Hegemony - Counter Hegemony: A Gramscian Analysis of Israeli Settlement Activity

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Abstract: The settlements, a fact on the ground by today, have had considerable effects both on Palestinian life and on the peace process. Notably, in the quality of irreversible entities, they have emerged as obstacles before a two-state solution. This article is an attempt to analyze the settlement activity in the occupied territories through the Gramscian concept of hegemony. On the first hand, the study will apply the concept of hegemony to the Israeli settlement policy by demonstrating the changing political climate within the country and the ideological attitudes towards the occupied territories. By doing so, the study will seek to reveal how Israel's settlement activity has become hegemonic. It will also discuss whether Israeli policies vis-à-vis the Palestinians in the occupied territories, which culminated in the First Intifada in 1987, have created a counter-hegemonic alternative in a Gramscian sense.

Keywords: Jewish settlements, Hegemony, Counter-hegemony, Occupied territories, Likud, Gush Emunim.

Hegemonya – Karşı Hegemonya: İsrail'in Yerleşim Faaliyetlerinin Gramşiyan Bir Analizi

Öz: Bugün fiili gerçek haline gelen yerleşim birimlerinin hem Filistinlilerin hayatı hem de barış süreci üzerinde önemli etkileri olmaktadır. Özellikle de geri dönüşü olmayan unsurlar oldukları için iki devletli çözümün önünde de engel teşkil eder hale gelmişlerdir. Bu makale işgal altındaki topraklardaki yerleşim inşa faaliyetlerini Gramsci'nin hegemonya kavramı üzerinden analiz etmeye yönelik bir girişimdir. Çalışmada ilk önce hegemonya kavramı yeni yerleşimlerin inşasına yönelik faaliyetlere tatbik edilecektir. Bunu yaparken ülke içerisinde değişen siyasi atmosfer ve bununla beraber dönüşüme uğrayan, işgal altındaki topraklara karşı sergilenen ideolojik tavır sergilenmeye çalışılacaktır. Böylece İsrail'in yerleşim inşa faaliyetinin ne yönden hegemonik bir eylem olduğu ortaya konulacaktır. Ayrıca İsrail'in işgal altındaki topraklardaki Filistinlilere yönelik politikalarının sonucunda, 1987 yılında gerçekleşen birinci İntifadanın Gramşiyan anlamda bir karşı-hegemonik eylem olup olmadığı tartışılacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yahudi yerleşimleri, Hegemonya, Karşı-hegemonya, İşgal altındaki topraklar, Likud, Gush Emunim.

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Introduction

The Six Day War was a military victory for Israel against the armies of Egypt, Syria and Jordan. However, with this victory the Palestinian issue settled at the root of the Arab-Israeli conflict; at the end of this war Israel embarked on a new path of settlement and colonization of the occupied territories. It initiated a project of building settlements on the occupied territories which it had captured during the Six Day War. Since then, the occupied territories have been witnessing "cantonization" and the Palestinians, one of the indigenous peoples of the land, have been facing interminable discriminations. The future of the peace settlement is running into danger as the settlement activity continues unabated.

This article is an attempt to analyse the settlement activity in the occupied territories through the Gramscian concept of hegemony. To do so, the study will firstly apply the concept of hegemony to the Israeli settlement policy by demonstrating the changing political climate within the country and the ideological attitudes towards the occupied territories. Doing so, the study will seek to reveal how Israel's settlement activity has become hegemonic. The study will further examine whether the country's policies vis-à-vis the Palestinians in the occupied territories, which culminated in the First Intifada in 1987, have created a counter-hegemonic alternative in a Gramscian sense.

The concept of hegemony has its roots in the North–South dichotomy in Italy, where Gramsci analysed ethnically based relations of exploitation. In Gramscian understanding, a group/class seeking to rule should firstly build its hegemonic supremacy. Hegemony not only means supremacy among the social classes, but it is also about the specificity of politics, making politics and shaping the political scene.[1] Hegemony operates where a class that is economically and socially "organic" in Marxist terms, such as the bourgeoisie or the proletariat, hegemonically "leads" another class that is not fundamental, most obviously the peasantry, to revolutionary victory. Thus for Gramsci writing in 1926, "the principle and practice of the hegemony of the proletariat" was one and the same as "the fundamental relations of alliance based on consent between the workers and peasants."[2] Hegemony is not primarily a political phenomenon, a form of repression or domination, but a social one; more precisely, it is socio-political, whereby the political element derives from the social.

Hegemony is a process of relations that performs continuously. In other words, the consent in the hegemonic relation cannot be achieved or lost at one stroke. Likewise, the resistance displayed against the present hegemony cannot emerge out of nowhere or disappear in an instant. Therefore, the consent is not always perfect and the potential to resist is always present. As Stuart Hall has pointed out,

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[1] Baran Dural, "Antonio Gramsci's Concept of Hegomony," *Electronic Journal of Social Sciences* 11, no. 39 (2012): 311.

