2015b) The Evolution and Reform of Palestinian Security Forces 1993–2013, *Stability: International Journal of Security & Development*, 4(1), pp. 1–20.

²⁰ It also could be argued that a fourth phase began after Salam Fayyad, the PA Prime Minister, departed in 2013. This could be characterized as statehood with ‘less spark and momentum.’ In 2011, European sponsors broadly concurred with Fayyad’s 2011 assertion that the ‘West Bank is already a state in all but name’. However, in the aftermath of Fayyad’s departure, the state-building project clearly has lost momentum: the international community, in the absence of any meaningful progress, appears content to support the reform of the PA security establishment and sustain the *status quo*.

bureaucracy); the latter instead implied the pursuit of the revolutionary program for self-determination that had been advanced by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Over time, the first imperative came to predominate, and Arafat used the PA security forces, in addition to nepotistic and patronage-based governing practices, to strengthen his authority and promote stability.²¹ Quantity, as opposed to quality, was Arafat's main priority. This resulted in the emergence of a bloated security establishment and forces with contradictory duties, which nonetheless reported directly to Arafat. The 9,000 recruits envisaged in the 1994 Cairo Agreement had grown, five year later, to more than five times this number (close to 50,000 security personnel).²²

This proliferation of the security forces, each of which committed considerable time to spying on each other, had hugely negative consequences for Palestinians.²³ The growth of the security apparatus enabled Arafat to establish security-based political structures, thus strengthening authoritarianism by blocking accountability mechanisms. This eroded legitimacy, contributed to heightened insecurity, and paved the way for future political fragmentation. However, rather than challenging endemic corruption and patronage,²⁴ the international community—and the EU was a foremost protagonist in this regard—chose to turn a blind eye. At the current point in time, the donor community now is grappling with governance-related challenges that can be traced back to this initial reluctance to disrupt the 'peace process.'²⁵

During the course of the second intifada, the PA's security infrastructure was destroyed by the Israeli army, in direct response to the fact that it directly participated in the uprising. This created a 'security vacuum,' which was filled by non-PA/non-statutory actors, with largely negative consequences for Palestinians. Exacerbated instability and political infighting meant that external donors, the PA and Israel became increasingly preoccupied with the question of how a strong and dominant security sector could be developed.

In June 2002, the PA announced its 100-Day Reform Plan.²⁶ This was then followed by the 2003 Road Map. The latter explicitly called for a 'rebuilt and refocused Palestinian Authority security apparatus,' which would confront 'all those engaged in terror' and dismantle 'the terrorist capabilities and infrastructure.'²⁷ The PA's security sector therefore was tasked with a relatively narrow range of responsibilities. In

²¹ Rex Brynen (1995) The Neopatrimonial Dimension of Palestinian Politics, *Journal of Palestine Studies* 25(1), pp. 23–36; Jamil Hilal & Musthaq Khan (2004) State Formation under the PA: Potential Outcomes and their Viability, in: M. Khan, George Giacaman & Inge Amundsen (eds) *State Formation in Palestine: Viability and Governance during a Social Transformation*, (London: RoutledgeCurzon), pp. 64–119.

²² Brynjar Lia (2007) *Building Arafat's Police: The Politics of International Police Assistance in the Palestinian Territories after the Oslo Agreement* (London: Ithaca Press).

²³ Edward Said (1995) *Peace and its Discontents: Essays on Palestine in the Middle East Peace Process* (London: Vintage).

²⁴ Tariq Dana (2015) Corruption in Palestine: A Self-Enforcing System, *Al-Shabaka: The Palestinian Policy Network*, May 15. Available at: <https://al-shabaka.org/briefs/corruption-in-palestine/>, accessed October 29, 2017.

²⁵ Tartir (2017b) *The Palestinian Authority Security Forces*.

²⁶ Palestinian Authority (2002) 100 Days Plan of the Palestinian Government (Ramallah: PA)

²⁷ United Nations (2003) A Performance-Based Roadmap to a Permanent Two-State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. Available at: <http://www.un.org/news/dh/mideast/roadmap122002.pdf>, accessed September 5, 2017.

combating terrorism, it would apprehend suspects, outlaw incitement, and collect illegal weapons. In addition, it would also provide Israel with a list of Palestinian police recruits and report 'progress' in each of these respects to the US government.²⁸ In committing to these priorities, the PA was pitched into the 'war against terror': as a direct consequence, resistance was reinvented as 'insurgency' or 'instability.'

