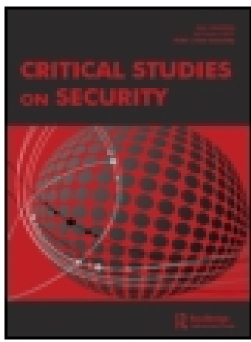

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ARTICLE

Elite and popular contradictions in security coordination: overcoming the binary distinction of the Israeli coloniser and the colonised Palestinian

Nadia Naser-Najjab and Shir Hever

ABSTRACT
Settler colonial theory has made a hugely significant contribution to the theorisation of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, but there is a danger that its application to the specific practice of security coordination could simply render the practice as an instrument of settler colonial rule. In this article, we would like to propose the important qualification that Coordination is, in practice, deeply conflicted and subject to multiple internal pressures, which extend from elites to public opinion. In accepting that Coordination can be appropriately viewed through a settler colonial lens, we would like to argue that it can also be viewed from 'below', and as an object of domestic political struggle that is implicated in legitimisation processes. Coordination is therefore simultaneously renounced and retained as part of the survival strategy of assorted elite groups. In order to demonstrate this, we reference Elite theory, interviews and online materials. Moreover, internal Palestinian divides suggest that opposition is more incomplete, partial and reactive within the neoliberal and settler colonial context.

KEYWORDS
Neoliberalism; Elite Theory; Oslo Agreements; Palestinian Authority; Security Coordination; Settler Colonialism

Introduction

The Oslo Accords set up a non-reciprocal system of both administrative and security coordination. Administrative coordination enables Israel to control Palestinians daily lives by means of the population registry and a permit system. Security coordination includes intelligence and preventive measures aimed against Palestinian resistance groups and intended to provide security for Israel. Coordination is mainly required from Palestinian security forces, which share intelligence and coordinate enforcement operations in area A of the West Bank.

The original contribution of this article is to explain the controversy regarding security coordination in both Israeli and Palestinian societies, and identify which elite groups have a stake in its continuation despite its unpopularity. This advances critical understandings of the political value of security within the context of neoliberalism and settler colonialism.

In Israel, opposition to Coordination has gathered momentum with the rise of the populist Right led by Benjamin Netanyahu. There are still Palestinian voices that claim it is in the national interest to coordinate with Israeli security organisations (the military, police and ISA (Shin Bet)) but they have been increasingly drowned out by Palestinian opponents, who argue it is a form of collaboration that suppresses Palestinian resistance (Toameh 2018).

This claim is not without justification. When the Palestine Papers, which documented negotiations between the PA and the Israeli government in the period 1999–2010, were released in 2011, they revealed the full extent of working relations between the PA and Israel, which extended to Israel asking the PA Minister of the Interior to kill a Fatah member of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade.

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Table 1. Composition of elite groups.

	Economic Elite	Political Elite	Military/Security Elite
C.W Mills model of the US elites	Top management and owners of corporations	Elected government and parliament representatives	Top officers in the Army, Marines and Navy
Israeli elite groups	Upper echelon of owners of corporation	The populist right-wing is comprised of Knesset members, ministers, key leaders of political movements and the prime minister	The security elite includes the senior officers and officials of the military, police, secret services, prison service and the Ministry of Defense
Palestinian elite groups	A small number of company owners	Central PLO, Fatah and PA officials	Senior officers of the various security branches

Providing information to Israel is the main contribution the Palestinian security forces make. This information mainly relates to Palestinian activists, and it enables Israel to target, arrest and kill them (Abdalla 2017).

However, it should not be presumed that such actions create a cognitive dissonance on the part of the PA. On the contrary, the Papers make it quite clear that, in 2005, the PA and Israel were in full agreement that the definition of 'terrorism' should be expanded to encompass any form of Palestinian resistance. In addition, the PA was not satisfied with Israel's punitive measures on the Strip and actually called for further ones to be introduced (Palestine Papers, 2009).

Palestinian critics object to the fact that Coordination implicates the Palestinian Authority (PA) as a subcontractor of the Israeli Ministry of Defence (Amrov and Tartir 2014) and exacerbates internal Palestinian divisions. Israeli opponents, meanwhile, claim it enables the 'terrorist' PA to enhance its military capabilities (Kuperwasser 2018).