[2] Peter Ghosh, "Gramscian Hegemony: An Absolutely Historicist Approach," *History of European Ideas* 27, no.1 (2001): 2.

sovereign groups cannot envisage a total pacification of the society despite their willingness to prevent and restrain the opposition. For every sovereign order has to display enough sense toward its subordinates in order to survive.[3]

Gramsci analyses the two concepts in question through dichotomies and contradictions. Hence, he refers to counter-hegemony in order to understand fully the concept of hegemony. Besides, any theory of hegemony lacking these kind of contradictions would fail to explain the changes in hegemony. In the final analysis, it seems an ontological and methodological necessity to define counter-hegemony while dealing with hegemony.[4]

In Gramscian thinking, beside hegemony, the concept of historic bloc has an important place as well. Historic bloc signifies the organic integrity between infrastructure and superstructure, and it emanates from the social groups that display their activities at the super-structural level.[5] For an historic bloc to be established by a ruling class, the dominant common sense must be criticized and surpassed. For common sense is a key concept that explains the consent given to any hegemonic order. Gramsci defines common sense as the worldview that is popular in a given historical period and prevalent among the masses. Common sense puts forth that ordinary people are the basic subjects in the process of hegemonic construction and reproduction. Accordingly, for a philosophy aiming to become the essence of an ideological bloc, it is essential to constitute an organic integrity with the thoughts of ordinary people; only then the historic bloc may emerge. [6]

In the light of this Gramscian theoretical background, the present study argues that Likud's rise to power may be depicted as the emergence of an historic bloc in Israeli politics, and its political philosophy as a new hegemonic order. Likud's ideology and policy, as concretized in the settlements in the occupied territories, is considered as the means through which Likud established its hegemony. As the Gramscian thinking dictates that any hegemony creates its counter-hegemony, this study suggests that the First Intifada is a counter-hegemonic act against the decades of Israeli domination.

In this respect, the analysis will proceed in three steps. In the first section, I shall evaluate the settlement activity as the means of establishing Israeli hegemony over Palestinians. In the second section, Israel's settlement policy and ideology will be analysed to demonstrate the changing hegemonic order following Likud's rise to power. In this regard, the study will refers to the *Gush Emunim* movement as the watchdog of Likud hegemonic ideology in the Occupied Territories, and to the Separation Wall as the instrument of reproducing the hegemony. In the final section, I shall seek to clarify whether the settlement activity as an instrument of hegemony

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[3] İlhan Aksoy and Candaş Can, "Hegemony and Counter-Hegemonic Leaks: Essaying of A New Conceptualizing," *PESA International Journal of Social Studies 2,* no. 3 (2016): 71.

[4] Aksoy and Can, "Hegemony and Counter-Hegemonic Leaks," 69.

[5] Hugues Portelli, *Gramsci ve Tarihsel Blok*, trans. Kenan Somer (Ankara: Savaş Yayınları, 1982), 5-6.

[6] Aksoy and Can, "Hegemony and Counter-Hegemonic Leaks," 65-66.

has created a counter-hegemonic action –that is, the First Intifada– against the Israeli administration there.

The Settlements as Israeli Hegemony over the Occupied Territories

The Six Day War in 1967 left Israel in control of a number of areas: the Sinai Peninsula, West Bank, and the Golan Heights (see Map 1). This war constituted a turning point in history of Israel: while it was a military victory, it also opened a door to the new problems that Israel would be facing. The Six Day War was also important insofar as it marked the emergence of the ideological cleavages among the Israeli society. Whether Israel could settle in the territories it had come to occupy, or rather it would be illegal and turn Israel into a colonial state, started to be hotly debated.

Following the end of the war, Israel became an occupying power. The Levi Eskhol government did not have a master plan for the territories captured during the hostilities. The war's territorial aims were not defined before the war, but determined on the battlefield.[7]
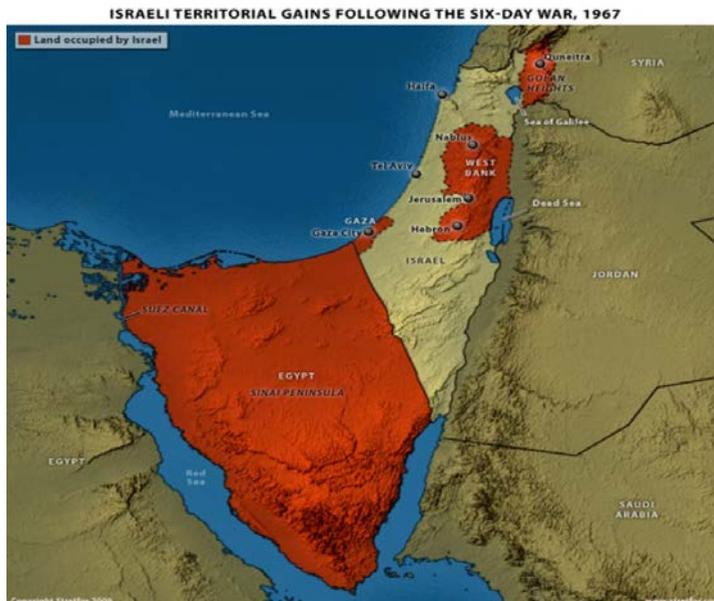
Map 1. (Source: Stratfor)

The occupation of West Bank alone brought an additional 5,878 sq. km under Israeli rule, along with its Palestinian population of nearly 600,000. After the occupation, the West Bank underwent considerable demographic changes, with

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[7] Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall* (London: Penguin Books, 2000), 250.

emigration abroad on the one hand, and immigration from the Gaza Strip on the other.

Israel now came to confront new problems on these captured territories, ranging from the issue of settlements to agriculture, construction and other domains. It was not possible to solve these problems without planning. Hence, the preoccupation with the problems led to a plan for reshaping the entire region in order to attain the best possible results. During the first years of occupation, the aim was to normalize the occupation. Israeli administration attempted to increase the productivity of the Palestinians in terms of economic utility; at the same time it sought to suppress the nationalistic drive and incite social fragmentation.[8] Apart from military administration, which included forms of collective punishment such as curfews, closures, house demolitions, and administrative detention, Israel developed mechanisms such as institutions, legislations, and bureaucratic means in order to produce new modes of behaviour, habits, interests, tastes, and aspirations —put differently, a new kind of Palestinian.

