

Palestine

A Protracted Peacebuilding Process

Emile Badarin

■ **ABSTRACT:** This article explores the theoretical bases of the Israel-Palestine peace process to see how that impacts peacebuilding and everyday life in Palestine. It begins by examining the lens through which classical and contemporary realist and liberal thought approaches peace, nonpeace, war, and peacebuilding. Second, it examines how knowledge production on peacebuilding has been applied in the Israel-Palestine peace process based on selected confidential documents from the negotiations' record that was made available in the so-called Palestine Papers published by the Al Jazeera Transparency Unit in 2011. My analysis of this source reveals how an embedded security and market metaphor regulated the Israel-Palestine peace negotiations. I argue that in an ambiguous context of decades-long negotiations, the results are in effect a "buyout" in which security is understood in exclusionary terms by the powerful side.

■ **KEYWORDS:** Israel, Oslo peace process, orthodox peace, Palestine, Palestine Papers, peacebuilding

For the past 20 years, at least, Israelis, Palestinians, and peace sponsors have been implicated in a seemingly endless peacebuilding project—best known as the Middle East or the Israel-Palestine peace process. Indeed, much of the abundant literature available on this process dwells on the details of diplomatic communications without relating them to the metatheoretical principles that underpin perceptible actions. This article attempts to examine the relation between peacebuilding theory and its empirical application in the context of the Israel-Palestine conflict. The so-called Palestine Papers, which are a large collection of confidential documents from the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations' record published by Al Jazeera (a Doha-based media network) in January 2011, have provided an exceptionally revealing lens onto the actual discourse of the peace process as diplomats have understood and enacted that process (between 2000 and 2010). This source will therefore be examined thoroughly after scrutinizing the realist-liberal paradigm of peacebuilding.

In this article, I argue that the Israel-Palestine peace process is authored according to the realist-liberal conceptions of conflict resolution between sovereign entities and democratization. This process is predominantly articulated in expressions of security, and through business and market activities that obscure alternatives and alienate issues of social justice, equality, and human rights. As a result, land was spatially and demographically problematized in a way that made peace in Palestine a remote possibility. By and large, contemporary knowledge production on peace and peacemaking is ontologically dependent on the existence of authorities (sover-



eighties, states), while power operations, derived from the supposedly rational security representations, frame the epistemology of peacebuilding.

Methodologically, I consider discourse as a space for the signification and construction of meaningful acts. Although no single definition suffices to explain the complex concept of discourse, for the purpose of this article, it is useful to think of discourse as systems of thoughts, representations, articulations, dispositions, and performative practices that construct social realities and meaning. This system is always governed and regulated by a set of discursive rules (Foucault 1970, 2002; Howarth and Torfing 2005; Laclau and Mouffe 2001). I suggest two analytical tools to examine the empirical case. The first is a process of juxtaposition whereby specific concepts and representations are usually stated in conjunction and paired together. The technique of juxtaposing concepts, articulations, and actions that belong to a particular discourse is usually used to create comparisons, highlighting similarities and differences. The poststructuralist approach uses this method, as employed by David Campbell (1992: 197–198, 224), to politicize a particular political discourse and demonstrate the possibility of constructing competing narratives by using the same discursive terms; this in turn challenges and problematizes predominant interpretations of events. The second tool focuses on linking mechanisms that are used to connect particular realist and liberal principles. The realist-liberal interpretation of peace is written in warfare terminologies and metaphors. Peace is circularly framed as the absence of war and violence and represented in two ways. Peace is *juxtaposed* with war, violence, and security, and *linked* to particular liberal concepts such as democracy, freedom, capitalism, and the free market. This contingent interpretation shapes a contemporary social reality of peace in academic and policy-making discourse, and in effect, it orients the Israel-Palestine peace process, as will be demonstrated in the empirical analysis.

This article is divided into three sections. The first section explores the theoretical basis of peacebuilding in classical and contemporary key literature underpinning the main principles of peacebuilding missions. It further examines how these theoretical bases bear on the discipline of peace studies and actual diplomatic efforts in the name of peace. The second section builds on this discussion in order to provide an outline of an analytical framework. In the third section, the empirical case of the Israel-Palestine peace process is analyzed based on, but not limited to, selected primary resources from the negotiation record to reveal the assumption on which that process is founded, and how it was conceived and operationalized. This analysis will unfold in four stages. First, the peace process is situated in the context of the Israeli and Palestinian divergent narratives. Second, the decisive role of the United States in the process is examined. The third and fourth stages investigate impacts of the latent market metaphor and peace-security nexus in the negotiation discourses.

Theoretical Knowledge Production on Peace and Peacebuilding

Thomas Hobbes's seminal thesis, *Leviathan*, is a source of anchoring and guidance for much of realist and liberal political theory explaining peace and war. Hobbes ([1651] 1998) argues that the state of nature generates disorder and insecurity. In the same vein, Machiavelli ([1532] 2003) tells us in *The Prince* that *Fortuna* (uncontrolled power of nature) is the origin of political disorder and the ultimate threat to peace and security. From this premise it follows that the prince must apply his uncompromising power to control *Fortuna*. In that respect, *Leviathan's* main concern is how to govern the state of nature or *Fortuna* that supposedly inclines humans into conflict and disorder. Because peace occurs due to “fear of death; desire of such things as are necessary to commodious living,” a calculated political setup (“convenient articles of

peace”) must be created, and rational people (“men”) would have to accept and live by its rules, Hobbes argues (1998: 86). The aim is therefore to regulate destructive and irrational forces within the state of nature through rational and scientific methods. Hobbes also suggests that individuals are essentially rational actors whose behavior is driven by mechanical and calculated order. This makes human behavior predictable, controllable, and amenable to “scientific” interventions (7).

