



ALI JARBAWI, *Min al-Ṭarḍ ilā al-Hukm al-Thāī: al-Mas'ā al-Ṣuhyūnī li-Wa'd Filasṭīn* [*From Expulsion to Self-Rule: The Zionist Quest to Bury Palestine Alive*] (Beirut: Arab Institute for Research & Publishing, 2023), pp. 517.

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Shaped by Zionist settler-colonialism, the field of Palestine studies has contributed unique concepts and insights to humanities and social sciences. This peculiar form of settler-colonialism has not only generated peculiar phenomena but also redefined existing ones, thereby challenging traditional scholarly paradigms and academic interpretations. For example, the application of the concept of “apartheid” in the Palestinian context,

originally associated with the racial segregation system in South Africa, does not fully capture the severity and nature of the brutal domination of the Israeli segregation system over Palestinians, as highlighted by scholars and South African leaders alike. Similarly, while the term “genocide” has been invoked to describe the large-scale mass killing and destruction of Gaza by Israel, it does not sufficiently reflect the multilayered atrocities, including mass extermination, ethnic cleansing, collective punishment, starvation, and other war crimes taking place in Gaza simultaneously, unprecedented in their visibility and the brazenness of their execution. Adapting those terminologies into the Palestinian context deepens our understanding of the peculiarity of that context and pushes the boundaries of social sciences to accommodate such extraordinary realities.

Ali Jarbawi’s book, *From Expulsion to Self-Rule: The Zionist Quest to Bury Palestine Alive* attempts to interrogate a concept that has been taken for granted for decades, which in turn fills an important conceptual gap in the field. In particular, the book critically examines the notion of “Palestinian Autonomy” or self-rule, presenting a reconceptualization that diverges markedly from conventional interpretations and existing models of autonomy. Jarbawi’s analysis underlines the unique nature of Palestinian self-rule, as enforced and promoted by Israel, which starkly contrasts with global norms and practices of autonomy. Despite its profound implications on understanding the dynamics of power, resistance, and governance in Palestine, the critical questioning of Palestinian autonomy has been largely under-researched.

The book takes as its starting point the dilemma the Zionist enterprise created for itself following the 1967 war, in which Israel occupied all of historic Palestine, but was unable to drive out its inhabitants as happened in the territories occupied in 1948, when Zionist gangs carried out a large-scale ethnic cleansing against Palestinian villages and cities and forcibly displaced the majority of Palestinians from their land. Highlighting the model of self-rule as an attempt to escape the impasse brought about by the failure to achieve the “physical transfer” of the Palestinians, Jarbawi examines how Israel created and implemented the idea of “legal transfer” through an agreement with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO),

which culminated in the Oslo Accords. This arrangement aimed at establishing a framework for Palestinian autonomy, albeit under constraints that perpetuate the status quo of Israeli colonial control.

The book rigorously traces the concept of autonomy, illustrating its exploitation by Israel to bolster its settler-colonial project. It critically evaluates autonomy theories, referencing historical and contemporary models, which led the author to the conclusion that these models are not suited for the Palestinian context. To address this gap, Jarbawi introduces the concept of “extraterritorial autonomy” to describe a unique form of self-governance, enforced and endorsed by a settler-colonial state beyond its internationally recognized borders. This term captures a specific kind of colonial administration superimposed upon a population not formally incorporated within the settler-colonial state’s citizenship and civil law domains. This governance strategy is characterized by efforts aimed at both the destruction and reconstruction of colonial spaces, with the ultimate goal of influencing and controlling the behavior of the colonized populace. The fundamentally violent character of extraterritorial autonomy, as a form of colonial governmentality, embodies the settler-colonial objective of eradication through alternative strategies, emphasizing its role in facilitating and perpetuating the settler-colonial agenda of dominance and control over the colonized.

He then provides a detailed historical analysis of how the idea of autonomy emerged and became a pivotal element in Israel’s strategy for dealing with the territories it occupied after 1967. This exploration, focused on the Palestinian situation but contextualized within the larger scope of Arab regional dynamics, offers key insights into the interplay between various actors and the autonomy project. In particular, the book elucidates that, notwithstanding the triumph Israel secured in the 1967 war, the conflict precipitated a significant quandary for the Zionist project due to its inability to expel the Palestinian population. Subsequently, the narrative shifts focus to the transformations within the Arab region, especially highlighting the transition in Egypt’s leadership from Gamal Abdel Nasser to Anwar Sadat. It critically examines the pivotal roles of Sadat and Israel’s then Prime Minister Menachem Begin in forging a new trajectory via the Israeli-Egyptian Camp David agreement. This agreement marked the first peace treaty between Israel and an Arab state, signifying a dramatic shift in the geopolitics of the Arab world. Crucially, Sadat positioned himself to negotiate on behalf of the Palestinians, during which Begin’s “autonomy plan” for the Palestinians was deliberated. This plan aimed to align with the Israeli vision while excluding the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO and the broader Palestinian national movement from the discussions.

Jarbawi then traces the trajectory of the self-rule project, examining the secret negotiations that unfolded during the 1990s and their ties to the Camp David Accords, against the backdrop of shifts within the Israeli government. He explores how the oscillating influence of right-wing and left-wing factions within Israel affected the course of these negotiations, alongside the evolving role of the PLO. Furthermore, Jarbawi scrutinizes the United States’ involvement, highlighting its support for Israel while positioning itself as a “mediator” in the negotiations. This analysis culminates in a comprehensive overview of the events and dynamics leading to the historic signing of the Oslo Accords, and by extension, the implementation of the Israeli envisioned autonomy model.

Jarbawi’s structured narrative serves as a vital groundwork for grasping the unfolding of events, incorporating crucial historical contexts and developments. Beyond a mere recount of history, the book imparts practical insights applicable to current and future contexts. Specifically, it lays the groundwork for a critical examination of the Palestinian Authority (PA). Given the internal divisions within the Palestinian national movement, the geographic and political isolation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and the ongoing expansion of settlements and annexation efforts, the PA has transitioned from a provisional solution to what appears to be a permanent establishment in the West Bank. This permanence, in turn, supports Israel’s

vision of a colonial autonomy for Palestinians, raising significant questions about the effectiveness and intentions of the PA in any long-term resolution of the Palestinian issue.

While the book offers a valuable account of the self-rule initiative, culminating in the creation of the PA post-Oslo Accords, it falls short in thoroughly analysing the outcomes and broader implications of this project. The book's omission of a detailed exploration into the PA's legitimacy crisis, its political failures, its security complicity, and the resulting impacts on Palestinian society and politics leaves a gap in understanding how the PA stands as a major obstacle to the broader struggle for Palestinian self-determination and liberation.

The book concludes that the Zionist project is one which is intended to erase Palestinian existence. It is not a party with any intention of negotiating a meaningful political settlement; rather, it is a settler colonial enterprise that has encountered no limits and no legal deterrent to its ongoing violations for over a century. Therefore, the book offers a warning and a lesson, namely, that those contemplating possible future solutions to this issue must hold fast to their "red lines", that is, their non-negotiable demands.