In each of these respects, Palestinian security reform continued to be 'in essence, an externally-controlled process, driven by the national security interests of Israel and the United States, and characterized by very limited ownership on the part of Palestinian society.'²⁹ The emergence of a new security doctrine (the 'one gun, one law, one authority' strategy)³⁰ was very much in the lineage of this initial characterization of SSR.³¹ The international donor community helped to implement this strategy starting from 2004, with both EUPOL COPPS and the United States Security Coordinator (USSC) playing a prominent role. These external actors were both sponsors and implementers.

The USSC and the EUPOL COPPS missions played a hugely important role in helping to shape the relationship between statutory and non-statutory security forces; in addition, they also made a significant contribution to the transformation of the PA's security sphere in the post-2007 state-building period. Their engagement had important implications for local ownership of security reform and opened up a whole new section of the international aid industry, thus adding an additional layer of complexity to the process of SSR. EUPOL COPPS emerged in this context, being conceived as a response to ongoing security vacuums and a means through which an existing political opportunity could be exploited fully.³² A security vacuum gave rise to the agenda of securitization, the technical vacuum gave rise to various capacity-building initiatives and the political vacuum resulted in the EU assuming a more prominent role within the peace process.

The post-2007 state-building project was the third phase in the development of the PA's security forces. It aimed, primarily by working through EUPOL COPPS and USSC, to reinvent the PA security forces, both by reinventing them as 'neutral' law enforcement bodies and enhancing their capacity to promote and uphold security. These interventions occurred under the broad heading of SSR and addressed issues relating to, *inter alia*, training and weapons procurement.³³ It was envisaged that this training would enable PA security forces to confront Hamas militants, engage and co-opt Fatah-allied militants, and promote public order by cracking down on hotbeds of

²⁸ Hussein Agha & Ahmad Khalidi (2005) *A Framework for a Palestinian National Security Doctrine* (London: Chatham House).

²⁹ Roland Friedrich & Arnold Luethold (2007) Introduction, in: R. Friedrich & A. Luethold (eds) *Entry-Points to Palestinian Security Sector Reform* (Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces).

³⁰ *Al-Jazeera* (2006) Transcript of Interview with Mahmoud Abbas, January 17. Available at: <https://goo.gl/1vgaFr>, accessed April 2, 2016.

³¹ This application of the Weberian concept of a 'monopoly of force' clearly established that the PA's statutory security forces are the only actors with the right to exert force within the OPT. By implication, other non-state actors, non-statutory bodies and armed resistance groups have to be marginalized, dismantled, co-opted, integrated, disarmed or punished. It is crucial however to maintain that the Israeli occupying forces remain the ultimate holder of power and force.

³² Amr Nasr El-Din (2017) *EU security missions and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict* (London: Routledge).

³³ Palestinian Authority (2008) *Palestinian Reform and Development Plan 2008–2010* (Ramallah: PA).

criminal activity (The West Bank cities of Nablus and Jenin were cited as key priorities in this regard).³⁴

However, these aspirations were substantially complicated when the ‘reformed’ security forces were accused of human rights abuses and the suppression of fundamental freedoms.³⁵ Local and international human rights organizations openly voiced their concerns about emerging authoritarian trends.³⁶ Some observers spoke of a PA which sought to rule with an ‘iron fist.’³⁷ This was particularly uncomfortable for the US, as the PA’s security forces had become popularly known as the ‘Dayton forces,’³⁸ in ‘honor’ of the US Lieutenant-general who led the ‘professionalization and modernization’ process.³⁹

The EU’s practical interventions quite clearly undermined a number of its other, more high-minded commitments. In supporting the unelected Fatah leadership as it conducted security campaigns that were directed toward elected Hamas representatives, it quite clearly undermined its own commitment to democratic accountability and rule of law. A European aid official quite openly acknowledged this:

[On the] one hand, we demand democratic processes, transparency and accountability and constantly stress the importance of human rights. But on the other hand, we have for the most part been silent about the PA’s extra-judicial campaign against Hamas. There is a huge contradiction in our message.⁴⁰

³⁴ International Crisis Group (2008) *Ruling Palestine II: The West Bank Model?* July. Available at: <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/eastern-mediterranean/israelpalestine/ruling-palestine-ii-west-bank-model>, accessed March 5, 2016.

