

Alaa Tartir and Timothy Seidel (eds), *Palestine and Rule of Power. Local Dissent vs. International Governance* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019). Pp. 252. Hardback. ISBN 19: 978-3-0300-5948-4

Alaa Tartir and Timothy Seidel have produced a remarkable volume that looks at two main forms of power in Palestine; the settler colonial project and the neo-liberal political and economic order. The former is expressed by the Zionist project's impetus to erase the Indigenous people- the Palestinians, and the latter is expressed by a host of 'state-building', peace process, and foreign aid agendas. Importantly, settler-colonialism is a continuous endeavour, not a historical event, in which the main aim is to replace the indigenous population for a settler one. This erasure happens in both the material and epistemic realm and is also bound to territory which the settler claims as its own. Neo-liberalism on the other hand promotes the notion that society should be shaped by the free market and that the economy can be deregulated and privatised. Inevitably governments play a major role in determining this socio-economic order and work hard to liberalise capital around the world through trade and diplomacy.

These two structures of power are certainly not mutually exclusive and what this book shows is how they work together to achieve their aims. Indeed, as the editors write: '(neo) liberal peace has always been made possible because of the violence and dispossession of colonialism'. Importantly Tartir and Seidel explain how neo-liberalism is working hard to depoliticise Palestine and remove politics from the discussions; they call this a 'neo-liberal logic'. Indeed, the de-politicisation of Palestine has been a main theme in the post-Oslo era. Where once there was a deeply politicised and mobilised grassroots based civil society, there now exists collection of NGOs mostly working towards a donor agenda in order to maintain economic survival. Similarly the Palestinian National Movement has also suffered from this de-politicisation, where various elites and factions are fighting to maintain their own miniscule power bases rather than unite towards a liberation struggle.

However the oppressed are not simply recipients of oppression, rather they also wield political agency that manifests itself as power. Following a Foucauldian analysis this book highlights just that: where there is power there is also resistance to it. The volume is divided into three parts, the first looking at resistance and mobilisation, the second looking at external intervention and aid and the third at the security sector and authoritarianism. This thematic division is well organised, and allows the reader to absorb the various layers of power in a structural and logical way. Furthermore, the use of ethnographic field research adds important human detail and connects the theory to the ground in a crucial way.

The most compelling section is the chapters examining resistance and mobilisation, which critically lay out the various ways in which Palestinians have manifested their opposition and sometimes collaboration with the settler colonial and neo-liberal regime. Ben White, for example, assesses the status quo in which the Palestinian Authority (PA) has been co-opted into creating a situation of powerless Bantustans rather than a sovereign state. White concludes that the failure to target the structure of the on-going settler-colonial project in historic Palestine has created a one state reality of total Israeli control, leaving the Palestinian leadership with some serious existential questions. Nijmeh Ali takes the case of the Palestinian citizens of Israel to demonstrate ongoing resistance to the structures of power in Israel, using the concept of *sumnud* (steadfastness) and highlighting cultural spaces where confronting the settler state is done both subversively and assertively. Dana El Kurd, in the final chapter of the first section, importantly looks at the class dynamics of protestors in the West Bank. Class is an oft forgotten aspect of analysis within literature on Palestine and El Kurd highlights it as a central factor in mobilisation. Indeed, she argues that the middle class- a group that is expected to take the lead in political

mobilisation- is often absent from protests in Palestine because its interests are tied to the status quo. El Kurd calls for a reconsideration of the working class in Palestine as a key mobilising player in political participation.

In the section on external intervention and aid, Jeremy Wildeman provides an analysis of the neo-liberal reality by tracing the history of aid to Palestine. Intersecting development theories with settler colonialism, Wildeman explains how colonialism was 're-casted as peace' in particular through the Oslo process which created a situation of further entrenched dependence on the colonisers. In the same section, a discussion on Palestinian NGOs by Melanie Meinzer outlines some of the ways in which they are resisting the toxic donor-NGO relationship which promotes an agenda that ultimately undermines Palestinian sovereignty. Primarily this involves recalibrating around a member based structure to break free of the international donor hold as well as relying on 'solidarity funding' and downwards accountability. In the final section is Tartir's critical look at the reform of the security sector under the leadership of the Prime Minister Salam Fayyad from 2007-2013. It concludes that it has been an international donor led endeavour to quash resistance against Israel and to tighten control over Palestinians in the West Bank in the name of state-building. This reform has led to increasing PA authoritarianism as well as the inevitable consolidation of power in the hands of the ruling party-Fatah.

Whilst only some of the chapters have been included in this review, all of the chapters come together in this edited book to offer those reading and working on Palestine a fresh lens through which to view the various power dynamics at play. It also importantly places the Palestinians as the focus and as agents in their own right- not simply as objects of a continuous settler colonial project. In its nuanced critique of the status quo the book sets out the foundations to, in the words of the editors, '... imagine new ways of being and draw new paths that bring... (Palestinians) closer to freedom'.

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