In this framework, peace unfolds as a derivative condition. Contingency and *Fortuna* are the enemies of peace. To overcome *Fortuna*, Hobbes contends, central authority must be erected and organized according to scientific (“art”) principles in the form of a worldly (“artificial”) sovereign with a vested authority and power to establish the treaties that would govern citizens’ behavior. This logic is deep-rooted in contemporary realist-liberal peacebuilding theory, and the establishment of central authority and state institutions has been its mainstay. From the realist’s lens, an overarching authoritative state apparatus enables the state to ensure internal peace within its territorial boundaries. However, such a structure is lacking globally, and therefore anarchy prevails. In an anarchic world order, relative peace between states can only be attained by either maximization (Mearsheimer 1994), or balance (Waltz 1979), of power. Consequently, there can be no peace in the absence of the state (central authority). Hannah Arendt took the idea of “statehood” further and equated it with the concept of rights, asserting that statelessness infringes on human rights. Satisfying one’s human rights is contingent upon belonging to a political community and holding citizenship in a state. For Arendt (1973: 267–302; 1994), there is a vital link between the state and human rights; breaking that link would, in consequence, deprive humans of their fundamental right to belong and be affiliated with a state.

Although liberal thought endorses core principles of realism (self-interest, power maximization, anarchy, rationalism, state authority), it takes a positive view of the state of nature and asserts that self-interest and rationalism incline people to peaceful cooperation even under conditions of anarchy. Immanuel Kant ([1795] 2005) provided the guidelines for what became the liberal peace theory and practice (Doyle 1983). That theory suggests that peace occurs once nations and states embrace a set of liberal principles such as democracy (Doyle 1986; Maoz and Russett 1987), capitalist and free market economic order (Gartzke 2007), and interdependence and cooperation (Keohane and Nye 2001). Moreover, liberalism posits that a rational political setup incorporating principles of the so-called Kantian triangle (international organizations, democracy, and economic interdependence) is the best way to achieve and sustain a perpetual peace (Russett 2010).

Peace and war have a central place in realist-liberal thought. Since the establishment of nation-state order, peace has been conceived in relation to the fear of war and insecurity. Establishing and maintaining a functional overarching authority (ideally in the form of a state) is considered a key measure to preclude anarchy, disorder, and conflict. According to this branch of political theory, establishing a central authority to regulate social power relations has been a central concern. In particular, the realist-liberal peacebuilding template begins with establishing political authority and order, and then seeks the means to regulate relationships between these authorities/states through a balance of power, democratization, capitalist and free market economic order, cooperation, and interdependence (Huntington 1996). By being associated with authority, authors of peace processes, who are supposed to be conscious and purposive, gain power to speak and champion the peacebuilding discourse. In this discourse, peace is usually juxtaposed with conflict tropes, thus deriving its meaning as the opposite of what terminologies of conflict may designate. Furthermore, peace is interlocked with material entities (such as territory, government/authority, balance of power, and maps) and linked with ideational signs (such as democracy, rule of law, free market, human rights, and good governance).

Realist-liberal attempts to follow in the footsteps of hard science led to greater dependence on mathematical logarithmic deductions to arrive at quantifiable, testable, and thus “scientific” outcomes. By applying the same rationale of mathematical equations, Hobbes argues, “logicians teach the same in consequences of words, adding together two names to make an affirmation, and two affirmations to make a syllogism, and many syllogisms to make a demonstration; and from the sum, or conclusion of a syllogism, they subtract one proposition to find the other” (1998: 26). In the main, quantitative inputs (statistics, mathematics, computer modeling) inform peace and conflict theories in their attempts to study causal correlations between so-called dependent and independent variables. For instance, statistics show that peace correlates with democracy; consequently, practitioners deduce a causal link between democracy and peace (James et al. 1999; Levy 1989; Maoz and Russett 1987; Oneal et al. 2003). Viewing the orthodox peace paradigm as an operation of a mathematical logic demands the examination of the process of constructing, adding, and subtracting various names, affirmations, and syllogisms to bring us closer to the cognitive system of peacebuilding discourse. This analytical framework helps detect a spectrum of excluded, taken-for-granted, and omitted components and power relations in the discourse of peacebuilding. More importantly, meaning construction is not power-free. On the contrary, it requires power to be produced in the first place (Foucault 1980). Power relationships at the early stages of meaning construction in the Israel-Palestine peace process are of particular significance to this analysis, not only because of the enormous power imbalance, but also because of their impact on actual life (i.e., hierarchies, marginalization, partitions, violence, disposition, discrimination, violations of human rights). Such power divides the land and population (e.g., settlements, settlers, Gaza, refugees, Jewish versus non-Jewish), where each division comes with a package of power differentials that punctuate daily life in Palestine (B’Tselem 2016; Halper 2009; Zureik et al. 2010).

The *Oxford Dictionary* defines peace as “freedom from disturbance,” “tranquility,” or “a period in which there is no war or a war has ended” (Judy 2001). Here too peace is derived from its antithesis (war, violence, conflict, insecurity, fear, danger). In the same fashion, to define the said antithesis we must necessarily return to the question of peace. What peace may constitute is a subject of deeply divergent interpretations; nevertheless, imaginaries of war and conflict are always at play (often drawn on, highlighted, or presented in negative ways) in any effort to determine what peace signifies.

Political literature devotes generous resources to study and theorize on peacebuilding. The orthodox peace, derived from realist and liberal theories, dominates the way diplomats think of and perceive peace (Richmond 2008). And indeed, the framework and champions of the orthodox peace paradigm are ingrained in contemporary political thought, as Terrell Carver (1996) has accurately pointed out. That paradigm has become a yardstick to classify political actors in relation to its principal authors (e.g., Machiavellian, Hobbesian, Lockean, Rawlsian). The metatheoretical assumptions of orthodox peacemaking operate within a matrix of overlapping interpretations of peace, tranquility, war, danger, risk, and authority.