³⁵ Kimberly Marten (2014) *Reformed or Deformed? Patronage Politics, International Influence, and the Palestinian Authority Security Forces*, *International Peacekeeping*, 21(2), pp. 181–97; Amnesty International (2013) *‘Shut up we are the Police’: Use of excessive force by Palestinian Authority in the occupied West Bank*. Available at <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/MDE21/006/2013/en>, accessed September 12, 2017; Human Rights Watch (2014) *Palestine: No Action in Assault by Police*. Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/05/19/palestine-no-actionassault-police>, accessed June 7, 2014.

³⁶ Saleh Hijazi & Hugh Lovatt (2017a) *Issa Amro and the EU’s Palestinian Authority problem*, European Council on Foreign Relations. Available at: http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_eu_palestinian_authority_problem, accessed September 8, 2017; S. Hijazi & H. Lovatt (2017b) *Europe and the Palestinian Authority’s Authoritarian Drift*, European Council on Foreign Relations. Available at: http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_europe_and_the_palestinian_authoritys_authoritarian_drift_7274, accessed April 30, 2017.

³⁷ Palestinians now often speak of a ‘double’ or ‘triple’ occupation, A youth from Balata refugee camp told the author: ‘I thought that having two occupations [Israel and the PA] is enough, but clearly that is not enough. Now we have a third one serving as an additional level of oppression thanks to all these external security missions, officers, complexes, academies, and vehicles. Author Interview, Balata Refugee Camp, West Bank, June 11, 2015.

³⁸ Mark Perry (2011) *Dayton’s Mission: A Reader’s Guide*, *Al-Jazeera*, January 25. Available at: <http://www.aljazeera.com/palestinepapers/2011/01/20111125145732219555.html>, accessed July 15, 2017.

³⁹ While those who used this phrase often were referring to the Palestinian National Security Forces (NSF), it was assumed to relate to other security forces, such as the Palestinian Civil Policy (PCP). Here it is important to note that a substantial proportion of the West Bank population do not distinguish between different security forces; on the contrary, it the PA’s security force was more often perceived and discussed as a single monolith. Dayton’s notoriety extended beyond the West Bank however. He quotes senior IDF commanders who asked him: ‘How many more of these new Palestinians can you generate, and how quickly?’ In 2013, Shimon Peres, the-then Israeli president, implicitly acknowledged Dayton’s efforts when he said: ‘A Palestinian security force was formed. You and the Americans trained it. And now we work together to prevent terror and crime.’ (Tartir, 2017b).

⁴⁰ International Crisis Group (2010) *Squaring the Circle: Palestinian Security Reform under Occupation*, p. 33. Available at: <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/eastern-mediterranean/israelpalestine/squaring-circle-palestinian-security-reform-under-occupation>, accessed March 5, 2017.

While this statement was made at the apogee of the PA state-building project, other contradictions and tensions within the EU message (most notably the tension between its high-minded policy proclamations and the actual reality) continued to act to the detriment of its reputation and credibility. It would be no exaggeration to state that the tension between rhetoric and practice emerged as a defining attribute of the EU's interventions in the SSR field. During this phase, Israeli security interests consistently have been prioritized and elevated over the interests and priorities of the OPT's inhabitants. Disarmament and criminalization have impaired popular resistance. In the contemporary West Bank, the PA's security forces largely are concerned with protecting the security of the occupier. The security rights of Palestinians in turn have been gravely imperiled by Israeli sub-contracting, in which repression now has become the PA's responsibility and priority.⁴¹

The security reform agenda can be seen, during this period, to have impacted negatively on the national struggle, everyday security, the ongoing imperative of resistance to occupation and the coherence of the Palestinian political community. While blame for this state of affairs should be dispersed and shared broadly, it is nonetheless apparent that donors must shoulder a considerable amount of the blame.

