

Call for papers

Power(s) in Palestine

Coordinators

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Argument

Over the past two decades a great deal of research on the question of Palestine has pointed to a fragmentation of the Palestinian political landscape¹, divisions exacerbated by the Oslo Accords.² The ensuing establishment of the Palestinian Authority (PA), in particular, fostered the emergence of new political dynamics and new sources of power and legitimacy, embodied in the conflict between Fatah and Hamas that has dominated Palestinian politics since 2007. The creation of the PA also encouraged a process of capital accumulation and a restructuring of social classes after 1993.³ Moreover, the dispersion of Palestinians across the world, the superposition of national and international legal realities and the diversity of actors in the conflict have contributed to the multiplication of sources and resources of power. This complex set of factors has prompted questions regarding new sources, mechanisms and flows of power in Palestine, as well as resultant dynamics. Such new forms of power can be illustrated in several ways.

In the political field, the Oslo Accords altered institutional structures by creating the PA, thus marginalizing the PLO, theretofore considered the fulcrum of Palestinian politics.⁴ The ensuing interim period also provided for the establishment of representative institutions (presidency of the PA, Palestinian Legislative Council) which for a time bestowed a new political mandate on elected officials. These elections however, although giving a new face to the architecture of Palestinian power, did not fundamentally change existing structures of domination while heightening political

¹ « Palestine éclatée », (Picaudou, 1997), « Les Palestines du quotidien » (Legrain, 1999), « Palestinians Divided » (Shikaki, 2002), « Fragmentations multiples » (Salingue, 2014), « La mosaïque éclatée » (Dot-Pouillard, 2016), « The Fragmentation of the National Political Field » (Hilal, 2019).

² GIACAMAN (George) et JORUND LONNING (Dag) (eds.), 1998, *After Oslo: New Realities, Old Problems*, Pluto Press, London/Chicago; HILAL (Jamil), « The Effect of the Oslo Agreements on the Palestinian Political System », in GIACAMAN (George) et JORUND LONNING (Dag), 1998, *Ibid.*, p. 121-145; GHANEM (As'ad), 2010, *Palestinian Politics after Arafat: A Failed National Movement*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press.

³ HANIEH (Adam), 2011, « The Internationalization of Gulf Capital and Palestinian Class Formation », *Capital and Class*, 35 (1), p. 81-106.

KHALIDI (Raja) and SAMOUR (Sobhi), « Neoliberalism as Liberation: The Statehood Program and the Remaking of the Palestinian National Movement », *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 2011, 40(2), p. 6-25; HANIEH (Adam), 2008, « Palestine in the Middle East : Opposing Neoliberalism and US power, *MRZine*.

⁴ SHIKAKI (Khalil), « A Window on the Working of the PA: An Inside View », *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 30, N° 1, Fall 2000.

fragmentation, notably as between Hamas and Fatah since 2007. Within the PLO, the principle of a fairer representation of Palestinian movements and factions, at the heart of demands for organizational reform, has so far never been seriously considered for lack of real will. Explanations for this situation are found in the continued colonial situation, internal political divisions, and the personalization of power.

The increasing lack of legitimacy resulting from the absence of regular elections has been accompanied in recent years by the inertia of the ruling elites whose desire to remain in power contributes to the weakening of the capacity for political action within the Palestinian national movement. This weakening is accentuated by Israel's tight control over Palestinian political dynamics and the longstanding stalemate in negotiations – assuming they were intended to reach a political settlement in the first place.⁵ As a result, the Palestinian leadership is today unable to respond to popular demands. Inter-Palestinian divisions, heightened by the uncertainties of succession to President Mahmoud Abbas, crystallize the stakes of power-sharing rivalries, the hegemony of Fatah, while lending credence to the impression of incompetence emanating from aging Palestinian leaders and the corruption of the political system.