The discipline of peace studies initially developed after World War II came into vogue after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Today, there are networks of numerous specialized university departments, research centers, journals, international institutions, and peacebuilding and peacekeeping missions, all dedicated to matters of peace and war (Rogers 2010). In 2005, the United Nations (UN) established an independent Peacebuilding Commission to advise and devise plans, identify actors and factors undermining peace, and marshal resources for peacebuilding efforts (UN General Assembly 2005). Processes of peacemaking have their own powerful institutions, sponsors, agents, practices, geographies, and political subjects. Peacebuilding theories are predominately produced *in and by* “developed” Western institutions, while their

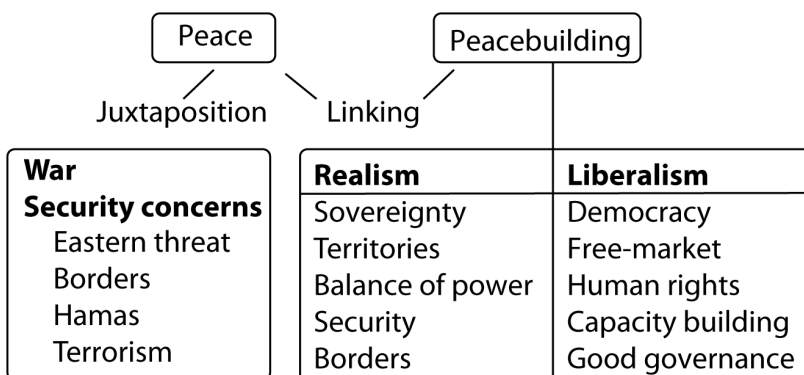
subjects are the “Third World” and “developing” countries. Knowledge production on peacebuilding imbues the North-South skewed power relation, which in effect perpetuates and is perpetuated by broader “structural violence,” to use Johan Galtung’s (1969) concept. Moreover, this order excludes the subjects from the start, forestalling their ability to intervene in knowledge production that directly affects their everyday lives. This serious epistemological shortcoming cannot simply be resolved by “problem-solving” approaches (Cox 1981).

Bearing on Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe’s (2001) analysis of the concept of hegemony, the notion of orthodox peace is hegemonic in how it governs the terrain of articulations and relationships. There is a constant interchange between the so-called scientific theorization on peace, peacebuilding processes, and the agents of peace (diplomats, negotiators, elite, leaders) that comes close to a corporate enterprise specialized in knowledge production on conflicts. This enterprise marshals political and financial support, includes or excludes actors, authorizes certain practices and delimits others; it writes narratives of conflicts, and defines acceptable and deviant behavior. In short, peacebuilding is a discipline; it is almost impossible to think about peace without explicit or implicit accommodation of the theoretical impositions of peace studies. The theoretical categorization, normative ranking, divisions, and practices compromise the regime that orients peacebuilding plans. Orthodox peacebuilding targets what Galtung (1969: 183) calls “negative peace” by managing direct violence through securitized formulas that often fail to attend to underlying structural, ideational, and historical bases of conflicts. It is worth emphasizing that negative and positive sides of peace are indivisible. Indeed, this approach to peace constitutes the Israel-Palestine peace process, as will be demonstrated in the empirical analysis.

A Brief Analytical Framework

In light of the discussion above, I employ two analytical tools to guide the analysis of the empirical case. The first is a process of juxtaposing different signifiers to construct meanings and social realities on the ground. In the case of Israel-Palestine, the notion of peace is usually juxtaposed with security regimes and concerns. The second tool is a schema of linking that helps link performativities of peacebuilding to democratization, functional authority, and good governance (Figure 1). Juxtaposition and linking helps distinguish various divergent concepts and principles that are strategically enmeshed into the field of peacebuilding, rendering their purported interconnectedness as being indivisible and indispensable to the achievement of peace.

Figure 1: Typology of juxtaposition and linking.



To summarize, I loosely define orthodox peacebuilding as a matrix of realist-liberal conceptualizations orienting action toward constructing a particular order that is believed to be conducive to peace. Agents' behavior is delimited by the rules of the orthodox order. This order begins with the realist requirement for a central authority (or an equivalent structure that more or less does the same functions) and moves on to incorporate normative liberal ideals such as democratization, rule of law, and capitalist and free market economic principles. This approach embraces a positivist methodology, especially statistical analysis. The subjects of this approach are mainly countries in the Global South. Against this theoretical backdrop, I turn now to the empirical case to examine the Israel-Palestine peacebuilding process in light of the above theoretical framework.

A Struggle of Narratives

The Israel-Palestine peace process attempts to mediate between two divergent narratives. While the current Israeli narrative is rooted in Zionism, the Palestinian narrative is the ultimate opposite. This dilemma of narratives is neatly captured in the following statement made by an Israeli diplomat in a negotiation meeting: "Our respective [Israeli and Palestinian] narratives cannot be reconciled. You [the Palestinians] think you are the victims. We [the Israelis] think we are the victims" (Doc. 3284). The Zionist movement emerged in the late nineteenth century as a reaction to anti-Semitism and the persecution of Jews in Europe with the aim to establish a Jewish national homeland in Palestine. This aim was indeed achieved through the birth of the state of Israel in May 1948, but only at a devastating cost for the Palestinians—which included the expulsion of seven hundred thousand to eight hundred thousand Palestinians and elimination of their social and physical communities (Khalidi 2006; Masalha 1992; Morris 1989; Pappé 2007). Since 1948, Zionism has become the official ideological compass of the Israeli state (Pappé 2014).

Although the beliefs, aims, and achievements of the Zionist movement have been subject of divergent interpretations, it is instructive to highlight its core features. The Zionist narrative perceives Jews as the ultimate victims determined to build a "national Jewish homeland" in Palestine. The founders of the Zionist movement paid meticulous attention to language while constructing its narrative and rationale. Its name, for instance, was carefully derived from the biblical word "Zion," which refers to Jerusalem, to establish a nexus between the movement, biblical text and era, and the land of Palestine (Ben-Ami 2006; Laqueur 2003) as a vehicle for constructing a historical legitimacy and attract Jews into Zionism. In particular, the Zionist narrative drew on selective religious texts to articulate Palestine as the "promised land of Israel," "virgin land," "a land without people for a people without land," "a Jewish Eretz Israel," in order to construct politicized spiritual imageries of, and primordial ties to, Palestine. Furthermore, Jewish immigration to Palestine is signified as redemption (*Ge'ola* in Hebrew) of the "ancestral" land and the "cradle of Jewish people" (Dan 2006: 48; Ben-Ami 2006; Kimmerling 2008; Pappé 2014). This doctrine unfolds explicitly in the statements of the Israeli diplomats and negotiators. For example, the Israeli negotiator (and former minister of foreign affairs) Tzipi Livni said, "Israel the state of the Jewish people and I would like to emphasize the meaning of 'its people' is the Jewish people with Jerusalem the united and undivided capital of Israel and of the Jewish people for 3007 years" (Doc. 2003). In the same fashion, in 2011 Israel's prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, echoed the same logic to justify the Jewish-only settlements in the West Bank. According to him, the West Bank belongs exclusively to "our [Jewish] forefathers." From his perspective, Israeli settlements and activities in any part of Palestine do not constitute an occupation or colonization because, as he put it, "[in] Judea and Samaria, the Jewish people are

not foreign occupiers” (Netanyahu 2011). The injection of contested ideological terminology is an assertion that Palestine is a God-given land to Jews only.