In analyzing the process of security sector reform, it is first important to recognize a divide within the academic literature on the subject. The first set of contributions tend to function within a more technocratic framework of reference, and they are predisposed to ask how external, elite interests can be realized more completely or embodied through a more effective implementation of the reform process. In contrast, a second set of contributions stress the need to consider this technical project within its wider social context.⁴² The preceding discussion consistently has reiterated the importance of the second set of contributions in enabling a fuller, more holistic analysis of the EU's contribution to Palestinian SSR.⁴³

The Instrumental Purpose of the EU Intervention

For the EU, EUPOL COPPS had a clear instrumental purpose and utility. This 'instrumental function' was reflected in the fact that this initiative enabled the organization to shift from being a 'payer' to a 'player'.⁴⁴ When it was established, EUPOL COPPS was mandated to provide technical support to the Palestinian Civil Police

⁴¹ Sabrien Amrov & A. Tartir (2014a) After Gaza: What Price Palestine's Security Sector? *Al-Shabaka: The Palestinian Policy Network*, October. Available at: <https://al-shabaka.org/briefs/after-gaza-what-price-palestines-security-sector/>, accessed April 3, 2016; S. Amrov & A. Tartir (2014b) Subcontracting Repression in the West Bank and Gaza, *New York Times*, November 26. Available at: https://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/27/opinion/subcontracting-repression-in-the-west-bank-and-gaza.html?_r=0, accessed April 3, 2016; Dana El-Kurd (2017) Mechanisms of Co-optation in the Palestinian Territories: Neutralizing Independent Civil Society, *Middle East Institute*. Available at: <http://www.mei.edu/content/map/mechanisms-co-optation-palestinian-territories-neutralizing-independent-civil-society>, accessed October 29, 2017.

⁴² However, it could be argued that the interaction between the two has contributed to a third strand, which seeks to identify how more 'holistic' perspectives and contributions can be assimilated into technical strategies and frameworks.

⁴³ Tartir & Edjus, Effective? Locally Owned?; and F. Ejodus & A. Tartir (2017) Policing Palestine, *Sada, Carnegie's Middle East Program*. Available at: <http://carnegieendowment.org/sada/72821>, accessed December 3, 2017.

⁴⁴ See further El-Din, *EU security missions and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict*.

(PCP). This support was provided in the expectation that it would enable local Palestinian security forces to align with internationally recognized ‘best practice.’ Over the past decade, EUPOL COPPS gradually has transitioned from capacity-building (training and equipment provision) to a more strategic role.⁴⁵ By virtue of the fact that it is the EU’s longest-running civilian crisis management mission, the institution inevitably has sought to present EUPOL COPPS as a success story. During an interview with an EUPOL COPPS staff member, I was enlightened about the EU’s ongoing ‘achievements’:

EUPOL COPPS has made a significant progress in the past 10 years for both the Criminal Justice Institutions and the Palestinian Civil Police (PCP). The Mission has contributed in improving the safety and security of Palestinians, in line with the domestic agenda of the Palestinian Authority, reinforcing the rule of law. EUPOL COPPS has succeeded in promoting civil police primacy meaning that the civilian police should be the organization with responsibility for policing, and that it is under civilian control.⁴⁶

The PA’s political and security establishment have similarly expressed their satisfaction with the EUPOL COPPS intervention. One high-ranking PA security official even suggested that, as a result of this support, the PA now has ‘one of the best police and security forces in the region’.⁴⁷ If it is no surprise to find a broad level of agreement between Brussels and Ramallah on this point, it is perhaps surprising that the former evidences a slightly greater degree of caution. A European diplomat observed:

Through the EUPOL COPPS, we developed the civil oversight, developed strategic planning in the ministry of interior, encouraged donors’ mechanisms for better coordination, and we ensured the Palestinian ownership in all of this. Yet, the situation is not optimal or ideal, planning is something and implementing is another thing, and progress of reform is difficult and slow process because of politics.⁴⁸

For its part, the Israeli government is also satisfied with existing arrangements: it views EUPOL COPPS as an integral component of the security coordination paradigm⁴⁹ that explicitly is concerned with the furtherance of Israel’s

⁴⁵ Ejodus & Tartir, *Policing Palestine*.

⁴⁶ Author Interview via email exchange, senior staff member of EUPOL COPPS in Ramallah, September 18, 2017. With reference to the ongoing needs of Palestinian stakeholders, the same source added: ‘For the PCP, they need a lot of equipment, vehicles and on top of which, they need funds to recruit more policemen and policewomen. For the criminal justice institutions, they need more training in the fields of prosecution, judges, lawyers and a functioning parliament.’