Economically, the Oslo accords also created new lines of social and political division through the distribution of material and symbolic benefits (institutional positions, titles, ranks, privileges, etc.) which became powerful sources of social prestige and political influence. Three new powerful social groups were thus formed and now constitute a new Palestinian elite: the bureaucracy,⁶ a "business class" linked to the PA,⁷ and a "new globalized Palestinian elite."⁸ This elite plays a central role in political polarization, while benefiting from the allocation of resources, opportunities, and commercial and financial privileges granted by the central leadership.⁹

At the regional level, since 2011 one observes increasing challenges to traditional powers and a multiplication of heterogeneous actors. These developments have made it necessary to interrogate the centrality of the Palestinian question and its marginalization.

This issue of *Confluences Méditerranée* seeks to understand the impact of these changes on the practice of power(s) in Palestine and to identify their concrete forms of expression. It will focus more particularly on these new sources, practices, and mechanisms of power(s) and their symbolic role and dimensions. Exploring the ways in which these powers are exercised in Palestine today - as part of the reorganization of the Palestinian political order after Oslo - will also allow us to shed new

⁵ HILAL (Jamil) (ed.), 2007, *Where Now for Palestine? The Demise of the Two-state Solution*, London, Zed Books; KHALIDI (Rashid), 2006, *The Iron Cage: The Story of the Palestinian Struggle for Statehood*, Boston, Beacon Press; DAJANI (Burhan), 1994, « The September 1993 Israeli-PLO Documents: A Textual Analysis », *Journal of Palestine Studies*, volume XXIII, N° 3, Spring 1994, p. 5-23.

⁶ SHU'AYBi (Azmi) et SHIKAKI (Khalil), 2000, « A Window on the Working of the PA: An Inside View », *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 30(1), p. 88-97.

⁷ BOUILLON (Markus E.), 2004, *The Peace Business. Money and Power in the Palestine-Israel Conflict*, London, I.B. Taurus; NASR (Mohamed M.), « Monopolies and the PNA », in KHAN MUSHTAQ (Husain), GIACAMAN (George) and AMUNDSEN (Inge) (eds.), *State Formation in Palestine. Viability and Governance During a Social Transformation*, London, Routledge Curzon, p. 168-191; HADDAD (Toufic), 2016, *Palestine Ltd. Neoliberalism and Nationalism in the Occupied Territory*, London/ New York, I.B. Taurus.

⁸ HANAFI (Sari) and TABAR (Linda), 2005, *The Emergence of a Palestinian Globalized Elite. Donors, International Organizations and Local NGOs*, Jerusalem, Muwatin, The Palestinian Institute for the Study of Democracy.

⁹ HANAFI (Sari) and TABAR (Linda), 2003, « The Intifada and the Aid Industry: The Impact of the New Liberal Agenda on the Palestinian NGOs », *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle east*, 23: 1&2.

light on the (re)sources of power, on the re-composition of political legitimacy and the re-articulation of hierarchies within power structures. This exploration can be broken down into the following three axes.

Axis 1: Institutional questions, political governance and partisan struggles

The establishment of a Palestinian Authority in the Territories was accompanied by the creation of a set of institutions, similar to those of a State, competing with and in some cases obscuring those of the PLO, despite the latter being the sole representative of the Palestinian people.¹⁰ The absence of a political settlement with Israel has led to the perpetuation of this institutional situation characterized, if not by a duplication, at least by a superposition of institutions and powers. The Palestinian institutional crisis has been accompanied, since the legislative elections of January 2006, by a partisan divide with the polarization of the political field between Fatah and Hamas. This split exposed the erosion of Fatah's power due to the failure of negotiations and internal divisions within the party itself, fueled by the prospect of Mahmoud Abbas's succession. The political polarization has further exposed the failure of other factions, notably the left-wing and democratic parties, to influence the political game and come up with an alternative.