This groundswell of opposition notwithstanding, Coordination is one of the few parts of the Oslo agreements that both leaderships still adhere to. Although Israel's and the PA's inability to keep to their stated commitments resulted in two suspensions (in 1996 and 2000–2004),[1] they did not end the practice (B'Tselem 2017).

Security was not just a feature of the Oslo Accords but was arguably its anticipating rationale and justification. This helps to explain why Coordination, which is a clear strategic priority for Israel, the 'international community' and the Palestinian leadership, persisted after the Camp David talks collapsed (Swisher 2009; Haddad 2016, 175).

The Palestinian elite values it as a privileged source of external funding and associated class entitlements (Abunimah 2014), and it is by no means coincidental that the US government has actively encouraged them to elevate their own interests over national priorities (Mombelli 2014). The PA, for its part, has in co-opted a substantial number of Palestinians (around 40% of the PA budget is spent on salaries) into its own patron–client relationships (Al-Shu'aibi 2012; Al Masri 2016).[2]

Israel values Coordination because it contributes to the strategic aim of obtaining control over the Palestinian land and population (Tartir 2017). The time and status of Israeli security officers are preserved when others do this menial colonial work (including arresting, incarcerating and interrogating dissidents, operating checkpoints inside Palestinian cities and dispersing demonstrations) on their behalf (Hever 2017).

Senior officers and security-minded politicians and officials believe that Coordination 'frees up' the Israeli army to focus on training for conventional war, strategic manoeuvres and applying new military technology (Levy 2012, 29, 64). This arrangement involves a lower expenditure of effort and the investment of fewer resources (Jamil 1976; Gregory 2004; Sayegh 2012).

Their Palestinian counterparts, meanwhile, as members of an elite group, assert their 'natural' right to an elevated status and reap the associated benefits. They are a distinct group set apart from others, and their petty authority perhaps partially compensates for the sharp humiliation of

occupation.[3] They are also, as an additional benefit, partially excluded from the cuts to services and the public sector, budget balancing and removed labour protections that have been imposed on other Palestinian sectors under the guise of neo-liberal 'reform' (Dana 2015, 455–77). In contrast, the large numbers of Palestinians who are employed in the security sector enjoy relative job security and 'security' more generally accounts for a third of the PA's budget (Abu Amer 2015).

Although Coordination ostensibly situates Palestinians as participants in a joint project, they are actually engaged on hierarchical and differentiated terms that reinforce their relative inferiority. In other words, their participation further reinforces the 'mythical portrait of the [c]olonised' and the belief that 'everything in the colonised is deficient, and everything contributes to this deficiency' (Memmi 1974, 161).

The US also requested the withholding of funds from those who employed supporters or members of Hamas, meaning that Palestinian organisations now have to effectively police their own staff. Coordination has therefore taken form as a regulatory and disciplinary practice (Hanieh 2008; Haddad 2016; Salamanca 2016). International influence, whether in the form of funding or other support, has accompanied every stage of the development of Coordination, which has progressed against the backdrop of a wider project of securitised neoliberal statebuilding (Hanieh 2008; Mombelli 2014; Haddad 2016).

The emphasis on coordination was present from the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993, but later developed in a specific historical and political context. After the collapse of the Camp David negotiations, the 'international community' viewed Arafat as part of the problem and sought to undermine his position. However, one of his most negative contributions was unintended: when he died in 2004, he left behind a divided political scene afflicted by internal divisions and external donor dependency, and this prevented political parties from pursuing independent agendas (Hammami 1995). The marginalisation of Hamas after it won the 2006 Legislative Council elections was, for example, a US-imposed precondition. Badarin therefore observes how '[s]ecurity-laden concepts and vocabulary infiltrated the Palestinian perception and political calculations' after the Accords Badarin (2016, 153). The 2007 donor reform agenda, which focused on enhancing the PA's counter-terrorism capabilities, was an example and, in the period 2007–10, the US allocated more than 392 USD M (USD) to this purpose. However, this conceptual and paradigmatic convergence created a clear crisis of Palestinian leadership, as it implicated the Palestinian elite in the perpetuation of colonial power.