⁴⁷ Author Interview, PA security official, Ramallah, May 17, 2017.

⁴⁸ Author Interview via telephone, European diplomat, Brussels, August 21, 2017.

⁴⁹ The 1993 Oslo Accords had a number of key objectives. They sought to establish the basis for a securitized peace process, doing so in the clear understanding that local-level security collaboration (between Israel and the Palestinian Authority) offered the best means through which this could be achieved. This securitization remains a key part of the PA’s security doctrine, a source of tension between the PA and the inhabitants of the OPT and an ongoing donor priority which is upheld through foreign aid conditionality.

security.⁵⁰ Ultimately, Israel envisages that this support will enable the PA to police the West Bank effectively, crush dissent and counter insurgency.⁵¹

However, these positive appraisals largely are confined to a relatively small number of observers, who collectively function as the members of what is, to all intents and purposes, a tightly sealed political and technocratic élite. One well-informed analyst and observer, who has been closely engaged with EUPOL COPPS over the last decade, claimed it was unrealistic to expect that ‘complementarity’ could be achieved within the projected timeframe given the level of staff turnover; other issues that were highlighted included staff secondment (level of operational and contextual knowledge and overall quality), resources and the length of EUPOL COPPS’ mandate (which is renewed on a six-month or annual basis). Each of these defects, it was argued, acts to the detriment of the intervention’s overall effectiveness, strategy and sustainability.⁵²

This broad appraisal closely is aligned with the critical literature, which is much more skeptical about the design (role) and application (impact, effectiveness) of the EUPOL COPPS initiative. EUPOL COPPS has been criticized extensively for failing to improve civil oversight and accountability. Its conventional train-and-equip approach can be argued to have enhanced the skill-sets of Palestinian security forces; however, any improvement in this respect should be considered against the clear failure to transfer training capabilities (design, planning, implementation) to the local level.⁵³ Aside from anything else, this defect brings the sustainability of the claimed improvements into clear question. A more general critique also can be directed toward the way that EUPOL COPPS, along with the broader SSR apparatus of which it is part, has contributed to the spread and growth of authoritarian tendencies.⁵⁴

Other critical readings also make an important contribution by bringing the narrow, technical focus of the mission into clear question. Beste İşleyen, for instance, has demonstrated how ostensibly benign demand-driven technical support has functioned to

⁵⁰ Security coordination between the PA security forces and the Israeli military takes a number of different forms. These include: the arrest of Palestinian suspects at the request of the Israeli authorities; the suppression of Palestinian protests directed toward Israeli soldiers or settlers; intelligence sharing; and a ‘revolving door’ prison policy, in which activists serve successive sentences in Israeli and Palestinian prisons, often for the same offence; Palestinian and Israeli security personnel also regularly participate in joint meetings, trainings and workshops (see Tartir (2017a), *Criminalizing Resistance*, p.15). For further insight into security coordination, see Amrov & Tartir (2014a) *After Gaza*, Amrov & Tartir (2014b) *Subcontracting Repression*, and Tariq Dana (2014) *The Beginning of the End of Palestinian Security Coordination with Israel?*, *Jadaliyya*. Available at: <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/18379/the-beginning-of-the-end-of-palestinian-security-c>, accessed July 16, 2017.

⁵¹ Ejodus & Tartir, *Policing Palestine*, p. 2.

⁵² Interview via Skype, Senior analyst and observer, Ramallah, June 22, 2017.

⁵³ D. Bouris (2012) *The European Union’s role in the Palestinian Territories: State Building through Security Sector Reform?* *European Security*, 21, pp. 257–271; D. Bouris & Stuart Reigeluth (2012) *Introducing the Rule of Law in Security Sector Reform: European Union policies in the Palestinian Territories*, *Hague Journal on the Rule of Law*, 4, pp. 176–193; Madeline Kristoff (2012) *Policing in Palestine: Analyzing the EU Police Reform Mission in the West Bank*, The Centre for International Governance Innovation. Available at: http://www.cigionline.org/sites/default/files/ssr_issue_no7.pdf, accessed April 5, 2013.