Suggested topics:

- *De facto* rule of the OPT, control mechanisms, and the realities of local authorities: security cooperation, economic dependence, realities of the occupation.
- Conflict between Hamas and Fatah: reconciliation and power sharing; rivalries for control of security apparatuses, etc.;
- Structures of power within Fatah, and the question of succession;
- Role of the opposition: evolution of left-wing PLO factions and Islamist movements;
- The question of refugees as a political and symbolic stake of power; organization in refugee camps and popular committees; influence of local issues on national policy.

Axis 2: Palestinians on the international stage

International political developments expose a paradox. Despite the PA's diplomatic strategy of international recognition having yielded some results, in particular recognition of non-member state status voted at the United Nations General Assembly in 2012, Palestinians failed in drawing concrete political benefits. In point of fact, the state project being negotiated contributed more to consolidating the colonial structure than allowing Palestinian political emancipation. With the failure of the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, and the confinement of Palestinian national aspirations to a constrained negotiating framework, the space for Palestinian rights has also shrunk considerably, resulting in the unilateral decisions taken by the United States since the election of D. Trump. These have intended to marginalize the Palestinian question yet further, through the establishment of strategic alliances between Third States, as illustrated, for example, by the recent normalization of relations between the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, and Israel. Moreover, the Arab revolutions

¹⁰ The formal recognition of the PLO as the one and only legitimate representative of the Palestinian people was obtained at the 8th Arab summit in Rabat in October 1974, and confirmed by the United Nations General Assembly in November 1974 which invited the PLO to its meetings as an observer and representative of the Palestinian people.

of 2011 shifted international attention from the Palestinian question to regional political developments.

Suggested topics:

- Diplomacy, representation and new configurations of power;
- Why do Palestinians continue to negotiate and what are they really negotiating? Is negotiation still a leverage of power?
- Assessment of the campaign for the recognition of Palestine in international institutions;
- Role of alternative and extra-diplomatic powers: lobbies, diasporas, BDS, etc.
- The question of refugees: between the centrality of the negotiation discourse and invisibility ("Deal of the century", end of funding for UNRWA, etc.).

Axis 3: Economic transformations and political power: new forms of domination

Political economy has been at the center of some studies on the Israeli-Palestinian question, particularly in the English language literature. These research efforts have helped to understand the structure and constitution of social classes, on the one hand, and the development of neoliberal approaches in the process of state building, on the other. Palestinian businesspersons and international organizations (World Bank, IMF or international donors) both play a significant role in the (re)configuration of power(s) in Palestine. The increasing number of NGOs (subject of numerous studies), as well as the institutional reforms imposed by the international community on the PA in 2003, illustrate this reality.

Suggested topics:

- Power dynamics linked to the status and role of debt. Changes in socio-economic priorities within Palestinian society; circulation and movement of capital (increase in bank loans, real estate purchases, consumption patterns); financial capital as a political tool (construction of the city of Rawabi);
- Impact of international aid and funding on the (re)configuration of power in Palestine; increased economic dependence on Israel, Paris Protocol of 1994, etc.;
- High unemployment and poverty rates; dependence of a large part of the population on government jobs, and its influence on the capacity or possibilities for systemic reform.

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Calendar

- Proposals should be sent to dima.alsajdeya@college-de-france.fr, francois.ceccaldi@college-de-france.fr and emiliodabed@yahoo.fr before December 1st, 2020.
- An answer will be sent to the authors before December 7th.
- Articles must be submitted before March 15th, 2021.

Instructions to authors for submitting article proposals

Proposals should not exceed 4000 characters (spaces included). The proposal must be accompanied by a title (even if provisional) and a short biography of the author.

Instructions to authors for the presentation of final articles

Articles should not exceed 25 to 30,000 characters (spaces included). Under the title of the article, give the author's name and institutional affiliation, as well as a 5-10 lines abstract.

Text should be single-spaced, Times New Roman, size 11. All the instructions are available on the *Confluences Méditerranée* journal [page on the iReMMO website](#).