Settler colonialism and coordination

Fanon once spoke of 'a colonial, calculated tactic meant to sow division' that is part of a 'divide-and-rule' strategy Fanon (1963, 136) and, in so doing, anticipated Coordination and other Israeli strategies that accord to a settler-colonial 'logic of elimination' that is not 'invariably genocidal' (Wolfe 2006:388–9; Gregory 2004:79; Jamil 1976). Coordination is therefore consistent with other colonial dimensions of the conflict, such as the 'replacement' of the 'indigenous' population by a settler population (see Pappé 2007, Chapter Two).

Furthermore, Coordination is also anticipated by various colonial antecedents and analogies. The delegation of clearly delineated responsibilities to the Palestinian security forces is therefore consistent with an age-old colonial practice that co-opts 'native' resistance groups and reinvents them as law enforcement agencies (Simpson 2011). Coordination, fragmentation and dispossession are therefore parts of a triad directed towards a specific intended effect. Pappé explains:

At first, the area was divided into 'Arab' and potential 'Jewish' spaces. Those areas densely populated with Palestinians became autonomous, run by local collaborators under a military rule. This regime was only replaced with a civil administration in 1981. The other areas, the 'Jewish' spaces, were colonised with Jewish settlements and military bases (Pappé 2017, 71).

Coordination can perhaps be best described as an innovation within the securitised system of control and surveillance that Israel established in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) in the

post-Oslo period. Its historical origins can however be traced to the 1930s, when Zionists recruited collaborators who collected information and intelligence, about Palestinian villages. The information they provided was then used to assist the 'ethnic cleansing' of Palestine in the *Nakba* (Pappé 2007, 19).

The colonial practice of 'indirect rule' also closely resembles the 'disengagement' espoused by leading members of the Security Elite, such as Yitzhak Rabin and, in his later years, Ariel Sharon. It is also consistent with the 'Bantustan model' and 'diplomatic transfer', which are both well established in the literature on settler colonialism. (Veracini 2010, 44). Both envisage the containment of indigenous populations in sovereign and/or semi-sovereign political entities and are conceived and developed in the wider context of a divide-and-rule colonial strategy (Fanon 1963, 136).

A number of contributions to the literature implicate Coordination, whether directly or indirectly, as a settler colonial practice. Clarno presents it and other Israeli policing strategies as part of a 'global web of racial capitalist projects' that seek 'to contain and pacify surplus populations produced by neoliberal restructuring' Clarno (2017, 165). This 'surplus' is left to fend for itself, as the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated, when PA neglect forced Palestinian workers to take risks and work in Israel (Naser-Najjab 2020).

This renders the practice, including the 2007 efforts of the US and EU to reform Palestinian security services, as a 'product of [imperial] interventions' (Clarno 2017, 165). Coordination is deeply immersed in international and local politics, as was shown when Israel and the US vetted recruits mainly drawn from Fatah (ibid: 168–9). The technocratic mentality which exerts such a strong control over the perspective of external donors is however structurally incapable of acknowledging and appreciating this feature.

In this article, we concur with those who implicate Coordination as a form of control that cements Israel's colonial rule over Palestinian land and population. The Palestinian leadership is aware of this but considers the alternatives to be even worse, and in any case has become dependent on the money and authority that Coordination provides. The Palestinian leadership has become 'entrapped' between the 'will to break colonialism [and] com[e] to friendly agreement with it' (Fanon 1963, 123).

The practice is deeply embedded in vested interests on both sides and has been compartmentalised, as was shown by the limited Palestinian response (the suspension of civil coordination) to Netanyahu's annexation plan. As was wholly to be expected, this deeply insufficient measure ultimately proved to be counter-productive, as it undermined the internal authority of the Palestinian security elite and created an opportunity for Israel's security forces to further strengthen their control of the West Bank by bypassing the PA.

In this article, we proceed with the intention of amending theories of settler colonialism by drawing on Elite Theory to de-aggregate the monolithic concepts of 'settlers' and 'natives' and identify hegemonic and counter-hegemonic forces within each elite group. We anticipate the application of this theory will provide insight into strategies of control and resistance. We then refer to interviews with a preventive security force employee and a journalist whose work focuses on coordination. We also refer to online materials to provide further insight into the Palestinian experience of Coordination.

The origins of Israel's security elite crisis

In Israel, competition between economic, military and political elite groups transformed Coordination into a battleground. The Security Elite invoked the practice to justify shifting resources to more prestigious aspects of Israeli security operations, such as the development of new weapon systems; the Economic Elite used it to support its demands for reduced military spending; and the newly-emerged populist Right, in seeking to cancel the recognition of Palestinians, opposed Coordination outright (Tartir 2016).