⁵⁴ David Rose (2008) *The Gaza Bombshell*, *Vanity Fair*, April. Available at: <http://www.vanityfair.com/politics/features/2008/04/gaza200804>, accessed April 1, 2010; Yezid Sayigh (2011) *Policing the People, Building the State: Authoritarian Transformation in the West Bank and Gaza*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Available at: http://carnegieendowment.org/files/gaza_west_bank_security.pdf, accessed September 7, 2017; Richard Youngs & Helene Michou (2011) *Assessing Democracy Assistance: Palestine*, *FRIDE*. Available at: http://www.fride.org/download/Assessing_Democracy_Assistance_Palestine.pdf, accessed September 17, 2017; and A. Tartir (2015a) *Securitized Development and Palestinian Authoritarianism*.

conceal a broad condition of power asymmetry and thus has diverted attention away from the various ways by which the EU problematizes, disciplines, and normalizes Palestinian security practices and strategies.⁵⁵ Other observers instead develop their critique from within a SSR framework to argue that the EU's prioritization of technical assistance neglects important political components of SSR, most notably the need for effective democratic governance.⁵⁶ Tahani Mustafa develops this argument and maintains that the EUPOL COPPS mission has failed. In her view, 'the separation of the teaching of technical skills from the political reality and the overall security system has created a police force that is highly skilled yet easily co-opted by political leaders.'⁵⁷

Finally, the inhabitants of the OPT also are broadly dissatisfied with the EU's contribution to SRR.⁵⁸ Here it should be noted that the object of this dissatisfaction is not the narrow priority of service delivery but rather the broader contribution of Palestinian authoritarianism. 'Voices from below,' which strategically have been silenced by the technocratic discourse, offer a fundamentally different reading, in which the EU is, by virtue of its direct support for the PA and by extension Israeli strategic interests, viewed as being complicit in the perpetuation of occupation.

Conclusion: Five Key Lessons

European aid, policies, and interventions, in attempting to work around the political realities of occupation, essentially have become part of the problem. The EU's wider project of neoliberal state-building similarly is constructed upon an entirely artificial separation of 'economics' and 'politics' which is clearly open to critical challenge and contestation. Even at the level of basic logic, it seems inconceivable that a sector ever could address, or sufficiently engage, the structural forms of violence that are embedded within an occupation that now has persisted for 50 years. At a strategic level, SSR reform is just as open to criticism as the misplaced belief that economic development will provide renewed impetus to a peace process that has evidenced signs of stagnation and regression for the best part of two decades. In recognizing this point, and in seeking to move the terms of policy engagement forward, this article now will outline five specific proposals that have a clear practical significance and relevance.⁵⁹

Firstly, the stated objective of the EUPOL COPPS mission is to professionalize the Palestinian police. This has been conceived as a prerequisite for peace-building, that is, as an 'investment' in the wider peace process. European policy-makers, however,

⁵⁵ Beste İşleyen (2017) Building Capacities, Exerting Power: The European Union Police Mission in the Palestinian Authority, *Mediterranean Politics*. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13629395.2017.1319750>, accessed July 22, 2018.

⁵⁶ Tahani Mustafa (2015) Damming the Palestinian Spring: Security Sector Reform and Entrenched Repression, *Journal of International Intervention and Statebuilding*, 9, p. 225; see also Sayigh (2011) Policing the People; Bouris (2012) The European Union; Bouris (2014) The European Union; Tartir (2017a) Criminalizing Resistance; and Tartir (2017b) The Palestinian Authority Security Forces.

⁵⁷ Mustafa (2015) Damming the Palestinian Spring, p. 225.

⁵⁸ Tartir & Edjus, Effective? Locally owned?

⁵⁹ While these lessons have been conceived and developed within the context of the EUPOL COPPS mission, it is clear that potentially they could be applied to the EU's broader engagement with the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. For additional lessons and recommendations, refer to Lovatt and Toaldo (2014) Five Reasons; Lovatt and Toaldo (2015) EU Differentiation; Lovatt (2016) EU Differentiation; and Dajani and Lovatt (2017) Rethinking Oslo.

do not appear to have registered that this aspiration is now further away than it was when the mission began. In addition to raising important questions about how ‘success’ is identified and measured, this also suggests that European policy-makers experience great difficulty in critically reflecting upon their ongoing interventions. In celebrating its own successes, the EU shows a quite striking detachment from material realities and Palestinian public opinion. This implies a far-reaching critical project that not just questions the end product but also the means through which policy practices and strategies are produced.⁶⁰