As mentioned above, the idea of establishing a Jewish state emerged as a response to centuries of anti-Semitism and persecution of Jews in Europe. However, at the time of widespread Western colonialism, the choice of building a Jewish homeland in Palestine was merely an option and second to Uganda (Schneer 2011: 196). Accordingly, the two terms “Jewish” and “state” have been frequently linked and articulated as a singular unit in Israeli political discourse. To establish a nation-state, Jewishness as a religious and spiritual notion was reconstructed into a national identity (Sand 2009). By way of bearing on Benedict Anderson’s (2006) thesis, this constructed narrative gradually gathered a pool of constituents who began to see themselves as an imagined political community. Linking Judaism with statehood in Palestine had (and still has) dire implications for the Palestinian people. First, building the new state meant to “conquer and expel the local population of Palestine” (Ben-Ami 2006: 13; Ben-Gurion [1937] 2014). Second, building a state for the “Jewish people” was constructed around the notion of a wide Jewish majority, leading to a simultaneous struggle over land and demography. In other words, to establish a Jewish state, Palestine had to be first conquered, and its native population had to be displaced and replaced with European Jewish settlers. The idea of transferring the Palestinian population outside Palestine was already in motion within the Zionist discourse at an early stage (Ben-Ami 2006: 25–26; Masalha 1992). To this end, demography was conceptually problematized ahead of the actual conflict on the ground.

Establishing an exclusive state for Jews seemed to solve the “Jewish question” in Europe and end centuries of persecution against the Jews, which culminated in the Holocaust. However, this solution has created another question: the question of Palestine (Arendt 1973: 290). Then it should come as no surprise to find that the Palestinian narrative mirrors the Israeli/Zionist narrative as an absolute opposite. The Palestinians see themselves as the native population and Zionism as a settler colonial movement. Palestinians consider themselves the victims of former victims, as Edward Said (1979) argued in his article “Zionism from the Standpoint of Its Victims.” The popular Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish (1983) elegantly articulated how Palestinians and Jews have been caught up in victimhood irony: “the victim killed its victim.” Palestinians recognize the suffering of their victimizers as a result of European anti-Semitism. Zionists, however, adamantly reject any responsibility for Palestinian suffering—despite all evidence gathered from Israeli archival sources, by a group of Israeli “new historians,” that proves Israel’s liability (Morris 1989; Pappé 2007).¹ Evidence from other conflicts shows that past injustices and suffering must be acknowledged and rectified as a means to prepare the conditions for reconciliation and peace (Anderlini et al. 2004; Bloomfield et al. 2003; Gallagher 2000). Indeed, this is what the peace process framework has failed to provide an answer for.

The events of the Arab-Israeli conflict in 1947 and 1948 culminated in two divergent consequences: the establishment of the state of Israel in May 1948 (and its aftermath), which in turn effectuated the expulsion of three-quarters of the Palestinian people (Rempel 2006) and the elimination of their villages and towns. This was the catastrophe *an-Nakba* for the Palestinian people. In exile, however, Palestinians embarked on rebuilding their communities and reinventing their political system afresh (Cobban 1984; Khalaf 1981; Sayigh 1997). However, the precarious and contingent conditions of exile, because of acute sociopolitical rivalry in the Arab hosting countries at the time, have augmented Palestinian insecurity and fear of disappearance and disintegration as a people and political community (Habash 2009; Kanafani 1963; Khalaf 1981; Sayigh 1997). Generally, the post-1948 Palestinian narrative has developed mainly in exile (Badarin 2016; Said 1992). Everything the Palestinians established was achieved on foreign soil, and thus susceptible to collapse at any point in time. This perspective propelled the Palestinian

leadership toward the path of the peace process, which they saw as an opportunity to ground Palestinian achievements on Palestinian soil in the West Bank and Gaza (Khalaf 1981, 1990; Qurie 2005).

The divergent outcomes of 1948 gave rise to two opposing narratives. Whereas the Israeli narrative hinged on redemption through the birth of the state of Israel, the Palestinian narrative centered on exile, disposition, and the loss of Palestine, that is, *an-Nakba*. Events of 1948 are represented with divine expressions such as absolute justice, sacred year, independence, miracle, redemption, and triumph in Israeli popular discourse, while their destructive face is silenced and omitted. The Palestinian *Nakba*, suffering, ethnic cleansing, and the destruction of their social and physical fabric is systematically erased (Kimmerling 2008; Pappé 2010, 2014). Denial of any responsibility for the Palestinian plight in 1948 is deeply rooted in Israeli society. From these two narratives, Israelis/Zionists and Palestinians constructed their identities and self-images to reflect two different peoples, where each side claims to have an exclusive right to Palestine. Nadim Rouhana and Daniel Bar-Tal (1998) have cogently argued that the Israeli-Palestinian “clash of narratives” adds collective psychological dimensions that further aggravate the conflict.

Internationally, however, the imagined solution for the question of Palestine has pivoted on the concept of partition to separate two divergent national groups of people. For instance, in 1947 the UN Partition Plan for Palestine proposed to divvy up Mandatory Palestine into two independent states—an Arab and a Jewish state—and a special international arrangement for Jerusalem. Even at that time, a common thread between orthodox peace and the Partition Plan is discernible, especially in how the latter articulated the solution to the conflict in terms of “two states,” “partition,” “independent Arab and Jewish States,” “boundaries,” and “establishing frontiers” (UNGA 1947). This particular understanding removed alternative solutions from the dominant discourse about potential peace ever since. The imagined solution hinged on “two states for two peoples,” where one group of people is defined exclusively through ethnoreligious characteristics (the “Jewish people”), while the other group is the antithesis of the first group. Thus, the conflict was tainted by an ethnoreligious binary: Jewish versus non-Jewish.