Anthony Giddens has previously distinguished between elite groups by comparing mobility between or within groups (Giddens 1974, 4–7). In Israel, senior employees frequently move between military command posts, the secret services, management positions in the arms industry and senior management positions in the Ministry of Defence, which creates the impression of a coherent elite group (Hever 2017).

Israel's Economic Elite pursues a classical colonialism rooted in exploitation and the Security Elite seeks the separation and elimination that were both historically associated with settler colonialism. Coordination effectively produced the Security Elite's switch from settler to classical colonialism, and Yitzhak Rabin played a foremost role in this development (Gerlitz 2015).

Coordination challenges Settler Colonial Theory because it involves the 'native' and gives him/her a role in achieving his/her own elimination. In Israel's version of apartheid, Palestinians have only been given a very limited economic role and have therefore been 'pushed out' (Kasrils 2015, 23–41). Coordination is therefore one of the few area where the Israeli colonial project can find a use for Palestinian labour.

The roots of coordination and 'enlightened' occupation

Coordination is the last remnant of the Security Elite's strategy of 'enlightened occupation' but the pronounced absence of other components (economic investments in the OPT, plentiful work permits for Palestinian workers and the intensive infiltration of Palestinian society and culture by Israeli intelligence operatives) means that it cannot conceal the heavy hand of the occupation nor convince the Palestinians they have 'something to lose' (Gordon 2008:169–96; Shamir 2012, 63–79).

Control over the OPT has been the Security Elite's central project since the end of the 1967 War. Moshe Dayan, Israel's minister of defence at the time when Israel seized the territories, promoted an 'enlightened occupation' that would ensure Palestinian docility by giving them 'something to lose'. Shlomo Gazit, Israel's military governor in the OPT, acknowledged that heavy-handed rule no longer worked in an age of decolonisation and instead advocated subtle manipulation and the recruitment of collaborators (Gazit 2005, 12–22). The Security Elite's ability to implement this strategy steadily declined over time, and this was because of the competing interests of the Economic Elite and the development of a populist Right in the Oslo years.

The 'enlightened' occupation policy exposed the Security Elite to the populist Right accusation that it wanted to 'appease' Palestinians. Controlling a civilian population is arduous, tedious and time-consuming and does not produce heroes nor clear-cut victories. Israel's military officers resented the army's reinvention as a colonial police force, and this eventually caused the collapse of the policy and the adoption of a more heavy-handed approach that involved collective punishment, mass arrests and torture. The prescience of Dayan's analysis was eventually demonstrated when spiralling Israeli repression produced an upsurge of Palestinian resistance (Gordon 2008).

The Oslo Accords were an attempt to break out of this vicious cycle. Rabin engaged in negotiations with the Palestinians to liberate the military (and the Security Elite) from the burden of colonial policing and to help it to train for the next conventional war. In other words, this 'security' work was effectively subcontracted out (Ibid: 171–89).

Israel's positions in the secret Oslo negotiations were strongly influenced by the army's influence (ibid), and this was shown when Israeli negotiators claimed a Palestinian request to establish a state radio and TV network was a 'security' issue (Savir 1998, 4). Palestinian negotiators originally resisted negotiating on these terms and Ahmed Qurei, the lead Palestinian negotiator, alleged that his Israeli counterparts wanted to substitute 'humiliation' for 'security' (Qurei 2005, 305). This is consistent with Israel's elevation of 'security' into a series of sacrosanct axioms. Shalhoub-Kevorkian observes that its 'security theology' is:

[A]ccepted and affirmed by the international community, as is evidenced by the failure of international organisations to prevent continuous injustices and attacks on Palestinians. Even

international humanitarian law fails to challenge Israel's security theology Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2015, 18).

When viewed from a more Critical perspective, this 'security' is concerned with restricting Palestinian movement (through division and closure) and interrupting communication (Ophir, Givoni, and Hanafl 2009). Alternatively, in a more Foucauldian reading, it is instead defined in terms of its productivity and its potential 'to reorder, regulate and discipline bodies and lives' (2015:5) (also see Zureik 2001:206, 2016:97; Berda 2017, 78)

The Security Elite's doubts about the PA and Oslo agreements persisted until the *Al-Aqsa Intifada* broke out (Berda 2017). While some welcomed the reduced workload, others questioned if it was wise to allow other 'security' providers to operate in the OPT. It has even been claimed that the excessive force that Israel used against the PA in periods of hostility (1996 and 2000–04) was an attempt to undermine a potential competitor (Levy 2012, 157).

