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Jeff Halper, *War Against the People: Israel, the Palestinians and Global Pacification*, Pluto Press, 2015, 296 pp., \$25.00 US (pbk), ISBN 9780745334301.

Jeff Halper is an unusual hybrid presence on both the scholarly and political scene. He describes himself as an “activist-scholar” (6), which adopts a controversial self-identification. The conventional stance erects a high wall between scholarship and activism. To his credit and for our benefit, Halper excels almost equally in both roles. He is one of the most lucid speakers on the lecture circuit combining clarity with wisdom and a rich fund of information and firsthand experience, and his work as a writer is influential and widely known. His activist credentials have been built up over many years, especially in his work as co-founder and leader of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, which has bravely confronted Israeli demolition crews and IDF soldiers, helped Palestinians on multiple occasions to rebuild their destroyed homes, thereby responding humanely to one of Israel’s cruelest occupation practices, an instance of unlawful collective punishment. Halper has estimated that less than 2% of demolitions can lay claim to a credible security justification (the respected Israeli human rights NGO, B’Tselem, estimates 1.3% of demolitions are justified by security, while the rest are punitive or 621 of 47,000 since 1967). As an author his main prior book makes an unsurprisingly strong pitch for activism as the most reliable foundation for analysis and prescription. His important and incisive title gave the theme away—*An Israeli in Palestine: Resisting Dispossession, Redeeming Israel*.¹ This earlier book remains valuable as testimony by a progressive Zionist in Israel that with good faith Jews and Palestinians might yet learn to live together, including finding a formula for sharing the land.

Halper’s own life experience makes this blend of scholarship and activism particularly compelling. He is an American born Jew who grew up in the Midwest and studied anthropology in Wisconsin, taught at a Quaker university for several years, and then moved to Israel where he married an Israeli and has three grown children. What particularly sets Halper apart from most other principled Jews in the ranks of critics of Israel is the striking combination of the radicalism of his opposition to the policies and practices of the Israeli state together with his evident commitment to remain in Israel no matter how far right the governing process drifts. Most other prominent Jewish critics of Israel have remained outside the country throughout their life (e.g. Noam Chomsky) or were born in Israel and then chose to become expatriate critical voices (e.g. Daniel Levy, Ilan Pappé, Gilad Azmun). There are a few internationally prominent Israeli journalists and cultural figures who have

¹ Jeff Halper, *An Israeli in Palestine: Resisting Dispossession, Redeeming Israel* (London: Pluto Press, 2008).

sustained sharply critical commentary (e.g. Gideon Levy, Amira Hass) and kept their Israeli residence despite harassment and threats.

In the book under review Halper broadens his own distinctive identity while enlarging the apertures of perception by which he views the Israeli state. He focuses attention on the Israeli arms industry, security doctrines, and policies, and examines Israel's acquisition of formidable diplomatic influence grossly disproportionate to its size and capabilities. It is this gap between Israel's significant impact on current world history and the modest scale of its territorial reality and its outsider status in most global settings that is the core mystery being explicated by Halper. He starts the book with some provocative questions that put the underlying puzzle before us in vivid language: "How does Israel get away with it? In a decidedly post-colonial age, how is Israel able to sustain a half-century occupation over the Palestinians, a people violently displaced in 1948, in the face of almost unanimous international opposition" (1)? He indicates that this phenomenon cannot be adequately "explained by normal international relations" nor by the strength of the Israel lobby in the United States nor by strong Israeli pushback to discredit critics by invoking the Holocaust as an indefinite source of impunity (3). What the book demonstrates very persuasively is that Israeli influence is a result of its extraordinary, partially hidden and understated role as arms supplier to more than 130 countries and as an increasingly significant mentor of national police forces and counter-terrorist operations and practices in many countries, including the United States.

Israel as Arms Merchant and Pacification Ideologue

Without exaggeration, *War Against the People*, is really three books in one. It is first of all a comprehensive and detailed look at the elaborate Israeli arms industry, including the extensive network of private companies engaged in arms production. Halper explores how Israel managed to become such a valued producer of sophisticated weaponry that so many governments have come to depend upon. Part of Israel's success in the highly competitive international arms market is to identify and develop niches for itself in the wider global arms market that allows it to compete successfully for market share with companies backed by several of the world's largest states by supplying specific kinds of weaponry that outperform the alternatives available for purchase. By so serving as an arms merchant to no less than 130 countries gives Israel a powerful unacknowledged source of leverage throughout the entire world. An aspect of Israel's success is to be apolitical in its operations as an arms supplier, provided only that the foreign government poses no security threat to Israel.