In a Gramscian sense, Israel's purpose was to create hegemony in the occupied territories insofar as hegemony is defined as the introduction of a new morality in conformity with a new conception of the world.[9] Hereby, Israel would be able to stabilize the Palestinian society and its structure around this hegemonic project. It should be pointed out that according to Gramsci, hegemony is political as well as economic: It is based on both economic activity and social relations of production. This study follows Laclau and Mouffe's conception of hegemony, according to which hegemony is not necessarily linked with class in contemporary societies and identity is provided solely through articulation within a hegemonic formation[10], as a special type of articulatory practice that occurs when social relations are antagonistic.[11]

It was in the weeks after the war that the first government initiative came, when some 160 Arab houses edging the Western Wall in Jerusalem were demolished. This act was followed by the expropriation of about 600 buildings in the Jewish Quarter so as to be rebuilt for Israelis.[12] The act was carried out according to a regulation that the occupied power (Israel) allowed itself to implement in the name of security concerns. However, coercive measures like this one, as well as controlling apparatuses and practices, were meant to preserve and consolidate the hegemony, to defend and develop the intellectual and moral leadership of a social group over

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[8] Neve Gordon, "Of Dowries and Brides: A Structural Analysis of Israel's Occupation," *New Political Science* 29, 4 (2007), 477.

[9] Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, eds. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1971), 366.

[10] Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 2001), 86.

[11] Dani Filc, "Populism as Counter-Hegemony: The Israeli Case," in *Gramsci and Global Politics: Hegemony and Resistance*, eds. Mark MacNally and John Schwarzmantel (London: Routledge, 2009), 120.

[12] Ann Mosely Lesch, "Israeli Settlements in the Occupied Territories, 1967-1977," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 7, no. 1 (1977): 29.

subordinated group.[13] Following Gramsci, as hegemony always triggers counter-hegemony, it might be argued that Israeli administration has helped to sow the spirit of resistance in the hearts and minds of the people who were under institutional control.

During Golda Meir's ruling period, occupied lands were seen as a bargaining chip so as to achieve peace and security. However, settlements were security assets for the Labour government, which though that their permanent existence had to be provided on account of security issues and defensible borders. As Yigal Allon mentioned during an interview:

> Settlements are, in my view, one of the greater levers in our political struggle over the demarcation of defensible borders within the framework of a peace treaty. I see in these settlements, if they are deep rooted and properly formed and organized, a great contribution to the security of the state, both regarding the day by day tactical aspect, as well as the task of a well-fortified territorial defence in the context of Israel's defensive deployment.[14]

This view of settlements as security assets changed following the victory of Likud in the 1977 elections. Likud's coming to power was a watershed for both Israeli politics and for the future of the occupied territories, including the settlement policy. As a popular bloc within Israel, Likud rose as a counter-hegemonic alternative against Labor, which constituted an historic bloc, thus a hegemony in Gramscian sense. Likud was composed of people (Mizrahim and the national religious right) who were marginalized and alienated by the Labor elite.[15] As a right wing, revisionist leader, Menahem Begin appealed to many Mizrahi Israelis, mostly first and second generation Jewish refugees from Arab countries, who felt they were treated by the establishment as second-class citizens. Thus, groups feeling discriminated against by the Ashkenazi elite gathered around Begin's Likud party and created a historic bloc against the political sphere dominated by the Labor since 1948. Known as *mahapakh* (upheaval), the 1977 elections proved to be watershed in Israel's political and social history. The founding socialist Ashkenazi elite were replaced by a coalition representing the marginalized Mizrahi and Jewish-religious communities. The Likud ideology that promoted a socially conservative and economically liberal agenda subsequently restructured the Israeli society. Gramsci thought that the historic bloc in Italy would comprise both workers and peasantry. According to him, the workers would create a hegemony over the peasants for the realization of their objectives, and together they would form the historic bloc. Accordingly, Likud created "a new ideological terrain and determined a reform of

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[13] Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 57.

[14] "Israeli Settlement Policy," *MERIP Reports,* 59 (August 1977), 19.

[15] For a detailed analysis of the situation of minorities within Israel see Oren Yiftachel, "Ethnocracy and Its Discontents: Minorities, Protests and the Israeli Policy," *Critical Inquiry* 26, no. 4 (2000): 725-756.

consciousness and methods of knowledge[16] for the realization of its hegemonic apparatus, both within Israel and in the occupied territories.

By using the signifiers "the people," "the poor" and "the excluded," Menahem Begin re-signified the alienated sections of the Israeli society, and also linked religious belief to the view of Jewish people as an organic cultural unity.[17] The important point here is that Likud government also privileged the Jews as an ethnically and culturally homogenous entity vis-à-vis the Palestinians. So, during its term, as a result of these policies concerning the occupied territories, Likud created its counter hegemonic alternative, its subaltern group. This latter did not accept its rule and mobilized as a populist movement against the occupation in 1987, known as the First Palestinian Intifada. Yet, as Gramscian theory suggests, hegemony reveals the discrepancy between the dominant and the dominated sides, and thus provides the emergence of a counter-hegemonic alternative.