The rising populist Right opposed the Oslo agreements and accused the Security Elite of giving Palestinians too much power and autonomy, and this cleared the way for Benjamin Netanyahu's emergence as the populist Right's leader. The 2006 invasion of Lebanon and its blunders further reinforced his authority by giving the populist Right an opportunity to attack the Security Elite (Gal 2017). Coordination provided a last place of refuge for the Security Elite, and its members stepped back from steering Israel's security policies and now increasingly focus on the arms trade and private military and security markets (Hever 2017, 173).

Under Netanyahu, the Israeli populist Right does not bow to the Security Elite in the same way as previous governments and instead courts popularity by accusing the PA of 'terrorism' and threatening to dissolve it (Middle East Monitor 2014). Meanwhile, Israeli security personnel label Palestinian security forces as 'security threats' and deny them permits to enter Jerusalem and Israel (Berda 2017). Israel arrested PA security staff after they imprisoned a Palestinian accused of selling land to Israelis (Jaradat 2018), and then suspended Coordination in the Jerusalem area (Al-Monitor 2018). The rise of the populist Right has therefore produced contradictions in occupation policies. The Security Elite depends on Coordination as much as the PA and assiduously works to increase the autonomy of the PA forces. In 2013, Israeli security forces invited the PA police to operate in East Jerusalem's A-Ram neighbourhood (which is in Area C) because they were reluctant to work there (Hasson and Khoury 2013).

Elite group competition

Competition between elite groups is focused, among other things, on the allocation of public resources. In the 1980s, the Economic Elite demanded a reduction in public security expenditure and called for reductions in the benefits, pensions and salaries of Ministry of Defence employees (Shiffer 2007). The Ministry responded by outsourcing its operations to subcontractors (Menahem 2010) which delayed, but did not prevent, budget cuts.

The percentage of GDP spent on security has incrementally declined up to the time of writing, which confirms the Security Elite's weakening hold on budget allocation (Shafir and Peled 2004, 234–235). Since 1994, private sector security expenditure has accounted for increasing amounts of Israel's GDP, while public expenditure has travelled in the opposite direction (Abu-Qarn and Abu-Bader 2008; Hever 2017). Outsourcing eroded the Security Elite's monopoly on the manufacture of security (Paz-Fuchs 2012).

In stark contrast to the development of privatised securitisation in post-apartheid South Africa, Palestinians have not gained a foothold in this sector (Clarno 2017, 125–57), and PA security officers have not been invited to sell their expertise on the global market. The passive and subordinate Palestinian role has made it possible for Israeli and Palestinian security actors to retain cordial relations (Machold 2018, 88–97). The 'expertise' of retired Israeli officers who have gained unique insight from extensive control of a civilian population provides Israel with a clear comparative advantage over global competitors (Gordon 2009, 6).

The development of the ‘laboratory model’ (a term used both by defenders and critics) reinvented the occupation as a marketing asset for the Israeli military and security industry, and as a coping mechanism that would help the Security Elite come to terms with its reduced hold on Israeli politics. This diminished status was further confirmed when Meir Dagan, a former Mossad chief, openly criticised the Israeli government for failing to appreciate the strategic importance of Coordination with the PA and the need to reach a peace agreement (Bergman 2018).

The Security Elite’s position is further undermined by divisions between the security and intelligence forces on spying and assassination methods. Assassination is unilateral and extra-judicial, and gives the Palestinian population the impression that ‘their’ security forces cannot protect them.

The role of the Palestinian security forces is a further source of division. Israeli critics dismiss them as traitors by their own people, and also insist on the importance of an established (i.e. ethnically defined) hierarchy (Keidar 2018). Its defenders, meanwhile, contend that it benefits the Israeli security elite by liberating it from the low-status task of colonial policing. Ma’arachot, the official Israeli military magazine praises Coordination and the PA and argues that existing arrangements make it possible to redirect resources to training and preparation, and subcontract colonial policing, which it disdains as an undesirable task best left to Palestinians (Kroitoro 2012). The occupation itself creates a hierarchy of rights and privileges, and produces social capital for Israelis at the expense of Palestinians by turning freedom of movement into a rare commodity. It also increases its own status when it defends the nation against ‘existential threats’ (such as Iran) and subcontracts the menial management of the ‘native’ population to Palestinian subordinates (Veracini 2010).