I argue that the “two states for two peoples” formula has become part of the problem it was supposed to resolve. First, it provided an attractive outfit for constructing and consolidating two exclusive identities, for “two states require two different peoples” (Doc. 2484). For instance, Mizrahi Jews (who moved to Israel from various parts of the Middle East) were encouraged to adopt Western values to transform their identity and draw sharp ideational and cultural distinctions between them and Arab Palestinians (Morris 2009: 185). Second, it entailed spatial and demographic remapping of Palestine. As far as the latter is concerned, non-Jewish individuals (whose religious affiliations were classified as less worthy) became surplus citizens; they had to be transferred outside Palestine to make space for Jewish settlers. Since 1948, Palestinians have been either forced to leave their homeland or pushed into smaller enclaves within it (Masalha 2005) despite being the native population of Palestine that constituted the overwhelming majority of its inhabitants (Abu-Lughod 1987). A small group of Palestinians who remained in Palestine became subjects of the emerging Israeli state, which afforded them its citizenship. Nevertheless, they have been treated with suspicion, deemed “marginal to the nation” (Walzer 1972: 97), a fifth column (Pappé 2011), a “demographic threat” (Orenstein 2004; Prainsack 2006; Rouhana and Sultany 2003). This degrades the status of the Palestinian citizens in Israel into a “marginal” category and elevates the status of Jewish citizens. In this context, human value is determined on collective ethnoreligious features, by factors extrinsic to the individual human being. Non-Jewish persons have become outcasts who may enjoy unequal rights, a second-class citizenship

while being encouraged to leave. Michael Walzer's (1972) theorization underpins exclusion and segregation and forecloses the possibility of rethinking the "nation" to accommodate the population under the jurisdiction of the state. The quest to divide the land and establish new states, borders, and political communities in Palestine based on dichotomous ethnoreligious affiliations (Jewish versus non-Jewish) implicitly holds within its folds seeds of the expulsion and dispossession of the Palestinians. The dire consequences of this framework are still with us today and likely to continue without the decolonization of Israeli-Palestinian power relations.

Since May 1948, the Israel-Palestine conflict has been one between a state and nonstate actors constituting the Palestinian national movement. Articulating the establishment of a Palestinian state as a goal is in line with the realist-liberal schema for peacebuilding. To that end, predominant players of the peace process have succeeded in transforming the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), which was founded in 1964 and enjoyed international recognition as a representative of the Palestinian people, into a rather weak Palestinian Authority (PA). The PA takes the role of the second party—the "partner" in the peace process—and executes a range of administrative and security tasks, which a state normally performs (DOP 1993). The existence of the PA has been pronounced as a temporary step leading toward establishing a sovereign Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza. However, the PA is a feeble and dependent construct. Its survival depends, largely, on foreign financial and political sustenance, and certainly it is anything but representative of the Palestinian people.² The peace process sponsors (mainly members of the Middle East Quartet, i.e., the United States, United Nations, European Union, and Russia) overlooked the issues of representation and legitimacy. For them, the only acceptable Palestinian representatives are those they deem "moderates" and "pro-Western." The United States embraced this mode of thinking as expressed in the Obama administration's desire to maintain "the same Palestinian faces [leadership]" (Doc.4905).

On the one hand, the Palestinian leadership saw the peace process as a step toward achieving Palestinian self-determination in a small part of Palestine. Israel, on the other hand, saw it as an opportunity to manage the conflict "on the basis of our [Jewish] historic right to Eretz Israel," as Ariel Sharon put it (quoted in Dan 2006: 168). The "fundamental condition for ending the conflict is the public, binding and sincere Palestinian recognition of Israel as the national homeland of the Jewish People" (Netanyahu 2011). However, ironically, only Palestinians, who already recognized Israel as a result of the Oslo Accords, are asked to give this recognition. Israel itself neither officially defines itself as a Jewish state nor requires other states to recognize it as such. Having such recognition repudiates the Palestinian narrative and right for a homeland in Palestine. In this context, Palestinians would declare themselves trespassers on the land of others. Having the Palestinians acknowledging the "Jewishness" of the land of Palestine turns them into aggressors, whereas settler-Zionists become the victims of Palestinian aggression. In short, the interpretation of the conflict would be turned upside down.

Furthermore, the "Jewishness" condition sets the ground for systematic expulsion of Palestinians in Israel (who are already viewed as marginal, a fifth column, and surplus citizens of Israel), if their numbers reach an "unacceptable" level, let alone if they match or outnumber Jewish Israelis. The expulsion and discrimination against Palestinians, whether in the West Bank and Gaza or inside Israel, is continuing, albeit at a slow pace. Consider the Israeli policy of house demolition in Jerusalem and restrictions on construction of new homes, denying or canceling the residence permits of Palestinian spouses, or the Praver Plan to evict the native Palestinian population in Naqab (Adalah 2012; B'Tselem 2016; HRW 2012, 2013). These are but prime perceptible examples from an ongoing policy of expulsion and disposition to rid the land of its native inhabitants.