The foreign policy of Likud was ideological, while that of the former government's (Labour Alignment) was pragmatic. Likud's ideology was composed of two words: Greater Israel. According to this ideology, Judea and Samaria, being the biblical terms of the West Bank, were the part of Eretz Israel. The integrity of land was an article of faith in Likud's political credo.[18] Thus, a new kind of Zionism emerged with the support of Likud, which was committed to the territorial ideology of Greater Israel. This ideology used nationalist and religious justifications to exercise Jewish rights in their historic homeland.[19] The Foreign Minister of the Likud government, Moshe Dayan, promoted the ideology of the Likud as follows:

> It is also important for ourselves to emphasize that we are not foreigners in the West Bank. Judea and Samaria is Israel and we are not there as foreign conquerors but as returners to Zion. An Israeli citizen shouldn't have to request a visa from Mayor Jabari to visit Hebron.[20]

The new Likud ideology was based on building more settlements in the West Bank so as to realize the Greater Israel ideology. From 1977, Israel began to build settlements in between Palestinian population centres. The aim was to change the West Bank's demographic balance by transplanting Israeli Jews from the overpopulated coastal zones.[21] On the other hand, during Begin's era there was growing international recognition of the PLO as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. The project of autonomy for the West Bank and Gaza, adopted in Camp David in September 1978, threatened the prospect of Israel's control over these

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[16] Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 365.

[17] Filc, "Populism as Counter-Hegemony: the Israeli Case," in *Gramsci and Global Politics: Hegemony and Resistance*, 128.

[18] Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, 352.

[19] Elisha Efrat, *The West Bank and Gaza Strip, A Geography of Occupation and Disengagement* (London: Routledge, 2006), 29.

[20] "Israeli Settlement Policy," *MERIP Reports*, 20.

[21] Peter Dermant, "Israeli Settlement Policy Today," *MERIP Reports* 116 (July-August 1983), 3.

territories. This formulation of autonomy could only be solved by transforming the reality by a large-scale Jewish influx.

As Minister of Agriculture and Settlements, Ariel Sharon adopted a plan which is known as "Sharon Plan." Its aim was to build a belt of settlements on the western highlands. Hence, the Israeli border would move to the Palestinian populated areas. It would also divide the West Bank into two smaller areas, so that the Palestinians would be enclosed from all sides by these colonies. In order to annex the belts in question, Sharon planned the construction of lateral roadways. All these activities would eliminate any chance to return to the 1967 borders. In the five years after Camp David Accords, Israeli government hastened to create facts on the ground so that it would be alw e to raise claims of sovereignty over West Bank by the end of the negotiation period, when the final status of the West Bank would be decided.[22]

Likud as the Historic Bloc: Its Settlement Ideology and Policy

It might be argued that the purpose of the Israeli settlement policy is to prevent the territory from coming under Arab rule. This is obvious from the fears among the Palestinian residents that the land will be alienated permanently and they will be forced to leave the territories.[23] Israeli claim of sovereignty, especially over West Bank, is also based on the religious justification that Jewish people have the right of return to the Land of Israel, which is eternal and which belonged to them even 2000 years ago.

According to some scholars, the Israeli occupation of the last 50 years has become an apartheid-style regime today. The elements of apartheid are inequality, separation, dependency, control, violation of human rights, exclusivity etc. All of these are indeed visible in the occupied territories of Palestine. Physical occupation of territory provides Israel with the opportunity to control every aspect of Palestinian life. Besides, it is argued that what Israel has done in the occupied territories until today was part of a colonization project comprising four determinants of the Israeli policy: demography, security, economic activities, and water resources.[24]

The biblical and nationalistic aims of the Israeli settlement policy were based on grounds of security. It can be argued that security has been the most useful pretext for territorial expansion and construction of more settlements, even though settlements play no rol in securing the Israeli state. The pretext of security is mean to legitimize Israeli political, military and economic controls. Israel insists on a demilitarized Palestinian state whose air space will be controlled by itself. It also seeks to control the Palestinian labour and commercial activity for security reasons. In fact, all these policies are meant to discriminate against the Palestinians and to

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[22] Ibrahim Matar, "Israeli Settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 11, no. 1 (1981): 99

[23] Lesch, "Israeli Settlements in the Occupied Territories, 1967-1977," 27-28.

[24] See A. Abu Ayyash, "Israeli Planning Policy in the Occupied Territory," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 11, no. 1 (1981): 111-123.

restrict Palestinian development, rather than to consolidate the security. From the perspective of core-periphery relations; it can be noted that the economic relationship between Israel and the occupied territories is similar to the relation between the more and less developed areas of the world. According to Van Arkadie, "the economic relationship between Israel and the West Bank shares some characteristics with economic linkages developed between rich and poor regions."[25] Hence, Israeli economic policy is based on the extraction of maximum benefits from these territories.

Another pillar of the settlement policy after 1967 is the control of the water resources in the West Bank. Hayim Gvirtzman, a lecturer at Hebrew University, argues that Israeli state policy is to establish unconditional sovereignty over water resources. As a matter of fact, the settlement map is overlapping with the map of the water resources. Therefore, Israelis are able to use 500 of the 600 million cubic meters of water extracted per year. This enables them to save 1 billion dollars and compensates for one –third of Israeli water consumption.[26]

Israel also created facts on the ground through land expropriation and settlements. According to B'Tselem, today nearly 500,000 settlers (186,646 in neighbourhoods in East Jerusalem and 311,431 in the rest of the West Bank) live in 137 settlements in the West Bank and at 12 large settlements in East Jerusalem.[27] In the recent years, settlement policy is marked by building small blocs of some 50,000 people. These blocs (Givat Ze'ev, Pisgat Ze'ev, Ma'ale Adumim, Ariel, Efrat, Etzion, Beitar Illit) control strategic corridors of the West Bank and prevent Palestinian territorial adjacency (see Map 2).
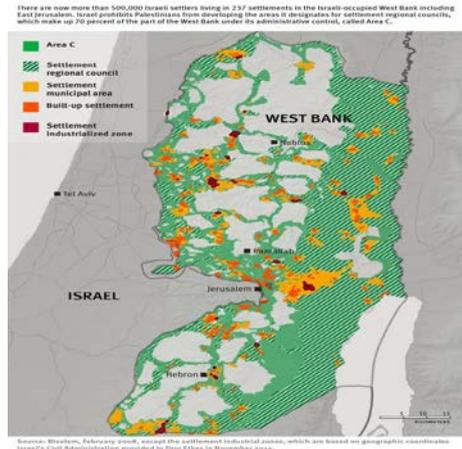
Map 2. (Source: B'tselem)

[25] Brian Van Arkadie, "The Impact of the Israeli Occupation on the Economies of the West Bank and Gaza," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 6 (1977): 105.