Internal Palestinian divisions

Coordination had been a problem for the Palestinian leadership since it was first announced. Even security personnel were frustrated with it, and this was demonstrated in both 1996 and 2000–04, when they turned their guns on their Israeli ‘partners’. (Usher 2003; Zilber and Al-Omari 2018, 14).

In December 2014, Zaid Abu Ein, a Palestinian minister without portfolio, died of his injuries after he was choked and hit with a rifle-butt by an Israeli soldier. The PCC responded by voting to suspend Coordination and accused Israel of failing to uphold its commitments. Moshe Ya’alon, the Israeli Defence Minister, dismissed this threat but claimed that it posed a bigger threat to the PA. He nonetheless made it clear that Coordination was still desired by the Israeli security establishment (The Jerusalem Post 2014). He was removed from office two years later when he took the side of the Security Elite against the populist Right in the Elor Azaria trial. He was then replaced by Avigdor Liberman of the populist Right, who was much more agnostic about the Coordination (Issacharoff 2017).

When the PA joined the International Criminal Court (ICC) in 2015, the Israeli government retaliated by withholding Palestinian tax revenues. The PA in turn threatened to halt Coordination. John Kerry, the US Secretary of State, sought to intervene in the escalating dispute. He observed:

> If the Palestinian Authority ceases or were to cease security cooperation – . . . and that could happen in `the near future if they don’t receive additional revenues – then we would be faced with yet another crisis that could also greatly impact the security of both Palestinians and Israelis (Beaumont 2015).

In July 2017, after Israel attempted to instal metal detectors at the entrance of the *Al-Aqsa* mosque produced large-scale popular protests, Abbas vowed to suspend Coordination and did indeed briefly follow through on this threat. But just four months later, Hazem Atallah, the PA police chief, resumed Coordination while claiming that ‘[w]e don’t work for politics; we work for people’ (Rasgon 2017). Abbas’s subsequent co-option of political parties into the reform of the PLO prevented any further efforts to suspend Coordination (Shehadeh 2015; 199; Haddad 2016).

In March 2018, Gazan activists started a 'Great March of Return', which protested the blockade and commemorated the 70th anniversary of the *Nakba*. Israel's aggressive response killed 195 Palestinians and injured over 15,000. Hundreds of Palestinians took to the streets of Ramallah to demand the end of the blockade and the reunification of the territories. Palestinian security forces responded with tear gas and physical violence, and detained more than 50 protestors.

Further tensions erupted in October 2018, when the US President Donald Trump recognised Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. The PLO's Palestinian Central Council (PCC) responded by setting out its official position:

In view of Israel's continued denial of the signed agreements, the PCC, in confirmation of its previous `decision and considering that the transitional phase no longer exists, decides to end the commitments of the PLO and the Palestinian Authority towards its agreements with the occupying Power, suspend recognition of the State of Israel until its recognition of the State of Palestine on the 4 June 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital, end security coordination in all its forms, and disengage economically from Israel on the grounds that the transitional phase, including the Paris Economic Protocols no longer exist (Ma'an News Agency 2018).

Some Palestinian political parties boycotted the meeting, in protest against the Council's failure to implement previous decisions. They also objected that the Council's previous complaints about the lack of political progress had not produced a clear response from the 'international community'.

In June 2020, the PA responded to Israel's annexation plan by announcing it would suspend Coordination (Toameh, 2018). Palestinians reported actual changes in the implementation of the practice on the ground, and observed in particular that the PA no longer facilitates the obtaining of work permits. Hussein al-Sheikh, the Head of the General Authority of Civil Affairs, said in an interview with the *New York Times* that 'We will prevent violence and chaos ... We will not allow bloodshed. That is a strategic decision ... But I'm not a collaborator with Israel' (Halbfinger and Rasgon 2020). Although the PA halted administrative coordination with the Israelis, security arrangements remained in place.

The political analyst Hani Al-Masri (2018) concludes that Palestinian divisions must first be resolved before Coordination can be ended. He notes that the practice, in its current form, entrenches divisions in the Palestinian political community by pitting supporters and opponents of the peace agreement against each other; and demands that the leadership should openly acknowledge that the practice is a 'divide and conquer' strategy (ibid.)