The Judge and “Honest Broker” Subject Position

The American mediators have occupied several subject positions in the Israel-Palestine peace process. Formally, the peace process has been run under the Middle East Quartet’s tutelage, while in practice, the United States has been the dominant actor that at once played the role of the “judge” and (self-declared) “honest broker” (Doc. 2942). These are utterly conflicting roles. As a judge, broker, or mediator at the negotiation table, the United States showed excessive accommodation of Israeli stances and narrative while at the same time obstinately repulsing Palestinian positions and legal rights.³ For instance, American mediators more often than not pronounced Palestinian demands “unrealistic,” “not feasible,” “unpragmatic,” “beyond reach,” and “not going to happen,” and even exerted political and economic pressure on the Palestinians, forcing them to back down. It is apparent from the minutes of meetings of various negotiation sessions that power was operating in one direction to compel the Palestinians to settle for whatever Israel was ready to offer them. For example, former US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice summed up her government’s stance on the fundamental issues of the conflict as follows: Palestinians must “start from the status quo” and accept a state with provisional borders without Jerusalem and to accept the “annexation” of the “settlement blocs.” Furthermore, the Palestinian right of return and reparation and holding Israel accountable for the refugees plight were all deemed “unrealistic” (Doc. 2942). Rice explained the US position throughout various negotiation meetings as the following:

Without hurting my role as an *honest broker* ... the starting point to create a state, a new state, *starting from* the occupation began in 1967. I don’t think it matters much if you *start from status quo*, or 1967. What matters is where the *border* will end up ... They [Israelis] made an *offer* it’s not good, but it’s not bad. 7.3–5 is 2.3 ... I don’t think that 7.3 is a number. But 1.9 or 2.3 is not ... I don’t think any Israeli is going to *cede* Maale Addumim ... then you *won’t* have a state! [If the PA rejects Israel’s annexation of settlement blocs] ... you [the PA] need to *imply* responsibility *without* saying that word/saying it directly ... responsibility is a *loaded term* ... international law will *not* help you because all the *compensation* is to the individual refugee. (Doc. 2942; emphasis added)

There will be a Palestinian state and Israel will *annex* part of the land of this state ... I [Rice] *divide* the problem into two parts: *annexation* and *compensation* [land swap], the *rest* is the state of Palestine. (Doc. 2825; emphasis added)

The above dense citation reveals a common attitude of selective dehistoricization of the conflict to avoid addressing its core issues. Rice strategically sets the course from 1967 to discredit the refugees’ right of return and absolve Israel of responsibility for their plight, which started in 1948. From the standpoint of peacebuilders, overlooking the history of the conflict that predates the 1967 Arab-Israeli War is the best way forward. Furthermore, it was common for successive American administrations to deny what has been achieved under their predecessors. For instance, the US special envoy to Israel-Palestine under the Obama administration, Senator George Mitchell, invalidated previous understandings reached under the George W. Bush administration because, as he explained, “Obama does not accept prior decisions [made] by Bush” (Doc. 4844; Doc. 4899). On the rendering of this logic, almost every diplomatic effort to negotiate a peace settlement begins anew from the ever-changing imaginary “status quo.” This framework of dehistoricization is an excellent fit for Israel. It meant shelving all central aspects of the conflict, such as the refugee question and borders, while Israel continuously changes the reality on the ground (the status quo) to solidify its military rule and settler colonialism in the West Bank. Furthermore, suppressing particular parts of the peace process’s history and memory has contributed to its continuous reproduction over more than two decades.

Internalizing the Israeli positions has been a constant feature of the US diplomats who have been involved in the Israel-Palestine peace process regardless of the ideological characteristics of the American administration at the time. The Obama administration embraced Israeli claims during the so-called Proximity Talks, a series of indirect negotiations between the PA and Israel mediated by Senator George Mitchell in between 2009 and 2011. But, here too, instead of acting as an “honest broker” and arbitrator, the United States put on the table a “settlement package” for the conflict that reverberated Israel’s perspective on all central issues, including Jerusalem, the refugees, borders, and security. The US position regarding the constant expansion of settlements in the West Bank and how this position was articulated illustrates how quickly the Obama administration accommodated Israeli policies. The US position swung from calling on Israel to “stop ... any kind of settlement activity” in the West Bank (Clinton 2009) to “limitations,” “restraint,” “substantially less [settlement] construction,” until the entire request to halt settlement construction was given up.⁴ Here is another example assembled from statements made by Mitchell and his adviser David Hale. In 2009, Mitchell and Hale urged the Palestinians to go along with the peace process. Their best hope would be convincing Israel to remove a few roadblocks to ease movement within the West Bank. As Mitchell put it:

The total package ... will lead to *substantially less* construction in the West Bank, even though it will *not* halt all. I appreciate the concern it *doesn't* cover East Jerusalem. (Doc. 4905; emphasis added)

The Israelis will not go for it [freeze construction in Jerusalem]. (Doc. 4899)

And if there is no deal, this will *unleash* a new wave of new settlements. (Doc. 4861; emphasis added)

We are trying to come up with a statement to give you [PA] a *ladder to climb down* on this issue. The best he [Obama] can get is “*restraint*.” (Doc. 4842; emphasis added)

I would *agree* with Israel if you were negotiating and bringing actions against them to UN. (Doc. 4899; emphasis added)

Meanwhile, Hale informed the Palestinian side that

an un-announced freeze [of settlement construction] in Jerusalem, or adoption of the principle [of freeze]. *Neither* of these is feasible. They *won't* happen ... a freeze in Jerusalem is *beyond* reach ... There is unanimity that it's *not feasible*. (Doc. 5012; emphasis added)

They [Israelis] would *not* agree to *any* mention of 67 [borders] *whatsoever*. (Doc. 4861; emphasis added)

The Israelis will remove *additional road blocks* and take steps to *improve* access and movement. (Doc. 4844; emphasis added)

The packed citations above display a second irony. Instead of bridging the “gaps” between the parties or presenting new ideas, the American diplomats have restated the Israeli policies of occupation/colonialism and wielded formidable pressure on the Palestinians to embrace a specious Israeli repackaging of occupation, rather than ending it. In particular, the American diplomats rearticulated Netanyahu’s (2009) vision for economic peace, and the possibility of improving some aspects of the living conditions in the West Bank. At the same time, the “honest broker” threatened to “unleash” new settlement construction and land grabs to punish the Palestinians if they resort to international avenues and law. The socializing and internalizing effects of the peace process modulated the Palestinian behavior and politics. The Palestinians have become inured to the adverse conditions of that process and voluntarily practicing self-censorship to avoid “annoying” Israeli and American interlocutors. In a context of Palestinian

self-censorship and American internalization of Israeli positions, Israeli negotiators and diplomats have become more driven to posit their views and positions in the form of a dictate and in absolute terms, leaving slim space for any meaningful negotiations.