[26] Marwan Bishara, *Filistin/İsrail- Barış veya Irkçılık*, trans. Ali Berktay (İstanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2003), 107.

[27] B'Tselem, "Land Expropriation and Statistics," http://www.btselem.org/settlements/statistics.

Areas A, B, C in the West Bank and H-1 and H-2 in Hebron threaten freedom of movement between these four disconnected Palestinian areas: the northern West Bank, the southern West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza.[28] These blocs and settlements are linked by a system of bypass roads which may be used only by Israeli settlers. Israel started constructing these roads and highways during the Oslo peace process. These roads separate Palestinian areas and practically annex their settlements one after another. Roads are permanent structures, and ideal as a mechanism of control. Through the roads, Israel will eventually be able to establish unconditional control over all the West Bank, even after the possible foundation of a Palestinian state. During the Camp David talks and the following Taba talks (2001), Prime Minister Ehud Barak made Yasser Arafat an offer that would leave 93% of the West Bank, considerable parts of East Jerusalem, and all of Gaza to the Palestinians. In return, the Palestinian side proposed 97% of the West Bank. However, even if these offers had been accepted, the creation of a sovereign and viable Palestinian state would still have remained a dream because of Israel's control over the West Bank, established though its roads and settlements that have become permanent.

Gush Emunim as the Watchdog of Likud's Hegemonic Ideology

The first Jewish settlement in Palestine was initiated by groups coming from Romania in the 1880s. The immigrants of the first Aliyah settled in the coastal plain of Palestine and constructed farming colonies. The second and third Aliyah were composed of Russians who would later constitute a proletariat motivated by Zionist and socialist ideologies. As a result of class conflicts, Kibbutzim (collective settlements) and Moshavim (cooperative settlements) were constituted as separate organisms working for the same purpose.

With the conquest of the West Bank during the Six Day War, a new wave of settlement activity came into being. The settlement activity after the capture of the West Bank was based on ancient myths about Biblical prophecies, to the effect that the Jews would reconstruct their state on the territories that had belonged to them 2000 years ago. Thus, with the support of Likud, a new kind of Zionism emerged, one that was committed to the territorial ideology of Greater Israel. This ideology used nationalist and religious justifications to exercise Jewish rights in their historic homeland.[29] The new settlers were highly motivated insofar as the region they settled was densely populated by "strangers," precisely speaking, Palestinians.

Since the end of the 1970s, some of the settlers in the occupied territories have appeared as partisans of extremism and been involved in certain incidents against the Palestinians in the occupied territories. The murder of twenty-nine Palestinians in

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[28] Jeff Halper, "The 94 Percent Solution: A Matrix of Control," *Middle East Report* 216 (Autumn 2000), 15.

[29] Efrat, *The West Bank and Gaza Strip,* 29.

the Cave of Patriarchs by Baruch Goldstein, a settler from Hebron, was an example of how the tension in the occupied territories had increased day by day.[30]

Today, there are various religious and non-religious communities in the West Bank, with different reasons for living in the West Bank. A settler movement that should be mentioned in this context is the *Gush Emunim*, Bloc of the Believers. This movement was established in 1974, after the traumatic 1973 war. The Gush Emunim's approach to the occupied territories is messianic. They believe in the sanctity of the Land of Israel, and their ideology suggests that the settlement activity helps them to contribute to the coming salvation of the Jewish people and Israel.[31]

Gush Emunim gained the support of the Likud government because the hegemony over the Palestinian population could only be maintained by the aid of a civilian movement and a civilian settlement process. Gush Emunim has emerged from the National Religious Party's Beni Akiva youth movement. It is inspired by Rabbi Tzvi Kook's views, which are extremist and concentrate on the assumed right of the Jewish people to sovereignty over the entire land of Israel.[32] The aims of Gush Emunim are twofold: colonization of the occupied territories by building settlements, and supplanting Palestinians.

The first activities of Gush Eminum were to revive the Etzion bloc occupied by the Jordanian Legion during the 1948-49 war and to re-establish Jewish existence in Hebron, the place where Jews had lived for centuries. In 1976 there were 220 Gush Eminum settlers in the territories, and the movement was expected to increase the number of settlements in the occupied territory insofar as it enjoyed the government's support. During the Likud's first two years, the movement established many settlements and increased the percentage of the Jews in West Bank. Thus it helped the government's policy of breaking up the territorial contiguity of Palestinie.

The most ambitious plan of the Gush Emunim was supported by the World Zionist Organization. In 1978, the organization published the "Master Plan for the Development of Settlement in Judea and Samaria." The report referred to the Palestinians as minorities, despite the fact that Palestinians made up the overwhelming majority of the population in West Bank.[33] Its aims were twofold: to settle 100,000 Jews between 1982 and 1987, and to increase their numbers to a half million by the year 2010. According to the plan, urban settlements would be established in the vicinity of the Green Line. They would not rely on a determined core of settlers with primarily ideological motivations , but rather offer Israeli residents a high standard of housing at a low cost.[34] However, it was overlooked that in parallel to the Israeli population, the Palestinian population would increase as

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[30] For an interpretation of this incident see Israel Shahak and Norton Mevzinsky, *İsrail'de Yahudi Fundementalizmi* [Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel], trans. Ahmet Emin Dağ (İstanbul: Anka Yayınları, 2004), 181-203.