Palestinian internal divides therefore occur at the public-elite level whereas in Israel they are internal to a relatively cohesive elite. Coordination therefore has direct implications for the legitimacy of the Palestinian political elite and threatens to further erode its (already limited) reserves of public support. It is also important to remember that this erosion has occurred from a low base, as the practice was deeply unpopular from its inception. The subsequent unravelling of Coordination was nonetheless foretold in the PA's entertainment of the illusion that concessions to colonial power would elicit anything other than contempt.

Palestinian experiences of coordination

In 2015, the Unit for the Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) created an Arabic Facebook page ('the Coordinator') that provided Palestinians with information about permits and other services. It presents Coordination as essential for 'preserv[ing] the stability of the security situation in Judea and Samaria'. Through the mediums of videos, images and text, it promises Palestinians they will be rewarded with permits if they behave themselves, and relays this important message in a tone of quiet empathy. On the basis of this presentation alone, observers would be forgiven for concluding that Coordination is not a pacifying tool of the Security Elite but is instead further evidence of COGAT's abiding concern for human dignity and welfare.

At the beginning of June 2020, Palestinians responded to the Annexation Plan by launching a social media boycott campaign: 'It's Me or the Coordinator'. This campaign, which was developed

by the popular Palestinian resistance, warned readers that the page seeks to recruit collaborators and gather intelligence information.

On June 16, the Coordinator responded with a Facebook statement that promised to issue permits digitally. It boasted that in the last week of June, COGAT issued 415,000 permits (320, 000 were distributed to Palestinian workers), coordinated the entrance of 65 ambulances to Israel and processed 18,000 humanitarian cases. However, it did not acknowledge the Security Elite no longer has the resources or legitimacy to restore the Civil Administration services that existed before Coordination. Without PA mediation, the permits that it offered were little more than an empty gesture. Hillel Cohen explains how another Facebook group operated by the ISA (the Israeli Security Agency, one of the last bastions of the Israeli Security Elite) also reaches out to Palestinians with a mixture of empathy and implied threats. (Cohen 2020).

In order to gain insight into the Palestinian experience of Coordination, we interviewed a senior Palestinian employee in the preventive security forces (R) and a Palestinian journalist (S), who both wished to remain anonymous. The contributions of R highlighted how he had come to view himself and the wider situation through the eyes of the Israelis, as Fanon had anticipated Fanon (1963, 210). R highlighted the contribution he and his colleagues had made in preventing the West Bank from becoming like the Gaza Strip and then became defensive when he was questioned about political prisoners and the human rights situation in the West Bank. His 'contradictory consciousness' (Matar 1981:99; Berda 2017) extended to defending death during torture on the grounds that it could happen in any country ('even Israel') and uncritically reproducing the Israeli 'line' on the killing of Ahmad Erekat (Middle East Eye 2020).

R also expressed the view there was no prospect of a recurrence of a conflict between Israeli and Palestinian forces ('They want to feed their children, you should see people begging for permits at the "Coordinator's" office, as result of halting security coordination'). He however denied that his employment in the security forces made him less socially acceptable (also see Clarno 2017, 187). In contrast to the preceding discussion, which has created the impression that Coordination is strongly opposed by the Palestinian public, S claimed that top senior officials and security coordinators had told her that Palestinians do not fully understand the concept of Coordination or its effect on their lives. This is clearly surprising given that she clearly explained how the securitisation of infra-structure and health services had made every aspect of Palestinian life a hostage of Coordination. She spoke, for example, of one interviewee, who told her how suspension of Coordination prevents him from sending the names of newborn babies to the Israeli database, which means they will not be eligible for travel permits.

Conclusion

In this article, we have considered beneficiaries of, and opposition to, Coordination. Although Coordination remains essential to the institutions created by the Oslo negotiations and to elite interests on both sides, it is confronted by a rising tide of opposition and is in constant crisis.

Opposition to Coordination extends across the Palestinian Left and Right and into the Israeli populist Right. Palestinians view it as an extension of Israel's colonial apparatus and lament how it has contributed to the creation of a Palestinian elite class. The Israeli populist Right, meanwhile, object to Palestinian access to the security profession, not least because it has the clear potential to disrupt an established racial hierarchy. The Security Elite also view the populist Right's challenge to Coordination as an indirect challenge to the privileges and entitlements that it has accrued over time.