To reify this observation, consider, for instance, the following statement made by the Israeli negotiator Tzipi Livni in a negotiating meeting: “Palestinians have a choice *either* to remain under occupation *or* get enough independence and dignity. I want to *tell* you about *your* needs then translate them into percentage ... you [Palestinians] come with what you want and we [Israel] come with what is *realistic*” (Doc. 2825). The statement perfectly illustrates how Israeli power was transmitted through the negotiations’ arena in parallel with its unabated military acts constantly altering reality on the ground to the detriment of the Palestinians and their hopes to establish their state. In this context, Israel has employed the negotiations’ arena to bestow its control over the discursive terms and determine, in a typical colonial attitude, the Palestinian needs and how much independence and dignity they are allowed to enjoy. Out of this attitude grew the Israeli “offers,” “packages,” “deals” that were designed to countenance Israeli perpetual control over the residue of a supposed Palestinian independence. In other words, Palestinians could only be afforded abridged freedom and dignity.

Peacebuilding as a Business Transaction

The subtext of the “broker” subject position reveals a conceptual resemblance between peacebuilding and business performances. Hence, and in conjunction with warfare and security tropes, the Israel-Palestine peacebuilding is constructed through business and market-related expressions. The negotiation record displays a pattern of such expressions and metaphors, numbers, and mathematical operations that constitute land and people into objects for transactions, concessions, and bargaining. A consortium of verbs—like offer, give, take, pay for, package, deal, land exchange, lease, compensate, swap, and transfer—are prevalent in the peace process. This consortium shapes how land and people are perceived (e.g., “import other people,” “population swap,” “transfer of people,” “release prisoners”) in a way that turns land and people into commodities and objects within its operative discourse. From this perspective, it is analytically suitable to approach the process of peacebuilding as a metaphorical marketplace in which Israel and the PA perform the seller and buyer subject positions; the United States plays the intermediary’s role, while “issues of the conflict” are goods and objects of transactions.

The choice of terminology in the communication channels is consistent with market logic. For example, the so-called Olmert’s package, named after the former Israeli prime minister between 2006 and 2009, offered to “annex 6.8%” of the West Bank to Israel and “acknowledge” the “suffering of” the Palestinian refugees (without being held responsible for forcing them into exile) in return for Palestinian acknowledgment of the “Israeli (Jewish) suffering.” Furthermore, the package signaled Israel’s willingness to “contribute” to an international fund to compensate the Palestinian refugees and allow the return of five thousand Palestinian refugees (out of over five million) to Israel on a “humanitarian” basis (Doc. 4736). The metaphorical title, “package,” implied that the same brush could treat people and land; both are deemed commodifiable and bargained over. Such a mode of thinking relegates human agency. Ironically, Israel represented that *transaction* as the “most generous” and “most fair” while simultaneously rejecting *equal* exchanges like “1:1 [land] swap” (Doc. 2826; Doc. 2484). With American internalization of Israeli perspectives, the operative system of fairness of justice within the peace process has been entirely contingent upon the whims of various Israeli governments, irrespective of Palestinians’ legal, national, and historical rights.

This combined market and security formula was utilized to launch a process to rework maps of the human and spatial geography of Palestine. Drawing maps comes always with a range of new power relations and categorizations of humans, identity, and living conditions (Agnew 2003). Hence, the peace process was an opportunity to redesign Palestinian demography and spatial existence through means of population transfer (under different formulas) and to repudiate the refugees' right to return, a right enshrined in international law. This is an alarming process, especially when an entire people are unequivocally represented as a demographic threat in Israeli popular and political discourse. Approaching the conflict with a business-oriented mind-set relegates peacebuilding into an arena for competitive power play, favoring the more powerful and resourceful to accomplish the most profitable transaction. Human dignity and principles of justice and morality are dispensed with and replaced with numerical (objectifiable) objects to be maximized or reduced.

When Peace Means Security

Rooted in realist-liberal thought, orthodox peacebuilding theory holds that tackling security concerns a substratum of peace. In a situation of ethnically driven conflicts, partition is put forward as a viable option to divide antagonistic national movements into separate spatial and political spheres of their own in order to dampen the "security dilemma" (Mearsheimer and Van Evera 1995; Kaufmann 1996). In this regard, the question of Palestine has been represented and dealt with from its early stages as a conflict between two different peoples that could only be resolved by dividing Palestine into two states. As a response to the tumult in Palestine in 1936, which evolved into a full-fledged Palestinian revolt that lasted until 1939, the British government appointed Earl Peel as chief of the Palestine Royal Commission (alternatively known as the Peel Commission) to investigate the causes that stimulated the revolt, protests, and general strike at the time. The commission's report, which was published in July 1937, recommended the partition of Mandatory Palestine to resolve the conflict (Quigley 2005; Shlaim 2009: 19–27, 57–58). From this point onward, virtually all peacebuilding visions to resolve that conflict revolved around the idea of partition. This is, indeed, precisely what the Oslo peace project promised to achieve. For the purpose of this article, it suffices to examine an element of that project: President George W. Bush's so-called vision for peace in Israel-Palestine, which evolved into the Roadmap for Peace in April 2003.

In 2002, the United States declared its vision for resolving the Israel-Palestine conflict, known as President George W. Bush's vision (Bush 2002). The vision articulates two things: the "road" and the "map" that will guide the Israelis and Palestinians to the destination of "peace and security." First, peace and security are juxtaposed to underline their interdependence on each other. Second, the "road" was conceived through, and linked with, concepts of "partition," "two states solution," "security arrangements," the democratization of the PA, and economic development for the Palestinians (DOS 2003). Hierarchy is at the core of the suggested map, and each step depended on the success of the previous one. Security was ranked step number one and exclusively expressed as the security of Israel. In fact, the majority of the negotiation meetings discussed Israel's "security needs"; Palestinian security was off the agenda.

Furthermore, violence was reclassified. Whereas Palestinian violence was systematically framed as "terrorism," Israeli violence was deemed "counterterrorism." According to the Roadmap (DOS 2003), the PA's security forces must confront "all those engaged in terror and dismantlement of terrorist capabilities and infrastructure." It posits: "A settlement, negotiated between the parties, will result in the emergence of an independent, democratic, and viable Palestinian

state living side by side in peace and security with Israel and its other neighbours.” That framing is both problematic and incoherent. It equates peace with security and articulates the latter as the starting point of the “road.” If security and peace were to be perceived as synonyms, then the realization of security in phase one would already realize peace without negotiating the terms of peace. Obviously, the subtext of that hierarchy and framing conceals prejudices: it places the responsibility for violence on Palestinians alone and considers their struggle for self-determination terrorism. Nonetheless, Israeli violence is framed as being a permissible reactive and self-defensive measure. Therefore, the loaded judgment in that framework behooves the Palestinians to forsake their “primitive violence” and join the “civilized” talks.