[31] Shahak and Mevzinsky, *Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel,* 163.

[32] Don Will, "Ideology and Strategy of the Settlements Movement", *MERIP Reports* 92 (November-December 1980), 10.

[33] Will, "Ideology and Strategy," 11.

[34] Efrat, *The West Bank and Gaza Strip,* 33.

well. Today, the number of Palestinians in the occupied territories (West Bank) is 3 million according to the data given by Palestinian Bureau of Statistics for the year 2017.[35]

Although it is hard to say that Gush Emunim conceived the idea of establishing full Jewish existence in the occupied territories, they have contributed alongside government policies to the fragmentation of rural Palestinian village blocs into dozens of sections. Consequently, it is very difficult now to piece them together in order to provide a basis for Palestinian sovereignty.

Apart from the religious Zionists of Gush Emunim, there are also Ultra-Orthodox (Haredi) and secular communities of settlers in the occupied territories. However, secular communities are not involved in violent actions like the members of Gush Emunim. Unlike the latter, secular groups settle in the occupied territories for the sake of cheap housing rather than out of ideological reasons.

Hegemony by Other Means: Separation Wall

In June 2002, the Israeli government decided to build a physical barrier separating Israel and the West Bank in order to prevent the uncontrolled entry of Palestinians into Israel and avert the suicide bombing attacks that had intensified during the Second Intifada following the collapse of the Oslo Process in 2000. In most areas, the barrier comprises an electronic fence with dirt paths, barbed-wire fences, and trenches on both sides, with an average width of 60 meters. In some areas, a wall six to eight meters high has been erected instead of the barrier system.

It was Yitzhak Rabin who first suggested creating a physical barrier between the Palestinians and Israelis after the murder of an Israeli girl in Jerusalem in 1992. In 2000 Ehud Barak began to implement his idea of building a barrier to block the way of motor vehicles at the northern end of the West Bank. After the outbreak of the Second Intifada, his successor Ariel Sharon found himself under domestic pressure to end Palestinian suicide bombings. He asked the National Security Director to formulate measures that would be able to prevent Palestinians from infiltrating into Israel. Eventually, the recommendation was to build a permanent along the length of the border. In 2002 the construction of the wall proper was initiated.

The decision to construct a wall between the two populations was based on security concerns. The Israeli state aimed to end the ongoing attacks and suicide bombings with this wall. The most important reason behind the decision was the wide popular demand coming from the Israeli public, who wanted to pursue a normal life without facing suicide attacks and continuous warfare. The Israeli authorities asserted once again that they were acting for security reasons. They also claimed that the Second Intifada was hurting the Israeli economy and widening the fractures in the Israeli society.[36]

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[35] "The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics," http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/site/881/default.aspx.

[36] Graham Usher, "Unmaking Palestine: On Israel, the Palestinians and the Wall," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 35, no. 1 (2005): 33.

In the short term, Israel's expectations were fulfilled: The wall decreased the infiltration of Palestinians into Israel. In long term, however, in light of the restrictions on entry to Israel, the isolation of the Palestinians outside the wall, and the ongoing settlement activity, the rationale of the wall turned out to be different: to create the conditions that would induce the Palestinians to abandon their homes voluntarily and and move to the large Palestinian cities.[37]

The first route of the wall was approved in 2003. According to this plan, the wall would annex 16 % of West Bank. In 2003, the wall became consistent with the master plan that Sharon had prepared in 1978, concentrating Palestinians into three disconnected enclaves: Jenin and Ramallah, Bethlehem, and Hebron and Gaza. The decision made in February 2005 to extend the separation wall from the centre of the country to the Judean desert was the most important one of Ariel Sharon. This step would amount to Sharon's true legacy in shaping the country's borders.[38] The new route of the wall would constitute Israel's eastern border, which would separate the future Palestinian state from Israel. Besides, this new route would annex 7-8 % of West Bank with the settlement blocs along it (see Map 3). Despite the fact that the purpose of the wall was declared to be linked with the security concerns of Israel, it gradually become the symbol of the country. With the public support behind it, the Israeli governments continue to plan new routes for building the wall, notwithstanding the fact that the wall was said to be temporary. Today the common consensus is that it has become permanent. The "bantustanization" of the Palestinian territory, the fragmentation of the Palestinian society, and the on-going settlement expansion, threaten the idea of a two-state solution. The wall affects the livelihoods of thousands of Palestinians, separates them from their properties, families or friends, restricts their freedom of movement, and prevents their access to hospitals and schools.

In a 2005 report, the UN stated the following regarding the impact of the wall on the Palestinian life:

> It is difficult to overstate the humanitarian impact of the Barrier. The route inside the West Bank severs communities, people's access to services, livelihoods and religious and cultural amenities. In addition, plans for the Barrier's exact route and crossing points through it are often not fully revealed until days before construction commences. This has led to considerable anxiety amongst Palestinians about how their future lives will be impacted... The land between the Barrier and the Green Line constitutes some of the most fertile in the West Bank. It is currently the home for 49,400 West Bank Palestinians living in 38 villages and towns.[39]

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[37] Usher, "Unmaking Palestine," 35.
[38] Efrat, *The West Bank and Gaza Strip*, 118.
[39] "The Humanitarian Impact of the West Bank Barrier on Palestinian Communities," United Nations (March 2005).