Coordination does however continue to serve the needs of the Israeli Security Elite and the PA. They depend on the practice, and cling to it in the (probably entirely futile) hope it will sustain them from the turbulence and vicissitudes of a major legitimacy crisis. In the Israeli case, this is an internal crisis whereas in the Palestinian case it appears at the elite/public interface.

Coordination was always based on the fundamental illusion that concessions to colonial power will produce compromise. General Palestinian criticisms also create the impression it was opposed

by Palestinians from the outset. However, this is contradicted by our interviews, which suggests that Palestinians are not aware of the practice's implications, despite the fact that it has impinged on their everyday lives in various respects. Even when they are aware of the implications, they have no option but to submit to colonial terms. This again highlights a contradiction, as it suggests that Israeli elite opinion opposes an effective practice.

In reflecting on internal Palestinian divisions, we also found it instructive that the instances of unrest that are cited were sporadic, episodic and, perhaps most crucially of all, reactive. In other words, opposition to Coordination occurs in the pronounced absence of an analysis of settler colonialism that situates the practice in relation to a wider neoliberal apparatus and considers it in terms of the ends that it seeks to achieve. This perhaps helps to explain why Coordination has persisted, in spite of its internal and external contradictions.

In the case of Israeli elite opinion, the divisions are clearly more intra-bureaucratic, although public opinion may be a 'subsequent' consideration as the respective groups position themselves with the aim of gaining a relative advantage. From this perspective, the objective justification of Coordination (e.g. its efficacy) appears almost as a secondary consideration. This places the persistence and failure of the practice in a new perspective, as it suggests that PA-Israel relations were subordinate to the arrangement of bureaucratic preferences and interests. This, of course, subverts the notion of an autonomous 'peace process' that proceeds or fails on its own basis; it is however entirely consistent with the criticism that the process has, from the start, been defined by its alignment with Israeli interests.

In conclusion, we wholeheartedly accept the proposition that Coordination should be perceived and understood as a settler colonial practice. However, we would suggest guarding against the danger that it will be objectified, and understood purely in terms of its ability or failure to advance colonial goals. We would add that this privileges the practice over the internal power struggles and priorities that effectively constitute it. It is, by implication, wholly mistaken to speak as if there is a common Israeli or Palestinian position on Coordination. In our view, this is sometimes occluded by encompassing references to the 'colonised' and 'coloniser'.

It is, on the basis of our own discussion, mistaken to speak as if Palestinians are implacably opposed to Coordination on the basis that it is a settler colonial practice. On the contrary, we have more frequently encountered the pronounced *absence* of a settler colonial analysis in the territories, and this is unfortunately yet another item that must be added to the indictment against the Palestinian leadership. Insofar as this is lacking, then resistance will remain focused on the practice and its immediate implications (i.e. the inconvenience that it creates) rather than on its significance and implication in a wider settler colonial project.

We would also encourage researchers and activists to ground their analysis of colonial power in a prior understanding of elite-level divides. On the basis of Israel's prolific creation of categories and sub-categories of Palestinians, we are accustomed to the insight that the objects of colonial power are engaged on highly differentiated terms; however, we are less familiar with the proposition that colonial power may be dispersed or internally conflicted. Perhaps this is due to a mistaken tendency to engage this power on its own terms, and to therefore view it as complete and all-encompassing. This article provides an insight to the internal divides regarding the security coordination practice among Israelis and Palestinians, and explains how despite public calls to end it in both societies, it has been perpetuated.

Future research should therefore focus on first establishing the nature of Palestinian opposition to Coordination and should then explore the proposition that Israel's internal elite divides anticipate resistance to both coordination and settler colonialism more generally.

Notes

1. Palestinian security forces eventually established fifteen divisions rife with internal rivalries. Tellingly, this did not elicit considerable concern on the part of the Israeli government or the PA's international donors (Shu'aibi 2012).

2. In responding to a wider context of continued Fatah-Hamas tensions, the PA further reiterated the deeply political character of Palestinian 'public service' by cutting the salaries of Hamas government employees in the Gaza Strip (Roy 2017; Tibon 2018).
3. This is consistent with Bourdieu's (1985) use of 'distinction'.

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