The Roadmap represents an operative blueprint of the realist-liberal peace. It is ontologically dependent on the existence of two sovereignties (authorities, states), while power-ridden communication between a few politicians outlines its epistemology. The peacebuilding map selectively juxtaposes and links “peace” with realist and liberal ideals like establishing security regimes, fighting terrorism, democratization, and “confronting and targeting” those who stand in the way of this interpretation of peace. This cognitive system overshadows the wider civil society (the “two” peoples who ought to live in peace) and allows power calculations, security representations, and market-like bargains to dominate methods of peacemaking. Although the peace process (supposedly) aims to establish two states living in “peace and security,” the meaning of “peace” and “security” are implied rather than defined. Looking at peace from a securitized lens enables “security-based diplomacy” to dominate the structure of the peace process and warrants the deployment of Israeli security policies under the guise of ensuring security and order in the West Bank and Gaza. As such, Israeli (and PA) violence in these areas become an integral part of the peace process.

The negotiation record shows that the ostentatious “language of peace” was written with security and violence metaphors. From the Israeli standpoint, security is something identifiable, obvious, and can be reached only through “solid security arrangement,” “real borders,” Israeli control over the Jordan Valley, and maintaining “settlement blocs” of “strategic” locations. On the other hand, security from the PA’s perspective is based on the end of the occupation started in 1967, “no Israeli military presence in the [future] Palestinian State” and a “sovereign independent [Palestinian] State” (Doc. 4933). Internalization of the “peace and security” formula modulated the meaning of peace and directed extensive efforts and resources on security aspects instead of addressing the profound causes of the conflict with justice and human dignity.

The premise of the peace process allows the market and security-imbued logics to dominate in favor of the powerful and better-resourced party, while deflecting the Palestinian struggle and excluding more than half of the Palestinian people who live in exile, let alone those who became second-class Israeli citizens. The Palestinian right and ability to leverage on international law were circumscribed. As it appears from the minutes of meetings, the American diplomats were often advocating for Israel and belittling the Palestinian positions. They were absorbed by the question of “how much” Israel might be ready to “give,” rather than putting in place the pre-conditions for a just, positive, and lasting peace in Israel-Palestine. Israel, on the other hand, exploited this deformed structure of the peace process to proceed unhindered with its military rule and colonization.

Conclusion

This article has examined key classical and contemporary realist-liberal peacebuilding literature in order to establish its principle rules of formation. It also considered the Israel-Palestine

peace process to see how the theory of peacebuilding is empirically operationalized, and how the “process” has been used to the advantage of the powerful side, yet without achieving peace. The analysis shows how the terminology of “peace” was strategically inserted in policy blueprints to legitimize particular political measures and discredit others. Discussions on peace and socioeconomic conditions (in policy blueprints) were subordinate to war-prone imaginations. Furthermore, it is apparent that theories in application materialize into social realities, shaping the living conditions and spatial environment of millions of people. Of course, this is not negative in essence; nevertheless, the concerns of the weaker side are usually susceptible to demotion and exclusion.

The agents of the peace process, especially American and Israeli agents, drew heavily on realist-liberal framework to articulate how peace may be achieved in Israel-Palestine. Security and market-imbued discourse dominated the process at the expense of other essential issues such as justice, legitimacy, international law, and human rights. That framework also contributed to the dehumanization of the human agency. The realist-liberal framework considers “partition,” “two states,” “security arrangement,” “democratization,” “borders,” and “land swaps” as the road toward peace. That approach inspired protracted haggling over the details and figures between self-proclaimed “rational” and “moderate” peace agents, while the societies in whose name the peace process operates were ignored. Given the weakness of the PA in the face of the hegemonic power of Israel and the Middle East Quartet, the operative formula for peace was shaped by the powerful, internalized by the mediator (the United States), and forced on the weaker party. Therefore, what the plaintiff tells was deemed paltry. This is what Jean-François Lyotard called the “perfect crime.” It “does not consist of killing the victim or the witnesses, but rather obtaining the silence of the witness, the deafness of the judge, and the inconsistency (insanity) of the testimony” (2007: 8). Negative and positive sides of peace are inextricable; leaving one side unaddressed spawns more violence. A solution based on the tenets of orthodox peace fails to address underlying colonial power relations sustaining the conflict. Therefore, structural reformation of Israeli-Palestinian power relations in the form of decolonization is imperative to envision a better future in Israel-Palestine for all.

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■ **EMILE BADARIN** is a researcher in Middle East politics. He holds a PhD in Middle East politics and master’s degrees in international relations, political science, and urban planning and architecture. He is the author of *Palestinian Political Discourse: Between Exile and Occupation* (Routledge, 2016).

■ NOTES

1. The term “new historians” refers to a group of Israeli scholars that emerged in the late 1980s and critically reexamined the history of Zionism, the establishment of Israel, the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the Palestinian refugee question based on Israeli archival material. This group, which includes Ilan Pappé, Avi Shlaim, Benny Morris, and Simha Flapan, challenged the dominant Israeli narrative and

- debunked its claims, in particular regarding the Arab-Israeli War in 1948 and the Palestinian refugee question.
2. To turn around the issue of representation, a complex PLO and PA relationship was constructed in 1993, which in effect led to the empowerment of the PA and the marginalization of the PLO (see Badarin 2016: 119–120).
 3. The Palestine Papers lay the degree of the US internalization of Israeli positions bare. Whether the Democrats or Republicans were in office, the United States adopted Israel's positions on all core issues. It unequivocally stood against the Palestinian right of return, compensation, or any reference to international law.
 4. The PA and Israel resumed negotiations in July 2013 without a settlements freeze (see *Al Jazeera* 2013).

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