It might be argued that the wall's construction has the same result as the settlements: the displacement of Palestinians from their land. For Palestinians, the wall represents the continuation of the Naqba, whereby they had been forced to leave their lands in 1948. The Palestinian town of Qalqilyah with a population of nearly 43,000 has been encircled by the wall. The aim is to ensure that the settlers can travel along the bypass roads in the area and facilitate the expansion of the settlements there. According to a UN report, approximately 6,000 Palestinians have left Qalqilyah.[40]
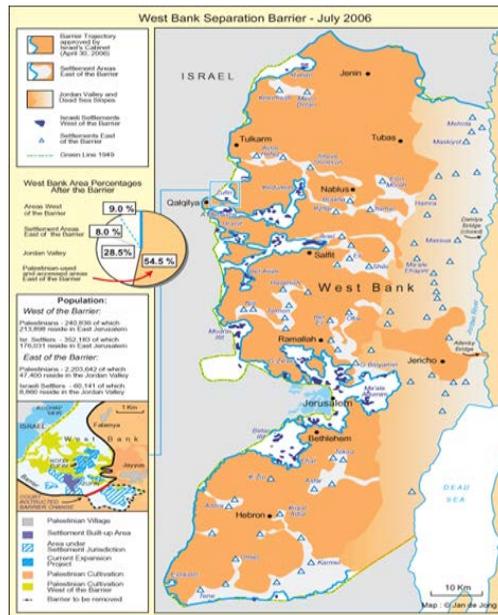
Map 3. (Source: FMEP)

One should also consider the psychological costs that Palestinians in the occupied territories have had to suffer. They have witnessed and still witness the expansion of the settlements, the demolition of their homes, and the construction of a separation wall, as well as death, torture, humiliation, restrictions and long hours of waiting at the checkpoints. All these feed frustration and anger among the Palestinians. In Baruch Kimmerling's definition, the policy that the Israeli state adopts toward Palestinian people is "politicide": "the dissolution of the Palestinian people's existence as a legitimate, social, political and economic entity."[41] In other words, "politicide" means marginalization. Israel has the right to defend itself and the duty to protect its citizens from attacks, but not by any means. Building a separation wall

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[40] Stephanie Koury, "Why This Wall?" in *Against the Wall*, ed. Michael Sorkin (London: The New Pres, 2005), 50.

[41] Baruch Kimmerling, *Politicide: Ariel Sharaon's War against Palestinians* (London: Verso, 2003), 3.

to prevent the Palestinian attacks has proved the most extreme solution conceivable, harming both the local population and the feasibility of possible peace agreements in the future.

First Intifada: A Counter-Hegemonic Act?

The rise to power of Likud, with its uncompromising ideology of Greater Israel that advocates the possession of all the Palestinian territories by the Jewish state, resulted in the isolation of Palestinians. There were also efforts by Likud to incorporate the occupied territories into Israel proper by increasing the construction of the settlements. Throughout the 1980s, the policy of the governments under Likud was to annex the occupied territories by isolating the Palestinians and by taking precautions that would help compel them to accept the Israeli policy of annexation.[42]

The Israeli administration strengthened its control by issuing identity cards, documents, checkpoints or permits for travel, building, economic activity, working etc. Following the occupation, much labor was exported to Israel. From the Israeli perspective, this meant cheap labor force and job opportunities for the Palestinians who suffered poverty. The price for Palestinians, however, was economic dependence on Israel. Even though the Palestinian economy benefited, it was at the expense of freedom, human rights and dignity.[43] The occupation had other effects as well on Palestinian life. Aside from the bureaucratic obstacles that had to be overcome, Israel also resorted to the institutional use of violence against Palestinians.

An example was "administrative detention." It was possible for instance to be taken under arrest by Israeli forces due to the doubt of political activity. There were also various sorts of collective punishment: curfews, demolitions of houses, closure of schools, restrictions on family unification, confiscations of private land, prohibitions of organized activities and restrictions on movement, these last being enforced through checkpoints.[44] Curfews were imposed on the whole citizens of a village or city on the grounds of military or security needs. Because of the curfews, the population was prevented from going to schools, offices or hospitals and confined to their houses without water or sanitation. Checkpoints constituted another form of collective punishment. At the checkpoints, food went bad, patients died, and children were prevented from reaching their schools. Palestinian economy was also strangled by the checkpoints and roadblocks.[45]   Finally, Israel's house demolition policy was also seen as a punitive action against the Palestinians in the occupied territories. Israel considered this policy as a punitive measure against the actual or suspected crimes of detained or convicted Palestinians. In particular, the

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[42] William L. Cleveland, *Modern Ortadoğu Tarihi*, trans. Mehmet Armancı (İstanbul: Agora Kitaplığı, 2008), 520.

[43] Anthony Oberschall, *Conflict and Peace Building in Divided Socities: Responses to Ethnic Violence* (London: Routledge, 2007), 56.

[44] Jonathan Cook, *Disappearing Palestine: Israel's Experiments in Human Despair* (London, Zed Books, 2008), 65.

[45] Cook, *Disappearing Palestine*, 170.

houses of persons who had carried out suicide bombings within Israel or against Israeli settlers or soldiers were always demolished in the aftermath of such attacks.[46] There were deportations as well. It was a cheap and effective policy, leaving no middle ground between resigned acceptance of Israeli rule and total opposition with armed resistance.[47]

Israel's efforts to deepen its presence in the occupied territories also had a negative impact upon the Palestinians. Apart from the immediate settlement activities, Israel took control of large amounts of land, mainly for military purposes, but in some cases also with the projected settlements in mind.[48] It took control of the water resources as well. Although the declared aim in this was to meet the needs of Israeli settlements, it has been argued that the diversion of water was a deliberate attempt to make farming difficult for the Palestinians and encourage them to sell their lands.[49] Beside water resources, Israel also sought to control communication, economic activity and transportation in order to undermine the territories' legal status as occupied lands and thus to make its own presence permanent and irreversible.