The narrowness of the mission’s ‘technical’ mandate also must be questioned and challenged. SSR is not a technical project that can be conducted in isolation from the wider historical or political context. Even if only for purposes of improved implementation, it should be acknowledged that this wider context will have a significant, and even determining impact, upon SSR implementation. For Palestinians, it is meaningless to speak of ‘security’ when the main source of insecurity is not addressed or is treated as an inconvenient obstacle that can be worked around. A ‘human security’ analysis helps to show up the inadequacies and shortfalls within the mission’s applied definitions of ‘security’ and ‘insecurity’; incidentally, it also serves to highlight the gulf between the EU’s policy representations and the actual practice. In this instance, the pre-eminent question—*whose* security?—awaits a more sustained and satisfactory engagement.

Thirdly, the EU’s engagement with security sector reform has done little to answer the question of which type of governance it would like to see emerge in the OPT. This is an inherently political question and the EU, whose foreign policy is grounded within a clear bias toward economic instruments (as evidenced by its abiding faith in trade and development) is poorly placed to answer this question. However, it would be both disingenuous and false for it to pretend that it has no interest or that this is ultimately for Palestinians to decide. The level of its financial investment has not been accompanied by a declaration of its clear political interest. Given that its interventions have contributed to the professionalization of authoritarianism (epitomized in the absence of a functioning parliament, human rights violations and the criminalization of resistance), it is clearly incumbent upon the EU to set out its political vision for the OPT. Upon assuming responsibility for the EUPOL COPPS mission, the EU sought to develop a unique role for itself. At the time of writing, this role is somewhat unclear and opaque.

Fourthly, any project of SSR must move beyond the limitations of a technical mandate to engage the structural forms of violence that are embedded within the OPT. One of the features of Palestinian life and society is that it is highly politicized in almost every aspect. Even the most prosaic and basic of everyday actions easily can become politicized.⁶¹ Finally, the EU needs to seek to incorporate the views of those

⁶⁰ When I enquired with an EU diplomat about the possibility that the EUPOL COPPS mandate might, after 11 years of being renewed, be terminated, I was informed that ‘[the EU is] not ready to close and terminate the EUPOL COPPS operations, it is a very political mission.’ Author Interview, August 21, 2017).

⁶¹ This clearly was indicated when EUPOL COPPS responded to a number of questions (pertaining to local ownership, democratic accountability and transparency) that I submitted in June 2017: ‘We cannot answer your questions because our mandate is purely technical, mainly mentoring and advising the Palestinian counterparts. Your questions are very political.’ Author Interview, EUPOL COPPS, email exchange, June 2, 2017).

who most directly are impacted by its interventions, that is, Palestinians resident in the OPT. Local ‘ownership’ and ‘participation’ are buzzwords that EU officials frequently invoke in their policy documents; it scarcely needs to be noted that they are much less frequently reproduced in policy practice. In this regard, the EUPOL COPPS mission is no exception. There is clearly much to be done if the EU is to overcome the impression of one Jenin refugee camp respondent, who said: ‘The US security mission is the big and aggressive devil; the European security mission is the small and gentle devil. Both of them are devils, but packaged differently.’⁶²

The EU police mission has much to say about the limitations of the EU’s contribution to and role in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. To this extent, it can be considered as a case study of a specific instance of SSR. However, I would maintain that the implications of this article extend beyond this relatively constricted terrain. The EU mission, I would contend, clearly illustrates the limits of apolitical and technocratic approaches when they are applied in highly politicized spaces. In failing to offer a sufficiently critical appraisal of unbalanced power relations, they ultimately come to function as a means through which this power is reproduced. Far from shaping the world order with its normative power, the EU, in the case of Palestine, has become one of the conduits through which colonial rule is sustained. Its vision of a securitized peace promises little more than a stale repetition and perpetuation of the colonial dynamics that have disfigured Palestinian life and society for half-a-century. Sustained critical scrutiny is a clear precondition if the EU is to break this cycle and become part of the solution, as opposed to the problem.

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⁶² Author Interview with Jenin refugee camp resident, June 14, 2015.

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