Secondly, the book is a detailed examination of the specific ways that Israel has adapted its security doctrine and practice to the varieties of Palestinian resistance over the decades. The Israeli approach rests on adopting a goal toward internal security that seeks to achieve a tolerable level of "pacification" of the Palestinian population. As such it does not seek to "defeat" the Palestinians, including even Hamas, and is content with keeping violent resistance contained so that Israelis can go about their lives with reasonable security and the economy can prosper. At the same time, the threat of violent resistance never entirely disappears or is absent from the political consciousness and experience of Israeli society, and the fear factor keeps Israelis supportive of oppressive internal policies. Pacification in the face of a potentially very hostile minority Palestinian presence in pre-1967 Israel has presupposed a fusing of Israel's military, paramilitary, police, and intelligence capabilities, but also a less understood Israeli politics of restraint. The capabilities to sustain pacifications

must be continuously updated and adapted to evolving circumstances, including shifts in Palestinian tactics of resistance.

This mental shift from “victory” over the natives to their relentless “pacification” to some extent reflects the ethical orientation of a post-colonial world. In many respects Israel represents a species of settler colonialism, but it takes the form of seeking some kind of imposed accommodation with the native population rather than their extinction or spatial marginalization. Actually, as Israeli politics have moved further and further to the right, the tactics of pacification have become more coercive and brutal, and do seem to push the original dispossession of the *nakba* toward some kind of “final solution” by way of settlement expansion as likely supplemented at some point by population transfer and by periodic massive military operations of the sort that have occurred in Gaza in 2008-2009, 2012, and 2014. In other words, pacification as conceived in the 1950s has become quite something more ominous for the Palestinians in the twenty-first century as “Palestine” shrinks in size and diminishes in threat while Israel’s territorial ambitions continue to expand and seem to be within reach.

The Israel/Palestine encounter is certainly unique in several of its aspects, yet it bears sufficient similarity to a range of threats facing many governments in the world to allow the Israeli government to serve as an exemplary practitioner of counterinsurgency war/politics. It is precisely the generality of contemporary security challenges situated within society that makes the Israeli experience seem so valuable to others, especially when reinforced by the widespread impression that Israel’s security policies have succeeded in the face of difficult challenges over an extended period. This combination of considerations gives Israel’s weapons, training programs, and security doctrines their global resonance. Especially in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, the long-term character of the Israeli experience became a strong credential on the arms market and among strategy-minded think tanks. Israel’s perceived counterinsurgency record has even led other governments to mute or even abandon their criticisms of the manner in which Israel suppresses Palestinians and flaunts international law. In this way, the Israeli network of arms sales arrangements has not only functioned as direct sources of influence and economic benefit to Israel, but also contributed a political payoff by weakening motivations at the UN and elsewhere in the world to exert meaningful pressure on Israel to modify its policies and uphold its obligations under international law. What Halper helps us to understand is this rarely discussed relationship between the arms trade and what might be called an international diplomacy of pacification. In effect, Israel has quietly bought off most of its potentially most dangerous governmental adversaries by making itself an invaluable collaborator in the security domain, which is given priority by every government when it comes to shaping its foreign policy. The reach of this weapons diplomacy is further extended due to Israel’s willingness to do arms deals discreetly with the most repressive of regimes around the world even while at the same time it takes great pains to substantiate the claim that Israel remains the only democracy in the Middle East.

Thirdly, this long experience of coping with Palestinian resistance has given Israel continuing field experience with tactics and weapons useful to subdue a non-state adversary, including convincing demonstrations of what works and what doesn’t. In fundamental respects the work of pacification is never finished, and so Israel continuously modifies its weapons mix to take account of battlefield lessons and technological innovations, and this is of great value to governments that were seeking to choose among several alternatives to meet the requirements of their particular security challenges. Israel can claim both the reliability of its weaponry through their field testing in response to varying conditions and

success in adapting to ever changing tactics of Palestinian resistance. No other country has achieved this mastery over the hardware and software of a pacification approach to internal security.

Halper also makes us aware that pacification is what also best explains the hegemonic ambitions of America's securitizing approach to world order. What Israel has achieved on a small scale, the United States is managing on a large scale. In other words the several hundred American foreign military bases together with navies patrolling all of the world's oceans, further reinforced by satellite militarization of space for purposes of intelligence and possible attack are the coercive infrastructure of both neoliberal globalization and American global leadership. The objective is to keep those dissatisfied with this established order under sufficient control so that trade, investment, and basic security relations are not deeply disturbed. Part of Halper's argument is that Israel understands the dynamics of an effective regime of global pacification better than any other country, and has done its best to be useful to the United States and Europe by providing niche support in terms of weaponry (say for border barriers, surveillance, and control) and doctrine (say targeted assassinations by drone strikes and collective blockades).