As the settlement activity continued unabated, the violent confrontations between Israelis and Palestinians became common in the occupied territories. For example, in spring 1987, there occurred a spiral of violence that began when a petrol bomb was thrown at an Israeli vehicle in Qalqilya, resulting in the death of a Jewish woman. In response the settlers carried out a rampage through the town, breaking windows and uprooting trees.[50] Many observers saw signs of rising Palestinian unrest due to the policies of the Israeli occupying authorities as well as to the vigilante actions of the well-armed Jewish settlers.[51] The West Bank witnessed numerous clashes between Palestinians and Israeli soldiers or settlers until the break out of the First Intifada. As the anger deepened and tensions rose, Palestinians began to resort to increasing violence. This anger was a result of Israel's presence in the occupied territories and its efforts to change the demographic and political conditions in the occupied territories. The growing isolation of the Palestinians resulted in a new consciousness and solidarity that eventually turned into Palestinian nationalism. In order to suppress the growing opposition to the occupation, Israel introduced a policy of "iron fist" that included various forms of collective punishment. For the first time since the independence, this policy broke up the general Zionist consensus regarding

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[46] Shane Darcy, "Israel's Punitive House Demolition Policy: Collective Punishment in Violation of International Law," Report of *Al-Haq*, West Bank affiliate of the International Commission of Jurists (2003), 5.

[47] David Hirst, *The Gun and The Olive Branch: The Roots of Violence in the Middle East* (New York: Thunder's Mount Press, 2003), 377.

[48] Mark Tessler, *A History of the Israeli Palestinian Conflict* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 521.

[49] Tessler, *Israeli Palestinian Conflict*, 521

[50] Tessler, *Israeli Palestinian Conflict*, 670

[51] Arthur Goldschmidt Jr. and Lawrence Davidson, *A Concise History of the Middle East* (Colorado, Westview Pres, 2006), 407.

not only the utility and morality of violent means, but also its harmony with the national goals.[52]

From 1985 onwards, the cumulative effects of the policies of Israel and the pressure that Palestinians faced in many aspects of their daily lives led the Palestinian people to search for new ways to resist the occupation. They either joined the militant extremist groups that sought to end Israel's existence, or staged strikes and demonstrations in order to draw the world's attention to their issues and discourage Israel from settling in the occupied territories. One Palestinian academic explained the cumulative effects of the policies of the Israeli government (then Likud) as follows: "The denial of natural rights and more harsh treatment eventually caused awareness that we were occupied. Everyone felt threatened. Your national existence was targeted. This realization finally sunk into the consciousness of Palestinians, so the occupation was resisted."[53]

Consequently, in December 1987, spontaneous and widespread demonstrations erupted in the occupied territories, following the death of four Palestinians in an accident involving an Israeli military vehicle. As the movement accelerated, it spread into all sections of the Palestinian society and led to the emergence of a broader leadership structure known as the *Unified National Leadership of the Uprising (UNLU)*. The establishment of such a body proved that the Palestinian common sense had changed in a way that could evolve into a historic bloc and that the Palestinians did not consent to but resisted Israeli hegemony. Israel's determination to suppress the uprising by introducing harsh methods of collective punishment exacerbated the situation and increased the participation in the uprising. From 1987 until the end of 1990, the occupied territories witnessed violence and terrorism. The clashes between Palestinians and Israeli soldiers engendered a spiral of violence which would cause the deaths of 1025 Palestinians and 56 Israelis.

Conclusion

It might be argued that Israel has created in the occupied territories a regime of separation based on discrimination. It has deepened its presence in the occupied territories both by coercive measures and by means of control in a Gramscian sense. However, this hegemonic project has paved the way for the creation of its counter-hegemonic alternative, which is still in the making.

From those occupied territories Israel has taken hundreds of thousands of acres of land in order to build settlements in the West Bank and to populate them with Israeli Jews in order to create a permanent fact on the ground. According to some authors, Israeli settlement policy is reminiscent of the restrictions that were once imposed upon the Jews in Europe. As a result of the Israeli settlement policies,

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[52] Scott Atran, "Stones Against the Iron Fist, Terror within the Nation: Alternating Structures of Violence and Cultural Identity in the Israeli Palestinian Conflict," *Politics & Society* 18, no. 4 (1990): 481-526.

[53] Quoted by Cleveland, *Modern Ortadoğu Tarihi*, 521.

Palestinians are losing control of their destiny; they are being deprived of their properties and culture. If the essence of colonialism is the imposition of alien rule upon an indigenous population, Israel's position in the West Bank and in East Jerusalem will have to be reconsidered. Neither the wall nor the on-going expansion of the settlements is able to bring about a settlement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In contrast, they are opening deep rifts between Israel and the peace. Today especially, the continued expansion of the settlements and the construction of the separation wall pose one of the greatest challenges to the two-state solution. The decades of settlement activity have produced the geography of a single state.[54] On the other hand, no politician in Israel could attempt to evacuate the settlements in the West Bank for the sake of a peace with Palestinians, since doing so may trigger civil war in Israel. Separation wall is another challenge to the two-state solution. Although it is sometimes argued that the separation barrier has created a *de-facto* two-state solution, it is probably less likely to lead to a Palestinian state than an apartheid-era South African reality.

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[54] For a detailed analysis of the "single state debate" see Tuğçe Ersoy, "Single State in Palestine: Constitutional Patriotism as a Conceptual Framework," *Bulletin of Palestine Studies*, no. 1 (2018): 36-60.

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