Matrix of Control

Halper relies upon an illuminating style of conceptualization to develop his basic analysis. For instance, one of his important contributions is to specify global pacification by reference to a "Matrix of Control." The basic argument of the book is that the most defining "wars" of our times involve using state violence against a mobilized population that mounts threats against the established economic and political order. The matrix of control is the complex interaction of weapons, policies, practices, and ideas that make this project a reality. The paradigmatic case is the Israeli pacification of the Palestinians, which is less than their defeat or annihilation, but something other than sustained warfare; it is doing enough by way of forcible action to punish, terrorize, and suppress without clearly crossing the line drawn by legal prohibitions on mass atrocity and genocide. It is damping down the fires of Palestinian resistance into a smoldering mass of tensions and resentments that every so often bursts into flames, offering pretexts for launching a new campaign of devastation. The pattern of periodic onslaughts against Gaza since 2008 is indicative of the broader policies, with three massive attacks every 2-3 years, what Israeli officials are comfortable describing as "mowing the lawn" (146), which incidentally stimulates a new round of arms sales.

The Israeli matrix of control (143-190) is specified by reference to its various main components, forming an integrated and distinctive form of what Halper describes as "urban warfare" resting on the premise of "domestic securitization," that is, conceiving of the enemy as mainly operating within the boundaries of the state, ultimately to be contained rather than defeated. Such an integrated approach relies on walls to keep the unwanted from entering, surveillance, fragmenting the population to be controlled, periodic and punitive violent suppression designed to prevent, preempt, and demoralize, and proactive intelligence that seeks to gain access to the inner circles of militant opposition forces. Such a matrix of control both deploys a mixture of traditional counterterrorist measures and the latest innovations in sophisticated technology, including armed robotics, drones, and a variety of overlapping surveillance techniques. The approach relies on a vertical layering of security measures that rests on redundancy to ensure effective control. What is original about this approach is its conscious realization that "victory" over hostile subjugated forces is not an

acceptable or realizable policy option, and what works best is a system of permanent control sustained by a mix of coercive and psychological instruments.

Pacifying Palestinians and Pacifying the World

Halper shows how this matrix of control, which developed to enable Israeli settler society to achieve a tolerable level of security with respect to the indigenous Palestinian population, seeks to fulfill an elusive requirement. It maintains security without resorting to genocide or to the kind of destructive forms of mass slaughter that characterized earlier experiences of settler colonialism where the land occupied was cleared of natives. At the same time, it pacifies in a post-colonial era where the power of the colonial master has been effectively challenged throughout the world. It is no longer possible to beat the native population into a condition of passive resignation as had been the case so often during the heyday of the extensive European colonial empires. These two considerations suggest a policy puzzle for the pacifier who must avoid extreme violence and yet depends on a sufficient degree of violence to intimidate a restive population that believes resistance is justified and currently accords with the flow of history.

The Israeli answer in a variety of acknowledged and disguised forms is best understood by reference to the Dahiya Doctrine, which incorporates a logic of disproportionate retaliation (174-176). In effect, for every Israeli killed or home damaged or destroyed, a far greater number of Palestinians will be killed and entire residential neighborhoods destroyed. The Dahiya Doctrine was proclaimed originally to justify the destruction of the Dahiya neighborhood in south Beirut during the Lebanon War of 2006. The people living in densely populated Dahiya were viewed by Israel as supportive of Hezbollah, but it is descriptive of Israeli behavior generally with respect to Palestinian acts of resistance, particularly with respect to Gaza since falling under Hamas's control. The supposedly centrist Tzipi Livni, the Israeli political leader who served as Foreign Minister during the massive attack on Gaza at the end of 2008, expressed this Israeli way of dealing with Palestinian resistance in Gaza in the following chilling words: "Hamas now understands that when you fire on its [Israel's] citizens it responds by going wild—and this is a good thing" (quoted in Halper, 175). I would add that "going wild" is a euphemism for rejecting the efforts of international humanitarian law and the just war tradition to constrain the intensity of violence and suffering by insisting on *proportional* responses. In effect, to reject so overtly this admittedly vague effort of international law to impose limits on the conduct of warfare, Israel is incorporating into the core of its security approach a repudiation of the humanizing ambition of international law, and implicitly claiming the right on its own to use force as it wishes. This is a step back from the extensive attempt during the prior century to put the genie of war, if not back in its bottle, at least to gesture toward that end. With Israel's concept of securitization, also descriptive of the approach taken by the United States, as well as such other countries as Russia, France, and China, it is arguable that international society has turned the normative clock back to a nihilistic zero.

There is another crucial feature of the matrix of control that is of wider relevance than Israel's treatment of the Palestinians that Halper associates with "Framing: A Tendentious Definition of 'Terrorism'" (149-151). This framing idea is to make it appear that "the terrorists" are always those resisting control by the established political order, and never those that are exercising authority however oppressively. As Halper points out, the IDF may kill over 2,000 Palestinians, two-thirds of whom are civilians, in the course of an armed confrontation in Gaza, as opposed to Hamas killing five Israeli civilians, but Hamas will still

be depicted as the practitioner of terror and Israel's violence will be put forward as defensive measures that are reasonable and necessary for the protection of the civilian population of Israel. The Israeli government will describe Palestinian civilian deaths as regrettable collateral damage, while attributing Hamas's comparatively trivial lethality to a deliberate intention to kill Israeli civilians. The final step in the ideologizing process is to make this construction of the respective intentions of the two sides hinge on the question of deliberate intention, and since Hamas's rockets are fired in the general direction of civilian populations the intention is declared to be deliberate, while Israel is seeking to destroy militarily relevant personnel and weaponry. This kind of manipulative framing by Israel has been borrowed by the United States and other governments to lend moral authority to the form of disproportionate violence that has characterized counterinsurgency warfare in Iraq and Afghanistan in the post-9/11 era as well as lesser military operations around the world in the course of "the war on terror."

What Israel has been doing within Palestinian territory it is seeking to control, the United States does globally. The introduction of drone warfare and special ops covert forces into dozens of countries throughout the world is an extension of the matrix of control as perfected by Israel within its limited field of operations. It also reformulates the parameters of permissible violence without regard to the limitations of international law, regarding any point of suspected adversaries throughout the planet as subject to deadly attack, borrowing notions of targeted assassination from the repertoire of Israeli practices. As with Israel, the operative goal of the so-called long war is not victory in the World War II sense, but rather the exercise of a sufficiency of control that is able to establish tolerable levels of security for Western societies and transnational economic activity. It is worth pointing out that as with Israel, the United States is unwilling to pay the costs in reputation and resources that would be required to achieve victory, although in the Iraq occupation as earlier in Vietnam it did seek to do more than pacify but in the end found the costs too high, and abandoned the undertaking.

Halper's book gives essential insights to a key set of interrelated concerns: the political benefits to Israel arising from its dual role as quality arms supplier and counterinsurgency mentor; the degree to which Israel's success in managing a hostile Palestinian population as well as a series of dangerous regional threats offers the United States a model for global securitization with a primary objective of preempting threats to the American homeland and safeguarding neoliberal global markets and trade routes from hostile forces; as also noted, the Israeli domestic security apparatus has been influential in the equipping and training of American and other national police forces. Additionally, Israeli technologies and knowhow have been relied upon to monitor borders and to erect barriers against unwanted entry; the advantages of having a seemingly permanent combat zone such as Gaza for field testing weapons and tactics increases the attractiveness of Israel as supplier of choice. This kind of combat zone is real world simulation that has many experimental advantages over the sorts of war games that are used to assess the effectiveness of weapons and tactics. Without incoming rockets from Gaza it would be impossible to reliably test the effectiveness of a defensive system such as the Iron Dome.

Concluding Comments

In the end, Halper answers the question as to why Israel's seeming international unpopularity based on its long-term suppression of the Palestinian people does not harm its image or status. Israel manages to get away with its abusive human rights record while a

more powerful and populous country such as apartheid South Africa was sanctioned and censured repeatedly. Of course, U.S. geopolitical muscle is part of the answer, but what Halper adds to our understanding in an insightful and factually supported manner is an appreciation of Israel's extraordinary usefulness as arms supplier and counterinsurgency guru. A further implication of Israeli usefulness is a realization that governments give much more weight to relationships that bolster their security capabilities than they do to matters of international morality and law. Given these realities, it remains clear that the Palestinian national movement will have to wage its struggle on its own with principal support coming from civil society. Israel, it must be acknowledged has substantially neutralized both the UN and the foreign policy of most important countries, although public opinion around the world is moving in directions that could exert mounting pressure on Israel in the years to come.

As the title of Halper's book suggests, what is transpiring worldwide, and is epitomized by the Israeli response to Palestinian opposition, can be best understood as part of a wider shift in the nature of global conflict in the post-Cold War period. Instead of most attention being given by security bureaucracies to rivalries and warfare among leading states, the most salient, dangerous, and cruelest conflicts are between state and society, or wars waged against people. There are no significant international wars between two or more states taking place now, while at least 30 internal wars are raging in different parts of the world. To be sure there have been a series of military interventions as part of the global pacification project under the direction of the United States and proxy wars in the Middle East in which major states intervene on opposite sides of a civil war. Yet whether we think of Syria as the paradigm of twenty-first century warfare or the Israeli matrix of control, it is "the people," or a mobilized segment, that is being victimized. Halper's book does the best job so far of depicting this new cartography of warfare, and deserves to be widely read and its main theses debated.

Richard Falk
Professor Emeritus of International Law and Practice
Princeton University

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